

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY TOOLKIT

May 14, 2021



Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies

#CARE4CARE
#TAKEFIVEON





ABOUT CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY AND THIS TOOLKIT

Children and Youth in Care Day, proclaimed into law with the *Children and Youth in Care Day Act, 2012*, is an opportunity to recognize the enormous contributions that current and former youth in care make in Ontario, as well as celebrate the strength, bravery, and resilience shown by these children and youth in the face of adversity.

This year, on May 14, 2021, OACAS is pleased to launch our new mental health initiative, [Take5](#). With funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), OACAS worked alongside our incredible advisory committee of First Voice Advocates, 20+ community organizations and experts to create information resources, multimedia content, live workshops, and events for children and youth of all ages, as well as their caregivers.

An interactive online space, [Take5](#) is focused on reducing mental health risk and isolation for children and youth in care during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

This year, OACAS is inviting you to “take five” (or more) with us on May 14 to support the mental health and well-being of children and youth in care.

This Toolkit Includes:

- Goals of Children and Youth in Care Day and [Take5](#)
- Key Messages
- Social Media Content (images, hashtags, and sample messages for social media engagement)
- Take5 and Talk About Mental Health: Conversation Starters for Caregivers and Those Who Work with Children and Youth
- Community Partners and Contributors

Goals of Children and Youth in Care Day and [Take5](#)

1. To celebrate children and youth in and from care for their strengths and unique identities.
2. To build better networks of support by increasing participation of community members and partners so that children and youth in and from care feel supported.
3. To destigmatize views about children and youth in and from care by increasing awareness and understanding with the public.
4. To reduce mental health risk and isolation for children and youth in care during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.



KEY MESSAGES

Children and Youth in Care Day

- On May 14, 2012, Children and Youth in Care Day was proclaimed by the government of Ontario to raise awareness about children and youth in the care of the Province.
- There are approximately 12,000 children and youth in care in Ontario. Each year 800–1,000 individuals “age out” and leave the care of the Ontario child welfare system.
- Children and youth in care are children and youth who live in kin, foster, and group homes. They are children and youth who are not able to live with their primary caregivers because of conditions that make it unsafe to do so.
- Children and Youth in Care Day is an opportunity to recognize the contributions of current and former youth in care to the Province, as well as reduce stigma and celebrate their strength, bravery, and resilience in the face of adversity.
- Children and Youth in Care Day is an important reminder that children and youth in care face adversities. They require allies, advocacy, and collaboration to help them reach their full potential.
- It is important for children and youth in care to know they belong to, and have the support of, their community. They need to know they are not alone.
- To symbolize Children and Youth in Care Day, the purple lion was chosen to represent the bravery and courage these children and youth need to overcome the obstacles and challenges of being an individual in and from care.
- This year, due to COVID-19, Children and Youth in Care Day celebrations will take place virtually. Using the hashtag #CARE4CARE, the child welfare sector and key partners will raise awareness about the importance of caring for children and youth in care.

Take5

- Children and youth involved with child welfare are at greater risk for mental health issues than children in the general population. Marginalized youth in and from care are also more likely to be impacted by COVID-19. This includes young refugees, youth living in rural areas, Indigenous, Black, racialized people and ethnic minority youth, young persons with disabilities, and young people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.
- Feelings of isolation and loneliness are among the main challenges and concerns for young people during the pandemic. This is particularly true for children and youth in and from care.
- This year, OACAS is pleased to launch our new mental health initiative, Take5, on May 14, 2021, for Children and Youth in Care Day. An interactive online space, Take5 is focused on reducing mental health risk and isolation for children and youth in care during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.
- With funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), OACAS worked alongside our incredible advisory committee of First Voice Advocates, 20+ community organizations and experts to create information resources, multimedia content, live workshops, and events for children and youth of all ages, as well as their caregivers.
- The OACAS Youth Advisory Committee chose the name Take5 to encompass the message of prioritizing self-care and mental well-being by pausing, reflecting, and taking a moment to breathe.
- Using the hashtag #Take5ON, the child welfare sector and key partners will promote and encourage access to the Take5 website, while highlighting the importance of supporting the mental health and well-being of children and youth in and from care.



SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Spread awareness about Children and Youth in Care Day on social media on May 14. Join the conversation! Follow us at [@ONT_youthCAN](#) and [@our_children](#) on Twitter and [@ontarioyouthcan.org](#) on Facebook.

Hashtags

#CARE4CARE

#ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay

#Take5ON

Links

Children and Youth in Care Day:
www.oacas.org/childrenandyouthincare/

Take5: www.take-5.org

Social Media Messages

Twitter/Instagram

- On May 14, 2021, children and youth in and from care ask the community to join in celebration and raise awareness to show they #CARE4CARE. Friends, neighbours, teachers, group home staff, foster parents, health professionals — we're all part of the community that cares for kids!
- It only takes one person to make children and youth in care feel like they are not alone. On Children and Youth in Care Day, be that person and show you #CARE4CARE.
- Children and Youth in Care Day is an opportunity to recognize the contributions of current and former youth in care, as well as reduce stigma and celebrate their strength, bravery, and resilience in the face of adversity. Happy #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay!
- Join us on May 14 to make sure children and youth in care know that they are not alone, that they belong, and that they have the support of their community. Show you #CARE4CARE!

- #Take5ON on May 14 for #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay to support the mental health and well-being of children and youth in and from care. Check it out and share it with your networks! www.take-5.org
- Children and youth in and from care are at greater risk for mental health issues. That's why [org/individual name] is sharing #Take5ON this #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay. Join us!

Facebook/LinkedIn

- On May 14, 2012, Children and Youth in Care Day was proclaimed by the government of Ontario to raise awareness about children and youth in the care of the province. There are approximately 10,000 children and youth in care in Ontario. Each year 800–1,000 individuals exit the Ontario child welfare system. But they are not alone. On Children and Youth in Care Day we want them to know they have the support of their community. #ChildrenAndYouthInCareDay #CARE4CARE
- On Children and Youth in Care Day we raise awareness about the struggles faced by children and youth in care. Being in care can be a challenging, isolating, and unpredictable experience. Supportive friends, services, and community can make the difference. #CARE4CARE on May 14 with #Take5ON and support the mental health and well-being of those in care. www.take-5.org

Social Media Images

Flyers and additional social media content, including images, are available for download at www.oacas.org/childrenandyouthincare/.



TAKE5 AND TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH: CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR CAREGIVERS AND THOSE WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

It isn't always easy to talk about mental health. In fact, it can be overwhelming for adults and children alike. But these conversations are important! Opening the door and creating opportunities for children and youth to share their experiences and how they are feeling is what will ultimately allow you to help them.

Using the themes from the [Take5](#) website, we have drafted some questions to help caregivers and those who work with young people to start conversations about their mental health and well-being. Whether you explore the website together or separately, we encourage you to "[Take5](#)" (or more) and start talking about mental health.

TIP: Try to stay calm and listen without judgment. Be straightforward, honest, and validate the young person's feelings.

Self-Care and Compassion

- What are ways that you manage stress and take care of yourself?
- Which strategies or choices work best for you? Which strategies or choices don't work as well for you?
- How do you make sense of the difficulties of your past so that they don't impact your present?
- What are some ways that I can create space for you to feel respected and valued?
- Have there been moments when you have not felt respected or valued and what things were absent or present that made it feel that way?

Harm Reduction and Substance Use

- Do you know where to go, or who to call, if you need help when feeling sad, overwhelmed, or in a crisis?
- What things would you like to learn or know to help you better manage behaviours that no longer serve you (e.g. drinking, drug using, self-harm)?
- If you are using alcohol or drugs, what actions are you taking to make sure that you are being as safe as possible in your use?
- Do you know how to get a drug testing kit and/or safe injecting kit?
- Are you getting whatever you are using from a trusted place or person?

Culture and Identity

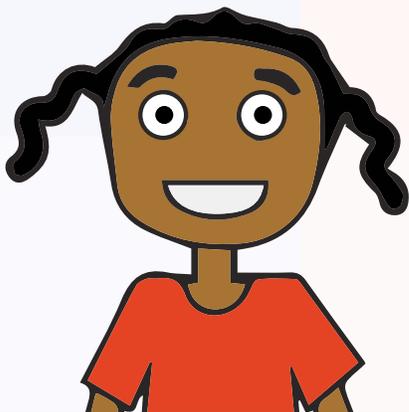
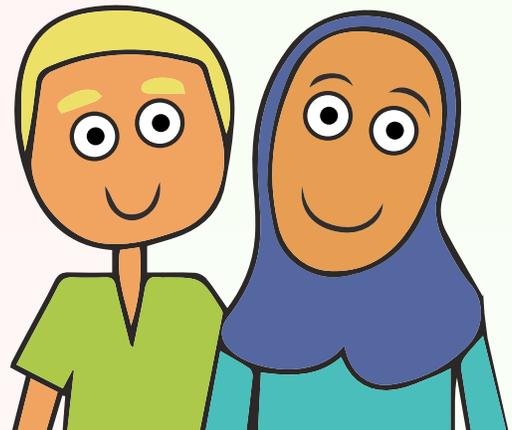
- What is important to you about who you are and where you are from?
- What are ways that we can celebrate those parts of who and how you are together (e.g. cultural foods, prayers, ceremony, music, dance, other practices)?
- Have you ever felt you were treated differently, made to feel badly about yourself, or physically or verbally threatened because of the way you look, act, speak, where you and your family are from, or the traditions/practices you keep?
- Are there things about your culture or identity that you would like to learn more about? How can I support your learning?



TAKE5 AND TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH: CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR CAREGIVERS AND THOSE WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH (CONTINUED...)

Healthy Relationships

- What does a healthy relationship (or a relationship that works well) look and feel like for you?
- What does an unhealthy relationship (or a relationship that does not work well) look like and feel like for you?
- Who do you have in your life that is a support to you? How do those people make you feel?
- Are there people you wish could be more involved in your life? Who are they and what do you hope they would contribute to your life?

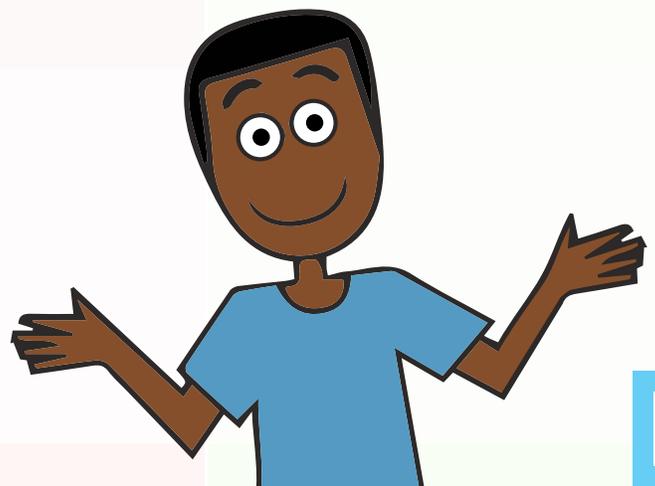


Learning and Skill Building

- How has COVID-19 changed the way that you experience school and learning?
- How has COVID-19 changed the way you receive support with school and learning either from teachers, tutors, schoolmates, family, or friends? What, if anything, might be missing or might you need more help with?
- What might you like to do or learn more about at school that COVID-19 has made difficult?

Mind and Body

- What role does social media play in the way you see yourself?
- How do the kinds of things you see, say, and who you interact with online make it harder or easier to see yourself in a positive way?
- What kinds of things do you say to yourself, or do for yourself that make you feel better in your body?
- What kinds of things do you say to yourself, or do for yourself that make you feel better in your mind?





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COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

We are grateful for the support of the following organizations for their contributions and partnership toward the **Take5** project. Thank you!



ABRARMH.CA

in this Together



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Association of Native Child and Family Services Agencies of Ontario



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