

Children & Youth in Care Day

#ForgetMeNot



Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies



CHILDREN'S
AID FOUNDATION
OF CANADA

Children and Youth in Care Day, proclaimed into law with the *Children and Youth in Care Day Act, 2014*, is an opportunity to acknowledge the valuable contributions that current and former children and youth in care make to the province, as well as the strength and resilience shown by these young people in the face of adversity. This year, OACAS is continuing the [#ForgetMeNot campaign](#) by asking all Ontarians the question: ***Are you there for kids in care?***

What can the Ontario government do?

Children and youth in care are children and youth who live with extended family, friends, or in foster or 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. Each year, nearly 12,000 children and youth in care are served by non-Indigenous child welfare agencies in Ontario.

The disparity in outcomes for young people from the child welfare system compared to their peers is well documented. It includes high rates of leaving high school or post-secondary early, under- or unemployment, mental health challenges and substance misuse, and precarious housing. It is also important to note that Indigenous and Black youth continue to be overrepresented in the child welfare system and that the experiences and outcomes of 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth involved in the child welfare system need to improve. This is the result of the historical and continual impacts of systems of power, privilege, and oppression—including colonialism and racism—that drive the oversurveillance of communities while also creating barriers to safe and culturally responsive supportive services across systems like mental health, housing, and education.

Children and youth in care cannot be forgotten. They must be prioritized by the Ontario government as a group with unique lived experiences and distinct needs. It is critical that the province develop policy and programming and make investments that are tailored to their specific needs, including identity and culture. This will ultimately support and further the work being done to address overrepresentation in child welfare and progress being made towards equitable outcomes. OACAS calls on the Ontario government to:

- **Expand mental health services for children and youth in care through additional investments in the *Roadmap to Wellness*.** This additional funding should be provided to organizations focused on child and youth mental health to help reduce wait times and improve access to specialized, culturally responsive, trauma-informed services and supports. A portion of this funding should be earmarked for children and youth with severe or complex mental health needs.
- **Ensure young people in care have access to safe, appropriate, and secure housing through additional investments in the Homelessness Prevention Program.** Investments should support housing models, programs, and initiatives specifically designed to support youth by offering a holistic range of wraparound supports and services focused on well-being, continued life-skills and social development, employment and education, and connections to culture, identity, and community.



- **Help young people in care successfully enter and thrive in the labour market by making targeted investments focused on learning recovery and skills development.** These targeted investments should be tailored to the needs of youth facing unique barriers to education and employment, such as early leavers from high school, single parent youth, youth living in low-income households, Indigenous, Black, and racialized youth, youth experiencing precarious housing, and youth in or from care.

About Children and Youth in Care Day

Children and Youth in Care Day was created because of the tireless efforts of young people in and from care and the stories and experiences they shared through the [My Real Life Book](#) report. It serves as an important reminder that children and youth in care face many unique challenges. They require allies, advocacy, and collaboration to help them reach their full potential. They need to know that they belong to, and have the support of, their community.

About the 2023 #ForgetMeNot Campaign

OACAS is continuing the [#ForgetMeNot campaign](#) by asking all Ontarians the question: *Are you there for kids in care?* This is a way to remind community, government, and service providers that these young people continue to need critical supports. They cannot be forgotten. This year's campaign emphasizes stories of young people with experience in the child welfare system and the influential people in their lives who contributed to their well-being. We want to encourage Ontarians to get involved in supporting their success. We are proud to partner with the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada on the 2023 #ForgetMeNot campaign.

Goals of Children and Youth in Care Day and #ForgetMeNot 2023

1. To acknowledge children and youth in and from care for their strengths and unique identities.
2. To advocate for better supports for children and youth in care.
3. 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 and thrive.
4. To destigmatize views about children and youth in and from care by increasing awareness and understanding with the public.

About the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies

The [Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies](#) (OACAS) is a provincial membership organization representing 47 of Ontario's 50 Children's Aid Societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies, and two pre-mandated Indigenous agencies. We support our members with practice tools, policy analysis, communications, and professional development and training opportunities.

About the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada

[Children's Aid Foundation of Canada](#) is our country's leading charity dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth and families involved in the child welfare system. We raise and grant funds and develop high-impact programs that are delivered in partnership with 80 child- and youth-serving agencies across the country. With the support of our donors and partners, we help children and youth involved with the child welfare system access the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

How to Get in Touch

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