

ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021



HOW CAN WE HELP?

Once you choose HOPE anything's possible

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

Truly Dedicated and Here to Help

What we have seen throughout the pandemic is how truly dedicated our staff are to the children, youth and families we work with and to each other in the organization. What we have learned this past year is the potential we have to truly help. Like most organizations, we have felt the impact of COVID-19 individually and collectively. We have joined in the struggle of the unknown, managed the pressures of caring for children, each other, and ourselves and supported those who have suffered illness – either those we serve or our colleagues. Yet, together, we have persevered.

This is a message of optimism and hope. Our Board continued to provide leadership, governance, support and guidance. Our staff at CCAS, along with their colleagues across the province, never stopped providing service, making sure that children and families received the help they needed. We focused on the impact that the pandemic has had on vulnerable communities and on individuals experiencing adversity, and our staff provided social, emotional, and material support to help meet basic needs and enhance resiliency of our service recipients. Whether it was providing families with food and money, children and youth with computers and Internet access to attend school virtually, or just providing the emotional support to those we work with, CCAS was there. Our foster families and volunteers made sure children and youth were safe, well and remained connected to their families, schools and community, despite the many obstacles COVID-19 created. In fact, the pandemic allowed us to demonstrate how child welfare is truly here to help. We are proud of how we adapted and found ways to help families, and it is a credit to our staff, foster families and volunteers that they never lost sight of our important role. We are using this pivot to highlight the future of child welfare - one where we are driven by a simple question, "How Can We Help?"

This simple question will guide us going forward and is the foundation of our new Integrated Operating Plan. Our 'here to help' commitment, with the services children, youth and families need and want, includes a number of objectives that we will seek to accomplish in the coming years. We will continue to strengthen our Catholic Identity as we also focus on equity, diversity and anti-racism. We have started to address disparity and disproportionality in the children, youth and families in our service, especially Black children, youth and families' involvement with CCAS, and we will continue this critical work.



Tony Cocuzzo, President of the Board



Mark Kartusch, Executive Director

The Board has also engaged in equity training and made a commitment to increasing the diversity of the Board of Directors, and we're thankful to the support we are already receiving to start this work. This includes the Black Governance and Leadership Project, led by TAIBU, which aims to increase Black representation in governance and decision making in organizations across the city of Toronto. We will be investing in staff development to strengthen our services and enhance the sophistication of our response to the impact of trauma so many of the families we have worked with experience. We will also continue to build and strengthen our organizational culture to ensure we remain a strong vibrant organization and continue to work closely and build new partnerships with community agencies to ensure seamless and integrated service delivery.

We know that coming out of the pandemic will not be a return to 'normal', but it offers us an opportunity to create something better. We believe we have created the building blocks to do just that, without ever losing sight of the proud and accomplished history and legacy of CCAS.

FOR THE LOVE OF CHILDREN



WE VALUE:

- Human Dignity
- The Courage and Integrity to Take a Stand
- Partnership and Teamwork
- Professional Excellence
- Cultural, Racial and Individual Differences

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto, on behalf of the Catholic community, is committed to providing social services that protect children and strengthen family life.

REDUCING DISPROPORTIONALITY & DISPARITY FOR FAMILIES OF AFRICAN-DESCENT

In 2018, CCAS developed and approved a policy on Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression (ARAO). In so doing, we committed ourselves to ensuring that all people associated with our agency, especially children, youth, families, communities, staff, caregivers and volunteers, are ensured their human rights and freedoms, namely to be free from all forms of racism, inequity and oppression.

Over the last several years, with the leadership of the One Vision, One Voice (OVOV) project through the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), the child welfare sector has highlighted the pervasiveness of Anti-Black racism in our society, its institutions, and has acknowledged that the child welfare sector is no exception. Systemic racism and ongoing inequities faced by Black communities have led to the significant over-representation of Black children, youth and their families referred to children's aid societies, receiving ongoing protection services, and coming into out-of-home care. While Black children and youth make up approximately 9% of the Toronto Catholic child population, they represent 29% of all children/youth investigated by our society and 39% of children/youth in our care.

Working to reduce and ultimately eliminate disproportionality and disparity is a focus at CCAS. To support our efforts, we have piloted and evaluated the Africentric Wraparound model, an approach to service delivery developed by the OVOV project, that seeks to unpack and dismantle bias in decision-making about families through critical reflection, and to provide identity-affirming services to children, youth and families of African-descent. We are planning to scale up this pilot across the organization in 2021-22. Further, we have introduced pre- and post-admission conferences that bring families together with their extended networks to develop plans that keep children and youth safely at home. At the same time, we have continued to strengthen close partnerships with our colleagues in Education, a primary source of referral for Black children, to critically examine our collective response to supporting Black families and to disrupt Anti-Black racism.



The combination of these efforts has resulted in fewer Black families investigated by CCAS, and fewer Black children and youth coming into our care. At the same time, we have augmented our Community Links approach, connecting many more families with supports in the community so that families who require service, but who do not need child protection intervention, can receive the help they need.

But we still have a long way to go. Systemic discrimination and inequity were not created overnight and will not be eradicated without consistent, focused and sustained effort. To ensure our ongoing progress we will work to implement our ARAO Blueprint, organized around the 11 Race Equity Practices recommended by the OVOV project. This Blueprint represents a comprehensive plan that puts equity at the centre of everything we do. We will continue to evaluate these efforts to ensure meaningful impact for the children, youth and families we serve.

COVID-19 UPDATE

What a year it has been! When the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic 15 months ago, who would have thought that we would just now be starting to see the end in sight?

As with many organizations, the past year was challenging for the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto as we learned to navigate a landscape of uncertainty and continuous changes while still providing essential child welfare services.

We collaborated with Public Health and learned about Infection Prevention and Control and incorporated these practices into our work, all while creatively developing new means of doing child welfare work in partnership with service recipients. An example of this partnership is our access conferences at which children, youth and their families come together with their support systems, their foster families and the service team – all virtually of course – to develop plans for access that are as safe as possible for all involved.

We focused on the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable communities and on individuals who have experienced adversity and created a guide to providing trauma-informed social, emotional, and material support to help meet basic needs and enhance resiliency. We also focused on the mental health of children, youth and families and provided supports and resources as needed. Many of our service recipients have been disproportionately impacted and we are continuing our journey to address inequity and become trauma-informed.

In addition to focusing on supporting children, youth and families, staff wellness and the impact of secondary trauma was a priority this year, with regular presentations and resources shared with staff and an emphasis on enhancing the resiliency and well-being of service providers. An organizational wellness committee was formed and will be developing and implementing an organizational strategy for mitigating the impact of secondary trauma on the workforce.

We are now in our post pandemic planning phase and are anticipating continuing the focus on how we can help, learning from the experiences of our service recipients and our staff. We can't wait to return to work more "usually". At the same time, we want to build on what we have learned through this experience that we can continue, from virtual bedtime stories between a child in foster care and their parent to virtual Town Halls involving our total staff.

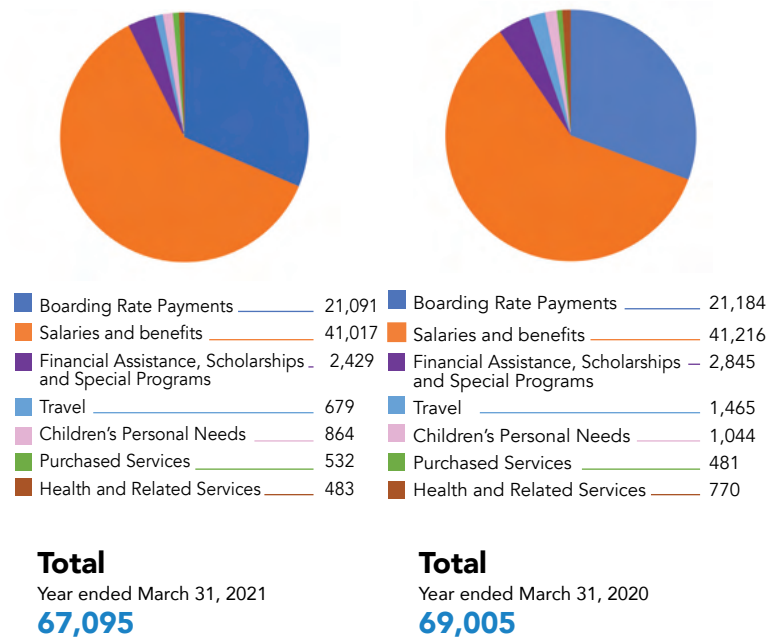
With the decreasing numbers of COVID-19 diagnoses in Ontario and with the increasing numbers of people being vaccinated every day, we are hopeful that we will be in that post pandemic world soon.



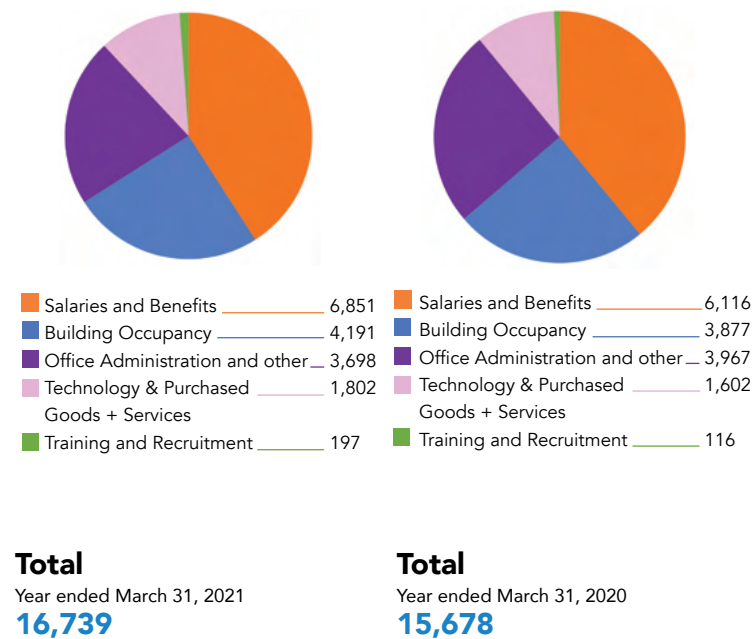
FINANCIALS & STATISTICS

2020-2021 Financials

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES COST (in thousands of dollars)

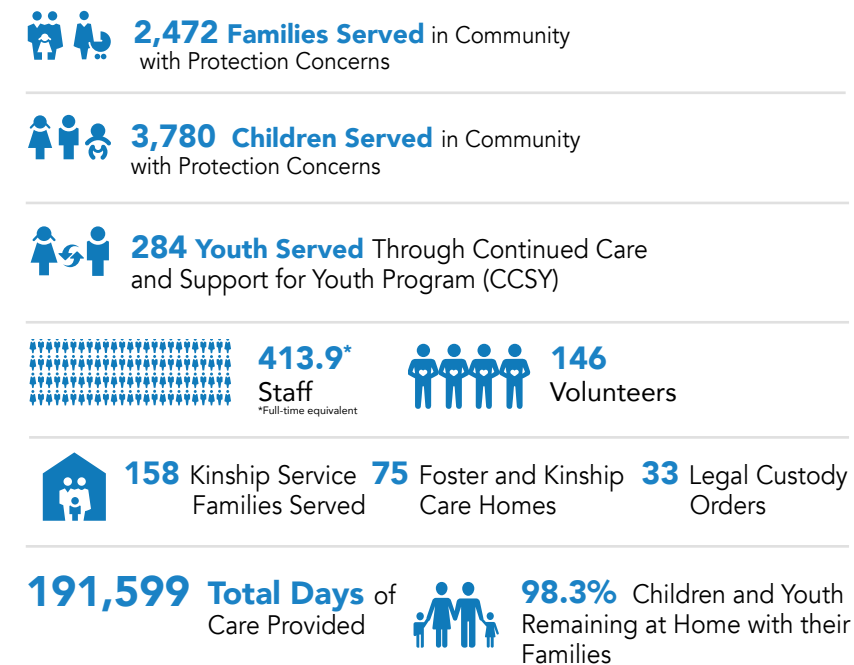


ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS (in thousands of dollars)

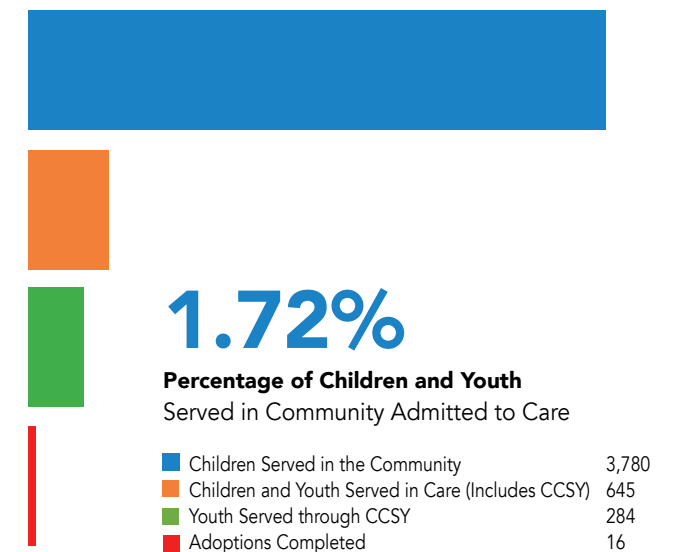


2020-2021 Service Statistics

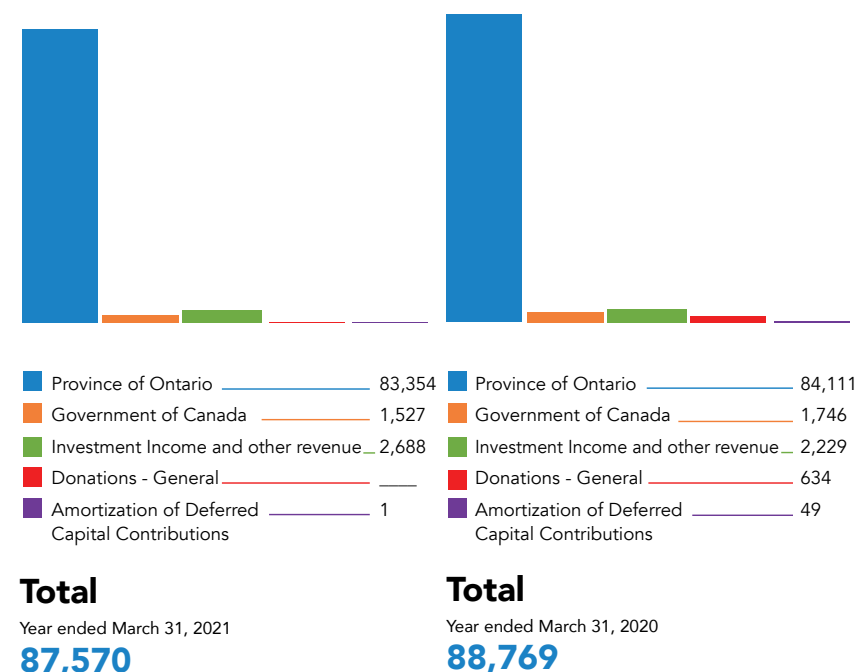
SERVICE



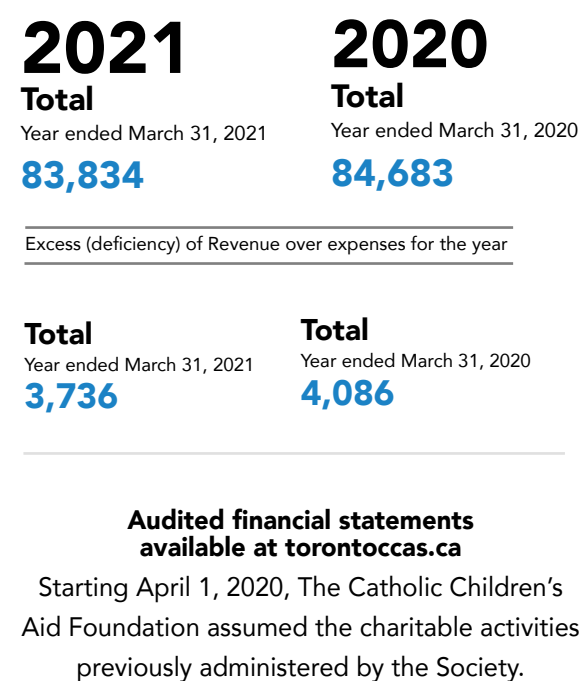
CHILDREN SERVED



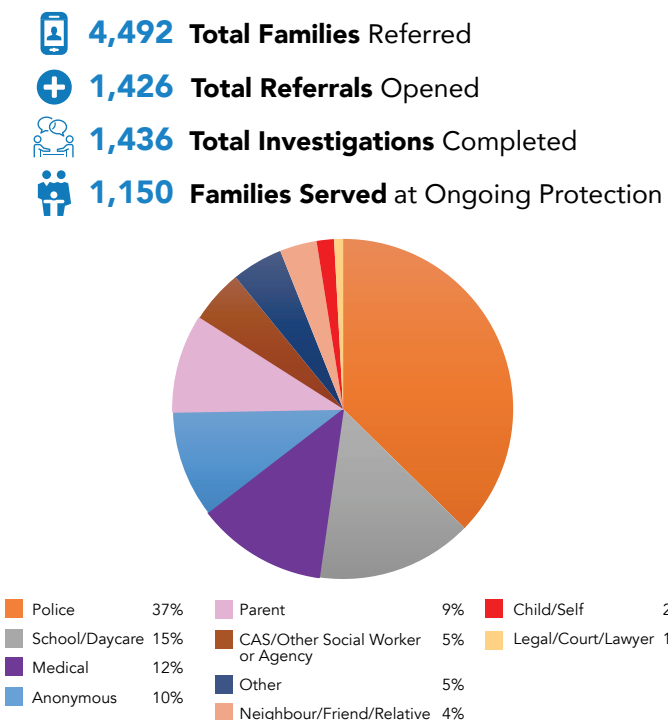
REVENUE (in thousands of dollars)



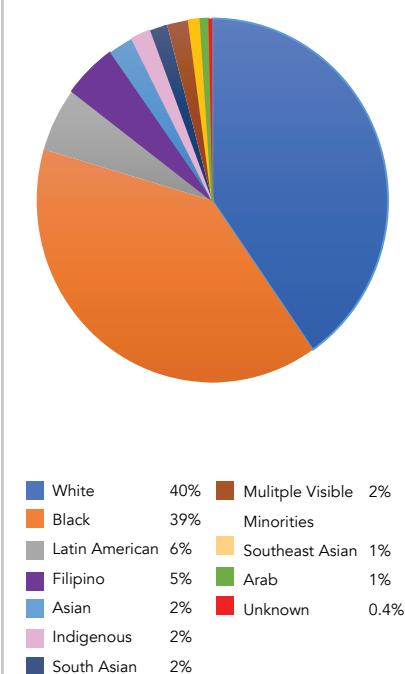
TOTAL COSTS (in thousands of dollars)



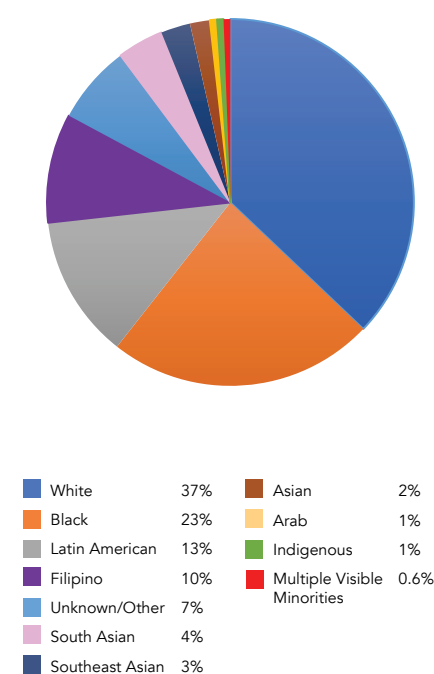
TOTAL REFERRALS INVOLVING PROTECTION



CHILDREN IN CARE BY RACE



INVESTIGATIONS BY RACE OF PRIMARY CAREGIVER





Catholic
Children's Aid
Society of Toronto



Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto

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