



Catholic
Children's Aid
Society of Toronto

ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010



Stronger
Together

Board of Directors

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Cover Story

One of the campaign ads for our province-wide "I Am Your Children's Aid" Public Engagement and Recruitment Campaign features Marian, former CCAS youth in care. As a youth, Marian suffered severe emotional, sexual and physical abuse. She blossomed in our care, and went on to successfully earn a full track scholarship, two Master's Degrees, a career as a Linguist and Speech Therapist, and won the title, Miss Eboness. She is photographed here with her CCAS Child and Youth Worker, Anita Strauss.

To learn more about the campaign, please turn to page five of this report.

Acknowledgment:

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Stronger Together:

Message from the President and Executive Director

During the past year, the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CCAS) has met the protection needs of thousands of vulnerable children in the Catholic community and worked with their families in need, while continuously improving how our services are designed, managed, and delivered to best meet these needs.

Providing child protection services is an intensive process. In 90% of cases, we are able to safely deliver protection services to families while their children remain in the home. While our goal is to provide the right services at the right time, our workers have to balance the time they spend with families with the demands of mandated, case documentation and recording. To reduce the amount of time that workers spend on documentation, the Society has created a project geared towards improving the timeliness and quality of case documentation and emphasizing it as an integral component of social work practice.

CCAS is also piloting a new coaching and mentoring program for our supervisors. We know that the strength of our frontline staff is directly related to the quality of supervision and mentoring they receive. Strong service teams that are inspired and committed achieve the best possible outcomes for our children and youth.

Better outcomes are also at the heart of the new Ontario Child Benefit equivalent (OCBe) funding. More of our children and youth in care are now able to get involved in activities such as dance, craft-making, summer camp or playing in organized sports. Our youth in care, 15-17 years of age, are getting help transitioning out of care thanks to a new savings program to help them plan ahead.

Recent cutbacks in provincial Government funding have left many Children's Aid Societies (CASs) struggling to deliver mandated child

protection services with insufficient funds. These agencies were left with a total funding shortfall of approximately \$28M. While they are expected to deliver the same level of mandated service, some of the affected agencies have cut services to reduce costs, thereby raising concerns about the safety of vulnerable children.

CCAS has exercised restraint and finished the year with a modest deficit. We have implemented a number of service reviews to help improve our service to children and families and identify further efficiencies. CCAS supports the work of the Province's new Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare as it works to assess the delivery of child protection services to diverse communities, and develop strategies to sustain an efficient and effective child protection system.

We are pleased to report that our Hope for Children Foundation, through its Christmas and

Adopt-a-Family Programs, supported over 900 families served and 500 participating donor groups. More than 2,600 children had their wishes come true, thanks to a similar number of donors, who supported the program individually, with their families and friends, or through their employee groups, schools, congregations and day cares.

We wish to thank our foster parents, volunteers, donors, Catholic Charities, and community partners for their involvement in our shared vision.

We also acknowledge the contributions of the volunteer members of our Board of Directors and the achievements of our entire staff who contribute to our ability to protect children and support families of the Catholic community.

Joseph James

The Hon. Joseph James, JD
Board President

Mary A. McConville

Mary A. McConville, MSW, RSW
Executive Director

Strengthening Our Services

New Intake Service Model: Modelling Improved Workflow

Last year, a collaborative group of workers, administrative staff and supervisors from across the agency came together to help design a new Intake Service Model for CCAS. Amalgamating Intake Services will allow the Society to address challenges experienced as a result of volume inequities and fluctuations at each of our four service branches that housed their own Intake Services departments. Centralizing the service will also help improve work flow by establishing service practices that are more efficient and consistent. A Design Committee and Front-line Advisory Work Group facilitated the relocation of Intake staff from four branches to a single location at one of CCAS's existing branches at the Dufferin Mall.

The new Intake Service Model will function as a centralized service while continuing to work seamlessly with family and support services at the rest of our branch offices. A total of 70 staff will provide the following services to the four geographic areas of Toronto:

- » Telephone Intake
- » Investigation and Assessment
- » Community Caregiver Investigations
- » Emergency After-Hours Services
- » Administrative Services
- » Disclosure Services currently located at the Dufferin Mall

Documentation Project

Documentation is a critical tool for workers to track their work with vulnerable children and families. Mandatory documentation standards help guide workers to ensure our service recipients get the services they need when they need them. Mandatory documentation, at various increments during the life of a case tracks the progress and outcomes of children we serve and provides a permanent record of the history of our involvement.

CCAS is completing a three-year project to help workers in the production of timely, quality case recording. Our goal is to influence attitudes towards documentation and to streamline the recording systems that support case recording. Less time spent on recording should also free up workers to spend more time in the community with children and families.

Electronic Case Notes Initiative

One of the ways we are helping front-line workers save time on documentation is by equipping them with the tools to transition from hand-written to electronic case notes. A number of our staff from different service areas participated in pilot-testing cyberpads and digital voice recorders. Electronic case notes reduce the two-step process of note taking to one as we integrate electronic case notes into daily practice across all of our service areas.

Investing in our Front-Line Workers: One Supervisor at a Time!

At CCAS, we believe our workers are our strongest asset. So much so, we recently developed a new coaching and mentoring program expressly for supervisors. Supervisors provide leadership to our service teams and offer guidance and support to workers in their day-to-day practice. Supervisors also mirror casework and documentation best practices with staff. Investing in our supervisors today will strengthen our service delivery to children and families tomorrow!

Strengthening Our Capacity

Volunteers Create Instant Connections

Year after year, CCAS can count on our group of dedicated volunteers to help us maintain community connections, and this year was no different! The Society's 300 volunteers represent more than 42,000 hours of service to our children and families. Our volunteers truly embody the spirit of giving and we are grateful to them for their steadfast support. Volunteers provided the following services to children and families: tutoring, parental respite, mentorship to children and youth, administrative support to staff, and driving children to important medical appointments and access visits.

Miguel Potenciano is one example of how our caring volunteers help us achieve positive service outcomes:

Miguel Potenciano works as a freelance video producer by day, and in his spare time he offers his expertise to our Adoption Department by producing videos of children available for adoption for the bi-annual ARE (Adoption Resource Exchange) Conferences. Child profile videos play a critical role in CCAS's efforts to find permanent homes for children and youth at ARE.

Since 2004, Miguel has dedicated countless, tireless hours sifting through video footage of children talking, eating and playing, looking for visuals that best represent the uniqueness of each child which he uses to create a story about their life. "My goal is to bring the child to life by highlighting the unique characteristics of their personality, so that potential adoptive parents feel as if they know them after watching the video," says Miguel.

In addition to editing, Miguel writes the scripts used for voice-over narration, and has enlisted the help of his business partner, Mike Ryan, to read the narration. He has also trained adoption workers on how to use the video editing software.

"Giving back to my community is a Catholic family value that my parents instilled in me when I was very young, and something I take very seriously," says Miguel.

Volunteer to Make A Difference!

Join the CCAS volunteer community! For more information about volunteering, and the unique and rewarding roles we offer, visit us online at www.torontoccas.org

Expanding Our Birchmount Location to Increase Service Capacity

Last year, our Birchmount offices in Scarborough expanded significantly to accommodate more than 150 staff and volunteers from Foster Care, Adoption and Kinship Services, Family Services, and Child and Youth Services.

This multi-service branch increases accessibility and effectiveness by bringing cross-functional departments under the same roof to provide a continuum of service to children, youth, families, and foster parents. It also provides an opportunity for services to become more visible in the community. The expansion included the construction of a new Youth Room where children and youth can relax, chat with their workers, and use the computer to search for affordable housing and jobs.

"The office space is bright, cheerful and functional. Sharing the space with other service teams provides us with the opportunity to have better communication about shared cases. Meetings are easier to arrange, and we can develop better working relationships with our colleagues to help us gain a better understanding of our different roles."

—Elaine Forrester,
Supervisor – Adoption and Disclosure Services



LINDA
Foster Mom

"I Am Your Children's Aid."



Don't tell me Children's Aid isn't effective! I remember a young girl who'd been with us two years when one of my sons referred to her as 'his sister.' She ran sobbing into the kitchen and hid under the table. I got under there with her. She felt like she'd never belonged anywhere—ever. Today this young woman has a stack of awards and volunteers in Tanzania, Trinidad and Ghana. She's determined to give back."

—Linda Weseloh,
CCAS Foster Mother

Engaging the Public

We are proud to be your Catholic Children's Aid Society, and that is why we have partnered with Ontario's Children's Aid Societies (CASs), to share personal, and authentic stories about former youth in care, foster parents, families and workers in a new province-wide public engagement and recruitment campaign called, "I Am Your Children's Aid."

Our goal is to engage community members to foster and/or adopt and advocate for the well-being of children and youth. The campaign also acts as a recruitment tool for CASs to attract volunteers and supporters to our work.

Two of the campaign ads proudly feature Marian, former CCAS youth in care, and Linda Weseloh, CCAS foster mother.

As a youth, Marian suffered severe emotional, sexual and physical abuse. She blossomed in our care, and went on to successfully earn a full track scholarship, two Master's Degrees, a career as a Linguist and Speech Therapist, and won the title, Miss Ebonyess.

Linda Weseloh has fostered many children from developing countries, including Marian, and offered them a second chance at a happy childhood and a loving home.

Their stories illustrate the role of CCAS in the community, the passion and dedication involved in our work, and the way that we can help transform lives.

Get Involved with Our Campaign!

- » Distribute campaign posters to organizations in your community and encourage them to take an active role in the campaign. Call us at 416-395-1500 for posters
- » Go to: www.youtube.com/user/yourchildrensaid to view the ads and Email the videos to your family and friends!
- » Twitter: follow our_children on twitter.com and send Tweets to: @our_children

Building Community

CCAS Community Partner Honoured with Stand Up for Kids Award

During October's Child Abuse Prevention Month, Toronto's Children's Aid Societies and the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Laurel Broten honoured local hero, Glory Chowtie, and community organization, The Gatehouse at the seventh annual Stand Up for Kids Award in recognition of their actions to help protect children from abuse and neglect.

Glory Chowtie was celebrated for intervening to save a newborn baby from exposure one frigid February morning, and The Gatehouse was recognized for its ongoing support to abused children and adult victims of childhood abuse. CCAS proudly nominated The Gatehouse for providing exceptional support and services to Toronto's survivors of child abuse.

The Gatehouse offers a safe, child-friendly, non-threatening environment where children can disclose abuse to child welfare workers and police. Adult survivors of abuse can receive counselling services to help get through painful memories of abuse, including mentoring which helps them deal with isolation and other abuse-related issues. The Gatehouse also works with victim's families to provide support and guidance.

Responding Together to Help Protect Women and Children from Domestic Violence

Last year, 10% of opened cases at CCAS presented a moderate to severe risk of emotional harm to a child because of exposure to domestic violence. In response to the need, a team of Child Protection Workers at our Toronto Branch developed an eight-week long series of workshops in English and Spanish for women on their caseloads who are impacted by domestic violence. These domestic violence workshops included information about different types of abuse, women's rights in Canada, legal aid, custody, family court, and immigration services. An entire day was dedicated to the developmental impact on children who are exposed to woman abuse. Mothers learned how to look and listen for cues signalling these negative effects in children's crying and behaviour, in addition to the importance of attachment and bonding with their child. There was also a significant spiritual and critical self-reflection component to the sessions. "Empowering women with knowledge and increasing their self-esteem so that they can protect themselves and their children was the main objective of these workshops," according to Lori Neidra, workshop organizer and Child Protection Worker.

The sessions resonated for many participants, including Maria, a service recipient. "It was very informative. I learned that there are so many forms of abuse, and that it's not just physical. I also learned that I was experiencing abuse, and didn't even know it," she says.

Building Community Connections

Our Speakers Bureau is an important way of connecting with our community to prevent child abuse and raise awareness about how we work to keep children safe. Whether self-initiated or in response to requests, our dedicated staff volunteers make presentations to teachers, police, day care providers, other service organizations, and members of the community. Topics include learning the signs of abuse, the duty to report abuse, how CCAS works with referral sources to protect children, and how we help strengthen families to keep children safe.

Some of the organizations served during the past year included:

- » **Community Organizations:**
Presentations for Silent Voices, a camp for deaf children, Mothercraft and Breaking the Cycle, community organizations for single mothers impacted by abuse.
- » **Multi-cultural:**
Spanish-speaking workshops for the Jane-Finch Spanish Community Group. Workshops at Centre Francophone for parents in the French community.
- » **Educational Institutions:**
Numerous presentations about child abuse indicators to students in Toronto Catholic District School Board schools and ESL classes. Career day presentations at elementary schools and universities, including St. Joseph and Michael Power Schools.
- » **Parishes:**
Special presentations to 10 Toronto parishes about the need for Catholic foster parents in Toronto.

Strengthening Our Children's Well-Being

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness-Raising Campaign

In Canada, one in 100 children are born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) each year. The impact of alcohol during prenatal growth can cause irreversible brain damage, including intellectual deficits and learning disabilities, and hyperactivity and damage to the central nervous system. There is no cure for FASD.

CCAS organized a variety of initiatives to mark National FASD Awareness Day on September 9, 2009. The first FASD Awareness Day was celebrated on 9/9/99. This day was chosen so that on the ninth day of the ninth month of the year, the world will be reminded that during the nine months of pregnancy a woman should abstain from alcohol.

We joined other Toronto child welfare staff and volunteers by holding a ninety-second Pregnant Pause at the corner of Avenue Road and Bloor Street, in front of the Royal Ontario Museum. We also offered awareness-raising information throughout the week to community members. Our in-house designed poster and information cards provided key information to visitors, while our FASD consultant led several information sessions for staff and caregivers. A daily online quiz to test staff knowledge about FASD enhanced our efforts to dispel myths and correct perceptions about FASD.

Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent (OCBe): Helping Improve Outcomes for Children and Youth

Starting in July 2009, OCBe, a new funding enhancement introduced by the government has enabled us to supplement children's basic needs. The OCBe Activities / Opportunity Fund provides children and youth in care (0-17 years old) the option of participating in recreational, educational, cultural, and social activities which support higher educational success, resiliency, social skills and relationship development. The OCBe Savings Fund provides youth in care who are 15-17 years old the benefit of a savings program that can help pay for housing or education after they leave foster care. Youth can only access these funds after they turn 18. Thanks to the new savings plan, youth leaving care are required to obtain financial literacy training to help them budget and manage their money more effectively.

"I think youth transitioning into independent living feel more financially secure. The extra money boosts their self-esteem and makes them feel more confident in taking that next step."

—Annie Kronic, CCAS Protection Worker

Extended Care and Maintenance (ECM): Bridging Transitions

When CCAS youth turn 18, they are legally considered to be adults and CCAS no longer has guardianship over them. Extended Care and Maintenance (ECM) is an important tool that bridges their transition to adulthood by providing additional support to youth between the ages of 18 and 21.

An ECM contract is mutually-agreed upon to identify ongoing support from CCAS. It may include educational/vocational/employment programming, medical, dental and financial support, and any other issues related to the youth's circumstances. It allows youth to keep connected with their worker, and to continue receiving guidance and counselling as required.

This year, 271 CCAS youth opted for ECM.

Strengthening Our Children's Future

Scholarships Give Youth a Chance at their Dreams

Nearly 100 of our youth moved one step closer to achieving their educational aspirations by receiving scholarships valued at more than \$195,000 from the Hope for Children Foundation. The Hope for Children Foundation's Scholarship Program provides vital emotional and financial support needed by our youth in care to pursue an education. The recent economic climate has made it difficult for students to access summer jobs to help pay for their post-secondary education. Our Foundation donors have stepped up and responded to this growing need.

Former Crown Ward David Horvath attributes part of his success to the Scholarship Program. "The Scholarship Program gave me what I needed to follow my dreams and achieve my goals. I would not be where I am today without this support." David graduated from the Pre-Health and Science Program at George Brown College and is now studying to be a paramedic through the Paramedics Program at Humber College.

Hope for Children Team Spirit In Motion

Team spirit and a passion for kids brought 172 Hope for Children Foundation supporters to the streets of Toronto for the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon last fall to run and walk in support of child abuse prevention programs.

CCAS employees, foster caregivers, youth, family, friends, donors, and volunteers raised more than \$40,000 in pledges and fundraising events—making it the most successful event ever! A special thanks to our organizing committee of CCAS staff and volunteers, who did an incredible job of promoting the event in our workplace and in the community.

Thanks to community support, children and youth receive critical assistance from the Hope for Children Foundation through post-secondary scholarships, enhancement grants, poverty relief grants, and support for youth transitioning to independent living.

MISSION

The Hope for Children Foundation raises funds to support programs that strive to create strong and healthy futures for children, youth and families served by the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto.

The Foundation provides funding for:

- » Enhancing children's lives through funding summer camp, sports and arts
- » Emergency assistance to families in crisis
- » Christmas Adopt-a-Family
- » Education advocacy and counselling to school-aged children and youth
- » Post-secondary scholarships
- » Special recognition for academic achievement
- » Sacramental preparation and spiritual development
- » Job training, employment support, and housing solutions for youth leaving foster care to independent living

Get involved

Find out how your participation benefits our children and youth

Donate on-line

Get your tax receipt instantly through our quick, secure and easy online tools

www.hopeforchildren.ca

CCAS Service Statistics

Children & Families Served

Total Children Served: 23,451

In Their Own Home: 22,010

In Care: 1,441

On Extended Care & Maintenance: 271

Total Days of Children in Care: 389,343

Total Families Served: 9,171

Investigations

Investigations Completed: 3,195

Adoption & Foster Care Services

Adoptions Completed: 45

Adoption Disclosures Completed: 205

Other Disclosure Services: 446

CCAS Foster Homes: 179

CCAS Group Homes: 13

Top 5 Categories for Opening Cases

Physical or Sexual Harm: 32%

Neglect: 11%

Emotional Harm: 30%

Abandonment/Separation: 7%

Caregiver Capacity: 20%

Referral Source

Number for 09/10

% of Referrals

Police	1419	20.8%
School/Principal/Teacher/School Social Worker	955	14.0%
Other CAS	908	13.3%
CAS Worker/Supervisor/Care Provider	639	9.4%
Social Agency	550	8.1%
Birth Parent	542	8.0%
Other	501	7.4%
Medical	323	4.7%
Anonymous	247	3.6%
Relative	191	2.8%
Legal/Court/Lawyer	159	2.3%
Neighbour/Friend	154	2.3%
Child/Self	108	1.6%
Daycare	81	1.2%
Unknown	39	0.6%
Agency Total	6816	100.00%

CCAS Financial Statement*

(in thousands of dollars)

Revenue	Year Ended March 31, 2010	Year Ended March 31, 2009
Province of Ontario	\$98,555	\$98,068
Government of Canada	2,661	2,806
Hope for Children Foundation	411	445
Other	1,077	1,133
Total	\$102,704	\$102,452
Child and Family Services		
Boarding Rate Payments	\$37,866	\$38,971
Salaries and Benefits	43,231	42,509
Travel	2,767	2,713
Children's Personal Needs	2,242	2,151
Health and Related Services	1,217	1,288
Purchased Services	648	2,176
Financial Assistance and Special Programs	629	676
Total	\$88,600	\$90,484
Administrative Expenses		
Salaries and Benefits	\$6,706	\$6,108
Building Occupancy	3,656	2,363
Office Administration and other	2,024	2,235
Technology and Purchased Goods and Services	1,558	1,218
Training and Recruitment	206	392
Total	\$14,150	\$12,316
Total Costs	\$102,750	\$102,800
Deficiency of revenue over expenses for the year	(46)	(348)
Accumulated deficit, beginning of year	(826)	(478)
Funding for prior year deficit	348	–
Accumulated deficit, end of year	(524)	(826)



* This is a condensed statement. Full financial statements, audited by Ernst and Young LLP, are available upon request.

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Toronto, Ontario M6H 4B1

Scarborough Branch

Foster Care, Adoption & Kinship Services

Child & Youth Services

1880 Birchmount Road
Toronto, Ontario M1P 2J7

Etobicoke Branch

5230 Dundas Street West, Suite 1
Toronto, Ontario M9B 1A8

MISSION

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.

WE VALUE

- Human dignity.
- The courage and integrity to take a stand.
- Partnership and teamwork.
- Cultural, racial and individual differences.
- Professional excellence.