

## **Questions or Complaints**

The Society is committed to providing services that are helpful to children and families. At the same time, the agency must comply with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the laws governing children's aid societies and children in the care of a children's aid society.

If there is a concern with regard to the services being provided, the agency will do its best to resolve the issue. Parents can contact child protection staff directly with questions, concerns or for clarification. If this does not resolve the issue, parents can contact the child protection worker's supervisor. In the event that a resolution cannot be found, parents have access to a formal complaints procedure by completing the electronic Formal Complaint To A Society's Internal Complaints Review Panel (ICRP) Form. The form is available at the agency, on the agency's website at [www.hamiltoncas.com/resolving-service-complaints](http://www.hamiltoncas.com/resolving-service-complaints), by visiting the Ministry's website at [www.children.gov.on.ca](http://www.children.gov.on.ca) or through the Ontario Central Forms Repository at [www.forms.ssb.gov.on.ca](http://www.forms.ssb.gov.on.ca).

Any feedback regarding programs and services received is always welcome. In order to continually assess and enhance services, the agency also conducts client feedback surveys by mail.

Children and youth with a complaint or concern regarding a children's aid society, foster home or group home may contact the Ontario Child Advocate at 1-800-263-2841 (toll free) or visit [www.provincialadvocate.on.ca](http://www.provincialadvocate.on.ca).



The Children's Aid Society  
OF HAMILTON  
La Société d'aide à l'enfance  
DE HAMILTON

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## **WORKING TOGETHER**



### **OUR MISSION**

The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton, in partnership with families and our community, is committed to the safety, protection, and well-being of children and the strengthening of families, while valuing diversity and promoting equity.

Serving  
Hamilton's  
children  
& families  
since  
1894



## ABOUT US

The Children's Aid Society (CAS) of Hamilton was established in 1894 as a not-for-profit organization focused on ensuring the well-being and protection of children. The Society is funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and mandated under Ontario's *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* (CYFSA) to protect children under 18 years of age from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and harm.

The Society is committed to ensuring that a child, youth and family's culture, race, Indigeneity, religion, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and ability are integrated in our services and practices. Trained child welfare staff are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to respond to concerns about the safety and well-being of children and youth.

## OUR MANDATE

The Society is mandated to fulfill the following requirements:

- Investigate allegations that children and youth under 18 years of age may be in need of protection;
- Provide guidance, counseling, and other services to families to protect children or to prevent circumstances requiring the protection of children;
- Provide safe temporary or extended care for children who are unable to remain in their home;
- Ensure the needs of children assigned to its supervision are met;
- Place children for adoption.

**OUR VISION:**  
A community  
where every child is  
a gift to be valued,  
nurtured, and  
kept safe.

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### ***A child's rights include:***

- Living free from neglect and physical, sexual or emotional abuse;
- Having adequate shelter, food and clothing;
- Receiving proper supervision and being nurtured in a way that encourages positive personal growth;
- Receiving necessary medical and dental treatment;
- The right to be raised by, know and develop relationships with members of their family, unless it is found by the Society or the Family Court that this is harmful to the child;
- Respect of their individuality, including ability, sexual orientation and gender identification.

### ***Parents are responsible for the following:***

- Providing healthy food, clothing and safe housing for their child(ren);
- Supervising their child(ren) including teens (up to age 16) living outside the home. Parents need to make all efforts to know where their teens are and ensure they are safe;
- Ensuring their child(ren) receives medical or dental care when needed;
- Protecting their child(ren) from possible physical, sexual or emotional harm by another person, including a partner;
- Protecting their child(ren) from being exposed to violence between adults.

## OVERSIGHT & ACCOUNTABILITY

The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton has a volunteer Board of Directors that is accountable for the agency's overall functioning and finances. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, the Ontario Ombudsman, and the Child and Family Services Review Board are government bodies that provide oversight to all child protection agencies in the province.

## **OUR VALUES:**

### Children

- Children developing to their full potential within a safe and healthy environment
- Positive, permanent relationships for children and youth

### Families

- The essential role of family in the lives of children

### Partnerships

- Respectful communication and collaboration with children, families, agency colleagues and community

### Quality Service

- Personal integrity
- Pursuit of professional excellence
- Progressive approach to service delivery
- Effective and efficient use of resources





### WORKING WITH 16 AND 17 YEAR OLD YOUTH

The Duty to Report outlined in the CYFSA does not apply to 16 and 17 year old youth.

A different service approach is required for this age group to

provide protection services and encourage their participation in voluntary service. The goal in working with this age group is to provide youth the opportunity to receive the support they need to reach their full potential and have better outcomes as they transition to adulthood.

### WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS FAMILIES

The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton is guided by the knowledge and expertise of Indigenous leaders and organizations in the Hamilton community as we continue on the path towards Truth and Reconciliation. The Society is committed to finding ways for Indigenous children to be cared for by their community and to ensure all staff at the Society receive training on Indigenous Ways of Being and Knowing.

### CARING FOR KIDS AS A COMMUNITY

Ontario's *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 (CYFSA)* serves to promote the best interests, protection, and well-being of children. While provincial law gives children's aid societies the exclusive responsibility to investigate concerns about the safety and well-being of children and youth under 18, and provide child protection services, CASs cannot carry out this mandated work alone. Caring for children is a community responsibility.

CASs work closely with many service providers in the community to provide support and service to help families thrive and keep children safe. All community members have a duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect. CASs also rely on individuals in the community to become kin, foster and adoptive families, to volunteer as tutors or drivers, or participate on Boards of Directors.

### KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

Hamilton CAS believes that children should grow up in their own homes whenever possible. As such, the agency's primary focus is working with families to address concerns and resolve issues that impact on a child's safety and well-being. In some instances, it is determined that it is in the child's best interest to reside outside of the family home for a period of time, until some of the concerns can be addressed and the safety of the child ensured. In this situation, discussion with the parents about placement occurs, and whenever possible, placement with family or a friend is considered.

**In 97% of investigations, child protection services are provided while the child or youth lives with their family.**

### DUTY TO REPORT

As per *Section 125 of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, anyone, including professionals who work with children, who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must promptly report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to a children's aid society.

When a call is received by a children's aid society regarding a potential risk to a child's safety and well-being, an authorized child protection worker (CPW) will answer the call. The CPW will assess a situation and ask many detailed questions to gather as much information as possible. A call does not always result in an investigation.

Depending on the nature of a reported concern, there may be telephone contact between a family and the Society. Where concerns about the safety and well-being of a child exist, Ministry standards state that a CPW must see the child within a specific period of time based on the severity of the concern.



The Society must keep accurate records of all contacts with children and their families to document activity and collect important information to help the children and families we serve. All records are confidential and disclosure of their contents are strictly regulated.



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ***Q. Will CAS take my children away?***

**A.** The Society strives to keep children living with their families whenever possible. If it is determined that a child is unsafe, or if a family indicates that they need help parenting their child, the Society will seek a suitable relative or community member to provide a safe and nurturing temporary living arrangement. If this is not possible, children will be placed in a foster home, group home or other residence depending on their specific needs. Often, placements are short-term as the Society works with parents to address concerns.

### ***Q. Does the Society take cultural differences in parenting behavior/ cultural background of families into consideration when making assessments?***

**A.** Yes. The agency recognizes that people of all cultures want what is best for their children. The Society is committed to raising awareness of cultural differences and is working in partnership with other children's aid societies and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies to improve services to diverse communities in particular the black and Indigenous communities who have been

marginalized by the system in the past.

Child protection workers are trained and provided with resources to ensure that cultural differences are taken into consideration when completing assessments.

### ***Q. Is it true that CAS workers receive rewards for placing children in foster care?***

**A.** No. Neither the CAS nor the child protection worker receives a financial reward for bringing children into care. The CAS only receives the required funding to meet the needs of children such as room and board, medical and dental care, and clothing.

### ***Q. When children are deemed unsafe at home, can they be placed with family or friends instead of foster care?***

**A.** Yes. The Society's primary goal is to promote the best interests of children, ensuring their safety and well-being while supporting the integrity of the family whenever possible. As such, when a child cannot remain in their family home, the option of placement with family or friends is always considered first.

In all situations, best efforts are made to consider the needs of the child and ensure a minimal amount of disruption. The process of placing a child with family or friends is referred to as kinship services. The CAS works with many families who have temporary kinship caregivers for their children.

### ***Q. Is it illegal to spank a child?***

**A.** It is important to ask what is meant by "spanking". Although the Criminal Code of Canada allows for caregivers to use "reasonable force" to punish their children, corporal punishment is not condoned by children's aid societies (CAS).

It is the position of the CAS that other forms of discipline are more successful in managing children's behaviour and do not increase risks of physical and/or emotional harm. In 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld the law which allows parents to use "reasonable force", however, set out some guidelines as to "reasonable" acts versus acts that are considered unacceptable or harmful to children.

#### *Unreasonable force means that:*

a) Given the limits of their cognitive

development, corporal punishment for children under the age of two is not reasonable and is harmful to them as it has no corrective value;

b) Corporal punishment of teenagers is not reasonable and is harmful because it can induce aggressive or anti-social behaviour;

c) It is not reasonable to use implements or objects such as belts, straps, or rulers, etc., due to the physical and emotional harm the use of such objects cause;

d) It is not reasonable to strike a child on their face or head due to the harm these physical acts can cause; and,

e) Corporal punishment must not be inhumane or degrading or harmful and there must be no lasting bodily harm (including bruises).

#### *Reasonable force means that:*

a) A parent can only use "minor corrective force of a transient and trifling nature";

b) Corporal punishment must be for "educational" or "corrective" purposes and not be motivated by anger, frustration, or abusiveness; and,

c) Inflicting corporal punishment must be limited to the use of the open hand.