

Annual Service Plan Review and Update 2022-23

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Introduction

The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton (Hamilton CAS), in partnership with families and our community, is committed to the safety, protection and well-being of children and supporting families by building on their strengths while valuing diversity and promoting equity. The agency has operated for 128 years and continues to evolve to meet community and provincial needs with a vision that every child in the community is a gift to be valued, nurtured, and kept safe.

In 2019, Hamilton CAS approved a five-year strategic vision. The strategic vision provides a blueprint for leading the Society through 2024. This document "Service Plan Review and Update: 2022-2023" highlights our priorities, objectives, and Strategic goals and lays out how the Society is working towards the goals within the current provincial landscape.

This document is comprised of two sections:

1. Context
2. Priorities, Objectives, and Strategic Goals

How do we measure progress?

Progress on strategic goals and objectives will be reported to the board twice a year.

Key performance indicators will be reported to the board in September.

The measurement and progress on key performance indicators will aid in the evaluation of progress towards identified objectives and will be used to inform further refinement of objectives over time to respond to the changing context and current progress.

Context

Demographics

The Children's Aid Society of Hamilton provides child welfare services to the amalgamated City of Hamilton which consists of both urban and rural landscapes comprised of 1,138 km². The socio-demographic composition of the City of Hamilton provides the context within which services are provided to families and underscores the complexity of the families we serve. The City of Hamilton has two Children's Aid Societies: Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton and the Children's Aid Society of Hamilton.

Population

- The 2021 Census found that 569,355 people lived in Hamilton. This represents an increase of 6% over the five-year period from 2016 to 2021.
- Approximately 28% (just under 160,000) of those living in Hamilton are aged 0–24.

Indigenous Identity and Racialized Population

- 3% of Hamilton's 0–24-year-old population identified as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis.
- Hamilton continues to see a rise in the diversity of its population and the younger the population, the more diverse it is.
- 34% of 0–24-year-old Hamiltonians identified as racialized. The racialized population made up 22% of the population in 2011.
- In 2021, racialized 0–24-year-olds included those who identified as Black (9%), South Asian (8%), and Arab (5%).

Immigration

- Immigrants comprise about a quarter of the total population of Hamilton,¹(26%), with 6% having arrived within the last 10 years.
- Hamilton has become a major Canadian destination for those moving to Canada and has been a designated Sanctuary City since 2014².

Language

- 83% of residents in Hamilton speak English most often at home and 71% had English identified as their first language. Arabic (2.2%) Italian (2.2%), Spanish (1.8%) rounded out other most used languages in Hamilton.

Income and Education

- The median after-tax income of Hamilton households in 2020 was \$74,500.
- 37% of the population of the City of Hamilton between ages 25 and 64 in 2021 have a high school (equivalent education) or less, with 12% between these ages having not graduated high school or any other post-secondary institution.

¹ [According to the 2021 Census dictionary, "Immigrant" refers to persons who are, or who have ever been, landed immigrants or permanent residents. Such persons have been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this category.](#)

² [Hamilton to become 'sanctuary city' for newcomers who fear deportation \(thespec.com\)](#)

Poverty, Food and Housing Insecurity

- Using the low-income after-tax measure in the 2021 census, 13% of children under 18 in Hamilton live in low-income households. This is higher than the provincial (12%) and national (12%) averages for children under 18.
- A smaller proportion of those under 18 lived in low-income households in 2021 as compared to 2016 when 21% of those under 18 lived in low-income households. Statistics Canada says after-tax income growth was faster for households with lower incomes, reflecting greater contributions of the Canada Child Benefit and pandemic relief benefits to the incomes of lower-income families in 2020.³
- In February 2023, there were approximately 1500 people experiencing homelessness in Hamilton.⁴
- In March 2023, approximately 6% of Hamilton's population including about 9,000 children accessed foodbanks through Hamilton Food Share⁵
- In April 2023, the City of Hamilton declared a state of emergency related to homelessness, opioid addiction, and mental health.
- In July 2023, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Hamilton was \$2,298.⁶

2022-23 is the third consecutive year in which service volumes remained below 2019-20 volumes. However, there have been shifts in the reasons for investigations. For example, investigations due to caregiver addiction, mental health, or developmental disability made up 19% of cases pre-pandemic. This trended up to 23% in 2020-21, 22% in 2021-22, and 20% in 2022-23. Investigations for caregiver/child conflict increased from 3% in 2019-20 to 5% in 2020-21, to 7% in 2021-22, to 8% in 2022-23. Physical force/maltreatment investigations, by contrast, have decreased since the pandemic began from 20% in 2019-20 to 14% in 2021-22 and 15% in 2022-23.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have seen a significant increase in admissions to care for caregiver-child conflict/child behaviour. In 2022-23, the average age of these youth was 14 years. With this being an older population, it is more difficult to find Society foster care placements, and 43% were placed in OPR foster, 7% in OPR group care, and 30% lived independently. For 7% of these youth, a short-term, unlicensed hotel was used because there was no licensed placement available. Hamilton CAS continues to experience a lack of residential resources and other community supports, including a lack of residential placements with appropriate resources to support the complex needs of youth, and staffing challenges at residences in our community.

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services' (MCCSS) directive that all youth in Continued Care and Support for Youth (CCSY) continue to receive service rather than aging out of care at 21 remained in effect in 2022-23. As a result, 74 youth remained on CCSY beyond their 21st birthday. Excluding youth over the age of 18, as of March 31, 2023, there were 206 children in care, which is a reduction from 239 the previous year. Beginning in April 2023, with the introduction of MCCSS's Ready Set Go Program, youth will now have services of the Society maintained until the age of 23.

³ [Household after-tax income rises and income inequality declines, says new census data | CBC News](#)

⁴ [Hamilton becomes latest Ontario city to declare state of emergency over homelessness, other crises | CBC News](#)

⁵ [Nearly six per cent of Hamilton's population fed by food banks | TheSpec.com](#)

⁶ [Average rent for one-bedroom apartments in Hamilton up by more than 15 per cent from last year \(thespec.com\)](#)

Strategic Vision 2019-2024

Priorities, Objectives, and Strategic Goals: 2022-2023 Year in Review

The Society has identified six priority areas of focus to guide our journey over a five-year period. Our priorities and strategic goals will support us in achieving our vision for the Society and provide a map of what we aim to do and how we aim to do it. In 2022-23, 39 goals were set across the six priority areas (see Appendix). Key achievements for each priority are presented.

Priority 1: Safety and Well-being

Children and youth safety and well-being will be increased within the family through good assessment and planning, capacity building and accessing the assets of the family itself and their community.

Objectives

- a. Shared understanding with others of how we can best contribute to supporting families in the community
- b. Increased capacity of families to provide for their children in their own home and reduce the risk of need for protection through early help and support by CAS and by accessing help from others
- c. Services and other interactions with ethno-specific and linguistic communities reflect well-informed and appropriate practices including with Afro-Canadian and Indigenous people and organizations

Key Achievements

In 2022-23, we increased the identification of families' safety support networks to support children and youth at home or in their community, and in response we have continued to see a reduction in admissions to care. As of March 31, 2023, there were 206 children (aged 0-17) in care, which is a reduction from 239 the previous year. The identification of a family's safety support network helps us to understand who the family has outside of professional relationships that will be lasting supports in a child or youth's life. This work is being further defined and implemented through the Society's Collaborative Family Engagement work. The identification of family safety support networks will continue as a priority area of focus next year and will include a built-in evaluation and accountability framework.

The Society's foundational work to develop an early help and intervention service approach has included several key evidence-informed activities, including a jurisdictional scan conducted by a working group to identify and assess early help models implemented in other jurisdictions. Using data collected as part of the Society's implementation of Collaborative Family Engagement, the working group also identified areas of pressure that may be a good place to start. A proposal for a pilot initiative was presented to the Director of Service group. The goal of the Family Preservation initiative is to keep children safely with their caregivers, family and community. The Family Preservation initiative will aim to provide a rapid response process to learn more about the family's network in order to have children remain safety at home or safely return to their family, kin or community as quickly as possible. The rapid response will be initiated at one of two entry points: when a child is at imminent risk of coming into care or after a child comes into the care of the Society. With some additional refinement, this initiative will form the basis of a six-month early help and prevention pilot initiative to be implemented next year.

The Society has continued to demonstrate considerable success in our efforts to find safety solutions in lieu of going to court. In April of 2020 the Society had 129 active child welfare court applications. As of the end of March 2023, the Society had 58 active child welfare court applications. Steps taken to achieve this outcome include:

- Implementation of an Integrated Legal Service Model that brings Legal and Service closer together to work collaboratively on the outcomes we are seeking.
- Ongoing focus by service teams and workers on providing service in a way that creates family engagement and supports families and communities to create safety plans for their children.
- Increasing the support that Society lawyers provide to workers about the preliminary service steps expected by the Society.
- Requiring Service Director approval for a service team to present a plan to commence court proceedings to a lawyer for a legal consult.
- Greater use of Temporary Care Agreements.
- Data collection and monthly sharing of data in relation to ongoing court applications to keep the number of court applications front of mind amongst service and legal staff.

We have continued our focus on equity training for staff across all levels of the organization. In 2022-23 all active staff have completed the mandatory Equity in Child Welfare Training offered through the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. Moving forward, all new staff will attend this training within their first three months of hire. Over the past year the Society continued to offer mandatory Honouring Relationships training to staff at all levels of the organization and the majority of active staff (86%) have participated. The Mohawk Institute Residential School Tour continues to be offered twice a year.

Relationship building with key community partners remains a priority for the Society. These relationships focus on supporting families earlier and reducing the need for more intrusive protection services. Significant work continued in 2022-23 with Empowerment Squared including a community engagement event designed to gather feedback on the work to-date and to continue to build supports that reflect the needs of the community. Over the past year we also increased engagement efforts with police, the children's mental health sector as well as a local children's hospital, the 2SLGBTQ+ community, Jewish Family services, and Addictions and Mental health partners. This work is grounded in a community approach and appreciation that the responsibility for child welfare belongs to all community members. Our work with Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC) also continued. We refer Indigenous families working with the Society to HRIC and HRIC provides service with the goal of supporting Indigenous children and youth in their own homes or assisting with reintegration back home or in their community. Program gaps identified will be a focus for the 2023-24 year, including increasing referrals made to HRIC from teams other than the Society's specialized Indigenous team. Upcoming efforts will also focus on improving the referral form, increasing communication between the Society's front-line workers and HRIC staff and obtaining feedback from service recipients about their experiences.

Priority 2: Permanency and Potential

Enable children and youth in care to find permanency and reach their full potential.

Objectives:

- a. Children in care safely transition to a permanent and stable out-of-care arrangement as soon as possible following admission
- b. Children in care are most often served in family-based settings as close to their homes as possible
- c. Improved educational achievement for all children and youth in care
- d. Plans and decisions are fully informed by youth voice and their input is reflected in service
- e. All transition-aged youth receiving service get the supports they need to reach their full potential as adults

Key Achievements

A Youth Advisory Council was established in October 2022 and is comprised of youth who are currently or formerly in the care of Hamilton CAS. The council meets bi-weekly on Tuesday evenings and is usually attended by 6-10 youth who range in age from 16-24. The youth are using their voice to provide feedback to the Society to implement child and youth centered change related to how to interview youth, how to bring their voice into plans of care, and feedback on recent MCCSS initiatives such as Ready Set Go. The Youth Advisory Council was instrumental in planning a Holiday event in December 2022, and a Youth in Care day event that will be held in May of 2023. The youth have shared that they feel they have built community within the group. Many of the members shared that they have found a level of support and understanding within the group that they cannot get anywhere else. The Youth identified really enjoyed having multiple guests join the group as it has given them an opportunity to share their voices and feel like they can make change within the system. The youth have also enjoyed the social times spent together playing games, learning about each other, attending YouthCan events and bonding. The youth have set the following goals for the council in 2023-24:

- Build membership through active recruitment, including making a recruitment video.
- Connect with other youth groups in the community.
- Finish the “What I Wish Workers Knew” project and present it.
- Host a mini conference.
- Connect with more organizations such as the Police and do activities with them.

Enabling children in Hamilton to grow up in safe, nurturing environments surrounded by family and community is a key principle of the Society’s Family-Based Care (FBC) working group. The FBC working group met monthly to develop a strategy to build and strengthen family-based care for children and youth in care. The group has already made progress by connecting with youth who are not currently in a family-based care setting and strategizing how to put them on that path. Together with their colleagues, this group is working to ensure staff are integrating family-based care principles into their daily work to support children, youth, and families. A priority over the past year and moving forward is to implement a targeted foster parent recruitment strategy. This strategy aims to broaden the foster caregiver community by recruiting caregivers who reflect the culture and identities of children and youth in care, support children with complex needs, and care for sibling group. The working group is meeting with community members and groups to collaborate on how we can work together to support children and youth within the Hamilton Community.

Over the past year, the Foster Family Association Executive at Hamilton CAS decided to disband. This has impacted the Society's ability to move forward with the implementation of the joint workplan to support children in foster care and to support foster caregivers. However, within the work of the Family-Based Care working group, there was a stream of work dedicated to building a foster caregiver recruitment plan and a plan for community outreach. This work included better understanding our child in care data and current foster caregiver complement to determine the profile of the foster parents we have and who we still need to meet the needs of children and youth in the society's care. The need to update foster caregiver recruitment materials was also identified. Moving into next fiscal year, this work will focus on the recruitment of caregivers who will care for adolescents. Ensuring the caregiver complement matches the identities of children in care, including Black, Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ communities is a priority. We will do this in partnership with community partners including Empowerment Squared and Hamilton Regional Indian Centre and community leaders.

Over the past year, the society's Educational Liaison assembled educational resources and continues to work with staff to access the support needed for children and youth in care to be successful in their education journey. These educational resources have been posted on the Society's intranet so that staff can easily access them. When new programs or processes with the school boards becomes available, regular updates are emailed out to service staff by the Educational Liaison. Joint work with the School Boards was also undertaken around strategies to improve information sharing, including early work to develop a system to allow the Society to access report cards in a timely manner.

Priority 3: Engaged and Inspired

Agency staff, foster parents and volunteers will be engaged and inspired in a healthy workplace

Objectives:

- a. Adequate staffing and skill levels are available to serve the needs and volumes of families and children served
- b. An agency-wide learning and development strategy that supports the agency as an evidenced-based place of learning
- c. Develop and implement a Healthy Workplace Strategy

Key Achievements

The first step of developing a succession planning/leadership development process was to roll out the Equity In Recruitment Toolkit. This toolkit was shared with staff in the fall of 2022. To further our knowledge and understanding of succession planning and leadership development, the Human Resource Supervisor has joined a provincial working group focused on this area. The goal is to develop a toolkit in collaboration with a cross section of staff that will be rolled out to the organization. This goal is in the early stages of development with a planned completion of March 2024.

Training priorities for staff were established for 2022-23 fiscal year. Emerging Leader training was offered to identified staff and all management staff have attended the Leading for Impact training offered by Schulich School of Business. Post-pandemic the Society re-commenced Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training and Car Seat Training for staff and specific administrative support staff are being re-certified on Car Seat Installation training. In addition, members of the Joint Health and Safety Committee have been registered for Level 1 Certification. A survey was administered to volunteers to assist with setting training priorities for the 2023-24 fiscal year. The foster parent training lead and human resources staff will continue to work collaboratively to identify, offer and develop training initiatives for foster parents.

A Revised performance appraisal tool has been fully implemented with the senior team and is being piloted by a small group of supervisors. Roll out of the tool to all supervisors is planned for 2023.

Based on an employee engagement survey completed in 2021, four themes were identified which included positive culture, equity of assignment, healthy workplace and leadership development. Working groups made up of a cross section of staff worked collaboratively to address each area. The groups completed their initiatives associated with these themes in June of 2022 and shared through all staff meetings in September 2022. Examples of working group initiatives included the development of a positive culture statement (see below). This goal has been completed, however, the Society continues to focus on healthy workplace initiatives.



We are all responsible, committed, and accountable to each other to promote a culture where everyone is welcomed, heard, respected, and valued.

We commit to challenging and interrupting behaviours of racism, discrimination, disrespect, intolerance, harassment, and bullying as we strive toward an environment of learning, care and respect for each other; a place where the voices of equity-deserving individuals will be heard and acted upon as we continue our journey of healing, inclusivity, equity and growth.

Priority 4: Strategic Partnerships

Develop and maintain strategic partnerships within the community and across the province that assist in supporting vulnerable children and families.

Objectives:

- a. Strategic partnerships with Indigenous and Black communities to support them in keeping their children safe at home
- b. A multi-level strategy (provincial, local, and case level) that supports advocacy, with specific roles defined for each level of the agency including staff and the Board

Key Achievements

The Society's partnership with Empowerment Squared continued over the past year with a number of achievements in supporting newcomer and racialized families involved with Hamilton CAS. Twenty-five families were referred to Empowerment Squared in 2022-23. Nine parents participated in the Parent Support Workshop created jointly by the Society and Empowerment Squared. The workshop content is geared towards parents with children aged 10-16 years of age, however, parents with children of all ages are welcome. A key objective of the workshop is to raise parents' knowledge about why families become involved in the child welfare system, the laws that protect the well-being of children in Canada, and to increase awareness of their children's rights and parental responsibilities in Canada. One-hundred percent of participants reported an increase in their understanding of child welfare services. Additional results included: access to culturally relevant services to enhance parents' participation in their children(s) education (35 translation services provided). Families were supported navigating educational system processes, including assistance registering newcomer students; Identification, Placement, and Review Committee meetings and support to ensure equitable access to support services for students who are differently abled; support throughout the disciplinary process, including the suspension and expulsion process; creation and implementation of Behavioural Safety Intervention Plans, and Safety Intervention Plans; culturally relevant strategies and supports for educators and administrators; assistance applying for post-secondary school; assistance with scholarship opportunities; assistance applying for OSAP, and financial aid; connection with culturally relevant mentors on post-secondary campuses. Approximately 90 percent of participants in the Parent Support Workshop indicated they felt they were progressing towards their self-identified goals. Empowerment Squared Student & Family Advocates made 30 additional referrals to other organizations in the community, including: Contact Hamilton, Ron Joyce Centre, Liberty for Youth, Wesley Youth Outreach Workers, Banyan, John Howard Society, Empowerment Squared programming, Art Gallery programming, Theatre Aquarius programming, counseling and mental health services, housing services, and emergency food support services.

Work with Empowerment Squared in 2022-23 also involved planning for a community forum cohosted with Hamilton CAS to be held next fiscal year. The forum honours a commitment made to re-engage the newcomer and immigrant community to obtain feedback on the impact the partnership between the two organizations has made over the past three years. In 2022-2023, we began meeting with Mishka Social Services, to discuss the possibility of working together to improve the experiences of Muslim families who engage with our agency and to reduce tensions between Muslim families and HCAS. Through this work, priorities have been identified, including: early help and prevention, advocacy and community supports for Muslim children, youth and families. Work in the coming year will focus on formalizing this partnership and how best to collaborate and work together.

The Society's partnership continued with the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC) over this past year with a focus on further building of trusting relationships and collaboration to support Indigenous families in Hamilton. The leads at Hamilton CAS and HRIC continued to work closely together in efforts to have front-line staff connect directly with one another around information sharing, planning and supporting families. There was an emphasis on staff-to-staff resolution of case and relationship related challenges which has resulted in an overall sense of connection and collaboration particularly with staff from Hamilton CAS's Indigenous team who frequently work directly with HRIC staff. In addition, HRIC provided opportunities for Hamilton CAS staff to participate in several events throughout the year, including Truth and Reconciliation Day, the Youth and Elders Conference, and the sacred fire for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Work is underway to look at other ways to support relationship building and strengthening across the two organizations.

One of the five pillars of the ministry's child welfare redesign initiative is Quality of Care. In 2022-23, a key aspect of this work for the sector involved preparing for the July 1, 2023 effective date of regulatory changes to support implementation of the Quality Standards Framework (QSF). The QSF applies to children and youth living in licensed residential settings. As part of Hamilton CAS's commitment to work collaboratively with OACAS to support system redesign, the agency's two Child Protection Information Network (CPIN) Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) played an important role in the provincial work led by OACAS to identify the changes needed in CPIN to reflect the new QSF requirements. The CPIN SMEs also participated on the QSF CPIN Training Group and facilitated a province-wide training webinar along with providing content to provincial training material.

Also part of the plan to redesign child welfare, the ministry announced the introduction of the Ready, Set, Go program (RSG) in February 2023, which took effect on April 1, 2023. RSG provides youth transitioning out of care with life skills and supports they need to pursue post-secondary education, skilled trades training and employment opportunities. Under RSG, CASs begin focusing on helping children in care plan for the future at an earlier age. Starting at age 13, they will begin learning practical life skills and planning educational goals. At age 15, the emphasis expands to financial literacy and preparing for the workforce, including managing personal finances, setting up a bank account, grocery shopping, resumé building, and how to access social services and other supports. RSG allows youth to remain in care until the age of 23, up from age 21. Monthly financial support increased to provide youth better quality of life and safer housing opportunities so they can focus on their studies or working. In keeping with the Society's commitment to support the implementation of system redesign, Hamilton CAS was part of a zone-based approach to revising policies and procedures to reflect the new requirements.

A decision was made part-way through the fiscal year to defer the Society's 2SLGBTQ+ community work so that we could prioritize restarting Hamilton CAS's internal 2SLGBTQ+ committee. The priority was to engage those who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ and aspiring allies within the Society first, and work through the committee as part of the overall strategy to engage the 2SLGBTQ+ community and co-develop supports for youth and their families. As part of the work for 2023-2024, there are plans to reconvene the 2SLGBTQ+ committee and build on the work that was started by the committee a few years ago.

Priority 5: Continuous Improvement

Enhance systems to support continuous quality improvement, transparency, and accountability.

Objectives:

- a. High levels of compliance are achieved on service standards and strategic outcomes are measured
- b. New provincial requirements are implemented
- c. Support is maintained for CPIN integration

Key Achievements

Preparatory work took place this year to launch a new brand for Hamilton CAS. The new brand will reflect the Society's strategic vision, customer service focus and equity and inclusion commitments of the organization. Through surveys and community engagement done in partnership with Empowerment Squared and Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, we received valuable feedback from those we provide service to, and those we work in partnership with. Understanding how we are experienced as an organization is integral to providing equitable and inclusive service and aligning our work to meet the needs of the community. A final brand concept will be chosen early next year and the launch will take place in the fall of 2023.

In 2022-23 we developed and rolled out a Collaborative Community Relations Model, which consists of a set of principles and core competencies that speak to how we experience one another and how others experience us as an organization, along with a resolution-based collaborative complaint process. Each day we interact with children, youth and families to provide excellent services in the community. Hearing directly from those we serve and understanding how we are experienced is integral to providing inclusive and equitable service to children, youth and families. As part of this commitment, a complaints report for the period of April 2021-March 2022 was developed and shared with the agency and board. The report identified a number of recommended strategies for improvement including: improving our response time for returning calls from service recipients, implementing a 1-transfer maximum per call, making sure there is a supervisor available to provide support and acknowledge the concern being identified. A complaints report will be prepared on an annual basis going forward.

Over the past year we have made significant progress in continuing to review and update the Society's policies and procedures. Key achievements included the development of a standardized policy template to be used across the organization, the development and delivery of policy writing training for all supervisors and directors, and prioritizing policies older than 2020 to be updated across the Society. The training program consisted of units on why policies are important, the policy review cycle, how to review policies with an equity lens, and instruction on using PolicyTech. The training was recorded and is available online as a resource. New supervisors and directors will be required to take this training in support of our commitment to continue to strengthen a culture of effective policy management. As part of this initiative, we were able to eliminate duplicate policies, remove documents that were not policies, and archive those that were outdated and no longer applicable. We also began using key features of PolicyTech that help increase accountability and transparency of policy access and review: the Attestation Feature; and Reporting. The Attestation feature prompts staff to confirm digitally that they have read and understand all aspects of the policy. There is also an option to add a brief "knowledge check" quiz. Similarly, we have used PolicyTech reports to track usage of the system. These tools allow us to recognize gaps and ensure teams stay current on policy. Each new or revised policy is reviewed and approved by Senior Team before it is uploaded to PolicyTech.

A decision was made part-way through the year to defer the development of a next generation, interactive dashboard for supervisors. Instead, we focused on increasing usage of the CPIN Task Report by supervisors and staff to keep track of upcoming due dates of tasks. We prioritized making enhancements to the CPIN Task report to align due dates with the ministry's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) audit reports. Additional tasks were also added to the report related to Child in Care and Kinship Service standards. The CPIN Task report was redeployed in October 2022, accompanied by a communication plan. Monthly usage of the CPIN Task report increased 133% from prior to the re-launch of the task report (September 2022-495 uses) to the end of the fiscal year (March 2023-1154 uses). QIP compliance increased by between 11% and 36% for child protection standards after the re-launch of the CPIN Task Report.

Over the past year we continued to build capacity among direct service staff to use data as part of day-to-day work. For example, the collection and use of demographic data continues to be an area of focus for service teams. It is important that identity-based information is collected prior to the conclusion of an investigation so that we can measure disproportionality and disparity. In 2022-23, investigation teams increased the collection of race-based data for children and youth from 75% completion in March 2022 to 93% by March 2023. From Fiscal 2018-19 to Fiscal 2022-23 there has been a 25% reduction in the amount of missing data at the intake stage, a 29% reduction at the investigation stage and a 25% reduction at the ongoing stage.

Priority 6: Resources and Sustainability

Ensure that valuable resources are in place to support service outcomes and ensure financial sustainability.

Objectives:

- a. Maximize revenue available including securing and allocating resources for the best possible organizational design, staffing and mix of placement resources
- b. An Information Technology Implementation Plan has been developed and reviewed

Key Achievements:

The Society ended fiscal 2022-23 with a deficit. The deficit is consistent with the Ministry budget which was not requested for submission until December 2023 (i.e., at the end of the third quarter). The deficit was due to increased costs for high-needs youth in care. A lack of residential resources, combined with limited mental health and developmental services in the community, has increased costs for children and youth the agency is serving. The Society continues to assess and monitor risks to ensure future sustainability.

Work contemplated for 2022-23 included the relocation and renovation of client spaces to improve the service experience. A feasibility study was completed however the costs of a full renovation were prohibitive given the Society's fiscal situation, and therefore the work was deferred. Cost-efficient options that will improve the client service experience continue to be reviewed.

Over the past year the board of directors underwent a governance review and made changes to board policies and procedures. A finance committee is being developed and it will support oversight of funding and expenditures as well as oversee the updating of the investment strategy for Society private funds. Funds continue to be invested in low-risk instruments to support programs not-funded by the Ministry.

Planned activities related to the Society's IT disaster recovery and business continuity plan were fully implemented. IT services can "failover" to the disaster recovery datacenter/cloud to ensure services are available in the event of a significant or long-term outage at the main office.

In 2022-23 a pilot of a shared resource allocation model for IT supports with two other agencies was paused due to the amalgamation work at Child and Family Services of Grand Erie. However, prior to being put on hold, this work resulted in the creation of over twenty self-serve help items related to CPIN that staff can access prior to logging an IT help desk ticket. This initiative will be revisited in 2023-24.

Conclusion

Hamilton CAS is pleased to provide this report which documents the Society's progress towards achieving the strategic vision to better support vulnerable children, youth, and families in the Hamilton community. The 2023-24 fiscal year is the final year of the current Strategic Vision. A Strategic Vision for 2025-2029, utilizing valuable feedback received from the community engagement report developed through the rebranding process, will be developed by the Society and approved by the board of directors next year.

Appendix: Operational Goals and Progress (2022-23)

Priority 1: Safety and Well-Being			
Children and youth safety and well-being will be increased within the family through good assessment and planning, capacity building and accessing the assets of the family itself, and their community			
Objective	Operational Goals	Implementation Status	Lead Director
a. Shared understanding with others of how we can best contribute to supporting families in the community.	1. Develop a clear service approach including definitions of early help and support in consultation with families, children, staff members/partners and communities.	Partially Implemented	Director of Service, A&S
	2. Continue to develop and implement defined processes to find safety solutions in lieu of going to court.	Fully Implemented	Chief Legal
b. Increased capacity of families to provide for their children in their own home and reduce the risk of need for protection through early help and support by CAS and by accessing help from others.	1. Develop collaborative relationships with key community supports to help families earlier and reduce the need for more intrusive protection services and share this work with colleagues across the organization through consultation and collaboration.	Partially Implemented	Director of Service, A&S
	2. Family safety support networks will be explored, identified, and documented for all families during initial involvement and will be involved during ongoing involvement.	Partially Implemented	
c. Services and other interactions with ethno-specific and linguistic communities reflect well-informed and appropriate practices including with racialized and Black people and Indigenous people and organizations.	1. Implement Equity training for staff across all levels of the organization	Fully Implemented	Director Equity, Inclusion, Community Engagement
	2. Implement Indigenous training to all levels of the organization	Fully Implemented	

Priority 2: Permanency and Potential			
Strategic Goal 2: Enable children and youth in care to find permanency and reach their full potential			
Lead: Director of Service – Permanency & Resources			
Objective	Operational Goals	Implementation Status	Lead Director
a. Children in care safely transition to a permanent and stable out-of-care arrangement as soon as possible following admission.	1. Clearly define permanency principles for the organization and develop a strategy to support outcomes related to this definition.	Partially Implemented	Director of Service, A&S
	2. Workers will develop clear safety goals, including the family, when a child comes into care with clear timelines for a child's return to their family. This plan will be clearly documented in the plan of service.	Partially Implemented	
b. Children in care are most often served in family-based settings as close to their homes as possible	1. Implement the joint workplan with the FFA to support children in our internal foster care children.	Not started	Director of Service, P&R
	2. Develop and implement a targeted foster care recruitment strategy for the organization.	Partially Implemented	Directors of Service & Director of Equity, Inclusion and Community Development
	3. Develop a service approach so that family-based care will reflect the child's culture and race, with an emphasis on Black and Indigenous children who are currently overrepresented in care.	Partially Implemented	Director of Service, P&R
c. Improved educational achievement for all children and youth in care.	1. Provide Staff with a resource that identifies the educational support services that are available in the community/school system	Fully Implemented	Director of Service, P&R
	2. Develop a tutoring program for children and youth in care aimed at those whose needs cannot be met through educational support services in the community/school system.	Fully Implemented	
d. Plans and decisions are fully informed by youth voice and their input is reflected in service.	1. Develop a Youth Advisory Committee	Fully Implemented	Director of Service, P&R
e. All transition-aged youth receiving service get the supports they need to reach their full potential as adults.	1. All Transitional Aged Youth have been engaged in and directly participated in their documented transition plan.	Partially Implemented	Director of Service, P&R
	2. All Traditional Aged Youth have an informal support network.	Partially Implemented	

Priority 3: Engaged and Inspired			
Strategic Goal 3: Agency staff, foster parents and volunteers will be engaged and inspired in a healthy workplace			
Objective	Operational Goals	Implementation Status	Lead Director
a. Adequate staffing and skill levels are available to serve the needs and volumes of families and children served.	1. Develop an agency-wide succession planning/leadership development process.	Partially Implemented	Director of Human Resources
b. Create an agency-wide learning and development strategy that supports the agency as an evidenced-based place of learning.	1. Establish training priorities for staff, foster parents and volunteers that aligns with the strategic vision, leadership/ role competencies and health and safety requirements of the Society.	Partially Implemented	Director of Service P&R & Director of Human Resources
	2. Revise performance appraisals to incorporate the principles of the leadership competency framework.	Partially Implemented	Director of Human Resources
c. Develop and implement a Healthy Workplace Strategy.	1. Consultation and development of a healthy workplace excellence framework.	Fully Implemented	Director of Human Resources

Priority 4: Strategic Partnerships			
Develop and maintain strategic partnerships within the community and across the province that assist in supporting vulnerable children and families			
Objective	Operational Goals	Implementation Status	Lead Director
a. Strategic partnerships with Black, Indigenous, and racialized communities to support them in keeping their children safe at home.	1. Deepen the connection with HRIC at front-line level.	Fully Implemented	Director of Equity, Inclusion and Community Development & Directors of Service
	2. Begin to build a relationship with the Native Women's Centre.	Deferred	
	3. Development of relationships with Empowerment Squared and other community partners to support the Racialized & Newcomer specialization teams work in the community	Fully Implemented	Director, A&S
b. Work collaboratively with other priority communities to respond to identified gaps and address intersectionality	1. Engage the LGBT2SQ+ community and co-develop supports for youth and their families.	Deferred	Director of Equity, Inclusion and Community Development
	2. Determine the agency's Mental Health priorities and clarify what our goal is	Deferred	
c. A multi-level strategy (provincial, local, and case level) that supports advocacy, with specific roles defined for each level of the agency including staff and the Board.	1. Work collaboratively with OACAS and Executive Directors within the province to support system redesign	Fully Implemented	Executive Director

Priority 5: Continuous Improvement			
Strategic Goal: Enhance systems to support continuous quality improvement, transparency, and accountability			
Objective	Operational Goals	Implementation Status	Lead Director
a. High levels of compliance are achieved on service standards and strategic outcomes are measured.	1. As part of Standards Quality Improvement Plan improvement, develop next generation, interactive dashboard for Supervisors.	Deferred	Director of Strategy and Planning
	2. Develop a set of guidelines and the process to be used consistently across the organization for updating policies and begin to update policies.	Fully Implemented	Director of Strategy and Planning
b. New Provincial requirements are implemented.	1. Enhance education and skill development regarding protection and disclosure of personal information.	Fully Implemented	Directors of Service, P&R
c. Broaden the awareness, knowledge and understanding of Hamilton CAS within the Hamilton community.	1. Launch a new brand for Hamilton CAS to reflect strategic vision, customer service focus and equity and inclusion commitments of the organization	Partially Implemented	Director, Communications
d. Provide quality service that embodies the strategic vision of collaboration, strengthening of families and well-being of children	1. Develop and implement a Customer Service Model that embodies the values of the agency, encompasses diversity and equity and inclusion practices and strengthens service to children, youth, and families. This includes creating an annual report on customer complaints.	Fully Implemented	Director, Communications
	2. Create a more holistic framework for client feedback and client survey to enhance customer satisfaction.	Partially Implemented	Director of Strategy and Planning
e. Foster a culture focused on data driven outcomes to support continuous improvement in our work	1. Build capacity to use data as part of the day-to-day work, starting with SR. Team and Supervisors.	Fully Implemented	Director of Strategy and Planning
	2. Develop a data framework related to racialized and black children in care.	Partially Implemented	Director of Strategy and Planning
g. Develop a 5 year equity plan that is focused on equity within the organization and community engagement	1. Establish a measurement framework for the equity plan so that we know if we're progressing in our equity journey.	Deferred	Director Equity, Inclusion and Community Development

Priority 6: Resources and Sustainability			
Strategic Goal: Ensure that valuable resources are in place to support service outcomes and ensure financial sustainability			
Objective	Operational Goals	Implementation Status	Lead Director/
a. Strategies are in place to maximize revenue available including securing and allocating resources for the best possible organizational design, staffing and mix of placement resources.	1. Relocating and renovating client spaces to improve client service experience.	Deferred	Director of Finance
	2. Update investment strategy for private funds to maximize return while balancing risk and formalize spending and investment targets	Partially Implemented	
b. Develop and review an IT Implementation Plan	1. Implementation of a business continuity plan and disaster recovery site.	Fully Implemented	Director of IT
	2. Pilot of shared resource allocation model for IT supports among two participating agencies.	Deferred	