



**CHILDRENS'S AID SOCIETY OF  
ALGOMA**

**2022-2023 OPERATIONAL PLAN**

## Introduction

This document represents the 2022-2023 Business plan for the Children`s Aid Society of Algoma. It highlights the mandate, strategic priorities, key activities and performance indicators of the organization for the upcoming year. The plan also demonstrates how the Children`s Aid Society of Algoma continues to improve our child protection services in the communities of the District of Algoma. This operational plan will link our work to both our Agency Strategic Plan as well the Provincial Strategic Pillars. These past several years the Child Welfare Sector has been examining issues of equity as we recognize the historic and current impact of systemic injustices and biases that disproportionately impact the most marginalized members of society including Indigenous, Black, racialized and LGBTQ2S communities. Children`s Aid of Algoma has established an equity committee to guide our practices through an equity lens. Our focus is on developing an environment that is shaped by openness and willingness to learn while we ensure that equity for all marginalized groups is achieved.

## Mandate

Children`s Aid Societies are independently governed agencies that are responsible for providing mandatory and critical services. Children`s Aid Societies have been providing these services to communities in Ontario for over 100 years.

They are legislated to perform certain functions under the provisions of the Child Youth and Family Services Act., includes the following functions:

- Investigate allegations or evidence that children who are under the age of sixteen years or are in the society`s care or under its supervision may be in need of protection;
- Protect, where necessary, children who are under the age of eighteen years or are in the society`s care or under its supervision;
- Provide guidance, counselling and other services to families for protecting children or for the prevention of circumstances requiring the protection of children;
- Provide care for children assigned or committed to its care under this Act;
- Supervise children assigned to its supervision under this Act;
- Place children for adoption under Part VII; and,
- Perform any other duties given to it by this or any other Act.

This legislation and the supporting regulations, directives and standards prescribe specific and detailed requirements for what services CASs must provide, how they must provide these services, including services to Aboriginal children and families and French language services, as well as the timelines in which these mandatory services must be provided.

CASs provide critical and essential services which are a safety net for the most vulnerable members of our society – infants, children and youth who are at risk of or are experiencing physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, neglect or abandonment. CASs are mandated to intervene if a caregiver cannot adequately care for or provide for a child.

Children’s Aid Societies protect and safeguard most children while they remain with their families in the community. This family-based support takes the form of intensive assessments and service plans, contacts with numerous other professionals and service providers, as well as ongoing supervision of the child while he/she remains in the family home. These are complex cases in which child protection concerns have been verified and there are risks of, or actual, abuse and neglect. As such, the work must be performed by skilled, qualified child welfare staff. Serving these children in the context of the home – when it is safe to do so – is consistent with the legislative and regulatory mandate and with the policy direction of government.

## Reconciliation Commitments

On October 1-3, 2017, the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies (OACAS) hosted a gathering at Geneva Park and Rama First Nation to acknowledge apologize for the harmful role child welfare has played historically, and continues to play, in the lives of Ontario Indigenous children, families, and communities. The Society participated in the gathering and apology, for the harmful role child welfare has played historically, and continues to play, in the lives of Ontario Indigenous children, families, and communities. OACAS presented nine key commitments the child welfare sector unanimously agreed upon in order to move forward with Reconciliation. The Society commits to the following:

- Reduce the number of Indigenous children in care.
- Reduce the number of legal files involving Indigenous children and families.
- Increase the use of formal customary care agreements.
- Ensure Indigenous representation and involvement at the local Board of Directors.
- Implement mandatory Indigenous training for staff.
- Change the inter-agency protocol to include Jordan’s Principle as a fundamental principle
- In consultation with Indigenous communities, develop a unique agency-based plan to better address the needs of the children and families from those communities.
- Continue to develop relationships between their local agency and the local Indigenous communities.
- Assist those individuals wanting to see their historical files by accessing and providing the information they request.

## Vision, Values and Strategic Direction



### Children's Aid Society of Algoma 2020-2023



**Vision** Protecting Children, Strengthening Families throughout the District of Algoma

**Mission** The Children's Aid Society of Algoma is committed to protecting children and promoting their well-being by working collaboratively with children, families, and communities through service excellence

**Values** Accountability Excellence Collaboration Integrity Respect Innovation

### Strategic Goals



## Key Activities supporting Strategic Directions

### Service Excellence within the Child Welfare Delivery System

Topic	Goal
Qualified Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit and Retain Qualified staff with Child Welfare experience or desire and aptitude for Child Welfare work.</li> <li>• Ensure hiring practices for staff reflect the diversity of our community – Equity &amp; Diversity</li> <li>• Succession plan- develop and support succession planning</li> </ul>
Comprehensive Training Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OACAS New Worker Training, appropriate training programs for all employees and their employment needs to respond to changing legislation, standards and directives</li> <li>• Develop annual agency training plan that addresses training priorities for each service department</li> <li>• Training for staff and resource families to expand skills, experiences and knowledge.</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely and accurate communication throughout the organization and with stakeholders internal and external.</li> <li>• Use of monthly news letter</li> <li>• Quarterly staff Town Halls</li> <li>• Management meetings</li> <li>• Team meetings</li> </ul>

<p>Equity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Equity Committee</li> <li>• Participate in zone Equity Lead meetings/planning sessions</li> <li>• Complete Agency Readiness plan to inform work plan</li> <li>• Implementation of One Vision One Voice</li> <li>• Ongoing training of all staff and ensuring new staff participate in OACAS Equity training</li> <li>• Engage with marginalized community groups</li> <li>• Comprehensive review of and gathering relevant demographic data</li> <li>• Embed equity practices within service delivery model, including records</li> </ul>
<p>Service Integration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive work environment with appropriate supports and focus on excellence in child and family outcomes</li> <li>• Replacing “silos” with cross departmental integrated service planning, mutual respect and shared responsibility with increased cross departmental capacity</li> <li>• Integration of legal service</li> </ul>
<p>Monitor and continuous improvement of Performance Outcomes and compliance with Service Standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work towards 100% compliance with provincial service standards and in attaining positive outcomes for children and families.</li> <li>• Implementation of milestone tracking at the case level</li> <li>• Pursuing equity outcomes for all marginalized staff</li> <li>• Work towards 100% compliance for IDBD</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual reporting and review of complaints/CFSRP/Ombudsman referrals/ investigations</li> <li>• Identify organizational critical metrics</li> </ul>
<p>Agency Records</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scan all Society records into document management system</li> <li>• Implement scanning work flow across departments to reduce paper</li> <li>• Develop clear expectations and timeframes to have documents scanned and attached to CPIN records</li> <li>• Development of policy and procedure</li> </ul>
<p>Health and Safety</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a safe and healthy work environment for employees, foster families, children and families involved in CAS services</li> <li>• Creating culturally safe and inclusive spaces for employees, foster families, children and families involved in CAS services</li> <li>• Develop check-in system for workers in the field after office hours.</li> <li>• Installation of video cameras for buildings/app download to agency phones</li> <li>• Ongoing training plan</li> <li>• Coverage for purchase of service</li> </ul>
<p>IT- Infrastructure /Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyber security and disaster recovery plan</li> <li>• Implementation of Policy manager program from Thunder Bay</li> <li>• New website development by RDC and update of sites content</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New website to be live in the Fall 2022</li> <li>• Capstone project with Waterloo University</li> <li>• Ongoing cyber security training for agency staff</li> </ul>
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## Aboriginal Child Welfare Service Delivery and Transfer of Services to Nogdawindamin Community and Family Services

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Goal</b>
<p>First Nations Relationships/Restoration of Jurisdiction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive working relationships with First Nations Communities whose members the CAS Algoma continue to provide Child Welfare Services to.</li> <li>• Appropriate consultation and collaboration in all Child Welfare involvement as per the legislation and best practices</li> <li>• Reduce the number of Indigenous children in care.</li> <li>• Reduce the number of legal files involving Indigenous children and families.</li> <li>• Increase the use of formal customary care agreements.</li> <li>• Ensure Indigenous representation and involvement at the local Board of Directors.</li> <li>• Implement mandatory Indigenous training for staff.</li> <li>• Change the inter-agency protocol to include Jordan’s Principle as a fundamental principle</li> <li>• In consultation with Indigenous communities, develop a unique</li> </ul>



	<p>agency-based plan to better address the needs of the children and families from those communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to develop relationships between their local agency and the local Indigenous communities.</li> <li>• Assist those individuals wanting to see their historical files by accessing and providing the information they request.</li> <li>• Review and embed Federal child welfare into current practice</li> </ul>
<p>Nogdawindamin Child and Family Services Restoration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with Nogdawindamin FCS and the Ministry of Community Children and Social Services to facilitate the future transfer of all other FNMI child welfare cases</li> <li>• Secondment agreements to facilitate the planning and transfer of files.</li> <li>• Interagency Protocol revision/update</li> </ul>

## Community and provincial engagement, collaboration and service development to support and protect children, youth and families.

Topic	Goal
Local Service System Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced collaboration and integration of services with community partners and collateral organizations to facilitate prevention and intervention options.</li> <li>• Have current comprehensive protocols with organizations CAS Algoma works with to ensure understanding and implementation of roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Increase our presence and visibility in the community by seeking out opportunities for impactful collaboration and partnerships</li> <li>• Educating the community to build a better understanding of the dynamics of child welfare, the multiple responses used by the Society, and the impacts of power and authority</li> </ul>
Provincial Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with OACAS and MCCSS on provincial projects</li> <li>• Participate in Provincial Funding Committee</li> <li>• Participate in all aspects of the OACAS Provincial Call to Action</li> </ul>

<p>Cross Jurisdictional engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with other Children’s Aid Societies as necessary to meet the needs of families as they move throughout the province and need support in other jurisdictions.</li> <li>• Zone and regional planning to maximize resources and explore shared service opportunities</li> </ul>
<p>Amalgamation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete feasibility work to determine the viability of amalgamating AFS and CAS</li> </ul>

## Family Based Care and Permanency for Children

<p><b>Topic</b></p>	<p><b>Goal</b></p>
<p>Family Based Service Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on providing strengths based services and supports to keep children and youth with their families and or family members wherever safe and possible</li> <li>• Implement One Vision One Voice frame work</li> <li>• Deliver services under an anti-oppressive framework</li> </ul>
<p>Family Based Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the number of children in care</li> <li>• Increase family base care</li> <li>• Recruit and Retain Foster Parents, Kinship placements for children and youth who must come into care.</li> <li>• Quality Child Caregiver relationships in Foster Care</li> <li>• Reduction of outside placements</li> <li>• Increase community capacity to manage high risk youth</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of a continuum of placement options</li> </ul>
Permanency Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit adoptive parents or foster to adopt parents</li> <li>• Seek legal custody orders where appropriate for children and youth eligible.</li> <li>• Use of ADR at the front end of planning to identify family and supports</li> <li>• Implement Family Finding</li> <li>• Openness</li> <li>• Sibling relationships and access</li> </ul>

## Strengthening Governance and Accountability

Topic	Goal
Board Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Skills based Board with broad representation from the communities within the District of Algoma (geographically and culturally)</li> <li>• Ensure Board membership reflect the diversity of our community</li> </ul>
Board Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing Board and Board member evaluations and development/training plan</li> </ul>
Administrative Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular Quarterly Financial, Service and Standards Compliance reporting</li> </ul>

<p>Accountability Framework</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect, analyze and report on Performance and Outcome measures and work towards a Balanced Budget.</li> <li>• Develop child advisory committee</li> <li>• Develop parent advisory committee</li> </ul>
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## Educational Achievement for Children and Children in Care

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Goal</b>
<p>Educational Achievement for Children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication to front line staff</li> <li>• Work closely with children, families and Boards of Education to ensure continuity of educational pursuits for all children</li> <li>• To have tutors identified for every child in care</li> <li>• Ensuring all staff are aware of the Educational resources available through the school boards for children involved with Child welfare</li> </ul>
<p>Educational Supports for Children in Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work closely with foster parents, kin placements and school boards to ensure continuity of educational pursuits, progress and graduation for children/youth in care</li> </ul>
<p>Educational Support for Post-Secondary Educational Pursuits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial assistance to support Children/Youth in Care in post-secondary educational pursuits and graduation</li> <li>• Financial sustainability of the Youth in care Scholarship Fund</li> </ul>

## Performance Measurement

Children’s Aid Societies understand the importance of measuring performance and outcomes for children and their families. To this end we have developed key Performance Indicators (PIs) that best outline effectiveness in delivering the child protection mandate.

There are currently five PIs that are reported:

- Recurrence of Child Protection Concerns in a Family after an Investigation
- Recurrence of Child Protection Concerns in a Family after Ongoing Services were Provided
- Days of care by placement type
- Time to permanency
- Quality of the caregiver-youth relationship

Each of these Performance Indicators is described in more detail below.

### **Recurrence of Child Protection Concerns in a Family after an Investigation**

This PI measures the percentage of family cases closed at investigation in a fiscal year that were re-investigated within 12 months after closing and where the child protection concerns were verified.

This measure is important because closing a case following an investigation assessment suggests that there are no child protection concerns requiring ongoing Children’s Aid Society involvement. However, at the conclusion of many investigations, workers make referrals to community-based services for families. This measure is important for further understanding of those families that return to a Children’s Aid Society with verified protection concerns and those that do not, both in terms of the nature and intensity of the services offered, and the risks, strengths and needs of children and families. Increasing knowledge in these areas will inform decision-making and improve service delivery.

There is no agreed-upon benchmark for the “acceptable” level of recurrence. While a lower level is generally desirable, the rate of recurrence is unlikely ever to be 0% for a variety of reasons, including the chronic nature of many of the struggles experienced by families commonly known to the child welfare system, e.g., poverty, substance abuse and mental health problems. Furthermore, the reconnection of some families with the child welfare system can be in and of itself a protective factor to children whose families are connected with necessary supports.

## **Recurrence of Child Protection Concerns in a Family after Ongoing Protection Services Were Provided**

This PI measures the percentage of family cases closed at ongoing protection in a fiscal year that were re-investigated within 12 months after closing where the child protection concerns were verified.

This measure is important because closing a case following ongoing services suggests that child protection concerns have been addressed and no longer require ongoing Children's Aid Society involvement. However, at the conclusion of Children's Aid involvement, many families continue to receive supportive services from other agencies in the community. This indicator measures the extent to which services have been successful in reducing risk to children over the 12 month period following Children's Aid Society involvement. This measure is important for further understanding of those families that return to a Children's Aid Society with verified protection concerns and those that do not, both in terms of the nature and intensity of the services offered, and the risks, strengths and needs of children and families. Increasing knowledge in these areas supports improvements in decision-making and service delivery.

There is no agreed-upon benchmark for the "acceptable" level of recurrence. While a lower level is generally desirable, the rate of recurrence is unlikely ever to be 0% for a variety of reasons, including the chronic nature of many of the struggles experienced by families commonly known to the child welfare system, e.g., poverty, substance abuse and mental health problems. Furthermore, the reconnection of some families with the child welfare system can be in and of itself a protective factor to children whose families are connected with necessary supports.

## **Permanency Outcome – The Days of Care, by Placement Type**

This PI measures, for all children admitted to the care of a Children's Aid Society, the days of care provided in the fiscal year, by placement type. That is family-based care versus non-family-based care.

It is important because children placed in family-based care are more likely to achieve permanency when the exit care, i.e., be discharged to parents or family including adoptive families or legal custody arrangements, compared to children in group care. Family-based care is the preferred placement setting for the majority of children in care. Children placed in family settings have greater opportunities to form a connection with consistent caregivers and to experience the benefits associated with membership in a family.

While a high rate of family-based care is desirable, selection of a placement setting should be first and foremost influenced by the needs of the child and the fit to the placement. Given the mandate of a Children’s Aid Society, and the nature of the challenges experienced by some children and youth, it is likely that there will always be some young people in care who require specialized treatment, programs and structure associated with group care settings.

## **Permanency Outcome – The Time to Permanency**

This PI measures, for all children admitted to the care of a CAS during the fiscal year, the cumulative percentage discharged within a specific time period (i.e. 12 months, 24 months and 36 months since admission).

It is important because one of the mission-critical outcomes in child welfare is to facilitate permanent living arrangements for all children that are safe, stable and supportive of lifetime relationships. The child welfare system in Ontario has multiple options through which permanency can be achieved (e.g., reunification with parents, legal custody, and adoption). Permanency planning is a significant focus for children in care, whose permanency status, both legally and psychologically, is uncertain. The timing and nature of permanency may look different for every child depending on the child’s needs, family circumstances, court processes, and availability of community service providers.

A key factor that influences time to permanency is child age at admission. Children who enter care at a young age are more likely to be discharged to certain types of permanency (e.g., adoption) compared to older children. Young children often achieve permanency within shorter timeframes, supported by legislation that limits the allowable cumulative time in short-term care for children under 6 years of age compared to older children. An additional factor that impacts time to permanency is the needs of the child, with more complex needs associated with longer timeframes to achieving permanency.

## **Well-being Outcome: The Quality of the Caregiver and Youth Relationship**

This PI measures the average score for children in care (aged 10-17) from a standard scale that measures a young person’s perception of the quality of the relationship with his or her primary caregiver. The scale measures the following four items:

1. How well do you feel he/she understands you?
2. How much fairness do you receive from him/her?
3. How much affection do you receive from him/her?
4. Overall, how would you describe your relationship with him/her?



Each of these four items is rated from 0 to 2, yielding a composite score with a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 8.

This is important because the quality of the caregiver-youth relationship is at the heart of service to children in care. Research demonstrates that a young person's perception of the quality of his/her relationship with his/her caregiver predicts the following: current happiness; self-esteem; positive behaviour; and placement satisfaction. As scores increase on the quality of the caregiver relationship scale, so do positive outcomes across each of these areas (e.g. higher self-esteem).

The key influencing factor is the young person's perception that the caregiver understands, treats fairly, shows affection towards, and has a close relationship with him/her.

## Contact Information

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