



For Immediate Release

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**ONTARIO'S CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES ARE HIGHLY REGULATED
AND ACCOUNTABLE**

Some media reports about the Ontario Ombudsman's recent request for investigative powers into complaints about Children's Aid Societies have mistakenly stated that Children's Aid Societies are self-monitoring and are not subject to external scrutiny or review. This is not the case.

There are more than 30,000 children in the care of Children's Aid Societies throughout the year and thousands more children receive child protection services in the community. Children's Aid Societies are accountable to both the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the public they serve. "The protection of children is a profound responsibility," says Jeanette Lewis, Executive Director of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. "That is why the child welfare system is highly regulated, and why it operates with the oversight of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Family Courts, and governing Boards," added Ms. Lewis.

Children's Aid Societies are subject to numerous accountability review mechanisms provided for under the *Child and Family Services Act*. As required by *The Act*, each Children's Aid Society has a complaint procedure that allows clients to come forward when they have concerns about service.

Each Children's Aid Society has a Ministry Program Supervisor, and the Ministry actively monitors the services and practices of Children's Aid Society. The Ministry is responsible for conducting Crown ward reviews, service and financial reviews, reviewing service plans, licensing foster care and residential programs, and reviewing fatality reports, and serious occurrence reports.



When a child is harmed or dies under questionable circumstances, and/or as a result of abuse, mistreatment or parental negligence or neglect, there are extensive reporting procedures, which are guided by a Provincial Protocol. The Office of the Chief Coroner and its multi-disciplinary Pediatric Death Review Committee reviews deaths externally.

With the exception of Nova Scotia, which has a mixed system, all other provinces directly operate child welfare services through a government department or ministry. In Ontario, child welfare authority is mandated to Children's Aid Societies through a Board of Directors with oversight responsibility.

Children's Aid Societies only intervene in family life when there is evidence that a child may be in need of protection. If a child is admitted into the care of a Children's Aid Society without parental consent, the Society must go before the court within five days to obtain a court finding of a "child in need of protection" and to explain to a judge why the child was taken into care. "The family court system is a powerful check and balance to ensure individual client rights are respected and that, ultimately, children are protected," says Lewis.

OACAS is a membership organization representing 52 of the 53 Children's Aid Societies in Ontario and in support of its members, is dedicated to providing leadership for the achievement of excellence in the protection of children and in the promotion of their well being within their families and communities.

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