

What is the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa (CASO)?



The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa (CASO) is a community organization legally mandated to protect children and youth from abuse and neglect.

We are one of 47 agencies in Ontario that work to keep children safe, provide support and other services to parents; and when necessary provide safe and nurturing care for children and youth who are unable to live at home because of family problems.

We provide service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Outside of regular business hours, a team of workers are available to respond to situations where children may be at risk.

In the majority of situations, we are able to protect children while they continue to live in their own homes.

We work in collaboration with families and other members of the community to ensure children and youth remain safe. Sometimes the risk of harm is such that the child or youth can not be protected at home or by extended family, and temporary care is provided either with kin or in a foster home.

Should a child is in the care of the Society, every effort is made to help the child remain connected to his or her family whenever possible. During the child or youth's stay in care we provide the best possible opportunities for growth and development.

We strive to provide services that respect diversity of race, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, ability, language, and culture.

If your child or youth is in the care of the Society



Sometimes children and youths are unable to remain in their family home. When a child or youth comes into the care of the Society it is either on a voluntary basis with parental consent or through a court order.

Every effort is made to place a child in a home sensitive to the racial, ethnic, cultural and religious background of the child. Whenever possible it is the practice of the Society to place children and youth with extended family or kin. When this is not possible the preferred option is with foster parents. Placing siblings together is a priority for the Society.

A child welfare worker will work with you in developing a plan of care for your child. Unless a family court judge says there can be no access, regular visits are arranged between the parents and the child or youth in care.

Our main goal is to work toward reuniting children with their families; a plan of service is developed with you toward this goal. If, however, a situation is deemed too serious and a child can not be safe at home, a permanent plan is developed and presented before a family court judge.

When does the CAS become involved?



Children's Aid Societies in Ontario have a legal mandate to intervene where necessary to protect children from abuse and neglect. The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa accepts reports of children and youths in need of protection 24 hours a day, seven days a week at (613-747-7800).

We become involved with a family when a concern about a child or youth under the age of 16 has been brought to our attention. These concerns can be about a child who has been harmed or about the possibility a child might be at risk of harm and early intervention services are necessary to protect the child.

When a call is received a protection worker and supervisor will assess the risk to a child based on the information and will decide how urgent our response must be. An investigation into the concerns will help decide how to best protect the child and provide supportive services to the family.

If the report suggests the risk of harm is immediate or there is an injury, CAS protection workers will respond within 12 hours. In all other situations a worker will visit the home within (7) days.

Once involved we work in collaboration with the family and community service partners to assist in resolving any concerns or problems the family is experiencing. When needed we provide on-going services; in most cases on a voluntary basis. In serious situations services may be provided with a court order.

A parent or a child may contact us directly. A relative, friend, teacher, nurse, doctor or other professional must make a referral when they are concerned for the safety and well-being of a child or youth.

When to report abuse?



Each of us have a responsibility for the welfare of children. We all share a responsibility to protect children and youth from harm. That responsibility extends to those situations where children and youth suffer abuse and neglect in their own homes. Ontario's Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) provides protection for these children.

Who is a “child or youth in need of protection”?

A child in need of protection is a child or youth who is or who appears to be suffering from abuse and/or neglect.

Who is responsible for reporting a child or youth in need of protection?

Anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or youth is or may be in need of protection must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to their local Children's Aid Society (CAS).

What are “reasonable grounds” to suspect child abuse or neglect?

It is not necessary for you to be certain a child or youth is or may be in need of protection to make a report to the CAS. “Reasonable grounds” refers to the information that an average person, exercising normal and honest judgment, would need in order to make a decision to report.

What is the age of the children to whom the “duty to report” applies?

The duty to report applies to any child who is, or appears to be, under the age of 16 years. It also applies to children subject to a child protection order who are 16 and 17 years old.

Can I rely on someone else to reply?

No. You have to report directly to the CAS. You must not rely on anyone else to report on your behalf.

What is abuse?



Child abuse is when a child has been intentionally hurt, or when a parent or caregiver fails to protect a child in their care and the child is harmed as a result.

Physical Abuse: Physical abuse is any action that results or could result in an injury to a child or youth. It can include slapping, punching, beating, shaking, burning, biting or throwing a child. Physical abuse can be one or two isolated incidents or occur over a prolonged period of time.

Sexual Abuse : Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used for the sexual gratification of an adult or an older child. It is against the law to touch a child for sexual purpose; encourage or force a child to touch another person in a sexual way; encourage or force a child to participate in any sexual activity; tell a child to touch him or herself for an adult's or older child's sexual purposes. Sexual abuse of children can take many forms. This includes sexual intercourse, exposing a child's private areas, fondling for sexual purposes, allowing a child to look at, or perform in pornographic pictures or videos, or engage in prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation.

Emotional Abuse : Emotional abuse is a pattern of behaviour that undermines a child's emotional development and sense of self worth. It includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child beyond his or her capacity. Emotional abuse includes constantly criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring, or isolating the child. It also includes failure by a parent or caregiver to provide their children with love, emotional support and guidance.

Neglect : Neglect is the failure to meet a child's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, sleep, medical attention, education, and protection from harm. This can occur when parents do not know about appropriate care for children, when they cannot adequately supervise their children or when they are unable to plan ahead. Young children should never be left unattended. This includes leaving a child alone in a car even if you lock the doors and are gone for only a few minutes.

Reasonable Discipline: The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa does not support the use of physical punishment. Research has shown that positive behaviour management strategies are more effective than physical punishment.

These practices include:

- ♦ positive reinforcement;
- ♦ praise;
- ♦ modelling;
- ♦ redirection;
- ♦ structure and routine;
- ♦ setting realistic, age-appropriate expectations;
- ♦ verbal and non-verbal cues;
- ♦ logical consequences, and
- ♦ problem-solving.

Volunteering at the CASO?



Our volunteers are people from our community who choose to donate their time, energy and skills. They are men and women over the age of 18, ranging from students, working people and retirees, who are all from diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Our volunteers share a caring concern for children and youths.

What are the roles of a volunteer?

You can contribute to a wide range of services. Some examples of volunteer roles are:

- ♦ Tutor for children and youths in care
- ♦ Mentor for children and youths in care
- ♦ Participant in children's groups
- ♦ Participant in programs that benefit both children and their parents
- ♦ Driver that help ensure children and youths arrive safely and on time for their appointments
- ♦ Clerical assistance or committee member

What kind of skills and time commitment does volunteering require?

No specialized skills are required; however, we make every effort to match your interests, availability and skills with the best possible volunteering opportunity.

Volunteer opportunities are available on a regular or occasional basis. Depending on the assignment, the CASO can work out a flexible schedule that will accommodate your availability and respect any other commitments that you may have.

How do I become a volunteer?

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please visit casott.on.ca and click on the "Volunteer" tab for a full schedule of Volunteer Information Sessions and to submit an application.

What is foster care?



Foster care is when people, who have been approved by the Children's Aid Society as foster parents, provide a home for children or youths needing care for a period of a few days, weeks, months or possibly years.

Who are foster parents?

Foster parents are people from any ethnic, cultural, racial or religious background with any sexual orientation who believe that every child deserves love and respect. Foster parents are individuals who are over the age of 18 and demonstrate an ability to parent. They have a stable and caring lifestyle and space in their home to support a child's or youth's needs.

Why are children and youth in care?

- ♦ Children and youth come into care when they can't be cared for properly at home. This can result from parenting challenges such as:
 - ♦ Inadequate resources and support
 - ♦ Mental illness that is not well-managed
 - ♦ Medical illness that impedes an ability to parent

What kind of support do foster parents receive?

Reimbursement for the child's or youth's living expenses
Training
24-hour on-call telephone support
In-home support

What steps do I need to take to become a foster parent?

1. Call (613) 742-1620 ext. 1 or visit our website at www.winningkids.ca or www.casott.on.ca.
2. Complete an application form.

What is adoption?



What is adoption?

Adoption is the permanent placement of a child or youth into your home, allowing them to legally become a member of your family. Most children or youths who are waiting for adoption have been removed from their homes because of abuse or neglect.

Who can adopt?

- ◆ People who are willing to make a lifelong commitment to children and youths
- ◆ People who are couples, single, divorced, widowed, gay or lesbian, and who are at least 19 years of age
- ◆ People who can financially manage the addition of a child or youth to their family
- ◆ People who have no criminal history that will prevent them from being approved to adopt

Who are the children and youths?

CAS always has an urgent need for families interested in adopting children and youths aged 5 years or older; sibling groups; and those who have developmental delays.

What is the adoption process?

1. Please start by visiting our website at casott.on.ca for more information on adopting
2. Contact the Adoption Intake Line at 613-742-1620. Our Intake Worker will further explain the process and invite you to one of our Adoption Information Sessions
3. You will need to complete the Adoption Application and if we proceed with your application, you will undergo a home study as well as training. This is further explained on our website.

What happens when I call the CASO?



The CASO will look into the information you provide and determine if it needs to be investigated. The CASO workers have the responsibility and the legal authority to investigate allegations and to protect children. The workers may, as part of the investigation and plan to protect a child, involve the police and other community agencies.

What is Confidential? All client information is confidential. The CASO can only disclose confidential information with your written consent. If there is information necessary to plan for a child's safety we may obtain a court order to obtain the information. Confidential information is presented to a Family Court Judge in situations that are before the court.

What is kept on record? The provincial government requires the CASO to keep records of our involvement with children and families. The records include all information related to decisions made and services that are provided to children and families. The records are kept confidential and are only released with permission unless the record is required in a court proceeding.

Are the police ever involved in child protection matters? All serious cases of physical, sexual or neglect cases are referred to the police. The police may lay charges if, based on the facts, a criminal offence has occurred.

Will a child be interviewed? When a concern about the safety of a child or youth is brought to the attention of the CASO an interview will occur. In most situations interviews will occur with the consent of the parent. In very serious matters the CASO may interview without the parents consent or knowledge.

When does the medical profession become involved? When child abuse or serious neglect causing harm to a child or youth has occurred or is suspected, a medical examination may be necessary. In these situations every effort is made to obtain parental consent to the examination. Occasionally, when a parent is not available to consent, the CASO under the auspices of the Child and Family Services Act will temporarily assume care and custody to proceed with a medical examination. Every effort will be made to continue to locate and involve the parents.



The Children's Aid Foundation of Ottawa (CAFO) raises funds to help children and youth in the care of the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa (CASO). CAFO provides education and life-enrichment opportunities that enhance a child's physical, social, mental, and developmental well-being so that they can grow into healthy and productive adults.

Keeping every child in our community safe is a responsibility we all share. Growing up under the shadow of abuse and neglect is hard enough. If we don't break the cycle, our community suffers.

CAFO Programs

Dare to Dream Bursary Program - Removes financial barriers so that deserving youth in our community can pursue their dream of going to college, university, or vocational training centre.

Camp for Kids - Sends kids to camp (often for the first time in their life) so they have a chance to develop leadership and social skills, confidence and have fun!

Cookie Jar Fund - Supports children and youth to participate and get active in sports, music, and recreational activities as well as provide basic necessities to families.

Fair Shot Program - Supports kids (in kinship and adoptive families supported by CASO) by encouraging them to participate and get active in sports.

Ted and Loretta Rogers Foster Care Transition Program - Provides children and youth coming into foster care with items and resources that aid in their comfort, well-being, safety, and sense of security in the midst of an overwhelming transition.

Scotia Capital Leap to Learning Program - Helps kids succeed in school through math and reading tutoring.

CAFO's Annual Fundraising Events

Salut! - an elegant wine and gourmet food pairing evening which offers a unique opportunity to explore new tastes and interact with wine enthusiasts alike.

Annual Charity Golf Tournament - provides the business community a chance to come together "fore" kids in a friendly round of golf and networking.

World Trivia Night - The largest live trivia competition in North America hosting up to 2,000 trivia enthusiasts. This pledge event that sees teams raise funds while competing for cash and prizes.

"I wish I could explain to you how great it feels to have your support towards my dreams. Being a recipient of the Dare to Dream Bursary Program has changed my life for the better. From now on I plan to go nowhere but UP."

— 18 year old with a dream

Make a Difference in a Child's Life

Become a Donor Today!