In Ontario Children’s Aid Societies (CAS) have the responsibility for investigating reports of child maltreatment, also called child abuse and neglect. In Canada, child maltreatment generally refers to any youth under the age of 16 who is not safe because they are at risk of harm or have been harmed by their parents or caregivers. Every day our agency receives over 120 calls with concerns about the safety of a child in the community. Calls about the safety of a child usually fall into the following categories: domestic violence related (35%), suspicion of physical, emotional, or sexual harm (25%), parents struggling with substance abuse or mental health issues that interferes with their ability to care for their child (20%), child neglect (15%), and conflict between a parent and youth that places the youth at risk or the parent can’t keep their child safe because the youth’s own behaviors place them at risk (5%). To anyone who has made a call on behalf of a child or youth — thank you. You are an important part of that village that it takes to raise a child.

Approximately 80 percent of calls to a CAS that result in an investigation come from ‘professionals’, including teachers, police, doctors and day cares. The remaining 20 percent typically come from neighbours, family, friends or anonymous sources. We know these are not easy calls for people to make, but the fact that we receive the number that we do tells us that Toronto citizens and professionals care deeply about the safety and care of its children.

When a call is received it is screened by at least two trained child welfare professionals. Using a provincially standardized set of criteria they listen and ask specific questions that helps them determine the level of risk to the child and if a protection investigation is needed. Depending on the severity of the accessed risk, calls are coded as ‘immediate’ investigation (within 12 hours) if the child has been harmed, or within 7 days if the child is at risk of harm.

For more information please call The Children’s Aid Society of Toronto at
416-924-4646 or inquiries@TorontoCAS.ca