



Attention News Editors

For immediate release

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Children and Youth give a high rating to the care provided

Toronto—“Children and Youth gave a high rating to the care provided to them in their current placements” concluded the *Quality of Care Review: Children’s Aid Society of Toronto* by Ontario’s Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy (OCFSA). OCFSA recently conducted 185 interviews with youth and children in the care of the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto (CAS of Toronto). The OCFSA was “extremely impressed with the quality of care described by many of the young people interviewed.” OCFSA will release its full recommendations later today. “The review of our Agency emphasizes the crucial difference foster families and workers can make for children whose lives have been impacted by child abuse,” said Carolyn Buck, Executive Director.

The review also pointed out two issues that CAS of Toronto is currently addressing. Fifty three per cent felt that their workers were easy to reach. We have instituted a 1-800 number for our youth so that they have easier access. Youth also need access to their “papers” and legal documents to protect their residency in Canada. CAS of Toronto has had many discussions with Citizenship and Immigration Canada about the plight of our youth. Anyone who has applied for a passport knows the importance of original documents. Usually in Canada through no choice of their own, our youth can face a life of uncertainty without the documents that either don’t exist or are being kept from them by relatives. We have thoroughly researched the issue and have provided best practice policies for our workers as we continue to advocate for change at a higher level.

Other recommendations serve as reminders of good practice for our staff. The report does speak to systemic issues that we cannot address on our own. We are longtime advocates for youth transitioning from care. They need much more instrumental support than we can currently provide. “This agency parents children and youth, it does not carry cases,” said Carolyn Buck, “we want to support our young people until they’re ready to be on their own, and 21 is too young.”

The Advocate also points out that there are no provincially mandated residential standards to ensure quality. This has been a longstanding concern. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services is responsible for licensing group homes but there is no

regulatory body to monitor the overall quality provided to the residents. CAS's, paid for by special funding from the Ministry of Finance, collaborated on a provincial approach to create a system with accountability and quality assurance features. The plan would save money through supply chain management which would offset the cost of quality assurance. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services was required to endorse this proposal before the Ministry of Finance was able to fund it. This was not done and the funding deadline has passed. "It is a lost opportunity to redirect resources which could have had a direct impact on quality of care for our youth", said Carolyn Buck, Co-Chair of the Provincial Committee.

-30-

The Children's Aid Society of Toronto works with children and their families when children have been or are at risk of being emotionally, physically, or sexually abused or neglected. The Society also develops and implements child abuse prevention programs. The Society is one of 53 children's aid societies in Ontario, and it is the largest such organization in North America. There are approximately 850 staff positions, 725 volunteers and 324 foster families at the Society. In 2006/2007, we worked with more than 11,835 families and more than 26,491 children. Additionally, more than 3,000 children were in our care on a short or long term basis during the course of the year. For every child we brought into our care, we helped eight more in their own home.

For more information, visit www.TorontoCAS.ca

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