



CHILDREN'S
AID SOCIETY
of TORONTO

LA SOCIÉTÉ
DE L'AIDE à
L'ENFANCE
DE TORONTO



How and Why Children Enter CAS Care

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 assessed 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.

In 2014, CAS of Toronto completed 7,052 investigations. Approximately 2,300, or the equivalent of 92 classrooms of children, were found to fit the definition of child maltreatment or be at risk of harm from their parent or caregiver. Public perception is that CAS's brings most of the children it investigates into care. The fact is that with the exception of Quebec, Ontario has the lowest rate of children entering care at 3 percent. That means that in 97 percent of the cases investigated by the CAS, the child remains with their family and a plan is developed to ensure their safety. Each CAS is working hard to do even better in this area and a key partner in this achievement is the child's immediate circle of relatives and friends. It is the grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins and even older siblings (called kinship care), as well as coaches, teachers and neighbours (called kith care) who know the child and who step forward to offer to care for that child, in the short or long-term. In Toronto we are in desperate need of these kinship and kith relationships to help us keep children and youth with their family and in their community.

When a child does have to enter the care of a CAS the preferred option is always family based care, including foster families. Foster families are an essential part of that village that helps care for our children when they can't stay with their family. In Toronto we are in short supply of foster families. This means that for a large number of youth in our care, they will be placed in homes outside the city – away from their family, community and in some cases their culture because a foster family, kinship or kith care arrangement in Toronto is not available. This is not a preferred solution for us. Toronto's children and youth in care need their village. Please consider becoming a foster, kinship or kith parent to a child in care in Toronto.

For more information please call The Children's Aid Society of Toronto at

416-924-4646 or **inquiries@TorontoCAS.ca**

www.TorontoCAS.ca