



CHILDREN'S
AID SOCIETY
of TORONTO

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

ANTI-OPPRESSION, ANTI-RACISM POLICY

Approved by the Board of Directors
November 9, 2006

The Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAST) values the advancement of equality, diversity and human rights for clients, staff, care providers and volunteers. It recognizes and upholds the inherent dignity, worth, and rights of each individual and is committed to the pursuit of equality, freedom from adverse discrimination and harassment and the removal of all barriers to equal opportunity. We recognize and uphold the principle of equality of access to appropriate services which are sensitive to the needs of clients whatever their race, religion, colour, national origin, ethnic origin, ancestry, citizenship, age, sex, sexual orientation, place of origin, marital status, or ability. (Reference: CAST Code of Ethics, 1989). In addition, the Society believes that each individual should be free from discrimination, harassment and barriers to equal opportunity related to their gender identity and social condition, including their economic status.

BACKGROUND

Last year, April 2005 to March 2006, the Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAST) served 13,511 families and 30,891 children and youth, 27,565 of whom were served in their own home. 55% of families and 60% of the 3,326 children/youth served in foster or residential care self-identified themselves as members of a minority culture or race. Many are newcomers to Toronto. In 2001, 49% or almost 1 of every 2 persons in Toronto was born outside Canada making the City of Toronto home to people from 169 countries speaking more than 100 languages. It is estimated that by the year 2017, 51% of the population of Greater Toronto will not be from the traditional dominant culture.

Approximately 63% of the children and youth served by the Society live at or below the poverty line. Some children/youth live with a physical and/or developmental disability while others identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, trans-gendered, gender-variant or inter-sexed. A disproportionate number of families served by the Society are single parent, women led - 51% compared to the national average of 25%.

The children, youth, families and communities served by CAST reflect the increasing diversity of the City of Toronto, aptly described as one of the most multicultural cities in the world. In addition, Society staff, foster parents and volunteers increasingly reflect the City's diversity.

Like most child welfare organizations the Society recognizes the need to develop and provide culturally appropriate child welfare practices and services to the children, youth, families and communities living in Toronto. Culturally appropriate refers to meeting the unique needs of each individual and/or family by responding equitably to that person's social, historical, cultural, ethnic, racial and religious location. Cultural appropriateness recognizes that the Society has a responsibility to work sensitively, respectfully and creatively with families from diverse cultures.

Many newcomer families and communities come to Toronto from countries where no formal child welfare system exists and where little to no information about Ontario child welfare legislation is provided to them as part of the pre-migration process. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Society has found itself confronted and challenged by newcomer communities who are unfamiliar with the legislated role of child welfare agencies to intervene with families to ensure the safety of children/youth. While this has created tension and occasionally conflict, newcomer, diverse communities and the Society share a common belief that every child/youth has a right to safety and security and to be free from abuse.

In its efforts to address the concerns articulated at both a family and community level, CAST has, over the past several years, engaged in a number of bridging diversity initiatives in partnership with a number of Toronto's communities. In 1995, for example, the Society approved a policy committing itself to making services safe and accessible to lesbian, gay and bisexual children/youth. Earlier, the Board had approved same sex fostering and adoption policies. The current Bridging Diversity Advisory Committee (BDC) is another example of a Society bridging diversity initiative, as are a number of other agency initiatives involving partnerships with diverse, newcomer communities.

Society staff and members of a number of Toronto's diverse, newcomer communities working together on the BDC were mandated to recommend an organizational change process to guide the Society in providing culturally appropriate child welfare services within the context of the Child & Family Services Act. A critical first step is the creation of a Board approved Anti-Oppression, Anti-Racism Policy that will frame the organizational change process at the governance, human resource and service levels of the agency. In taking this step, it should be recognized that CAST continues its tradition of developing forward thinking, leading-edge child welfare policy to reflect the ever-changing community it serves.

It is important to note that the policy has been deliberately and consciously titled anti-oppression, anti-racism at the strong recommendation of the BDC members and subsequently supported by stakeholder consultation feedback, including the community stakeholders. Much discussion and debate took place within the BDC as to the title. It is critical that the title of the policy reflect the belief that the end goal of policy implementation is an organization and services that are free of all forms of oppression for all stakeholders and achieves equity. A deliberate decision was made to also include the term racism, which while included under the umbrella term oppression, was deemed to be of such a significant nature for the children, youth and families served by the society, as well as all agency stakeholders, that it required highlighting. It is believed that identifying racism in the title of the policy highlights the significant impact of racism on agency stakeholders and demands that it be addressed as a component of policy implementation.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The process of developing this policy has been comprehensive and lengthy, involving frank and courageous discussions among members of the BDC and agency stakeholders. The BDC members have spent considerable time in self-reflection, self-education and setting out guiding principles. Part of the education process involved hearing about similar efforts in other related organizations such as the Family Service Association of Toronto, CCAS and the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health, as well as presentations and discussions facilitated by BDC members.

Stakeholder Consultations took place from May to September, 2006 when a working draft of the policy was shared with the Board of Directors, the Board Advocacy-Policy Committee, the Senior Advisory Team, agency staff, foster parents, volunteers, youth in care, CUPE Local 2316 and the community at large. The BDC developed a Question Guide to help facilitate the feedback consultations that took place at staff team meetings, branch focus groups or through individual feedback to BDC members using phones, fax, e-mails, conversations with BDC members or other methods of their choice. The Board of Directors engaged in an in-camera consultation with an external facilitator prior to considering the policy for approval.

The proposed policy was welcomed and well received by all stakeholders, who commended the Society for developing an Anti-Oppression, Anti-Racism Policy. The community stakeholders were impressed that the policy speaks directly to the issues of power and privilege which they felt were not always addressed in similar policy statements. However, they, along with other stakeholders struggled to understand the Anti-Oppression, Anti-Racism Policy in the context of the Child & Family Services Act, which can be perceived and experienced by many families from diverse, newcomer communities to be in and of itself oppressive.

Common themes identified in the consultations included:

- The importance of strong organizational commitment and leadership on the part of the Board and senior management to implement the policy within specific timeframes and change impact measurements;
- The need for all stakeholders to create a “safe and respectful” environment that encourages, supports and sustains self-reflection, the appreciation of differences and diversity, and engagement in both the difficult conversations and the organizational changes that policy implementation will require;
- Organizational commitment of dedicated human and financial resources to provide the tools required for stakeholders to engage in the change process;
- The development of internal, organizational infrastructures to implement and sustain the change process. This may include: training; systems and governance analysis; coordination; communications; dedicated time and staffing resources; and evaluation resources;
- Measuring the impact of the organizational change process on a regular and on-going basis;
- Individual and organizational accountability for developing anti-oppressive, anti-racist child welfare policies and practices and for creating a work environment free from all forms of oppression and racism.

CONTEXT

Anti-oppression, in combating all facets of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, agism, disableism, etc, begins with the premise that there are inequities in power that pervade all social relations. These power imbalances are socially constructed or learned ideologies where a hierarchical relationship (implicitly or explicitly) benefits a dominant or privileged individual/group(s) and marginalizes others (Bell, 1997; Bishop, 1994, Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). Oppression occurs when a person is blocked from opportunities towards self development, excluded from full participation in society, denied rights that the dominant group takes for granted or is assigned a second class citizenship, not because of individual talent, merit or failure, but because of her/his membership in a particular group or category of people (Mullaly,2002).

Both the dominant group and those who are oppressed learn oppression through an unconscious, socialization process rather than through an active, conscious learning process. Therefore, deconstructing and ‘unlearning’ oppression is possible by engaging in a conscious and active process of challenging previously held personal and organizational values, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes. If one believes that oppression is learned, then anti-oppression can be viewed as a process of deconstructing and ‘unlearning’.

We believe that, while Toronto’s diversity has added cultural, social and economic benefits to our community, it has also resulted in the marginalization and oppression of groups who experience neither full access to nor participation in the life of the City and its institutions. Despite continuously demonstrating their resiliency and strength, many newcomer communities are experiencing disproportionately high rates of poverty, unemployment, under employment, reduced academic success, high rates of youth dropping out of school and increasing contact between youth and the criminal justice systems.

Oppressions such as racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, agism, disableism etc., are interrelated and interlocked (Dei, 1996). That is to say, aspects of social differences such as race, gender, sexual orientation and class are unintelligible without considering them in relation to each other (Ng, 1993). Thus individuals and/or groups can simultaneously experience oppression from more than one source of their social location.

While not endorsing a hierarchy of oppression, practice tells us that an increasing number of children, youth and parents being served by the Society identify with a racial minority group. Race or skin colour seems to be a salient aspect of social difference when considering the experience of visible minority communities who experience disproportionate levels of unemployment, under-employment, poverty and academic underachievement. Racism is defined as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.” (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965)

In a landmark study by Michael Ornstein, *“Ethno-Racial Groups in Toronto, 1971-2001: A Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile”*, Institute for Social research, York University, January, 2006, he reports that non-European ethno-racial groups experience considerable

disadvantage in the labour market compared to European groups. “Accounting for the effects of age, education and immigration leaves a gap of about 20 percent in the income of men from European and non-European ethno-racial groups, with the members of the African groups somewhat worse off (about 25percent) and the South and Central Americans somewhat better off (about 17 percent).” More recent newcomers fare worse than those who have been in Canada longer. “Extreme poverty affects the Somali, Afghan and Ethiopian groups, over half of whose members are below the low income cut-off: and the rate of low income is between 40 and 50 percent for the “Other West Asian”, Iraqi and Taiwanese groups. Extreme economic disadvantage is highly racialized. All twenty of the poorest ethno-racial groups in Toronto are non-European.”

All facets of oppression are interrelated by common elements of power and control (Pharr, 1996) The dynamics of oppression share three pervasive components: 1) stereotypes, assumptions, theories and/or the dominant ideology; 2) bias, prejudice and /or the attitudes, positive or negative directed at the oppressed group(s); and 3) discrimination whether it is expressed individually, internal or on a societal, systemic or institutional level. Each form of social oppression is pervasive, feeds on and is sustained by the next.

The dynamics of oppression create a climate of silence and invisibility for marginalized groups. For example, marginalized people rarely have a representative voice or image in mainstream society. This results in stereotypical misrepresentations and encourages prejudicial attitudes. When these prejudices are acted out, discrimination occurs. Systemic discrimination occurs when individual acts of discrimination develop into widely accepted norm. “It must be acknowledged that while oppression may manifest itself as an overt, intentional, individualistic act, it is most likely to be covert, unintentional, and embedded in the culture and institutions of our society”. (Mullaly, 2002)

Anti-oppressive practice recognizes that social identity and oppression is complex, takes many forms and has many intersecting relationships. Power and privilege are relative to one’s location or position in society. Anti-oppression means allying with the marginalized individual or group and requires that all individuals, groups and institutions acknowledge the power and privilege that comes with their social location. Strategies for change require that we all share responsibility to address oppression.

Anti-oppressive practice involves working to eliminate oppression by addressing the power imbalance derived from membership in a dominant group and complicated by the power associated with the legislated mandate of child welfare. It is “an approach to social work practice which seeks to reduce, undermine or eliminate discrimination and oppression, specifically in terms of challenging sexism, racism, ageism, and ableism and other forms of discrimination encountered in social work.” (Thompson, 1993) Practice is driven in service delivery systems by culturally preferred choices, not by interventions that are culturally blind or free. (Cross T. et al, 1989)

PRINCIPLES

While in keeping with the legal mandate of the Child & Family Services Act, Ministry Standards & Guidelines and other relevant legislative requirements and Society policies, CAS-Toronto is committed to anti-oppression in the following ways:

Access

Aims to ensure that all aspects of the agency, including its employ, physical space, services and governance are reachable, approachable, obtainable and permits entry.

Inclusiveness

Actively reaching out, in culturally appropriate and respectful ways, to include and welcome people from diverse communities to participate in the decision making processes of the organization as well as to promote fair access to information and services at CAST. It also involves including and welcoming individuals from diverse groups to provide input into agency policies and services.

Respect

Recognizing, valuing, and respecting different views, values, orientations, histories and cultures of diverse groups, while acknowledging the significance of child welfare legislation and the CAST mission statement, Code of Ethics and any other relevant agency policies.

Accountability

Aim to ensure that the Board of Directors, staff, foster and residential care providers and volunteers actively engage in implementing an anti-oppression-anti-racism policy. Further, that purchase of service providers be informed of and be expected to provide care and services that comply with the Society's Anti-Oppression-Anti-racism Policy and practices.

Advocacy

Continue to ensure that, both internally and externally, policies and services seek to eradicate systemic barriers to equity, equality, inclusiveness, access, and respect.

Equity

Aim to ensure fairness in the ways services and information are provided, to include communities in decision-making processes, sharing power and resources, and that recruitment and hiring practices at all levels of CAS-Toronto are reflective of the diversity of our society.

Equity is the standard by which to measure all related principles.

POLICY STATEMENT

Whereas the Children's Aid Society of Toronto believes that it is the right of all children, youth, families, communities, staff, care providers, volunteers and persons affiliated with the Society to be free from all forms of oppression and racism be it resolved that:

The Children's Aid Society of Toronto will, with diligence, take the steps required to review existing agency policies and practices, develop new ones, deliver services and create a work environment free from all forms of oppression, including racism.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Adopting this policy demonstrates the commitment of CAST to delivering anti-oppression/anti-racism child welfare practices. The policy will require an organizational change process that will have varying implications, some of which can be anticipated and others that can't. Some anticipated implications are:

- The implementation of this policy, while being consistent with Canadian laws, will result in services delivered to children, youth, families and care providers that values and respects their cultural, racial, ethnic and religious diversity, resulting in improved relationships of CAST within diverse, newcomer communities and the community at large.
- The policy is an official and formal way to acknowledge and encourage organizational change. The anti-oppression/anti-racism policy will require the agency to examine systemic barriers that inadvertently disadvantage access to services for clients, access to employment for internationally trained social workers, promotion opportunities for staff from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, and access to opportunities for newcomer families to qualify as foster parents, adoptive parents and volunteers, including board membership.
- Adopting this Anti-Oppression/Anti-Racism Policy sets the agency on a course of organizational change that will require all involved to challenge both personal and organizational values and practices that may be experienced as oppressive and/or racist. Reflecting on how one's personal power and privilege, in combination with the inherent power associated with the child welfare mandate, impacts on our interactions with our clients and colleagues can be enlightening but also emotionally demanding and challenging. There is no easy way to accomplish this process, as it will require all stakeholders to engage in difficult conversations with each other, as well as ask the organization to review and revise current policies and practices.
- Creating an anti-oppressive/anti-racist organization furthers the creation of an equitable, respectful and positive work environment that values and benefits from the diversity of staff, foster parents, care providers and volunteers, including board members. This kind of work environment encourages people to want to be part of the organization and sustains them to remain part of it over the long term.
- Significant commitment and leadership will be required from the Board and senior management in guiding and supporting the implementation of the policy. Children, youth, parents and families will look to them to help the agency engage in a change process that will require staff, foster parents, care providers and volunteers to reflect on the power and privilege that comes from their location in society and to consciously challenge previously held values, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of people different than themselves. The Board and senior managers will be expected to set the example and act as role models in this process.
- Policy implementation will require dedicated human and financial resources to support training and consultation, carry out systemic reviews, implement new procedures and practices and conduct on-going evaluation, subject to financial ability

- Data collection within the agency will need to be revised and improved in order for it to accurately reflect the clients being served. This may require a review of the purpose for which the data is being collected, how it will be used and its impact on service planning and delivery.

The adoption of the policy will impact on the agency's community partners, requiring the development and implementation of a communication strategy to inform the community about the new policy as well as the implications of its implementation. It might also be realistic to anticipate that as the Society establishes a 'higher standard' of anti-oppressive/anti-racist child welfare practices for itself, expectations of other organizations and systems providing services and care for CAST involved children, youth and families may also be raised to a 'higher standard'. This may require CAST, subject to the Society's financial ability, to assist community service providers to meet new agency expectations.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS	
<i>Ableism/Disabeism</i>	Ableism refers to consciously or unconsciously held beliefs that take expression in individual and/or institutional actions, policies, and practices that subordinates and views as inferior a person or group who suffers from physical, emotional, developmental, psychological, or psychiatric challenges.
<i>Ageism</i>	Ageism refers to consciously or unconsciously held beliefs that take expression in individual and/or institutional actions, policies, and practices that subordinates and views as inferior a person or group based upon age.
<i>Anti-Oppression</i>	Anti-oppression, in combating all facets of racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, agism, disableism, etc, begins with the premise that there are inequities in power that pervade all social relations.
<i>Classism</i>	Classism refers to consciously or unconsciously held beliefs that take expression in individual, institutional, and economic systems that promote policies and practices that subordinates and views as inferior, a person or group who suffers from economic hardship.
<i>Discrimination</i>	Unequal treatment based on one or more of the prohibited grounds, except where conduct is permitted under the Ontario Human Rights Code. Discrimination can be intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect but the result is adverse on prohibited grounds.
<i>Diversity</i>	Refers to the wide ranging aspects of social differences including such areas as race, colour, sexual orientation, religion, gender, language, age, ability, place of origin, and culture.
<i>Equity</i>	A state of fairness or justice, in which individuals and groups are provided with services, information, and benefits in a way that promotes fair and just conditions.
<i>Harassment</i>	A course of vexatious comments or conduct based on a prohibited ground as defined in the Ontario Human Rights Code, that is known to be or should reasonably be known to be unwelcome.
<i>Heterosexism</i>	The systemic beliefs and practices that benefit heterosexuals. It is the most pervasive source of LGB discrimination, even if unintended and, is often based on the assumption of heterosexuality and that being heterosexual is normal or preferred.
<i>Inclusiveness</i>	The degree to which an agency actively seeks, welcomes and collaborates with diverse community partners.

<i>Power Sharing</i>	Having in common, between two or more individuals or groups, the capacity to affect decision-making. Power sharing involves aiming to ensure that individuals or groups, particularly those from marginalized communities, have the capacity and resources to participate fully in effecting decision-making outcomes.
<i>Racism</i>	Racism is defined as “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.” (International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965).
<i>Sharing Resources</i>	Networking with community support groups to sharing in common services, programs, information, knowledge, funding and skills to promote the well being of children, youth, families and communities.
<i>Social Location</i>	How one is treated in society based on their position/location that includes the power and privilege associated with one’s economic status, race, education, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, marital status, religion, national origin, legal status.

Related Agency Policies:

- Code of Ethics
- Harassment & Discrimination Policy
- We Are Your Children Too: Accessible Child Welfare Services For Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Policy
- Same Sex Adoption Policy
- Same Sex Fostering Policy.

This policy was developed by the Bridging Diversity Committee of the Children’s Aid Society of Toronto.

REFERENCES

- Bell, L. A. (1997). Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, & P. Griffin (Eds.). *Teaching for social justice handbook*. Pp. 1-15. New York: Routledge.
- Bishop, A. (1994). *Becoming an ally: Breaking the cycle of oppression*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- CAST Code of Ethics, 1998
- CAST 2004 Annual Report
- Cross, T. Bazron, B., Dennis, K., & Isaacs, M.(1989). *Towards a culturally competent system of care*. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Child Development Center.
- Dei, G.J.S. (1996). *Anti-racism education: Theory and practice*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Hardiman, R. & Jackson, B.W. (1997). *Conceptual Foundations for Social Justice Courses, Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*. New York: Routledge.
- Mullaly, R., (2002), *Challenging Oppression: A Critical Social Work Approach*, Don Mills, Ontario, University Oxford Press, Canada.
- Ng, R. (1993). Racism, sexism, and nation building in Canada. In C. McCarthy & W. Crichlow (Eds.), *Race, identity, and representation in education* (pp. 50–59). New York: Routledge.
- Pharr, S. (1996). *In the Time of the Right: Reflections on Liberation*. Berkeley, California: Chardon Press.
- Thompson, N. (1993). *Antidiscriminatory practice*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

Acceptable Use Policy



Purpose/ Rationale:

The Children's Aid Society of Toronto (hereafter referred to as "CAST"), in part through its "Acceptable Use Policy," seeks to achieve the following goals with respect to its Technology Resources:

- Protect Users and guests
- Adhere to all applicable laws and regulations
- Maintain the integrity and quality of technical resources
- Ensure that the privacy and security of personal information concerning clients and others is maintained

Scope:

All Users and Guests will adhere to the "Acceptable Use Policy" at all times when using any Technology Resources of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto ("CAST"), either remotely or while at a CAST location. All use of Technical Resources managed by CAST, is governed by the "Acceptable Use Policy."

Definitions:

"User" means an employee, foster parent, volunteer, student, contractor or other individual who has been given CAST credentials for access to or use of CAST technology resources.

"Data" means information in a raw or unorganized form (such as letters, numbers, symbols, or graphics) that refers to, or represents, conditions, ideas, or objects.

"Guest" Any individual who has been given limited or temporary access to CAST technology resources.

"CAST Credentials" means information provided to Users from CAST's IT Department which gives them the ability to access CAST technology resources (examples include an account number/name and a secret password).

"Information" means timely and accurate data organized and presented in a way that gives it meaning/relevance leading to increased understanding or reduced uncertainty.

"Personal activity" means any activity unrelated to a User's role with CAST or related instructional, academic, administrative, and/or research objectives (also known as a "non-CAST activity").

"Contractor" means an independent business providing value to CAST pursuant to an agreement or contract, also known as a vendor, strategic partner, or consultant.

“Technology Resources” includes laptops, desktops, telephones, pagers, cellphones, smartphones, photocopy equipment, faxes, PC viewers, monitors, personal digital assistants (PDA), multifunction printer (MFP), network resources (ie. WLAN/LAN), software, internet, email and electronic storage devices, mobile hotspots and all other devices that the CAST’s IT Department may support.

Policy:

1. General

1.1. Usage of the CAST’s Technology Resources must always be consistent with the interests of CAST and its role in the community, its Vision, Mission & Values Statements and its assigned Mandate. All Users must respect and adhere to this and other related policies as well as in accordance with the law. All Users must respect the rights of others and observe all legal obligations when utilizing these resources.

1.2. Users are to obey the law and abide by all CAST policies, standards, and guidelines when using any of CAST’s technology resources.

1.3. Users will only access information and data about clients, service providers, collaterals, employees, volunteers, foster parents and others using Technology Resources for the purpose of providing CAS services as required by their job duties with respect to identified individuals and families, or as expressly permitted by their supervisor or manager.

1.4. Technology Resources are primarily for work-related activities. They may be available for personal use as authorized by and subject to the specific limitations and conditions outlined in this Policy.

1.5. Technology Resources are Agency property. They must not be used improperly in contravention of this policy.

1.6. Users must make every effort to conserve CAST’s limited resources by using Technology Resources judiciously. One User’s use of CAST’s Technology Resources must not disrupt the operation of Agency systems by other Users.

1.7. Any activity that could impact the fair, safe, and productive use of Technology Resources or negatively impact CAST’s operations, assets, and/or reputation is prohibited.

1.8. Users are required to conduct themselves in an appropriate, professional manner when using any of CAST’s Technology Resources and services.

1.9. Users are accountable for all activities logged against their CAST credentials (username and password) or electronic signature code.

1.10. By using any CAST Technology Resources, a User acknowledges and agrees that he/she has read the "Acceptable Use Policy" and agrees to abide by all terms and conditions.

2. Identity/Access

2.1. Users are to access Technology Resources only by using the CAST credentials (username and password) assigned to them. Use of another User's credentials is prohibited.

2.2. CAST usernames and passwords are personal identifiers equivalent to a signature on a document and should not be shared with or disclosed to anyone at any time.

2.3. Concealing one's identity when accessing Technology Resources is prohibited. Similarly, masquerading or impersonating another individual is also prohibited.

2.4. Users must adhere to proper security and authentication procedures by changing passwords when required. The current password expiration for systems is 60 days.

3. Security

3.1. Users must take care to ensure Technology Resources as well as related facilities, equipment and installations are safely secured when not in use. Lost or stolen Technology Resources must be reported immediately to the IT HelpDesk.

3.2. Users and Guests are required to safeguard the confidentiality all sensitive, privileged and personal data and information to which they have access by way of CAST Technology Resources.

3.3. Users and Guests must take every possible precaution at all times to ensure that no other person gains knowledge of their CAST passwords.

3.4. All communications sent or received by way of CAST Technology Resources should be treated as confidential by Users and accessed only by the intended recipient. Users are not authorized to retrieve or read information that is not sent to them, except under circumstances where the employee is absent and the supervisor must open mail or forward urgent or time sensitive communications; or where the person is on extended leave; or where the system administrator deems it necessary to the integrity of the service area or computer system, and then only if approved by Director, Information Technology & Property.

4. Personal Use

4.1. Limited use of Technology Resources for personal use is acceptable and permitted provided that use does not violate any other aspect of this policy.

4.2. The personal use of Technology Resources may not interfere or otherwise conflict with CAST operations or incur any additional costs for CAST.

4.3. Users should use caution when using services for personal use, recognizing that data created, received, and/or stored may be accessed by CAST at any time.

4.4. When a User chooses to use CAST Technology Resources for personal use, CAST is not responsible for any consequences of privacy/confidentiality breaches with respect to the data or information stored on CAST Technology Resources.

4.5. The excessive consumption of Technology Resources such as network bandwidth, server time, file storage space, printer paper, etc. is prohibited. CAST may define what constitutes excessive use at any time.

4.6. Technology Resources, when used for personal use, are provided "as is" and without any guarantee or warranty whatsoever.

4.7. CAST reserves the right to modify its Technology Resources or any aspect thereof at any time and without notice. CAST may also modify or terminate the availability of Technology Resources for personal use at any time with as much advanced notice as possible.

4.8. Users and Guests must be aware that deleting electronically stored files does not ensure permanent erasure. Deleted data and information may be recoverable by CAST.

5. CAST Access, Use and Disclosure of data and information

At its discretion and in accordance with applicable law, CAST may access, use, and disclose the data and information of its Users and Guests in the following circumstances:

- as required by Federal, Provincial, or local law enforcement agencies to carry out essential CAST agency functions
- as required to preserve/protect public health and safety
- where there are reasonable grounds to believe a law has been violated
- to investigate a breach of CAST policy
- to recover business data after an employee has left the organization
- to execute a spot audit or perform any planned monitoring on systems.

Approval is required from the Director, Information Technology & Property.

6. Prohibited Activities

6.1 Users and Guest shall not use (or allow anyone else to use) any of CAST's technical services to:

- violate any law or encourage others to violate any law
- install, use, or distribute software for which one does not have a license
- access, modify, distribute, or reproduce copyrighted material without a license
- create, view, collect, or share pornographic, offensive, or indecent images
- create or distribute malware or other disruptive/destructive constructs
- violate the intellectual property rights of another individual

- distribute bulk mail (spam) or other messages for personal use purposes
- waste bandwidth, server time, storage space, printer paper, or other resources
- compromise CAST's legitimate interests

6.2 Unless granted an exemption by the Director, Information Technology & Property, no User may use (or allow anyone else to use) any of CAST's technical services to:

- impede, interfere, impair, or otherwise cause harm to the activities of others
- monitor or scan networked resources
- seek to learn or use another person's credentials (username or password)
- operate a commercial or for-profit business without authorization
- intrude into the networks, systems, data files, or computers of others
- use, access, or disclose information on co-workers, friends, or relatives
- edit or delete one's own employee, student, contractor, and/or guest records
- transmit data to any off-site/online storage location not managed by CAST (i.e. Cloud based storage)

7. Responsibility

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that their employees know the Agency Information Technology policy, standards and guidelines and that they are provided with the necessary Agency training related to this subject matter. Supervisors and Managers are also responsible for enforcing the policy.

All Users are responsible for following the provisions of this policy, including:

- 1) Refrain from responding to writers who they do not know personally as this may release a virus, or in the case where e-mails have been sent out randomly, attempting to confirm the validity of the e-mail address may ultimately lead to even more inappropriate e-mails being sent.
- 2) Reporting receipt of inappropriate offensive e-mail which constitutes harassment or discrimination;
- 3) Reporting security incidents, breaches and/or exposures to their supervisor or manager, with the expectation they will inform other areas and individuals that need to know so that corrective action could be taken as required.

8. Monitoring

8.1. All Technology Resources, including User and Guest activity, are actively monitored and logged for security, diagnostic, and audit purposes.

8.2. CAST respects the privacy of its employees, students, contractors, and guests and will not use, access, or disclose personal data or information except in accordance with this policy.

8.3. Data and information created, received, and/or stored at CAST may be accessed during the normal course of service maintenance or troubleshooting.

9. Enforcement

9.1. CAST may reserves the right to have authorized personnel periodically or regularly access and audit the contents of its computer Technology Resources systems to monitor for the appropriateness of their content. Improper use by Users may result in cancellation of privileges and/ or disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Managers have the right / responsibility to monitor use in accordance with this policy.

9.2. Suspected violations of the "Acceptable Use Policy" must be reported to the Director, Information Technology & Property

9.3. Pending an investigation, CAST reserves the right to immediately suspend a User's access to any and all technical services.

9.4. Employees and students who violate the "Acceptable Use Policy" may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or expulsion.

9.5. Contractors and guests who violate the "Acceptable Use Policy" may have their CAST contracts terminated and/or be refused all future entry to CAST locations (managed offices and homes).

9.6. CAST reserves the right, at its discretion, to permanently revoke the access of any User or Guest to any and all Technology Resources at any time.

9.7. Questions about this policy may be directed to the Director, Information Technology & Property ahughes@torontocas.ca or call extension 2020.

Cross Reference

Code of Ethics

Discrimination and Harassment Policy

Psychological Harassment and Bullying Policy

Approved by the Strategic Leadership Team on December 10th, 2014



CODE OF ETHICS

The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to identify and establish contemporary standards or principles of conduct that govern our actions as members of the Society.

The Children's Aid Society of Toronto is committed to developing a work environment and a service delivery system, free from all forms of oppression, including racism.

VISION

A city where children are safe, families are strong, and communities are supported.

MISSION

Leading with excellence and working in partnership to:

- Prevent situations that lead to child abuse and neglect by embracing, strengthening and supporting families, and communities;
- Protect children and youth from abuse and neglect;
- Provide safe and nurturing care for children, and youth;
- Advocate to meet the needs of children, youth, families, and communities.

VALUES

- Placing the needs of children and youth first;
- Creating an environment that promotes trust, equality, respect, diversity, openness and honesty;
- Affirming and valuing our staff, care providers, clients and volunteers;
- Promoting enduring relationships with children and youth;
- Being accountable and transparent;
- Demonstrating excellence, leadership, teamwork and innovation

We take pride in our vision, mission and values and undertake to safeguard the trust and confidence which the public vests in us. We commit ourselves to discharge our responsibilities and duties in a way that acknowledges our unique position within our community, inspires respect and follows the highest standards of conduct.

It is to this end that we adopt this Code of Ethics. It is important and expected that we acquaint ourselves with it and acknowledge that our continued employment and relationship with the Society are dependent upon upholding it.

To maintain the values and goals of the Society, we pursue our knowledge of how we behave towards each other within a framework of conscience, duty, accountability and honour. It is our intention that we uphold the Code in spirit and in letter, that it provides critical focus to our thinking in each situation we encounter and that our actions give it effect.

INTERPRETATION

For the Purposes of this Code of Ethics, members of the Society mean the Board of Directors, staff and, where applicable, foster parents, students and volunteers.

The Board of Directors of the Children's Aid Society of Toronto adopted this Code of Ethics, in its present form, on February 21, 2013. It came into effect on that day.

1: Administration of Service

We undertake, collectively and individually, to uphold and comply with all laws, rules, regulations, policies and procedures that impact on our job responsibilities and the mission and mandate of the Society.

Commentary

- The Society reserves the right to make rules, policies and procedures necessary to govern the agency's business and the actions of its staff and to ensure the proper discharge of its mission and mandate.
- The Society will comply with all applicable laws, rules and regulations of the federal, provincial and local governments. It will uphold the terms and conditions of employment and the applicable collective agreement with its employees.
- We undertake to acquaint ourselves with all laws, rules, regulations, policies and procedures which impact on our specific responsibilities. We undertake to make decisions, as required, which are consistent with these and then to act accordingly.
- We hold the establishment of rules, policies and procedures to be dynamic, sensitive to error and responsive to change. We undertake, therefore, to review and revise, as required, our rules, policies and procedures to ensure our full potential to provide quality service.

2: Integrity

We are dedicated to, and accept responsibility for, the discharge of our duties with a high degree of personal and professional integrity.

Commentary

- We undertake to act with respect for the rights of others.
- We acknowledge that dishonourable conduct by an individual member of the Society will reflect adversely upon the integrity of the agency as a whole and may impair the essential relationship of trust we have with our clients, associates, funders, the community and with each other.

3: Quality of Service

While acknowledging the differences which may exist among our respective roles, positions and responsibilities, we hold each to make a substantial contribution to the work of the Society. Therefore, as members of the Society, we undertake to perform our respective duties with competence, conscientiousness and integrity.

We uphold the value of partnership among our clients and colleagues and undertake to act in a way that respects and contributes to their growth and development.

Commentary

- We undertake to attempt to fulfill the requirements of our respective positions such that the provision and quality of service to the Society and its clients is timely and effective and meets the standard of performance established by the agency.
- We undertake to remain current in our respective areas of knowledge and skill and, as applicable, to engage in continuing study, education, training and development.
- We undertake to seek from each other, and to provide to each other, consultation and assistance, with respect, dignity and in the spirit of partnership.
- In matters outside our immediate competence or experience, where we cannot acquire such competence or experience without undue delay or risk to our clients or to the Society itself, we undertake to seek the timely assistance of our colleagues both within and outside the agency and/or direction from our superiors.

4: Freedom from Discrimination and Harassment

We recognize and uphold the inherent dignity, worth, and rights of each individual. We undertake to pursue equality, freedom from adverse discrimination and harassment and to pursue the removal of all barriers to equal opportunity.

Commentary

- We reject, and will neither tolerate nor condone, any actions, behaviours or attitudes in the work environment which may cause discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, colour, ethnic origin, ancestry, citizenship, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, place of origin, marital status, family status, record of offences or disability, as defined in the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.
- We reject, and will neither tolerate nor condone, any actions, behaviours or attitudes in the work environment which may cause harassment or the threat of it based on any of the prohibited grounds listed above.
- We reject, and will neither tolerate nor condone, any actions, behaviours or attitudes in the work environment which may cause the creation of intimidating, hostile or offensive surroundings or which interferes unreasonably with the ability of an individual to perform his or her duties.
- We undertake to uphold the Ontario *Human Rights Code*, any other relevant federal and municipal laws and all policies and procedures that exist to protect the human rights of individuals.
- Each member of the Society has the right to protection and remedy, through relevant law, policies and procedures, established externally and internally, and without reprisal or threat of reprisal, to address matters arising from discrimination and/or harassment.

5: Diversity

We recognize and uphold the principle of equitable access to appropriate services which are sensitive to the needs of clients whatever their race, religion, colour, ethnic origin, ancestry, citizenship, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, place of origin, marital status, family status, disability, social condition or economic status.

Commentary

- We acknowledge diversity as an integral component of our communities and undertake to provide equitable access to opportunities and full participation for all individuals.
- We value and respect the diversity of our communities, clients, staff, foster parents and volunteers. We undertake through our actions to develop and promote harmony and positive self images, self worth and self identity.
- We reject, and will neither tolerate nor condone, any expression of bias with respect to the race, religion, colour, ethnic origin, ancestry, citizenship, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, place of origin, marital status, family status, disability, social condition or economic status of any individual, family or community.
- We undertake to uphold all relevant federal, provincial and municipal laws and all policies and procedures that exist to promote and protect equitable access to services and opportunities.

6: Quality of Communication

We uphold the principle of open communication within the Society and the creation of a positive working environment where the flow of timely, accurate and candid information supports the achievement of Society goals and the strengthening of Society values.

Commentary

- We undertake to express ourselves in a way that is courteous and to reject behaviours or attitudes which are rude, provocative or disruptive. We further undertake to refrain from uninformed or inappropriate criticism with respect to the competence or conduct of our colleagues and undertake to prevent ill feelings from influencing our performance or conduct toward our colleagues.
- We undertake to distinguish clearly between our opinions as individuals and our statements as representatives of the Society. When called upon by the Society to help in conveying information to the public, we undertake to do so in an informed way and one which encourages public respect for the Society and the rights of our clients.

7: Disclosure of Information

We undertake to hold in strict confidence all information concerning the business and affairs of the Society and its clients and will reveal such information only if explicitly or implicitly authorized to do so by the Society, the client, or as required by law.

Commentary

- When the law or a court order requires the disclosure of confidential information that disclosure will be limited to the information required.
- The fiduciary relationship of trust that is a fundamental component of the Society's work prevents members of the Society from using any information for his or her benefit, or to the benefit of a third party, without prior full disclosure to the Society and with the authorization of the Society. No information will be used to the detriment of the Society or its work.

8: Conflict of Interest

As members of the Society, we undertake to act in a way that does not cause, or is likely to cause, a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Commentary

- A conflicting interest is one which likely would affect adversely the judgement of a member of the Society when acting for the Society. The presence of a conflict of interest, or the presence of compromising or competing influences, may seriously prejudice our ability to act freely in the fulfilment of our duties and responsibilities as members of the Society.
- We undertake to reveal, through appropriate channels, fully and without delay, any actual or possible conflict of interest.
- We undertake to reveal, through appropriate channels, fully and without delay, any errors or omissions in the performance of our duties and responsibilities which may affect adversely the business of the Society or which may, potentially or in fact, attract legal liability.
- As members of the Society, we undertake to ensure that if we engage in another profession, business or occupation concurrently with our employment by the Society, we will not allow that interest to jeopardize our integrity, independence or competence in the fulfilment of our duties and responsibilities with the Society.



SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

PURPOSE

This policy outlines acceptable use of social networking media for conducting Society-related business with and about clients and conveys expectations regarding at-work and off-duty use of social media.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, students, foster parents, and contractors of the Society.

DEFINITION

Social networking media is technology using the Internet and mobile telephones that allows for the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

Social networking media include but are not limited to: Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Linked-In, Twitter, Flickr, online communities and chat rooms, texting, instant messaging, blogs, wikis, and web-based games. This policy is not limited to any specific technology.

POLICY

The Society acknowledges that social media has become a widespread means of communication among individuals and organizations and that it offers new opportunities and potential benefits. There are also potential risks to be considered. Given the general nature of child protection services, social networking media use must be approached with care to protect personal information and the privacy of all users. Preferred methods of communication between employees, foster parents, volunteers, students and contractors and children, youth, families and collaterals remains face-to-face, telephone, and through the Society's email. At no time is social media communication to become the primary form of communication with children, youth, families, and collaterals.

Any communication through social networking media is or can become public.

Even when deleted, information may endure electronically and may be retrieved and circulated. The identity of contributors is recorded and may be revealed so anonymity is not assured. The privacy challenges posed by social media are impossible to manage at a systems-level. For that reason, this policy gives attention to user behaviour, both professional and personal.

Use of social networking media for Society-related business is a risk-based decision that must be founded on a strong rationale derived from our mission statement and potential benefits for clients in connection with identified service goals and effective service delivery. Use of social networking media must be in accordance with professional ethical standards and all other Society policies and procedures.

Professional boundaries help to safeguard the worker-client relationship¹ and establish a framework for an interaction that benefits the client. When using social media, employees, students and contractors must avoid dual relationships. At no time are personal emails or social networking accounts to be used to communicate with clients. Use of a personal mobile telephone to send text messages to clients releases personal information because the user is not able to block the telephone number². Further, once the personal contact information is known to a client, the worker is open to receiving unsolicited communication on their personal device outside working hours, raising questions about the appropriate response. For these reasons, the Society discourages such use.

As Society employees, foster parents, volunteers, students and contractors may serve as role models and trusted supports to clients, it is important that off-duty personal use of social networking media be consistent with preserving the Society's image and reputation of integrity and credibility and maintaining a positive work environment. Off-duty use of social media may become a work-related matter.

Training will be provided to assist with use of social networking media in accordance with this policy.

PROCEDURES

SUPERVISION

Obtain authorization from a Supervisor prior to using social networking media, including text messaging to clients, as part of provision of service. Supervisors are to discuss with staff appropriate use of social media and ensure workers are familiar with agency policies addressing such use. Such consultation and approval is to be documented in supervision discussion notes.

Communication between supervisors and workers through text messaging is to be limited to worker safety and administrative matters.

TRANSPARENCY

Establish a professional account and profile for using social networking media for Society-related business. Use your name and the Society's e-mail address when creating accounts, [i.e. jdoe@torontocas.ca](mailto:i.e.jdoe@torontocas.ca). Identify your position with the Society when communicating through social media.

PRIVACY ISSUES AND PRIVACY SETTINGS

Use good judgment and common sense to govern use of social media. Read and understand the privacy setting options of a social networking media, especially in regard to how others may access a user account or profile. Apply privacy settings to accounts and profiles that are consistent with the intended usage and as determined by the Society. Enable HTTPS in social media accounts wherever possible to enable use of a secure Internet channel.

At no time is identifying information (i.e. name, picture, etc.) about clients to be exchanged through or posted on any social media belonging to employees, volunteers, students or contractors.

¹ In this instance, worker includes employees, students and contractors involved in Society-related business.

² There may be a few brands of mobile telephone where the blocking feature exists.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Maintain a professional and respectful tone when communicating through social media and be constructive and concise. Consider how messages might reflect on the sender, recipient and the Society. Express information accurately and clearly so that it cannot be misrepresented. Do not use language that might be perceived as defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libellous. Avoid exaggeration, conjecture, derogatory remarks or characterizations, obscenity, copyrighted materials, and legal conclusions. Avoid communications that may alienate, harm, or provoke.

DOCUMENTATION

Document all communication exchanged with or about clients through social media. Direct person-to-person exchanges through social media are to be printed and filed in the client record. Exchanges through instant messaging technology and texting on mobile telephones are considered by the Society as non-written communications and, as such, are to be documented in case notes, recording date, time, method of contact and content of communication.

If through social networking media information that falls under the mandatory reporting child welfare guidelines is discovered, then a report must be made as required by law.

CLIENT CONTACT

Use of social media to communicate with a client may be authorized by a supervisor when its usage is consistent with the service plan or plan of care. Workers are to utilize social networking media only during regular business hours or authorized overtime. However, in exceptional circumstances, approval may be given for time-limited after-hour use. In these situations, the Supervisor and Worker are to clarify in advance the manner in which the Worker is to respond when communications are received from the client outside regular working hours.

The worker will obtain the client's consent to communicate by using social media and will discuss with the client how the agreed upon media will be used, including anticipated response patterns to communications (for example, limitations on contact outside working hours).

Whenever possible, use social media communication options that operate like email, i.e. direct person-to-person, so that only the intended recipient sees the message. Be aware that text messages may be viewed by other than the intended recipient. Workers³ are to shift as soon as possible to preferred communication methods, i.e. face-to-face, telephone, and email.

SOME SPECIFIC SITUATIONS PROTECTION SERVICE WORKERS

Initial contact with clients may be attempted using social networking media in the absence of alternatives and such communication is to have as little specific and confidential information as possible.

Do not extend to or accept from clients requests to be “friends” on social media. If such a request is received, proceed with the client in person to discuss confidentiality and the boundaries of professional helping relationships.

Children Service Workers / Resource Workers:

Children Service Workers may use social networking media in order to encourage and enhance communication with youth. In the event that a request to be “friends” on social media is received from a client, proceed with the client in person to discuss confidentiality and the boundaries of professional helping relationships.

Workers may use social networking media to communicate with any child being served by the Society who is Absent Without Leave (AWOL).

Foster Parents / Adoptive Parents caring for children on Adoption Probation:

Foster parents and adoptive parents who are caring for children on Adoption Probation may text and “friend” children in their care on social media but may not “friend” Society employees, students, volunteers or contractors, or natural parents, or other family members of children in care. Note that Kinship Care parents may “friend” other family members of children in care as they deem appropriate.

Child Protection Investigations:

Workers may use social networking media in accordance with documented investigation plans to identify and/or locate a family which is the subject of a reported referral for service when other means of investigation have been unsuccessful. As the record of activities, messaging, and posted content of social networking media is in the public domain, be wary of the veracity of information obtained in this way and use professional judgement as with any other means or source of information during a child protection investigation.

At the earliest opportunity, workers are to advise clients about how the Society collects and utilizes information, including information available through social media.

Although information posted on social networking media is public and may be viewed by anyone, consider whether a general search for information about a client honours their right to privacy outside of service.

Research Kin / Kith:

Use of social networking media is permitted in accordance with case plans in the search for kin and kith of children, youth, and families involved with the Society. Use is to be for a clear purpose and when the potential of other sources has been exhausted. Limit inquiries to potential kin and kith to requesting identity verification (i.e. “Are you this person?”) and inviting telephone contact for further discussion.

³ Employees, students, volunteers and contractors

CROSS REFERENCES TO EXISTING SOCIETY POLICIES & DOCUMENTS & LEGISLATION

- Anti-Oppression Anti-Racism Policy
- Child and Family Services Act (103(1))
- Code of Ethics (HR Manual)
- Computer Systems and Internet Usage - Policy and Guidelines
- Confidentiality and Release of Information (HR Manual)
- Discrimination & Harassment (HR Manual)
- Employee Attitude and Conduct, Customer Relations(HR Manual)
- Foster Parent Agreement (P.I.G FCS.039)
- Record Keeping (RD.001 – RD.061; SCYC.105- SCYC.116)
- Rights & Responsibilities of Children and Youth in Care (P.I.G. SCYC.10; IRS.056; IRS.059)
- Technology Usage Policy and Guidelines
- Terms and Conditions of Employment (HR Manual)
- Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and Program (HR Manual)