

Annual Report

ANNUAL REPORT

2022
2023

CHILDREN'S
AID SOCIETY
OF TORONTO



Table of contents

Board Chair letter Yeugenia Kazantseva	2
CEO letter Lisa Tomlinson	3
Our messages	4
Our workplace	5
Our Service delivery	6
2022-2023 by the numbers	8
Board of Directors	10
Financial summary	10



Board Chair Letter

YEUGENIA KAZANTSEVA

Dear CAST Community,

It is with great pleasure that I address you as the Chair of the Board of Directors for the

Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAST) and share with you my reflections on the significant work, remarkable progress and notable achievements of the past year. This annual report highlights the exceptional leadership and unwavering dedication of each and every one of our staff at the Agency.

The past year has been a busy and transformative one for CAST. We experienced some changes in the Board membership and the Executive Team, which presented us with unique opportunities for growth and evolution, and at the same time provided us with new and fresh perspectives. Despite these changes, the Agency, Board and staff demonstrated remarkable resilience and a commitment to working together to ensure seamless transitions. It was through this strong leadership and collaborative spirit that we were able to navigate change successfully and I recognize and thank everyone for their tremendous efforts.

Throughout the year, our focus as a Board centered around building our Board Member complement, providing ongoing strategic support and counsel to the CAST Executive Team and evolving and launching the 2023-25 Strategic Plan. The updated plan required collective efforts and extensive engagement from many stakeholders. The dedication and hard work put forth by the Board and Strategic Leadership Team were instrumental in shaping the final, updated, and enhanced Strategic Plan. I am immensely proud of the outcomes that emerged from this comprehensive strategic planning process. Our renewed strategic priorities, clear direction and refined Key Performance Indicators will serve as a roadmap for next year and beyond.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the members of the Board of Directors and the Board Executive Committee for their ongoing dedication and commitment to the Agency's mission. Your valuable insights, expertise, leadership, dedication and support have played a crucial role in shaping our strategic direction and ensuring our organization's success. Your leadership has also been instrumental in fostering an environment of collaboration and community.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Lisa Tomlinson, Interim CEO, and the entire Executive Team. Their strong integrity, leadership, strategic vision, and tireless efforts have been pivotal in driving our Agency forward despite challenges and obstacles along the way. This commitment to excellence and incredible dedication to the children, youth and families we serve has been an inspiration to us all.

Additionally, I want to express our gratitude to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and each and every one of our partners across the Greater Toronto Area. Your collaboration and support have been invaluable. As an Agency we recognize the sheer importance of fostering strong, grounded partnerships with community organizations. By connecting and collaborating with others, we strengthen our organization and team, and services we provide.

Looking ahead, the Board of Directors remains steadfast in its commitment to support the Agency in delivering on its Strategic Plan and top three strategic priorities. Further, we understand the critical need to steward existing partnerships that reflect the diversity of Toronto while also actively building and establishing new ones. By fostering these relationships, we strengthen our Agency and what then we can provide and make available to the families we work with.

In closing, I want to express my deep appreciation and pride in the exceptional work that has been accomplished over the past year. Our Agency's progress and achievements are a testament to the dedication, collaboration, and commitment of our entire organization. Our Agency's progress and achievements are a testament to the continued dedication and support, collaboration, and commitment of our entire organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yeugenia Kazantseva". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Yeugenia Kazantseva
Board Chair
Children's Aid Society of Toronto



CEO Letter

LISA TOMLINSON

Dear CAST staff, Board of Directors and the extended community,

I am pleased to present to you the 2022-23 Annual Report for the Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAST). This report highlights the tremendous work we have accomplished and the significant progress we have made over the past year, thanks to the dedication of our staff, the strong support from our partners in the community, and the guidance provided by our esteemed Board of Directors.

The last year for our Agency was a period filled with much change, hard work and many learnings. Despite the challenges we encountered along the way, our unity and collaborative spirit enabled us to continue enhancing our processes, services and supports to the children, youth, families and communities we serve.

As an Agency we remained resolute and open to change and doing better. I want to acknowledge the collaborative work we undertook with our partners at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Ontario Ombudsman's Office. Together, we identified areas for improvement and ways in which we can enhance the work that we do.

I would like to extend my gratitude to every member of our staff. Your hard work, passion, and leadership have been exemplary and your willingness to embrace change and learn along the way have set us apart and propelled us forward over the last twelve months. Together, we have tackled complex projects, delivered high-quality services, and made a positive impact on the lives of those we serve. Your commitment and exceptional teamwork have been instrumental in our progress.

I would also like to express my heartfelt appreciation to our partners in the community. Your continued support, expertise, collaborative approach, and critical feedback have been vital in enhancing our resources and supports to Service users. Together, we have worked, leveraging our respective strengths, to address the diverse needs and challenges of the communities we serve. The collective impact we have made is a testament to the power of collaboration and partnerships. The child welfare sector cannot do this work alone.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the remarkable guidance and support provided by our dedicated Board

of Directors. Your strategic insights and unwavering commitment to our mission have been instrumental in shaping our direction and ensuring our long-term success. An example of your leadership and expertise is exemplified in the updated 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. Together as part of this planning process the Board and our Strategic Leadership Team recognized that preparing children, youth and families for success should be done from the beginning of Service and at every stage along the Service continuum. We will be implementing this approach over the next fiscal year and beyond. Our Board's commitment to our mission and values has been a constant source of inspiration and motivation for all of us and we are truly grateful.

Now looking ahead to the coming year, we will continue to build upon our learnings, partnerships and successes and focus on implementing the enhanced Strategic Plan. I am confident the plan will strengthen Service delivery, which will include developing more and new partnerships with agencies that are high referral sources. By focusing our efforts and leveraging our collective expertise, we will continue to further enhance the quality of the Service, supports and resources that we can provide to the children, youth and families we work with.

In closing, it was a big and challenging year. Together, we learned much, evolved greatly and achieved some significant milestones along the way. We bring a broad range of perspectives to the work and we don't nor should we always agree but as we embark on the 2023-24 fiscal year, I am confident that, with our shared commitment and dedication, we will address and overcome the new challenges that come our way, foster positive change and continue to enhance our services and supports to those we serve.

Thank you once again to our dedicated staff, Agency partners, and the Board of Directors for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lisa Tomlinson', written in a cursive style.

Lisa Tomlinson
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Children's Aid Society of Toronto

Our messages



Over the past fiscal year, our Corporate Services department partnered with teams across CAST to understand their needs and opportunities to strengthen our Service Delivery.

Our focus on bringing greater streamlining and efficiency to our Agency, led us to introduce new software and systems including the roll-out of Office 365, enhanced financial reporting, and complementary financial literacy training. As part of our governance processes, and working with our external procurement partners, we hired KPMG as our statutory auditor and BDO as our internal auditor. We continued with the annual update of our risk

management and business continuity plans for the Agency. Our financial analysis and reporting played a key role in our Agency's advocacy efforts related to funding. In addition, we completed the renovation of our Logan Avenue based facility that has garnered favourable responses from staff and youth, alike.

In understanding that the pandemic has created a new way of working, in late 2022 we led the undertaking of a Return to Office Study to inform our decision making. As we move forward, our goal is to implement a hybrid working model that supports operational needs and enables timely and relevant Service to children, youth and families, while balancing the well-being of our staff.

Keshwer Patel, Chief Financial Officer



The 2022-23 fiscal year held great significance for our Agency, particularly in the realm of Service. At CAST we introduced a new equity lead position to support our EDI work and we established new partnerships with organizations in the community whilst continuing to strengthen and expand on

existing ones. In tandem with our partners at the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services we implemented the new Ready, Set, Go program for youth transitioning out of care, and proactively prepared for the forthcoming Quality Standards Framework regulatory changes impacting our sector.

Additionally, our Service teams continued to be driven by a commitment to learning, strengthening feedback opportunities, identifying areas for improvement, and fostering a collaborative environment to enhance our work. As we look ahead with a new and updated Strategic Plan by our side, our focus will be on reinforcing front-end Service delivery, which includes developing more and new partnerships with agencies that are high referral sources. By concentrating our efforts and harnessing our collective expertise, we will continue to elevate the quality of Service, support, and resources we extend to the children, youth, and families we serve.

Nancy Ansong-Danquah, Interim Chief Operating Officer



Our Human Resources department has the privilege and the pleasure of serving and supporting our dedicated employees who provide exemplary and essential services and support to children, youth and families in our communities. With the goal of enhancing engagement and equity

in our workplace, over the past year, we implemented new hiring, training and leadership programs and initiatives, while ensuring the health, safety, and wellness of our people.

The pandemic presented unprecedented challenges that our employees relentlessly navigated and ultimately prevailed to uphold our vision of a city where children are

safe, families are strong and communities are supported. Many lessons were learned, including the evolution of our workplace and the transition to adopting hybrid in-office and working from home profiles that promote work-life harmony and optimize our Service delivery. In addition, we were once again recognized with the distinctions of Greater Toronto's Top Employers (11 years), Canada's Best Diversity Employers (8 years) and Canada's Best Employers for Recent Graduates (8 years).

We are excited to further strengthen our internal and external partnerships and the opportunities and potential that will emerge on our journey of continued success!

Colin Hill, Interim Chief Human Resources Officer

Our workplace

As North America's largest board-governed child welfare agency, our communities look to our Agency to support children, youth, and families. In turn, we support our staff by building an award-winning workplace that's focused on engagement, equity, and continuous learning. Over the past year, our focus has been on enhancing our equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, expanding our leadership programs, and evaluating next steps in our return to office plan.



2022 Workplace Census Survey

Since 2009, our Agency has conducted a Workplace Census Survey with a series of questions posed to our employees to better understand the different groups they identify with including race, creed, religious or spiritual affiliation, gender, sexual identity, and persons with disabilities. In 2018, the Workplace Census Survey results informed the development of our Equity Based Hiring Strategy that supports our Agency in building a more diverse workforce that is reflective of the communities and identities of the families we serve.

In 2022, we conducted our latest Workplace Census Survey, in partnership with CUPE 2316, that allowed us to measure the progress we have made over the past four years. We are pleased to share that the Census data demonstrates that our Equity Based Hiring Strategy has enabled us to increase representation of equity-deserving groups across many departments and positions. The Census results also allowed us to identify areas of improvement and opportunities to evolve our Equity Based Hiring Strategy moving forward.

Leadership Development Program

With an average tenure of more than 14 years, our staff are building their careers at CAST, and we provide opportunities for their continual learning and growth. Over the past year, we completed the Leadership Development Program for our Directors to build their leadership capacity through educational sessions focused on organizational effectiveness, employee relations, coaching, performance management, communication, and change management.

The insights and learnings from these sessions set the foundation for our Leadership Development Program for CAST Managers and Supervisors that will be rolled-out

over the coming year. The educational sessions have been designed based on feedback from Managers and Supervisors who identified their areas of interest and opportunities for skills development.

Launch of Employee Resource Groups

As we continue to build a more inclusive and equitable work environment, in 2022 we introduced four Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) for Black, Muslim, East Asian and 2SLGBTQ+ employees. Created by members of our staff, ERGs provide a channel through which our employees can come together in a structured, inclusive, and formalized space that's focused on connection, advocacy, networking, and career development.

Return to Office

Throughout the pandemic, our Agency worked in a primarily hybrid model. As we evaluate and plan for the future of our workplace, we engaged Avison Young as an external consultant to help us assess and rethink our Agency's on-site structure. To support with the development of our return to office plan, Avison Young conducted an in-depth, third-party study, including staff, management and community partner surveys, functional area interviews, and Union consultation.

The results of this study are helping to guide our future on-site working model that will consider and prioritize operational needs and the highest standard of Service delivery to the families we support, Service volumes, roles of specific teams and individuals, event specific activities for meetings, and the health and safety of our staff, and the children, youth, and caregivers.

Our Service delivery

Every day at CAST, our staff across the Agency come together to uphold our vision to create a city where children are safe, families are strong, and communities are supported. We do this through championing Service delivery, partnerships and interventions that are rooted in equity, diversity, and inclusion, and designed to support and strengthen families. Over the past year, our Service strategies have supported us in reducing the number of children and youth coming into our care and addressing disparity and disproportionality in our Service delivery.

Growth of our Kinship Service

Driven by our priority of keeping children and youth connected to their families, communities and culture, in 2022-2023 we facilitated 500 kinship placements, with 17 per cent more kin and kith placements than the previous year. There was also an increase in referrals from child welfare agencies across the province and country for kin/kith assessments.

Over the past twelve months, we added two additional positions for a total of eight Kinship Connections Workers. The growth of this team has resulted in a decrease in wait times for children and youth who need a kinship search completed to expand placement options, establish contact, and/or build their family/community network. We also implemented a system to support kinship families at the onset of a children and youth placement via funding through the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada to assist with immediate needs. In addition, every child and youth entering a kinship placement, received a comfort kit including such items as gift cards, a tablet, comforting and sensory items, books and more.

Partnerships in Profile

Over the past year, the evolution of our strategic partnerships demonstrates the exceptional efforts of our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team and the Manager of Strategic Partnerships role that was established in 2021. The team's work has been instrumental in fostering the development, stewardship, and nurturing of new relationships with community organizations. Through collaborative efforts, we established and evolved our external partnerships, including the following examples, with organizations that share our goal of supporting

children, youth and families with culturally aligned resources and supports.

► **Journey to Zero**

Journey to Zero was a four-year pilot program created and implemented by CAST and supported by the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada, Balsam Foundation, and Rossy Foundation. The prevention program offered targeted interventions and resources to help strengthen families, prevent children and youth from (re)entering the child welfare system, and support them to thrive within their communities. Through a series of early interventions, such as family partnership meetings, intensive in-home supports for adolescents, cultural support for Black families, and family network building, Journey to Zero helped families create safety and support plans that enabled children and youth to live with their families or kin. In fact, in 86 per cent of cases, Journey to Zero directly prevented children and youth from entering care.

The program's four-year term recently wrapped up and now our Agency is evaluating the outcomes and overall impact of the initiative. This evaluation and the results will help us determine the most effective ways to integrate the Journey to Zero approach into our overall Service model.

► **Black Agency Network**

During Black Mental Health Week 2023, we launched our new partnership initiative, the Black Agency Network (BAN). This collaborative effort involves CAST, Delta Family Resource Centre, and Anchoring Minds with the goal of enhancing the services and supports available to Black families navigating the child welfare system in the Greater Toronto Area.

The primary objective of BAN is to establish a seamless connection between young individuals and families to culturally aligned resources and supports. By leveraging the collective expertise of local, Black-led, and Black-informed agencies, BAN facilitates access to a diverse range of services. Through the coordination of Black families involved with our Agency, BAN seeks to strengthen and streamline their support networks, helping to foster their overall well-being and resilience.

Digitizing our processes

To enhance our Service delivery, we are looking at opportunities to implement new technology and digital strategies that streamline and strengthen the support we provide to the children, youth, and families we serve.

In February 2023, we launched our pilot program with Convergence.Tech that provides young people in care with a digital wallet to upload and store vital personal and professional documents directly on their phones. With immediate access to documentation including a health card, birth certificate, SIN number, proof of welfare status, bank statement, and more, the digital wallet provides them with an organized and trusted means of taking ownership of their identity and credentials with greater autonomy and independence. Before considering an Agency-wide rollout, the pilot allows us to provide the digital wallet to a select group of young people in care to understand its usage, benefits, and opportunities for improvement.

Ready Set Go

In early 2023, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services launched the Ready, Set, Go (RSG) program, replacing the Continued Care & Support for Youth program. The goal of RSG is to equip youth in care and youth transitioning out of care with essential life skills, additional resources, and comprehensive support systems to support their pursuit of post-secondary education, skilled trades training, and employment opportunities.

RSG offers extended support to youth until the age of 23, two years longer than the previous age limit, with increased monthly financial assistance to provide them with ample time and resources to concentrate on their studies or professional endeavors. It also provides outcome indicators

for youth aged 13-17 in areas such as health, education, employment, life skills and social and family relationships.

There was tremendous dedication, time, and effort invested by our CAST Service teams in the preparation for launch of the new program. Their unwavering commitment played a pivotal role in ensuring its smooth implementation and lays the foundation for the program's positive impact on the lives of youth in care.

Quality Standards Framework

The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services is implementing regulatory amendments to the Child, Youth Family Services Act. The new regulations under the Quality Standards Framework (QSF) are designed to enhance the quality of care provided by service providers to children and youth in care. These changes focus on prioritizing family-based placements and improving group care for children and youth who are unable to remain in their homes. Key areas include staff qualifications, foster parent training, safety assessments and plans, service planning, youth engagement, restraints usage, education, and complaints mechanisms.

Our Agency has been actively preparing for the implementation of the QSF which take effect July 1, 2023. By embracing these changes, we strive to deliver the highest standards of care and support to the children and youth we serve.

Scarborough Branch Sensory Garden and Activity Centre

In August 2022, we officially opened a new Sensory Garden and Activity Centre at our Scarborough Branch that provides an interactive outdoor space for children, youth, and caregivers during their time together.

The Sensory Garden and Activity Centre allows for families to work together to care for seedlings while experiencing the health and therapeutic benefits of gardening and learning about healthy eating. With yoga mats, water and sand tables, craft and bubble stations, rock gardens, and more, the space encourages young people to play, learn new skills, develop self-confidence, and engage their senses.

From April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

By the numbers

8

CAST calls*
for service
received
19,452



Referrals
received
16,454



*Overall, CAST receives more than 30,000 calls a year through Telephone Intake and Emergency After Hours.

5,753

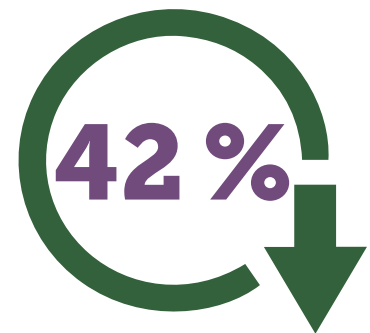
Total
investigations
completed



223 children and
youth discharged
from care to a
family or kin



over the **past 5 years**,
the number of children
admitted into care **dropped**



**9 out of
10 times**

the work we do is with
children, youth and families
in their homes

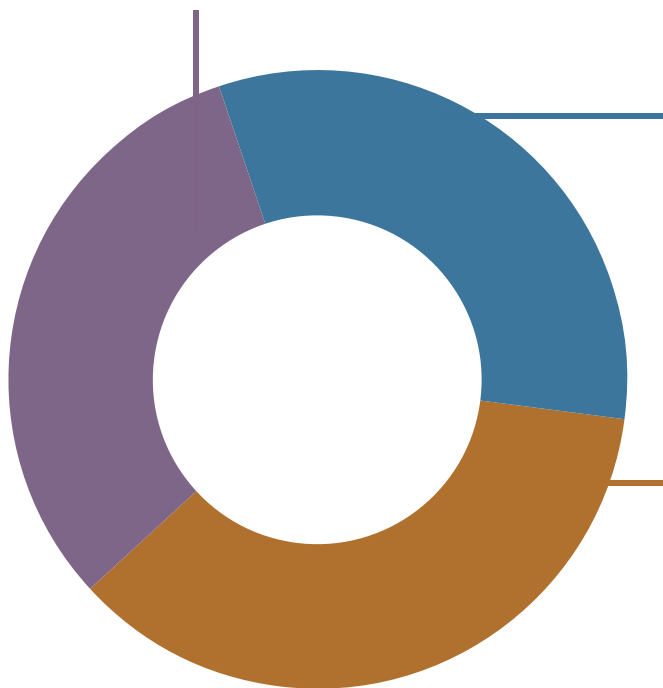
Total number
of kinship
placements
500



Total number of
adoptions
32



84% of families felt their Worker helped them develop a good plan to keep their children safe



82% of families felt part of the decision making process

84% of families felt they were treated with respect

Board of Directors

Executive Members

Yeugenia Kazantseva

Board Chair

Salim Somani

Vice Chair

Randy Carter

Treasurer

Gerald Mak

Secretary

Board Members

Iqbal Ali

Randy Carter

Eugene Choi

Silvie Crawford

Catharine Dutt

Derek Eng

Jennifer Eng-Yeboah

Dr. Evelyn Kissi

Gave Lindo

Gerald Mak

Greg McGovern

Marlon Merraro

Irene Mukasa

Shruti Paul

Cheyenne Ratnam

Julie Rezvani

Marshall Schnapp

Bruce Sinclair

Financial summary

10

(In thousands of dollars)	2022-2023	2021-2022
	\$	\$
Revenue By Source		
Government of Ontario	164,267	163,341
Government of Canada	2,221	2,533
Children's Aid Foundation	5,014	3,950
Other	2,313	1,621
Total Revenue	173,815	171,445
Government of Ontario Revenue By Program		
Child Welfare Program	156,182	158,238
Other	8,085	5,103
Total	164,267	163,341
Expenses		
Salaries & Benefits	89,434	87,598
Boarding	48,280	44,097
Other	39,488	35,805
Total Expense	177,202	167,500
Summary of Operations		
Revenue	173,815	171,445
Expenses	177,202	167,500
Deficiency/Excess of revenue over expenses	(3,387)	3,945

Audited financial statements are available upon request.