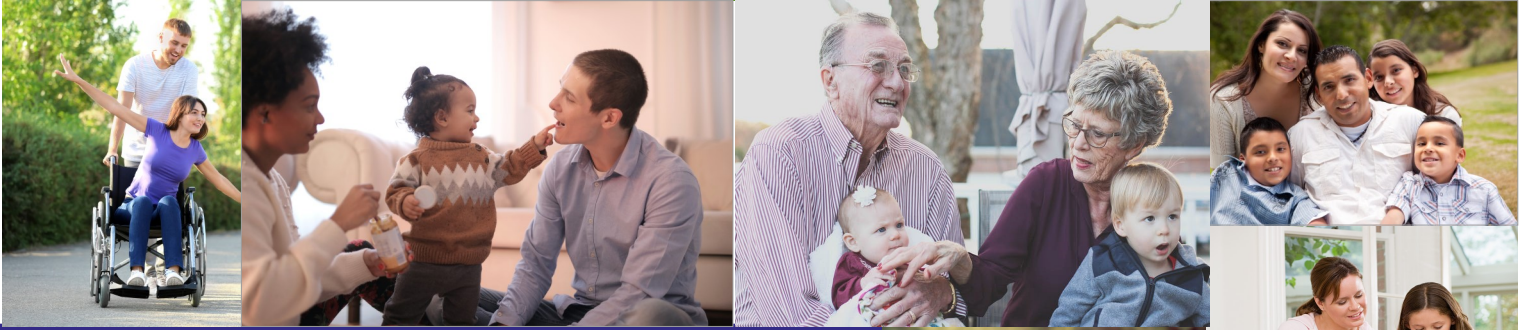




Halton Children's Aid Society 2020-21 Annual Report



Everybody
Has Somebody
Somewhere



Vision—Children, Youth and Families Thrive

Mission—We protect children and youth, strengthen their well-being and support lifelong, enduring relationships



Land Acknowledgement

Let us acknowledge together that Halton Region stands on the traditional territory of the Anishinabe, Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat; now home to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

As settlers, we are grateful for the opportunity to meet here and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of the land and for those who continue today.



On Common Ground

No one thing, can define us
For we are complex creatures, dreamed in the mind of the creator
We laugh when we should cry
We cry when we should laugh
We joke when in pain
We smile because tears could consume us
We love unconditionally and totally
We understand that family should come first
Yet family is not defined, solely by blood
We are quick to anger, yet no one forgives faster
We are loyal and we are strong
When we commit, we are unwavering
We have survived much, but do not mistake adaptation for resignation
You will always see us, for we will always be here
Standing for what we believe in, standing beside each other
Doing what is right for our children, our future
We remember our obligation to our mother the earth
And we remember our place upon her
We are a proud people and honorable people
We do not always do right, for we are human
And prone to the follies of humanity
Yet we strive to be better, to make each other better
To make the world a better place for the children
I know the Creator smiles upon us, no matter where we are, or what we do
For the love of a child is unconditional
No matter where life takes you, walk proud

“I am sure that everyone hears or sees something of themselves in those words
and that teaches us that no matter how far apart we may seem
we are never so far that we cannot find common ground.”

Chief Stacey Laforme, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation

from the book “Living in the Tall Grass: Poems of Reconciliation” by R. Stacey Laforme

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Message from Our Executive Director and Board Chair

Welcome to the Annual Report of the Halton Children's Aid Society (Halton CAS) for the year 2020-21. The theme of this year's report – **Everybody has Somebody Somewhere** – speaks to our belief in the right of every child to have at least one person (hopefully many people) to love and care for them their entire life.

Over the past year, our Society joined other child and family serving organizations in Halton Region implementing a Pandemic Response Plan. Typical of the Halton community, agencies across our region shared their pandemic plans, strategies, and resources with one another, keeping a clear focus on the safety and well-being of children, youth, and families.

This context makes all the more impressive the achievements of the Halton CAS over the past year. We continued to connect with children and families, forged new relationships, maintained strong connections with our youth in care, all while balancing personal circumstances created by the pandemic.

Our gradual adjustment to the conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic allowed the work to continue on key programs and priorities. **This cannot be stressed enough.** Our staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, and foster, kin and adoptive caregivers pivoted from a COVID-19 crisis response to prioritizing services to children, youth and families within a stressed and confined environment.

Child welfare is a highly personal and intense type of work, one which requires our staff to conduct much of the work in person. Often, our staff were the only professionals actually seeing children, youth and families in person – and they did this with great sensitivity and caring! **This dedication distinguishes our agency and we are very proud of, and grateful to, our staff.**

This year will also stand out as one in which horrifying incidents and examples of racist violence, genocide, and colonial legacy in Canada and other countries shone a stark light on systemic racism and white supremacy. Our agency redoubled its commitment to inclusion, respect and dignity in our work and in ourselves. We continued on our journey toward diversity, equity and inclusion, acknowledging the strides we have made this year with humility, knowing we have so much farther to go. We continued to implement the recommendations in our equity environmental scan, leading the work where we could while humbly listening to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) staff, community members, and leaders for guidance to move us forward.

As we look to the year ahead, we are enthusiastically preparing for **Child Welfare Redesign in Ontario**. The Halton CAS has much to contribute to a change agenda built on community collaboration, service integration, and early help. We will continue to support our youth in care and youth in the community to achieve their dreams. We will continue to work with community partners to provide culturally appropriate and family driven services, keeping children out of care and engaging the natural assets of the community in our work.

We gratefully acknowledge Chief Stacey Laforme for his gracious permission that we could share his beautiful poem on Reconciliation as part of our annual message. Miigwech, Chief Laforme. We look forward to many more good discussions with you on ways we can deepen our relationship.

Inside this Annual Report you will find stories of connection, reunion, re-engagement, and relationship all in support of finding that 'somebody'! Please enjoy the stories as well as some of the key facts and figures we are proud to report for this year.

Emad Elsayed, Board Chair

Janice Robinson, Executive Director

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Our Team

Board of Directors

Board Executive

Emad Elsayed, Chair

Joyce See, Vice Chair

Mike Reid, Finance and Risk Management Committee Chair

Terry Spearin, Governance Committee Chair

Brendan Neil, Director at Large

Board Members

Eslyn Blair | **Terry Kelly** | **Hazel Lambert** | **Joan Lewis** | **Marcus Logan**
Karen Marshall | **Ann Murray** | **Kamran Niazi** | **Brad Saunders**

Leadership Team

Janice Robinson, Executive Director

Lynn Barker, Director of Children and Youth Services

Jennifer Binnington, Director of Protection Services

Michelle McGaw, Director of Human Resources and Organizational Excellence

Juliette Prouse, Director of Finance and Property Management

Robyn Connolly, Executive Assistant to the Executive Director/Communications Specialist

\$20,268,010
(revenue)

\$19,496,821
(expenses)

2020-21 surplus = \$771,189

The above is a summary of details from the Halton CAS 2020-21 audited financial statement prepared and audited by SB Partners. Access a full audited financial statement at www.HaltonCAS.ca

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How We Are Staying Connected

“Reflecting on this past year, a lot of people could say it has distanced all of us. We are now stuck living in a virtual world, limiting our face-to-face contact; however, in a sense, it has been a blessing. **We have been able to connect with youth** in ways we never have before. Those youth who live out of region are able to connect with other youth and staff through our virtual programs and events and feel a sense of inclusion. To reflect on the theme **Everybody has Somebody Somewhere**, I think it resembles the notion that anyone who provides you a sense of safety is only a zoom call away! In a sense, we are lucky to have the technology we do right at our fingertips!”

~Cassie Gauthier, Youth in Care Leader

“I live way out of the region. I currently reside in North Bay, which is like four hours away. I’ve definitely stayed connected to my CAS because I’m very involved with the activities they run. I’m involved with the YouthSAID program, which has definitely been the biggest way I’ve stayed connected. Everyone there (staff and kids) reaches out and we all check with each other one way or another. Also, **I’ve stayed connected** by them making sure to reach out and include me. I go out of my way to check-in with the workers and stay updated on all the events that are taking place. I think that COVID has made my relationships with my workers in Halton stronger because we check in way more. It has also made me **appreciate the connections** more. COVID has made me realize just how strong my support network is.”

~Alissa, YouthSAID Member

Julie is currently enrolled in college and must complete a First Aid course as part of her program. On the first day of the course, Julie suffered an anxiety attack and was unable to attend. She called me in tears and was ready to give up. We **worked together** to brainstorm a solution that included Julie’s mom accompanying her to the course on another day. Julie and mom attended the course together and both passed with flying colours! This is just one of many stories of **supporting youth and their families**.

~Catherine Dowds, Continued Care and Support for Youth Worker

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How We Are Making Family Connections

I connected a youth with his maternal grandparents. He had their phone number, but was afraid to call because he had not seen them in seven years. I made the call and was thrilled to hear how his grandparents missed him and were willing to help and support him in any way they could! Once he knew they wanted to connect, he was able to call them himself. A few weeks later, he moved in with them. He now has not only their support, but his Aunt and Uncle from whom he had also been estranged. These family connections will help support him as he graduates high school this year and heads to University in the fall. He will now have a place to go on weekends and holidays too!

For years, we have worked with a young man whose adoption broke down. I knew his family of origin lived in another region, but there had been many concerns resulting in the youth and his younger siblings becoming extended society wards. I recently learned his older brother wanted to be reunited with him. This older brother also remains connected to other family members. The two brothers reconnected immediately. Within days of reconnecting, the older brother picked up his younger brother—who had been homeless—and brought him home. Then they met their mother and another older brother after many years of separation. This youth had been lost since he came back into care. Assumptions were made that he had no one. Now, he has a family and a connection to his heritage.

Last summer, I participated in a visit between a youth and his grandparents who had not been together for over three years. From the moment they saw one another, it was evident they were connected. Grandma remembered a special cake her grandson was quite fond of and so she baked it especially for him. Grandpa affectionately referred to his grandson as 'Scooter' and the two enjoyed checking out grandpa's vintage Thunderbird car. A particularly moving moment occurred when they went through a photo album grandma put together. The album and visit reminded this youth that he is very much loved and there are people out there who care about him. It just took arranging a visit to make this happen.

I facilitated a family meeting with a teenager to help him understand there were people who were committed to him and would support him long after his 18th birthday. We developed a plan of support that reduced his anxiety about what would happen once he turns 18. He is now able to focus on completing high school and participating in the volunteer activities he enjoys. No one should worry about turning 18!

*All stories submitted by
Lisa Wark, Family Connections Facilitator*



How We Are Connecting Families Together

Peter was born in 2016 and placed with foster parents who had expertise in caring for high-risk infants as Peter has a genetic neurological condition. Peter has made significant gains in both his emotional and physical development thanks to the high level of care from his foster family. Peter continues to thrive making daily gains and meeting developmental milestones. While a transition home is always our goal, it was ultimately determined Peter was not able to live with his birth family. Peter's foster parents thought of him as a part of their family, so they made the decision to adopt him. Peter has consistency, support, predictability and a forever family. Today, he continues to heal, grow and thrive.

~Holly Simmons, Adoption Supervisor

Cynthia is a teenager who was first placed in foster care when she was 12 months old before being adopted. When the adoption broke down, Cynthia was placed back in care. Staff learned Cynthia still had a connection with her foster family and discussed a potential placement. In 2019, Cynthia moved in with the foster family. Cynthia feels very much a part of this family and there are ongoing discussions that Cynthia will continue to live with them past her 18th birthday, if that is something she wants. Cynthia found her Road Home!!

~Amy Bramwell, Road Home Project Manager

Veronica is 12 years old and has special needs. She was moved to a foster home when she was unable to continue living with her father and stepmother. Veronica's mother, who had not cared for her since Veronica was three, worked diligently with us to gain custody. Weekend access eventually became full-time care and custody. Mom was open, honest and worked hard. In May 2021, Veronica was placed back in Mom's care and now lives with her half-sister and remains connected with her maternal and paternal families. People's pasts do not have to dictate their futures. People with a mental health diagnosis can overcome obstacles and live a happy life.

~Katie Drysdale, Child Protection Worker



How We Are Helping Early

We work with our partners to provide early intervention.
Only 8.15% of families return for service within 12 months.

519

cases linked to community services

90%

of our work
is completed at investigation

41

children and youth placed
with kinship families when they
could not remain in their own homes

24

community placements—at schools, police
service, Halton Region and counselling
services—enable staff to provide early
intervention, accessibility and help

18

duty to report/community engagement
presentations completed to help
awareness that it is EVERYONE'S
responsibility to keep children and youth safe

279

significant connections engaged in
support network planning
or children and youth

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Keeping Kids with Their Somebody

96%

of cases enable children and youth to remain with their families

61%

of children and youth are discharged within one year of coming into care

74%

of children and youth return to family or kin

2

adoptions finalized (or in process)

93%

of youth transitioning from care have a meaningful connection to family

121

number of children and youth in our Society's care

73%

of our children and youth in care are over the age of 12

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Collective Impact for Youth

Halton Youth Collective Program (HYCP)

The HYCP operates as a community collective of youth transitioning from care, funders and social service agencies. It is a resource hub for young people and children's aid society workers to address needs/barriers as they arise for youth in achieving their satisfaction in education, employment and training. All youth are provided the opportunity to work with an adult mentor to support them in meeting their goals. This mentor will continue with the youth long term. The Halton Children's Aid Society is the lead agency for service delivery and the primary connection with the program's youth. The HYCP includes a team of 25 diverse, youth serving agencies representing a range of social services from housing to education and mental health to employment and training. The HYCP is a collaborative approach to problem solving and decision-making, grounded in data. The youth voice plays a key planning, implementation and execution role to address the issues confronting youth as they transition from care.

64%

of employment
goals met

52%

of training
goals met

72%

of education
goals met

81%

of youth said their
mentor was helpful

91%

of eligible youth
in care attending
high school

95%

of youth 18-21 years of
age actively pursuing
education,
employment or training

\$428K

received from the Children's Aid Foundation of Halton to support additional programming to enhance the lives of children and youth in Halton

- ◆ Bursary program, which provides financial support for youth to attend post-secondary education
- ◆ FUTURES educational program, life skills initiatives and recreational programs
- ◆ Outreach Services from Bridging the Gap's homeless program for youth aged 16-24
- ◆ YouthSAID Advisory Group programming including Children and Youth in Care Day, YouthCAN conference and Grand River Zone events
- ◆ Collective Impact Project to support employment for youth transitioning out of care
- ◆ Assistance to Kin Service children, youth and families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

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