



Judith Clark
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Dear Judith,

On behalf of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), I extend warm greetings to you, your Board of Directors, and your staff at the League of Ontario Foster Families as you convene the 11th Annual LOFF Conference and AGM.

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS) is a provincial membership organization representing 47 of Ontario's 50 children's aid societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies, as well as two pre-mandated agencies. OACAS supports our members with practice tools, communications, professional development, and training opportunities and is committed to working towards an effective system that supports all children, youth, and caregivers. We work with provincial partners across sectors and with the government to improve outcomes for the children, youth, and families across Ontario.

I would like to share with you some recent initiatives and areas of priority for OACAS:

- On May 9, alongside young people with lived experience in the Ontario child welfare system, OACAS and the Children's Aid Foundation of Canada visited Queen's Park as part of the [#ForgetMeNot campaign](#) to ask the question: ***Are you there for kids in care?*** We also met with several Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) and Minister Parsa to talk about better supports for youth in the areas of mental health, housing, education, and employment.
- One Vision One Voice (OVOV) hosted its fourth PowerUp! Youth Symposium in March. PowerUp! is specifically designed for Black-identifying children and youth actively involved with child welfare and allows Black youth to build connections, community, and to celebrate Black identity. OVOV is a program funded by the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services through the OACAS to address the overrepresentation and experiences of disparities faced by African Canadians after coming into contact with the child welfare system.
- In February, we hosted the first ever Q-Munity Youth Symposium, an event that welcomed and celebrated 2SLGBTQ+ children and youth with experience in the child welfare system. The event provided youth the opportunity to meet each other, share experiences, and be empowered.
- OACAS continues to engage with First Nations, Inuit, and Metis organizations, including ANCFSAO and Chiefs of Ontario, to support their work to help families in their communities.

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We recognize that being a foster caregiver is a very rewarding, yet challenging path. OACAS and our members greatly appreciate everyone who is willing to care for some of our most vulnerable children and youth. The impact that foster caregivers have on the lives of the children and youth in their homes is lasting, and OACAS is committed to doing all we can to ensure that there are tools and training are available to all foster caregivers to help them succeed. Some of our current learning opportunities include our newly launched [Trauma Informed Care: Supporting Children and Youth](#), Anti-Black Racism Training for Foster Caregivers, as well as discounted first aid training through St. John's Ambulance.

OACAS and its members are embarking on a provincial foster caregiver recruitment campaign this year, which will also underscore the importance of retention and related support. Thank you for sharing your insights and experiences with us through our sector consultation group. We look forward to continuing to engage you in the campaign development.

We value the role of foster caregivers and their tireless efforts to open doors to reunification, stability and permanency, safety, and well-being, and recognize the critical work foster carers do to support primary caregivers, where possible, so they can address issues that have put their children's safety and well-being at risk.

Thank you for your work to support the continuous learning and engagement of foster caregivers across Ontario. We look forward to further partnership opportunities.

Warm regards,



Nicole Bonnie
Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies