

2023–2024 Business Plan



Catholic
Children's Aid Society
of Hamilton



Société d'aide à l'enfance
catholique
de Hamilton

Introduction

The Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Hamilton (CCASH) is committed to protecting the children and youth in our community from abuse and neglect. We work in collaboration with community partners to strengthen the capacity of families in the Hamilton Catholic community. The Society has operated for 69 years and continues to evolve and adjust based on the needs of our local community. The Society’s professional and well-trained staff provide a complete range of child protection services to children, youth, and families.

The 2023–2024 Business Plan for the Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Hamilton examines the provincial context, local strategic directions, work processes, and operational requirements to determine the opportunities and/or challenges that the organization should address over the 2023-2024 year.

To accomplish this, the agency looks back over the past year, examining corporate and service performance, including quality assurance, organizational development accomplishments, strategic activities and results as well as provincial influences. We developed the 2023–2024 organizational business plan based on our strategic map and organizational priorities.



Our Mission

Guided by Catholic values and teachings, we serve and offer bilingual (English/French) service to children, youth and families within the Hamilton community to protect their safety and well-being, strengthen families and nurture lifelong relationships.

Our Values

- Success for children, youth and families
- Compassion and caring for one another and the people we serve
- Equity and inclusion
- Shared accountability
- Family, church and community partnerships
- Transparent communication and collaboration
- Social justice

Our Vision

- Child and youth safety, well-being and resilience
- Thriving families
- Community partners working together



Statement of Faith

At the heart of the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton is a recognition of the sacredness of human life, and the dignity and worth of each person created in God's image. Our vision and mission are inspired by the compassion and mercy of Jesus Christ who cared for the most marginalized persons of his community and who reminded his followers that

"Whatever you did to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

(Mt.25:40)

Governed by civil legislation and our provincial charter to protect children and youth, we are also guided by the teaching and tradition of the Catholic Church, responsive and accountable to the local community which it serves.

Our Calling to Serve

Drawing on the heritage of our Catholic faith, our vocation as an agency is to help build a world in which children and youth can live safely and thrive, families are empowered to flourish, and the bonds of community are strengthened through compassion and justice. Coming from diverse faith traditions and philosophies, we are grounded in the Christian values of love and humble service, united in our commitment to care for all people, especially the most vulnerable. We take a holistic service approach that honours the mind, body and spirit of each person and that upholds their human rights in society.

Our Culture of Care and Community

We foster a culture of care and community in our workplace in which priority is always given to nurturing healthy relationships with one another and hope and healing for the families that we serve. This relational culture is strengthened by giving spirituality a place of honour and recognition in the workplace, and offering the gift of hospitality where every voice can be heard and positive change can take place. We promote timely, child-focused decision-making and healthy relationships for children and youth in the communities where they live.

Our Commitment to Social Justice

Our agency services are inspired by the rich tradition of Catholic moral and social teaching, which upholds the sacredness of the person, family life and the common good. We serve in a spirit of solidarity with our church and community partners in seeking justice and peace in our society. We focus especially in our mission on the needs and rights of the children that we serve. We honour the differences that make each person unique and are committed to equity, inclusion and empowerment for all our staff and service recipients, helping them to participate fully in decisions that impact their lives.

Our Dedication to Service Excellence

We are devoted to serving children, youth and families with ethical integrity, compassion and professional competence. We are leaders and advocates for positive social change and believe that our holistic and faith-based approach enriches the lives of our service recipients and the child welfare system, ensuring it is more caring, responsive, just and effective.



Equity Workplan

In 2022, CCAS Hamilton developed an Equity Workplan which was grounded in our overall commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as expressed in our mission, vision and current Strategic Plan. The workplan is grounded in the following four priorities:

Priority 1: Deepen the CCASH's anti-racism work

Our commitment is not only to inclusion but to meet our legal obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code to create a workplace free from harassment and discrimination.

Priority 2: Diversify the workforce at all levels

Our commitment is to strengthen the hiring and selection processes and remove the barriers to hiring employees from diverse backgrounds.

Priority 3: Strengthening Human Resource Policies and Practices

Our commitment is to create a solid Human Resource infrastructure while also embedding equity within its employment policies and processes and ensuring they align with the Ontario Human Rights Code requirements and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Priority 4: Create a more inclusive and respectful organizational culture

Our commitment is to focus attention on fostering a more inclusive organizational culture in which employees at all levels feel welcome, safe and able to contribute their best.

Since 2022, there has been significant progress on the Equity Workplan in areas such as equitable human resource policies and practices and staff training and development. In 2023-2024 CCASH will continue with its' commitment to meeting the priorities of the Equity Workplan.



Mandate

The Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton is a child protection agency mandated under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act in Ontario. Our responsibility is to protect children from harm or risk of harm due to neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

Delivering services during the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging and required us to quickly adapt service delivery to ensure compliance with provincial and local public health direction regarding COVID-19 protocols. As restrictions lifted with the decrease of COVID cases, the CCASH has been able to resume service delivery back to pre-pandemic measures. We recognize the significant impact the pandemic had on families, children and youth that we serve as well as our staff, resource and kin parents and volunteers. We look forward to continuing to deliver high quality services to the children, youth and families we serve in the community.

In 2023, CCASH has been implementing two new Ministry initiatives. On April 1, 2023, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) launched the Ready, Set, Go program (RSG). With the RSG program youth will continue to be supported until the age of 23, up from age 21 and they will receive increased financial support.

RSG is a youth-centred, strengths-based program that outlines the parameters within which societies are expected to work with eligible children and youth both before and beyond their 18th birthday. Societies will provide supports and guidance that will assist youth to achieve physical and emotional well-being, acquire basic life management skills, and develop social networks that include connections to caring adults and the community while respecting a child's identity characteristics and cultural connections to

ensure youth are successfully transitioned to independence. RSG is committed to providing youth transitioning out of care with life skills and supports they need to pursue post-secondary education, skilled trades training and employment opportunities.

As of July 1, 2023, new regulatory amendments will come into effect to support the implementation of the Quality Standards Framework (QSF): A Resource Guide to Improve the Quality of Care for Children and Young Persons in Licensed Residential Settings.

Released in 2020 as a part of the broader Child Welfare Redesign (CWR) Strategy, the QSF is a cornerstone for Ontario's vision for what high-quality care looks like across all sectors and settings that make up licensed out-of-home care. The QSF provides guidance on the many aspects of high-quality care necessary to support children and young persons to thrive, have their needs met and achieve better outcomes.



Children First

Our work is guided by our respect for the rights of all children and by our commitment to honouring the uniqueness of each child and youth we serve. We recognize the uniqueness of each child, youth, family, and community and provide services that respect their cultures, traditions, race, and social identities. Our staff works from a child-centered perspective to develop individualized plans that respond to the needs of each child and youth. We also believe that helping children means working with their parents and helping them with their problems. We are committed to involving and engaging parents to improve outcomes for children, youth and families and ensuring children, youth, families, and their community participate in the decision-making processes that impact them.

Equity

The agency is committed to the priority of ensuring that those who are involved with the Society receive equitable services and are affirmed in their identity and lived experiences with all areas of oppression. In the agency's work with families, we are committed to an anti-oppressive practice in which we challenge the impacts of power and privilege, reduce barriers and are inclusive and affirming of the broad range of diversity in the Hamilton Catholic community.

Spirituality at Work – Faith Inspired Care, Compassion, Community

Our employees, youth, families and partners always comment that there is something special about working with the Catholic Children's Society of Hamilton. People have described it as "a warmth," a real dedication to family, compassion and the sense that the work of the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton is "a calling." The Society is a faith inspired agency and as such our work is a vocation guided by spiritual values, teachings and traditions. This truly impacts how we approach our mission — as a sacred responsibility to children, youth, families and the community that we serve. We encourage our staff to weave faith, spirituality and mindfulness into everything they do, thus improving their well-being and the welfare of all those we serve.

Our Team

Our employees are the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton's greatest assets. Child welfare is challenging work, and it is only through the fortitude, caring and commitment of our staff that we can serve our clients and improve outcomes for children, youth and families every single day. Our work is rewarding in providing the opportunity to touch, protect and shape lives. Whether on the front line or working in support roles or management, our employees possess the skills, expertise and experience needed to make a difference.

Volunteers Cast a Beautiful Shadow

Our team of volunteers strengthens the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton and helps us to achieve our goals. Today, our volunteers are involved in more ways than ever before, from driving children and youth to appointments or family visits, to providing tutoring and lending a hand with other tasks. In addition, our Board of Directors dedicates many hours to our agency, providing leadership and a true commitment to the work we do each day. We commend and recognize the service and dedication that our volunteers provide to benefit the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton's children, youth and families.

Resource Families Open Hearts & Homes

Every day in neighborhoods across Hamilton, foster, kin and adoptive families open their hearts and their homes to vulnerable children and youth. It takes special people to make this commitment. We celebrate the skills, compassion and dedication of these special individuals and thank them for providing safe, loving and nurturing homes for our children and youth.



Key Activities supporting Strategic Directions for 2023-2024

Over the next three years, the Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Hamilton will take action across four strategic pillars that will allow us to achieve our Vision.

1. Create Brighter Futures
2. Passionate and Prepared team
3. Excellence in All We Do
4. Public and Stakeholder Confidence

The pillars are reflected in our Strategy Map and supported by our Faith Statement.

Strategy Map

WHO WE ARE: Our Mission	WHAT WE DO: We create brighter futures	HOW WE DO IT: Excellence in all we do	Passionate and prepared team	Public and stake-holder confidence
<p>Guided by Catholic values and teachings, we serve and offer bilingual (English/French) services to children and youth within the Hamilton community by protecting their safety and well-being, strengthening their families and nurturing lifelong relationships.</p> <p>WHAT WE VALUE: Success for children, youth and families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success for children, youth and families • Compassion and caring for one another and the people we serve • Equity and inclusion • Family, church and community partnerships • Transparent communication and collaboration • Shared accountability • Social justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and youth are safe and have a strong sense of well-being • Children and youth experience a range of positive life outcomes • Parents, families and communities are supported to safely care for their children • African-Canadian, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ+ and all other marginalized youth and children experience equitable outcomes • Children and youth have meaningful, lifelong connections to their family members • Children and youth sustain strong ties to caring and culturally responsive communities • The voices of children, youth and families are listened to and acted upon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We deliver strength-based, equity focused and faith-inspired services • We strengthen family, extended family and resource family capacity • We acknowledge and strive to remove oppression and inequities across our service system • We work with our community and cultural partners to design and deliver resources, services and supports that meet the needs of our children, youth and families • We partner with families, youth and children in all planning and decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courageous and inspiring leadership at all levels • Highly competent, empowered and supported staff and resource families • Welcoming, inclusive and culturally responsive processes and spaces • A culture where we are always learning, collaborating and embracing ways to improve • Caring, compassionate, agile and spirited team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community outreach, engagement and philanthropy • Effective communication and advocacy • Balanced risk management • Continuous quality improvement • Fiscal stewardship and accountability



Strategic Pillars

The strategy map outlines what actions the agency will take across strategic pillars that will enable the organization to achieve our Vision. The Strategic Pillars are then translated into strategic directions and supporting goals. The strategy map is supported by our Faith Statement. The organization has prioritized four key projects for 2023–24 and their progress will be reported to the Board on a quarterly basis.

1. Quality Standards Framework (QSF) Implementation
2. Staff Wellness, Resilience & Retention
3. Integrating Spiritual Care into Service Delivery
4. Equity

Each of these priority projects is aligned with the provincial priorities in child welfare and will impact all staff across the organization.



Key Accomplishments in 2022–2023

A Service Plan advancing the strategic priorities is developed annually and incorporates key projects to support the Strategy Map. The Service Plan meets the requirements of the Accountability Agreement with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. As an agency we are committed to service excellence that achieves the best possible outcomes for the families, children, and youth we serve.

This past year our key projects emanating from the Strategy Map were in three key pillars:

1. Excellence in All We Do – Equity
2. Passionate & Prepared Team – Spiritual Care/Staff Wellness/COVID Recovery
3. Public & Stakeholder Confidence – Service Framework Redesign Implementation

The projects achieved positive outcomes in moving the agency forward and each is outlined on the following pages.

Excellence in All We Do

Equity

Outcomes:

- ✓ Ongoing consultation, training and coaching to operationalize Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) concepts.
 - ✓ Development of the Equity Audit Implementation Steering Committee (EAISC)
 - ✓ Heart & Spirit Customization
- CCASH continues to develop its Equity team and initiatives. A Sexual Orientation Gender Identity & Expression (SOGIE) lead was hired in October 2022. The SOGIE lead facilitated the OACAS SOGIE training for all staff members as well as training on Gender 101.
 - CCASH has partnered with Dr. June Paul from Skidmore College in the US to participate in a research study related to a tool, ECOMAP, which assists with engaging 2SLGBTQ+ youth.
 - Two new Affinity groups (racialized and 2SLGBTQ+) have been developed. An Affinity group is an opportunity to bring employees who have a shared identity characteristic, such as race or sexual orientation, together to discuss issues that impact their shared identity while providing emotional and instrumental support.
 - A book club focusing on white fragility for supervisors and Senior Leadership Team has concluded. Development of a book club that is accessible to all frontline staff was initiated and the book chosen was Me & White Supremacy.
 - The Director of Equity & Services and Director of Protection Services continue to Chair the First Nations Metis & Inuit consults to review the service pathways for Indigenous service recipients, to ensure referrals to culturally appropriate services are embedded. CCASH continues to attend meetings of the Indigenous Child Welfare Collaborative alongside our Indigenous partners.



- The Equity Audit Implementation Steering Committee (EAISC) was formed with representation from across the organization and has developed their terms of reference. The EAISC reviewed the equity audit recommendations and identified additional recommendations for consideration. The committee has continued to meet monthly to review the four priority areas in the equity audit and provide recommendations to Senior Leadership.
- The agency Reconciliation Lead is facilitating the customization of the Heart & Spirit curriculum. This initiative has enhanced staff's understanding of the vulnerability caregivers demonstrate in participating in an assessment and the importance of honoring their story with humility. Indigenous service providers have been engaged in the customization process. The Reconciliation Lead is also actively involved in ensuring that Indigenous service users are connected to culturally safe and relevant services while enhancing a connection to their culture and community.

Passionate & Prepared Team

Spiritual Care/Staff Wellness/ COVID Recovery

Outcomes:

- ✓ Spiritual Care continues to make a vital contribution not just to our faith identity as an organization but also to fostering employee wellness. The agency's spiritual care outcomes integrate a faith perspective on our wellness philosophy and the wellness related activities of the agency.
 - ✓ The staff wellness program will present opportunities for all staff to learn more about personal wellness. The committee will make available online tools, reading resources as well as hosting virtual or in person training.
 - ✓ The hybrid work model has been implemented as of June 2022. Policy and procedures have been developed to assist all staff with the implementation of the formal hybrid model moving forward.
- Spiritual Care team continues to lead weekly prayer services that nurture our spiritual life and foster a sense of belonging and community for staff.
 - Ongoing spiritual care and support for staff in need.
 - Resources developed for staff on spiritual care intranet site.
 - Spiritual care supports families where there is a need for spiritual intervention at the request of the worker.
 - Wellness policy finalized.
 - Wellness committee hosted several online trainings and the intranet wellness folder was enhanced to allow for a more interactive resource.
 - Hybrid work model developed to ensure job satisfaction while meeting the needs of the agency, community, and employees.
 - COVID protocols continued in the agency to reduce spread of COVID amongst staff and service recipients.

Public & Stakeholder Confidence

Service Framework Redesign Implementation

Outcomes:

- ✓ Reviewing the current Service Model pathway to ensure that Indigenous and other equity deserving service users are not disproportionately impacted.
 - ✓ Revise position titles to reflect better the intended function of the position in strengthening and supporting children, youth, and families.
 - ✓ As we are working on the redesign, we will focus on engagement with the community and opportunities to expand community-based collaboration and partnerships.
- A group of staff developed alternative names for protection roles that are more consistent with current titles. This will promote clarity for service recipients and community members. Protection roles will also be aligned with titles referenced in the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
 - The WrapAround program continues to support families and youth transitioning to adulthood successfully and seeks to enhance the participation of equity-deserving groups in the program.
 - During the past year, Equity Team formed with the supervisor reporting to the Director of Service & Equity.
 - Action Plan developed in response to the analysis of data on the experience of Black/African Canadian service recipients.
 - A Resource Recruitment Strategy has been implemented.

