

# 2024-2025 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 70 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 2024–2025 Business Plan for the Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Hamilton is informed by the agency’s new strategic plan, the provincial context, and operational requirements to determine the opportunities and/or challenges that the organization should address over the 2024-2025 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 2024–2025 organizational business plan based on our strategy 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 Vision

Child and youth are safe, secure, and thriving in their families and communities.

## Our Values

- Child, youth, and family well-being
- Reciprocal partnerships
- Spirituality and faith
- Compassion and caring
- Equity, inclusion, and belonging
- Accountability
- Communication and collaboration
- Social justice

# 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 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 2024-2025 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, and sexual or emotional abuse.

A new strategic plan was approved by the Board of Directors in 2024 and will chart our distinctive course moving forward. *The Brighter Futures Strategic Plan 2024-2027* was developed after extensive stakeholder consultation to ensure that the plan reflected the complex and diverse needs and expectations of the children, youth, families, and communities we serve.

During FY 2023/24, CCASH implemented the Quality Standards Framework, a cornerstone for Ontario’s vision of what high-quality residential care looks like with the goal of better outcomes for children and youth. 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.

We have also continued with the full implementation of the Ready, Set, Go program (RSG). With the RSG program youth continue to be supported until the age of 23, up from the age of 21 and they receive increased financial support. RSG is a youth-centered, strengths-based program that outlines the parameters within which societies are expected to work with eligible children and youth both before and beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.



## 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.

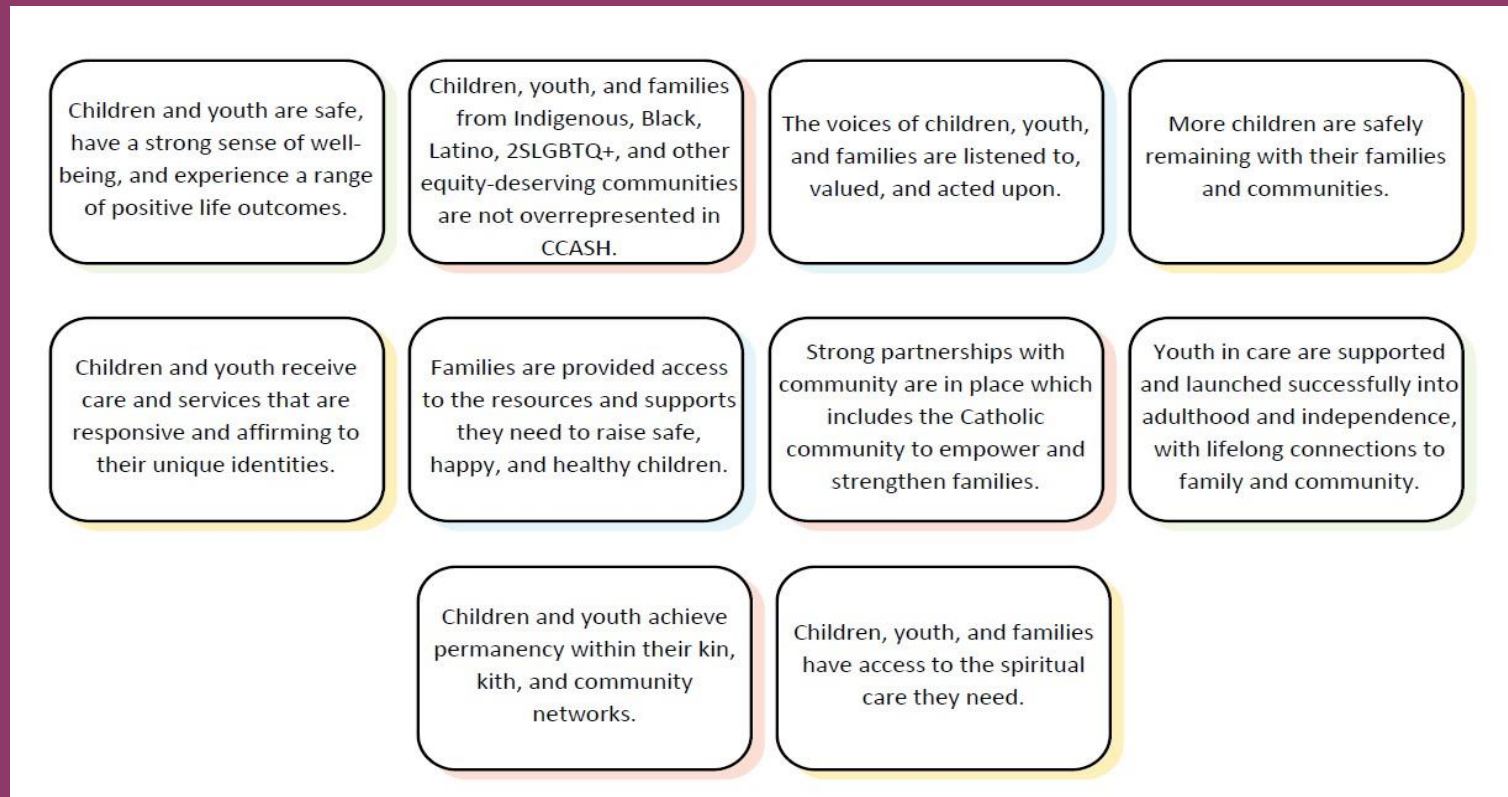


# Key Activities Supporting Strategic Directions for 2024–2025

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

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

## Outcomes





## 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 2024–25 and their progress will be reported to the Board on a quarterly basis.

1. Community Engagement
2. Equity
3. Spiritual Care & Service Delivery
4. Prepared & Resilient Team



## Key Accomplishments in 2023–2024

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 – Quality Standards Framework (QSF)
2. Passionate & Prepared Team – Staff Wellness, Resilience & Retention
3. Public & Stakeholder Confidence – Equity

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

# Excellence in All We Do

## Quality Standards Framework (QSF)

### Outcomes:

- QSF has been implemented in the agency.
- Staff have received QSF training.
- All policies have been updated and incorporate QSF requirements and are accessible to all staff.
- Foster parents have been provided training and are required to complete all QSF training requirements.
- Foster parents participated in cultural competency training in partnership with the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre (HRIC).
- Updated foster parent manual with QSF requirements.
- Processes including templates have been created to ensure compliance with QSF standards.
- Obtaining identification for all children and youth in care.
- Children in care timeline and process map developed to support frontline staff with meeting all QSF requirements.
- Rights and Responsibilities and complaints brochures for children and youth have been updated.



## Passionate & Prepared Team

### Integrating Spiritual Care into Service Delivery

Outcomes:

- Spiritual care steering committee was created to guide the implementation of spiritual care in service delivery.
- Training modules were developed to support the initiative
- Professional education and development programs in spiritual care were provided for staff in protection services to increase their understanding of and provision of spiritual care.
- Increased awareness, literacy, and competency in the delivery of spiritual care.
- Spiritual assessments are being implemented in service delivery within the protection area and fully incorporated into plans of care.
- Specialist spiritual care is made available in a timely manner to all service recipients who request it.

### Staff Wellness, Resilience & Retention

- Hiring of a Wellness Coordinator
- The Wellness Coordinator completed certification through the Mental Health Commission of Canada for the 'Working Mind.'
- Working Mind training delivered to agency staff.
- Offered virtual sessions on mindfulness and wellness to agency staff.
- Wellness Policy updated.
- Wellness Committee in place to host wellness initiatives for staff.

## Public & Stakeholder Confidence

### Equity

Outcomes:

- Heart & Spirit curriculum has been completed and sent for approval and endorsement from the Association of Native Child and Family Service Agencies of Ontario (ANCFSAO).
- Hiring of Anti-Black Racism Integration Lead.
- Over 90% of staff completed the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression (SOGIE) training.
- Equity Audit Implementation Steering Committee which was supporting the work of the Equity Audit Workplan completed its mandate.
- Elder Renee Thomas-Hill formally agrees to be our Elder in Residence.
- Development of two new Affinity groups for racialized and 2SLGBTQ+ staff members.
- Engagement with HWDSB and HWCDSB leads to infuse equity considerations into School Board Protocols.
- Collaborative events between DEI department and spiritual care
- Staff participation in facilitated book club: Me and White Supremacy.
- Ubuntu Affinity Group accompanied black youth to attend Power Up symposium facilitated by OACAS One Vision One Voice.