

# REFLECTIONS ON THE COVID-19 Pandemic

We recognize the incredible strength and resilience of children, youth, and families, staff, kinship families, foster parents, and volunteers during the past year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had impacts on health and well-being individually and collectively. Social and racial injustice have been brought to the forefront as inequities in the social determinants of health place equity-seeking groups at increased risk.

Recognizing youth are amongst the most vulnerable, YRCAS staff worked to ensure additional supports were in place including:

- Technology to support youth to stay connected with their families, friends, and support people, their worker, and to participate in remote learning
- Educational Liaison support during moves to remote learning
- Ensuring access to services for physical and mental health
- Increased financial supports to offset employment impacts and to purchase PPE
- Educational and bursary supports



The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services provided additional supports:

- Extended financial support and ongoing benefits to youth beyond their 21st birthday for transition to independence
- Funding to support child and youth mental health
- Funding to enhance employment and training supports to youth leaving care

Youth have demonstrated incredible strength and resilience during this difficult year, and YRCAS continues to advocate with youth for access to opportunities while continuing to provide educational and bursary supports.

Frontline service staff have worked diligently to deliver vital supports to children, youth, and families in creative and adaptable ways. Frontline staff have offered support by maintaining regular contact in person, by phone, and/or video calls, ensuring families and their children have the technology needed to stay connected to those who are important to them, by collaborating and coordinating service delivery with community partners, and by advocating alongside families for access to services and resources.

Families have persevered and remained strong in the face of significant pandemic related difficulties.



**320**  
Staff\*

\*Total number of staff includes all individuals employed by the agency, including those in casual and part-time positions.

# REFLECTIONS ON THE COVID-19 Pandemic

Kinship and foster families have provided exceptional care and support during these challenging times for children and youth while coping with risks related to COVID, as well as personal and professional impacts of the pandemic. Kinship and foster families used additional COVID-related supports such as income replacement, food delivery costs, and additional PPE when caring for a child or youth that tested positive for COVID-19 to keep everyone as safe and well as possible.

## VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

YRCAS volunteers provided critical supports. Their roles included provision of transportation, tutoring and distance support, all to keep the environment as safe as possible for children and families.

### Volunteers provide support to these important programs:

- Big Buddy Mentoring
- Administration Support
- Homework Club
- Special Events and Projects
- Tutoring
- Drive Program
- Family Visits

To help mentor a child or youth, please visit [www.yorkcas.org/volunteeropportunity.asp](http://www.yorkcas.org/volunteeropportunity.asp) or email [volunteering@yorkcas.org](mailto:volunteering@yorkcas.org).



50

Kinship Service Families



11

Kinship in Care Families



72

Foster Families



69

Volunteers



12

Children/youth supported through one-to-one mentorship from volunteers



74,850

Kilometers driven by volunteers taking children and youth to family access visits, activities, appointments



4,955

Total hours of volunteer service (not including Board Members' hours)

We celebrate the incredible care, love, and support provided to children and youth during this challenging time.

# COMMITMENT TO Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

York Region Children's Aid Society values diversity and inclusion, and respects the dignity, beliefs, and ideas of individuals.

YRCAS is committed to creating an environment of equity and inclusion so that every individual can work and receive services with dignity and respect.

Our organization has been moving forward with clear purpose. We recognize that some work will take time to do properly to create a comprehensive approach that is fully adopted in partnership across the organization and our communities. True change is deliberate and is paced so it is sustainable and embedded in practice – not just the outward appearance of change. Progress will be measured by equitable outcomes for children, youth, and families.

YRCAS has worked to develop a detailed action plan to integrate inclusive practices into service delivery in support of more equitable outcomes for children, youth, and families. Our organization has engaged in initiatives to integrate the One Vision One Voice 11 Race Equity Practices, the Nine Indigenous Commitments, and the recommendations and findings of the Ontario Child Welfare LGBT2SQ+ Organizational Self-Assessment Provincial Report.

YRCAS continues its commitment to challenging and addressing institutional and oppressive practices that produce inequitable outcomes.

We continue working to ensure access to resources, supports, and opportunities that strengthen families, so children and youth reach their full potential within their communities. We have developed monitoring and accountability mechanisms to understand the diverse and intersecting identities of the children, youth, and families receiving service to inform initiatives and service delivery priorities.

Success will be marked by the reduction of over-representation of African Canadian and Indigenous children and youth in care, and families involved with the child welfare system.

We established internal forums for staff to be equipped to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in their work to support children, youth, families, and the many communities we interact with on a daily basis:

- Allocated and dedicated resources in the development of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Department to have oversight in integrating equity and inclusion practices across the organization
- The Black, Latency, Adolescent and Continued Care Committee (BLACCC), who strategically advance mentorship programs that support Black youth to identify and celebrate their culture and heritage
- The Black Staff Advisory Council, a forum for Black staff to provide input in the organization's service priorities and delivery
- Renewed the Equity and Inclusion Advisory Council, a forum that has participation of staff from intersecting identities to provide input into the organization's service priorities and delivery



# 2020 OPERATIONAL REVIEW

## of York Region Children's Aid Society

In the fall of 2020, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services conducted an Operational Review of YRCAS after receiving allegations of racism, bullying, and harassment occurring within the workplace.

The review found that agency staff had been deeply impacted by "an autocratic, deficit-based culture of fear that targeted dissent and enabled oppressive behaviours," including racism and anti-Black racism. YRCAS embraced the review and the 35 recommendations in the areas of:

- Leadership
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Human Resources
- Board Governance
- Change Management
- Service



With the voices of staff and the Board of Directors, a work plan was developed to address the recommendations and reflects our commitment to be an equitable and inclusive organization as a workplace and a provider of service. We see our work plan as the first step, with many projects, initiatives, and actions required to actualize positive change. We acknowledge our shortcomings and commit to making necessary changes to strengthen service for children, youth, and families.

Visit our website at [www.yorkcas.org](http://www.yorkcas.org) to view our work plan and updates, to track our progress in making the right changes for our organization and the community.

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

— James Baldwin,  
Activist and Author

# SERVICE Delivery

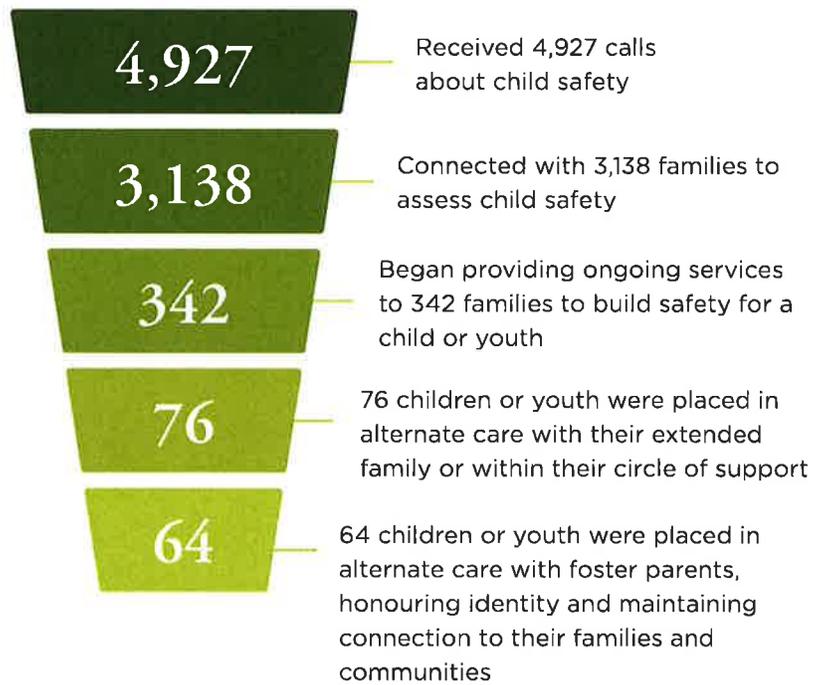
## PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES

We are committed to child and youth safety, well-being, and permanency.

When concerns are reported for the safety of a child or youth, we assess the concerns and partner with families, their support people, and community organizations to build safety where needed and to ensure families have access to resources that support them to be healthy and strong. We are engaging in learning about the impact child welfare has had on children, youth, and families so that we provide service that is responsive to an individual's diverse and intersecting identities and lived experiences.

Equity and inclusion will guide our service to facilitate equitable outcomes for children, youth, and families. We will be intentional in that we are delivering service that aligns with reducing the disproportionality and disparity for Black, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+, and equity-seeking children, youth, and families to whom we provide service.

All statistics are for the fiscal year April 1, 2020, to March 31, 2021.



**121**  
youth received voluntary, ongoing support

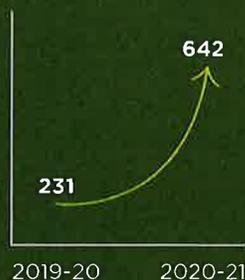


**22**  
children and youth were adopted

### NUMBER OF COMMUNITY LINK SERVICES

(over past two years)

When receiving a call for child safety, we connected families to other community services for support without becoming involved.



### NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN CARE

(over past three years)

Partnering with families and their support people has kept children safe at home.



# PROTECTING CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In Ontario, most reported cases of human trafficking involve sexual exploitation, referred to as sex trafficking. According to Ontario's anti-human trafficking strategy, the age of recruitment is as young as 13 years old, with 70% of victims under age 25.

## Those at high risk of being trafficked:

- Children and youth involved with Children's Aid Societies
- Indigenous women and girls
- 2SLGBTQIA+ persons
- Homeless and marginalized youth
- Persons living with disabilities
- Persons facing barriers to accessing housing, supports, and basic needs

In York Region, we are actively collaborating with our community partners on raising awareness, identifying risk, intervening early, and providing support and care for survivors.

## Collaborative initiatives with our community partners include:

- Updated joint sex trafficking protocol with York Regional Police
- Model of family-based care for children and youth at risk, or when sex trafficking is suspected or confirmed
- Development of a risk screening tool to identify children and youth at risk of sex trafficking

## OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Cedar Centre
- Dnaagdawenmag Binnoojiiyag Child & Family Services
- Jewish Family and Child Service
- Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions
- York Regional Police Special Victims Unit Human Trafficking Section
- York University, Department of Psychology, Teen Relationships Lab

A special thank you to **U-R Home Awareness and Support Services**, a non-profit organization raising awareness and educating the public on local and domestic human trafficking, for their donation of U-R Home Care Bags containing clothing, hygiene products, journals and gift cards for individuals exiting trafficking.



# PRIVACY AND ACCESS TO Personal Information

Part X of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act came into effect on January 1, 2020, setting out a legislative privacy framework and establishing new rules for the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information by service providers.

It provides more consistent protections and rights for children, youth, and families related to their personal information and introduced an individual's right to request access to, and correction of, their record of personal information. The Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario now provides oversight to ensure adherence to privacy rules.

Throughout 2020, we embarked on a journey of training staff, developing a Part X Knowledgebase, updating policies and procedures, revisiting our service delivery model to comply with Part X requirements, and communicated our information practices to children, youth, and families.



We received  
and fulfilled  
**604**  
requests for  
access to personal  
information.

