



Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies

The voice of child welfare in Ontario



**ONE VISION ONE VOICE:
Changing the Child Welfare System for
African Canadians**

October 1, 2016

www.oacas.org/AfricanCanadians

#AfriCanFamilies

This Project

- **What:** Research, including community conversations, exploring the issues.
- **Why:** Reduce the racial disproportionality in child welfare and improve outcomes for African Canadians who come into contact with the system.
- **Who:** Steering Committee of individuals from the African Canadian community. Reference Group made up of CAS representatives.

The Consultations

16 consultation sessions with over 800 participants:

- Toronto (East, West, Downtown, LGBTQ, youth)
- Peel Region
- York Region
- Durham Region
- London
- Hamilton
- Windsor (general and youth sessions)
- Ottawa (general and youth sessions)
- Sudbury
- Thunder Bay



The Consultations

- **Questions:**
 - What are the issues that bring African Canadians into contact with CAS?
 - What are the issues once they become involved with CAS?



The Issues That Bring African Canadians into Contact with CAS

- Issues within the family
 - Child neglect
 - Sexual or physical abuse
 - Emotional abuse
 - Domestic violence
 - Death, disability or mental illness of parents
 - Conflict between parents and youth



The Issues That Bring African Canadians into Contact with CAS

- Biases in other systems
 - Education
 - Policing
 - Healthcare



The Issues That Bring African Canadians into Contact with CAS

- Lack of access to culturally appropriate social services
- Poverty
- Immigration and settlement
- Lack of understanding of the role of child welfare



The Issues Once Involved With CAS

- Eurocentric child welfare system

“Systems are designed and governed by White Eurocentric values that require these values of their clients to properly interact.”

“The CFSA is a colonial document that is applied to all people which oppresses the African Canadian community.”



The Issues

- Anti-Black Racism

“I feel like the staff are scared of us Black kids, so they try to get rid of us quickly. They don't try to understand us.”

“The consequences are harsher for me even though another kid would have done the same thing.”



The Issues

- A system that does not serve the emotional, cultural and spiritual needs of African Canadian children in care
- Lack of access to culturally appropriate services
- Power imbalance



The Issues

- Long-term negative impact of CAS involvement on individuals and families
- Transracial placement of African Canadian children and youth



The Issues

- Parenting styles
- LGBTQ youth
- Challenges advocating for race equity
- Group homes
- Catholic CASs



Recommendations for Change

1. Changes to Ontario's child welfare system

- Change the funding formula
- Create an African Canadian Children's Aid Society
- Mandated collection and reporting of race-based data
- Educate referrers



Recommendations for Change

1. Changes to Ontario's child welfare system

- Greater oversight and accountability
- Increased funding for African Canadian agencies that provide services to children and families
- Equity Office within MCYS and/or OACAS
- A “Bill of Rights” for parents and children



Recommendations for Change

2. Changes within children welfare agencies

- Family-centred approach to child welfare
- Hire more African Canadian staff
- Better education and training of child welfare staff



Recommendations for Change

2. Changes within children welfare agencies

- Cultural matching of foster and adoptive families with children in care
- Supports to White foster and adoptive parents
- Appropriate financial supports for African Canadian children



Recommendations for Change

2. Changes within children welfare agencies

- Ensure African Canadian children and families have access to culturally appropriate services
- Engage and partner with the African Canadian community
- Greater use of kinship placements



Recommendations for Change

3. African Canadian community

- Coordination of community services



Next Steps

- Phase II proposal submission to MCYS
- Phase II includes:
 - Capacity development for the field of child welfare and system partners/ referral sources
 - Data and outcomes Analysis
 - Annual African Canadian staff gathering
 - Annual African Canadian youth in care gathering



THANK YOU!



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