

Supporting Children and Families

Protecting children and helping build healthy families

Ontario's 53 **Children's Aid Societies** (CASs) are not-for-profit agencies that protect children from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and neglect.

In the Peel Region, Peel Children's Aid keeps children safe, helps parents build healthy families, and provides safe, nurturing environments for young people who can't live at home because of family problems.

Keeping children safe by supporting healthy families

Raising children is not easy. Even in the best of circumstances it's a job that takes a lot of time, energy and patience.

It's even harder when you also have to cope with serious problems like poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, ill health, relationship breakdown, new immigrant language barriers, or the challenge of caring for children with physical, emotional or developmental difficulties.

Families in these circumstances come under a lot of stress. This can harm family relationships, and distressed parents may abuse or neglect their children. Sadly, the cycle of abuse often perpetuates itself – with abused children becoming abusive adults.

Prevention is key

We believe that the best way to deal with child abuse and neglect is to prevent it. That's why we encourage people to contact us before family problems get out of control. We can help families through the rough times, and support and strengthen families so they can parent their children safely.

Child protection is our responsibility

Child protection is our ultimate responsibility. Therefore, we must intervene in any situation where a child under 16 has been, or is, threatened with physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or neglect.

Because children are almost always better off growing up in their own homes, we try to keep families together whenever we can. Most of the families we work with receive help through counselling and various support services to create safe homes for their children. If that fails, we may seek a court order to supervise children in their own homes, or place them in an alternate home.

We are here to help

If you are having difficulties caring for your children or teen under 16 years of age, help is available through the Peel Children's Aid and other community agencies.

We'll help you learn how to provide a safe and loving environment for your children and help you deal with problems such as anger and stress. We can also teach you new ways to deal with problems, and help you develop skills for handling crises.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

It's always better to get help early, before problems get worse. Regardless of your background, and no matter what language you speak, help is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you're worried about your children, or someone else's, don't hesitate to contact us.

Providing a safe place for children

When parents are unable to safely care for their children, Peel Children's Aid finds places for the children in the homes of friends or relatives, in foster homes, or in other kinds of residences. Some of these residences are managed directly by the Peel Children's Aid, and some by other community agencies.

Placements are usually short-term and most children are returned to their homes when their family situation improves. In the meantime, we help parents learn how to provide better care for their children.

In some cases, however, children need to be placed permanently away from home. Whenever possible, we try to arrange adoptions. If adoption is not feasible, we strive to keep the child in touch with his or her family if this is in the child's best interests.

Leaving our care

When young people are ready to leave our care, we help them learn important life skills so they can manage on their own. When adopted children grow up, we can arrange for them to meet their birth parents, if both parties agree.

You can help keep children safe

Children are dependent on adults for love, support and nurturing. Therefore, we're all responsible for protecting them from abuse - whether by a parent, sibling, babysitter, relative, family friend or stranger.

Here's what you can do to protect children from abuse and neglect

If you think a child is being abused or neglected, it's your legal duty to report the situation to a Children's Aid Society, even if you've already reported it on a previous occasion.

You're protected from any kind of legal action, provided the report is not a deliberately false accusation. For the child's sake, you should report the situation without delay by phoning your local CAS or The Ministry of Children and Youth Services.