



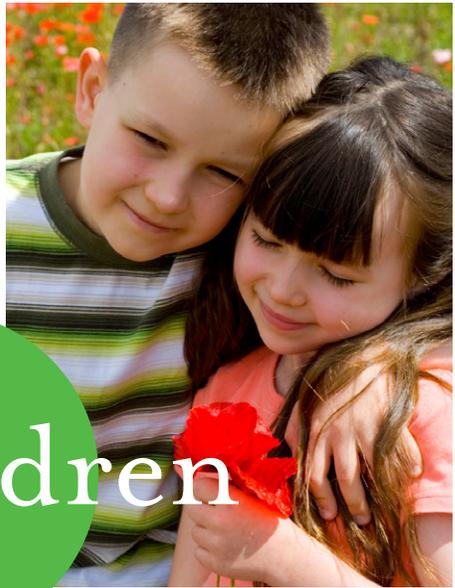
youth



families



community



children

our year in review

ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14



BOARD PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

We're balancing our budget, and staying focused on our strengths

In some ways it is an understatement to say that 2013–14 was a very challenging year for Family & Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County. With the introduction of a new provincial funding model we began the year projecting a significant deficit. Adding to our pressure was a new Ministry Regulation requiring the Agency to submit a balanced budget.

Members will be interested to know that our funding has been steadily declining over the past eight years, and as a result we have been required to manage with continued fiscal restraint. Although funding has been declining, service volumes have not gone down. In some key areas the request for our services has actually increased.

Through a reduction in program spending, additional controls and reduced staffing levels, primarily in senior management and administration, we were able to balance our 2013–2014 budget and meet the requirements of the Ministry.

While it has been a challenging year, we are committed as a resilient organization to remaining positive and focusing on our strengths:

- A service model that values true engagement with families so that children and youth are safe and can stay with their families;
- Using family court only when it is required;



- Helping children and youth in care achieve permanency and increase family connections for Crown Wards; and
- Working in a meaningful way with our community partners to advocate for the needs of our most vulnerable citizens.

Through all the discussion at the Board table we have kept foremost in mind the important work that we are legislated to deliver in this community. The Board and staff remain committed to our mission: "we work together with children, youth, their families

and the community for the safety and well-being of children and youth." We have renewed our commitment to the priorities of our strategic plan as they provide a blueprint to desired service outcomes while being accountable to the funding we receive from the provincial government.

We are very proud of the ongoing commitment of our staff, foster parents and volunteers. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated, creative and caring group of people and this report will highlight the service volume numbers that we experienced this year, highlight our service outcomes, and offer a sample of stories about the people we serve in Guelph-Wellington.

Jan Lord, President, Board of Directors

Daniel Moore, Executive Director

CHILDREN FIRST FUND

Financial support helps youth in care further college studies

At the age of 18 I needed to choose a post secondary path in order to achieve my goals. I had no idea of my passion but I wanted to be successful, to help people and to wake up every morning loving my job. I had so many fears before entering college. I wondered how I would cover the expensive costs of tuition, as well as the cost of living on my own.

During my first year of college I struggled to get by financially. I needed to work full time in order to support myself. I would work late into the evenings and then be at school for an 8 am class. It would take me 1-1/2 hours on two busses to arrive at school. I missed classes from sheer exhaustion and mentally I was breaking down. My course marks reflected this. I needed help!

The financial support that enabled me to continue my studies came from Family & Children's Services through community bursaries and donations. They also provided me with love and the encouragement to continue. This support has been ongoing during the three years it has taken me to complete the college program. I successfully graduated April of 2013.



As a youth in care I often felt I didn't have the emotional support and encouragement from a family as other kids did. The financial assistance I received helped me to feel that other people believed in me. This aspect was the most important to me throughout my journey. It helped me understand that people out there cared about me enough to want to see me succeed. And succeed is what I did!

Nadia Sorgente



Children First Fund results for 2013–14

Thanks to the ongoing generous support of individuals, families, businesses and organizations within our community:

- 17 youth in care have to date attended post secondary education programs with 10 registered the coming term.

- 38 youth living independently without family experienced a family holiday meal with all the trimmings and received a stocking "stuffed" with goodies and gifts.
- 3 youth participated in full choir rehearsals of Handel's Messiah.
- 22 vulnerable families in the community enjoyed a Guelph Storm home game which included the sharing of a light meal together.
- 16 families participated in a parenting group program which directly impacted 25 children/youth

What we're doing to support families and keep children and youth safe

SIGNS OF SAFETY

Our agency has eight teams of professional Family Services workers dedicated to working with families to keep children and youth safe in their own homes. Two teams that serve rural families in Wellington County and six teams that serve Guelph families.

We are continuing to implement Signs of Safety – a rigorous risk assessment framework from Australia that helps us to engage with families and build effective safety networks that help to keep children and youth safe in the short and long term. We are excited to be part of a growing international community of practice using this framework.

We are evaluating our own work and are one of a few Ontario CASs that will be joining an international research project that measures outcomes using this approach and compares data from other countries including Australia, Netherlands, the United States, England, Sweden, and Denmark. We hope to have some results from this research to report in next year's annual report.

EARLY HELP

We still believe it is best to help children and youth before they get hurt rather than after. We are involved in a significant multi-agency collaborative effort, called Nurturing Neighbourhoods, that provides outreach to vulnerable parents before their vulnerabilities become big and intractable problems that pose risk to their children. Our agency has provided leadership to this effort and there are early indicators of very promising results.

An evaluation report is due out in the coming months and early signals indicate the work is meeting its outcome objectives of supporting families to prevent harm to children and youth. This outreach initiative, jointly supported by the Guelph Community Health Centre and the Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition, successfully connected to 132 vulnerable families last year to

increase protective factors such as appropriate housing and access to health care and social service, thereby preventing harm to children and youth.

JUST THE NUMBERS

Between April 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014:

- 3,665 people contacted our agency because they were worried about children and youth in our community.
- Out of those contacts, we supported 2,343 families by connecting them to other community resources or providing them with information.
- The remaining 1,322 calls resulted in us conducting child protection investigations to check on the safety of those children and youth.
- From those 1,322 investigations, 961 were closed following the investigation and a further 350 families required ongoing support.
- An additional 410 families were already being served through our ongoing services at the beginning of the fiscal year and 16 open cases were transferred from other agencies, resulting in a total of 776 families being supported through ongoing service by our agency to keep their children and youth safe in their home.
- Fewer than 4% of the children and youth in those families needed to come into foster care.
- The remaining 96% of children stayed in the care of their families with safety plans in place that often included family networks helping parents to keep their children safe.



In the past year we received
3,665 calls
 from people concerned about
 the safety of a child

Of those calls, we did **1,322 investigations**

We worked with
776
 families through
 on-going support

- Referrals to partner agencies
- Nurturing Neighbourhoods
- Neighbourhood Groups
- Signs of Safety



96% !
 of children we work with
 remain in their own homes

■ Excerpt from a client thank-you letter, reprinted here with permission:

“ I AM WRITING YOU WITH A DEEP SENSE OF JOY ... ”

“It is with a deep sense of gratitude and thankfulness that I am writing this letter to you about my overall experiences with Family & Children’s Services of Guelph Wellington County. My history working with them is extensive. My story is a series of battles with drugs and alcohol, domestic violence, an eating disorder, and unresolved trauma from childhood, which as you

may know has had a tremendous negative effect on my children and my abilities to parent. I could not have won these battles on my own, family and children’s services have been there for me throughout. . . . I am writing to you with a deep sense of joy, excitement and hope about my future, my children’s future, and the future of my community.”

What we're doing to support children and youth in finding life-long connections

FAMILY FINDING

Family Finding is a formal technique and set of steps that our workers have been using to find and involve extended family or people who may have been involved in the past with a child or youth who is in our care. Many children who come into care have lost touch with or have never met extended family members. These connections are important to building a community of support for a child or youth that may lead to life-long relationships and even a home for a child to live. In some cases, reconnection leads to enhanced support for parents who have also become isolated. At right (next page) are two Family Finding success stories from our agency..



YOUTH IN CARE

Half of our children in care are youth between the ages of 16 and 21. These youth need people who care about them and who will support them as they transition to adulthood. Through Family Finding we are reconnecting some youth to family and people that have cared about them in the past. Some youth are finding permanency with foster parents or family. Some youth are being adopted.

All of our youth need support to be successful in school including post-secondary education and work. Over the past year there has been improved access to scholarships and bursaries, and Ontario Student Assistance (OSAP) so that youth wanting to attend post-secondary have the financial support they need. But our youth also need support to obtain their driver's license, learn to cook, manage their finances - to become adults. We are working hard to support these youth to be happy, healthy, connected and successful.

KINSHIP – FAMILY IS IMPORTANT

Many children who come into care are placed with extended family such as grandparents, aunts or uncles. If a return to their parents is not possible, we work hard to support these family members to either obtain custody or adopt the children. Through a provincial policy, family members can obtain financial support if their income level does not exceed certain requirements.

At the end of 2013–2014, 20 children in our care were living with family members ('kin') and there were 30 children not in care who could not, for safety reasons, live with their families and were living with relatives in 23 different kinship arrangements. These children are being supported to live with their relatives while we work with parents to address the difficulties they are experiencing with the hope that the children can return home.

FOSTERING AND ADOPTION LAST YEAR:

- 25 children found a family through adoption
- 79 adoptive families were supported in some way after their adoption finalized
- We have 93 approved foster and adoptive homes

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE LAST YEAR:

- 60 children were brought into care
- We had an average of 206 children and youth in care on any given day in 2013–2014
- Approximately 50% of our children and youth in care are over the age of 16



FAMILY FINDING SUCCESS STORIES *

Annie and Michael

Over the past year Annie (13) and Michael (15) have expanded their family tree from 9 to 115 members through Family Finding. Not able to live with their mom, they needed a permanent loving home. Their biological father, who they did not know, was located and contacted in Western Canada and he led us to half siblings of Annie and Michael who they did not know existed.

As a result, their siblings' mother and her husband have opened their hearts and their home to Annie and Michael. After a few successful visits they will be moving out west this summer to live with their brothers and are being adopted by the family. They are very excited to begin their new life which also includes maintaining connection to their mother and grandmother here in Ontario.

* Names have been changed to protect identities

Amanda

Amanda (17) has been in foster care almost her entire life and has experienced many losses and changes in caregivers. When Family Finding began, she did not know of any family members and she was very lonely with no permanent family to care for her. She now knows of more than 100 relatives in eastern and northern Canada. She has met her biological parents, half sister and many members of her mother's family. They have traveled to Ontario to see her and she has traveled to the east coast to visit them.

This summer she will meet her paternal grandparents in PEI. Through Family Finding, Amanda has learned of her Mi'kmaq heritage. Her maternal grandmother is a spiritual leader in her community. We continue to assist Amanda to get to know her family and to explore their role in her future. Amanda is no longer "alone" in the world and seems more hopeful about her life.



REVAMPED WEBSITE FOR F&CS

In 2013 we launched our new website! Designed to be more user-friendly and interactive, it gives members of our community a chance to get to know us better and provides them with the information they need about our services. Be sure to follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/fcsgw>

Financial year-end for 2013–14

Audited financial statements available on request

EXPENDITURES

Direct Service	
Staffing Costs (service)	\$ 10,491,092
Boarding Rates	4,159,552
Client Support	791,407
Travel (Staff & Clients)	604,764
Adoption Subsidies & Probation	367,421
Legal & Professional	300,016
Program	15,748
Sub-total	\$ 16,730,000

Infrastructure and Administration	
Staffing Costs (Administration)	1,975,807
Infrastructure (Building/Technology/Capital)	1,174,483
Administration Costs	563,970
Sub-total	\$ 3,714,260

Expenditures Total \$ 20,444,260

REVENUES

Ministry Funding	\$ 19,474,994
Children's Allowance / Parental Maintenance	456,571
Tax Recoveries	295,446
Expenditure Recoveries & Interest	197,529
Inter-agency Fees	19,720

Revenues Total \$ 20,444,260

Excess of expenditures over revenues \$0

Contact information

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Shelldale Centre

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County Office

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L-R: Donna Jaques, Jan Lord, Judy Yarmey, Zakir Akram, Patricia Widmeyer, Raechelle Devereaux, John Livernois, Lesleigh Hunter

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Vice-President Susan Dickert

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