



ANNUAL REPORT

A Year in Review
●●●●● 2022-2023



a year's overview

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Heather Broddy, Daria Allan-Ebron

We are delighted to present to you the Annual Report for Family & Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County. Over the past year, our dedicated team of agency staff, volunteers and foster parents has worked together to support the needs of vulnerable children, youth, and families in the Guelph-Wellington community.

This past year has seen several changes at the agency: Sheila Markle, Executive Director, retired at the end of July 2022, and Daria Allan-Ebron, new Executive Director, joined the agency shortly afterwards in August. Erin Harvey, Director of Service, retired in May 2023. Recently, Shea Dahuja joined the agency as Director of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Service, and Danielle Mitchell joined as Director of Service to lead our Children's Services Strategy. We are excited to continue strengthening and building relationships and partnerships across the community in the upcoming fiscal year.

Our agency has continued to focus on early help, recognizing the importance of addressing issues at their root cause by working in collaboration with families and community partners to offer support. We continue to focus on keeping children at home with family, kin, and community wherever possible. We know the importance of helping family members stay connected to community, so children and youth can grow up in an environment where their identity needs are supported. We also know the importance of children and youth growing up in homes where they are safe and their wellbeing and permanency needs are a priority. Our agency continues to strive towards integrating equity, diversity, and inclusion, together with Truth and Reconciliation, into everything we do, including our practice, partnerships, and organizational culture. We are committed to changing the outcomes for marginalized communities, notably the overrepresentation and disproportional impacts to Indigenous and black communities.

This past year, we launched the Village Finding Project, which aims to partner with communities to address adverse childhood experiences through resilience building by fostering connections and developing a network of caring adults.



a year's overview

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Continued

The Province of Ontario continues to redesign and modernize child welfare. As part of that strategy, a new program designed to better support youth success was launched. The new [Ready, Set, Go program](#) has been implemented at the agency.

We have been faced with challenges over the past year, with impacts of COVID-19 on families, children, and youth still visible in our community. In the workplace, we have gradually resumed in-person meetings, and we continue to focus on nurturing employee engagement, building workplace culture wellness initiatives, and strengthening diversity, equity and inclusion across the agency. We strive to be a place where everyone feels a sense of belonging and connection.



**Executive Director,
Daria Allan-Ebron**



**Board Chair,
Heather Broddy**

We are working towards towards helping youth to transition into adulthood with the needed help and support.



We have seen a decrease in the number of foster parents and volunteers. We are focused on recruiting caring and compassionate adults to support the diverse needs of the children and youth we serve.

In closing, we would like to acknowledge, our staff, foster, kin, and adoptive families, volunteers, board members, donors, and partners in our community that have continued to work together to ensure we can provide essential services and support to children,, youth, and families in the Guelph-Wellington community. We look forward to another successful year in 2023.



is the Ministry Program that will replace Continued Care Support For Youth.

It is part of the Ministry's commitment to child welfare redesign and aligns with the commitment to increasing support for youth. With this new directive, planning timelines for youth in the extended care of the Society will begin earlier. Youth will now receive support until the age of 23, including changes to existing financial supports provided.



Equity Commitments

and a sense of belonging

At Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County, our work in local communities and within our organization is guided by our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-oppression, and Truth & Reconciliation. With Guelph being one of the fastest growing cities in Canada, our region is diversifying quickly, and we understand that our services must meet the needs of the changing population. Issues of racism, such as anti-Indigenous and anti-black racism, along with poverty, food insecurity, and an increase in issues of mental health, are having a vast impact on our communities. Therefore, working with families and neighbouring social agencies to keep children and youth safe within their own communities is an opportunity we see as a priority.

In addition, we believe that creating an internal sense of belonging among our employees is one of the most important things we can do to ensure our long-term success. We recently completed the collection of data on staff census and employee experience. Knowing where we are will help us shape where we want to be, creating a work environment where everyone feels welcome with a sense of belonging.

We acknowledge that any progress made does not undo the injustices of the past or diminish experiences for those who continue to live with inequities. We are committed to leveraging our partnerships with the focus on building sustainable, anti-oppressive practices and staying the course to Truth and Reconciliation, knowing that we have to hold ourselves accountable to the [Nine Key Commitments](#) to move forward. We will continue to report on the progress made on these commitments, acknowledging that our actions and behaviours will always speak louder than our words.

*Shea Dahuja,
Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Service*



Employee Engagement Survey

Human Resources

We conducted our third annual Employee Engagement Survey and maintained a good response rate of 73%. We will continue to work on increasing this number in the upcoming year.

OUR ANNUAL SURVEY COVERS SIX MAIN CATEGORIES

Workplace Culture

Overall Engagement

Leadership

Communication

Learning and Development

Physical and Psychological
Safety and Wellbeing

All areas of the survey showed improvement, with Leadership improving in some areas by double digits! All categories in this survey remain priority areas of focus with special attention continuing to be on Workplace Culture, Learning and Development, and Physical and Psychological Safety and Wellbeing.

The annual Employee Engagement Survey provides an anonymous feedback mechanism for staff and continues to provide guidance to leadership and the strategic direction of the agency.

*Bethany Comeau,
Director of Human
Resources*



OUR SERVICES IN 2022-23

FAMILY SERVICES

New Referrals

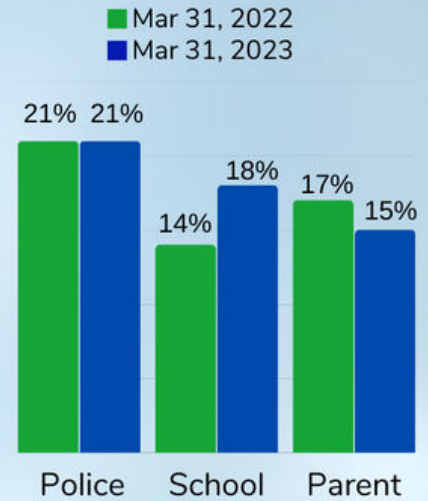
2021-22 2022-23
2,930 3,227 ↑ 10%

new calls received from people worried about a child

Top 3 Reasons for Investigations



Top 3 Callers



New Non-Protection Services

2021-22 2022-23
1,822 2,005 ↑ 10%

- files opened for support services
- referrals to other community organizations
- assistance to other children's aid societies, etc.

New Investigations

2021-22 2022-23
1,108 1,222 ↑ 10%

families had worries big enough to look into

New Ongoing Services

2021-22 2022-23
222 166 ↓ 25%

families needed ongoing help to address the worries

Total Protection Cases Receiving Services

Already open at start of year
 New cases during year
 Total cases served in year

Investigations	
2021-22	2022-23
225	196
1,108	1,222
1,333	1,418

Ongoing Services	
2021-22	2022-23
274	238
222	166
496	404



OUR SERVICES IN 2022-23

KINSHIP

When children and youth are not able to stay with their primary caregivers, our agency endeavors to place them with family members or other individuals who are known to them and their family. These types of placements are called kinship placements. Kinship providers have a biological or other significant connection to the child, youth or family, and can include relationships such as grandparents, aunts/uncles, step-parents, family friends, neighbours or other community members. Kinship placements allow children and youth to maintain connections with their family, culture and traditions, which helps build a sense of belonging, safety and security for children and youth. The two types of kinship placements are kinship care and kinship service.



Kinship Care

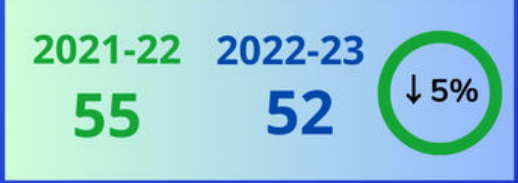
Kinship care is when a child or youth with "in care" status is placed with a family member or someone known to them or their family.

Kinship Service

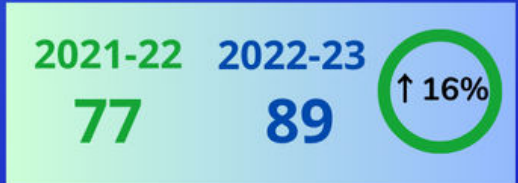
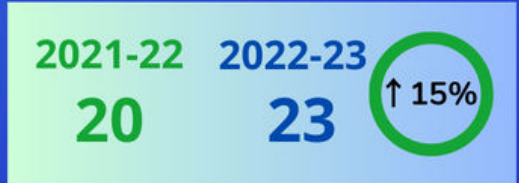
Kinship service is when a child or youth who does not have "in care" status is placed with a family member or someone known to them or their family.



Families providing kin placements



Children/Youth in kin placements



Admissions and Discharges

2021-22 2022-23

37 37

0%

children and youth were admitted to our care to help keep them safe from harm

2021-22 2022-23

33 45

↑ 36%

children and youth left our care

Top 3 reasons children/youth were admitted to our care

	2021-22	2022-23
Parent requires support to care for child:	32%	35%
Child abandonment/separation:	30%	22%
Physical harm:	16%	
Assistance to another CAS:		16%

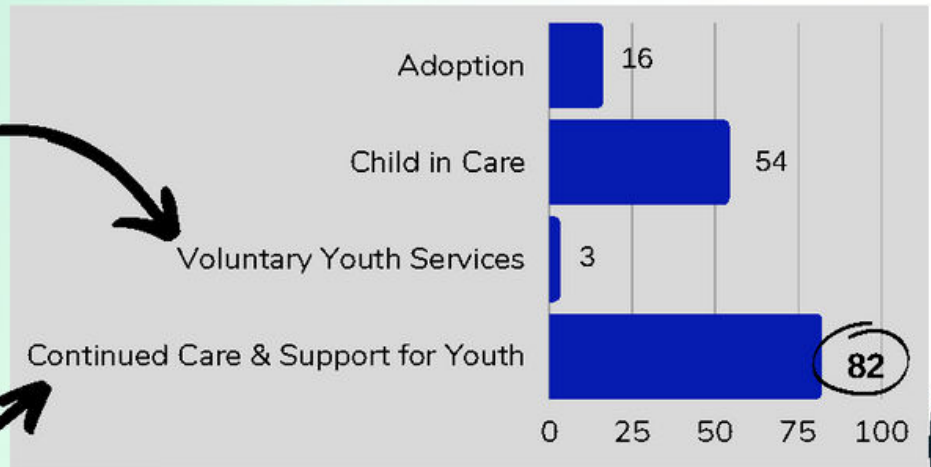
Top 3 reasons for children/youth leaving care

	2021-22	2022-23
Child/youth returned home:	39%	43%
Adoption completed:	24%	27%
Child/youth transferred to another CAS:	12%	
Youth over 18 years old left care voluntarily:		16%

Children and Youth in Care on March 31, 2023 = 155

On January 1, 2018, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services changed the Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act to allow Children's Aid Societies to provide services to 16 and 17 year-olds in Ontario through Voluntary Youth Services Agreements (VYSAs).

Previously, when Children in Care and youth with VYSAs turned 18, they could enter into a Continued Care & Support for Youth Agreement to allow them to continue to receive services and supports from our agency until they reached the age of 21. Starting April 1, 2023, youth can now receive services and supports from our agency until they turn 23 under the Ready, Set, Go program.



A Voluntary Youth Services Agreement provides youth with supports such as:

- Assistance with housing
- Reconnection with family/network
- Educational support
- Mental Health Support

2021-22 2022-23

21 9

↓ 57%

youth aged 16-17 were served through a Voluntary Youth Services Agreement

At the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services issued a moratorium to maintain supports and services for youth who turned 21 during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, this year our agency has continued to provide support to 42 youth whose Continued Care and Support Agreements would have ended, allowing them to have a longer period of certainty and security.

Starting April 1, 2023, youth can now receive services and supports from our agency until they turn 23 under the Ready, Set, Go program.

Of the 82 youth with Continued Care & Support Agreements on March 31, 2023:

- 37 (45%) were Children in Care who moved to Continued Care & Support for Youth when they turned 18
- 45 (55%) were youth with Voluntary Youth Services Agreements who moved to Continued Care & Support for Youth when they turned 18
- 35 (43%) of the above youth were aged 21 or older



Village Finding Update

Parenting can be especially hard when parents feel isolated or alone and face big challenges. All parents

want the best for their children. Sometimes parents' struggles make it difficult to meet their children's needs.

Rather than 'villages' of interconnected and extended families and friends, many people live far from relatives. Some don't even know their neighbours. Parents can feel isolated, overburdened, and unsupported. We want to change that with Village Finding. We want to create "The Village" needed to help children, youth, and their parents thrive. Village Finding aims to foster connections between caring community members and children, youth and their families who are struggling or in crisis. Positive connections with caring adults help children feel better and develop resilience to face life's challenges.

On March 22, 2023, we officially launched our Village Finding Project. One hundred fifty people attended our launch event where we had a keynote address by Dr. Wendy Ellis. She introduced us to the concept of "Pair of ACES", which takes the research on ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences) from the mid 90s and updated it to include "Adverse Community Experiences". Wendy talked about the systems responses needed in order to take on dealing with the circumstances in which people live that make Adverse Childhood Experiences much more likely. Feedback from the event was very enthusiastic and positive.





Village Finding Update *continued*

Family & Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County is currently undertaking a pilot project in five local communities to see if we can build a vil-

lage. In these communities (during the pilot), **we are looking for caring adults willing to connect with a child and become a helper to their family.**

Erin Harvey,
former Director of Service

**THERE
ARE FOUR
WAYS TO
HELP**

EVERY
CHILD
MATTERS

1

I help with small acts of everyday connection. This may include walking a child to school, helping with homework, or playing at the park.

2

I am part of a child's safety network and take part in safety planning meetings with FCSGW and the Family.

3

I offer my home to a child to stay for short periods of time when things at their home are really challenging. (This could include overnight stays.)

4

I am a kin home for children. I can also become a customary care home or foster home when children are not safe at home.

COULD THIS BE YOU?



The Importance of Grandparents

In my work on the kinship team, I have had the privilege of working closely with many grandparents who are the caregivers for their grandchildren during times when their parents or caregivers are unable to care for them. The role of grandparents and elders is a vital one as child protection workers engage with family networks. Grandparents are often the knowledge keepers in families. They

support caregivers in having safe visits with their children and are vital network members providing necessary care for the children and youth in their family.

Many grandparents thought they were done raising children, but instead have stepped into the role of primary caregiver for their grandchildren. I have had the honour of walking alongside grandparents who assumed these roles in many different ways.

*Jennifer Bulyaki,
Kin Worker*

A retired grandmother and grandfather planned to travel, but put those plans on hold when they needed to care for their grandkids.

Grandparents accepted the responsibility of caring for their 3-year-old and 4-month-old grandchildren and were willing to care for the children forever if needed.

A step grandmother and grandfather accepted the legal responsibility of raising their teenage grandchildren.

*Together
We Can!*

Our kin team is grateful for the involvement of grandparents, and we continue to be amazed by the love and care they provide.



Foster Care

Over the past year, the team at Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County focused on raising awareness about the urgent need for foster parents within our community. We are dedicated to ensuring the safety, well-being, and permanency for children, youth, and families within our region. A crucial aspect of our mission involves providing stable, nurturing, and loving homes for children and youth in need through our Foster Care Program.

Did you know?

FCSGW is faced with a critical need for diverse foster families, particularly for Black, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQIA+ children and teens, and sibling groups over the age of five.

While many potential foster parents may initially gravitate towards younger children, it is essential to remember that older children and sibling groups also require love, stability, and the support of foster families to grow and transition successfully into adulthood.

Currently, children and youth over the age of 5 who are not able to live in their current homes are being placed in OPRs (Outside Paid Residences, the private foster and group care system) as there are not enough FCSGW foster homes to accommodate our increasing community need. The impact of a caring foster family on these vulnerable children and youth can be transformative, and can empower them to heal and grow and better reach their full potential. Sibling groups, particularly those with older children, face additional challenges in the foster care system. Maintaining family connections and keeping siblings together is of utmost importance for the emotional wellbeing of the children involved.

Our current group of dedicated foster parents provide care to existing children in their homes and have attended a variety of trainings over the past year, including Indigenous Learning, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, Trauma and Attachment, and First Aid. We want to thank them, together with kin, adoptive families, and staff, for their compassion and commitment to making a difference in the lives of children, youth, and families.

*Daria Allan-Ebron,
Executive Director*

Fund Development

It was an incredible year for the Children First Fund. Despite the impacts of the pandemic, including a rise in inflation, increased demand, and staff shortages, we were able to strengthen our work to provide vulnerable children, youth, and families involved with FCSGW with enrichment opportunities, educational support, life skills, essential needs, and community resources to build strong and resilient families.

We knew this year would be challenging, and we were blown away by the response of our donors, committees, and community partners whose generosity and commitment helped us to achieve sustainability for important and unique programs and services. Thanks to you, the Children First Fund raised over \$206,800 in financial and \$10,000 of in-kind support.

As we move forward into this next fiscal year guided by our Strategic Plan and feedback from clients, donors, committees, and community partners, our goal will be to advance our fundraising efforts to create a future in which Guelph and Wellington County's most vulnerable children, youth, and families have the strength and resilience to build a lifetime of their own unstoppable success.

*Patricia Brady,
Fund Development and Communications Manager*

Children First Fund 2022

Family & Children's Services
of Guelph and Wellington County



IMPACT

Fund Development

Donor Spotlight

New partnerships made in 2022-2023

Guelph Lions Club



The Guelph Lions Club donated \$17,500 to support our Car Seat Program for one year with the purchase of 50 new 4-in-1 car seats for low-income families in the Guelph and Wellington County.

Cavanaugh Family Foundation

The Cavanaugh Family Foundation donated \$16,935 to support scholarships for two youth in care with FCSGW for five years through the Maureen Cavanaugh Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Omnia Packaging Inc.



Omnia Packaging Inc. donated \$5000 to support children, youth, and families involved with FCSGW during the holiday season and all year round with enrichment opportunities and new family experiences.

Did you know?

Our youth room was renovated in 2022. Thanks to Laura Greenway's generous donation of \$50,000, the youth room received an upgrade of practical and fun-filled items, such as new sofas, tables and chairs, pantry filled with snacks and basic necessities, board games, popcorn machine, television, school supplies, and more!

Thank you
to our
donors!

Volunteer Services

Volunteers play an important role in the lives of the children, youth, and families we serve and have a lasting and positive impact. They contribute a variety of skills, experience, and knowledge that support families with their goals. After putting recruitment on hold during the pandemic, we were excited to start recruiting new volunteers again last Fall. We are thankful for the volunteers already involved with the agency pre-pandemic, who continued to provide amazing service to children, youth, and families as mentors, tutors, parent aides, and drivers. A special thank you to each of these volunteers for their unwavering dedication during a challenging time.

This past year, the focus for volunteer services has been to rebuild the program as we navigate the needs of families in Guelph and Wellington County, which may or may not be the same as before the pandemic. We prioritized the recruitment and training of new volunteers and matching them with families based on needs. Our organization is committed to a volunteer program that is inclusive and equitable and remains intentional in the recruitment of Black, Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ volunteers. As we move forward, the volunteer program is excited to have volunteers serve as part of the agency team, working together to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and youth.

*Karan Mann,
Manager of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*

Join our team!



VOLUNTEER WITH US



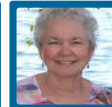
BOARD OF DIRECTORS AS OF MARCH 31, 2023



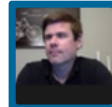
Al Potma
Vice Chair



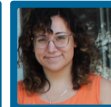
Animesh
Vadaparti



Cathy Dean



Chase
Collver



Christina
Cameletti



David
Estill



Delbert
Williams



Heather
Broddy
Board Chair



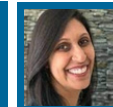
Megan
Harron



Mike
Hallett
**Secretary
Treasurer**



Shaun
Valeriote



Shikha Jain



We need you.
Our kids need you more.
Visit our website to learn
how you can make a
lasting difference.
<https://www.fcsgw.org/>

Support your community
one child at a time.



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Contact us at 1-800-265-8300
or 519-824-2410

Diversity doesn't look like anyone. It looks like everyone. Karen Draper

Child Welfare Operations

2022-2023 Results

Audited financial statements available upon request.

EXPENDITURES

Staffing	\$ 13,912,923
Boarding rates	3,616,933
Infrastructure & admin	2,044,660
Client support	1,267,125
Adoptions	894,138
Travel	211,698

EXPENDITURES TOTAL **\$ 21,947,477**

REVENUE

Child Welfare funding	\$ 21,233,011
Other non-recurring revenue	694,021

REVENUE TOTAL **\$21,927,032**

Net Surplus (Deficit) **(\$20,445)**

2021-22 Carry forward deficit **(\$796,191)**

2022-23 Deficit assistance funding **\$816,636**

NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT) **Nil**

