

Overview of Ontario's plan to Redesign the Child Welfare System

Long-Term Vision

An Ontario where every child and youth has the supports they need to succeed and thrive.

Goal and Scope

Working in partnership with the child welfare, residential and community-based services sectors to build a coordinated range of services that strengthen families, focusing on community-based prevention and early intervention services. These will be high quality, culturally appropriate and truly responsive to the needs of children, youth and families. When children and youth cannot remain at home, they will be supported through family-based placements wherever possible. We are improving the overall quality of care they receive from children's aid societies and residential services, such as foster care or group homes. Our system will provide children and youth in care with the supports they need to be safe, succeed and thrive as they transition from care to adulthood.

Strategic Pillars

Our strategy has five pillars focused on prevention, early intervention and seeking more permanent homes for children and youth in the child welfare system.

1



Child, Youth, Family and Community Well-Being

Shifting to Prevention

- The redesign will address the need for improved coordination and consistency across systems by shifting to a model focusing on a collaborative and holistic approach.
- A new, shared responsibility across sectors to work together to enhance child, youth and family well-being among all children, youth and families and help keep families together.
- Service providers and community organizations will work together to identify and respond to the needs of families early-on, including schools, early-years programs, parenting programs and health and mental health services.
- Families will be connected more quickly to appropriate and effective social supports or know how and where to access the right supports in times of need.

Indigenous Children, Youth and Families

- Indigenous children, youth and families, through the Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy (OICYS), will be able to access community-based prevention and early intervention supports, including through expanded access to customary care, that are culturally appropriate and reflect their customs, heritage and traditions. Child protection will be a last resort.
- Supporting the implementation of Indigenous-led models and systems for child and family services.

2



Quality of Care

Quality and Oversight

- Implementing *Ontario's Quality Standards Framework – A Resource Guide to Improve the Quality of Care for Children and Young Persons in Licensed Residential Settings* to support residential service providers in delivering high-quality residential care.
- Launching the *Children and Young Persons' Rights Resource* to support children and young persons receiving services under the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* to know and understand their rights.
- Enhancing training and qualification requirements for persons providing residential care, including staff and caregivers.

Prioritize Family-Based Care

- Focusing on family-based placements, like kinship and foster care, over group homes, where appropriate, to increase stability and culturally appropriate options for children and youth in care.

3



Strengthening Youth Supports

Amplifying Youth Voice

- Ensuring children, youth and families have a strong voice in decisions about their care, including increasing access to education and employment resources, information and supports to improve transitions from care.

Enhancing Youth Supports

- Expanding and increasing access to education and employment supports for youth (e.g., postsecondary, employment and apprenticeship programs).
- Providing youth with dedicated, targeted supports to meet their distinct needs and respond to their cultural identities. This includes those with disabilities and mental health needs as well as specific supports for Indigenous, Black, racialized and LGBTQ2S children and youth.
- Supporting youth to transition successfully to adulthood.

4



Improving Stability and Permanency

Family-based Supports

- Improving access to resources for all types of family-based caregivers (e.g., kinship, customary and adoptive).
- Expanding post-adoption parent training and peer supports.
- Implementing a public education campaign to recruit new, diverse caregivers and adoptive parents, and working with stakeholders on initiatives to recruit and retain foster and kinship caregivers.

Consistent Adoption Services

- Offering more consistent and responsive adoption experiences for children, youth and prospective adoptive parents.
- Developing a centralized adoption intake service and adoption service standards.
- Launching and implementing centralized adoption matching.

5



System Accountability & Sustainability

Accountability and Efficiency

- Developing a new accountability framework focused on outcomes.
- Releasing an enhanced service collaboration to improve services and equity for children, youth and families.

Financial Sustainability

- Implementing shared services and shared back office functions (HR, IT and finance) to achieve a more efficient and effective child welfare system.
- Developing options for new system structures, including a new funding model, to ensure the system is financially sustainable in the long term and children's aid societies can balance their budgets.

All pillars of the child welfare redesign are supported by the co-developed Ontario Indigenous Children and Youth Strategy