



2021-2022 Business Plan

Introduction

This document represents the 2021-22 Business Plan for Chatham-Kent Children's Services (CKCS). It highlights the mandate, strategic priorities, key activities and child welfare performance indicators of the organization. As an integrated child welfare, youth & children's mental health and developmental services agency, the plan also demonstrates how Chatham-Kent Children's Services continues to improve our child, youth and family well-being services in Chatham-Kent.

The Ontario government declared a state of emergency on March 17, 2020 to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This resulted in the closure of schools, childcare centres, many public service facilities and businesses. Months of quarantine and physical distancing restrictions have led to a series of cascading social and economic impacts.

Mandate

Children's Aid Societies are independently governed agencies responsible for providing mandatory and critical services. Children's Aid Societies have been providing these services to communities in Ontario for over 100 years.

They are legislated to perform certain functions under the provisions of Section 35 (1) of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 (CYFSA). The mandate of CASs, as described in this section of the CFSA, includes the following functions:

- investigate allegations or evidence that children may be in need of protection;
- protect children where necessary;
- provide guidance, counselling and other services to families for protecting children or for the prevention of circumstances requiring the protection of children;
- provide care for children assigned or committed to its care under this Act;
- supervise children assigned to its supervision under this Act;
- place children for adoption under Part VIII (Adoption and Adoption Licensing); and,
- perform any other duties given to it by this or any other Act.

This legislation and the supporting regulations, directives and standards prescribe specific and detailed requirements for what services CASs must provide, how they must provide these services, including services to FNIM children and families and French language services, as well as the timelines in which these mandatory services must be provided.

Children's Aid Societies provide critical and essential services to the most vulnerable members of our society – infants, children and youth who are at risk of or are experiencing physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, neglect or abandonment. CASs are mandated to intervene if a caregiver cannot adequately care for or provide for a child.

Children's Aid Societies protect and safeguard most children while they remain with their families in the community. This family-based support takes the form of intensive assessments and service plans, contacts with numerous other professionals and service providers, as well as ongoing supervision of the child while he/she remains in the family home.

These are complex cases in which child protection concerns have been verified and there are risks of, or actual, abuse and neglect. As such, the work must be performed by skilled, qualified child welfare staff. Serving these children in the context of the home – when it is safe to do so – is consistent with the legislative and regulatory mandate and with the policy direction of government.

**** Although not a mandated service, many of these criteria also apply to the delivery of our youth & children's mental health, development and prevention services.**

Mission, Aspiration and Values Statement

MISSION

Strengthening Children and Families for a Better Future.
Des familles et des enfants plus forts, pour un avenir meilleur.

ASPIRATION STATEMENT

CKCS is an accredited multi-service agency that responds to the unique dynamics of our families. We support the well being and safety of our children and their families through evidence based practices and collaboration with community partners. Together, CKCS employees strive to foster an environment that encourages positive growth, professional development and progressive change.

VALUE STATEMENT

Together with our community, CKCS CREATES:

Collaboration

Respect

Equality

Accountability

Trust

Empowerment of families

Support

2021-2024 Strategic Plan

Timely access to the right support

- Families can expect to receive the support they need at the right time within their own community
- Families will be able to access supports when they need them, in a way that is useful for them in line with their cultural heritage
- Families will have support to navigate to services from other community providers in as smooth a transition as possible

CKCS is a learning organization that innovates, improves, and implements best-practices

- CKCS will innovate, improve, and implement best practice to ensure service excellence
- Families will see CKCS as a trusted partner that will work alongside them to provide excellent supports
- Families will have workers who see their strengths and build on them to get them where they want to be
- CKCS is committed to evidence-informed decision-making
- We will use data about our community to drive planning decisions, meet local service gaps, and ensure equitable access to services

Reconciliation, Equity, and Inclusion

- CKCS will have made significant reductions in the disproportionate number of indigenous and racialized families within our child welfare services over the period of this strategic plan
- CKCS will address barriers to access experienced by all communities to mental health and developmental services.
- Families will see themselves represented at CKCS
- CKCS is committed to understanding the needs of all our community members and will work with an openness to learning about systemic barriers and experiences of those communities.

CKCS in the community

- CKCS will collaborate and innovate with community partners to meet the needs of families – filling gaps as they are identified
- CKCS knows it takes a child to raise a community around them – and we will work to ensure services are wrapped around children, youth, and their families
- CKCS will work with partners to help them understand all the ways we work with families and how organizations can collaborate with us to help families access services.

Service Volume Highlights

	2020-2021	2019-2020
Intake/Family Services		
Total Reports Received	1763	2086
Total New Investigations	758	929
Investigations Not Required	356	283
Cases Opened	138	145
Cases Open at End of Year	210	219
Children in Care		
Children Admitted to Care	60	67
Children Discharged from Care	49	92
Children in Care and End of Year	137	126
Total # of Children Served in Care	186	218
Total Days Care Provided	47547	50302
Total Adoptions Completed	1	10
Total New Foster Homes Opened	10	4
Total Foster Homes at End of Year	52	47
New Kinship Service Homes Opened	58	64
# of Kinship Service Homes at End of Year	61	51
Adoption Disclosures Completed	16	28
Children's Mental Health		
Intake Referrals	702	744
Brief Services and Walk-In	149	281
Counselling and Therapy Services	444	470
Psychological Assessment	13	74
Young Offenders Served	11	18
Children's Mental Health		
Childcares and Early Learning Programs	48	46
Infant Development	143	149

Performance Measurement

Chatham-Kent Children's Services understands the importance of measuring performance and outcomes for children, youth and their families.

Provincial Key Performance Indicators

The Provincial Key Performance Indicators (PIs) that will be measured this year are:

- Recurrence of Child Protection Concerns in a Family after an Investigation
- Recurrence of Child Protection Concerns in a Family after Ongoing Services were Provided
- Days of care by placement type
- Time to permanency
- Quality of the caregiver-youth relationship

The most recent available results are available here:

<https://www.ckcs.on.ca/sites/default/files/Accountability/Chatham%20Kent%20Children's%20Services%20Pis%20Summary.pdf>

QUEST PROJECT

Chatham-Kent Children's Services (CKCS) was selected to be part of The Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health Quest project entitled **Youth Justice Care Pathway**. Quest is a quality improvement (QI) initiative based on Lean Six Sigma.

Youth justice involved youth referred to CKCS for mental health treatment as part of their probation orders are waiting on average ~74 days to have their case assigned to a mental health worker through the YCJA intake process. This has a negative impact on youth justice involved youth who would benefit from more timely mental health services alongside the probation. Referring partners, have begun to refer youth with probation orders for mental health treatment elsewhere in the community. The agency has moved to a fee-for-service model as a result of dwindling referrals.

CKCS was accepted to participate in the Quest CQI program offered by the Ontario centre of excellence for child and youth mental health aimed at improving care pathways in the child and youth mental health sector.

Root Causes:

The QI team discovered many factors that lead to lengthening intake cycle times for YCJA clients. The most significant are listed below:

- Process steps occurring sequentially rather than concurrently, administrative delays (approval), time spent determining the best client/clinician pairing or "fit".

- Delays at critical aspects of the intake process that involve client and family participation including; initially contacting the client and family, scheduling an intake assessment, assessment (BCFPI) completion and subsequent scheduling of treatment sessions)



Goal statement:

This project aims to reduce intake cycle time for YCJA clients by 93% to ensure case assignment in 7 days or less by July 31st, 2021.

Project Goals:

- YCJA clients will complete their mental health intake and have their case assigned within 7 days of the initial referral from the probation team.
- Reduce median YCJA intake cycle time from 94 days to 5.5 days (Range: minimum 3.0 days - maximum 7.0 days)
- Collaborate with the Probation Office team to improve YCJA intake completion *when appropriate* (i.e. youth or family resistance to actively participate in the intake process is resulting in a significant delay to their case assignment and subsequent treatment.)

Ideas to improve the current state:

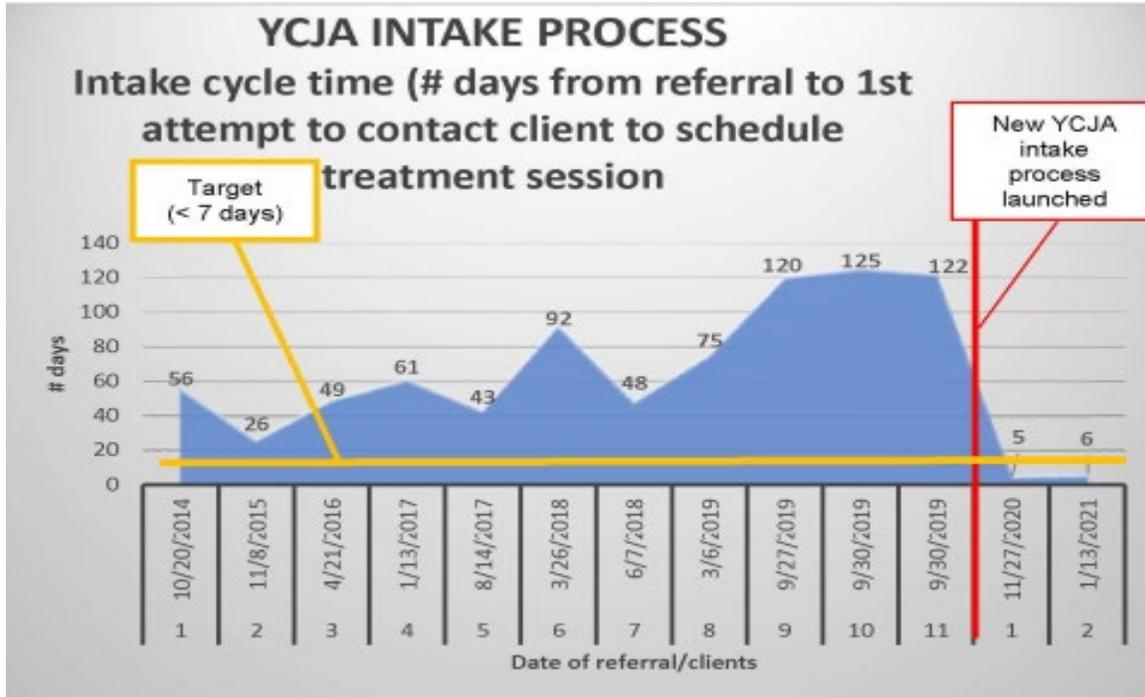
By using Lean Six Sigma methodology, the CKCS Quest QI team identified opportunities to streamline the YCJA intake process and drastically reduce the intake cycle time for YCJA clients by:

- 1a)** Identifying process steps that can be carried out concurrently and development of an ideal state process map
- 1b)** Prioritizing administrative practices that support timelier access (e.g. approval & case assignment protocols)
- 2)** Collaborating with partners in probation when appropriate to support/encourage active participation by the youth and family throughout the intake process (i.e. initial contact for consent, scheduling intake, BCFPI assessment completion and scheduling a treatment start date)

Performance Measures (visual) pre-QI vs post-QI

Following implementation of improvement idea #1 above (ideal state YCJA intake process) the intake team met their target of YCJA case assigned in less than 7 days from referral on two occasions (Nov. 2020 & Jan. 2021).

This has validated this change as an improvement and the team will work to incorporate this new intake process into standard operating procedures. This improvement will move to a monitoring and response plan for continued surveillance.



Next Steps

Brainstorm ideas & opportunities with partners in Youth Justice to encourage and support youth and families to actively participate in critical aspects of the intake process which typically lead to delays for YCJA clients to begin treatment (e.g. initial contact for consent, scheduling intake assessment, assessment (BCFPI) completion and scheduling initial treatment sessions).

MEASURING SUCCESS IN CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH

The Ontario Perception of Care Tool for Mental Health and Addictions (OPOC-MHA) was used in 2016 and 2021 to identify opportunities for Quality Improvement. The objective is to utilize this information to establish a system level intervention to enhance services access for clients accessing and engaged in care. All regions were involved in the implementation process. This provincial data offers opportunities for comparison. Results are forthcoming but generally the questions about most helpful and least helpful were typical of past comments made in a variety forums across Ontario: i.e. mental services were beneficial but the wait for longer term counselling and therapy service is too long.

AGENCY DESIGNATIONS/INITIATIVES/PROJECTS

EQUITY

The commitment to equity across the organization has strengthened over the past year across all agency mandates. In the winter and spring of 2021, the Board of Directors continued to review the diversity of the Board and thought of ways to increase community representation. Targeted recruitment, with an acknowledgement of the lack of diversity in the Board, led to applications from racialized members of the community, and a much more diversified Board.

In January 2021 we recruited a full-time equity lead to the organization. They have been working with the leadership team, the equity committee, and staff to build a plan for moving from conversations around equity to actions that will make our services and impacts more equitable. All staff groups undertook the OACAS equity curriculum, a three-day program to help staff understand the roots of inequities and give skills and knowledge on how to identify inequities and begin to challenge them. The equity committee has been encouraging staff and leadership to continue the discussions and questions applying an equity lens to our work.

The work on reconciliation and Indigenous commitments continues. A meeting with local Indigenous partner organizations and band representatives, 'Shut UP and Listen' took place to better understand the needs of community, gaps in service to chart the path forward towards First Nations jurisdiction for the wellbeing of children and youth from their home community.

We have funded an Indigenous led staffing position, the Ganawenim Coordinator in partnership with Ska:na Family Learning Centre as a cultural service navigator for the community. In addition, work is underway to codesign partnership services with Walpole Island First Nation for Indigenous youth, increasing potential resource homes or formal customary care within community, and cultural mental health services as part of the strategic planning process.

Next steps from the Equity Committee include work on inclusion and recognition of staff identities, further training, as well as facilitating call in conversations around what equity is and means at the organization.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORK

In an effort to ensure youth and family voice was incorporated into CKCS's next strategic plan, we engaged the Tamarack Institute to conduct some community engagement sessions. This community engagement work was originally planned for early 2020 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project recommenced in December 2020 in an entirely virtual format. The engagement included two main activities: first a series of individual interviews with a range of stakeholders and then secondly, four virtual focus groups with community partners, staff, and clients and their families.

Through this engagement CKCS was interested in learning:

- What is working well today?

- What could be improved today, and why is this important?
- What do we think the future of CKCS should look like, and why?
- What are tangible steps we would like to see CKCS taking in the coming years, and why?

The community told us they had 6 main priorities for CKCS over the next few years:

1. Enhance preventative supports, brief services, and reduce wait times
2. Improve communications processes both internally and with clients/families
3. Focus on staff empowerment & retention
4. Raise public awareness of CKCS and reduce stigma of accessing integrated services
5. Enhance interagency collaboration & reduce duplication of service
6. Expand family-focus – Empower foster parents to be part of the team approach to planning; improve apprehension process; offer increased parent supports

CHILD WELFARE REDESIGN

Ontario is building a child and family services system that ensures more families stay together and that children and youth in care have the support they need to be safe, succeed and thrive.

The child welfare redesign strategy focuses on transforming child and family services to strengthen families and communities through prevention, early intervention and seeking more permanent homes for children and youth in care when they cannot stay in their own homes or communities.

Transforming child and family services is a significant undertaking and will take time. Working in partnership with Indigenous partners, children, youth and families (including a focus on diverse communities), community service providers, the child welfare sector and other health and social services partners, the government intends to take a phased and measured approach to implement redesigned services and systems that are effective, sustainable and accountable.

The new child welfare redesign strategy was developed with input from:

- youth
- families
- caregivers
- First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners
- community organizations
- frontline workers
- child welfare sector leaders
- lawyers

They participated in over 100 engagement sessions and provided over 3,000 responses to an online survey.

The redesign strategy looks to achieve seven successful outcomes for families as well as Ontario's overall child and family services system.

The strategy looks to achieve the following outcomes for families:

- **Safety:** children and youth are safe, achieved by the least intrusive means
- **Voice:** children, youth and families are respected, have their voices heard and their needs met
- **Permanency and stability:** children and youth are safely connected to their families, communities and cultures
- **Wellbeing:** children, youth and families are supported in their communities to thrive while meeting key developmental and educational milestones

The redesign also seeks successful outcomes for the child welfare system, including:

- **Quality:** children and youth are supported to grow through high quality, consistent services that meet their needs
- **Decreasing disparities for overrepresented groups:** such as reducing the number of days in care for Black, racialized, First Nations, Inuit, Métis and LGBT2SQ youth
- **Sustainability:** the sector is sustainable, efficient, effective, accountable and flexible enough to adjust to the new reality following COVID, like digital service delivery

To read more about Ontario's Child Welfare Redesign Strategy:

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/childwelfare/redesign-strategy.aspx>

Chatham-Kent Children's Services continues to be committed to reducing the number of children placed in a group home, as well as in an Outside Paid Resource. Foster parent recruitment efforts are focused on finding the best match for every child and youth that is in need of a placement.

SHARED SERVICES

The agency continues a shared service partnership with Sarnia Lambton CAS. By capitalizing on opportunities as they presented, we leveraged the talent and resources to drive innovation and efficiency. The shared service functions that are led by CKCS staff include quality improvement and analytics, information technology, property and procurement. Human Resources is led by Sarnia Lambton staff. Collaboration such as this is our commitment to a sustainable service model that is responsive to the needs of children, youth and families.

COUNSELLING AND THERAPY

In 2020, Chatham-Kent Children's Services introduced a new counselling and therapy program; FOCUS 10. The program Focus 10 is a counselling option for clients who don't feel that Brief services is adequate to meet their needs, but who also don't feel that long-term counselling involvement is necessary. The goal of the program is to stream clients with less complex needs into service more quickly (i.e., address waitlist times). As with other brief therapies, this program capitalizes on client's readiness for change as research has shown that clients who receive treatment at their moment of need are more likely to experience success in therapy. This was in response to client feedback that identified a sub-group of mental health clients who indicated that they would rather have a limited number of sessions and get into service more quickly, than to have an undefined number of sessions and have to wait longer for service.

LEAD AGENCY

Moving on Mental Health is a province-wide action plan which was initiated by Ministry of Children and Youth Service in 2014. The purpose is to fix a Children and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) System that is fragmented and difficult for both families and professionals to access and navigate. The goal is to increase the degree of coordination, responsiveness, and ease of access for all children and families that need mental health services. In 2019, responsibility for funding CYMH services was transferred to the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care.

Chatham-Kent Children's Services serves as Lead Agency for the Chatham-Kent service area. As Lead Agency, CKCS is responsible to work to improve the functioning of the system collaboratively with other agencies in our area that that receive funding to deliver at least one of a set of seven specific children and youth mental health services, including brief services, crisis services, counselling and therapy, family caregiver support, residential/intensive Services, targeted prevention, and specialized consultation and assessment.

To read more about the changes occurring across Ontario visit:

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/specialneeds/momh/moving-on-mental-health.aspx>

ROADMAP TO WELLNESS

Over the last six years, Chatham-Kent Children's Services has worked diligently alongside our core service providers to address the identified local gaps in children's mental health services. The introduction of the **Roadmap to Wellness: A Plan to Build Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System** provides a clear strategy towards further improvement.

The plan will enable a system that will effectively respond to the needs of every child or youth with mental health needs. The four pillars outlined in this roadmap are designed to support service delivery, *improve quality, expand existing services, implement innovative solutions and improve access.*

As the primary provider of all seven core mental health services with strong partnerships and alliances with key service providers, Chatham-Kent Children's Services is in a unique position to leverage investment to maximize service delivery of the various partner agencies. Designed in response to Making Services Work for People, Chatham-Kent Children's Services exemplifies integration of sector partners that improves access to services. This foundation for improvement outlined in the Roadmap to Wellness is augmented by the Ontario's Plan to Redesign the Child Welfare System as well as the guiding documents for infant development and special needs resourcing.

In addition, Chatham-Kent Children's Services is an integral member on the various long-standing planning tables including CK Child and Youth Planning Network, Special Needs Service Coordination, ACCESS Open Minds Chatham-Kent, Youth Justice Services, Homelessness, Kids Team, CTAP, Suicide Prevention and the United Way Situation Tables. Meetings with our core service providers, community partners in education, and health along with our municipal and provincial representatives have also occurred during the last couple of months to assess service area needs and establish key priorities.

These committees, tables and mapping meetings have provided valuable information for ensuring our community continues to expand and improve mental health and addiction services for children and youth.

There is a growing need for children's mental health services in Chatham-Kent. The pandemic has dramatically altered the way of life for many of our youth and families. The ongoing pandemic means youth have faced school closures, virtual school challenges, lack of structure and isolation from their peers. For many youth, the stress, anxiety, and depression has progressed to serious mental health concerns. In addition, parents are struggling to balance childcare, schooling, and work.

This urgent and growing need for mental health services and a current wait list for services requires increased funding and a wait list reduction strategy.

Chatham-Kent Children's Services "Zero Wait Campaign" is planning to invest the recent announcement of a 5% base increase to address the current waitlist and the lack of supports for children, youth, and families.

The Chatham-Kent Ontario Health Team plans to concentrate their efforts on chronic illness and elderly populations to end hallway care as well as focus on mental health and addictions. Key priorities identified during our meetings have focused on the impact of COVID-19 on our community.