

# ONE VISION ONE VOICE

## CHANGING THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM FOR AFRICAN CANADIANS



**SHARE YOUR VOICE.  
SHAPE OUR VISION.**

### CONSULTATION WORKBOOK



Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies  
The voice of child welfare in Ontario

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# CONSULTATION WORKBOOK

The African Canadian community is holding province-wide consultations on the experience of African Canadians in Ontario's child welfare system.

We want to hear from parents and youth who were formerly involved with the Children's Aid Society (CAS), service providers, advocates, educators, social workers, and anyone else who has had experience with CAS and cares about how Ontario's child welfare system affects African Canadians.

We are holding consultation sessions across Ontario from September to November 2015. You can get involved by participating in a consultation session or by hosting your own discussion. Visit us online at [www.oacas.org](http://www.oacas.org) for a consultation session near you.

You can also join the online conversation:

 **Twitter:** @1Vision1VoiceCA #AfriCanFamilies

 **Instagram:** [Instagram.com/1Vision1VoiceCA](https://www.instagram.com/1Vision1VoiceCA)

 **Facebook:** [facebook.com/1Vision1VoiceCA](https://www.facebook.com/1Vision1VoiceCA)



Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.  
Contact: [AfriCanFamilies@oacas.org](mailto:AfriCanFamilies@oacas.org)

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## SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining the consultations on African Canadians and Ontario's child welfare system. You are an important part of this conversation.

This workbook is for individuals and organizations who want to lead a consultation session or provide their input into the discussion. This workbook has four sections:

**Section: 1** Introduction

**Section: 2** Hosting a consultation session

**Section: 3** Discussion questions

**Section: 4** Appendix that includes information on Ontario's African Canadian community and their experience in the child welfare system

Creating a child welfare system that serves all members of the diverse provincial population equally and fairly is important. These consultations will allow participants to discuss their experience with their local Children's Aid Society and ways to make outcomes equitable for African Canadian children and youth.

*One Vision One Voice* is a project to examine the experience of African Canadians in Ontario's child welfare system and develop a Practice Framework that will help Children's Aid Societies to better serve the African Canadian community.

Twelve consultation sessions will be held throughout Ontario from September to November 2015. The information we get from these consultations will help inform the development of a Practice Framework.

This workbook serves as a guide to help you host your own consultation in your organization or community. The Appendix provides background information to help you set the context for the consultation discussion. You can also find additional information at [www.OACAS.org](http://www.OACAS.org) and join the conversation on social media.

## **ONE VISION ONE VOICE: Changing the Child Welfare System for African Canadians**

### **Why talk about the experience of African Canadians in child welfare?**

The experience of African Canadians in the child welfare system is not the same as that of White and other racialized children and families.

Hearing directly from the community will help bring to the surface the experiences of African Canadian children and families with child welfare and will help us understand how child welfare services need to change to better serve the community. This information will be summarized along with the review of the literature and best practices in the Research Report that will be released in early 2016.

### **What will the Practice Framework do?**

A Practice Framework will support the various Children's Aids Societies across Ontario to understand and better serve African Canadian children and families. It will be used to help reduce the over-representation of African Canadians in the child welfare system and ensure they have better outcomes when they do get involved with child welfare.

### **What is the purpose of this consultation workbook?**

This workbook will help you host your own consultation session in your community, organization, workplace, or with family and friends. It allows you to summarize and submit the content of your discussions to include in our research. Individuals can also use the workbook to provide their own views.

This workbook poses a series of questions to help facilitate the discussion. This workbook also includes information in the appendix to help set the context for your discussions.

### **Who should participate?**

We want to hear from parents and youth who were formerly involved with the Children's Aid Society (CAS) or family services agency, service providers, advocates, educators, social workers, and anyone else who has had experience with CAS and cares about how Ontario's child welfare system affects African Canadians.

### **Who is leading these consultations?**

*One Vision One Voice* is a project of the African Canadian community, funded by the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, through the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. The project is guided by a Steering Committee comprised of individuals and agency representatives from the African Canadian community. A Reference Group, that is made up primarily of African Canadian child welfare staff, also provides guidance and support to the project. (Visit the website [OACAS.org](http://OACAS.org) for more information.)

## HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

### **Complete it individually**

You can complete this workbook on your own and submit your responses.

### **Host a discussion in your community, community agency, workplace, or with family and friends**

You can host an informal discussion with your family and friends. You can also host a more formal discussion in your community, community agency, or workplace.

This workbook will help you prepare, facilitate the consultation session, and get the results of the consultation back to us.

## OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

You can participate in one of the *One Vision One Voice* consultations happening across the province from September to November 2015. Visit [OACAS.org](http://OACAS.org) for the consultation schedule and to register.

You can also participate by submitting your responses to the consultation questions through an online survey.

We also encourage you to join the conversation on social media:

 **Twitter:** @1Vision1VoiceCA #AfriCanFamilies

 **Instagram:** [Instagram.com/1Vision1VoiceCA](https://www.instagram.com/1Vision1VoiceCA)

 **Facebook:** [facebook.com/1Vision1VoiceCA](https://www.facebook.com/1Vision1VoiceCA)

## SECTION B: HOSTING A CONSULTATION SESSION

### BEFORE YOUR EVENT

#### 1. Determine the type of event you want to have

Think about the type of event you want to have. Will you invite friends and family over for a discussion over a meal? Will you have a more formal discussion in your community agency, local community, or workplace? Or will you work through the workbook on your own?

You can hold whatever type of discussion you want. But, if your discussion group has 10 or more people, you might want to divide the participants into smaller groups at different tables so that everyone has a chance to speak and be heard.

#### 2. Help create interest in the discussions

You can share this workbook with participants to get them thinking about the issues before they come to the discussion.

You can help create interest in the 12 province-wide consultation sessions by joining the online conversation. You can also participate through social media by sharing pictures of your discussion groups, your thoughts, quotes, or more about African Canadians and the child welfare system.



## AT YOUR EVENT

### Prepare to summarize the discussion for us

Getting a summary of your discussion is important to us. Please have someone take notes to ensure that the discussion and ideas are summarized.

You can print the workbook, summarize your discussions in the space provided and mail or fax the workbook back to us. You can also send us your input electronically. See page 8 for ways to submit the notes to us.

### Getting the discussion started

Here are some tips for facilitating your consultation session:

1. Introduce yourself. Share your name, background and why you decided to host this session.
2. Invite participants to introduce themselves and talk about why they want to be part of this discussion.
3. Review the discussion guidelines that will ensure that all participants feel comfortable talking about their experience and suggestions for making the child welfare system better for African Canadians.
4. If it is helpful, follow the schedule below to keep your discussion on track. The length of time needed for each activity will vary depending on the size of the group.

 Time	 Topic	 Speaker	 Resources Needed	 Outcomes
10 minutes	Introduction Review guidelines	Facilitator	Discussion guidelines (photocopy guidelines or write guidelines on flipchart)	Participants understand the purpose of the discussion and agree to guidelines for a respectful conversation
20 minutes	Review highlights from the Appendix	Facilitator		Participants have the context for the discussion
1 to 2 hours	Discussion Questions	Everyone	One person assigned to be notetaker Pen and paper/ computer for notetaking	Summary of key points
5 minutes	Wrap-up	Facilitator	One person assigned to get notes back to us.	Thank everyone for sharing their voice and shaping the vision of a child welfare system that better serves African Canadians.

## GUIDELINES

These are suggested guidelines that the group should agree to, to help ensure the discussion is respectful and inclusive of all points of view. Participants can also add to this list.

**No guilt, no blame.** We all have a different point of view on these issues depending on our background and experience. Everyone should be able to participate in this discussion, sharing their own perspective, without feeling guilty or blaming others, as long as they remain respectful.

**Everyone's perspective is equally valuable.** Remember this is a dialogue, not a debate. We are not here to convince others or change another person's perspective. Everyone's viewpoint is to be respected and valued.

**Join the discussion.** We want to hear from everyone. Everyone's opinions and perspectives are needed if we are to develop a Practice Framework that addresses the issues and challenges faced by African Canadians in child welfare.

**Keep the conversation going.** This is a great opportunity to meet others who care about these issues. We hope you use the opportunity to make important connections and continue the conversation.

**Confidentiality.** Please don't share the personal opinions or experiences shared by individuals in this group. But please do share general themes and ideas with others.



## DISCUSSION TIPS

These are some tips to help the facilitator lead the consultation session.



DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Encourage everyone to participate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Don't manage the conversation too closely. People will want to talk about their own experiences with child welfare. While you may need to move the discussion along, as much as possible, let it flow freely.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Focus on generating solutions. While it is important for everyone to share their experiences, particularly if they are negative, encourage people to discuss what can be done to address the problems they have identified.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Don't let a few people dominate the conversation. Encourage participants to share 'air time' with others.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Share your great ideas and photos (as long as you have permission from the people in the photograph) on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Use the #AfriCanFamilies hashtag on all your social media posts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Don't focus on consensus. The group does not have to agree. Remember that everyone's opinions are equally valid and should be included in the summary notes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ While these may be difficult conversations, we want this to be a positive experience for everyone. Please support constructive conversations in which everyone is able to share their voice.</li> </ul>	

## AFTER YOUR EVENT

Once the discussion is finished you can fill in this workbook or type up your notes and send it to us.

Please have all feedback to us by November 15, 2015.

There are a few ways to provide your feedback:

 <p><b>Online Survey</b> Access the online survey at: OACAS.org</p>	 <p><b>By email</b> Type up the notes and email them to us at: AfriCanFamilies@oacas.org</p>
 <p><b>By fax</b> (416) 366-8317 Attention: Kike Ojo</p>	 <p><b>By mail</b> ONE VISION ONE VOICE Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies 75 Front Street East, Suite 308 Toronto, Ontario Canada M5E 1V9</p>

## WHAT WE WILL DO WITH THE INFORMATION

Once the 12 province-wide consultation sessions have been held and we receive information from individuals and organizations who have held their own sessions, we will:



Summarize the information and identify themes from these discussions



Incorporate this information into the Research Report



Use the input to help inform the development of the Practice Framework







**Vision for Child Welfare**

The child welfare system has an important role to play to protect children from neglect and abuse. The child welfare system can also help families address the needs of children. This could mean that child welfare agencies may need to make changes to policies, programs as well as training for staff.

**5.** What suggestions do you have to improve Ontario's child welfare system? (Think about what the provincial government, community agencies, and individual Children's Aid Societies can do before African Canadian families become involved with child welfare, once they become involved with child welfare, and when they are no longer involved.) (approx. 15 minutes)

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**Other Comments**

**6.** Do you have other comments and thoughts that you would like to add?

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.....  
.....

**Please let us know who participated in this discussion:**

- An individual
- Group, please describe, e.g. family and friends, name of the host organization or community group, business, etc.: .....

Number in the group: .....

## APPENDIX

# FACT SHEET

## The African Canadian Population in Ontario

While not all have arrived in Canada directly from their ancestral homelands in the continent of Africa, the term "African Canadian" is used to identify all Canadians of African descent, regardless of place of birth or cultural background.

### A GROWING POPULATION

People of African descent have lived in Canada since the 1600s. The first Africans came to Canada as explorers. Later, others were enslaved and brought to Canada. Many came from the United States fleeing slavery and oppression, while the Black Loyalists who fought for the British in the American Revolutionary War were promised land and their freedom in Canada.

In the 1960s, Canada changed its immigration policies that were designed to limit the number of racialized people who immigrate to Canada. Since then, the African-descent population in Canada has grown considerably with immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean now comprising a large proportion of the African Canadian population.

The African Canadian population has a much younger age structure than the general Canadian population. In 2006, children under the age of 15 accounted for 28% of the African Canadian population, compared to 17% of the White population.<sup>1</sup>

### DIVERSITY

There is a great deal of ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity within the African Canadian population. There are populations in southwestern Ontario whose ancestors came to Canada via the Underground Railroad. There is also a large immigrant population, as well as those who are second and third generation Canadian.

43% of all African Canadians were born in Canada, with 9% being third generation or more.<sup>4</sup>

### GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Almost 60% of the African Canadian population lives in Ontario. While African Canadians live in communities throughout Ontario, the majority - 74% - live in the Toronto CMA (Census Metropolitan Area).

### THE DATA

- There are 945,665 African Canadians, representing 3% of the country's population.<sup>2</sup>
- There are 539,205 African Canadians in Ontario, representing 4% of the provincial population.
- The African Canadian population grew by 65% between 1996 and 2011 (from 573,860 to 945,665) while the total population increased by 19%.
- Statistics Canada estimates that the African Canadian population will double by 2031.<sup>3</sup>
- Community organizations estimate that 10% of the African Canadian population is LGBTQ.

### Ethnic Origins in Ontario

Jamaican	218,065
Trinidadian	51,340
Somali	33,970
Barbadian	23,385
Ghanaian	22,035
Nigerian	20,025
Ethiopian	17,320
Haitian	15,830

### African Canadians by Municipality

City of Toronto	218,160
Peel Region	116,265
Ottawa	49,650
Durham Region	41,890
York Region	25,870
Hamilton	16,110
Windsor	10,575
London	9,255

1- Labour Program, Government of Canada. Designated Group Profiles.

[http://www.labour.gc.ca/eng/standards\\_equity/eq/pubs\\_eq/eedr/2006/profiles/page08.shtml](http://www.labour.gc.ca/eng/standards_equity/eq/pubs_eq/eedr/2006/profiles/page08.shtml)

2- Unless otherwise stated, all figures on this fact sheet are from Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey.

3- Statistics Canada. Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population. March 9, 2010.

4- Statistics Canada. Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada.

<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm>

# ONTARIO'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

BY THE NUMBERS

**\$1.4 BILLION**

THE ANNUAL COST OF ONTARIO'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM IN 2014-15 <sup>1</sup>



**\$31,000**

THE 2013-14 AVERAGE ANNUAL COST OF MAINTAINING A CHILD IN CARE <sup>2</sup>



IN 2013, CHILDREN REMAINED AT HOME IN

**97%**

OF ALL INVESTIGATIONS <sup>3</sup>



MORE THAN

**171,000**

THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF REFERRALS THAT CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES IN ONTARIO RECEIVE EACH YEAR FROM PEOPLE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SAFETY OR WELL-BEING OF A CHILD <sup>4</sup>



**47**

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES IN ONTARIO <sup>5</sup>



**6,100**

THE MONTHLY AVERAGE NUMBER OF CROWN WARDS FOR 2014-2015 <sup>6</sup> (CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO HAVE BEEN PERMANENTLY REMOVED FROM THEIR PARENTS)



**14,538**

OF ONTARIO'S 3.1 MILLION CHILDREN WERE IN CARE OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES AS OF MARCH 31, 2015 <sup>7</sup>



**46%**

OF FORMER CROWN WARDS, AGED 19 AND 20, HAVE AT MINIMUM GAINED A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA IN 2012-13. BY CONTRAST, THE CURRENT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE IS 83%. <sup>8</sup>



THE NUMBER OF FORMER CROWN WARDS, AGED 19 AND 20 WHO HAVE AT A MINIMUM GAINED A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA HAS INCREASED <sup>9</sup>

**4%**

FROM 42% IN 2006-2007 TO 46% IN 2012-2013



THE CURRENT PROVINCIAL SECONDARY SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE HAS INCREASED

**8%**

TO 83% OVER THE SAME TIME PERIOD. AS SUCH, NOT ONLY IS THERE A SUBSTANTIAL GAP IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, BUT THE GAP APPEARS TO BE WIDENING. <sup>9</sup>



**43%**

OF HOMELESS YOUTH HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM <sup>10</sup>



**68%**

OF HOMELESS YOUTH COME FROM FOSTER HOMES OR GROUP HOMES <sup>11</sup>



**82%**

OF CHILDREN IN CHILD WELFARE HAVE DIAGNOSED SPECIAL NEEDS <sup>12</sup>



## SOURCES:

- 1- Ministry of Children and Youth Services Quarterly Report
- 2- Ministry Quarterly Report and OACAS Child Welfare Service Survey
- 3- Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2013
- 4- Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies
- 5- Ministry of Children and Youth Services Quarterly Report
- 6- Ministry of Children and Youth Services Quarterly Report

- 7- Ministry of Children and Youth Services Quarterly Report
- 8- Gateway to Success, Cycle Two, June 2010, OACAS
- 9- Gateway to Success Cycle III - OACAS Survey of the Educational Attainment of Crown Wards and Former Crowns
- 10- Raising the Roof. Youth Homelessness in Canada: The Road To Solutions.
- 11- Raising the Roof. Youth Homelessness in Canada: The Road To Solutions.
- 12- OACAS (2011). An Agenda for Children and Youth: Pre-Budget Consultation.





**ONE VISION ONE VOICE** is an initiative of the African Canadian community. It is guided by a Steering Committee with input from a Reference Group.

**STEERING COMMITTEE** individual members and member organizations

Uko Abara, Office of the Public Advocate for Children and Youth  
Dr. Akua Benjamin, Ryerson University  
Sophia Brown Ramsay, Black Community Action Network  
Dr. Jennifer Clarke, Ryerson University  
Denise Dunn, Office of the Public Advocate for Children and Youth  
Everton Gordon, Jamaican Canadian Association  
Clayton Greaves  
Leyland Gudge  
Kemi Jacobs  
Mohamed Jama, Midyanta  
Sipho Kwaku, Rites of Passage  
Dr. Howard McCurdy  
Sonia Mills-Minster, Millan and Associates  
Margaret Parsons, African Canadian Legal Clinic  
Zakiya Tafari, Ukima House / Young and Potential Fathers  
Jamea Zuberi

**REFERENCE GROUP** member organizations

Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton  
Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto  
Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex  
Children's Aid Society of Ottawa  
Children's Aid Society of Toronto  
Durham Children's Aid Society  
Peel Children's Aid Society  
Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society  
York Region Children's Aid Society



Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies

The voice of child welfare in Ontario