

ANNUAL REPORT 2020–2021



**FAMILY AND
CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville

Together for Our Kids

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY
THROUGH COVID TIMES



President & Executive Director's Report:

UNPRECEDENTED YEAR OF OPERATING

Family and Children's Services has undergone an unparalleled operating year as a result of COVID-19.

We commenced our fiscal year 2020-21 in a lockdown as a result of the pandemic, and at the time, information was coming at us rapid-fire from global, national, and local public health organizations. Our greatest accomplishment this year was our ability to adapt quickly to emerging information and maintain service continuity, while keeping everyone safe.

Pandemic – The Highs and Lows

For the first 4 to 6 weeks into the pandemic, the agency adapted to virtual platforms quickly. We used apps like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and What's App to meet both internally and with our partners and service recipients. Certainly, internal meetings via video conferencing have become the norm. We have successfully delivered intensive training over zoom for both staff and foster parents. However, we learned weeks into the pandemic that delivering child welfare services to children, youth, and families who were struggling, was not particularly effective over a screen. Therefore, by June 2020, we reverted to providing the majority of our child protection services (to both families in the community and children/youth in care) in person. This included resuming visitation between families and children in and out of home care, and credit goes to our Support Services team for their creativity and rigour in ensuring safe protocols were in place to allow as much family visitation to occur as possible.

We participated in our annual Extended Society Care review at the end of September 2020 and welcomed a Ministry team who reviewed our services to long-term children in care. While there were some struggles in meeting compliance when it came to documentation, the case planning was noted as exceptional. The review team remarked that the level of in person direct contact with our children and youth was 'outstanding' and noted that LLG stood out provincially in the level of direct support we were providing children/youth in care during the pandemic.

And we are most proud to report that asking staff to provide in person services was not difficult; in fact, our staff have

been leaders in promoting and articulating the importance of maintaining high quality in person child welfare services.

Navigating times like these where there existed no blueprint has not come without its challenges. Our employees are a group of passionate and committed individuals invested in the wellbeing of our community, but they too have families and unique pressures and responsibilities at home. We have had to navigate stay at home orders with strict restrictions, periods of quarantine and self-isolation, home-schooling or online learning, and other caregiving responsibilities. At the same time we have been keeping the wheels of child welfare turning and dealing with the realities of the families in our community who have struggled with multiple barriers, barriers that have only been amplified by the pandemic. We provided opportunities through our Employee Assistance Program for staff to debrief, learn some coping strategies, and just offer space to normalize or validate the emotions of those charged with helping our community's most vulnerable. We attempted to be as flexible as possible this year, allowing staff to work from home at hours that would assist them in balancing home and work responsibilities. The realities have meant a difficult year and we have had some additional recruitment and retention challenges which has created some workload pressures on our front-line staff. To say the front-line, administrative, and management staff of FCSLLG have risen to the occasion, is an understatement. They have truly comprised the backbone of the LLG communities this year.

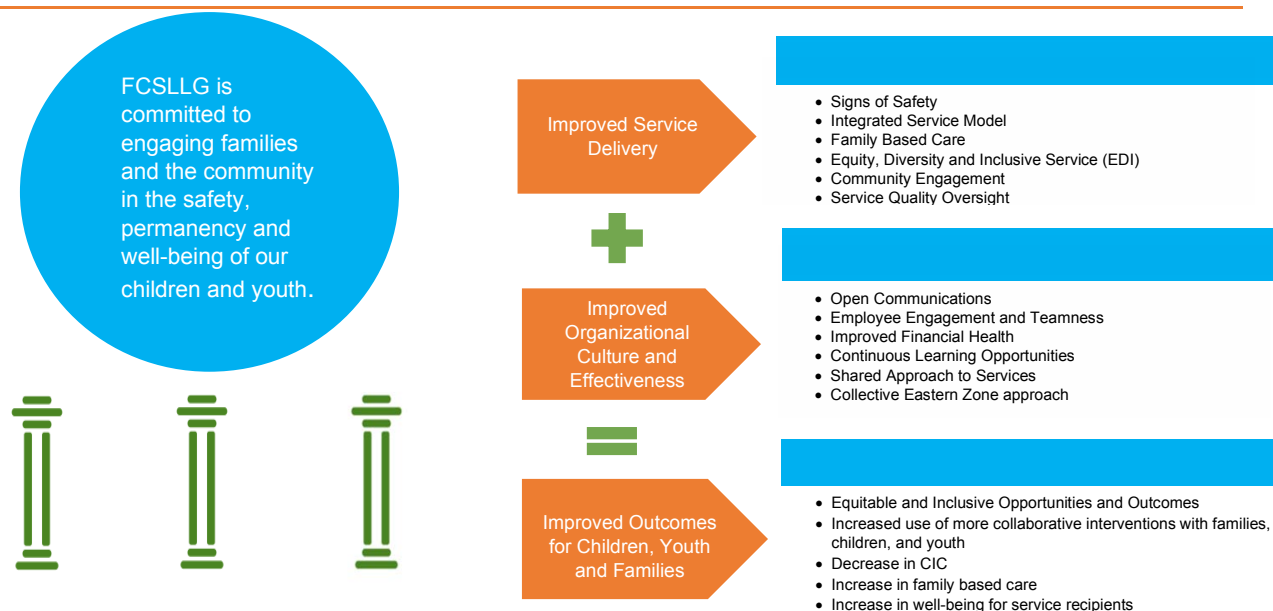


FCSLLG's Strategic plan

COVID aside, somewhat miraculously, we have managed to move many components of our strategic plan forward. Some of the highlights include:

2020-2025 STRATEGY MAP

VISION: *Safe, healthy, resilient kids growing up in their families within their communities ... where FCSLLG is part of a social system that promotes equitable outcomes for all children and families.*



Resiliency Engagement Inclusivity

- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity has been a key focus area this year, and we've trained over 95% of all staff in key anti-racism and anti-oppression concepts. Reflecting on tragedies that shed light on systemic racism, bias, and discrimination internationally and within the Ontario child welfare context has been an important ingredient to our learning and growth as individuals and as an agency. The improvement over one year in our Identity-based data collection is an indicator that we are headed in the right direction. While we have much more work to do, we do believe the agency is poised to be a part of the solution when it comes to delivering child welfare services in a manner that honours and celebrates cultural identities and will over time address the over-representation and disparities of service to Indigenous families, Black and racialized families, LGBTQ2S+ youth, and other marginalized groups in our community.
- We are collecting and closely tracking our data which will tell us if we are making gains towards our goals of working more collaboratively and less litigiously with families and are using the Signs of Safety model with fidelity that facilitates families and their networks to drive their own safety planning. We are seeing a slow downward trend of children and youth in care and a slow trend downward in the number of Child, Youth and Family Services Act court applications. You will read some testimonials in our report that illustrates some of the important work undertaken with families this year.
- We are thrilled to report that the number of youth in group care has decreased over the year, another measure of success in our family-based care model. Credit goes to our Out of Home Services team and our placement coordinator for the recruitment, matching, and creativity in planning to place youth with significant personal challenges.

- We committed to an analysis and review of our integrated service model this year, and we completed this through the great efforts of our service management team, led by our Service Quality and Outcomes Manager. Strengths and challenges were identified, and we continue to use our data to improve service delivery.
- In terms of organizational culture, it's been an exhausting and strenuous year to say the least, but we have worked hard to streamline and improve internal communications, a direct result of staff feedback. In June 2020, we completed our annual Gallup climate survey and were pleased with the results, given we were three months into the pandemic, our overall engagement index had indeed improved from 2019.
- Financial health has improved this year, in large part due to COVID-19. We realized savings on travel, some on salaries, and savings on boarding costs due to a reduction in Outside Placement Resource use. Our anticipated costs on other lines were also lower than forecasted and our expenditures were offset because we were able to recover funds through the Ministry's Covid Relief Fund last year. Further, in March, we were notified by the Ministry that we would be receiving a one-time deficit assistance grant in the amount of \$1.267 million, which was unanticipated but extremely welcomed and put us in an unexpected surplus position this year. Between the one-time grant from 2019-2020 and the one-time grant this year, as well as some reduced expenditures, the agency has moved from being in an accumulated deficit position of \$3.158 million to \$992,303. Complete financial stability is still out of reach until the child welfare funding model is re-designed to be more sustainable for all agencies, including small-mid size, rural organizations with lower population density. However, we are pleased to be on more solid footing this year.

We could not do our work without our community

Throughout the last year, Family and Children's Services staff have been actively engaged within our community. Senior leadership has consistently sat at lead tables in both Lanark County and Leeds-Grenville, facilitating conversations about the pillars of child welfare re-design and the concept that child protection is everyone's business. Front-line staff and managers organized a community day in early March 2021 with over 100 community service providers. Our goal was to inform our community about key components of our service, including Signs of Safety, our continuum of care, and to generate a conversation about the shift towards more equitable and inclusive service that promotes positive outcomes, as outlined in the child welfare re-design framework. It offered partners the opportunity to talk about what has been going well and how we can partner effectively moving forward. Further to this, various managers and front-line workers have met with police detachments, school boards, community agencies such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters, etc. to build upon existing partnerships, all even more critical given the pandemic and the expected aftermath for families, children, and youth. We are proud to work with community members who are dedicated to improving the wellbeing of children, youth and families in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville.



Tony Barnes, &
President

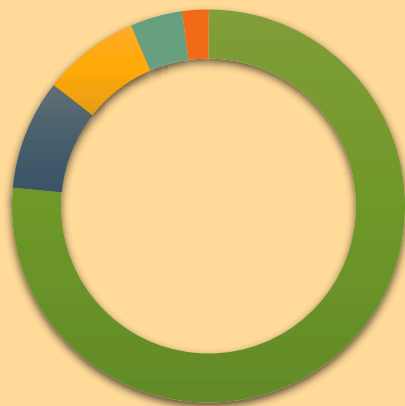


Erin Lee Marcotte,
Executive Director



Community Outreach

Together for our Kids Fund



- General Fund
- Education Funding
- Christmas Campaign
- Summer Camp
- Snowsuit Campaign



Snowsuit Campaign

- 800 Snowsuits distributed
- 40 Volunteers
- Partnerships with the Brockville Kinsman (snowsuit campaign); Gallipeau Centre Smiths Falls; Pier Church Brockville; Baptist Church Smiths Falls; Conlon Farm Recreational Complex in Perth, ON

Christmas Angel Tree Campaign

- 940 Angel Tree gifts distributed
- 29 Community Trees
- 21 Volunteers
- Partnerships with the Lanark OPP

Summer Camp

- 35 children supported with summer activities and summer camps
- Summer camp funding received from the United Way of Leeds & Grenville

Volunteer Drive Program

- 17 Volunteer Drivers
- 115,676 KM Driven



Through the support of our caring community, we received \$72,895 (\$40,000 from United Way) in donations to help support outreach programs. Thank you for your generosity.



Purple Ribbon 2020



Every October we participate in a provincial awareness campaign called Dress Purple Day. On October 27, 2020, we dressed in purple to show families facing challenges that we care, and we can help. The aim is to raise awareness about the supports that are available and how to access them. It also encourages all Ontarians to do their part in supporting vulnerable families in their community.

The campaign this year shifted focus to highlight that CAS's are just one of the many resources available to support families facing challenges as well as the role of individuals in the community to help them access the services they need.

The emphasis was placed on the role of community and community partners in prevention work (mental health, addictions, violence against women, education, food insecurity, employment support).

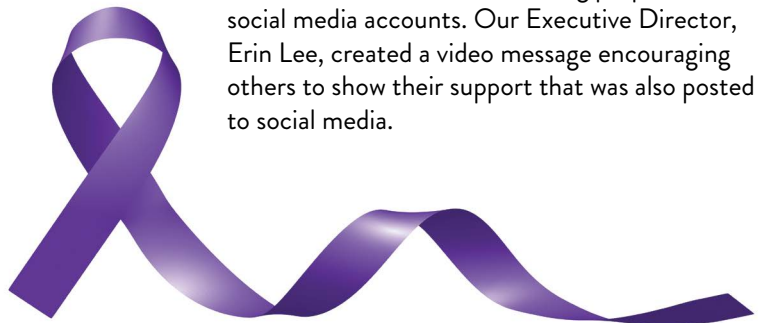
The campaign moved away from the target focus on teachers and the education sector to promote the idea that everyone has a role to play in supporting children, youth and families in their community. This year's campaign incorporated the message "here to help".

What we asked people to do:

We asked others to help us to spread the message! Staff and community partners were asked to create a video, join the conversation online at #IDressPurpleBecause, and then wear purple on October 27th to show that they are part of the community that cares for children, youth and families.



Here at FCSSLG, we posted photos of individual staff members and teams wearing purple to our social media accounts. Our Executive Director, Erin Lee, created a video message encouraging others to show their support that was also posted to social media.



Key Developments

Signs of Safety

There has been a lot happening in the Province on the Signs of Safety front. In February of this year the England Innovations Project (IEP) released an evaluation of Signs of Safety practice in 10 Local Authorities in England. The study looked at Signs of Safety implementation and the fidelity of Signs of Safety practice. The evaluation reviewed workforce outcomes, quality and duration of assessments and outcomes for children and families in terms of cases being re-referred and the use of kinship versus out of home placements. The report highlighted that fidelity to the model is paramount.

Our Agency, along with others in the zone, have committed to work with our leadership teams to ensure we are using Signs of Safety principles and practice across all our internal systems and structures. The sector also recognizes there is work to be done to develop measurable outcomes to evaluate our interventions.

Starting in September 2020 a group of ten staff participated in and end to end case review with a consultant/trainer from Elia (the home of Signs of Safety that assists organizations with whole system implementation). The end-to-end casework enhanced the skills and capacity for the participants. This process was spread over 12 months. Each month the participants reviewed the methodologies and learning processes embedded in Signs of Safety. Each participant then took on the role of mentor/coach with their teams and, working an actual case in the organization, would use what they learned to guide and support their team in applying the methodology and tools to the case. Feedback was very positive and those involved showed much more confidence and competence in Signs of Safety.

We also worked with our consultant to develop a dashboard in order to track the work on files and to develop templates to conduct collaborative case reviews to collaboratively review the depth and breadth of the work on files. Use of both tools will be implemented in the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity (EDI)

The Agency developed a Statement of Equity to acknowledge child welfare's role in systemic oppression and to outline our commitment to do better. This statement is on our website in both written and audio format. <https://fcsllg.ca/accountability/fcsllgs-equity-statement/>

Service

With the ongoing discovery of unmarked graves at former residential schools, it has emphasized the importance of the work on Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity, including work towards the 9 child welfare sector commitments related to Truth and Reconciliation. In 2020-21 we set a goal to have Identity based data on 80% of the children and youth we serve. We made steady progress toward our goal, reaching about 70% compliance, and bring this goal forward to 2021-22. We have also spent the past year working on increasing our compliance on completion of Demographic Data for all children in out of home care and completing Identity Based Demographic collection for all service recipients.

During the course of our strategic plan to 2025, we are committed to ensuring IdBd and Demographic data are completed on all service recipients so that we have a good understanding of the families we are involved with. When a family identifies as having Indigenous heritage or any other unique identify characteristics, we will ensure we are reaching out to Bands, Indigenous service organizations and community service providers who serve specific groups to guide us in providing service in a culturally informed and respectful way.

Staffing

This year the agency conducted a survey of both staff and our board of directors to get a sense of the diversity that exists. We plan to survey staff and Board members annually to find out about diversity. This year we will ask staff and board members about how responsive they find the agency to be on issues of identity, culture and inclusivity. We have a goal of increasing the diversity of our workforce across the organization by 2025.

Training

Over the course of the 2020-21 fiscal year all staff at the Agency attended 'Equity in Child Welfare' Training. This three-day training was designed to promote equity and inclusion and address the inherent marginalization of vulnerable populations that come into contact with child welfare services in Ontario. The goal of the training was to raise awareness of child protections' colonial and Eurocentric perspective and how it impacts on worldviews, child welfare assessments and decisions.

Key Developments

We are also reaching out to those who work with racialized groups to help us approach our work with these communities from an anti-oppressive, anti-racist lens. We hosted a staff presentation by Amber Crowe of Dnaagdawinmaag Binnoojiiyag Child and Family Services about the importance of knowing who our service recipients are and understanding past traumas experienced at the hands of child welfare.

Reduction in Outside Paid Resource Group Care

As part of our Strategic Plan, we are working to reduce the number of admissions to group homes over the next five years including less reliance on Outside Paid Resource foster placements. This goal is a direct reflection of the intent of Child Welfare Redesign to improve quality of care for children and youth. Family-based care is the preferred placement if a removal is necessary. Group care is the last option explored. In year one, we have made good progress with this goal. At the opening of fiscal 2020 we had three (3) children/youth in OPR foster care and ten (10) children/youth in OPR group care. At the end of the fiscal year we had two (2) in OPR foster and four (4) in OPR group. This continues to be a priority for the foreseeable future. The role of the Placement Coordinator is to exhaust all possible in-house foster home options before considering placement outside of our own system. Additional supports required to meet the child's needs are considered at the time of placement.

Expansion of Educational Liaison Supports Provincially

In February 2021, the Ministry approved an additional \$1.5M to expand the Education Liaison program to further support improved educational outcomes for children and youth in and from care and/or receiving child welfare services from Children's Aid Societies. FCSLLG was allocated \$92,100 in funding for future fiscal years. Previously we were in receipt of \$60,000 annually. We contracted with Tom Jordan (retired CDSBEO Superintendent) as our Educational Consultant and he plays an integral role in supporting our children and youth in care by participating in educational planning (REACH meetings) with our school board partners, as well as the workers supporting the children and youth and our foster parents. We work closely with mainstream schools and alternative learning programs to best support the unique needs of our children and youth. Monies from this initiative bolstered our efforts to provide adequate technology for students throughout the pandemic.

Quality Assurance at FCSLLG

Despite the pandemic, we were able to continue to move quality and reporting initiatives forward on many fronts. We have developed and improved upon our systems for data collection and reporting of progress internally on service volumes, compliance, and identity data. We implemented a weekly dashboard including important service volumes and other measures, such as investigations opened and completed, ongoing cases served, after hours call volume, placement breakdowns, COVID related expenses, and number of active employees. During the first 6 months of the pandemic beginning in mid-March of 2020, we saw an average decrease in investigations opened of 26% and an average decrease of 16% for the year. We are paying close attention to identity data, sending out weekly IDbD compliance reports to teams and a monthly dashboard tracking our progress with IDbD and completing demographic profiles for children in out of home care. We were also able to complete a review and analysis of our service model in 2020, which was a huge undertaking for the agency and involved a qualitative review of over 500 files. This was an exciting development as it sets the stage for annual file reviews and continuous improvement in our strategic focus areas.

Foster Parents

Foster parents contribute enormously to the success of FCSLLG and they stepped up without hesitation throughout the pandemic. With the landscape changing rapidly from week to week and shutdowns impacting on volunteer drives and the access program, our foster parents teamed up with service recipients and staff to make the best of a difficult situation. At the onset of the pandemic, we used technology to assist with virtual visits for our children and youth. As time went on, it became apparent that this was not the best service, and we expanded our access program back to family homes and in the offices. Foster parents rose to the occasion and assisted with drives while adhering to covid protocols to make these visits possible. The Placement Coordinator launched a Coffee Break program to keep communication flowing. This venue allowed foster parents the opportunity to join together to discuss relevant topics, agency updates and just spend some time together as a group. With school closures for much of the year and summer camps non-existent this year, our foster parents were asked to be creative and to provide opportunities in their homes or local

neighbourhoods. Foster parents, like many others, were asked to be caregivers, teachers and recreational leaders for our children and youth. The agency provided many of our foster parents and youth with technology to assist with at-home learning and we did see an increase in the purchase of books and outdoor recreational items. We utilized funds from the Ontario Education Championship Team in addition to Stability Funding provided to the school boards through MCCSS. We had very few placement breakdowns during Covid, and most foster parents did not utilize respite given the protocols of moving from home to home. In 2020/21 we increased consultations with our Educational Liaison and foster parents continue to play an integral part in REACH meetings for our children and youth.



FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31st, 2021

Fiscal Year 2020/2021

REVENUES

	Province of Ontario	\$18,762,430
	One Time Assistance	\$1,267,484
	Recoveries	\$1,645,836
	Total	\$21,675,750

EXPENSES

	Direct Service Costs	\$4,444,574
	Salaries and Benefits	\$12,134,080
	Travel and Training	\$443,245
	Administration	\$2,467,396
	Amortization	\$157,639
	Total	\$19,646,934
	Excess (Deficiency)	\$2,028,816

Our People

Employees.....	125
Foster Families.....	61
Adoptive Families.....	33
Volunteers.....	17
Kilometres driven by Volunteers.....	115,676

Board of Directors 2020-2021

OFFICERS:

Tony Barnes, President
Lyndon Murdock, Vice-President
Mike Andrews, Treasurer

DIRECTORS:

Nigel White	Lydia Foley
Kevin Clouthier	Steve Vaughan
Ashley Dayment	Patti Goodman
Shannon Stilnovich	Isabelle Sauve

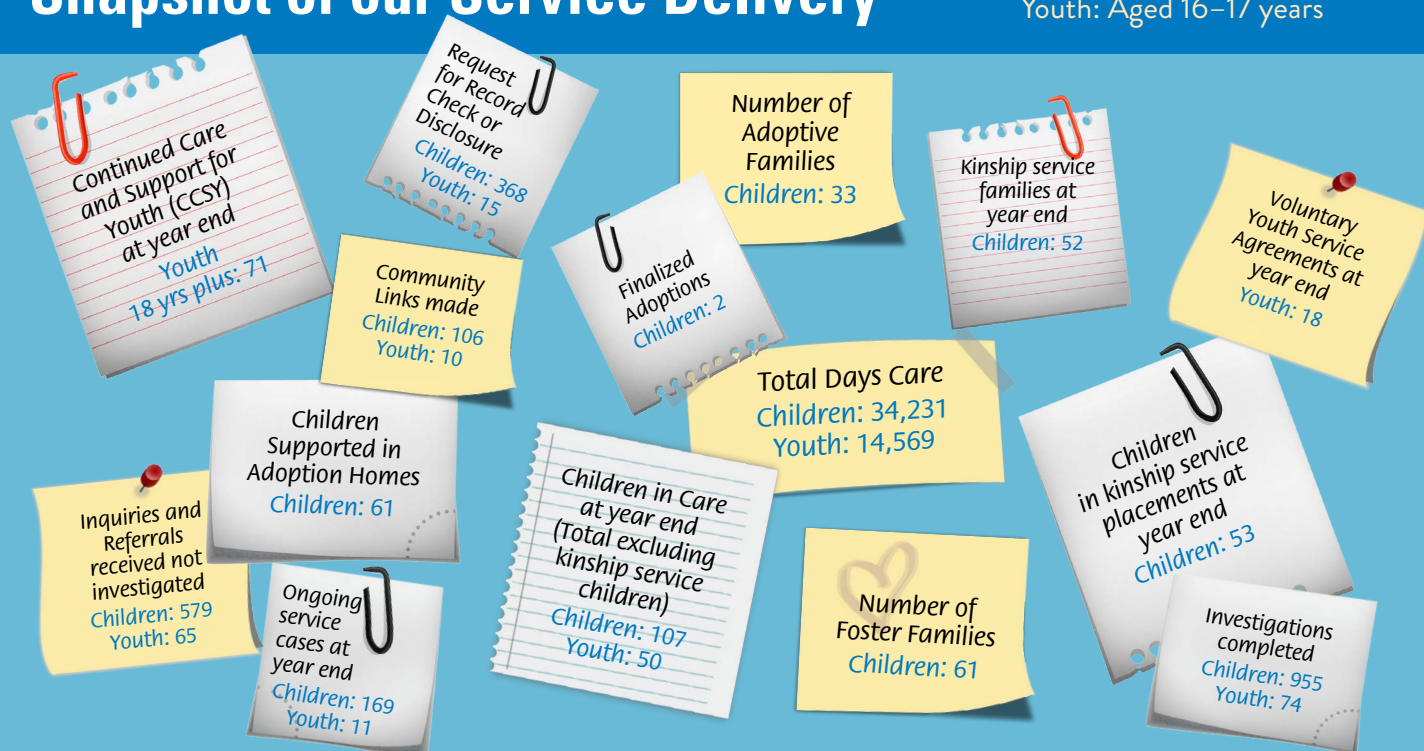


Employee Service Awards

Later this year, FCSLLG is looking forward to gathering in person to recognize 27 staff who have reached a milestone of 2, 5, 10, 15, 20 and even one 30-year award recipient for their years' service. As we celebrate their passion for child welfare, we are also reminded of their caring and commitment in working with our service recipients. As this past year has been particularly challenging with COVID related uncertainties, workers were creative in ensuring that service delivery continued. We will celebrate all staff at this event who continue to provide support to our community's most vulnerable. We also honoured three of our staff as they celebrated their retirement after many years of child welfare services, Johanne Wyss-Huskinson, Steve Orr, and Karynn von Cramon. Congratulations to all and thank you for your continued efforts in supporting children and families in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville!

Snapshot of our Service Delivery

Children: Aged 0–15 years
Youth: Aged 16–17 years



Working Together to Make a Difference



Sharing Service Recipient Experiences

"In the beginning I was in denial, Sam did what was best for my kids and for me. She saw what was happening and ran with it. Sam has been nothing but helpful, she has helped me with my birth certificate and with housing. She's always been so helpful. Sam is kind and caring, that's what I can say about her. My kids are doing so much better now that they are with my Aunt. It was Christmas Eve, and my daughter didn't want anything to do with me and I thought, what am I doing with my life? I knew I had to change. I couldn't have done it without Sam, I see that now that I'm not doing drugs anymore. Sam was my number one support. When people offer help, you have to take it"

Tiffany, mom of 7 and 10 year old girls with Indigenous heritage



My experience in foster care was full of ups and downs. It wasn't until I moved into my foster home in Smiths Falls that I actually felt like a part of a family. Living with Amanda and Daryll shaped who I am today. They were always there to tell me wrong from right and they taught me so many valuable life lessons. I don't think I could ever be more grateful to anyone in my life other than these two selfless amazing parents. Amanda and Daryll always looked out for me and I doubt if I was in any other home I'd be the person I am right now. So thank you to the agency for putting me in such a loving home and thank you Amanda and Daryll for being amazing parents.

Olivia, age 18, Youth in Care

"Throughout our involvement Shirley has felt listened to, that the workers understood who her grandson is and that they made a difference. Little things like a gift card for craft supplies, always returning calls and being informed of what was happening helped Shirley and her family feel part of a team. She understood what was happening. Shirley said she would absolutely encourage others to provide care of family when needed. Lastly, Shirley said 'I miss Catherine. I enjoyed working with her. She was good with us, and I don't know what we would have done otherwise. Please let Catherine know that he's growing well – now 5'8" and 130lbs and to stop by one day'.

Cindy (Service Manager), in an interview with a grandparent Shirley

"Both Christine and Sabrina have been so helpful answering all of my questions about development and what I need to know. When I first became a dad I was just 'winging' it. They don't teach this stuff in school. Right now, his (Alex) issues are communication. Christine and Sabrina are helping me with some techniques I can use with Alex. People can be prideful, but they need to ask for help"

Dad of 18 month old Alex



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Together for Our Kids



Office Locations

Corporate Office

Mailing Address:

Brockville
438 Laurier Blvd.
BROCKVILLE, Ontario
K6V 6C5

**Note: mail to this address only*

Other office locations:

Smiths Falls
Perth
Carleton Place

To reach any of our offices toll free
call 1-855-667-2726



Member Agency

www.fcsllg.ca

**Working with Communities...
Promoting Equitable Opportunities**

