

ANNUAL REPORT

2022–2023



**FAMILY AND
CHILDREN'S
SERVICES**

of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville

Together for Our Kids

RESILIENCY,

ENGAGEMENT,

INCLUSIVITY



President & Executive Director's Report:

THE NEW NORMAL



It's poignant that as we write this report to our community that the World Health Organization has recently declared the end of the COVID-19 health crisis. It caused us to reflect upon three years of service challenges and successes and ultimately, when we take stock of the work accomplished, we have much to be proud of as a group of employees, foster parents, and volunteers. We can say the last fiscal year certainly felt a little more "normative" in terms of service delivery. We are actively working within a mixed model of in-person office attendance and remote work, although it is a model that will require continual evaluation.

Reflecting provincial and national workforce shortages FCSLLG has faced its own recruitment challenges, but by the end of our fiscal year we were in a much more solid staffing position, welcoming many new team members with enthusiasm. This has decreased caseload averages and while workload in child welfare is an ever-present reality, we are cautiously optimistic we have achieved stabilization of our workforce. We have done a lot of work on employee engagement within the organization this year, involving staff from various levels and functions in the organization. Feedback regarding our January 30th all staff day was positive. There were several recommendations and actions put forward to promote workload efficiencies and employee wellbeing. We have also taken steps to invest in and implement a formal peer support program within the Agency and have five employees now trained to offer peer support debriefings to our employees when faced with work related challenges, including child deaths or serious case-related events. The work of child welfare is

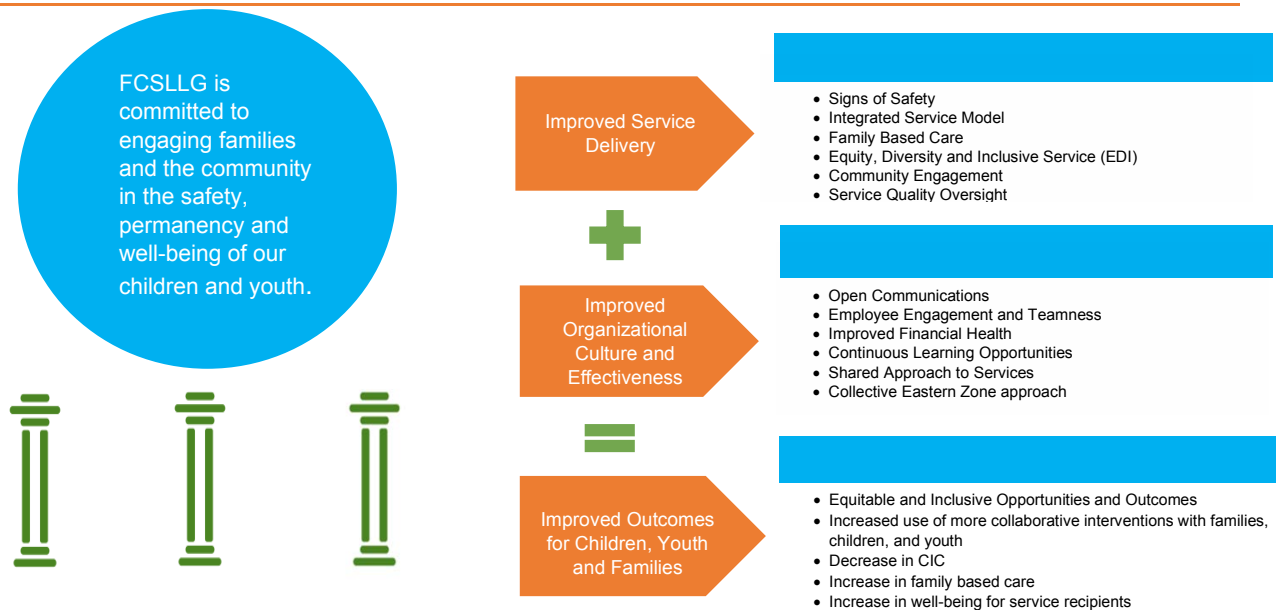
emotionally taxing and we continue to look for ways to support our employees to manage compassion fatigue and critical incident effects in a manner that allows them to remain resilient and carry out their work in accordance with the mission and vision of our Agency.

We were very pleased with the Ministry's response to the needs of youth transitioning out of care, as evidenced through the new Ready, Set, Go policy directive. The directive allows child welfare agencies to provide continued support to youth up to their 23rd birthdays. This is two years beyond what was previously legislated. The goal is to improve overall outcomes of youth leaving care, as historically the research has demonstrated disparities in outcomes of youth in the child welfare system compared to their peers. The policy directive comes with a number of requirements that will drive independence planning with youth, starting from the age of 13. While our Agency has always worked well with youth in supporting their transitions, the extension of the age, the focus on key readiness skills including life skills, education, employment, housing, community and culture connection, as well as the financial supports available to youth beginning at age 18 will be extremely helpful for youth transitioning to adulthood.

The Agency underwent its two main auditing processes in August and September, our Extended Society Care (ESC) Review and the Foster Care Licensing. Overall, our ESC review noted our continued focus on thorough planning with our children and youth in care on all dimensions, health, education, social/emotional skills, self-care/independence skills and permanency. The quality

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

of relationships and stability of placement were also noted as positive for our children/youth in extended care. In terms of Licensing, the Agency received a conditional license this year. There were some areas that required follow-up and focused refresher training, including serious occurrence reporting and high risk situations, fire safety training, and training related to plan of care requirements for youth in care. The Agency had until March 31st to complete the follow-up and we were happy to report full compliance at that time.

From a governance perspective we are pleased to report that by the annual meeting, we will have a revised set of by-laws to approve that have been reviewed through the lens of compliance with the now proclaimed Ontario Not for Profit Corporations Act (ONCA). We have welcomed new Board members this year, Jane Hess, Melanie Cook, and Elizabeth Dorrington, but are also bidding farewell to Lyndon Murdock, Lydia Foley, and Julie Malone-Vowles

Our retreat in September 2022 focused on Board member development, as well as an equity session on the role of unconscious bias in governance. We thank all of our Board members for their valuable contributions this year and look forward to continued progress towards the Agency's strategic objectives this coming year.

Our Equity and Truth and Reconciliation work continues. We strive to improve our identity-based data collection and front-line staff are involved in training their peers and sharing stories of impact. Understanding the identities and cultures of those we serve often helps us advocate for them to receive services they need, or helps us understand their lived experiences and then support them in navigating difficult referral processes or barriers in other systems. We have utilized our Regional Director of Equity, César Ndéma-Moussa, for consultations on various topics, related to human resources, equity-centered leadership, and community advocacy. In November, the Agency sent six

President & Executive Director's Report:



We celebrated National Indigenous History Month in June 2022 by hosting a drum circle for staff, youth and foster parents. A local Indigenous Knowledge Carrier and Drum Keeper, Francine Desjardins, led us in some teachings and songs on the drum. She introduced us to Chris Bendevis, an Indigenous knowledge carrier who carried out pipe ceremony and song with us. It was an important cultural experience for all participants.

employees to the three-day Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Conference hosted by the Association of Native Child and Family Service Agencies of Ontario in Blue Mountain. Through a series of workshops, keynote speaker addresses, and cultural ceremonies, it was an amazing opportunity to learn, reflect, and bring back some tangible thinking and action plans to the Agency. We hosted another mandatory Indigenous training for all staff in January, led by the Director of Service of Akwesasne Child and Family Services who provided much insight into the Mohawk community and the ways in which their agency is working in a non-intrusive manner to support families. We also learned a little bit about the Wampum belts and how they were used to mark agreements between peoples.

Over the course of the fiscal year, we have been receiving requests specifically from various First Nations across the province. These are data (both quantitative and qualitative) requests made for a variety of reasons, from assisting to ready First Nations to take on their own child welfare mandates, to assisting with repatriation efforts, to understanding where their Nation's children are, to reminding Societies of our obligations under the Child,

Youth and Family Services Act to consult with First Nations, Inuit, and Metis communities when working with children from those communities. Our Manager of Service Quality and Outcomes has led these data collection activities and reports to the various First Nations. It has been complex but important work and we anticipate it will also be a mechanism to build relationships with Indigenous communities across the province.

We have continued to advocate and communicate with our Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services in a transparent manner regarding our funding shortfalls. As our financial statements indicate, we finished our operating year with another deficit. Despite an adjustment to the funding formula, we saw another decrease in our base funding allocation. The Board, on behalf of the organization, has taken the position that further expenditure cuts would lead to diminished service for our community members who require child welfare services and increased risk to children. We will continue to work collaboratively with the Ministry in a transparent manner with the hope that Phase III of the funding formula review will bring about sustainable funding for the Agency.

Looking ahead, we are in the throes of the Quality Standards Framework implementation, a regulatory "sea change" for children and youth in out of home care, as well as foster and group care providers. We are continuing to thrust our strategic plan forward to 2025 in our 12 key focus areas and look forward to a successful and challenging year!

Mike Andrews,
Board President

&

Erin Lee Marcotte,
Executive Director



Community Outreach

PARTNERSHIP

Holiday Campaign:

- 1000+ Angel Tree gifts distributed
- 35 Families sponsored by community members, local businesses and organizations
- 30 Families supported through the Perth Metro food basket donations
- 130 Youth gift bags distributed to youth aged 16+ who live independently
- Over \$54,500 (\$12,802 in monetary) of monetary and in-kind donations received to support families in LLG

Volunteer Drive Program

- 11 Active volunteer drivers
- 476,847 kilometers driven

Snowsuit Campaign

- 483 Snowsuits were distributed through our community distribution days
- 162 snowsuits were distributed by our front-line staff
- Thank you to our 18 volunteers who devoted time to make this campaign a success this year!
- Fundraised \$20,911 for the snowsuit campaign
- Partnerships with the Brockville Kinsmen (snowsuit drive) and the Brockville Pier Church

Fundraising:

- Through the support of our caring community, we received \$63,555 (including \$30,000 from United Way) in donations to help support outreach programs. Thank you for your generosity!

Other donations received:

- Holiday donations: \$7,102
- General donation fund: \$23,116
- Snowsuit fund: \$2,625
- Education fund: \$712

Summer Camp

- 95 children/youth from LLG were able to go to camp funded by our summer camp funding with an additional 23 families receiving summer activity funding.

Garden Project

- In 2022, FCSLLG installed three raised garden beds at the Smiths Falls office, with the purpose of promoting engagement, nutritional education, and cooking and healthy eating amongst service recipients. In 2023 we began exploring avenues to expand our garden, with the possibility of implementing new programming. Currently, FCSLLG is developing the Growing Together garden program, aimed at promoting experiential learning, environmental awareness, community engagement, and addressing food security. The project will establish a garden where families can learn and improve their skills and expand their knowledge of gardening. Growing Together will not only serve as a source of fresh produce for families but also a space for educational and community building activities. The Garden will be designed and managed by families in the community, providing them with valuable experience and leadership opportunities. Growing Together will offer activities to enhance family's ability to build relationships, create a sense of community, and social connection. FCSLLG plans to maintain the Growing Together project year after year to build community connection, promote family engagement, and address food insecurity within our community.



Key Developments

QUALITY STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

In July 2020, in relation to Pillar 2 of the Child Welfare Re-design agenda, the Ministry released the Quality Standards Framework (QSF) which was meant to provide guidelines to improve the Quality of Care for children and youth in licensed residential settings in Ontario. This includes foster homes and group homes (OPR's).

These guidelines resulted in changes to Ministry regulations that form the basis of Out of Home service delivery across the sector. The changes are meant to improve the quality of services and care received by children in care, improve oversight of residential placements, and increase accountability for Societies when they place a child in a residential placement. There is an underlying philosophy that children/youth deserve to receive high quality care that is trauma informed, child centered and individualized to meet their unique needs whilst facilitating strong family and community connections. The requirements do not apply to kin service arrangements (children placed on an out of care basis with kith or kin) or youth on a VYSA (voluntary out of care arrangement with support from the Society).

The QSF regulations come into effect on July 1, 2023 and over the course of the year the Ministry and OACAS have been focussed on providing various resources, including training videos, an Implementation Guide and various templates to assist agencies, including Children's Aid Societies, in preparing for implementation.

These changes will have a considerable impact on our fostering community, those staff who support them, and staff who work with children/youth and their families of origin.

The QSF requirements include new and amended expectations related to:

1. Pre-service qualifications for staff (including any staff involved with children/youth)
2. Training for foster parents, including additional mandatory training for each provider and ongoing focus on foster parent development
3. Pre-admission assessment and safety plans
4. Plans of care
5. Physical and mechanical restraints
6. Complaints
7. Education
8. Enhanced case management requirements for societies including emphasis on gathering identity documents, completing child social history within 30 days, pre assessment related to youth in unlicensed settings.



Ready, Set, Go!

Introduction:

Outcomes for youth in, leaving and from the child welfare system are typically poor compared to the general Canadian youth population. Without a stable home environment and strong relationships with peers, mentors, or adults, youth in and from care are more likely to experience a range of negative outcomes, such as homelessness, mental health concerns, unemployment, lack of educational engagement and achievement, and involvement in the justice system.

This new policy directive aims to prepare youth for successful transition from their care to adulthood. Societies are required to provide eligible youth with continued care and supports based on their individual needs and aspirations to enable them to transition smoothly to adulthood. These supports, both financial and non-financial. Ready, Set, Go replaces the CCSY Program (Continued Care and Support for Youth).

The new regulatory amendments came into effect on March 31, 2023. This directive promotes early assessment and planning, promotes youth voices and youth engagement in decision-making about their long-term goals and identified barriers, during the provision of care prior to the child's 18th birthday.

Youth leaving the care of a society or customary care are more likely to achieve improved outcomes when they are provided with supports and guidance and have a voice in planning and decisions that concern them. Societies will provide supports and guidance that will assist youth to achieve physical and emotional well-being, acquire basic life management skills and develop social networks that include connections to caring adults and the community while respecting a child's identity characteristics and cultural connections.

The Core features of the new policy and the Ready, Set Go (RSG) program are:

- Strengthened accountability for societies with respect to preparing youth to successfully exit their care, including requiring societies to:
 - a) Work with youth from the age of 13 to prepare them in advance of exiting care.



- b) Offer a conferencing option to youth after they turn the age of 15 that would facilitate formal planning for transition.
 - c) Provide youth with an information package prior to the youth's 18th birthday. and ensure a worker completes a basics checklist so youth can successfully leave care.
 - d) Continuing providing support to youth with pathway to school, training and employment including ensuring youth are aware that post-secondary activities raise their funding by \$500/month at age 20.
- Increase age of eligibility for supports and services at the youth's 23rd birthday.
 - Increased financial supports for eligible youth leaving care to enhance safety and stability.
 - Additional financial support for eligible youth pursuing post – secondary studies or training.
 - Individualised work with youth to identify their strengths and areas that require support and development and measure progress during the RSG program (e.g. housing, education, employment, supportive relationships).

Immediate impacts of the directive:

We have a number of youth who, due to the increased funding have now been able to access stable housing, which will now allow them more time to focus on their educational pursuits rather than working multiple jobs in order to pay rent and bills.

In the first month following the new directive, we had approximately 6 youth (who were previously homeless, residing in emergency shelters, or couch surfing) that were able to secure apartments in their community since April 1.

Snapshot of our Service Delivery 2022/2023

Request for
record check and
disclosure
343

Reports received
not investigated
605

Inquiries
97

Children/youth
in group care
Mar 31 2022
1

Children/youth
in group care
Mar 31 2023
1

Community
links
179

Number of
families completed
PRIDE
6



Families
before the court
Mar 31 2022
52

Families
before the court
Mar 31 2023
47

Reduction of 9%

Investigations
completed
(total)
1135

Working
Together
to Make a
Difference

Number of
foster families
at year end
59

New approved
foster homes during
the year
9

Transfers to
ongoing
146

Ongoing
service cases at
year end
190

CCSYs at
year end
103

VYSAs at
year end
33

Adoption
Probation children
at year end
8

Adoptions
completed
6

Children in
kinship service
placements at year end
41

Children in care at
year end (including
adoption)
187

Total Paid Days
Care
60,636

Families receiving
post-adoption
services
62

Statement of Operations



FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31st, 2023

Fiscal Year 2022/2023

REVENUES

	Province of Ontario	\$ 18,205,582
	Balanced Budget Fund	\$ 486,022
	Recoveries	\$ 1,609,455
	Total	\$ 20,301,059

Donation Revenue: \$ 63,555
(\$30,000 was from United Way programs) included above in recoveries

EXPENSES

	Direct Service Costs	\$ 5,063,391
	Salaries and Benefits	\$ 12,273,172
	Travel and Training	\$ 774,947
	Administration	\$ 1,635,810
	Amortization	\$ 140,658
	Occupancy	\$ 508,628

Total \$ 20,396,606
Excess (Deficiency) (\$ 95,547)
Loss on Sale of Assets 0
Excess (Deficiency) (\$ 95,547)

Our People

Employees.....	116
Foster Families.....	59
Volunteers.....	11
Kilometres driven by Volunteers.....	476,847

Board of Directors

2022-2023

OFFICERS:

Mike Andrews, President
Lyndon Murdock, Vice-President
David Lintaman, Treasurer

DIRECTORS:

Shannon Stilnovich	Isabelle Sauve
Frank Onasanya	Jane Hess
Al Howard	Elizabeth Dorrington
Lydia Foley	Julie Malone-Vowles
Steve Vaughan	Melanie Cook

Employee Service Awards

Later this year FCSLLG will celebrate its employees for their years of service as they are a true testimony of their dedication to those we serve and to the agency. The event will recognize 2, 5, 10, 15, 20, and 35 year service award recipients with a total of 17 awards to be presented. As we celebrate their passion for promoting child and family well-being, we are also reminded of their commitment to working with those most vulnerable. Congratulations to all of our recipients this year! We truly value their contributions and thank you for your continued efforts in supporting children and families in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville!



Sharing Service Recipient Experiences

"My involvement with CAS has been very good. I am appreciative of my worker, Catherine, the CAS community and the VYSA for being able to help and support me when I've needed it, and to also get me back on my feet and on the right path. I'm thankful that I have good support and a good team around me supporting me with whatever my needs are, whether that's my little interests or school. Catherine is always there to help me and be someone I can reach out to for help and support."

Emma, Age 18

"I am blown away by the outpouring of love for my children, from staff, to foster parents, to school staff – you guys go above and beyond your jobs"

Father of 13 and 11 yr old children after 18 months of service and a reunification

"Growing a family brings with it many challenges, and adoption is no different. It takes amazing teamwork and commitment. Having an incredible team behind you makes all the difference, Krista our adoption worker made the transition from single home to family home an easy one. The supports available within the agency are endless. Our entire experience from inspection to our son moving in with us has been positive, we felt embraced and cared for by our workers who genuinely kept our best interest at heart. Thank you to the entire team, we are forever grateful"

Kori & Oz

Workers made us feel involved by having network meetings and bringing our people together. This helped make sure everyone is on the same page about what needs to happen. This let us hear what the concerns were and put it into perspective for us. We have always felt heard when we ask questions or share concerns. The 3 columns really helped us feel involved and that we can help make decisions.

Parents of 3 yr old boy who was successfully reintegrated home

"Right now I get \$1100 and it all goes to rent. My rent is \$1280 plus hydro so I've been paying around \$300-\$400 (whatever hydro is) and I've been working a lot during school hours just to get the 8hr pay. But with the Ready, Set, Go program it will take so much stress off. Simply not having to juggle and prioritize work over school is super de-stressing. Some things I know I will be getting with the extra money are fruits and veggies because they are not cheap and I haven't budgeted them recently and I love healthy food so I will actually be able to make stuff with that. Gas is a main expense. I've really wanted a vacuum and a dining room table and a dresser but I haven't had enough to budget that in so those are some purchases that I'm aiming for over a couple of months as well."

Carma-Lee (age 18)



Working with Communities... Promoting Equitable Opportunities



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



Member Agency

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

www.fcslg.ca