

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2023–2024



**FAMILY AND  
CHILDREN'S  
SERVICES**

*of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville*

Together for Our Kids

FACING  
CHALLENGES  
TOGETHER



# President & Executive Director's Report



Mike Andrews, Board President



Erin Lee Marcotte, Executive Director

## FACING CHALLENGES TOGETHER

**F**CSLLG has been confronted with ongoing challenges throughout the fiscal year. Even so, there are some significant accomplishments that we are pleased to share with our community.

Two major regulatory changes were implemented over the course of the year. Ready, Set, Go, which came into effect April 1st, sets out more specific supports for youth aged 18 to 23 getting ready to leave care. The Quality Standards Framework, which came into effect July 1st, includes a plethora of enhanced licensing and children in care compliance regulations, all with the aim of improving the quality of care for children and youth in the care of an agency.

While the intent of the regulatory changes is welcome, these changes create additional administrative burden. Our staff worked hard to understand the implications of the regulatory changes through extensive training and adapting to new processes and documentation requirements. The new standards have also brought more training demands for foster parents and additional day-to-day expectations that must be met for the agency to be compliant with our foster care licensing requirements.

The Agency's licensing review did not take place during 2023-24 but is now underway. We expect this will be a year of growth and learning as we implement the new regulatory framework.

The annual Extended Society Care review was completed in summer 2023. We received excellent feedback from the

Ministry reviewers related to the quality of our planning, the quality of relationships between children and the adults who care for them, and overall placement stability. Directives and recommendations were mainly related to compliance with timely documentation.

The agency spent a significant amount of time at the bargaining table through the fiscal year of 2023-24. Despite efforts by both management and union, an agreement could not be reached without a four-week labour disruption. We were very happy to see all employees return to work after an agreement was ratified in August. A labour disruption affects staff morale and labour relations however, we are very proud of how our employees, management and union together, have prioritized service delivery to ensure the safety and best interests of the children and families we serve. As we write this, we have hope that the organization has settled to a degree. Our annual climate survey results provide encouraging evidence that employee engagement is beginning to improve.

### Organizational Structural Changes

We bid farewell to one of our Directors of Service, Amanda Colacicco, in April 2023, as she took on the role of Executive Director for Family and Children's Services of Frontenac, Lennox, and Addington. Given this, the agency experimented with a senior management structure change and went with one Director of Service for a year, spreading out some portfolio assignments



to other members of the management team. I want to commend and thank Director of Service, Jaime Beechey, for her commitment to operations and risk mitigation during the year. She managed a large team and a number of portfolios during a very challenging year. Ultimately, our evaluation is that one Director of Service will not be sustainable in the long-term, and a second Director of Service, Sharon Chapman, has been appointed as of April 1, 2024.

As part of our ongoing analysis of structure, the agency entered into an agreement to purchase legal leadership services from the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa. We are pleased that Chief Counsel, Julie D'aoust, and Legal Services Coordinator, Anne-Mary Zietak, have joined our team on a part-time basis. The legal department has stabilized and adopted more streamlined processes under their leadership.

Unfortunately, the agency also had to initiate the lay-off in the fall of 2023 of five support services employees after a careful analysis of service delivery within the Support Services department. While extremely difficult for our employees, given the financial realities and the analysis of the program, it was a necessary step towards organizational efficiencies, and it was not possible to achieve this reduction through attrition. This also led to a reduction of one service manager within our management team. Some of the resources were diverted to the creation of kinship/connections workers, with a goal to provide more targeted and comprehensive kin finding and kin support services to assist with the goals of sustaining family-based care and family connections for children and youth who cannot reside with their parents.

The agency officially and firmly signed an agreement of sale of our 8 Herriott St. building in Perth, after being on the market for well over a year. The new owners take possession of the building on August 2, 2024. Approximately 14 staff will have moved from Perth to our Smiths Falls location, leaving one service team of six in Perth in a smaller, rented space within 8 Herriott St. This has been a significant change management process for the agency, as 8 Herriott was the main corporate office of legacy Lanark Children's Aid since 2005 and was a symbol of strong community presence and partnership. Reducing the footprint and moving the majority of staff to Smiths Falls is all part of a cost containment and savings strategy given our financial forecast.

## Fulfilling Commitments towards Truth and Reconciliation

In honour of National Indigenous People's Day in June, the agency hosted a Walk for Wenjack in collaboration with some community partners, such as public health and police services. Staff and partners raised money for the Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Fund that seeks to improve the lives of Indigenous people by building awareness, education, and connections between all peoples in Canada.



*FCSLLG staff and community partners participate in Walk for Wenjack*

# President & Executive Director's Report:

We are thrilled to congratulate the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation (AOPFN) for adopting their own law, Nigig Nibi Ki-Win, that sets out how and under what authority they will provide child wellbeing (including child welfare/protection) services to the children who are members of their First Nation. Over the course of the year, FCSLLG has been mining data and providing all records related to their members to assist the new agency, Nigig Nibi Ki-win Gamik, in preparing for April 19, 2024, the date their law came into force and effect. There has been a lot of collaboration in ensuring our organization meets its obligations under federal legislation. Protocol development began in the latter part of the fiscal year and will continue as a collaboration with Nigig Gamik to develop clear processes for the identification, referral, and service delivery for children and families who are members of AOPFN.

In January, the agency was able to send six staff to the provincial Indigenous Child and Youth Wellbeing conference in Ottawa. This was achieved through a grant that the agency was successful in achieving through the Community Services Recovery Fund. The conference offered a wide variety of workshops and cultural experiences for our staff to bring back to the agency and into their own practice. We are also looking forward to sending all staff to Madahoki Farm for the day in May through these grant funds. This

day will be one of learning and reflection as we further our understanding of Indigenous culture, all related to our commitments to continuous mandatory training for all child welfare staff.

From a governance perspective, the agency has struggled to maintain its complement of 13 volunteer directors, although with our new by-laws approved in June 2023, we can govern with a range of 5 to 13 directors. We bid farewell to Melanie Cook who resigned from the Board and welcomed Emily Wimpenny and Jen McMaster as new members. We are grateful for the commitment of our 10 volunteer directors who have served on the Board over the course of the year, particularly in these challenging times.

We held our annual Board retreat in October, hosting Robert Fulton, MSW, who completed a community data profile commissioned by the Every Kid in Our Community lead table. The data-sets and their implications painted a clear picture of social challenges within the communities of Lanark Leeds and Grenville and their impact on child welfare. For example, many of our communities within the counties are identified in the data as concentrated areas of disadvantage by factors including housing security, children living in poverty, crime severity, substance use, and educational achievement.

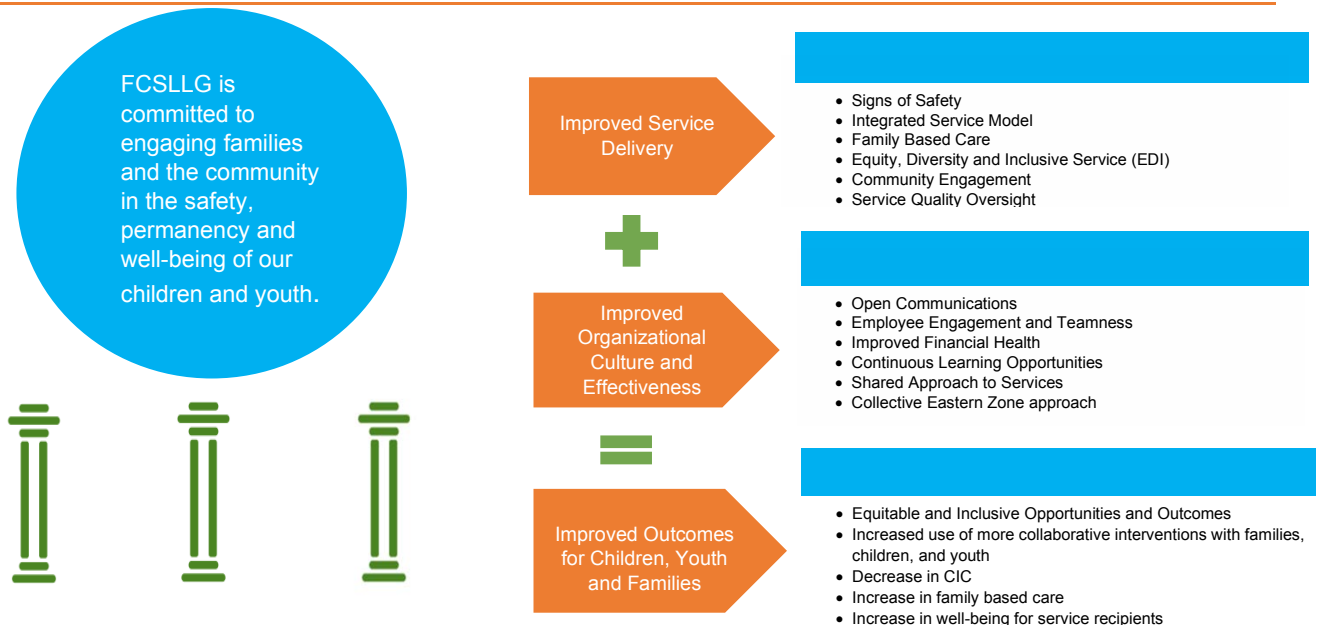
The challenges are all the more concerning to the Board given the continuing reductions in the operating funding provided by the Ministry. As you will see from our publicly available audited financial statements, the agency has posted another significant operating deficit for 2023-24, and the financial forecast for 2024-25 is even worse.

The Board began additional advocacy efforts in 2024. Our Executive Director and Board Chair have been meeting with various mayors across the three counties to raise awareness of child welfare funding challenges and how these impact the



## 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

citizens of each municipality. These advocacy efforts were motivated by the Fulton report's call to the Board to increase our agency profile, the pressing need for increased child welfare funding across the province, and the need for a revised funding formula that better aligns funding with the services provided by our agency.

This advocacy continues into the new fiscal year with a delegation to Lanark County Council and a possible delegation at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario later this summer. The Board has also been highly engaged with our regional office and has written directly to Minister Parsa to outline our serious concerns about inadequate funding for FCSLLG, but also the child welfare sector more broadly.

Despite the various challenges the agency has faced this year, highlighted is also the fact that we have faced them together. Management and front-line staff have been focused on service delivery and the key strategic priorities in

child welfare. We can celebrate an overall trend in increased compliance with key standards, and more collaborative, less litigious interventions with families. We continue to learn as an organization and as individual professionals, all with the aim of developing our child welfare practice in a manner that promotes more equitable and anti-oppressive outcomes for children, youth and families. As always, we cannot do this work alone, and wish to thank our community partners, our foster parents, volunteers, and Board members who work alongside us with common goals to achieve greater wellbeing for children, youth, families, and the communities at large within Lanark, Leeds, and Grenville.

*Mike Andrews* & *Erin Lee Marcotte*

Mike Andrews,  
Board President

Erin Lee Marcotte,  
Executive Director



# Key Developments

## QUALITY STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

On July 1, 2023, the new regulations related to Quality Standards Framework (QSF) were implemented across the province. These requirements, that form the basis of Out of Home services delivery, are intended to improve the Quality of Care for children and youth in licensed residential settings (including CAS approved foster homes). The philosophical underpinning is that children/youth deserve to receive high quality care that is trauma informed, child centered and individualized to meet their unique needs while also facilitating strong family and community connections.

Our staff have been focussed on implementing these changes that have impacted on all areas of their work with children, youth, and our foster care providers. Staff have attended numerous training sessions, educational webinars and function meetings related to changes to workflow, new tools and enhancements to the child welfare documentation system. Additionally, they have reviewed new policies

and procedures and developed accompanying desk aids and checklists to enhance compliance with requirements. Foster parents have also been attending mandatory training sessions in the areas of First Aid/Infant CPR, Trauma informed Training, Cultural Competency and Physical and Mechanical Restraint training. It should be noted that there were a few challenges along the way including a labour disruption a short time after the requirements came into effect, securing local training opportunities for foster parents, technology issues for foster parents accessing virtual training and the steep learning curve for all these changes. These regulatory changes have had a huge impact on our fostering community, those staff who support them, and staff who work with children/youth and their families of origin, however we know that this is integral to our vision of high-quality family-based care and better outcomes for children and youth in our community.

## Community Outreach

### Snowsuit Campaign

- 497 Snowsuits were distributed through our community distribution days
- 58 snowsuits were distributed by our front-line staff
- Thank you to our 23 volunteers who devoted time to make this campaign a success this year!
- Partnership with Baptist Church in Carleton Place
- Fundraised \$6,991 for the snowsuit campaign

### Summer Camp

- 147 children/youth from LLG were able to go to camp funded by our summer camp funding with an additional 34 families receiving summer activity funding.

### Holiday Campaign:

- 1345 Angel Tree gifts and gift cards were distributed in partnership with Lanark OPP
- 35 Families and youth were sponsored by community members, local businesses and organizations
- Thank you to All Purpose Towing and Brockville Stingers for their generous toy drive contributions.
- We appreciate the support from our 9 volunteers for assistance in sorting gifts for the community.
- Over \$26,660 (\$7,924 in monetary) of monetary and in-kind donations received to support families in LLG

### Volunteer Drive Program

- 12 Active volunteer drivers
- 352,779 kilometers driven
- 4944.8 hours driven



## Ready, Set, Go!

The Ready Set Go program came into effect on April 1, 2023. The program aims to prepare youth for a successful transition from foster care to adulthood and provides them with support based on their individual needs and aspirations. New regulations require societies to focus on better preparing youth leaving care and promotes early planning, youth voices, and youth engagement in decision making about their long-term goals and how to achieve these goals.

Under the new program, societies begin focusing on helping children plan for their future at an earlier age. Starting at age 13, they begin learning practical life skills and planning educational goals. At age 15, the emphasis expands to financial literacy and preparing for the workforce including managing finances, setting up a bank account, grocery shopping and how to access social services and other community supports. Societies also provide support 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. RSG is based on 9 key indicators that are critical to successful transitions from care. They include:

1. Documentation
2. Education, Training, Employment
3. Financial Stability and Financial literacy
4. Health and Wellbeing
5. Housing
6. Identity, culture and belonging
7. Family and social relationships and professional supports
8. Rights responsibilities and Self Advocacy
9. Self-Efficacy

The new RSG program allows youth to remain supported until the age of 23 (up from age 21). Financial support has also increased with this new directive. The increased financial support helps provide our youth with a better quality of life and safer housing opportunities.

FCSLLG began the process of implementing Ready, Set, Go by ensuring all youth over the age of 18 were provided



with new RSG agreements and a planning meeting to discuss the new program, including the increased financial support. Workers utilized the RSG Guide and checklist of skills to inform the planning. All of our youth programming (including financial literacy and independent living groups) were adjusted to ensure that there was a focus on the 9 indicators.

The increased funding has been instrumental in helping our youth to obtain and secure more stable housing. With the increased amounts, youth can now focus on completing their education without worrying about needing multiple jobs in order to pay the rent and purchase groceries. Planning conferences have provided youth with a forum to talk about their goals and aspirations and allows them the opportunity to see all of their supports around the table willing to help them achieve their goals. The increase in age from 21 to 23 has allowed many of our youth the chance to finish their high school education without having to worry about navigating some of life's challenges on their own. It has provided more stability for youth knowing that they have someone to connect with and ask for help when needed.

# Snapshot of our Service Delivery 2023/2024

Request for  
record check and  
disclosure  
380

Inquiries  
168

Reports received  
not investigated  
556

Children/youth  
in group care  
Mar 31 2023  
1

Children/youth  
in group care  
Mar 31 2024  
5

133.3% increase from Mar 31 2023

Community  
links  
322

Number of  
families  
completed  
PRIDE  
0



Cases  
before the court  
Mar 31 2023  
46

Cases  
before the court  
Mar 31 2024  
44

Investigations  
completed  
(total)  
1167

2.8% increase  
from 2022-23

**Working  
Together  
to Make a  
Difference**

Number of  
foster families  
at year end  
49

New approved  
foster homes during  
the year  
6

Transfers  
to ongoing  
155  
6.0%  
increase  
from  
2022-23

Ongoing  
service cases at  
year end  
150  
23.5% decrease  
from  
Mar 31 2023

Ready, Set,  
Go! at year  
end  
100

Voluntary  
Youth  
Services  
Agreements  
at year end  
27

Adoption  
Probation children  
at year end  
2

Adoptions  
completed  
7

Children in  
kinship service  
placements at year end  
57  
32.6% increase from  
Mar 31 2023

Children in care at  
year end (including  
adoption)  
46  
10.3% decrease from  
Mar 31 2023

Total Paid Days  
Care  
65,344

Families receiving  
post-adoption  
services  
58



# Information Systems at FCSLLG

The focus of the IT department at FCSLLG is continuous improvement. Technology is prevalent in numerous processes that comprise our client services and business functions. Dependence on mobile computing, communications, and cloud-based services adds flexibility for our workforce but also provides opportunities for threat actors to exploit those systems. In the past year, we have focused on strengthening our cybersecurity posture through enhanced policies and

procedures, selecting, and implementing the correct security countermeasures, and providing more in-depth cyber training for all staff at the agency. Parallel to security, there has been a focus on upgrading and enhancing the current IT infrastructure at FCSLLG. We will continue to research new and existing technologies that provide opportunities for workflow optimization and align them with corporate goals and budgetary considerations.

## FINANCIALS

### STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024

Fiscal Year 2023/2024

#### REVENUES

	Province of Ontario	\$ 17,978,788
	One Time Assistance	\$ 50,920
	Ready, Set, Go Funding	\$ 898,200
	Recoveries	\$ 1,945,738
	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 20,693,646</b>

**Donation Revenue: \$ 440,648**

(\$40,000 was from United Way programs) This amount is included in Recoveries above

#### EXPENSES

	Direct Service Costs	\$ 6,067,751
	Salaries and Benefits	\$ 12,188,657
	Travel and Training	\$ 730,186
	Administration	\$ 2,284,017
	Amortization	\$ 131,566

**Total \$ 21,402,177**  
Excess (Deficiency) (\$ 708,531)  
Loss on Sale of Assets 0  
Excess (Deficiency) (\$ 708,531)

# Sharing Service Recipient Experiences

"Well, the support to 23 helped me to get my diploma finished because I changed program, so was a year behind. The funding was most beneficial for helping with rent and groceries without having to take out huge OSAP loans. I also had a career counselor who did an assessment with me to help me find the course that was a good fit with my skills and interests. To be honest I wasn't ready to be completely on my own when I was twenty-one."

*M.L. Age 22*

"We have been fostering for approximately 18 years. During that time, we have had the pleasure of working with many workers and support workers. Each and every worker that we have had, has been very supportive and responds to our questions and concerns usually the same day. We also feel very much like a part of the team as we are very involved in all decision making and the agency always listens to our suggestions and addresses our concerns. They are also very kind and considerate towards our biological children and adopted child. They clearly take into account all the aspects that fostering can have on a foster family. We truly enjoy fostering and it has certainly impacted all our children and our grandchild in a very positive way."

*Foster Parent, Susan*

"When I first went into care I was scared because I had heard stories of kids getting lost in the system, but when I met my worker, she taught me to work harder for the things I wanted and encouraged me to do better in my work. When I turned 18, I started to get \$1,800 and I was so grateful for that because I now live alone and support myself. Without my worker, and the financial support, I wouldn't be where I am today, I would've gotten lost in the system and that is just because I had a worker that had believed in me when I didn't believe in myself."

*L.W. Age 18*

"The ready, set, go program with FCSLLG has given me many opportunities I would have not been able to achieve without the support. The increased age of support allowed me to focus on school and achieve my degree. Post-secondary education comes with a lot of pressure and having the RSG support, this allowed me to focus and put the majority of my effort towards school and not worry about financial issues. As inflation continues to increase in today's society, it becomes more difficult for foster children such as myself to live independently. The support I have received allowed me to be independent and achieve my goal of finishing nursing school to become a registered nurse. The support I have received after becoming independent has granted me the opportunity to give myself a career and a good life ahead."

*M.D. Age 23*

I have been grateful to be a part of the FCSLLG team for many years. Through my involvement in organizations provincially, as well as my role as Foster Parent Support Worker, and Foster Parent, I'm often reminded of how fortunate we are to have the uniquely respectful teamwork relationships that we share between foster parents and staff here at FCSLLG. These are challenging days in Child Welfare. I'm happy to be facing those challenges together as a team, right here.

*Foster Parent,  
Kathy*

“From a very young age my life was tied to CAS. From one home to another, through the ups and the downs, and every single major life event that I went through until the age of 23, Brockville CAS and its many caseworkers and caregivers were there for me.

It can be very easy to have a negative outlook while growing up as a youth in care due to the stigma that often surrounds it. However, I took every opportunity afforded to me; every bit of financial care, every learning experience, and most importantly all of the advice and wisdom that was offered to me throughout my childhood and adolescent years. With all of this in mind, I can confidently say that my outlook as someone who grew up in care was almost always very positive.

In spite of my background and the fact I didn’t grow up with my biological family, I never once felt like an outsider. It was always quite the opposite. I had an extraordinary childhood! It was one full of love,

care, happiness, traveling, and many extracurricular activities that were funded by CAS. On top of that, if ever I had any worries or just needed to talk to someone, there was always support available in abundance.

I don’t know how my life would have turned out under different circumstances, but I am grateful every single day for the childhood I was given and the support I’ve received throughout my life. Anybody would be lucky to have been given even half the opportunities I’ve been able to experience through my ties with CAS.

To any youth that may be reading this; the Children’s Aid Society is your friend, your benefactor, your support through anything you’re fighting against, and above all else CAS is here to help you. Don’t ever be shy to ask for advice or seek guidance. Your life is ultimately what you make it, but it can be much easier when you learn to lean on the system that has nothing but your best interests at heart.”

*Alex – Proud former youth in Extended Society Care, Age 23*

## Our People

Employees.....	113
Foster Families.....	49
Volunteers.....	12
Kilometres driven by Volunteers.....	352,779
Hours driven .....	4944.8

## Board of Directors

2023-2024

### OFFICERS:

Mike Andrews, President  
Frank Onasanya, Vice-President  
David Lintaman, Treasurer



### DIRECTORS:

Al Howard	Elizabeth Dorrington
Steve Vaughan	Emily Wimpenny
Isabelle Sauve	Jenn McMaster
Jane Hess	

## Employee Service Awards

Later this year FCSLLG will celebrate its employees for their years of service and to honour all staff for their dedicated services and commitment to those we serve and to the agency. The event will recognize 2, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30-year service award recipients with a total of 21 awards to be presented. As we celebrate all employees for their individual efforts in promoting child and family well-being, we are also reminded of their continuous advocacy for change and enhanced services that address the needs of 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, youth and families in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville!

*Congratulations!*



# 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.fcsllg.ca](http://www.fcsllg.ca)