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# **CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF STORMONT, DUNDAS & GLENGARRY: STRATEGIC PLAN**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This strategic plan outlines the strategic intent of the Children's Aid Society of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry (CASSDG) for the coming 4 years — and acts as a guide for service planning and performance monitoring in pursuit of its intended results.

Through the strategic planning process, CASSDG sought to:

- Reflect and gain fresh insight about its focus moving forward
- Develop a shared vision
- Focus its energies and resources
- Ensure accountability and good governance

To develop this strategic plan, CASSDG held consultations with many different people, including children and youth, their immediate and extended families, close community connections, resource parents and partner organizations.

Their valuable input — combined with a review of child welfare policies, directions and service data — was vital to refining and defining the CASSDG vision, mission, commitments and strategic directions outlined in this document.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL FOUNDATION**

Collectively, our vision, mission, mandate and commitments create the foundation and context for everything we do.

### **Vision**

**Children, youth, families – safe and thriving**

### **Mission**

Together with our community, **we are here to help** children, youth and families be safe, strong and connected.

### **Mandate**

We protect children and youth from harm by:

- Providing information on the protection of children and youth
- Assessing and investigating situations where concern for children and youth has been identified
- Building family capacity to protect children and youth
- Finding and supporting interim and permanent families
- Meeting the needs of children and youth in care

### **Principles**

Seven principles guide how we work:

**EXCELLENCE:** Achieve positive outcomes through excellent service and responsible governance.

**HIGH EXPECTATIONS:** Encourage confidence and future success through high expectations.

**RESILIENCE:** Build resilience by focusing on potential, strengths and positive change.

**ENGAGEMENT:** Increase understanding and trust through clear, open and respectful communications.

**RELATIONSHIPS:** Create opportunities for connection and meaningful relationships.

**DIVERSITY:** Recognize and affirm diversity of language, ability, culture and gender.

**PARTNERSHIP:** Accomplish more by working and learning together.

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

CASSDG has identified four strategic directions:

- Encourage strong, unconditional relationships
- Maximize child and youth potential
- Partner to strengthen services and supports
- Be a strong healthy organization that demonstrates positive impact

### **Encourage strong, unconditional relationships**

The importance of establishing solid and supportive relationships is critical for children, youth and families. That means each person has someone to talk to, someone to reach out to when they need support, and someone with whom they can celebrate achievements and special events. We are committed to helping children and youth cultivate these kinds of lasting relationships and deep connections with family members and other adults in the community — with people who are not paid to be a part of their lives.

Our organization focuses on ensuring the safety of young people, with all attempts made to preserve the family. By engaging extended family and other community supports, we make every effort to keep children and youth with family, without compromising their safety. Providing strong support for families can be crucial to mitigating the risk of harm.

When a child or youth cannot live with their biological family, finding extended family or close community members to provide a loving, safe home is the priority. If he or she needs to be brought into care, our focus shifts to finding a lasting home that offers a warm and supportive environment that will help build deep, long-lasting relationships.

***“Children and youth need people who will be there to support them in the long term.”***

**CASSDG is striving to:**

- Help youth establish meaningful and beneficial connections with family and other community members who will support them into adulthood
- Foster close relationships between children and youth in care and family and other community members
- Help families receiving support make close connections within their communities

**Maximize child and youth potential**

***“I want to have opportunities to do things I have never done before.”***

Being given opportunities to explore and develop their interests and achieve their goals are priorities for children and youth in care. These young people want to have the same opportunities as their peers when it comes to extracurricular activities, education and employment. They want to be supported and pushed toward achieving their goals and their ambitions. They strive for normalcy.

We are committed to and invested in helping children and youth realize their dreams. The intent is to enhance our understanding and strengthen our work so that all children and youth feel supported and can achieve their maximum potential.

To succeed, we require a combined effort from families, resource parents, workers, partner agencies and the broader community.

***“Children and youth need a chance to dream and open up to what is possible for them.”***

**CASSDG is striving to:**

- Give children and youth in care the opportunity to explore their interests and participate in activities
- Help youth in care graduate from high school and post-secondary programs
- Help youth in care benefit from the full scope of employment opportunities
- Prepare youth to live independently

**Partner to strengthen services and supports**

***“We need to identify priority gaps and use a collaborative approach to develop solutions that leverage each other’s strengths.”***

Considerable resources and energy have been invested in building and strengthening our working relationships with partner organizations. While we have created a strong foundation for collaboration, to further develop these connections, more work must be done to:

- Expand our partners’ awareness of the strength-based philosophy for working with families
- Identify and address priority gaps to ensure the right services are available at the right time, reflecting the diverse needs and realities of families
- Explore the feasibility of expanding accessibility of services through joint efforts like co-location and shared services
- Establish a proactive, joint planning approach for vulnerable children, youth and families
- Strengthen working relationships between frontline staff of partner organizations
- Increase impact and efficiency by exploring options to streamline joint planning initiatives
- Align services across the province while accounting for differences in local environments and service delivery systems

We have also identified two particular groups for focus:

- Vulnerable children, youth and families who would benefit from proactive intervention from a wide range of partner organizations
- At-risk youth with complex needs who are frequently involved with multiple services without achieving positive outcomes and are challenging to support in a family home

***“We need to transcend mandates to support children, youth and families with complex needs.”***

**CASSDG is striving to:**

- Increase understanding of the strength-based philosophy and approach to supporting families and keeping young people safe
- Establish stronger working relationships with partner organizations
- Maintain and expand our collaborative approach to identifying and responding to service gaps

**Be a strong healthy organization that demonstrates positive impact**

CASSDG has undertaken a significant cultural change over the past five years. We have invested in making change at all levels of our organization: from leadership to frontline staff to the network of resource parents and partner organizations. In doing so, we have demonstrated our capacity to change and to thrive.

Child welfare organizations need to establish positive impact on children, youth and families. They also need to maintain sustainability by using their resources responsibly. Our newly adopted service framework is an evidence-based model that demonstrates accountability and ensures we can meet expectations in a consistent way. Our staff members have undertaken considerable training to implement these changes and we are continually working to fully integrate these practices.

Child welfare work is rewarding yet difficult. Our staff members celebrate many successes in their work with children, youth and families — but they are also exposed to extremely difficult situations. We need to put a stronger focus on the wellness of our staff and resource parents, promoting resilience in dealing with the difficult situations and secondary trauma associated with their work.

We place great importance on evolving our culture, supporting our staff and continually embracing change.

***“The service framework we have established is a strong foundation for achieving positive outcomes for families.”***

**CASSDG is striving to:**

- Enhance our capacity to demonstrate impact
- Meet and exceed expectations
- Assure the health and wellness of our staff and resource parents