



We Value

Safety – Families – Relationships - Collaboration – Being Open & Willing to Change

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE PERIOD OF March 30, 2021 - April 27, 2021



Equity & Indigenous Services

2SLGBTQ+

On April 19th, there was a provincial staff meeting for all child welfare staff who identify as 2SLGBTQ+. This is the second staff meeting of its kind and built on the topics and discussions from the first meeting held on March 4th. Our staff were provided with the information and encouraged and supported to attend.

The child welfare leadership sector meeting held in April was focused on 2SLGBTQ+ topics and information. Our gratitude to Board members Kim Godin, Bri Dubowski and Adam Kilner who attended. There was excellent attendance from across the province and powerful stories shared. It is on the Board meeting agenda for discussion.

SOCIAL SERVICES NETWORK ANTI-RACISM STATEMENT

The Social Services Network released an anti-racism statement this week. It is attached and below is a link to media coverage about it:

<https://www.theobserver.ca/news/local-news/social-services-agencies-commit-to-anti-racism>

STUDY ON DISCRIMINATION IN LAMBTON COUNTY

Lambton County is working with Forum Research to study experiences of discrimination, responses to discrimination, sense of belonging, and wellbeing in Lambton County. The hope is that the results will help inform strategies that lead to more welcoming communities. The survey is being undertaken in many municipalities in Southwestern Ontario. Further information is in the attached news release.

NIIJAANSINAANIK CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Our congratulations to Niijaansinaanik Child and Family Services on their designation as an Indigenous Child Well Being agency. This is great news for Indigenous children and families and the communities that the agency will serve.

<https://nijcfs.com/>

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/60973/ontario-designates-niijaansinaanik-child-and-family-services-as-an-indigenous-childrens-aid-society>

TRANSGENDER DAY OF VISIBILITY

March 31st was International Transgender Day of Visibility. It's a day set aside to honour transgender people and their contributions as well as raise awareness of discrimination that they face. Thank you to Terry Button for sharing the website below where further information can be found including this:

The day was founded by US transgender activist Rachel Crandall of Michigan in 2009 as a reaction to the lack of recognition of transgender people, and citing the frustration that the only well-known transgender-centered day was the Transgender Day of Remembrance which mourned the murders of transgender people, but did not acknowledge and celebrate living members of the transgender community.

<https://www.queerevents.ca/tdov>



Getting through the Pandemic
High Quality Service Delivery

WHO

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has encouraged countries and individuals to continue with public health measures saying that the pandemic is far from over. At the same time, he said there is also reason for optimism.

<https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/1884288067796>

PROVINCIAL

If you are following what's happening in Ontario right now, you are already aware that it's very serious and tragic. Highest numbers of new cases, hospital admissions, ICU and ventilators since the beginning of the pandemic. Young, healthy people with no underlying health conditions are becoming critically ill. There are multiple warnings from physicians and experts that this wave is much different than the ones before. A health care system that is beyond capacity.

It is very hard when people are exhausted and frustrated with all the restrictions. For everyone's health and welfare and to allow the people in our health care system (who are also exhausted) the best chance to continue taking care of people, please continue to follow all the requirements to the best of your ability. We know the measures to contain the spread will also have negative impacts on many vulnerable populations, including the people we serve. All pandemics have a beginning, middle and end. At some point, this will end.

The numbers are important, and it is just as important to remember that behind every number is a person with a life, family and friends. Thanks to the Kettle & Stony Point First Nation for posting this link on their Facebook page. The First Nations young person from Regina shares his story about getting COVID and his message for others:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sd3SmOhrFvA>

It might be a good time to remind ourselves of the overarching principles and values that we decided to use at the beginning to guide our response to the pandemic. These continue to apply:

1. Compassion & Kindness - For the people we serve, for people in the communities, for our colleagues & for ourselves.
2. Flexibility - These are new & unknown circumstances. We are going to need to be flexible as things emerge.
3. Do our part in protecting lives and health.
4. Prioritize what services we can continue to provide.
5. Good & frequent communication.
6. Take pressure off the medical system so it can respond to the most vulnerable & do the critical work.

SERVICE

Given what is happening, we will be **extending our current service delivery model until the end of May** (it was previously end of April). That means:

- In person services are assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Continue to limit physical presence in the buildings to only what is essential for service.
- We will continue to provide phones to families as needed.

Your local
**Child & Youth
 Crisis Line**
 Call anytime
 1-833-622-1320



Crisis Line for Children & Youth

- A new crisis line has started through a partnership between St. Clair Child and Youth Services and Family Counselling Centre. It will be operated by Distress Line volunteers. Thanks again to Justine Willison, Jen Chamberlain and Andrea Dalziel for organizing and delivering some of the training to the volunteers at the crisis line. Please share this resource so children and youth know that it's available.

- I had this link recently sent by the school our youngest daughter attends and it has some good resources and ideas in it for mental health activities at home.
- <https://smho-smso.ca/blog/online-resources/easy-and-fun-mental-health-activities-for-home/>

GATHERING ABOUT FAMILY BASED CARE



YOU'RE INVITED!

TO WHAT?
 A Gathering to find solutions to the concerns about the use of group care.
 We want to work together to increase family based care.

WHO?
 You... and people from 8 different child welfare agencies from across the province. Come join the conversation and make a difference.

- Chatham-Kent Children's Services
- Emergency Response Child & Family Services
- Durham Children's Aid Society
- Ottawa Children's Aid Society
- Simco-Lambton Children's Aid Society
- Starnat, Dundas and Otagary Children's Aid Society
- Toronto Catholic Children's Aid Society
- Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society

WHY?
 We know there is a big difference in how much agencies use group care. A few use none at all and others use it a lot. We want to talk together and invite you to help us better understand this and work with others to find solutions. There has been a lot of research about the negative impact of group care on young people (to name a few of the reports over the years - We are your Sons & Daughters; Young People Matter; Safe with Intervention; My Real Life Book).

WHERE?
zoom
 is where it's at these days. So that's where we will be.

WHEN?
 Thursday, April 29, 2021
 at 9:00 am
 till Noon

We are trying something new. Despite years (decades!) of efforts to increase family-based care for children and youth in care in the province, there is still a big difference between agencies – some use very little group care and some use it a lot. Agencies are also more likely to use group care for Indigenous and Black children than for White children – it is another area where systemic racism shows up. Executive Directors

from 8 agencies, including ours, have gotten together and planned a gathering to talk about this. All staff are invited and encouraged to attend if you are able, regardless of your role in the agency. It is important for people from agencies who have been successful in reducing or eliminating group home use share what worked and share some of the challenges and learning. Plus, it provides an opportunity to connect and network with your peers from other agencies. To register please contact Nicole Hillier (nhillier@slcas.on.ca or 519-336-0623 ext. 524) Save the Date – April 29th from 9-12.

Vaccines

Systemic racism continues to show up in who is getting access to vaccines. The most at-risk communities have had the most infections and the least access to vaccines. Some vaccine clinics have been postponed or cancelled due to a lack of vaccines. Part of the provincial announcement today included increasing vaccines to hot spots by 25%.

There is hope that there will be enough vaccines for all adults to have at least their first dose by July.

Age eligibility for the AstraZeneca vaccine has been extended to people aged 40 and up through pharmacies (subject to availability). The link below provides the list of pharmacies who can administer the vaccine and information about how to register or get on the wait list:

- <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/vaccine-locations>

At our agency, we have provided Lambton Public Health with updated lists for eligible staff who still need to be vaccinated as well as alternate caregivers. We are now at **59%** of staff vaccinated (those who are eligible because they provide in person services).



Strategic Planning

More discussion groups took place earlier this month for the Board, Youth, service managers and Indigenous Staff participation. Nash, Gabe and Ryan will be holding a discussion with our staff at this month's staff meeting. They continue to struggle with youth participating in these groups. The process is running longer than planned and is expected to wrap up later in May.



STAFF WELLNESS

The Getting Better Together Committee

This Committee has continued to support staff wellness throughout the pandemic. During the March Board meeting, they provided an overview of what has been offered to staff, and what is planned in months to come.

Administrative Professionals Day

We are very grateful for our amazing team! Time and again they go above and beyond and are a very important part of our work and our agency. This year, we asked for examples and comments about our administrative professionals, Nicole Hillier collected the responses and created an electronic card that was sent to each admin worker.

Unapologetically Human

Thanks to Melody Bourque, one of our staff on our family finding team for sharing this link to a commercial called Unapologetically Human which resonated with her – “I think it speaks to how we feel and where we are at and where we want to get to these days”.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eHnsXSIPjY>

**DAWN FLEGEL, M.S.W., R.S.W
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.**