

The Children's Aid Society of the District of Thunder Bay

Agency Overview

The Children's Aid Society of the District of
Thunder Bay

Mission, Vision, Values

Mission Statement: *In partnership with families and communities, we promote safety and wellbeing of children and youth to help them reach their potential.*

Vision Statement: *Thriving Children and Youth. Strong Communities.*

Values Statement: *Integrity, Diversity, Equity, Accountability*

UNDERSTANDING CHILD WELFARE IN ONTARIO: **IT MIGHT SURPRISE YOU**



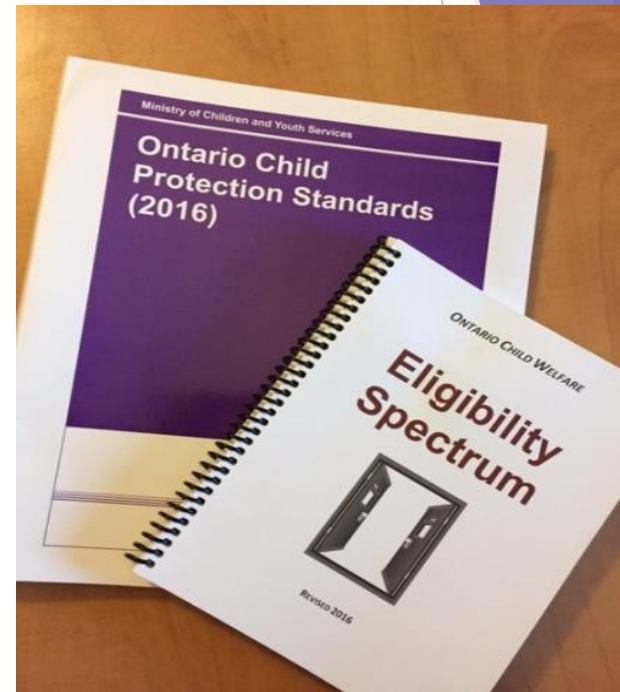
Ontario Association of
Children's Aid Societies

Supporting the Delivery of Child Protection Services:

- ▶ Legislation - Child, Youth and Family Services Act:

“The paramount purpose of this Act is to promote the best interests, protection and well being of children”

- ▶ Child Protection Standards
- ▶ Child Protection Tools Manual
- ▶ Eligibility Spectrum
- ▶ In Care Resources (OnLAC, SAFE, PRIDE)



Child Protection Services:

Thunder Bay CAS provides services to children, youth and families in Integrated Teams. There are four teams that consist of:

- ❑ Authorized Child Protection Workers (Anchors or investigating workers and ongoing Family Service workers)
- ❑ Children's Service Workers
- ❑ Resource/Adoption Workers
- ❑ Family Support Worker



Roles and Responsibilities:

- ▶ **Anchors and Family Services Workers:** Authorized staff who conduct child protection investigations and ongoing services to families requiring support and intervention.

Our child protection workers use a professional, standardized process to determine if reported concerns require further investigation.

- ▶ **Children's Services Workers:** When a child is admitted into the care of the Children's Aid Society, a Children's Services worker ensures that the child's rights and best interests are protected, supported and monitored, and the voice of the child is heard.

The Children's Services Workers, in collaboration with the child's family, community partners and caregivers, ensures that the physical, social, emotional, and service needs of the child are met.

Continued:

- ▶ **Resource/Adoption Workers:** Support resource/foster homes and adoptive homes
- ▶ **Family Support Workers:** supports access visits and provides in home support to families receiving child protection services.



Definition of a Child in need of Protection

Section 37(2) of the Child and Family Services Act:

- ▶ (a) the child has suffered physical harm, inflicted by the person...or caused by...
 - ▶ (i) failure to care for, supervise or protect
 - ▶ (ii) pattern of neglect
- ▶ (b) the child is at risk of physical harm (as above)
- ▶ (c) The child has been sexually molested by the person... or by failure to protect

Definition...

- ▶ (d) There is risk that the child will be sexually molested (as above)
- ▶ (e) The child requires medical treatment that is not provided by the person
- ▶ (f) The child has suffered emotional harm as a result of the persons actions or neglect
- ▶ (g) The child has suffered emotional harm, the person does not provide treatment to alleviate
- ▶ (h) There is a risk of emotional harm resulting from the persons actions, failure to act or neglect
- ▶ (i) There is risk of emotional harm and the person does not provide treatment to prevent harm

Definition...

- ▶ (j) the child suffers from a mental, emotional or development condition that the person does not provide treatment
- ▶ (k) the child has been abandoned
- ▶ (l) the child's parent has died or is unavailable
- ▶ (m) the child is in a residential setting and the parents are unwilling to resume care
- ▶ (n) the child is less than 12 yrs and has killed or seriously injured another person, treatment not provided by person
- ▶ (o) the child less than 12 yrs repeatedly injured another person or property damage caused by the person's failure to supervise
- ▶ (p) the parents are unable to care, child over 12yrs, with consent.

Types of Abuse:

“Child abuse” includes physical, emotional and sexual abuse and/or neglect. It also addresses a pattern of abuse and risks of harm. Some definitions include:

- ▶ **Physical** - is any deliberate physical force or action, by a parent or caregiver, which results, or could result, in injury to a child. It can include bruising, cuts, punching, slapping, beating, shaking, burning, biting or throwing a child. Using belts, sticks or other objects to punish a child can cause serious harm and is also considered abuse.
- ▶ **Neglect** - occurs when a caregiver fails to provide basic needs such as adequate food, sleep, safety, education, clothing or medical treatment. It also includes leaving a child alone or failing to provide adequate supervision. If the caregiver is unable to provide the child with basic needs due to financial inability, it is not considered neglect, unless relief has been offered and refused

Types of Abuse Continued:

- ▶ **Emotional:** is a pattern of behaviour that attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self-worth. It includes excessive, aggressive or unreasonable demands that place expectations on a child beyond his or her capacity. Emotional abuse includes constantly criticizing, teasing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, ignoring or isolating the child. It may also include exposure to domestic violence.
- ▶ **Sexual:** occurs when a child is used for the sexual gratification of an adult or an older child. The child may co-operate because he or she wants to please the adult or out of fear. It includes sexual intercourse, exposing a child's private areas, indecent phone calls, fondling for sexual purposes, watching a child undress for sexual pleasure, and allowing/forcing a child to look at or perform in pornographic pictures or videos, or engage in prostitution

Child and Family Services Act



Ontario
Child and Family Services Act

ServiceOntario
e-Laws

- ▶ Under section 72 of the Child and Family Services Act every person who has *reasonable grounds* to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection **must** promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to a Children's Aid Society. This includes persons who perform professional or official duties with respect to children, such as health care workers, teachers, operators or employees of child care programs or centres, police and lawyers.

Reasonable Grounds:

- ▶ It is not necessary to be certain that a child is or may be at risk
- ▶ “Reasonable grounds” refers to the information that an average person, using normal and honest judgment, would need in order to decide to report.
- ▶ Children’s Aid will determine if there is sufficient basis to warrant a further assessment of the concerns about the child(ren)



Exposure to Domestic Violence



- ▶ Police refer to CAS all cases of domestic violence (Duty to Report) whether or not the children are present, whether or not the child is a direct witness.
- ▶ If CAS receives the initial referral, CAS may contact police to obtain any information which may assist in their investigation and further increase their safety and the safety of the children

Mandate Expansion:

- ▶ As of January 1st, 2018, 16 and 17 year olds in Ontario are eligible to receive protection services from the Children's Aid Societies.
- ▶ Duty to Report for 16 & 17 year olds: “May” report versus “Must” report
- ▶ Services are voluntary in recognition that a different service approach is needed for older youth.



Facts and Figures

Child Welfare Facts and Figures

- ▶ In Ontario, there are 47 designated Children's Aid Societies. 9 Children's Aid Societies are Aboriginal agencies and three are religious (two Catholic and one Jewish).

In fiscal year 2014-2015:

- ▶ There are over 8,600 full-time equivalent staff in Children's Aid Societies across Ontario.
- ▶ The highest number of referrals (in order) were from law enforcement, schools, other Children's Aid Societies, self (mother/father/child), and community caregiver/professionals.
- ▶ The top five reasons for children and families becoming involved with Children's Aid (in order) are request for assistance, child exposure to partner violence, caregiver with a problem, physical force and/or maltreatment, and inadequate supervision.
- ▶ More than 171,600 calls and referrals were made, 80,813 of which required investigations.
- ▶ Of the investigations that were completed, 77% did not require further protection.
- ▶ Youth aged 16-18 are the highest represented age group in care.
- ▶ More than 36% of adoptions were by the foster family the child had been living with.

The Child Welfare Process

- Child and family comes into contact with the child welfare system either:
 - By family requesting services
 - By third party referral
- In either case, family may receive services voluntarily or as child protection intervention



The Child Welfare Process Continued

- As part of child welfare process, all families will be assessed for service using Eligibility Spectrum
 - Family may then move to investigative phase of child protection process OR
 - Family may then move directly to service including
 - Family seeking adoption services
 - Pregnant woman needing support

Child Protection Services Case Flow

- ▶ Child Protection Standards guide worker's practice at each phase of service delivery:
 - Receipt of referral and eligibility determination
 - Investigative phase of service: is child in need of protection?
 - Ongoing Case Management: transfer, service planning, and delivery
 - Completion/termination of child protection service delivery

Receipt of Referral and Eligibility Determination

- ▶ When receiving referral and determining eligibility
 - Thoroughly collect information from referent
 - Review any CAS history, and information from other sources
 - Use Eligibility Spectrum to assist in interpreting all reports received and in making decision about eligibility for service

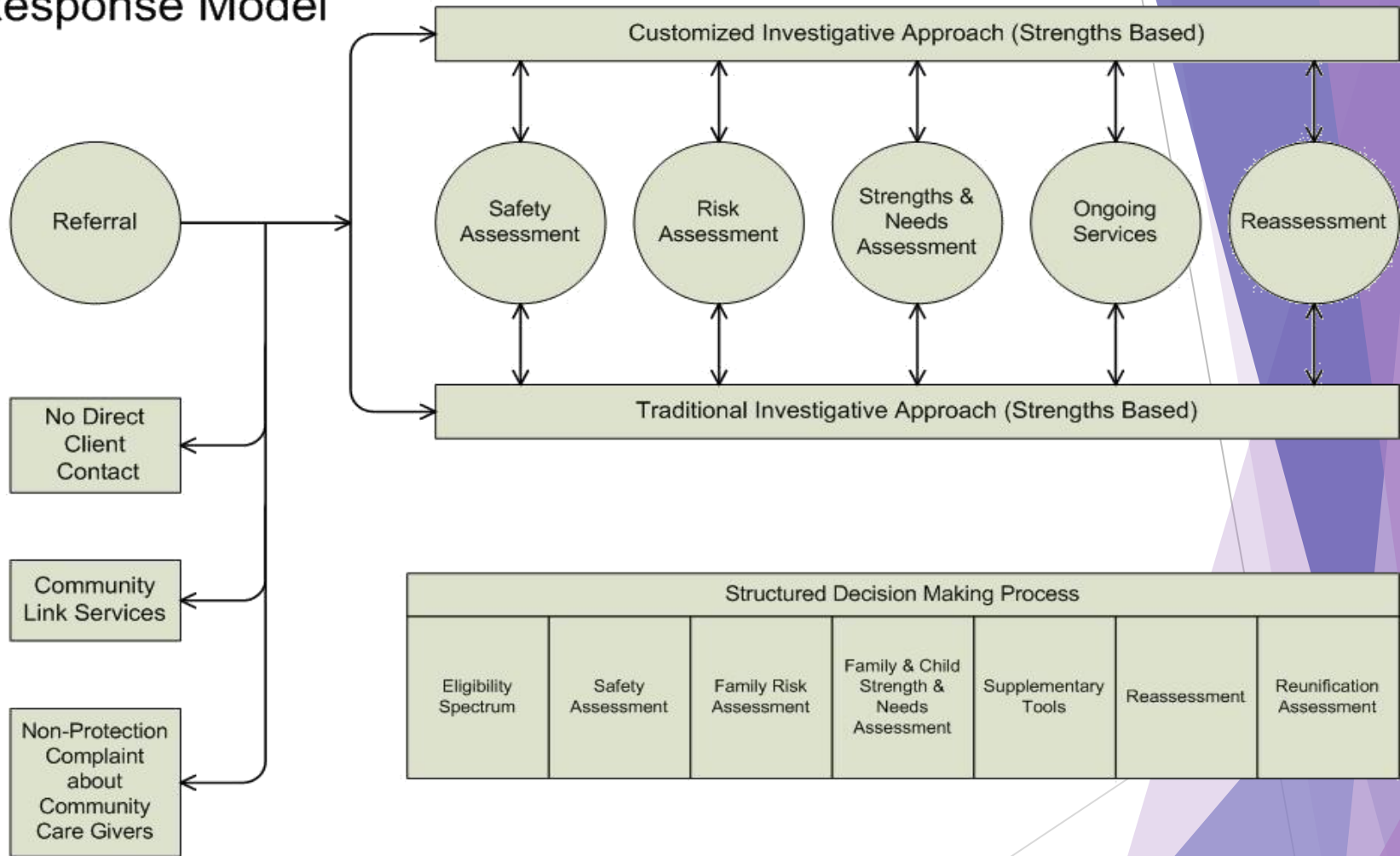
Investigative Phase of Service: is the child in need of protection?

- ▶ When in the investigative phase of service
 - Opportunity to assess safety of child
 - Explore family's strengths and needs
 - Understand history and current circumstances from family, extended circles, formal collaterals, CAS records
 - Information gathering and use of prescribed tools to guide decision making regarding risk and safety for child

Ongoing Case Management: Transfer, service planning and delivery

- ▶ If child and family require ongoing services
 - Case is transferred as prescribed by Standards
 - Safety plan is monitored and Strengths and Needs Assessment conducted
 - Within family-centred conference, a service plan is developed

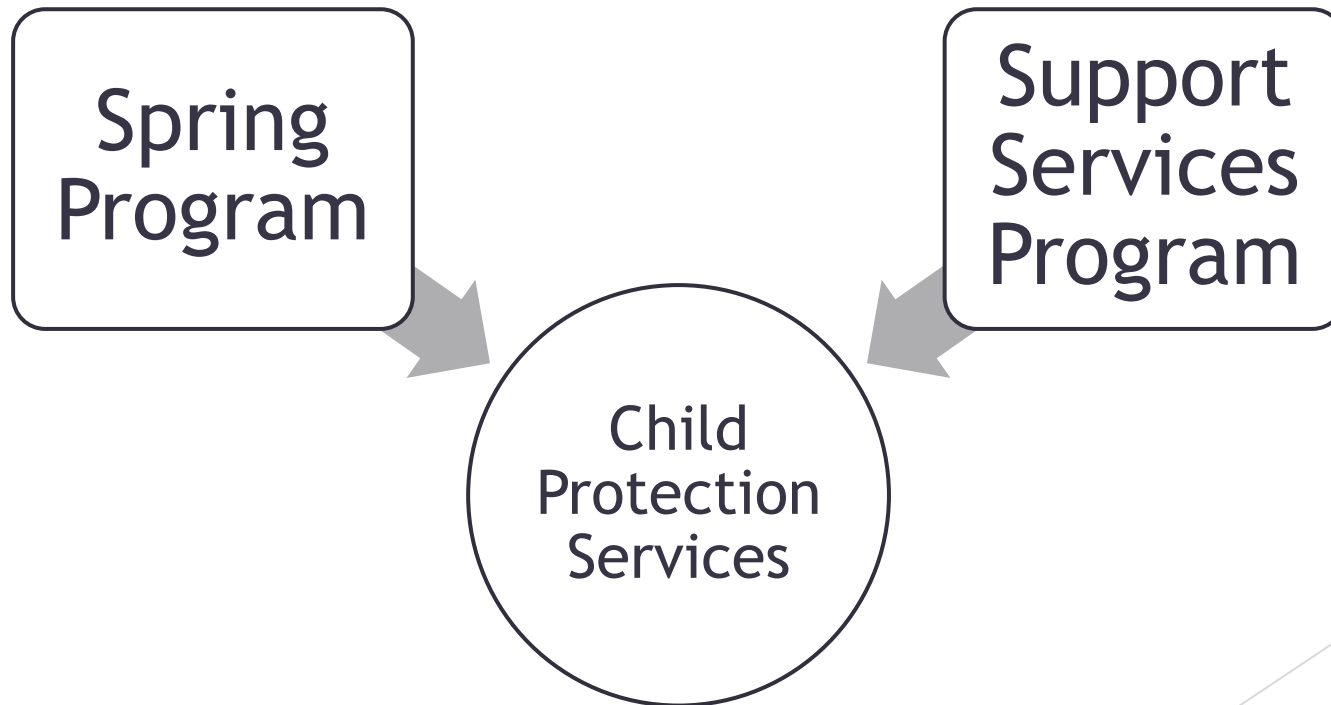
Differential Response Model



Strength Based Approach to Child Welfare:

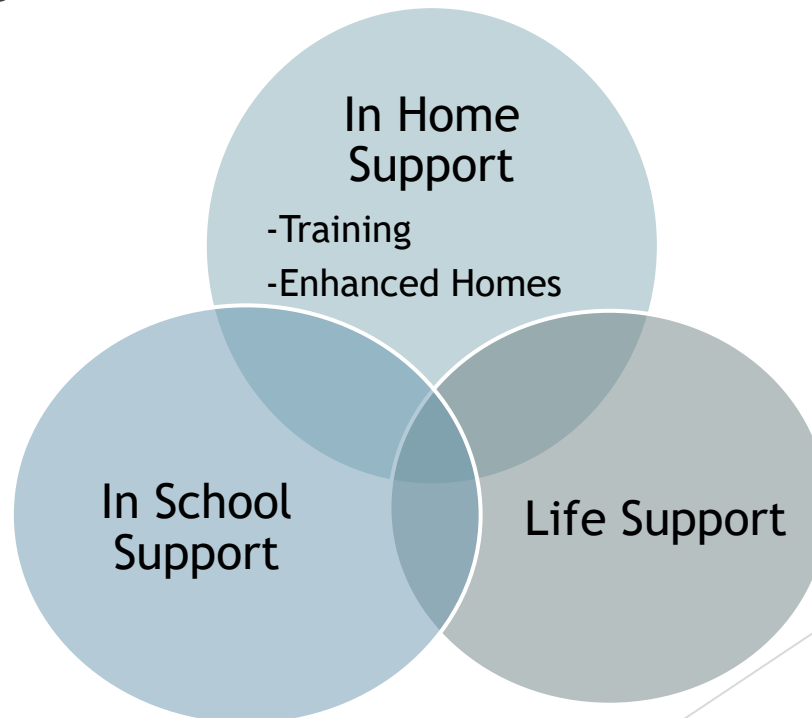
- ▶ Model that focuses on the resources, strengths and capacities of the individual, family or group.
- ▶ Focus on client engagement - balance engagement and authority

Internal Programs/Services that support services to children, youth and families:



Spring Program:

- ▶ The SPRING Program is an ARC-informed therapeutic program that takes a holistic approach in providing intervention. The Attachment Regulation and Competency (ARC) Framework is utilized to inform our provision of trauma-informed training and support to children/youth in care and not in care and their caregiving system.



Support Services:

- ▶ The Support Services Team is comprised of an Administrative Assistant Scheduler, Family Support Workers and Casual Prime Workers.
- ▶ Family Support staff are responsible for providing in-home support to families (parenting support) as well as the facilitation of supported access visits between children and their families. They can also provide Circle of Security, a program designed to enhance understanding of attachment, training. They collaborate and consult with other Society staff, community professionals and care providers.
- ▶ With the support of casual staff (Prime Workers), Support Services also provides transportation to facilitate access visits as well as temporary daycare/school drives. Support staff also support children and youth receiving service through one to one support.

Look For Signs of Safety

“The Signs of Safety is an innovative strengths-based, safety-organised approach to child protection casework. The model of its approach was created in Western Australia by Andrew Turnell and Steve Edwards” www.signsofsafety.net

All families have signs of safety: strengths, resources, their own way of solving problems, and their own goals





Questions?