



WORK PLAN 2011-12: The Children's Aid Society of Brant AOP-Diversity Manager

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Each time a person strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

- Robert Kennedy

This work plan is a result of the combined efforts and work completed by various staff, committees, and students at the agency since 2007. This work could not be completed without the participation of all of these service providers. My deepest gratitude however, goes to the families and children who we work with everyday, as they are the reason why we have embarked on this journey and are the people whose voices should help guide our work every day.



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This work plan is focused on “taking the next step” in moving the Children's Aid Society of Brant along its journey towards anti-oppressive practice. With the focus on Transformation Agenda, the agency started its formalized focus on AOP with the formation of the Diversity-AOP Committee in 2007. Now, four years later, the stage has been set for anti-oppressive practice to become interwoven into the fabric of the agency and into our every day practice with families. The AOP Manager position was created by the agency, at the endorsement of the Board of Directors, in 2011 to provide support and leadership to the organization and staff in this journey as we move forward. The purpose of this work plan is to highlight the various areas that this position will focus on in the upcoming year.

This work plan is structured around bringing to life five philosophical AOP statements that have been informed by and are reflective of the agency's vision and philosophy.

VISION STATEMENT OF THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF BRANT

All children will be safe, supported, encouraged and nurtured in order to achieve their potential.

All children will have their inherent right to be children protected.

All children will be valued members of a family and community.

Each family will be valued as the primary source of safety, stability and nurturing.

Each family will promote a sense of belonging and cultural identity for its members.

Families will demonstrate a value system that affirms respect, dignity, self-reliance and commitment to responsible parenting and citizenship.

Families will have sufficient resources and opportunities to realize their potential as hopeful and responsible citizens.

The community will promote economic and social well-being of its members, enabling them to live in harmony.

The community will be respectful and responsive to the environment and to the needs and rights of all its members.

PURPOSE STATEMENT OF THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF BRANT

The Children's Aid Society of Brant will work with families and the community to safeguard a permanent, nurturing family for all children at risk of abuse, neglect or abandonment.

In response to our commitment to strengthen and value families, we will work to recognize and use the strengths of families in all assessment, decision-making, and actions.

We share with the community the responsibility for protecting children and strengthening families.



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We will work in collaboration with the community to achieve this purpose.

FIVE PHILOSOPHICAL STATEMENTS GUIDING THIS WORKPLAN

- 1. The Children's Aid Society of Brant endorses anti-oppressive practice both at practice, organizational and systemic levels.*
- 2. The Children's Aid Society of Brant supports a learning environment for all members of the organization.*
- 3. The Children's Aid Society of Brant is committed to working with all families in order to support safe and nurturing environments for all children.*
- 4. The Children's Aid Society recognizes and values the diversity of families.*
- 5. The Children's Aid Society of Brant works collaboratively with community partners to serve families.*



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PHILOSOPHICAL STATEMENTS GUIDING AO WORK AT BRANT

1. *The Children's Aid Society of Brant endorses anti-oppressive practice both at practice, organizational and systemic levels.*

This position will work in partnership with both the Provincial Anti-Oppression Roundtable and the agency's Diversity-AOP Committee, as both of these committees are critical to operationalizing anti-oppressive child welfare practice at the agency. It is necessary for this position to sit at the provincial AOR as it provides a natural link to the emerging dialogues on AOP in child welfare in Ontario as well as learning opportunities through information on different agency AOP and diversity initiatives. Additionally, through the involvement on this committee, this position will be able to enhance the coordination and implementation of the AOR framework within the agency, as the members at the table could provide support and counsel through our agency's journey.

Being a member of the agency's Diversity-AOP Committee is also a vital component of this position. As identified in the report "Where Are We Now and Where Do We Need To Be Going?" completed by an MSW student at the agency, leadership both at the agency and at the Committee was a recommendation and need identified by staff. This position can assist the Committee by providing this leadership and support.

GOAL	TASKS
<p>To work in collaboration with other provincial child welfare AOP initiatives to enhance the quality of service delivered to families.</p> <p>To coordinate the implementation of the AOR framework within the agency.</p> <p>Chair the Diversity-AOP Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency representative at the Provincial Anti-Oppression Roundtable. • Share information from the roundtable with the rest of the agency. • Liaise with and learn from other agencies on their "AO journey", in order to assist our agency's journey. • Determine what steps have been started and what needs to occur within the Brant CAS context. • Create a multi-year plan for the operationalization of the framework. • Chair meetings • Bring forward items for discussion from staff • Maintain the yearly budget for the AOP committee. • Ensure that minutes are completed and posted on intranet to increase visibility of work done at the Committee. • Be the liaison between the community, agency and Committee. • Provide the agency's Board of Directors with regular reports on the work of this position, the Committee and the agency (as it pertains to AO).



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2. *The Children's Aid Society of Brant supports a learning environment for all members of the organization.*

This position will provide support in this area by encouraging the use of various adult learning techniques and AO opportunities for discussion and learning. For example, this position will be responsible for orienting new staff on AO at the agency as well as resourcing the AO training needs for resource parents and volunteers. This position will also use current mechanisms in place at the agency such as unit meetings, the intranet, Leaders meetings etc to promote an environment that is welcoming of AO discussions. This is organizationally vital as it helps promotes critical self-reflective practice which is a core component of anti-oppressive work.

GOAL	TASKS
<p>To support the agency's staff, resource parents and volunteers learning and understanding of AOP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend unit meetings to discuss areas where I can assist teams with their learning and AO practice • Offer consultation support to Leaders Group and staff as a whole. • Standing agenda item at Leadership Team • Use the technology in place to enhance dialogue – posting articles/discussion points on the intranet. • Maintain and encourage use of AOP library • Meet with all new workers and orient them to the AO philosophy of the agency, the work that the Committee does, the library etc • Member of the Agency Development Committee • Work with agency staff on examining systems in place (or that need to be developed) for staff to bring forward AO issues. • Support training for all resource families (foster, kinship, adoption) on AOP. • Work with staff on how to enhance resource parents understanding of AOP issues through their practice with them. • Support training for volunteers and students.

3. *The Children's Aid Society of Brant is committed to working with all families in order to ensure safe and nurturing environments for all children.*

This position will help support the agency's purpose statement of "In response to our commitment to strengthen and value families, we will work to recognize and use the strengths of families in all assessment, decision-making, and actions" by engaging families in discussions on how they have received service from our agency. Through this process we can learn about the *quality* of service that is provided by listening to families experiences of working with our agency. Through this process, we can learn about



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whether families feel that they are valued and involved in all areas of assessment, decision-making, and actions. There is enormous potential for valuable lessons learned this process, as it has been shown that the primary indicator of parental engagement in child welfare services is the relationship that the parent has with their worker (Dumbrill, 2005) and this process can help us learn about potential areas for growth.

GOAL	TASKS
Engage in dialoguing with families on AOP and how to improve our practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist the committee and agency engage the community in the formation of a parent's advisory committee. Examine the feasibility of engaging the current mechanisms in place to assist with this (for example the Community Chats held by CDU etc). • Assist the committee and agency engage the community in the formation of a service providers advisory committee.

4. *The Children's Aid Society recognizes and values the diversity of families.*

This position can assist the agency in this area by liaising with other agencies on diversity work in the community. This is an important issue for the agency to pay attention to as the cultural make-up of Brantford continues to change, which behooves the agency to also change with these trends.

This position can help coordinate a number of recommendations made towards increasing service delivery to immigrant groups. These recommendations were the result of research completed by a MSW student on immigrant families' perceptions of the agency and child welfare. In this era of Transformation and Differential Response, it is important for us as an agency to provide this outreach so that families are aware of the support that the agency can provide to newcomer and immigrant families. This is an important component to be supported by this role in collaboration with other initiatives by staff members in their geographical teams as each community may work with a predominant group of new comers, for example, the North Team works with a large population of South Asian families due to the prevalence of families buying homes in that community. This outreach is also important as often immigrant families parent in ways that are familiar and part of their tradition, however these parenting methods may conflict with Canadian laws and parenting practices. This can often result in the involvement in these families in a child protection manner, which might be mitigable through support, outreach and education.

GOAL	TASKS
Collaborate with the community on diversity initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to increase visibility at cultural events to reduce the fears associated with CAS • Collaborate with other agencies to develop materials in different languages that are accessible. • Member of the ISTEP Committee



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5. *The Children's Aid Society of Brant works collaboratively with community partners to serve families.*

This position will assist the agency in continuing the collaborative work in the community with a particular focus on AO. Anti-oppressive practice is a term that has originated in the social work field but is being adopted by various other sectors. As this agency started their AO journey a number of years ago, we can provide support to other agencies who are at different points in their journey. Additionally, this work is important to our agency's development as well as it is important for us to learn from our partners about how we can work with them in an inclusive way.

GOAL	TASKS
<p>Engage the community in dialoguing on AOP and how to improve our practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist the committee and agency engage the community in the formation of a service providers advisory committee. • Enhance our profile regarding AOP work in the community so that service providers know what to expect from our service. • Assist other agencies with their AO journey through sharing of resources, education, support, etc. • Create a community AO table/committee. • Liaise with other agencies on what we need to know on engagement with them.

Considerations for the future and closing remarks.

This work plan has been completed during the first two months of being in the position of AO Manager and I expect that it will be a 'living document' that will change as the work and communities change. As the work continues to unfold, the different steps in the AOR framework will also evolve and unfold and will result in the subsequent work plans for this position. For example, it is expected that subsequent work plans will include items such as examining the agency's policies and procedures from an AO perspective, as well as developing different measures of examining the "quality" of service provided. Shifting an organizational culture towards anti-oppressive practice is a multi-layered initiative, however our agency is in good standing to continue on this journey. We at Brant CAS have been on our AO journey for a number of years and senior management has created the structures to continue to embed this work, through this position, the AOP-Diversity Committee, SOS, FGDM, Clinical Counselling, Clinical Supervision etc. The charge of this position and the agency is to deepen and interweave our understanding of AO and our practice so that we continue to work with families in inclusive and respectful ways.

In conclusion, I submit this work plan to help guide my work in this upcoming year recognizing that I am writing it in anticipation of what this work will look like. In respecting the organic nature of individuals, families and communities, I anticipate that there will be goals and tasks that emerge through this year, which will help inform the work and subsequent reports. It is my hope that this will also be the only work plan that will be completed in isolation of families, as we are ultimately accountable to the children and families who we service.

Respectfully submitted,

Iona Sky, AOP Manager, December 2011