

Hastings Children's Aid Society
STRATEGIC PLAN
2004 - 2007

**Approved by
the Board of Directors:
May 6, 2004**



OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In February 2003 our Board of Directors initiated a strategic planning process for the Society as a means of helping to focus our organization to better meet the challenges we face.

After five years of implementing changes emanating from the Ontario Government's reform of child welfare, a period marked by unprecedented growth, it was timely to step back and reflect on the impact of change and clarify priorities for our future.

The Board had completed and implemented its review of Governance in 2001, which was a key step forward in adapting its governance role to fit the needs and context of a much larger, more proactive human service organization than the Society had been in the preceding decade.

Stage One of our strategic planning process was a demographic review of the communities we serve. This was seen as an essential step towards framing our future. By better understanding the current conditions that confront the vulnerable children and families with whom we work, we could develop stronger directions for the next four – five years. *The Demographic Review of Hastings County*, undertaken in the Summer of 2003 and presented to the Board last October, analyzed over 50 economic, demographic, social and health indicators for the Hastings County area. See the full Demographic Review on our website at www.hastingscas.org.

The Board of Directors established a Strategic Planning Advisory Committee to oversee the process and to provide input and guidance. The Committee consisted of four Board Members, including the Board Chair, four executive staff members, one supervisor and one front-line staff representative. A workplan was developed and Committee representatives confirmed. The members of the Committee included Janet Richardson, Scott Chamberlain, Jim Mallon, Terry McGuigan, Len Kennedy, Mark Kartusch, Tracey Vandervoort, Mark Stevens, Tammy Butchart and Catharine Embury.

In the Fall we moved into the next stage, which was to update our Vision and Mission Statements and develop a set of values to further reflect the kind of organization we wish to be.

This was followed by the development of strategic priorities and directions to serve as guideposts for the Society over the next four years. Five work groups were established to address themes of permanency planning, community partnerships, resource development, staff capacity building and infrastructure. They solicited stakeholders and key informants for input and ideas as to what our priorities should be. Foster parents, collateral agencies, service providers and other Societies were consulted. The workgroups then distilled the ideas and recommendations received and produced up to six strategic priorities or directions.

All of the above input was placed before the Board for review and discussion at a facilitated retreat in April. In the course of their review the Board revamped slightly the strategic priorities of the workgroups, resulting in communications being added as a sixth theme. The Board refined and endorsed all the elements of the Strategic Plan and gave final approval at the May 2004 Board Meeting.

In the recent months there have been significant developments at the provincial government level with the creation of the first Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Our Strategic Plan reflects emerging policy and Vision Statements of the new Ministry and positions the Society to be ready to adapt to new ways of delivering integrated services that are marked by stronger outcomes for the children and families served. The future role of the Society will be guided by the strategic directions set out in this plan. Our success will depend on the support and resources we devote to the achievement of these priorities.

This Strategic Plan will guide the Society through a changing, ever evolving period during which the current child welfare and children's systems will see significant developments towards greater integration as we reach the end of our first century of service.

Besides new program directions, we will focus on developing further the infrastructure required to deliver our mandate through a decentralized structure across a geographic area of almost 6,000 square km. This includes our requirement for capital funding and the development of a long-term solution to our office accommodation needs.

Through all these challenges we intend the Society to be proactive in our community, a leader in our field, an employer of choice and a service provider with unparalleled commitment to children and families.

In developing the plan we have opted to use the term "child maltreatment" to describe the focus of Society interventions with clients. The term "child maltreatment" encompasses a wide range of acts or behaviour by parents, caregivers or adults which may cause, or place children at risk of, serious physical or emotional harm. This includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. It also encompasses actions and omissions, intentional or unintentional, and may involve single incidents or repeated patterns¹.

Throughout this document it is intended that where the word "child" or "children" is used, this means children and youth aged from 0 – 21 years in keeping with the Society's mandate.

¹ (Field guide to Child Welfare, Rycus J. & Hughes R., CWLA Press, Washington, 1998)
The Child and Family Services Act RSO, 2000 further defines categories of a child being found in need of protection in Ontario. In this report we use "child maltreatment" to refer to all such forms of abuse and neglect.

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

The following are key assumptions that will influence the Society and the child welfare sector in Ontario over the next three to five years:

- The current rate of growth is not sustainable. The Ministry is making it clear that we need to plan towards sustainable growth, not uncontrollable growth.
- Although admission and discharge rates are coming closer into balance, the total number of children in care is still rising and days care increasing.
- The number of protection cases is leveling off.
- The Ministry is introducing new expectations that are linked to funding, e.g. outcome measures and performance contracting.
- Ministry funding is not available for prevention programs. Our preferred approach in the next few years is to access such funding through the Quinte Regional Children's Foundation, which has the mandate to fund prevention and support programs of the Society.
- The Society will look for partnership opportunities for shared or integrated services, e.g. in areas such as, regional adoption, centralized intake, partnership in treatment foster care, training for foster parents, co-location, etc.
- Recruitment of qualified staff will place us in competition with other employers, making retention of staff a top priority.
- We expect fairly rapid growth of information systems, both locally and across the child welfare sector with some developments at a provincial level, potentially across the entire children's service system.
- Capital funding will be scarce and difficult to access. The Society will continue to work towards our requirements for a long-term plan.
- Demographic forecasts indicate that the child population in Hastings County will gradually decrease.
- The *Child Welfare Program Evaluation Report* authored by Lucille Roch will act as a guidepost for Children's Aid Societies and the Ministry over the next two to three years, with planning for implementation of the new Children and Youth Services Ministry being the main activity this year.

BUILDING OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUE STATEMENTS

The key to the development of successful statements is that they represent the Board, management and staff and are readily understood by the general public. Draft Vision, Mission, and Values Statements were developed in a preliminary forum by the Board at their 2002 Retreat. In late Fall 2003, senior managers facilitated four staff focus group sessions to gather input regarding these draft statements and help shape and focus them. Staff were also asked to develop and define the top ten values for the Society's workplace and culture.

The senior management team incorporated this feedback and condensed the earlier version into seven draft statements for the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee's review and recommendations prior to presentation to the Board at their April 2004 Retreat. The Board's further revisions and refinements are reflected in this final document.

OUR VISION

Our vision is that every child lives and develops in a safe, nurturing environment, free from maltreatment.

OUR MISSION

To be guided always by the best interests of the child.

To respond to the needs of children requiring protection and care.

To provide ongoing support to families and the community.

To address the causes of child maltreatment and thus prevent such maltreatment.

To collaborate with community partners in the fulfillment of our role.

OUR VALUES

Child Focused

Service decisions and planning will be guided by the best interests of the child. We will listen to and respect the feelings and wishes of children. Each child will be treated with dignity and respect.

Teamwork

Teamwork focuses us on our common goals. Working together, we respect the diversity of individuals while accepting our responsibility to contribute. Teamwork includes being sincere and trustworthy in the way we approach our work and others. Through teamwork we can be faithful to our vision, mission and values.

Positive Work Environment

A positive work environment reflects flexibility, understanding, and commitment to the wellness of all. It values our different perspectives and contributions and incorporates the elements of fairness and equity. A positive work environment allows individuals to be supported, encouraged and clear of what is expected of them.

Professionalism

Professionalism is demonstrated through our knowledge, proficiency and achievements as well as by our commitment to high quality work. It is displayed in the way we conduct ourselves towards others and by representing the Society's values at all times. Professionalism allows us to work positively to resolve conflict. A professional organization is committed to continuous learning and improvement.

Collaboration

Children and families are best served when all parties, both inside and outside the Society, work together in a collaborative manner, building positive relationships through respect, trust and open communication.

Responsible Use of Resources

Staff, Foster Parents, Volunteers and Board Members are valued resources. All our resources will be managed effectively, efficiently, and responsibly. It is important that we be accountable for our decisions related to the use of all of our resources.

Transparency

Transparency allows decisions to be understood by others. It requires clear, consistent and timely communication and involves individuals in decisions that affect them.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In the design phase of the strategic planning process, senior staff identified five principal themes for which future direction needed to be set out to guide the Society's development over the next three to five years:

- (1) Permanency Planning
- (2) Community Partnerships
- (3) Resource Development
- (4) Staff Capacity Building
- (5) Infrastructure and Business Processes

In Board-level discussion it was determined that Communications should be identified as a unique theme and added to the list as a sixth category:

- (6) Communications

Working groups were created to gather data in each of the themed areas. From November 2003 to February 2004, the working groups met to identify appropriate key advisors and stakeholders, develop questions, gather and analyze input and report the results.

Each of the working groups reported their results with a series of strategic priorities. These priorities were refined by senior management to provide consistency across the five themed groups and then presented to staff for review and additional input. The Strategic Planning Advisory Committee reviewed these results and provided their recommendations. The Board's input was received at their April 2004 Retreat and was incorporated into this final document.

1. Permanency Planning

The Society will integrate the concept of permanency planning throughout the organization and make it a priority in planning for children. Collaborative planning is crucial for children and the implementation of a permanency plan must happen as early as possible. Ideally, permanency planning should begin at the initial point of contact with the Society.

The Society will educate and promote the purpose and objectives of permanency planning to staff, foster parents and community partners.

The Society will make decisions about permanency based on sound assessments and thorough, inclusive consultation.

The Society will support and enhance positive experiences for youth in care to promote their optimal development.

The Society will expand permanency options that are in the best interest of the child including Family Placement, Kinship Care, Guardianship and Adoption, and Customary Care for native children.

2. Community Partnerships

The Society will assume leadership in the development of prevention services for families, children and the community in collaboration with the Quinte Regional Children's Foundation and other community partners.

The Society will enhance its services to include new areas such as prenatal care, domestic violence and service to high-risk infants and youth, with support from other agencies.

The Society will work in partnership with other child and family service agencies to provide easier access and reduce barriers to services with the goal of improved client well-being and related outcomes.

The Society will explore opportunities to develop partnerships or integrate services with community agencies, to achieve better-coordinated, more responsive services, create efficiencies, and maintain a sustainable level of services and funding.

3. Resource Development

The Society is committed to Society foster care and will increase the capacity and range of our Resource System to allow for better matching and stability of placement for children.

The Society will revitalize the training, retention and relief plan to increase support to the foster care system.

The Society will promote a child-centered team approach for children in care.

The Society will strive to ensure equitable educational opportunities for all children in care. We recognize the many pathways of educational achievement and through support, guidance and strong community partnership, we will give our children their optimum educational growth.

4. Staff Capacity Building

The Society will develop and implement a formal, structured approach to employee orientation, training, development and succession planning.

The Society will develop a comprehensive, strategic approach to employee retention.

The Society will provide clear job expectations and will support the employee to meet performance standards and goals through the development and implementation of a Performance Management System.

5. Infrastructure and Business Processes

The Society will shift infrastructure cost from a leased operations and maintenance basis to a capital basis through: identifying current and future infrastructure needs imposed by mandated and other activities; procuring capital funding to meet identified infrastructure requirements and seeking opportunities to reduce/manage infrastructure needs including infrastructure sharing with other agencies.

The Society will pursue information systems (IS) solutions to manage workload and assure quality information for Society needs through: continuing the development of HR/Financial systems; introducing IS solutions to reduce staff time spent in clerical and administrative tasks; identifying the information needs of management and service delivery staff; seeking opportunities to further integrate administrative and service delivery IS systems and participating in the provincial single IS system initiative in a lead or primary supporting role.

The Society will improve accountability and reporting through the development of outcome measures and other results-driven indicators including accreditation, report cards and similar tools.

6. Communications

The Society will strengthen its profile in the community through the development of a comprehensive internal/external communications plan, advocacy and public education.

The Society will develop and project a positive image through enhancing its visual identity, developing marketing strategies to promote the organization and its needs, and providing leadership in the community.

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