


**Historical Development**  
**of**  
**The Children's Aid Society**  
**in the**  
**Regional Municipality of Niagara**



Under the Children's Protection Act passed in 1892, provision was made for establishing Children's Aid Societies.

Mr. J.J. Kelso, a former reporter for the Globe, too frequently saw instances of abuse and ill-treatment of children. His deep concern for their welfare, his skill in public relations and his determination to sharpen the public conscience for its children led him to found the Children's Aid movement in Ontario. He was later appointed first Provincial Superintendent.

The first Children's Aid Society in this area was formed in 1898 in Niagara Falls and was known as the Humane Society and the Children's Aid Society of Niagara Falls.

Welland City came next in 1899.

In 1903 the organization of a Children's Aid Society in Lincoln County got under way. The first meeting was held in the Protestant Orphans' Home on June 21, 1904. Officers were selected and on September 23, 1904, incorporation was completed.

For about eight years, wards of the Children's Aid Society of Lincoln County were given shelter in a home on Summer Street. In 1912 larger quarters had to be obtained and from 1912 to 1917 most of the children were in a home at 1 Geneva Street. On October 16, 1917 the Children's Shelter, located at the corner of Queenston Street and Eastchester Avenue, was formally opened. In 1936 the use of the Children's Shelter was discontinued because the wards of the Society had increased to such an extent that no building available was large enough. Since that time children have been placed in foster homes.

The Welland County Society was formed in 1907. The property now known as the Regional Adolescent Centre was purchased by Welland County Council in 1918 for \$7,000. The house was enlarged and modernized and became known in the community as the Children's Shelter, housing up to 25 - 30 children. It was at one time a classroom for the education of children. The land surrounding the Shelter often produced much of the required food. In 1976 a new, modern assessment centre facility was built which has been used primarily for the assessment of teenaged children coming into the care of the agency.

On May 22, 1935 the Children's Aid Society of the County of Welland and the Children's Aid Society of the City of Welland became a chartered, incorporated Society under the name Children's Aid Society of the County of Welland.

On May 1, 1941 the Humane Society and the Children's Aid Society of Niagara Falls amalgamated with the Children's Aid Society of the County of Welland.

From the outset of the Child Welfare movement in Ontario, the municipalities were by law ordered to pay a daily rate for the maintenance of a child found by the Court to be in need of care under the society's guardianship. Each year a per diem rate was struck based on actual costs in the previous year for maintaining one child in care for one day - clothing, board, school books, etc., and received Court approval.

In 1922 the Children's of Unmarried Parents Act, the Unmarried Parents Act and the Adoption Act became the Child Welfare Act. In 1954, Ontario became one of the first Child Welfare Acts in the world to define "emotional neglect".

Some very significant changes were made in the Child Welfare Act in 1965. The most significant from the direct services point of view was the addition in the statement of "Objectives of a Children's Aid Society" of the principle of preventative service to families.

The two Societies of Lincoln and Welland Counties amalgamated in 1969. Regional Government did not exist at the time, however, it was in the planning stages. Despite this, a regional child welfare service made sense, and the new Society was organized.

Though carrying a long respected history in Ontario, there remained a concern that the name of Children's Aid Society was no longer adequate to identify a modern and progressive child welfare service. There was a growing emphasis in the realization that a child's needs can best be met by strengthening their environment - family, school, housing, recreation, and community. Amalgamation provided the opportunity for our change of name to Family and Children's Services of the Niagara Region. This supported the belief that the new name was more descriptive of the work of the agency.

Family and Children's Services of the Niagara Region is the fifth largest, by population served, of the fifty-one children's aid societies in the Province of Ontario. It serves a population of nearly 400,000 and has a land area of 718.4 square miles. The characteristics of the area have major influences on the delivery of services. Some of these characteristics are as follows:

- i)The population is distributed into several major centres; that is : St. Catharines - 129,300, Thorold - 17,542, Niagara Falls - 75,399, Welland - 47,914, Port Colborne - 18,766, Fort Erie - 26,006, Niagara-on-the-Lake - 12,945, Lincoln - 17,149, Grimsby - 18,520, West Lincoln - 10,864, Wainfleet - 6,203, and Pelham - 13,328.
- ii)The characteristics of each of the communities are varied and therefore require different kinds of service.
- iii)There are four large Boards of Education, two court systems, one Regional Police service, and four United Ways.

### **Regional Facts:**

#### Region At A Glance:

- What it Covers: 1,851 square kilometres (715 square miles) and almost 400,000 people.
- Number of Employees: 1,700 full-time and about 600 part-time, not including Niagara Regional Police.
- Number of Councillors: 30, including the Regional Chair.
- Cost of Business: The Region will collect about \$96 million in property taxes in 1995. Including provincial dollars, the Region will spend nearly \$290 million this year.
- Single Largest Department: Niagara Regional Police, with a 1995 budget of \$57.9 million and 771 officers and civilians.
- Number of sets of traffic lights: 245.
- Number of sewage plants: 7.
- Number of public health nurses: Approximately 200, excluding seniors homes.
- Number of seniors homes: 6.

#### Responsible For:

- Producing pure drinking water.
- Treating sewage.
- 960 kilometres of main roads.
- bi Overall land use planning.
- Caring for the elderly, including operation of six homes for the aged.
- Social services, including welfare assistance and day care.
- Public health, such as inoculation programs and monitoring communicable diseases.

- Police.

Studies in the 1960's in Niagara North and Niagara South recognized the need for a family agency in the Niagara Region. In 1965 the United way of St. Catharines provided \$10,000 to the Children's Aid Society in St. Catharines and Lincoln County to develop a separate family division within the agency. This was the first beginnings of a family agency in the Region (The Family Counselling Centre) which would provide private and voluntary family support services to the public. Family counselling, single youth and adult counselling became a part of the Family Counselling Centre's mandate.

In 1968 a study conducted by the Social Planning Council of Niagara Falls recommended that a similar family counselling service be instituted by the Welland Children's Aid Society. Since the amalgamation of the two agencies in 1969, the Family Counselling Centre has continued to be recognized as a division of the Family and Children's Services providing the traditional family support services.

### **Family and Children's Services Since Amalgamation:**

With amalgamation in 1969 of the two Children's Aid Societies came many administrative and service problems to be solved by the Board of Directors. The following are a few of the problems and solutions.

- 1.It was decided that the head office would be in the city of St. Catharines.
  - 2.It was felt that the major purpose of amalgamating the two agencies was to give a consistent service throughout the region. Child care, adoption, unwed parents, protection and family counselling services were gradually equalized throughout most of the region.
  - 3.Office and interviewing accommodations were improved in Niagara Falls, Welland and St. Catharines.
- In October 1994, the new Welland building was completed. This building replaced the old one on the same site and services our consumers much better. For example, it has a lifeskills and family visiting rooms.
- 4.Common personnel policies were developed for the whole region.
  5. i)In 1981 the personnel department was expanded to include a full time training role in recognition of the support needed for front line and management staff to adequately perform their job.  
ii)In the early 1990's the training position was eliminated and its responsibilities were distributed amongst supervisory staff. In 1995 the position of Assistant to the Human Resources Director was created to meet the need of training.  
iii)The agency has been a student training centre for post graduate Masters students, BSW students and Community College students for the past twenty-five years.
  - 6.A then sophisticated accounting and management information system was developed through the introduction of a central computer. The goal of the agency was to develop systems and programming such that they enhance and assist the work of front line staff. This system is now antiquated and the agency is forging ahead in the future of computer technology.
  - 7.Common boarding home rates for foster parents were developed.
  - 8.The combined two agencies soon had over 750 children in care and it was felt that a great emphasis on adoption and preventative services were needed.

9. Teenaged children began to come into care in increasing numbers such that the older shelter in Welland was needed to be used as an Assessment Centre.
10. The age and condition of the Assessment Centre soon became a public issue because of adverse Grand Jury reports. Through the co-operation of the Province, the Regional Municipality of Niagara and the Family and Children's Services, a new, modern centre opened July 7, 1976.
11. The agency had developed an integrated child care system having eight group homes and specialized Group Treatment Parenting (GTP) and TRUST Programs (Training, Resources Understanding, Supporting and Trusting Abused Children).
12. A good "after office hours" service during the evening, on weekends and on holidays to protect neglected children was instituted.
13. In 1977 an agreement was signed with the Ministry of Community and Social Service for the provision of an Adult Protective Services Program.
14. The Board of Directors of the agency decided, from its new beginning in 1969, that it would be accountable to the public by having open Board of Directors meetings such that the newspapers and radio stations could report its decisions.
15. The Board of Directors also encouraged public participation through recruiting a large membership averaging over 500 and a large volunteer program of over 400.
16. The volunteers actively work in the day-to-day programs of the agency through driving, interpreting, friendly visiting, tutoring, clerical work, etc.
17. The agency developed a large core of foster parents. There are over two hundred foster parents.
18. The agency also is the family agency in the Niagara Region providing family and marriage counselling and counselling to young adults.
19. In the 1980's the agency plans to move to a more decentralized system through reorganization of its structure.