FACS NIAGARA | FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

FACS NIAGARA

# ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021

# SUPPORTING. STRENGTHENING. PROTECTING.

facsniagara.on.ca

Stock photography used within this annual report was taken prior to March 2020.

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# FACS NIAGARA BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2020-21

Shaun Adams (President)
Brian Minard (Vice-President)
Anita Scholman (Treasurer)
David Willer (Secretary)
Anna Bozza (FACS Executive Director)
Brian Eckhardt
Betty-Lou Souter
Dr. Karim Ali
Nadine Wallace
Robert Renaud
Sean Worthington
Rod Hollick
Wendy Sturgeon

# STAYING TRUE

There can be no doubt that this year was one of the most turbulent times in modern history. >>

## A Message from Board President and Executive Director

*Board President, Shaun Adams and Executive Director, Anna Bozza.*

FACS Niagara continues to serve families, children, and youth in Niagara amidst the backdrop of an unprecedented global pandemic. Although there have been times when the pandemic's felt like it would never end, the finish line is closer than ever with the development and distribution of safe and effective vaccines.

While the COVID pandemic has been a generational event that's upended every aspect of our personal and professional lives, there have been other developments that have fundamentally altered how we interact the world. Global events have spurred a long-needed national reckoning of how to create a more equitable and just society for all.

These factors require us to adapt and change, but our agency has not abandoned who we are at our core. By staying true to our mission, vision, and values, we have a compass that continues to point us to true north even in times when the world around us is uncertain.

Our team is united in our mission to protect, support, and strengthen the lives of children, youth, adults, and families. Every action we take and every decision we make is with their needs in mind. Particularly during this pandemic, we continue to live our values in our everyday work. Our team is caring, respectful, collaborative, accountable, and acts with integrity in all that we do.

The need in our community has never been greater. Families have faced pressures we never could have imagined. There has been extreme isolation, the loss of many of the supports they normally rely upon, and economic instability.

The support of FACS Niagara has been a constant that families could rely on throughout COVID. As an essential service, our doors have always remained open, and our teams have never stopped their work to see that families, children, and youth had help when it was needed most.

## Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

*Jill Dunlop, Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues visits the FACS Niagara office and meets with local Indigenous partners.*

In 2020, several high-profile events caused institutions around the world to examine their approach to welcoming diversity and promoting equity. This is a journey the FACS team has been on for some time and it is work our organization embraces with great enthusiasm. We recognize the institutional racism embedded in many of the structures of our sector and society. We are committed to dismantling those oppressive structures and fostering safe spaces for our staff and the community we serve.

In particular, the child welfare sector recognizes the great need for enhancing collaboration and joint decision-making with Indigenous communities. At FACS, our work with our partners at the Niagara Chapter of Native Women, the Niagara Regional Native Centre, the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre, and the Métis Nation strives to keep Indigenous families together, prevent Indigenous children and youth from coming into care, and ensuring that Indigenous children and youth receive cultural and ethnic supports.While we cannot erase the historical legacy of Ontario's child welfare system with Indigenous communities, we are demonstrating through action our commitment to reconciliation and respect for Indigenous communities' right to self determination.

## Joint Committees

We are fortunate to have the support of our union partner during these times. FACS has established a number of joint committees in partnership with CUPE Local 2328/2328.1 to help guide our organization in the critical work we are doing. Committees include the:

- Joint Pandemic Committee
- Joint Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Honouring Identity Committee
- Joint Task Force
- Joint Wellness Committee

You will find more information about these committees in the following pages.

## Thank You

We would like to extend our most heartfelt thanks to:

- Our community partners: by working together, we accomplish so much more than we can on our own. Thank you for sharing this journey with us.
- The entire FACS team, including our foster families and volunteers. Your work throughout the pandemic has been inspiring and countless families in Niagara are better for having the support you provide directly or indirectly.
- Our union partners at CUPE Local 2328: Through our work together, we can realize our shared vision of seeing families and children achieve their full potential in a safe environment.
- Our generous donors: the funding you provide supports the mental, social, and physical wellbeing of children and youth in Niagara – allowing them to pursue their dreams unhindered.

We could not do this important work without you.

In addition to the critical work already mentioned, the FACS team has celebrated many important successes this year. You will find many examples of the outstanding work done in the following pages of this report and, if you are viewing electronically, we invite you to watch the embedded videos and other interactive content we have placed within.

Thank you and we look forward to our continued work to protect, strengthen, and support our community.

*Shaun Adams*
*President of the Board*

*Anna Bozza*
*Executive Director*

Our Mission, Our Vision and Our Values. >>

# WHO WE ARE

**OUR MISSION**

To protect, support and strengthen the lives of children, youth, adults and families.

**OUR VISION**

A community where children, youth, adults and families achieve their full potential in a safe environment.

**OUR VALUES**

- We are Caring
- We are Respectful
- We are Collaborative
- We act with Integrity
- We are Accountable

# WHAT WE DO

## OUR MISSION

FACS Niagara is a multiservice agency serving the 12 municipalities that make up the Niagara region.

## FACS NIAGARA PROVIDES:

- CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES
- FAMILY AND INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING
- FOSTERING
- ADOPTION SERVICES
- DAYCARE

COVID is a generational event that has changed everything about the way we live and work. >>

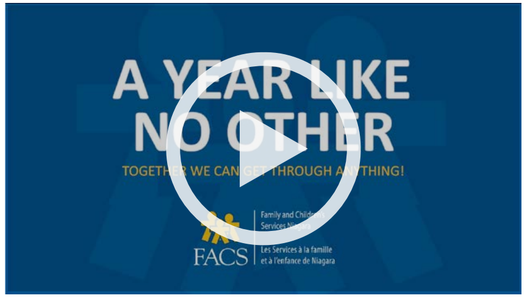
# A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

>>

Through the pandemic, our team has been incredible in their commitment to each other, to safety, and to the families, children, and youth we serve.

We invite you to watch the following video to see how the FACS Niagara team continued to go above and beyond during these challenging times.

**CLICK ON THE VIDEO. >>**




## Protecting Children and Strengthening Families

**6,299**
REFERRALS RELATED **TO CHILDREN IN NEED OF PROTECTION**

**2,469**
CHILD PROTECTION **INVESTIGATIONS COMPLETED**

**4,615**
FAMILIES RECEIVING **ONGOING CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES**

**5,434**
**CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVED**

**800+**
FAMILIES RECEIVING **ONGOING SERVICES AND SUPPORTS AT ANY ONE TIME**

**419**
**CHILDREN IN CARE** (MONTHLY AVERAGE)

**36**
YOUNG PEOPLE 18 YEARS OR OLDER **WHO RETURNED TO FACS FOR SERVICES**

# THE VIEW FROM THE FRONT LINES: >> Reflections on Providing Service During the Pandemic

"The pandemic's definitely made our work more challenging. We're all problem solvers, we all want to help out the best we can. I'm proud of how our team has found ways to respect the realities of the pandemic and deliver support focused on the needs of children and families. In everything we do, we're thinking about how we can help children to grow and move forward positively in these times of heightened adversity."

**CARLY ALGUIRE**
*Child Protection Worker*

"I can't say enough about how incredible our foster parents have been throughout this experience. They have been resilient and engaged, always doing what is best for children. It seems the pandemic's thrown something new at us each day, but our foster families have responded beautifully. They've ensured that children never miss visitation with their parents, they've adapted to lockdowns, online learning, and kept up with all safety protocols. We have also stepped up our support to them, ensuring we're in regular contact and always asking what we can do for them."

**MEAGHAN COOPMAN**
*Child Protection Worker*

"We are committed to being here for our community. Over the course of the pandemic, we've seen an increase in the number of families calling seeking support. This has been a difficult time for everyone, and families know that we have continued providing services throughout the pandemic. We've worked with them to meet their needs, keep children safe, and ensure that no one falls through the cracks."

**JENN TATE**
*Child Protection Worker*

"We haven't taken a break at FACS. We've been on the road since day one of the pandemic, visiting with families to make sure they are supported. We've increased our communication with families to strengthen relationships and make sure they're doing well. The pandemic's affected everyone differently and we've provided a range of supports, including personal protective equipment to help them stay safe, technology to adapt to online learning, and so much more. It's been a long year, but you just feel so good knowing you're helping."

**ELANA SYKES**
*Child Protection Worker*

## Bringing Families Together

For families, time together is precious.

The FACS Niagara visitation program supports regular and meaningful contact between families and children. Spending time together helps maintain a bond and healthy relationship between children, siblings, and parents.

During the COVID pandemic, we had the opportunity to redesign our visitation program to best meet the needs of parents, their children, and foster families. In August 2020, we consolidated our visitation program in the Niagara Falls office, which provided the opportunity for the agency to ensure a consistent, streamlined program, where every family receives high-quality service.

When families come together, they bond while doing different activities with each another. During special events, we also capture special photos of families they receive as keepsakes of their valued time together. During visits, all COVID protocols are in place, ensuring everyone's safety.

Over 2020, we have seen an average of 95 children and 100 parents participate in visitation in Niagara Falls. Feedback has been extremely positive, and we look forward to building on our successes this year.

## Ici, Nous Parlons Français

The Niagara region is home to a thriving Francophone community. Recognizing this, Niagara is one of 25 designated regions across Ontario where government services must be provided in French.

In 2020, FACS Niagara, along with the Hamilton Children's Aid Society and the Hamilton Catholic Children's Aid Society, began a pilot project to connect Francophone families to child welfare services in French. The partnership will ensure Francophone families in Niagara receive the most appropriate service to meet their needs.

This joint initiative with the other Children's Aid Societies expands on the work already being done at FACS Niagara to respect the cultural identity of all families receiving service from the agency. This work aligns with the goals of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services' child welfare redesign by recognizing our responsibility to the different communities we are fortunate to serve.

# Protecting our Team and Families, Children, and Youth during COVID-19

It has been a challenging time for everyone adjusting to new safety requirements to curb the spread of the virus, including stay-at-home orders and lockdowns.

Through everything, the FACS team continues to provide service to the community. They do this while maintaining the highest standards of infection prevention and control to keep everyone safe.

## Joint Pandemic Committee

At the outset of the declaration of the pandemic, FACS immediately convened a Joint Pandemic Committee in partnership with CUPE Local 2328/2328.1. This committee plans, provides guidance to the agency, and responds to issues as they arise.

## Signs of Optimism

A return to something resembling normalcy is on the horizon with the arrival of vaccines in Niagara.

FACS has advocated for all team members to be made eligible for vaccination at the earliest possible opportunity, and vaccines have been going into our team's arms since March 5, 2020.

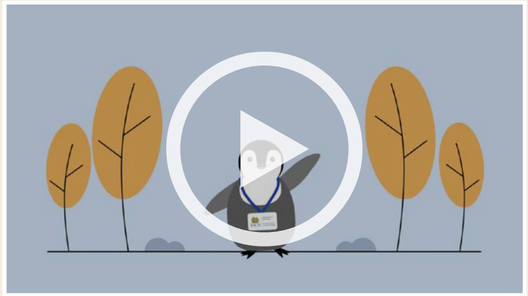
Every shot brings us one step closer to the end of the pandemic and a time when we can gather again as we continue the important work of protecting, supporting, and strengthening families in Niagara.

## Percy

Percy the Penguin is FACS' official safety mascot. Percy was introduced to the agency as an important reminder to reduce slips, trips, and falls in the parking lot during the icy winter months. Those arriving at the building were encouraged to "walk like a penguin" by taking small steps to stay steady.

As COVID arrived in Niagara, Percy's role expanded to help communicate decisions from the Joint Pandemic Committee and guide our team safely through the pandemic.

**CLICK ON THE VIDEO ABOVE AS PERCY DESCRIBES THE VARIOUS MEASURES FACS IS TAKING TO KEEP EVERYONE SAFE. >>**



During these challenging times, it is more important than ever that we come together to support one another and our agency. >>

# WORKING TOGETHER

>>

The unique insights, experiences, and perspectives of our team all have a critical role to play in supporting the success of our agency. Having the contributions of our team members leads to improved decisions and ensures we are best meeting the needs of our community.

FACS has established a number of additional committees in partnership with CUPE Local 2328/2328.1.

Working jointly:

- recognizes the long-standing positive and productive relationship between FACS and our CUPE Locals
- provides a structure for voices to be heard equitably
- recognizes that our CUPE Locals are key partners in supporting our continuous improvement and the implementation of committee decisions.

Joint committees have equal representation of union and non-union members. Each committee has authority to make recommendations and decisions that support organizational improvement.

## Joint committees at FACS

### Joint Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Honouring Identity Committee (EDIHI)

The EDIHI committee supports our practice to ensure children and families receive culturally appropriate services and supports. The committee also helps strengthen our ability to effectively speak out against racism and support one another.

### Joint Pandemic Committee

FACS has continued to provide in-person services throughout the pandemic. The support of this committee keeps families, children, and youth safe while our team members are out in the community. The committee maintains personal protective equipment for staff, as well as families as needed.

### Joint Wellness Committee

Working during these challenging times is understandably stressful. The FACS team has demonstrated extraordinary dedication to our families, and the Wellness Committee works to “help the helpers,” by supporting their overall well-being.

### Joint Task Force

The Joint Task Force’s mandate is to support a positive, equitable, and productive workplace for all FACS team members, allowing them to focus on their important work with families, children, and youth.

# Family Counselling Centre

## It's OK to Not be OK

Life is complex at the best of times. Throw in the challenges of a global health crisis and life can become infinitely more difficult to navigate.

For FACS Niagara's Family Counselling Centre, the pandemic has created increased demand for help. Compared to the previous year, the FCC has seen an approximate 20 percent increase in the number of sessions booked. Particularly during these COVID times, the FCC's philosophy that "it's ok to not be ok," guides the team as they work to support and care for individuals, couples, and families in Niagara. Following the declaration of the pandemic, the FCC pivoted quickly to deliver virtual services to clients and ensure they had support during the pandemic.

To make counselling services accessible to all, the FCC offers a fee subsidy program tied to income and some sessions are provided free of charge.

# SERVICES

- **SCHEDULED SESSIONS: 5460**
  Unique clients: **1476** | Unique Youth (0-17): **524**
- **PARTNER ASSAULT RESPONSE:**
  Unique clients: **90**
- **CARING DADS:**
  Unique clients: **52**
- **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:**
  **SCHEDULED SESSIONS: 457**
  Unique Women: **66** | Unique Youth (0-17): **43**
- **CHILD WITNESS PROGRAMS:**
  Unique Women: **29** | Unique Youth (0-17): **22**
- **ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES:**
  Unique clients: **192**
- **FOSTER KIN SUPPORT SERVICES:**
  Unique Families: **45**
- **FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCING:**
  Conferences completed: **39**

# UNITED WAY FUNDED

- **WALK IN: SESSIONS:**
  **227** free counselling sessions
- **FEE SUBSIDY:**
  **618** subsidized sessions
- **CHILD ADVOCACY:**
  **474** sessions

# Other Successes

## A Safe Place to Learn, Share, and Grow

FACS Niagara offers childcare services in St. Catharines at our Bunting Road and Western Hill locations. Full and half-day programs are available, as is before-and-after school care.

We offer quality care in an environment that stimulates children's curiosity, sparks joy, and supports positive connections with one another.

In 2020-21, our childcare programs supported 111 of Niagara's youngest residents as they began exploring their world.

## Meeting Milestones and Getting Support

We all want to see our children grow up healthy and strong. Our Resource Consultants are an invaluable support to families, helping to assess children's developmental milestones. If needed, referrals are provided to services in the community for further support.

In 2020-21, our Resource Consultants provided support to 84 families and children.

## FACS Niagara the 'Gold Standard'

Each year, the Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services reviews all Children's Aid Societies in the province to ensure the quality of care provided to children and youth. This is an important opportunity for FACS to be accountable to our community and demonstrate evidence of the quality of our programs and services.

The review is completed for all children and youth who have been in extended society care for 24 consecutive months. It also includes eligible youth on adoption probation. This year, 59 files for children and youth in extended care, and 12 adoption probation files were reviewed. We are focused on establishing permanency for all children and youth supported by the agency, with our primary goal to reunify families. In the Ministry review, FACS achieved 100 percent compliance in seeking permanency options for children in care.

FACS also:

- achieved 100 percent compliance for all Indigenous service requirements; and
- received scores in excess of 90 percent in safety and wellbeing.

Ministry reviewers described our level of contact with children and youth as the gold standard. They noted it was consistent with the level of excellence they've come to expect from FACS Niagara.

We are so proud of our team and all the work they do to create positive outcomes for children and youth in Niagara. Congratulations!

## Above and Beyond Awards:

In partnership with the FACS Union Social Executive (FUSE) Committee and the FACS Foundation, the Above and Beyond peer recognition committee was established to recognize those team members for their outstanding dedication to the families we serve, and those who bring a smile to the face of their co-workers, support one another when the going gets rough and make each day brighter.

FACS Niagara has always gone above and beyond for children, youth, and families. This is especially true over the past year when everyone's been challenged by COVID. Throughout the pandemic, the entire team has demonstrated the true meaning of courage, compassion, and dedication. For those reasons, we are pleased to, once again, name the entire FACS team as recipients of the Above and Beyond Awards.

We are truly grateful for their efforts.

# FACS NIAGARA FOUNDATION

The mission of the Niagara Foundation for Family and Children's Services is to raise funds and awareness to support FACS Niagara in their work to help children, youth, and families in Niagara reach their full potential. >>

>>

The dedicated Foundation Board appreciates the generosity, support, and commitment of the hundreds of donors who support the work of FACS Niagara. Since the FACS Niagara Foundation started 21 years ago, generous individuals, corporations, and organizations have donated more than $9.1 million and supported thousands of children, youth, and families.

Thanks to the community's generous support, in 2020:

- 65 children enjoyed a COVID-safe YMCA summer camp experiences;
- 110 children and youth received "Summer Smiles at Home" activity baskets;
- 140 youth received help making the transition from foster care to living independently including 57 youth who received food, housewares and seasonal gifts;
- 55 youth received "Home for the Holidays" care packages throughout the year;
- 233 children in 114 families and 50 youth in the received toys or gifts and food during the festive holiday season; and
- 186 families received emergency COVID-19 supports for food and basic needs.

## Education Grants

Young people have limitless potential. Research indicates that education is the single most important factor in helping youth in care lead rewarding, productive, and successful lives. FACS Niagara places a high priority on encouraging and supporting current and former youth in care to complete their education.

The graduation rate for children in care continues to increase each year. Many of these talented young people continue their learning beyond high school by pursuing postsecondary education. FACS and the Foundation are pleased to support these efforts by providing grants and other assistance to help them achieve their career goals.

In 2020, 37 youth received education grants and COVID emergency support to pursue post-secondary studies. Through the support of our generous donors, FACS and the Foundation are able to provide grants to 50 dedicated and deserving youth in 2021.

# FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2020

Darlene McDowell (President)
Caroline Polgrabia (Vice-President)
Chris Accursi (Secretary)
Yar Diduch (Treasurer)
Anna Bozza (FACS Niagara Executive Director)
Nathan Gatt
Heather Henry
Dave Weeks
Sean Worthington (FACS Niagara Board Liaison)

Dave Augustyn (Development Director)
Catherine Barkwell (Foundation Assistant)

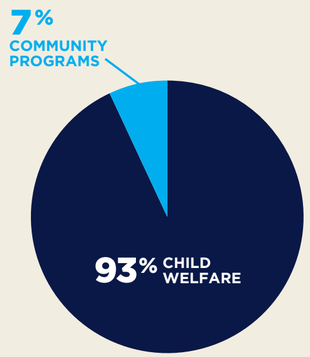
# FINANCIAL REPORT

2020-2021

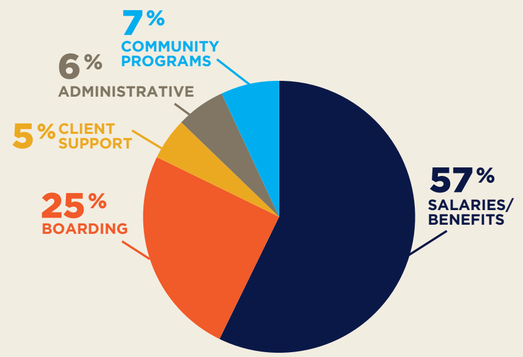
## Summary of Details

This summary of details of 2020-2021.
Financial Statements audited by Durward Jones Barkwell & Company LLP.

### Revenues 2020-2021 % Breakdown by Program




### Expenses 2020-2021 % Breakdown by Category




**SUMMARY $000s**

| | Child Welfare | Community Programs | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Revenues | $ 47,203 | $ 3,564 | **$ 50,767** |
| Expenditures | $ 45,478 | $ 3,287 | **$ 48,765** |
| Surplus/(Deficit) | $ 1,725 | $ 277 | **$ 2,002** |

## Thank You to Our Funders

The Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services
The Ministry of the Attorney General
The Niagara Region
The United Way Niagara (Family Counselling Centre)
FACS Niagara Foundation
Our Generous Donors

FACS

Family and Children's Services Niagara

Les Services à la famille et à l'enfance de Niagara

Phone: All locations: 905.937.7731 • Toll Free: 1.888.937.7731 • TTY: 905.937.8105 • All Faxes : 905.646.7085
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