



**ontario association of
children's aid societies**

The Children's Aid Society of Brant

Final Accreditation Summary Report

Date March 31 -April 03, 2008

Brant Children's Aid Society

1. INTRODUCTION

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies Accreditation Program is a voluntary program of quality assurance for member Children's Aid Societies within the province. The field has developed standards for determining the level of service and practice to be provided in nine areas (ten areas for Phase II and subsequent reviews) (Adoption; Agency Governance and Administration; Agency in the Community; Children in Care; Family Services; Finance; Foster, Institutional and Group Care; Human Resources; Volunteer Services; and Quality Assurance (Phase II and Subsequent Reviews)). The agency's performance is measured against these standards.

Agencies wishing to apply for accreditation first undertake an internal review of their policies and practice as compared with those described in the standards. After the completion of the self-study, modifications are made and compliance tracked internally until the agency is content that a sufficient level of compliance has been attained. At this point, the agency requests that a team of peer reviewers be assembled to examine the agency operations.

Peer reviewers then complete a comprehensive audit of the agency's operations and service delivery systems. This includes examining policies and procedures, reviewing files, interviewing staff, foster parents, children in care, board members, volunteers and community service providers, and reviewing confidential surveys.

There have been significant changes in the child welfare field resulting from the initiatives of the Transformation Agenda of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and Bill 210 (November 30, 2006), necessitating changes to the child protection accreditation standards which remain in draft form during Brant CAS's third accreditation review. These 67 standards have not yet been presented to the OACAS Accreditation Committee and Board for approval however, in order to review an agency on its former and current service delivery it was necessary to include a "Transitional Expectations" section which was comprised of ten broad areas of service related to the changes. The areas are: 1) The Ontario Child Protection Decision Making Model that includes: Differential Response and MCYS Child Protection Standards in Ontario, 2) Use of the Eligibility Spectrum (Revised October 2006), 3) Ontario Child Protection Tools, 4) Kinship Service, 5) Kinship Service Standards, 6) Case Conferences for Children in Care, 7) SAFE, PRIDE and OnLAC, 8) ADR and FGDM, 9) Complaint and Review Procedures and 10) Child Death Reporting and Review Process

Brant CAS was rated on the relevant Family Service Section of Accreditation Standards however it was not rated in the usual manner on the new draft OACAS Accreditation Child Protection Standards. The agency was expected to provide evidence for the review team to demonstrate that the agency is using the ten areas in its practice.

A recommendation for accreditation is made to the OACAS Board when an agency has achieved full or substantial compliance on all applicable standards. At least 80% of the applicable standards must be rated at the full compliance level in each of the ten standard areas.



Brant Children's Aid Society

2. BACKGROUND

The Children's Aid Society of Brant, incorporated in 1895 is located in South Western Ontario. It is bounded by Hamilton-Wentworth to the Southeast, Haldimand-Norfolk to the Southwest, Oxford to the West and Kitchener-Waterloo to the North.

Like many CAS's in the province the Brant CAS has grown considerably since its Phase II accreditation four years ago. Compared to January 2004, the agency currently has a budget of \$24.4 million (2004 - \$18.3 million), 205 full time employees (2004 – 165), 323 children in care (2004 – 409) which is a significant 21.03% decrease in the number of children in care, and 215 foster homes (2004 – 172) which is a healthy 20% increase in resource homes from 2004. The management of this growth so successfully is a very positive achievement. Other services areas have responded similarly, such as the sizeable expansion of the volunteer services being provided.

Brant County has a population of 124,607, and according to 2006 data 18.7% are 14 and under. The majority of the populace lives in the city of Brantford. There are two Aboriginal communities – Mississauga's of the New Credit First Nation and Six Nations of the Grand River with an estimated combined population of 21,000.

A variety of service strategies have been developed by the agency that reflect the needs of the community. Community based child protection teams and School based workers offer a range of supportive and mandated services. These programs are often offered in partnership with other community services.

3. REVIEW TEAM

Review team members consisted of (from right to left):



Stephen Doig Director of Services
Phyllis Lovell Director of Services
Darlene Niemi Manager – Quality Assurance
Gary Putman Executive Director (retired)

Frontenac CAS
Grey CAS
Thunder Bay CAS
Dufferin F&CS



Brant Children's Aid Society

4. FACTUAL OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN DURING SITE REVIEW

The following activities were completed by the Accreditation Team:

a) Files Reviewed

NOTE: The review team was unable to review the required number of files in some categories due to lack of client consent

Child Protection Referral Dispositions:

No Direct Client Contact	2
Non-Protection Report	2
Community Link Service	2
Open for Child Protection Investigation (including files with allegations of abuse and files with allegations of neglect)	4

Open for Ongoing Service:

Ongoing Child Protection Service	24
Pregnancy Counselling	1 (note: only file)
New Investigation on Ongoing Child Protection File	2
Kinship Service	2
Customary Care	0 (no consents)
Kinship Care Family	2
Customary Care Family	0 (no consents)
Foster Family	8
Child in Care	15 (6CW, 5SW, 4TCA)
Child in Care Placed on Adoption	4
Adoption Approved Homes	3
Adoption Disclosure	1
Volunteer Service	5

TOTAL: 77

b) Files Reviewed

Human Resources	14
-----------------	----

c) Surveys Reviewed

Community Serv. Providers	19
Board Members	9
Foster Parents	5
Volunteers	4



Brant Children's Aid Society

Agency Staff	6
Children in Care	15

d) Interviews

Personal:

Andy Koster	Executive Director
Marilee Sherry	Manager FGDM
Julie Martyn	CUPE Union President
May McCabe	Human Resources
Dale McKechnie	Human Resources
Meredith MacLachlan	Supervisor – After Hours Program
Rycene Eves	Admin. Assistant (After Hours Program)
Jill Esposto	Manager of Child Development Unit
Mary Dinelli and Leslie Thomas	Adoption Managers
Debra Ward	Volunteer Services Coordinator
Michelle Williamson and Jacquie Scatcherd	Managers of Children's Resource Unit
Bruce Burbank	Director of Service
Terry Arnold	Permanency Services Manager
Catherine Gabel	Quality Assurance Manager
Karin Hill	Director of Service (Native Services)
Larry Longboat	Six Nations Native Prevention Services
Stacy Neill	Manager – Legal services
Loretta Murphy	IT Manager
David Diegal	Ministry Program Supervisor
Christine Shea	Finance Manager
Debbie Coombe	Accounting Manager
Pat Banning	Director of Administration
Paula Loubé	Executive Assistant
Harry Emmott	Board President

(Focus Groups)

Agency Staff (8 Managers + frontline) – agency in the Community

After Hours Staff (4)

Adoption Staff (2 managers and 2 service staff)

Volunteers (2 drivers, homework helper, teen mothers group assistant)

Foster Parents (6 foster mothers, 1 foster father)

Foster Care Staff (6)

Children's Services Workers (4)

Children in Care (8: 6 Crown Wards, 2 Society Wards)

Native Services Branch staff (22)

Child Protection Staff (8)

Finance Staff (2)



Brant Children's Aid Society

IT Staff (3)
Service Directors (3)

e) Site Visits

Family Group Decision Making offices
Family Resource Centre
Native Services Branch offices (Six Nations)
Six Nations Territory tour
New Beginnings Darling Site
Major Ballanchey Best Start Early Learning and Parenting Center
Stepping Stone Neighbourhood Center
Slovak Village Supervised Access Center, and Eagle Place Community Team
Northland Gardens
Diversity Committee @ Tourism Center

f) Additional Documents Reviewed

Agency Policies & Procedures
2007 Crown Ward Review
2008 Crown Ward Review
2007 Foster Care Licensing Review (2008 report not yet completed)
OPR Review by Team (2007-08) report
Collective Agreement (Brant CAS + CUPE)
Employee & Family Assistance Program brochure
Self-Directed Orientation – All Staff
Multi Year Results Based Plan 07/08
Board and Committee Minutes
By-laws
Charitable Information Returns
Letters patent
Corporation Returns
Strategic Planning Documents and Final Plan
Agency Website
Board Orientation Manual
Organizational Chart
Code of Ethics
Oath of Confidentiality (Board)
Board Evaluation process and surveys
ED Evaluation
Designated Authority list
Fire Safety Plan
Finance Policy and Procedures
07/08 Estimate Submission and Quarterly Reports
Internal budgeting and deficit management documents
Fixed assets ledger
Purchase documents
Job Descriptions



Brant Children's Aid Society

Board reports and minutes
Annual Audits 05/06/07



Brant Children's Aid Society

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS IN EACH AREA

Policy compliance on (*indicate total number*) standards in ten areas was examined.

Compliance Rating Scales

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1 | <i>Full Compliance</i> | 3 | <i>Partial Compliance</i> |
| 2 | <i>Substantial Compliance</i> | 4 | <i>Non Compliance</i> |

OVERALL COMPLIANCE RATING

In this box, indicate the number of standards that received each of the four ratings and underneath, indicate the percentage that this represents (DO NOT include the number of non-applicable standards in the percentage calculations)

2008 Review (all standards reviewed)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
269	1			3	273
99.63%	0.37%			----	100%

For each of the ten standard sections, complete the boxes in the same way as indicated below.

After these numerical calculations for each section, a narrative should be included speaking in more detail to the findings for each section.

(2004 Review) (included 75% of standards)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
222	3	0	0		225
98.7%	1.3%	0%	0%	-----	100%



Brant Children's Aid Society

AGENCY IN THE COMMUNITY 2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
10	0	0	0	0	10
100%	0%	0%	0%	----	100%

(2004)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
8	0	0	0		8
100%	0%	0%	0%	----	100%

An excellent introduction to this section is the positive response of 86% from agency collaterals surveyed, to the question “does the CAS cooperate with other community organizations to address community service needs”. The Executive Director has a very strong commitment to community partnerships and cooperative service delivery which is reflected by the vast majority of staff persons in the agency. As noted later in this report, the Brant CAS has been far ahead of most of the Ontario child welfare field in providing differential response services to its community. The Family Resource Centre and the community based units are so embedded in their communities that they have become part of the fabric of their respective neighbourhoods.

The 2004 review highlighted three particular collaborative community based initiatives that have continued and become integral parts of the community:

- The Family Resource Centre offers a variety of partnered services and programs for parents and children. This location is also the site for most of the Family Group Decision Making conferences – a testimony to the client’s perception of neutrality. The centre has existed for several decades and continues to provide a base for practical life skills services to new mothers, teens, families and their children.
- The Community Based child welfare services have expanded to include locations in schools, housing developments, Early Years centres and Women’s shelters. Staff from these programs describes their services as providing meaningful but often “invisible” services to their clients in a least intrusive environment while creating trust and generating additional tangible and intangible formal and informal child protection/prevention services. The service planning needs for these teams is identified by the clients themselves.
- The Native Services Branch and Aboriginal Services Unit provide culturally sensitive child welfare services to aboriginal children and their families in Brant County while supporting an eventual devolution process to distinct aboriginal child welfare services. The Brant CAS has again demonstrated its visionary thinking in facilitating child welfare services to First Nations communities by aboriginal staff for aboriginal families and children.



Brant Children's Aid Society

A challenge facing the agency is the Ministry's acknowledgment that this service model accurately reflects Transformation in action however their willingness to fund these services even at their current level is questionable. The ministry views some of this service model as "mandate drift" where MC&YS regard child welfare prevention and early intervention strategies as the responsibility of agencies other than a CAS.

FOSTER CARE/INSTITUTIONAL CARE/GROUP CARE 2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
20	0	0	0	0	20
100%	0	0	0	0	100%

(2004)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
15	0	0	0	0	15
100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

The Foster Care standards were rated as fully compliant with all reviewed standards. Foster care files were reviewed and documentation was found to be timely, comprehensive and thorough. Case notes reflect frequent contact with foster families and the provision of support when needed to foster families.

Kin in Care family files were reviewed and found to be well documented. Brant CAS has recognized kin care providers for many years and they are included in training events and appreciation activities. Brant is encouraged to adapt the service agreement to reflect the special considerations that may apply when kin are care providers. The use of the foster parent service agreement is an acceptable practice however this refinement to practice may better assist kin in care families to appreciate the special challenges that may apply when caring for family.

Brant CAS has implemented SAFE and PRIDE since the last accreditation review. Staff reports the usual change challenges but have embraced the provincial approach to training and home studies. They all feel that SAFE results in a more comprehensive assessment of Kin Care families and Foster families. Staff is better able to match children and youth to resource as a result. Pride's requirement to use foster providers as co-trainers has enhanced the agency's past practice of using foster parents as resources at pre service and is well accepted and successful.

The focus group with foster parents uncovered some challenges around incorporating the foster parent as part of the team. While some foster parents were very complimentary of the agency with respect to communication and inclusion in decision making a small number of foster parents were critical of the organization's ability to honor the concept of team. Resource workers were seen as excellent sources of support. They clearly appear to be excellent mediators. The inclusion of foster parents as part of the care team is a transformation goal and a provincial



Brant Children's Aid Society

challenge. Resource staff acknowledges that the experience of team is a challenge in an agency that has multiple staff members involved in the planning for children in care. The agency may wish to seek ways to afford all service staff the opportunity to develop their relationships with foster parents and their skills at responding to foster parent complaints and processing difficult and contentious decisions with foster families.

Resource staff is very complimentary about the value of permanency planning meetings and the inclusion of foster and kin care parents in this forum.

AGENCY GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATION

2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
46	0	0	0	0	46
100%	0%	0%	0%	----	100%

(2004)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
34	1	0	0		35
97%	3%	0%	0%	----	100%

The agency has achieved 100% compliance in this area of the accreditation review.

There were nine (9) Board Member questionnaires returned with a consistently positive view expressed of the Board's functioning and high praise for the work of the senior staff and in particular the Executive Director. Telephone contacts were not able to be made with the two Directors who requested calls. However the Board President was interviewed. Personal interviews were also held with the Executive Director, Executive Assistant and Ministry Program Supervisor. Policies and standards required within the Governance and Administrative standards are in place and current

There is ample evidence that the Board and Senior Administrative staff place a high priority and ongoing attention to this important agency area. . The Board has managed to maintain membership which reflects their unique community. The Board is very actively involved in the agency's operations through a very extensive committee structure and has ongoing access to senior staff of the agency. As a result, the Board surveys reflect a clear sense of satisfaction with their roles and the performance of their senior staff. This is confirmed by the Ministry Program Supervisor who views the agency and Board as well respected in the community and pro active in their service approaches



Brant Children's Aid Society

FINANCIAL

2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
25	0	0	0	0	25
100%	0%	0%	0%	----	100%

(2004)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
18	0	0	0		18
100%	0%	0%	0%		100%

The agency has achieved 100% compliance in this area of the accreditation review.

During the course of the on site review, the reviewer interviewed the Finance Manager, Accounting Manager, two accounting staff, Director of Administration and MCYS Program Supervisor. In addition a number of agency documents were reviewed.

The agency has maintained a high level of accounting and administrative support services over the past four years. Accounting and service data systems are in place and operating well. Staff members are well qualified and have a number of years experience with the agency.

VOLUNTEER SERVICES

2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
18	0	0	0	0	18
100%	0%	0%	0%	----	100%

(2004)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
17	0	0	0		17
100%	0%	0%	0%	-----	100%

The Volunteer Program is an area of significant strength for the agency. Volunteers were effusive in their praise of staff for excellent recruitment efforts, for thorough orientation and



Brant Children's Aid Society

training, for creative opportunities to work with children and families and especially for recognition and appreciation. Volunteers expressed a great deal of job satisfaction and two were inspired to imagine a career in the helping services as a result of their experience with Brant CAS.

Volunteers are used in many capacities and the 'job' opportunities are interesting and challenging. The files were well documented and showed thoughtful and creative efforts to engage volunteers and to thank them for their efforts. The agency has established priorities for volunteer driving budget allocations that are respected and well managed. Volunteer staff was articulate and passionate about their roles and were recognized for their kindness and good service by volunteers.

Brant CAS has created an opportunity for volunteers to hear the positive comments and compliments that staff have observed about the value of the volunteer in the life of the service user. Volunteers all reported that they had received specific feedback about the impact of their volunteer service and often were complimented on their skills and commitment. This practice enhances their job satisfaction and their commitment to Brant CAS.

All of the standards were considered in this review. The agency has achieved a compliance rating of 100%

HUMAN RESOURCES

2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
39	0	0	0	0	39
100%	0%	0%	0%	----	100%

(2004)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
49	0	0	0		49
100%	0%	0%	0%	-----	100%

As in the 2004 Accreditation review, the Human Resources standards were rated 100% - all of the standards were considered in this review. The agency has increased its staff complement in the HR department as well as streamlined some of their practices – for example they now maintain the reference check information in a separate "Competition File" thereby ensuring employee confidentiality.

Both unionized staff and management report good labour relations and open communication. The policy statements are thorough and readily accessible to all staff electronically. The personnel files themselves are well organized, reflecting adherence with agency policy. The agency is to be complimented for their consistent completion of annual performance management documents. Staff training was a combined service and HR activity until recently



Brant Children's Aid Society

when the senior manager left the agency and the Management Assistant responsible for training is also leaving. This will present a challenge for the HR staff however they have begun planning to meet this need.

Staff development is a primary focus for the agency and they involve all staff levels in reviewing and planning for ongoing excellence.

As in 2004, all statutory requirements and remittances are met.

CHILDREN IN CARE

2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
32	1	0	0		33
97%	3%	0%	0%	-----	100%

(2004)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
25	1	0	0		26%
96%	4%	0%	0%	-----	100%

There continues to be a clear sense that the agency remains fully committed to children and youth in care. This is reflected in the agency's Policies & Procedures as well as the agency's established practices and processes. Additionally, there are QA activities that ensure adherence to these. In reviewing child care files and their corresponding family service files, it is evident that there is appropriate rationale and supporting evidence for decision making when admitting a child into care. Further, efforts to ensure effective concurrent planning are made early on following the child's admission to care.

With few exceptions, admission documentation is completed in a timely manner. The initial assessment and Plan of Care were consistently completed within the prescribed timelines. Ongoing recording was completed within the prescribed timelines or very close to it. In a few cases ongoing recording was completed a few days late. As a result Standard 2.1 was rated as substantial compliance. In all of the files reviewed, arrangements were made to have admission medicals completed within 72 hours. Overall, annual medicals were completed on time.

The agency has an effective system in place to ensure that the child's placement resource meets his/her needs accordingly. Critical information about the child is documented and discussed with the designated agency staff in order to facilitate appropriate matching of resources. Through the file review process, it is evident that this is a consistent agency practice.

There continues to be strong evidence of the agency's value in preserving family relationships



Brant Children's Aid Society

and utilizing family supports. Upon a child's admission to care, efforts are made to include family members and other key supports in case planning and decision making. This was observed through the Concurrent Permanency Planning format and it was noted in several files that parents, other extended family members/supports and foster parents attend these meetings regularly. Additionally, file information and feedback from staff indicate full support and success of the agency's Family Group Decision Making program. In several cases, children were placed in Kinship Foster Care homes and exercised regular access with their parents and/or other family members. Several children experienced few placement changes.

Direct worker contact with children was observed to be frequent and regular. As required by agency procedure direct worker contact with children occurred monthly or more in the files reviewed. With few exceptions, feedback from children in care (surveys/focus group) further supports that this practice consistently occurs. In several cases, worker changes were minimal. In general, the organization of child care files was excellent. Documentation was easily accessible. The quality of recording (Assessments/Plans of Care, Social Histories) was observed to be of a high standard. In particular, there were some exceptional Social Histories completed that included critical details and information about the child's life. In most files there were photographs of the child and in some cases, also photos of extended family members. The agency is currently transitioning to a computerized recording system. Feedback from Children's Services workers suggests that this has resulted in frustration for some workers who are not fully trained in their knowledge of this new system, in addition to the recent changes to recording regulations.

ADOPTION 2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
37	0	0	0	0	37
100	0	0	0	----	100%

(2004)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
30	0	0	0		30
100%	0%	0%	0%	-----	100%

Brant CAS is participating in a regional adoption initiative that will enhance permanency options for children and embed the demands of Bill 210 into local practice. Staff appears to have embraced the new legislatively based options for children with enthusiasm. They are well acquainted with the changes and are able to describe case scenarios where 'new' thinking has resulted in permanency for children. The degree to which staff has searched for adoptive families is evident. The use of Adopt Ontario and national adoption services is high. Evidence of openness agreements was present in files. Consideration of sibling placements is a priority. The



Brant Children's Aid Society

challenge of a comprehensive and consistent approach to subsidy support for families will be undertaken as part of the regional adoption initiative. The agency supports the permanency funding guidelines and provides financial support to families.

Brant CAS has adoption capacity within the Native's Services Branch. This Branch has been very successful at recruiting aboriginal families to offer permanency to aboriginal children through adoption. Families within the Six Nations community have offered adoption opportunities to aboriginal children from across Canada.

Adoption files and files related to children placed for adoption were reviewed. Files are documented in a timely fashion, comprehensive and thorough in their consideration of the child's needs. There is evidence of extensive contact with children and with adoptive families. Families appear to be well supported.

Only one adoption disclosure file was reviewed because consents could not be obtained for additional files.

Adoption services has achieved a compliance rating of 100% across all of the applicable standards

FAMILY SERVICES

2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
27	0	0	0	3	30
100%	0%	0%	0%	----	100%

(2004)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
21	1	0	0		22
96%	4%	0%	0%	-----	100%

With the Transitional Standards being considered in this review, Standards 1.4 (Compliance with the ORAM), 8.1 (Serious Occurrence/Contentious Issue) and 1.12 (Service Planning) were not rated as part of the phase III review. Child welfare service delivery is very compatible with the agency's mission and vision statements and totally consistent with a strength based family centred practice model providing truly seamless services to children and their families in Brant County. The Differential Response strategies of Transformation have been in place, and utilized, in the agency for several years. Case transfers are frequently merely an administrative exercise with the same worker continuing ongoing services with the client.

Concurrent planning is an integral part of service planning for permanency for children and community collaboration is embedded in the overall plan thereby effectively expanding the services available to families. Although not included in the rating, it should be noted that the



Brant Children's Aid Society

service planning has improved from the last accreditation review as the plans are available in the files; they are revised to be consistent with assessments or other case developments. Where clients could not be involved in the service planning (usually due to non compliance or unavailability) this was noted in the planning. The new standards requirement for client involvement via family centred conferencing for service planning will ensure client involvement continues. The agency's commitment to "community based service teams" will enhance client involvement in overall service delivery as well. Court plans were succinctly documented when necessary although the agency appears to extensively rely on a less intrusive approach using service or care agreements. Brant CAS was a provincial leader in Family Group Decision Making, a program that is highly regarded by the courts, local legal counsel, the OCL and the agency's frontline staff.

The Family Resource Centre and the several Community Based Units provide a virtually seamless (and perhaps often "invisible") child welfare presence throughout the various neighbourhoods in Brant. This service model has reduced the distrust for child welfare services and increased the overall effectiveness of the agency's service delivery options.

To reiterate the comments made in the 2004 review, the Brant CAS created an effective Differential Response, strength based, family centred service delivery model well before the Transformation agenda put these concepts into the Ontario practice model. Staff at all levels of the agency exudes an enthusiasm and commitment to their work that is frankly remarkable.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
5	0	0	0		5
100%	0%	0%	0%	----	100%

(2004)

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
5	0	0	0		5
100%	0%	0%	0%	----	100%

The agency has a very well developed Quality Assurance program that consists of one full-time Manager who assumes responsibility for numerous QA initiatives and activities agency-wide. Additionally, there are other positions within the agency that include QA responsibilities, however many of the QA functions are performed directly and/or monitored by the QA Manager. The agency's QA manual summarizes the organization's QA philosophy, policy and strategy for integration of QA functions within the agency. The QA Manager is well connected with the provincial Q Net committee in addition to the QA regional network of the South West, which both provide opportunities for resource sharing and professional development.



Brant Children's Aid Society

The QA Manager completes an Annual Work Plan that is presented and approved by the Board of Directors. Within the agency structure, there are clearly defined QA initiatives and activities that identify service areas in need of improvement, tracking or data collection. This is achieved through various methods including the Strategic Services Directions Committee (Board), regular Management Meetings and the Staff Planning Committee (staff members). The QA position has played an integral role in Transformation implementation which was tracked through the Mandatory Compliance Work Plan. Currently, there are several ongoing QA initiatives in place to measure progress and compliance of new DR standards in addition to Child Care recording requirements. Further, there are regular QA processes in place to evaluate the quality of service delivery.

QA reports and findings are communicated primarily through agency/committee meetings and the QA Manager regularly participates in these as reflected in their respective Minutes. Additionally, regular communication occurs on a one to one basis to relevant Management staff directly or through e-mails.

The agency is committed to research and is involved with 2 major research projects through Wilfred Laurier and McMaster Universities in addition to other projects that are coordinated through the QA program. The agency has established a process to measure outcomes for children as a means to evaluate the efficacy of service delivery through child performance indicators. The agency has an established process for eliciting feedback from staff through the Performance Evaluation format. Suggestions and feedback from staff is gathered regularly and is addressed through the agency's Staff Planning Committee. The QA Manager plays an integral role in the development of the agency's Strategic Plan which ensures clear direction and vision throughout the organization.

SPECIFIC TO THIS REVIEW 2008

As a result of the Ministry's Transformation agenda and the many changes that are required as a result of that the OACAS Accreditation Committee approved a transitional approach for this review.

The agency was assessing the OACAS new Child Protection Standards that are still in the developmental phase. The results will not be included in the final ratings for this report.

The OACAS Accreditation Committee developed 10 transitional standards that the agency was rated on with either a "yes" or "no" rating. The agency was expected to demonstrate through evidence provided that it is addressing the areas covered in these 10 transitional standards to at least some degree, and was expected to be as inclusive as possible in providing examples of evidence in each category. N/A was considered to be acceptable rating if it could be proven that it was as a result of something beyond the control of the agency. In addition to the usual requirements, in order for there to be a recommendation for full accreditation the agency had to receive a positive (yes) rating in each of the ten categories.

TEN TRANSITIONAL STANDARDS (2008)

YES	NO			N/A	TOTAL
------------	-----------	--	--	------------	--------------



Brant Children's Aid Society

10					10
100%	%	%	%	----	100%

The Brant CAS service model has historically provided child protection services from a strength-based "differential response" model consistent with the Child Protection Standards in Ontario (2007). The agency has also long used the Eligibility Spectrum for determining service criteria and has incorporated the required assessment tools. Philosophically, the Brant CAS has engaged in concurrent planning for children utilizing the least intrusive, family based interventions wherever possible. Rather than foster care, the agency relies heavily on kinship service/care options. The Family Group Decision Making program is well established in assisting with strength based family centred problem resolution rather than relying on the court process. This ADR process has provided a template for the Ministry for policy development to establish similar service models. The SAFE, PRIDE and OnLAC service models have been initiated at the agency. Clients, foster parents and adoptive parents are well aware of the client complaint and review procedures. Lastly the agency has incorporated the Child Death Reporting and review process into their policies and procedures.

The agency should be commended for their foresight and planning in utilizing an outcomes focused, strength-based family centred service delivery model well before most of the field.

The agency was also been asked to pilot test the draft OACAS Accreditation Information Technology Standards. The results will not be included in the final ratings.

DRAFT OACAS ACCREDITATION INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS

(not included in final ratings)

2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
9	7	7	0	0	23
40%	30%	30%	0%	----	100%

The agencies new draft IT and HR Policies and Procedures were reviewed and the reviewer interviewed the IT Manager, three IT staff and the Director of Administration. In addition, the reviewer toured the IT centre, including server room at the main office. Spot audits were completed on three staff workstations. (two notebooks, one desktop).

The agency has just recently begun an exercise of policy development, documenting what have been their ongoing practices. These draft statements are yet to be finalized and approved by the Board. Because this is a new area of policy development for the agency and since there was a short time frame to prepare for this review, the reviewer found the draft policy and procedures somewhat lacking in clarity and procedural detail. I would recommend that the agency take the necessary time to review the draft policy document to assure that it is comprehensive and reflects the agency's best practices so as to have a good foundation for staff direction,



Brant Children's Aid Society

orientation and future training.

Other observations were: a Disaster recovery plan is underway but also needs more attention to detail, Computers viewed were old and quite slow, staff have not signed statements about agency ownership as yet but there is an intention to do this in the future once policies are finalized and approved, there is only software specific IT training to date – the intention is to catch up with existing staff and have IT training as part of new staff orientation, spot monitoring for offensive material is not yet operational nor is the policy for staff reporting of such behavior, orientation to staff is yet to occur regarding proper care of the IT equipment.

The agency does have a sophisticated IT infrastructure which appears well supported with qualified IT support staff. There are challenges for the agency with a significant number of off site locations/offices and some limitations of available public fiber optics infrastructure in some areas of the community which limits connectivity options and performance. In addition, financial pressures and the need for economies affect computer refresh rates.

Overall, the agency is well served and once written policy and procedures are in place and staff are oriented and trained on an ongoing basis, the agency is well positioned to complying with all standards.

2. Substantial Compliance: 2.1, 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7, 3.8, 4.1,

- the agency's draft policy adequately covers the required information but is not yet approved and in place or known by staff

3. Partial Compliance Standards: 1.6, 2.5, 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, 4.2, 5.1,

- the agency's draft policy is lacking detail in required information and is not yet approved and in place and/or a process is not yet in place to advise staff or train them.

The agency was also asked to pilot test the draft OACAS Accreditation Draft Quality Assurance Standards. The results will not be included in the final ratings.

DRAFT QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARDS (not included in final ratings) 2008

1	2	3	4	N/A	TOTAL
5	1	0	0		6
84%	16%	0%	0%	----	100%

The agency is committed to QA in all aspects of the agency and has processes in place that promote a culture of continuous improvement. Many internal stakeholders such as Board members, management and staff are involved in and/or are aware of various QA activities. However, it is evident that not all staff members and other key stakeholders such as foster



Brant Children's Aid Society

parents and volunteers participate in QA initiatives. The agency is in the process of further developing an explicit communication strategy regarding QA activities and sharing information. As a result Standard 1.2 was rated as substantial compliance. The use of the agency's Intranet system may facilitate greater communication and transparency of QA initiatives, data collection, and reports.

6. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Society is to be commended in their adherence to the OACAS Accreditation process, ensuring that their accredited status did not lapse while also using this process to continue to improve all aspects of the agency.

The Brant Children's Aid Society is an agency that has fully embraced the principles of Transformation well in advance of this being an "agenda" for the Ministry. The agency's differential response model has integrated its service delivery models into their community while continuing to further develop collaborative partnerships to improve the well being of families and their children. The research partnerships are well established to support evidence based practices and outcomes for children. Concurrent planning for permanency for children is systemically built into their practice model and the agency has a very successful Alternative Dispute Resolution program to reduce adversarial service practices. The Executive Director provides visionary leadership and continually seeks new challenges in the quest for excellence in child welfare.

Brant CAS may wish to consider how the practice of including child and protection family specific information in foster and kin care files impacts on service users' privacy entitlements. The file information is contained in a separate folder within the foster/kin care family file. This information appears to assist resource staff to consider and incorporate critical protection information into their service to foster families. The agency may wish to remove this sensitive and private information from the foster/kin care file when it is no longer helpful, when the placement ends or when permanency is achieved.

Lastly, the Accreditation team would like to express our thanks for the hospitality and willingness from all of the staff during the accreditation review process.

Recommendation:

The Accreditation Team respectfully recommends that the Brant Children's Aid Society be fully accredited.

Submitted by: Stephen Doig
Phyllis Lovell
Darlene Niemi
Gary Putman

Signature of Team Leader

