

# **Being In the Care of a Children’s Aid Society (CAS)**

See also: Going Into the Care of a Children’s Aid Society (CAS)  
Leaving Home (for 16 and 17 year olds)



## **OVERVIEW**

This pamphlet is for a young person who is already getting help from a Children’s Aid Society (CAS) and provides information on:

1. Your rights in residential placements
2. Adoption and openness orders
3. Being pregnant
4. Leaving your foster home or group home before 18
5. Extended care after 18



This symbol indicates additional information that applies if you are **First Nations, Inuk or Métis**. You should let your CAS worker know if you have Indigenous ancestry, are a member of or self-identify with an Indigenous community or communities.

## **PART 1: YOUR RIGHTS IN CARE**

### **What is a Residential Placement?**

A residential placement is a foster home, group home or other place for young people to live and get the care and treatment that they may need. In a residential placement you will be looked after by foster parents or staff.

### **What are my rights when I am in a residential placement?**

You have a right to take part in making important decisions about your care including your healthcare, education, religion, and transfer to another residence or leaving the care of a Children's Aid Society (CAS). You will have a plan of care that outlines how you will be cared for in a safe and healthy way.



If you identify as First Nations, Inuit and Métis, all decisions must support and maintain your culture, heritage, traditions, connection to community and concept of extended family.

You also have the right to:

- Visit or speak with your family members and lawyer in private, except when there is a court order which says otherwise
- Reasonable privacy (eg. to send and receive mail) and to your personal property
- Nutritious food, medical care, clothing and to physical and recreational activities
- Not be punished physically

### **I am not happy in my placement, what can I do?**

You should speak to your worker for information about making a complaint. If you are refused this information, you can call Justice for Children and Youth.

### **Can I change where I am placed?**

You can ask to have your placement reviewed. A group of people, called the Residential Placement Advisory Committee (RPAC) will listen to your case and make recommendations as to whether or not your placement is suitable.

If you are 12 or older you have the right to have your placement reviewed. If you are under 12, you will have to ask your CAS worker whether a review can occur or get someone to request a review for you.

If you are not happy with the recommendations, you have the right to a second review before the Child and Family Services Review Board (CFSRB). The CFSRB decision makers have the power to transfer you, end your placement, or leave you in your present placement.

## **PART 2: ADOPTIONS and OPENNESS ORDERS**

### **What does it mean if I'm adopted?**

If you are adopted, this means the adult adopting you becomes your legal parents and you will no longer be in extended society care.

If you are 7 or older, your consent is required for you to be adopted.



If you are First Nations, Inuk or Métis, the CAS must consider the importance of maintaining your connection to your Indigenous communities when planning for you to be adopted.

### **Will I see my other family members?**

Anyone who wishes to keep a relationship with you after you are adopted, can make an application to court for an openness order. This type of order can allow you to keep in contact with specific people, including your birth parents and siblings. Whether this type of order is made depends on your situation and if keeping the relationship is in your best interests.

If you are 12 or older, you will be given notice that someone wants an openness order to communicate or spend time with you; and your consent will be required before the judge will make this type of order.



Before you can be adopted, a notice must also be provided to the Indigenous communities you identify with, to allow them to apply for an openness order. The purpose of the order would be to help you develop or maintain a connection with your First Nations, Inuk or Métis community, culture, heritage and traditions.

## **PART 3: BEING PREGNANT**

### **Do I have to tell my CAS worker that I am pregnant?**

You do not have to tell anyone that you are pregnant. If you want to end the pregnancy you can talk to your doctor about your options. The doctor is not allowed to tell anyone about your pregnancy or about any decision you make.

If you want to keep the baby, then it is probably best to tell your worker as soon as possible so that you can make plans together about how to prepare for the baby's arrival.

### **Will CAS take my baby away after s/he is born?**

CAS is responsible for making sure that all children are taken care of properly, including your baby. Your baby may be taken away if the worker thinks that the baby is being harmed or neglected by you or someone else in your life, or might be harmed in the future. CAS may also take your baby if you are not meeting your baby's needs.

Examples:

- Physical, emotional or sexual harm
- Not enough food, or clothing, or shelter
- Not getting medical treatment that the baby needs

### **What can I do to keep my baby?**

Talk to your worker, they can help you find the best programs and resources to prepare for your baby's arrival. Some ways that you can show CAS that you have the ability to care for a baby:

- Attending your medical appointments while you are pregnant
- Attending a parenting course
- Reading books about taking care of a baby, including bonding with your baby
- Getting things ready for your baby before s/he is born, eg. diapers, a crib or bassinet, baby clothes, blankets
- Finding a supportive community such as parents, social workers, or other adults who you can rely on and ask for help if you need it
- Taking steps to ensure you have a safe place to live and the home is safe for the baby

### **Can CAS help me take care of my baby?**

If you are in Extended Society Care (formerly called a "crown ward") or in Interim Society Care (formerly called a "society ward"), then CAS has a responsibility to help you in all areas of your life. This includes helping you to build the skills and get the resources to take care of your baby. Talk to your worker about the things you need or want in order to prepare for your baby's arrival or to take care of your baby. If your worker is not helping you, you should talk to a lawyer as soon as possible.

## **What about where I live?**

After you become pregnant, CAS may suggest that you move into a special home for girls who are pregnant. These homes usually have special services to help you prepare for your baby and to help you take care of your baby after s/he is born. The staff in these homes will try to help you and they may also tell CAS whether you are doing a good job of taking care of your baby.

After your baby is born and you have shown CAS that you can take care of your baby, CAS may suggest that you move into independent living or semi-independent living - *see next section.*

## **PART 4: LEAVING A FOSTER OR GROUP HOME BEFORE 18**

### **When can I leave my foster home or group home?**

If you are at least 16 years old, there are two other possible housing options:

- a) Independent living or
- b) Semi-independent living.

These options are not available in every case. Read the information below to understand these options and then talk to your CAS worker or a lawyer to see if these options are available in your case.

### **What is independent living?**

Independent living is when you live completely by yourself. CAS will give you money to pay your bills and to buy things that you need, eg. rent, food, transportation, clothing, and other special items that you may need. CAS may ask you to sign an agreement about how the money will be used and about the things you should be doing with your time, such as going to school or attending certain programs on your own. The amount of money they give you will depend on where you live and the CAS's policies.

### **What is semi-independent living?**

Semi-independent living is similar to independent living, but instead of living completely by yourself, you will live in a place where you still have access to some adult support if you need or want it. For example, you might live on your own in an apartment building that also has some offices for adults who can help you with things like budgeting, finding employment, and building other life skills. CAS will give you money to pay your bills and to buy things that you need. Similar to independent living, your CAS may ask you to sign an agreement about how the money will be used and about the things you should be doing with your time, such as going to school or attending certain programs on your own.

### **What if CAS won't let me move into independent or semi-independent living?**

If you are not happy with the place you are living or if the CAS is not responding to your request for independent or semi-independent living, you can ask for a Residential Placement Advisory Committee (RPAC) to review your situation. The RPAC can suggest a different place for you to live. If you don't like what the RPAC says, or if the CAS does not do what the RPAC says, you can apply to the Child and Family Services Review Board (CFSRB) to make a different decision. If you want to do this, you should ask the Office of the Children's Lawyer (OCL) for help.

### **Can I leave CAS care entirely?**

If you are in Extended Society Care (formerly a "Crown Ward") and you are 16 years or older, you can ask a judge to end the order putting you into care. You would then be an independent minor and not be involved with CAS anymore. If you are thinking about this option, you should talk to a lawyer.

## **PART 5: EXTENDED CARE AFTER 18**

### **What types of support can I get from CAS after I leave care?**

There are two main types of support you can get from CAS after you leave CAS care:

1. 16 and 17 year olds can enter into a Voluntary Youth Service Agreement (VYSA) with a CAS.
2. Continued Care and Support for Youth (CCSY) for youth over 18.

You will have to sign an agreement with the CAS in order to get a RYS, VYSA or CCSY. The agreement will tell you how much money CAS will give you, what other kinds of supports CAS will give you, and what kinds of things you have to do to keep getting the supports.

### **What is Continued Care and Support for Youth (CCSY)?**

CCSY is for young adults who are 18-20 years old and who used to be in the care of a CAS until turning 18. CCSY includes money for you to live on your own and other services such as counselling and other special programs. University tuition is also free for any person who qualifies for CCSY. Many colleges also provide free tuition to people who qualify for CCSY.

You can get CCSY if you were on a VYSA until you turned 18.

### **How do I get VYSA or CCSY?**

You can ask your CAS worker for CCSY; and you can ask for a VYSA by contacting your local CAS. If you don't get what you are asking for, you should talk to a lawyer.

### **Can I restart my CCSY? Is it too late for me to get CCSY if I never got it before?**

If you used to get CCSY and then stopped, you can ask your CAS to restart your CCSY at any time until you are 21 years old.

If you were in extended society care until you were 18, you can still ask your CAS for CCSY at any time until you turn 21. If you are on a VYSA until your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, then you can ask for CCSY.

### **When does CCSY end?**

Once you turn 21 the CAS will stop giving you CCSY.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Office of the Children's Lawyer: [www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/ocl/](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/ocl/)

Family Law Information Centres:  
[www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/infoctr.php](http://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/family/infoctr.php)

## TO TALK TO A LAWYER

Justice for Children and Youth (17 years and under) - [www.jfcy.org](http://www.jfcy.org), 1-866-999-5329

Lawyer Referral Service - [www.lsuc.on.ca](http://www.lsuc.on.ca), 1-800-268-8326 (up to 30 min free advice)

Legal Aid Ontario - [www.lao.on.ca](http://www.lao.on.ca), 1-800-668-8258

## OTHER CONTACTS

Kids Help Phone - [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca) (with live chat option), 1-800-668-6868  
Phone and on-line support and information (under 20)

211 Ontario Community and Social Services Help Line - [www.211Ontario.ca](http://www.211Ontario.ca),  
dial 211 from any phone in Ontario

## LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION:

(Courts and service providers can help fill this in with helpful information)

My CAS worker's name & phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Family (Child Welfare) Court address & phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

My OCL lawyer's name & phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

This pamphlet gives general information about  
Being in the Care of a Children's Aid Society. Speak to a lawyer or legal worker  
about specific questions. February 2020.



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