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Board Members Manual



For Ontario's Children's Aid Societies

Prepared by

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

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“Board Members are made, not born”

Harleigh B. Trecker, *Building the Board*

1. INTRODUCTION

This manual has been prepared by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and we trust it will prove to be of assistance to board members, both new and experienced.

Child welfare is the responsibility of each and every one of us as citizens. But a fortunate few of the total population have the privilege and honour of serving children through membership on a children's aid society board of directors or its committees.

Yours is a responsibility of the greatest magnitude. The decisions you reach, the actions you take through your professional staff, foster parents and volunteers, can have a lasting effect on the families and children served by your children's aid society.

To measure up to your responsibilities as a board member requires time, energy, commitment, dedication, conviction and a deep-rooted belief in the potential for good, which is to be found in each and every child and family with whom we come into contact.

How you measure up and what kind of contribution you make for the well-being of others, depends on you and you alone.

2. ESTABLISHMENT OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

From *The Child Welfare Act*, RSO 1980, Chapter 66, Part I.

Section 6(1)

Every society shall be incorporated under *The Corporations Act* or a predecessor thereof as a corporation without share capital and shall be approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Section 6(2)

Every society shall be operated for the purposes of,

- a) investigating allegations or evidence that children may be in need of protection;
- b) protecting children where necessary;
- c) providing guidance, counselling and other services to families for protecting children or for the prevention of circumstances requiring the protection of children;

- d) providing care for children assigned or committed to its care under this or any other Act;
- e) supervising children assigned to its supervision under this or any other Act;
- f) placing children for adoption;
- g) assisting the parents of children born or likely to be born outside of marriage and their children born outside of marriage; and
- h) any other duties given to it by this or any other Act.

3. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARD MEMBERS

As a citizen who has been elected to the board of directors of a children's aid society, the board member has many responsibilities vested in him or her under legislation. Many board members may be unaware of these responsibilities. For the board member to function effectively on behalf of children and families in the community, these obligations should be thoroughly understood.

A voluntary board, such as a children's aid society board, is one of the community's most essential resources. An individual becomes a director of such a board by virtue of the fact that he or she has been elected to the office in accordance with the requirements of *The Corporations Act*. As an incorporated society, and in respect of the administrative and service programs, various mandatory functions are specifically required of a society under *The Child Welfare Act*.

The children's aid society in your community was formed in the late 1890's or early 1900's, because concerned citizens, such as yourself, saw a social need which was not being met and came together to form an organization which would fill this need. Today in Ontario there are fifty-one such children's aid societies. Once totally funded through donations and private contributions, children's aid societies' statutory services are now funded, 50% by the Federal government (Canada Assistance Plan), 30% by the Provincial government and 20% by the municipality. The Ministry of Community and Social Services, under *The Child Welfare Act*, is responsible for seeing that the various mandatory functions are carried out. The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies acts as a co-ordinating and lobbying body for the fifty-one children's aid societies.

The Letters Patent, issued to a society under *The Corporations Act*, describe in some detail the duties required of a society and its board members. Each board member should study the Letters Patent and pertinent sections of *The Corporations Act* so that he or she becomes thoroughly conversant with these duties and responsibilities.

4. ATTRIBUTES OF THE BOARD MEMBER

An effective board member is one who will undertake to become familiar with the following:

- An understanding of the basic purpose and function of the society and the philosophy which supports it.
- An understanding of the statutory responsibilities of the society and its non-statutory services to the community.
- A knowledge of the society's origin and history. (Each society should make available to each member a brief history of the society.)
- An understanding of the existing policies and programs of the society and the reason for them.
- Information on the society's organizational structure.
- A clear picture of the sources of revenue and how these are expended.
- A knowledge of the various functions of staff, the key positions and a general knowledge of personnel practices of the society.
- Familiarity with the society's relationship with other agencies in the community and the inter-relatedness of the society with the two levels of government (municipal and provincial) and with the courts.
- An understanding of the role of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies.
- A realization of the rapidly changing role of public and private services of the community.

5. LETTERS PATENT AND SOCIETY BY-LAWS

As a corporation, the society is required to have a constitution and by-laws. The responsibility for developing these or amending them lies with the board of directors of the society.

The by-laws of the society and any amendments thereto, must be approved by the board, the membership and the Minister of Community and Social Services and filed with the Director of Child Welfare. Every board member should have a copy of the society's by-laws.

The by-laws and the society's Letters Patent should be reviewed from time to time to make sure that the actual operation of the society is within the goals and objectives in the Letters Patent and the by-laws. Procedures for amending the Letters Patent are set forth in *The Corporations Act*. By-laws may be amended in accordance with the requirements contained in the by-laws and in *The Child Welfare Act*.

The board member should be able to relate these documents to the changing needs of the community and thus ascertain whether amendments

are needed in light of new trends in service or changes in legislation governing the society, or both. Consultation with respect to amending by-laws, services and trends, is available through the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. Model by-laws were developed through the combined efforts of the Ministry of Community & Social Services and your Association. Letters Patent and by-laws should be readily accessible at all times and maintained in the society's offices.

6. MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY

Every children's aid society must maintain an active membership. An informed membership is essential to a meaningful and appropriate service delivery system in your community.

Society by-laws, which place narrow limits on "membership", should be carefully examined and weighed against the possibility that they may exclude broad and significant representation from the community. The by-laws of a society, approved by the membership and the Minister of Community and Social Services, are implemented by the board of directors.

Society members who have rendered long and/or outstanding service, may be honoured with a special type of membership — e.g. honorary or life membership.

If members are to be kept active and interested, they should be invited to participate in more than the annual meeting. Boards of directors should provide their members with learning opportunities such as educational meetings with films or speakers, service as volunteers and/or the privilege of serving on committees or the board itself. Members should receive regular mailings of literature and the *OACAS Journal*. They should be encouraged to participate in the Annual Conference of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies.

"Membership" in a society is not transferrable and ceases to exist upon the death of a member or when he ceases to be a member by resignation or otherwise, in accordance with the by-laws of the society.

Only members in "good standing" can participate in the society's business at general or annual meetings.

7. THE ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the membership of the society is called for the following reasons:

- to provide for the annual election of officers and directors according to the society's by-laws;

- to distribute the society's annual report to its members and thereby provide an opportunity for those in attendance to react to its content;
- to appoint auditors for the new society year;
- to deal with any other matters or issues of concern to the society and its membership.

Most of these functions are required under *The Corporations Act*. In addition, the Act is explicit on the timing of giving notice to the membership; the time and place of the meeting and the manner in which the voting process is to be carried out.

The annual meeting is an opportunity not only to comply with the legal requirements but to communicate with the membership and other segments of the community about the work of the society.

8. ELECTION OF DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

Board members are elected each year at the annual meeting. This is a requirement under *The Child Welfare Act* and *The Corporations Act*. Letters Patent and/or by-laws, may provide for election on a rotation basis.

A system of rotation of directors is allowed under *The Corporations Act* and this should be considered by a society for it is a good way in which to prevent "the self-perpetuating board", while at the same time providing for continuity of interest and experience.

Specific officers of the board, such as the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer may be elected at the annual meeting or they may be elected at the first meeting of the board from among their number.

Any vacancy on the board occurring during the year may be filled for the remainder of the term by the directors, providing a quorum of directors remain in office, or by a general meeting of members if there is no quorum.

9. COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As a corporation, the society is required to have a board of directors. The basis for establishing a board is written into the Letters Patent issued to the society by the Provincial Government of Ontario.

The Child Welfare Act requires the board to have an Executive Committee and stipulates certain requirements as to its composition.

A children's aid society board is required, under *The Child Welfare Act* of Ontario, to include on its Executive Committee, no fewer than four municipal representatives who are appointed by the councils they serve.

Apart from the nine person Executive Committee, the size of the board is not defined by legislation. The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies has observed that the average society board is composed of 19 members. The number should not be less than 19 as this would result in the Executive Committee always being a majority. Interested citizens who wish to participate in the activities of the society, should be encouraged to do so through service on committees of the board or in other volunteer capacities.

A majority of the board of directors constitutes a quorum, unless Letters Patent, Supplementary Letters Patent, or a special resolution of the board, ratified by the membership rule otherwise.

The Corporations Act requires that a quorum of the Executive Committee be a simple majority.

Beyond the requirements of legislation, the society should strive for a board which reflects a cross-section of the community. The best way to bring a variety of viewpoints and skills to a board is through an involved and aware membership.

10. GENERAL FUNCTIONS OF THE BOARD

A children's aid society is governed by its board of directors. It is the board which determines policy; selects its Local Director; initiates and/or approves of programs and services to be offered; is responsible for funds, both statutory and private, and exercises the power and authority vested in it by *The Child Welfare Act* and *The Corporations Act*.

Each member brings to the board a diversity of talent, experience, skill, interest and socio-economic background. The board, to be effective should be:

- Composed of persons vitally interested in the work of the society;
- Adequate in number to carry out its responsibilities;
- Aware of the geographic differences and needs;
- Fiscally responsible for the organization and accountable to the community;
- Comprised of persons able to reflect community views and concerns.

11. SOME OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ARE:

- Directing the organization according to the stated constitution and by-laws;

- Developing long and short range goals and objectives and approving programs related to them;
- Establishing priorities for programs and services (often based on funds available, time limitations and human and physical resources);
- Keeping abreast of community needs and trends so they may be reflected in the organization's policies and programs;
- Evaluating policies and program effectiveness, in response to community need.
- Selecting and appointing a Local Director in accordance with *The Child Welfare Act*, who is responsible for the management of the day-to-day operation of the society;
- Interpreting, in an informal way, the role and function of the organization to the community;
- Planning for and vigorously pursuing sufficient funds to operate the organization effectively;
- Approving and monitoring the society's operating budget and other financial and material resources;
- Being responsible to the community for the efficient management of the funds;
- Approving negotiated contracts with respect to salaries, wages and benefits for staff.
- Assuring the maintenance of accurate financial records;
- Having audited financial reports available for study by all members and citizens at large;
- Ensuring that the society is adequately insured for all possible and/or likely eventualities;
- Establishing sound personnel policies and procedures. They must be readily available to all staff both at the time of and during the staff members' period of employment;
- Striving for an effective working relationship between the board and staff.

12. INTEGRITY OF THE BOARD

For the society to function effectively, it is essential that it enjoy the trust of the community.

The board of directors, through its composition, through its transactions and its relationships and interests, must not give even the appearance of a "conflict of interest" either personally or collectively.

For example, *The Corporations Act* permits the directors to pass by-laws to regulate, among other things, "the qualifications and remuneration of the directors". Such by-laws, however, cannot be legally implemented until confirmed by a general meeting of the society, "called for that purpose". While individuals usually serve voluntarily, it is permissible for a director to be re-imbursed for out-of-pocket expenses incurred while on society business. Per diem or other similar types of payment may not be advisable and any movement towards such payments should be carefully weighed in relation to the voluntary nature of the board member's duty. It could well be that payment to directors might detract from the way in which the community perceives the society and the board in particular.

A board member must declare any interest he or she may have in any financial transaction of the society and refrain, not only from voting on, but participation in, the discussion of the issue.

For the foregoing reasons, it would seem inappropriate for staff members to be elected members of the board proper. Staff can and should be provided with the opportunity to contribute through involvement and/or membership on appropriate committees of the board. There should always be a clear channel to the board for staff input on various matters and these should be known to the board and staff alike.

13. COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD

The role of a committee is purely advisory unless specific decision-making powers have been delegated to it by the board of directors. Committees should be appointed on an annual basis and their composition should be subject to board review.

Authority flows from the board to the Local Director and through the Local Director to the staff. A committee's function is to bring the wisdom and judgment of a group of interested and informed persons to bear on a specific area of the society's responsibility.

It is important for a committee to be able to differentiate between those matters which require board and/or staff response:

- a) The staff should be making decisions where procedure is involved; and
- b) the board, where the subject involves policy.

Committee advice and assistance is generally in the form of recommendations to the board.

There are three main types of committees essential to board effectiveness, namely: administrative, services and special or ad hoc. It can be just as inappropriate to have too many committees of the board as to have too few. All committee chairmen should be members

of the board. The composition of the committees (except for the Executive Committee) should be representative of the board and, where possible and appropriate, staff and members of the community at large. This not only keeps committees and boards active, but is an effective way to add expertise, involve more of the community in the work of the society and bring to the society, a reflection of public opinion.

Committees facilitate the work of the board by considering matters referred to them in greater depth than would be possible if the board were to deal with them as a committee of the whole. Committees isolate the key issues requiring board consideration, thus freeing up the board's limited time to deal with more urgent or pressing matters.

Policy is often conceived in committee. The committee does the spadework. The chairman reports the findings to the board and makes recommendations. The board takes final action unless it has delegated its decision-making powers to the Executive Committee as an interim measure, say over the generally recognized summer recess when some boards choose not to meet.

The President of the society and Local Director should be ex-officio members of all committees.

The reports of committees should be distributed to board members in advance of the meeting, whenever possible, so that board members may formulate their opinions and questions prior to the board meeting. It is as a result of committee work, that the board member gains a more intimate knowledge of the detailed operation of the society and is, therefore, better able to discharge his/her responsibility in the more formal meetings of the board proper. Too many boards are in "committee of the whole" too much of the time. This limits the amount of business that can be considered by the directorate.

The attendance of the Local Director, or his designate, at all committee meetings as a resource person can assist in preventing the oversight of important considerations. Care should be taken to avoid having the board duplicate the work of the committees. The board should, therefore, consider the recommendations of the committee; amend as they see fit or refer issues or concerns back to the appropriate committee for further study.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is permissive under *The Corporations Act* and mandatory under *The Child Welfare Act*. It is the board's responsibility under *The Child Welfare Act* to delegate specific authority and responsibilities to this committee. However, care should be taken to assure that the Executive Committee, by virtue of powers granted to it by the board, does not usurp or replace the board's role so that the board as a whole, merely functions as a rubber stamp of Executive Committee decisions. Boards falling into this

practice may well find board interest on the part of its members greatly undermined.

Nominating Committee

A Nominating Committee of four to six persons is recommended. It should be of sufficient size to represent various interests, but sufficiently limited in size to be effective. Board members appointed to a Nominating Committee should not be those eligible for re-election, for this, if not observed, could result in boards tending to perpetuate themselves.

Suggested Ways to Structure a Nominating Committee:

1. Direct appointment by the board as a whole;
2. Election by the membership at the annual meeting;
3. Election of some by the membership and appointment of others by the board.

Members of the Nominating Committee should have these qualifications:

1. Experience on the board of a society;
2. A thorough knowledge of the society's function;
3. The capacity to treat the business of the committee in confidence.

Nominations may be received by mail and in advance of the annual meeting. The permission of the nominees is essential and this, together with biographical material, can be circulated to the voting members before the annual meeting. Another method is a combination of this, with nominations from the floor or from the floor only. Unless carefully monitored, the latter option could lead to a "packed meeting", the result of aroused emotions. Boards elected in anger could result in decisions being made during their term in office, which could have far-reaching and perhaps serious detrimental consequences for the society and the children it serves.

The Nominating Committee's report or slate of candidates is presented directly to the membership at the annual or special general meeting called for election purposes. Where there are more candidates to vote for than vacant positions on the directorate, a vote by secret ballot is recommended.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is usually chaired by the Treasurer of the society. For practical reasons, board members only should serve on this committee, and it is recommended that some municipal representatives be included. The committee's role is to prepare and present to the board, the financial forecast or service plan of the society and recommend its approval. The

board determines the method and frequency of reporting to the board, the municipality and the community regarding the society's finances.

Personnel Committee

This committee deals with matters relating to personnel and employment practices. It is responsible for preparing written policy on staff qualifications and job descriptions and for the recommending of salary levels for the various categories of staff. Its activities and recommendations are subject to the approval of the board proper, unless otherwise authorized by the board.

While the engaging of personnel is the responsibility of the Local Director, the committee should determine the conditions of employment. The essential areas are:

- a written job description for each position in the agency;
- a salary schedule showing starting salaries, increments, maximum salary levels for each position;
- a personnel practices manual covering such points as hours of work, sick leave, employee benefits, legal holidays, vacation, leave of absence for educational purposes, severance pay, application for employment criteria, termination of employment procedures, method of periodic staff evaluation; and
- all other matters related to personnel and the part they play in the fulfillment of the agency's goals and objectives.

While an administrative committee, the Personnel Committee is usually comprised entirely of board members; however, it is essential to take into consideration the views of the staff. Contact with staff should be maintained on a regular basis. This may be achieved by inviting representatives of the staff to attend meetings as observers or to respond to, or present issues of mutual concern for discussion.

Negotiating Committee

Where there is a collective agreement, the board should appoint a Negotiating Committee.

Property Committee

This committee is normally responsible for the maintenance of properties owned or leased by the society, including land, buildings, office equipment, automobiles, etc. As a committee, they should also play a significant role in the overall budgetary process, consistent with their responsibilities.

Service Committees

Service committees are formed for the purpose of joint study by board and staff of problems arising in the area of service to clients and the development of policy to effect solutions. These services may involve protection and/or preventative service to families.

In the process, board members and other lay persons become familiar with the service programs offered, while bringing to staff members the views and opinions of the community served by the society.

Such committees must have clearly defined and understood goals and objectives, both long and short term. Committees dealing with services are not set up for the primary purpose of "educating" board members, although this can be a very helpful experience. They are functional committees. They exist to develop and recommend policy and program components, and to assist in finding solutions to service issues faced by the society.

Public Relations Committee

This committee serves in an advisory capacity to the board and staff on public relations issues. Such a committee should be sensitive to community concerns about the society and propose policies and programs to the board to increase the public's awareness of the society and its role.

Policy and Planning Committee

Having meaningful, realistic and attainable goals and objectives should be of primary concern to all boards and staff.

It is therefore, most important that the board of directors approach this task with the determination, far sightedness and daring needed to meet the ever growing demand for quality service to families and children.

Goals and objectives both long and short term, should have a high priority rating in each and every society. The planning process can be a most valuable experience for board and staff alike, and should be approached jointly and in a spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm.

While financing plays a major role in the setting and realization of goals and objectives, it should not be used as an excuse to fail to plan when funding does not seem to be present or forthcoming in the foreseeable future. Often priority setting, regrouping or reallocation of staff and related available resources already in existence, can result in effective planning and goal attainment. Boards and staff alike must guard against only introducing change as a reaction or a response to something that has already happened; e.g. an unexpected shift of age of children in care; a marked increase in requests for service through intake; a pronounced drop off in the availability of foster care resources, etc. While all of these cannot be anticipated in advance, there are usually trends or signs which board and staff should address in advance of, not in reaction to, shifts in service need or focus.

Other

Special purpose or ad hoc committees may be formed from time to time to deal with such matters as by-laws, legislation, or specific issues which should or should not be addressed by the society. These committees are usually terminated on conclusion of their assignment, with appropriate recommendations to the board of directors.

14. MINUTES AND OTHER RECORDS

The decisions reached, whether by the board as a whole, its Executive Committee, or any other committee, must be recorded in minutes which form the official record of the deliberations. Under *The Corporations Act*, minutes of such meetings are admissible as evidence of proof of the proceedings for which the society may be held accountable. These and other records of accounts, where applicable, must be kept at the head office or in a place of safekeeping and readily accessible to those entitled to peruse them.

The Corporations Act lists several circumstances under which minutes are open for inspection. It is therefore extremely important that minutes and other documents are kept in a business-like manner.

With respect to lists of directors and members of the society, *The Corporations Act* of Ontario states that a person wishing to obtain a list of the membership must file an affidavit with the President or other person authorized by the board of the society, and in a form provided by *The Corporations Act*. It is contrary to the law to use such a list for advertising, soliciting or other purposes not connected with the society.

15. THE BUDGET AND SERVICE PLAN

Preparation of the Service Plan and presentation of the estimate of expenditures are essential to the society's fulfillment of its responsibilities. All members of the board should participate in the discussion of the budget and, particularly, those municipal representatives on the directorate who will be called upon to make comments on the budget when it goes before their councils.

The Child Welfare Act of Ontario outlines the time frame under which a society must operate in order to qualify for provincial and municipal funding.

In presenting the budget to municipal or other government bodies, the society should be represented by its best informed board persons. It is their responsibility to speak to the budget content based on their knowledge of the society's programs. The President, Treasurer and Local Director should be present along with others so interested or designated by the board.

If a disagreement arises among the three parties involved — the society, the municipality and the Ministry — provision is made under *The Child Welfare Act* for a review of the estimates.

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies has an important role to play in the child welfare budget review proceedings as per Section 12, ss.1, of *The Child Welfare Act*:

- (1) For the purposes of this section and section 11, a child welfare review committee shall consist of:
 - (a) one member appointed by the Minister, who shall be chairman;
 - (b) one member appointed by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies; and
 - (c) one member appointed by the council of the municipality or the District Child Welfare Budget Board, as the case may be.

Commencing with the budget year of 1981, Ontario's children's aid societies have been required to prepare and submit "Service Plans" both to their respective municipalities and the Province, on a yearly basis.

The "service plan" approach, adopted by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, obligates societies to:

- (1) Account for their revenue and expenditures for the past year or years;
- (2) Analyze and explain statistical trends applicable to all areas of service;
- (3) Project their staffing, program and overall budgetary requirements for the year ahead;
- (4) Formulate strategies and plans, both long and short range, in order to strengthen the quantity and quality of their service to families and children;
- (5) Monitor "experience" trends in terms of services and related dollars, throughout the year.

The service plan process requires input and involvement of board and staff, as well as municipal and ministry personnel, in the preparation. It, therefore, becomes the "blueprint" from which the society develops, and fulfills its service mandate within the appropriate legislation and the policies enacted by its board of directors.

16. EVALUATING SOCIETY PERFORMANCE

How does a board measure a society's performance? How does the board member assess the quality of the service the society is giving? These sources of information are some of the measurement tools:

- a) The Local Director's monthly and annual reports;
- b) The comparative financial report;
- c) Any Ministry survey, analysis or interpretation of the child welfare field as it applies to CAS;
- d) The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' Annual Survey of the societies;
- e) The reaction of the community;
- f) The observations and recommendations arising out of an Operational Review;
- g) Market research on client satisfaction.

The Local Director's Monthly & Annual Reports

A Local Director should provide the board, prior to its meetings, with statistical and other material related to the society's activities during the period reported. This should include a record of the volume of cases handled in comparison with the previous year's experience. A quarterly analysis should be available showing trends and expected projections. There is a danger of confusion if too many figures are used; on the other hand, too skimpy a report may not present a realistic picture. A written "qualitative" report should also be presented by the Local Director. It need not be extensive, but should serve as an evaluation of the current and/or pressing problems as well as the programs or steps being taken to resolve them.

The report at the end of the year can be a lead-in to the annual report which should be made available to each and every member both at and following the annual meeting. The year-end report to the board provides an opportunity to evaluate the society's program efforts in relation to its anticipated budget for the succeeding year.

It is a proven, well recommended practice for the Local Director to involve other members of staff in the preparation and presentation of these reports wherever practicable and appropriate.

The Comparative Financial Report

This report should consist of:

- 1) a balance sheet, and
- 2) a comparative financial statement.

The balance sheet is a clear indication as to how the society stands financially. The comparative statement shows costs in relation to the

monthly or quarterly operation for the current and preceding year. If possible, it should include projections of cost to the end of the year. This enables the board to respond to any trends in expenditures and revenue which were not foreseen when the budget was prepared.

Ministry Surveys of the Child Welfare Field

Periodically, the Ministry tabulates all the statistical data provided by the fifty-one societies. These statistics indicate trends on a province-wide basis. They can be used for comparison purposes between societies and communities of comparable size, population density and with similar socio-economic factors.

OACAS Annual Survey

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies conducts an annual survey of the fifty-one children's aid societies. The results are made available to the societies in the early Fall and provide valuable information which is essential to the preparation of annual Service Plans and budgets. The content of the survey includes such matters as salary levels, personnel practices, rates of board to foster parents, size of staff and board, staff development methods, as well as information pertaining to programs offered. This information can be used to evaluate the society's performance in relation to other children's aid societies in the Province.

Community Reaction to CAS Services

Board members should be alert and receptive to public comment on the society's activities, whether from individuals or from the media. Board members should be able to interpret the society's role to the public in general terms. It is, therefore, important that all board members be as conversant as possible with the society's policies and programs.

Operational Reviews

The 1980's saw the Ministry of Community & Social Services introduce the "Operational Review" of Ontario's children's aid societies. Conducted by teams selected by the Ministry, the review process was designed to provide an outside assessment of the administration, programs and general overall effectiveness of societies in fulfilling their legislated mandate.

Through the involvement of the staff, board and representatives of the community, it was hoped that societies would be enabled to evaluate their efforts of the past, take stock of their present status in the delivery of services to families and children, and most important of all, plan for the future, by using past experience and the anticipated needs of the community as their frame of reference.

The Operational Review process is by contractual agreement between the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Society's board of directors.

A board should approach reviews with an open mind and be prepared to respond to commendable comments as well as constructive criticism of their society's service delivery system to the community.

The review experience can only be deemed to be a helpful exercise if both the society and the Ministry approach their respective responsibilities in a positive spirit, thus laying the groundwork for more meaningful service to families and children both in terms of quantity and quality, in future years.

Market Research on Client Satisfaction

There is a growing trend for societies to conduct surveys amongst their clientele to assist them to evaluate their services to the community.

17. RELATIONSHIPS

Board — Staff — Clients

While the board establishes policy, the implementation or carrying out of the policy is the responsibility of the Local Director and staff.

Board members in the fulfillment of their role do not generally have direct contact with clients. Where direct contact is made by a client with a board member, the board member should refer him or her to the staff for assistance. However, the board member has the right to know whether or not service has been provided to the client. A board member should not interfere in the handling of a case by approaching individual staff members. Such concerns, if they exist, should be conveyed to the Local Director.

If a case must be referred to the board or a committee, the client's name should be withheld. It is the "situation" — not the person — that the board or committee should discuss, unless there are special circumstances which would necessitate the revealing of names.

It is questionable whether a board member should permit his or her name to be used as a reference for employment with the society or by a foster or adoption applicant. It is probably wise not to become involved in either capacity as the support or lack thereof could create a conflict of interest or embarrassing situation for the board member.

Board — Staff

Board and staff work co-operatively to carry out the objectives of the society. This is the prime responsibility of each, both indirectly and collectively. The

board relies upon the ability, training and experience of staff to provide service of the highest quality to the families and children of the community. Committee and board meetings are the generally recognized avenues for board and staff to think and plan together and to share co-operatively in the provision of service to the area under the mandate of the society and the field of child welfare.

The Local Director is employed by the board of directors and is, therefore, responsible to the board as a whole. He or she is required to implement policies as determined by the board and consistent with the requirements of *The Child Welfare Act*. In the process, the Local Director is:

- Authorized to expend funds within the limits of the annual budget and service plan as approved by the board;
- Responsible for bringing to the attention of the board, the need for special and exceptional expenditures not included in the budget;
- Required to report to the board if it is not possible to operate within the limits of the budget approved by the board;
- Expected to serve as an advisor to the board on policy and program issues which affect the services provided by the society;
- Responsible for employing staff members within the classifications and salary ranges approved by the board. Board members should bear in mind that the staff are responsible to the Local Director or to a person designated by him or her, not the board as a whole or any individual officer or director. In the supervision, direction and deployment of personnel, the Local Director is governed by the documented personnel practices and procedures approved by the board.

Foster Parents as Partners

Foster parenting has become an increasingly demanding and responsible role. It requires more dedication, commitment and expertise than ever before. Children's aid societies regard their foster parents as partners and colleagues in their joint efforts to further the best interests of children.

It is the responsibility of the board to see that foster parents have an appropriate channel to communicate their concerns to the society and that all foster parents are fully aware of the procedure they should follow. To encourage a harmonious relationship and clearer communication between the society and its foster parents, the society should:

- a) encourage foster parents to take upgrading courses in child care from the society, the ministry or a community college; and

- b) make it possible for foster parents to serve on appropriate committees of the board.

Volunteers

Traditionally, the children's aid volunteer has taken care of the clothing room, been a driver, manned the clinic, addressed envelopes and performed a host of other routine tasks. With the broadened concept of service to families, children's aid societies have found other meaningful and perhaps more satisfying roles for volunteers to fill. Their contribution to the work, particularly in times of constraint, can be of great assistance to the society as it tries to stretch its available dollars as far as possible.

A more recent development has been the recruitment of volunteers from the "client group" and involving them in self-help projects. This contribution of time and effort can be of great value to "the client volunteer" and to the society as a whole.

Board members can often help in the recruitment of volunteers where particular expertise is needed on committees or where an individual has special skills or talents to assist clients as well as staff.

The board as a whole should plan to meet and express their appreciation to volunteers at some point in the year. There can be no better way to involve members of the society and the community at large. This is especially so if the society's programs include a broad range of voluntary activities calling for various levels of abilities over both the long and short span of time.

Boards and societies are cautioned against recruiting too many volunteers at one time, and then having no assignments for them. A volunteer who relates to the society initially in a very positive, enthusiastic way, can easily be discouraged if he or she hears nothing from the society for weeks on end, by way of an assignment. Therefore, strive for a proper balance of program assignments and available volunteers.

A volunteer bulletin or newsletter published monthly or every other month can do wonders to maintain volunteer interest and support of the society's efforts.

18. ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

The OACAS, as it is commonly referred to, was formed in 1912, a consensus having been reached at that time by the children's aid societies of the Province, that a single voice was needed to reflect the wishes and concerns of its member agencies.

As far back as 1914, the OACAS requested the Government of Ontario, to submit, for its consideration, legislative changes being contemplated which might have a bearing on services to children. Thus began a close partnership which has been strengthened in the intervening years.

In 1920, the OACAS was incorporated under *The Corporations Act of Ontario* and Letters Patent issued.

OACAS's Board of Directors

The OACAS is governed by a board of directors elected at the annual meeting of its membership. The OACAS's by-laws enable it to elect its board by the rotation method.

The Board of Directors is comprised of twenty-one directors representing twenty-one regions in Ontario. One-third or a total of seven of the directors must be Local Directors of its member agencies.

Through several committees, each chaired by a member of the directorate, issues of vital concern to member societies are addressed. Standing Committees are: Executive, Finance and Personnel, Nominating, Services, Conference, and Public Relations. Additional ad hoc committees, such as Resolutions and Legislation, are struck as the need arises.

A candidate for the Board of Directors must have served at least two years on the board of directors or the staff of a member agency or organization and continue to serve the agency or organization as a board, committee or staff member during the term of office as a director of the Association. The term of office of elected directors is three years. The President is normally chosen from amongst the non-staff members of the board.

Membership in OACAS

It is the children's aid society as a corporation, which holds membership in the Association. All member societies are entitled to send *four* voting delegates to the annual meeting — two lay members and two staff members, regardless of the size of the society.

The by-laws provide for Section status and any group of individuals associated with a member agency which is primarily interested in any aspect of welfare service to children and families, may be recognized as a Section, subject to the approval of the board and the membership.

Membership Fees

Membership fees are paid by the societies on an annual basis. According to Association by-laws, a society, agency, or organization shall be declared a member in "good standing" upon payment of the membership fee or required portion thereof, prior to the annual meeting in the year in which it is due.

Membership may be terminated or a member may be suspended (for a definite or indefinite period) by the members, for failure to pay dues or to comply with such conditions and terms of membership as the members may then prescribe.

The fee schedule is determined by the size of individual agency approved budgets, and this schedule is evaluated at appropriate intervals. Any and all changes must first be approved by the combined membership of the fifty-one societies at the Association's Annual Meeting, or at a special meeting convened by the board of directors.

Services Provided

— The Association offers consultation services to societies on concerns pertaining to budgets, programs, staffing, amalgamation with other CAS's, selection of personnel, including the appointment of Local Director, and by law, has an official role to play in Child Welfare Review hearings as per *The Child Welfare Act of Ontario*.

— The Association endeavours to maintain a roster of key resource personnel of proven experience to assist societies having special problems such as key vacancies while awaiting new personnel appointments.

— The Executive and Associate Executive Directors are in regular attendance at zone meetings of the Local Directors throughout the Province, to learn of their concerns and to up-date them on developments of interest to the societies. These exchanges often necessitate follow-up work by the OACAS staff, to clarify or expedite matters for the societies concerned.

— The Association plans, coordinates, and conducts workshops, seminars, training sessions for board, staff, and foster parents, throughout the year. The OACAS Annual Conference draws participants from all parts of the Province as well as from Canada as a whole and the United States. Open forums, workshops, and an opportunity to exchange views with one's colleagues, make this a meaningful experience. The Association's Annual Meeting is held at this time.

— The Association maintains a close contact with an insurance brokerage firm, to make certain that all essential areas of coverage for societies are addressed and the services provided are at the least possible cost to societies consistent with appropriate coverage.

— The Association responds to issues pertaining to legislation, funding, and standards, consistent with sound child welfare. The Association encourages input from its member societies in its efforts to present a united position on behalf of the children's aid field.

— The Association regularly liaises with the Ministry of Community and Social Services and other appropriate branches of government re matters of importance to its member societies.

— The Association provides legal advice to societies re interpretation of the legislation they are expected to administer.

— The Association compiles and circulates an Annual Survey to all societies re salary scales, benefit packages, rates of board, clothing allowances, programs being offered, size of boards of directors, staff, membership, and volunteer participation, as well as providing other current and helpful data needed by societies.

— In order to keep the societies informed, OACAS circulates five times a year a *News & Views* publication, as well as offering a newspaper clipping service of articles appearing throughout Ontario's daily and weekly press, having a bearing on CAS responsibilities and activities. A monthly publication, entitled the *Journal* is also published, and has a circulation in excess of 12,000.

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies serves as a voice for its member agencies when issues of general concern are addressed by the news media. The promptness of the Association's response is often of great importance in strengthening community understanding and appreciation of the efforts being made by Ontario's children's aid societies to help and protect the children of this province.

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