

# Toolkit: Dress Purple Day 2024

OCTOBER 25, 2024



Ontario Association of  
Children's Aid Societies

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## How to Use the Dress Purple Day 2024 Toolkit

This toolkit is intended to support child welfare agencies, community-based organizations, service providers, direct service staff, provincial partners and individuals in recognizing and participating in Dress Purple Day 2024, taking place on Friday, October 25.

In addition to calling on Ontarians to “dress purple” to show their support for children, youth, and families facing challenges, this year’s campaign also includes a call to government to strengthen social infrastructure in communities across the province so children, youth, and families can access the right care, at the right time, close to home. We will be wearing purple this year to send a clear message to Ontario — strong, healthy communities matter.

Join us in highlighting the important role individuals and communities play in supporting children, youth, and families facing challenges and advocate to government to do more to help them thrive.

This Toolkit Includes:

[About Dress Purple Day, Dress Purple Day 2024, and Historical Context](#)

[Goals of Dress Purple Day 2024](#)

[Key Messages](#)

[A Call to Better Support Children, Youth, and Families](#)

[Join the Campaign](#) (including a template letter for MPPs, social media messages, visual assets, and additional resources)

## About Dress Purple Day

Every October, the [Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies](#) (OACAS) and children’s aid societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies (child welfare agencies) across the province, in partnership with government, community-based organizations, service providers, direct service staff, and individuals, raise awareness about the important role individuals and communities play in supporting children, youth, and families facing challenges through the provincial Dress Purple Day campaign.

The Dress Purple Day campaign aims to raise awareness about the supports and services available in communities across Ontario, including through child welfare



agencies, and how they can be accessed. It reminds community-based organizations and service providers about the importance of working in partnership to provide early intervention and prevention services to children, youth, and families that need short- or long-term support. The campaign also reminds children and youth that they have rights to safety and well-being in all spaces, including at home, at school, and in their community.

Dress Purple Day is the last Friday of October. This year, Dress Purple Day will take place on **October 25**.

## Dress Purple Day 2024

In 2023, OACAS called on government, community-based organizations, service providers, direct service staff, provincial partners, and individuals to share what Dress Purple Day meant to them and to remind children, youth, and families facing challenges that services and supports are available. However, we know that many children, youth, and families do not have easy and equitable access to community-based programming and initiatives vital to their health and well-being. In some communities, the necessary supports and services just do not exist or there are lengthy wait times that make access impossible.

That's why, this year, OACAS is calling on Ontario to step up and strengthen social infrastructure in communities across the province. Children, youth, and families should have timely access to high-quality, trauma-informed supports and services that are identity-affirming and inclusive, and meet their unique needs close to home. We hope you will lend your voice and join OACAS in urging the province to ensure this is the reality for children, youth, and families in their communities.

## Historical Context

In 1992, the "purple ribbon campaign" emerged to educate the public in Ontario about child abuse. The campaign evolved from there to a province-wide, month-long campaign called Child Abuse Prevention Month. Every October, child welfare agencies, OACAS, and partners (i.e., government, community-based organizations, service providers) worked to teach the public about the signs of abuse and neglect, and the duty to report concerns of maltreatment to their local child welfare agency. The campaign was successful as a public education initiative; however, it had unintended negative consequences.



Indigenous and Black families shared that the campaign’s emphasis on reporting led to heightened and unwarranted surveillance. In many ways, the campaign was more harmful than helpful. Based on this feedback, in 2021, OACAS took the campaign in a different direction. OACAS focused the campaign on the importance of supporting children, youth, and families facing challenges and reminding the most vulnerable that they are part of a community that cares. Read more about that shift [here](#).

## Goals of Dress Purple Day 2024

1. To highlight how child welfare agencies work in partnership with local community-based organizations and service providers to support children, youth, and families facing challenges;
2. To advocate to government for the need to invest in social infrastructure so children, youth, and families can access the right care, at the right time, close to home;
3. To raise awareness that every child and youth has a right to safety and well-being in all spaces and that the community plays a role in protecting those rights; and
4. For OACAS and child welfare agencies to strengthen relationships with local community-based organizations and service providers supporting children, youth, and families, through virtual and/or live events and social media on the last Friday of October.

## Key Messages

- Every October, OACAS and children’s aid societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies (child welfare agencies) raise awareness about the important role that individuals and communities play in supporting vulnerable children, youth, and families in Ontario.
- Children, youth, and families across Ontario are facing significant challenges amidst a period of heightened economic vulnerability.
- Children, youth, and families facing challenges are not alone. Child welfare agencies are part of the broader network of community-based organizations and service providers dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of children, youth, and families. They work in partnership with local organizations



and service providers to ensure children, youth, and families receive vital early intervention and prevention services so they can thrive and stay together.

- Children, youth, and families should have easy and equitable access to high-quality, trauma-informed care that is identity-affirming and inclusive. For too many this is not the reality. For many children, youth, and families, they cannot easily access supports and services that promote their health and well-being close to home. That's because they may not exist in their community, or they may be facing long waitlists. This is unacceptable. Timely access to community-based care should not be determined by your postal code.
- Community-based organizations and service providers delivering culturally responsive, relevant, and identity-affirming care that centres the social determinants of health have become increasingly scant, siloed, and splintered.
- The government of Ontario must take immediate action to ensure community-based organizations and service providers have adequate resources to truly respond to the needs of the children, youth, and families in their communities.
- Weak social infrastructure and systemic gaps in access to community-based care are acutely felt by Indigenous, Black, racialized, newcomers and refugees, francophone, and 2SLGBTQ+ children, youth, and families, including those presenting with complex needs (i.e., social, emotional, developmental, mental health and addictions, etc.). These gaps are only compounded by location. Children, youth, and families living in Northern, rural, and remote parts of Ontario face unique challenges in accessing the right care, at the right time, close to home.
- We all have a role to play in building strong, healthy communities. This includes the Ontario government. The province needs to step up and ensure organizations are well equipped to work together to wrap around children, youth, and families when they need it most. The time is now. We cannot wait. They cannot wait.



- Young people have a right to safety and well-being in all spaces. And not just physical safety and well-being. Children and youth have the right to play and grow in spaces that are inclusive and identity-affirming and embrace all aspects of who they are (i.e., race, culture, gender and sexual identity, etc.).
- In circumstances where an adult has a concern about the safety or well-being of a child or young person, they should contact their local child welfare agency. Before contacting a child welfare agency, adults have a responsibility to check their personal biases before making a report. Stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, ability, poverty, and sexual orientation can lead to over-reporting, over-surveillance, and over-policing.

## A Call to Better Support Children, Youth, and Families

### What Child Welfare Agencies Do

Child welfare agencies are part of the network of community-based organizations and service providers dedicated to promoting the health and well-being of children, youth, and families across Ontario.

Child welfare agencies help protect children and youth who are experiencing abuse or are at risk of experiencing abuse physically, sexually, emotionally, or through neglect or abandonment. Child welfare agencies also provide early intervention and prevention services. They work in partnership with local organizations and service providers in their communities to ensure children, youth, and families get the right care, at the right time, close to home, so they can thrive and stay together.

Most cases that child welfare agencies encounter are not ones of extreme abuse or neglect. Families they support often face challenges such as poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment, mental health and addictions, as well as intersecting systems of power, privilege, and oppression. Indigenous and Black children, youth, and families face systemic anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism across sectors and over-reporting, over-surveillance, and over-policing.

In 97% of investigations, children and youth remain at home, and their families may receive early intervention and prevention supports and services so they can thrive and stay together. When it is not possible for children and youth to remain at home,



child welfare agencies coordinate out-of-home care with kin and alternate caregivers, as well as community-based organizations and service partners. Most children and youth receiving out-of-home care are placed in kinship service or customary care (2% of investigations) and fewer are placed in kinship care or other placement types (1% of investigations). (Source: [Ontario Incidence Study, 2018](#)) Over the past ten years, there has been a 19% increase in the number of children receiving out-of-home care being placed with kin and alternate caregivers.

## What Children, Youth, and Families Need

Child welfare agencies should be able to easily connect children, youth, and families to the right care, at the right time, close to home. But this is not the reality. Community-based organizations and service providers delivering culturally relevant, responsive and identity-affirming supports that centre the social determinants of health have become increasingly scant, siloed, and splintered due to chronic underfunding.

Earlier this year, the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO) released [a report](#) on the spending plan of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. The FAO highlighted that Ontario has underfunded MCCSS by an estimated \$3.7 billion less than is needed to fund existing programs and fulfill announced commitments. Further, the FAO projected continued shortfalls in the coming years.

Additionally, the [Ontario Nonprofit Network](#) (ONN) recently released a report with alarming findings regarding the health of the nonprofit sector. In [2023 State of the Sector](#), ONN shared results over the past four years which demonstrate that the demand for services and supports has been increasing, nonprofits are facing worsening economic hardships, and there is a persisting shortage of human resources. They also showed that nonprofits are cutting back programs and services to cope, waitlists are growing, and the number of closures is climbing.

Inadequate access to community-based care is acutely felt by Indigenous, Black, racialized, newcomers and refugees, francophone, and 2SLGBTQ+ children, youth, and families, including those presenting with complex needs (i.e., social, emotional, developmental, mental health and addictions, etc.). These gaps are only compounded by location. Children, youth, and families living in Northern, rural, and remote parts of Ontario face unique challenges in accessing the right care, at the right time, close to home





In this underfunded and fractured landscape, child welfare agencies are filling systemic gaps to ensure children, youth, and families receive short- or long-term support. Though agencies work tirelessly, it is more and more challenging to effectively work in partnership with local organizations and service providers to provide early intervention and prevention-focused wraparound services to the most vulnerable children, youth, and families.

## Our Call to Government

This year, we will also be wearing purple to send a message to the Ontario government — far too many children, youth, and families across the province are struggling to access the community-based care vital to their health and well-being.

Alongside partners, we are calling on the Ontario government to take immediate action to ensure community-based organizations and service providers across the province have adequate resources (i.e., funding, staff) to truly respond to the needs of children, youth, and families. The province must take a cross-ministerial approach to investing in community-based organizations and service providers and bolstering social infrastructure by:

- Developing and promoting integrated, wraparound approaches to service delivery so children, youth, and families have access to individualized, coordinated care that is easy to navigate and meets their unique needs.
- Making targeted investments in communities so that all children, youth, and families have access to the supports and services they need to thrive close to home, regardless of where they live.
- Addressing the systemic gaps and barriers to meet children, youth, and families where they are at, across all levels of care.
- Improving access to early intervention and prevention-focused programs and initiatives that ensure families can access the right care, at the right time, before they escalate and reach the point of crisis.
- Ensuring children, youth, and families presenting with complex needs (i.e., social, emotional, developmental, mental health and addictions, etc.) have access to highly specialized, intensive supports, services, and/or treatment responsive to their unique needs in their communities and also that children, youth, and families continue to receive seamless, consistent care as they transition to adult services, if needed, without losing support as they age.



Click [here](#) to read our open letter addressed to Premier Doug Ford.

The open letter is signed by organizations dedicated to supporting children, youth, and families across the province. They include municipalities and non-profits, as well as organizations in child welfare, immigration and refugee services, integrated youth services, mental health care, community health, child development and rehabilitation, child and family services, intellectual and developmental disabilities, hunger relief, housing, and social work.

## Join the Campaign

### Write to your MPP

Your MPP is interested in the priorities of their constituents. Use the message below to write to your local MPP by letter or e-mail about the Dress Purple Day campaign and share the open letter addressed to Premier Ford. We recommend personalizing your message by explaining why the campaign and social infrastructure matters to you.

Look up your riding and find your MPP [here](#).

### Template Letter

[NAME]  
MPP for [NAME OF RIDING]  
[CONSTITUENCY OFFICE ADDRESS]

Dear MPP [NAME],

My name is [YOUR NAME] and I am one of your constituents in [NAME OF RIDING]. Every October, the [Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies](#) (OACAS) and children's aid societies and Indigenous Child and Family Well-Being Agencies (child welfare agencies) across the province, in partnership with government, community-based organizations, service providers, direct service staff, and individuals, raise awareness about the important role individuals and communities play in supporting children, youth, and families facing challenges through the provincial [Dress Purple Day campaign](#).

The Dress Purple Day campaign aims to raise awareness about the supports and services available in communities across Ontario, including through child welfare

agencies, and how they can be accessed. However, many children, youth, and families cannot easily access community-based programming and initiatives. In some communities, the necessary supports and services just do not exist or there are lengthy wait times that make access impossible.

Earlier this year, the [Financial Accountability Office of Ontario](#) (FAO) reviewed and released a report on the spending plan of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. The FAO [estimated](#) that Ontario has allocated \$3.7 billion less than is required to fund existing programs and announced commitments. Further, the FAO projected continued shortfalls in the coming years.

Additionally, the [Ontario Nonprofit Network](#) (ONN) recently released a report with alarming findings regarding the health of the nonprofit sector. In [2023 State of the Sector](#), ONN shared results over the past four years which demonstrate that the demand for services and supports has been increasing, nonprofits are facing worsening economic hardships, and there is a persisting shortage of human resources. They also showed that nonprofits are cutting back programs and services to cope, waitlists are growing, and the number of closures is climbing.

That's why, this year, OACAS is calling on Ontario to step up and strengthen social infrastructure in communities across the province. OACAS and provincial partners sent an open letter to Premier Doug Ford. [Click here to read the open letter.](#)

The open letter is signed by organizations dedicated to supporting children, youth, and families across the province. They include municipalities and non-profits, as well as organizations in child welfare, immigration and refugee services, integrated youth services, mental health care, community health, child development and rehabilitation, child and family services, intellectual and developmental disabilities, hunger relief, housing, and social work.

Systemic gaps in access to community-based organizations and service providers delivering culturally relevant, responsive and identity-affirming care that centres the social determinants of health are acutely felt by Indigenous, Black, racialized, newcomers and refugees, francophone, and 2SLGBTQ+ children, youth, and families, including those presenting with complex needs (i.e., social, emotional, developmental, mental health and addictions, etc.). These gaps are only compounded by location. Children, youth, and families living in Northern, rural, and remote parts of Ontario face unique challenges in accessing the right care, at the right time, close to home.

The province must provide community-based organizations and service providers with adequate take immediate action to ensure community-based organizations and service providers across the province are able to truly respond to the increasing needs of children, youth, and families and effectively work in partnership.

I urge you to lend your voice and join OACAS in calling on Premier Ford to ensure that children, youth, and families have all the resources they need to thrive in their communities.

Sincerely,

[INSERT SIGNATURE]

## Social Media Messages

### X & Instagram

- On #DressPurpleDay2024, Ontario child welfare agencies raise awareness about the role that individuals and communities play in supporting vulnerable children, youth, and families. Join us Oct 25! #IDressPurpleBecause
- #DressPurpleDay2024 is a chance for [organization name] to show our support for the vulnerable children, youth, and families in Ontario. On October 25, we will dress purple. [oacas.org/dresspurpleday](https://oacas.org/dresspurpleday) #IDressPurpleBecause
- At [organization name], our mission is to support vulnerable children, youth, and families in our community. That's why we will dress purple on October 25 for #DressPurpleDay2024. Find out more at [oacas.org/dresspurpleday](https://oacas.org/dresspurpleday) and join us! #IDressPurpleBecause
- I'm here to help the children, youth, and families facing challenges in my community. That's why I dress purple on October 25 for #DressPurpleDay2024. Find out more: [oacas.org/dresspurpleday](https://oacas.org/dresspurpleday) and join me! #IDressPurpleBecause
- I'm showing up for the vulnerable children, youth, and families on #DressPurpleDay2024 by dressing purple and calling on government to invest in our communities so we can access the services we need, when we



need them. Act with me! Learn more at [oacas.org/dresspurpleday](https://oacas.org/dresspurpleday).

- This #DressPurpleDay2024, organizations across Ontario are calling on @ford nation to invest in social infrastructure so children, youth, and families have access to the services they need to thrive. Join me!  
[oacas.org/dresspurpleday](https://oacas.org/dresspurpleday) #IDressPurpleBecause

## Facebook/LinkedIn

### **We will dress purple on October 25 to show support for Ontario families. Will you?**

[organization name] is joining this year's Dress Purple Day campaign to raise awareness that we all have a role to play in supporting the children, youth, and families in our community who are facing challenges and to call on the Ontario government to do more to support those who need it most. Learn more about the campaign at [www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday/](https://www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday/) and join us! #DressPurpleDay2024

### **We all have a role to play in supporting vulnerable children, youth, and families in Ontario.**

On October 25, [organization name] will be dressing purple to show our support for the children, youth, and families in our community facing challenges. Find out more about the campaign at [www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday](https://www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday) and join the Dress Purple Day campaign to show your friends, family, neighbours and community that you are available to help. #DressPurpleDay2024

### **I'm joining the 2024 Dress Purple Day campaign! Are you?**

On October 25 I will be wearing purple to show my support for the vulnerable children, youth, and families in my community. I will also be calling on Premier Ford to invest in social infrastructure in Ontario so children, youth, and families have access to the services they need to thrive and stay together. Find out more about how you can get involved in the Dress Purple Day campaign at [www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday/](https://www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday/). #DressPurpleDay2024

### **This Dress Purple Day we remind families that help is available and no one is alone.**

Dress Purple Day is an opportunity to make sure children, youth, and families know that there are resources and services available to help them. On October 25, we will dress purple to remind them we are one of those places families can turn to for help.



Find out more about the campaign at [www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday/](http://www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday/)  
#DressPurpleDay2024

### **I'm calling on the Ontario government to invest in communities. Join me!**

On #DressPurpleDay2024 child welfare agencies and community partners are calling on Ontario to step up and strengthen social infrastructure in communities across the province. Children, youth, and families should have easy and equitable access to supports and services in their communities that are high-quality, trauma-informed, identity-affirming, and inclusive. Help us make this a reality for everyone! Read OACAS's open letter and learn more at [www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday](http://www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday).

## Campaign Assets

The visual elements of the campaign include:

- Graphics for Instagram, Facebook, and X/Twitter
- A Zoom background
- Profile picture filter

Download all assets at [www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday](http://www.oacas.org/dresspurpleday) or [here](#).

## Additional Resources

- The [Dress Purple Day Provincial Classroom Resources](#) were developed to support educators to engage in conversations with elementary, middle, and high school students about their safety and well-being in all aspects of their lives and their networks of support.
- Read our campaign brochure [Child Welfare in Ontario: A Shared Responsibility](#)
- Watch [our video to better understand child welfare](#).
- Read the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services' brochure [Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect: It's Your Duty](#)

