



**Building Bridges for the Success of our Children and Youth
Community Round Table
May 31, 2018**

Summary of Question and Answer Session

Following opening ceremonies, remarks from the moderator, and a presentation by Council members, there was an opportunity for community members to ask questions of members of the Community Advisory Council. The information shown below is not a verbatim account, but rather a summary of the questions and answers.

Community Advisory Council members present: Natalie Perryman (Co-Chair), Veralyn Alleyne (Co-Chair), Larry Johanson, Wanda Secord, Akilah Haneef, Sandra Forsythe, Raphael Francis, Leroy Clarke, Michelle Davis, Dawn Walcott Parris.

Moderator: Larry Johanson.

Question and Answer Session

Question 1: With respect to the anti-black racism strategy, I am worried that if the political system changes, will initiatives like this be supported and will the CAS follow through on it?

- **Answer (Akilah Haneef, Member of the Community Advisory Council [CAC]):**
On June 1, 2017 the government passed bill 144, the Anti-Racism Act in Ontario. They worked hard to get that done. It enshrines in law the work they are doing. Even if there is a new government they would have to change the law / repeal the act. That makes it more challenging – it is not impossible, they can overturn / repeal a law. Also funding could get cut, another government could come in and not fund it. Those are possibilities but it doesn't look likely, but we have a lot of support and it is unpopular to come in and say we are not going to support anti-racism.

Question 2: (The speaker) suspects that the majority of workers at Durham CAS are predominantly white, like other CAS's in GTA. (She) knows that efforts have been made to teach staff about anti-oppression, and knows there are policies and procedures. (She) wonders if this is being measured. If staff aren't doing the work, there will continue to be trite complaints etc. Where are we at in terms of measuring the success of this?

- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
It is exactly what people think - that CASs are predominantly white. In 2016 Durham CAS contracted with Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) to do a third party survey of our staff around diversity and inclusion. The results found that we are very reflective of our community in our staffing, particularly in our service departments. We will also undertake another review about 2 years from the first one, so in the fall of 2018. We will do this every other year, a temperature check on the diversity of our staff. It is important when a person from the community is involved with an institution like CAS, it goes a long

way to see someone who looks like you. But not every staff, we do have white and other staff in our organization. Part of our AO work that started in 2012 was around the learning, that is something we embraced, and is part of our directional statement in our strategic plan, we can't just check off a box and say we've done it. There is work we need to continue to do, in our organization and in every organization. We all have inherent biases. We need to keep looking at this and developing strategies, this work will continue in the organization.

Question 3: When you post (the presentation) on the agency's website, could you make the Intake Flow Chart bigger, so it can be seen / read easily. The intake flow chart is crucial.

- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
This is a good suggestion. As we think of AO (and accessibility) today, this is great feedback so the chart is accessible and readable. (Update: the flow chart can be found here: <http://durhamcas.ca/reporting-abuse/how-dcas-responds/>)

Question 4: (Referring to the presentation) Regarding the intake / referral process and when Durham CAS decides whether or not to proceed -- the report talks about physical force and maltreatment. Is there any ongoing support to Black families, newcomers to Canada, so they know what abuse is in our country?

- **Answer (Dawn Walcott Parris, Durham CAS Director of Services and Member of the CAC):**
These are new statistics to us. We started collecting aggregate data in February (Mandated requirement regarding identity based data), it is allowing us to look at some of these service factors. We can see now if there is something we need to address. The issue is how to get the message out proactively – what training, what learning looks like for families, preventative measures, so the issue doesn't get to our door. We are in the early stages and welcome suggestions.

Question 5: What about the stats from before February?

- **Answer (Dawn Walcott Parris, Durham CAS Director of Services and Member of the CAC):**
We have always tried to collect the stats, we didn't have same degree of consistency, or have at every stage of our service. We have known about our children in care, but we didn't always know about children coming in at Intake, or in Ongoing Service. We are now collecting this data at every stage of service, so it paints a clearer picture.

Question 6: Is there resistance to taking those statistics in terms of race, from clients or Society staff?

- **Answer (Isabel Khalaf, Durham CAS Director of Intake Services):**
This created some angst for application of data collection. We found out that people are interested in offering the information, it is voluntary – collecting information on children. They have the right to say no. It is very much a survey that is being applied in a standard methodical way for a standard of high reliability. Intake workers are implementing this process. It is a bit more work, but we haven't heard of any complaints or issues. Workers understand that it is linked to important service, leads to positive outcomes, and they are excited about the opportunity to participate in that. In terms of families, everyone is unique

and different – staff who are administering it are very skilled in explaining reasons, where the request comes from; overall families have been responsive when they understand the link and the connection with how the data will be used. So we are moving along quite significantly. If a family or individual said no, we would need to respect that.

Question 7: Is it too early to comment about compliance?

- **Answer (Isabel Khalaf, Durham CAS Director of Intake Services):**
There is a Quality Assurance piece that occurs at the conclusion of the Intake process. The supervisor will review the record, data standard, and if information is missing, there needs to be an explanation of family's right to refuse to provide the information.
- **Answer (Barb Gracey, Durham CAS Director of Ongoing Family Services):**
The experience in Family Service is similar to Intake. They have found families and children to be receptive to the questions, and staff are becoming skilled at asking questions in a sensitive, respectful way. There are some questions that are emotional for children. We try to approach it in a way that makes children feel comfortable in answering. We have the ability to engage the parent if the children are too young / non-verbal, to assist in answering the questions. One of the most difficult questions for children to answer is "what is your postal code?". It is somewhat different at Family Services – it is ongoing so they have a relationship and are known to families, which gives us a bit of an advantage. We have to complete the survey in one sitting, which can be problematic. But in general the families and children have been wonderful and we have had a truly remarkable and positive experience.

Question 8: What happens with the information collected on Black families, especially when it is considered trite reporting and inconsequential?

- **Answer (Dawn Walcott Parris, Durham CAS Director of Services and Member of the CAC):**
Children's Aid Societies are required to document every call and response. When a call comes through according to standards and regulations we must write down what we are told, who it pertains to, and what we are going to do (decision). If the decision is that we aren't required to follow-up, we must write that down.

Question 9: So the information stays with the CAS?

- **Answer:** Yes.

Question 10: So does this perpetuate anti-Black racism, especially if it is inconsequential?

- **Answer (Dawn Walcott Parris, Durham CAS Director of Services and Member of the CAC):**
The information recorded will say it was inadequate, and nothing of concern. The next person who sees that information, will be able to compare it with new information that comes in. It may turn out that there is a series of calls that are inconsequential. That can sometimes happen, and we see the pattern.

Question 11: Would they not look at practitioners going into the home?

- **Answer (Dawn Walcott Parris, Durham CAS Director of Services and Member of the CAC):**
Not every call results in us going into the home. If we see a pattern of calls that seem invalid, we can say “have you called before? What is this about?” We can begin to challenge the caller. It would give us pause to ask more questions. But we are obligated to keep that information. We can’t change the standards. We are audited on a regular basis. The Ministry has a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), and one of the requirements is to review our documentation, i.e., how thoroughly we have done this, in compliance with the standards.
- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
The Quality Improvement Plan came out of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario’s review in 2015; their concern was that standards of service were not being complied with.

Comment 12: If information is kept on file and not deemed adequate at the time, and another call comes in, the intake worker might see something different as they would go into the process. We wouldn’t want to throw the information away or not keep it there.

- **Answer (Dawn Walcott Parris, Durham CAS Director of Services and Member of the CAC):**
That is true – we have to look at all of the information all of the time, we don’t want to leave children unprotected.

Question 13: Re: training / skills around intake processes – is it ongoing, and is there an Anti-Oppressive worker presently?

- **Answer (Dawn Walcott Parris, Durham CAS Director of Services and Member of the CAC):**
Not at this time (i.e., an Anti-Oppressive worker), but it doesn’t mean there is no training. The AO manager position is vacant, we do however have an AO structure built into our organization. Within that structure there are a variety of committees that focus on specific areas of oppression, such as gender, services to Black families and South Asian families, and the LGBTQ community. They offer training and learning opportunities for staff.

Question 14: Re: AO training – is there a mechanism to ensure that when workers are documenting things, that they apply the AO framework and is there a process to monitor this? (The speaker indicated) she is a former CAS worker, and she saw a lot of blatant racism in the documentation. Is there a way of monitoring impact?

- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
What has happened and the evolution in Durham CAS, there has been training throughout. All of us are responsible for AO. At the beginning the AO Lead was taking it on their shoulders, but as we cascaded it through the organization, we learned that it is all our responsibilities. It is very important in the worker/supervisor relationship. We understand the concern about what has been written in the files, and referenced the “Sixties Scoop”. The work and clinical supervision that is happening around the application of the AO lens is one of the monitoring structures.
- **Answer (Isabel Khalaf, Durham CAS Director of Intake Services):**
It is an evolving process – but we are open to having the dialogue and these conversations. We are much less defensive than we were even a decade ago. In Intake Services, we have

become quite good at identifying these things. We are educating callers when we hear something that doesn't sit right. We are listening, and are more willing to listen and dialogue. Issues are being brought to the forefront – We see these as opportunities for learning, otherwise there is no evolution. We are also creating a space for staff to feel safe.

Question 15: Within training – are there specific trainings that focus on implicit bias?

- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
If the question is about anti-Black racism, there is a training opportunity coming up within the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS). It will be available in the fall and will be a mandatory training for all staff. Other than that, we don't have this specific opportunity at this time.

Answer (Melissa Bequette-Batchellor, Durham CAS Director of Human Resources):
We don't do "training" which is "one-off", we are going to be a learning organization, learning and developing. If we do just one thing, it is about "checking the box". Most staff have done the AO work through training and refreshers, so it is ongoing.

Question 16: Does Durham CAS have outside people who come in to support the learning?

- **Answer (Melissa Bequette-Batchellor, Durham CAS Director of Human Resources):**
We utilize the OACAS. We also go out and see what is happening outside the office, and send staff to development opportunities when we can. We are always looking for opportunities to move forward.

Comment (Natalie Perryman, Durham CAS Board of Directors, Co-Chair of the CAC):
With regard to the work of the CAC, and records being kept forever -- this will be part of a strategy / advocacy piece going forward. People need to know that CAS's cannot destroy the records. If people called in with something "iffy", if they knew the information would stay on record forever, and knowing that all CAS's will soon be on the same mandated province-wide system (CPIN). This is the advocacy piece for CAC, i.e., this is the message they are trying to get out to the community – particularly to education, police, and health – so they know the importance of reporting, but also the impact of that reporting when it is frivolous.

Question 17: The position of Manager of AO which is vacant – (the speaker) noted that it was posted last year. What came about from the posting, and how long has it been vacant?

- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
There have been two rounds of recruitment for the position, as we are looking for a particular skill set. We had great candidates with applicable skill sets (creativity, theory and practice) but we are looking for a broader skills set around strategic leadership, management. We had hoped the position would be filled by this point, it is a very important role. We want to get the right person for the job. We understand the importance of particular projects coming up, and have been trying to manage through existing structures. We are hiring internally from our service supervisors group, there will be a project manager (for up to 6 months – contract position) for two key things: tasks coming from the Community Advisory Council, and the One Vision One Voice (OVOV) Phase 2 work coming up in the near future (implementation phase). The project manager will be looking at those two

projects, and at the same time we will continue our recruitment for the position of Manager of AOP, Diversity and Equity. We will be engaging a search firm to look at this, as it is a fairly niche area of work/practice. We are finding more CASs and other organizations that are looking for this level of expertise.

Question 18: How long has the position been vacant?

- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
Since last July (i.e., July 2017).

Question 19: If it has been vacant since last July, how do we know we will find someone with the skills for that job?

- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
The position has changed. It was formerly an Integration Lead, when we were new to AO and needed to learn. We are in a different position now. We wanted to look at what we need as an organization, and we did this through a consultative process, including consultation with the agency's AO Steering committee, the Community Advisory Council, and the Durham CAS Leadership Team. Over a period of 2-3 months we developed a job description and posted it.

Question 20: The weight of all of that being on one person is a concern. (The speaker) suggests that the CAC support this effort. It shouldn't be one person / position – it is challenging, and is a mental health issue. The person will be burnt out – it is not a job for one person. There has to be another design to this, it can't just be one individual.

Comment (Larry Johanson, Member of the CAC):

(He) feels it is a Director level position, with managers underneath. But he hears the issue of money.

- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
It is about the funding. The Ministry does not provide the agency with funding to support any equity work. Although reading the Ontario Human Rights Commission report, there is a recommendation that has gone forth, saying that the government should ensure there is funding for this work.

Question 21: Would it be effective operation of the Community Advisory Council to educate the CAC members on the new Act? Are there plans to educate the members of the CAC about the new Act?

- **Answer (Dawn Walcott Parris, Durham CAS Director of Services and Member of the CAC):**
We have in-house counsel who can provide education to the CAC members at any point in time that the agenda allows for it. We haven't established the timeframe for this at this point, but is certainly something we can do at some point.

Question 22: There has to be education of the Council members so they know what the Act is. (the speaker) wants the CAC members to be able to answer the questions, not the Durham CAS staff.

- **Answer/Comment (Larry Johanson, Member of the CAC):**
Point taken.

Question 23: When the Durham CAS concludes an investigation that is “trite” reporting, they have to keep this information. Does the agency write or give the families any documentation about this? It causes anxiety for the families, and would help saying we thought the reporting was “trite”.

- **Answer (Dawn Walcott Parris, Durham CAS Director of Services and Member of the CAC):**
We are required by the standards to provide notification to every family at the end of the investigation, outlining the outcome; with the notification, it says yes there was something, or no there was not.
- **Answer (Isabel Khalaf, Durham CAS Director of Intake Services):**
The standards don't state how that is provided – it can be verbal (by telephone or in person), or in writing. We have a practice at to do closing letters at Intake Services, so that people (need to) know the outcome and that information is kept on the database.

Question 24: Call it racism – it is ok to have policies, but when you have policies, how do you hold people accountable for following those policies?

- **Answer (Melissa Beckette-Batchellor, Durham CAS Director of Human Resources):**
If someone says something that is not appropriate, they need to go to the HR Director who will deal with it. We have let staff know that this is what they should do.

Question 24: With respect to funding, there is no funding for the AO position. The agency's fiscal year runs April 1 - March 31; when they develop their budget, does the agency incorporate the required AO funding when advising the Ministry?

- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
In 2013/14 there was a new funding framework and for the first time, an accountability agreement for all children's aid societies. One of the stipulations is that we must balance our budget. So we develop a balanced budget, which within that, includes all of our needs, i.e., staffing, program, capital needs – everything.

Question 25: Does the budget increase sometimes?

- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
The agency's budget has been decreasing each year by 2%. The Ministry formula is based on children in care (service volumes) and socio-economic factors. Child welfare funding is about \$1.4 - \$1.5 billion provincially and the funding “pie” has been the same for the last number of years.
- **Answer (Dawn Walcott Parris, Durham CAS Director of Services and Member of the CAC):**
The funding formula produces a number, it is up to the agency to divide that up to meet all of its needs.

Question 26: Is there funding for dedicated anti-Black racism personnel? (referred to OVOV report)

- **Answer (Wanda Secord, Durham CAS Executive Director, Member of the CAC):**
Not unless the Ministry designates funding for that, which it doesn't currently.
- **Comment (Akilah Haneef, Member of the Community Advisory Council [CAC]):**
Perhaps it will come in phase two of the OVOV process.

Question 27: In the next review, would the CAC propose an accountability structure (AO structure) to see what that would look like?

- **Answer (Akilah Haneef, Member of the Community Advisory Council [CAC]):**
The CAC will need to talk about next steps for next year, they can talk about this.

Question 27: Referral sources (such as education, law enforcement) – is there a protocol? They impact the work we are doing, there is a need for collaboration.

- **Answer (Akilah Haneef, Member of the Community Advisory Council [CAC]):**
We need to better educate them on what is a proper referral. Some of these things are in the OVOV report phase 2, i.e., education of professionals who refer. We hope we will see some changes from this perspective.

Closing remarks by forum Moderator.