



Ontario Association of Young Parent Agencies
servicing infants, children and young parents - together

L'Association Ontarienne des Agences pour Jeunes Parents
servir nourrissons, enfants et jeunes parents - ensemble

JANUARY 2025

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear OAYPA members,

Happy New Year! I hope you all had a joyful holiday season celebrating with your teams, clients, friends and family! As we step into 2025, I want to take a moment to reflect on an extraordinary year and extend my heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support and dedication to the work of OAYPA.

This year, one of our most significant accomplishments has been the completion of our new [Policy Paper](#) and [Strategic Plan](#). These documents are more than plans—they represent our collective vision and commitment to advancing the needs of young families across Ontario. In the coming year, we'll leverage these tools to advocate for systemic change, enhance service delivery, and strengthen partnerships that empower young parents and their children to thrive.

This progress would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of each of you. The very fact that we received both client and provider responses from 100% of members for our policy paper demonstrates your commitment to our work. Whether participating in working groups, strategic planning meetings, reviewing materials, agency contributions towards the policy paper, lending expertise to advisory and executive committees, or advocating to regional supervisors about the work of our sector, your dedication has been instrumental in driving OAYPA's mission forward. Your collaborative spirit and tireless efforts ensure that the voices of young families are heard at every level of decision-making.

2024 also marked the final full year of funding for the **Ujima Project**. With funding coming to an end Jan 31, 2025, we have not yet confirmed a new source to sustain the project. Although this uncertainty presents a challenge, it also strengthens our resolve to find solutions.

Over its duration, this transformative initiative provided critical early literacy and developmental supports, and fortified our sector's capacity to deliver innovative, evidence-based interventions. The establishment of nine Early Childhood Development Hubs across the province stands as a testament to the power of collaboration.

Through partnerships with SickKids the Ujima Project has enriched staff expertise and standardized evidence-based practices, empowering them to meet the complex needs of young families. Staff have reported increased collaboration with community organizations and greater capacity to deliver trauma-informed, equity-focused care.

As we move forward, the insights gained from Ujima will shape its next chapter. Our focus now shifts to ensuring the project's sustainability and expansion. We submitted two proposals – solicited and unsolicited) to MCCSS highlighting our successful proof of concept pilot and making the case for sustainability. We are committed to securing long-term funding and embedding Ujima's core practices (evidence-based developmental screening, early literacy, attachment-based dyadic interventions, anti-oppression/anti-racism) across our sector, ensuring its legacy continues to grow and positively impact young families for years to come.

Thank you for your dedication, passion, and commitment to our shared mission. I look forward to working alongside each of you in 2025 as we continue to advocate for and support young families across Ontario.

Wishing you all a year filled with growth, success, and meaningful achievements. Together, we can make a profound difference in the lives of young parents and their children.

UJIMA PROJECT UPDATE



The Ujima Project has transformed the lives of young families across Ontario, providing unparalleled support and integrated services to vulnerable parents and their children. Launched in March 2022, 9 OAYPA member organizations (Abiona Centre – Project Trustee, Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health, Fresh Start Support Services, Regina's Place, Rosalie Hall, Rose of Durham, Rose of Sharon, St. Mary's Home and Youville Centre) led by Tamar Meyer, Bev MacKillop, Ekuia Asabea Blair, Lesley Barraball, Suzanne Flier, Jamie Cann, Jennifer Jewer, Jane Kenny, Anna Aitchison, Deanne Kukulewich, Kathleen Cummings, and Pete Embleton. The Ujima Project employs a dyadic care model designed to assist families with children experiencing developmental delays or complex special needs. By focusing on family navigation, early childhood development, and cross-sector collaboration, the project has demonstrated significant, positive outcomes for young families. This initiative has become a model for empowering young families to thrive.

A cornerstone of the project's success was the partnership with SickKids. The topics of all consultations are listed below along with the consultation webinar recordings. SickKids will continue to offer consultation sessions twice a month until June 2025. Please note that these consultation sessions are open to all OAYPA members. Meeting information and topics will be shared in the newsletter. Stay tuned for the final report in March 2024.

The Program Consultation Sessions linked the hubs provincially, as a community of practice and provided guidance, support and clinical knowledge to their daily work and client scenarios. The SickKids team of Gillian Thompson, Dr. Dafni Sadler and Jasmine Saleh, fostered a space that was safe and supportive for all of us in the work that we do and in the cases we hold. The aim of the consultations was to create a community of practice to share clinical strategies, de-brief cases presented by staff, and strengthen the skillset of all staff.

YEAR	TOPIC	DATE	RECORDING LINK
2023-2024	Vicarious Trauma	Oct 11, 2023	https://youtu.be/CTfjdK9l8zU
	Speech Language and Communication	Oct 25, 2023	https://youtu.be/Oe1ihnKg1tw
	Therapeutic Alliance; Frontline Experience	Nov 8, 2023	https://youtu.be/SY6i7RM5dkg
	Standards of Pediatric and Adolescent Care	Nov 22, 2023	https://youtu.be/VelhWmj8bH8
	Mood Dysregulation; Practical Approaches	Dec 13, 2023	https://youtu.be/BbvEHbxSXR8
	Mood Dysregulation; Part 2 Evidence in Practice	Jan 10, 2024	https://youtu.be/hHWhpB5H4PQ
	Supporting Families Through Transitions	Feb 28, 2024	https://youtu.be/sPocCxRlp54
	Domestic and Intimate Partner Violence	Mar 13, 2024	https://youtu.be/sGtd2DzKoac
	Child Maltreatment and Working with SCAN	Mar 27, 2024	https://youtu.be/aLMJgwpmBFE
	Youth at Risk for Sexual Exploitation Trafficking	May 22, 2024	https://youtu.be/ckfk9arqYSI
Nurse Family Partnership	Jun 12, 2024	https://youtu.be/E23Lo7O5tIs	
2024 - 2025	How do We leave it All Behind at the End of the Day	Sept 11, 2024	https://youtu.be/4UFDzN7iMTg
	Transitions in Speech and Language Services in..	Sept 25, 2024	https://youtu.be/jOdN3lo_hul
	From Red Flags to Healthy Connections in Relations	Oct 9, 2024	https://youtu.be/dIEBhICCAik
	Essentials of Working with Parents who have a	Oct 23,	https://youtu.be/InYy6

	Learning or Developmental Disability	2024	8rsLZg
	Harm Reduction, Motivational Interviewing & Talk...	Nov 13, 2024	https://youtu.be/mQzYTXB1Jlc
	That Won't Work: Strategies for Resistance	Nov 27, 2024	https://youtu.be/zbdHgfnpENU

OAYPA SOCIAL MEDIA

You can find OAYPA on X, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook! Help us spread the word—follow, like, share, retweet, and subscribe to our channels!

LinkedIn: [Ontario Association of Young Parent Agencies \(OAYPA\)](#)

Instagram: [@OAYPA](#)

Facebook: [Ontario Association of Young Parent Agencies](#)

X: [@TheOntarioAsso1](#)

🌟 **Special Feature:** January's **Agency of the Month** is Camino Wellbeing + Mental Health! 🌟

WHAT'S NEW

Report on the Homelessness Crisis in Ontario

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) released a comprehensive report on January 8, 2024, titled "[Municipalities Under Pressure: The Growing Human and Financial Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis](#)" that reveals the unprecedented and growing toll of homelessness on individuals, families, communities, and governments. Ontario's homelessness crisis has deepened significantly over the past decade, but the increasing proportion of chronic homelessness—people in prolonged or repeated episodes of homelessness—is a warning sign that our already unacceptable housing problem is on a trajectory to get worse. Children and youth now account for nearly 25% of those experiencing chronic homelessness with children aged 0-15 representing 12% and youth aged 16-24 accounting for 11%. These figures highlight the growing vulnerability of young people and the systemic gaps in services to support them. These numbers demonstrate systemic failures that extend beyond housing, reflecting deep gaps in healthcare, mental health services, justice systems, and more.

This report aligns with our [Policy Paper](#) recommendation to establish partnerships to develop and implement a housing strategy. Housing insecurity was cited as the #1 reason pregnant and parenting youth accessed services at our agencies. As we know, housing instability can strain parent-child relationships, disrupt child development, and perpetuate cycles of poverty.

The connection between this report and our Policy Paper provides a strong rationale for our recommendation that MCCSS partner with OAYPA and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) to create and implement a housing strategy for young equity-deserving families; a strategy that includes providing priority access to affordable, long-term family-friendly housing with wraparound support.

New CMHA Report on Mental Health and Ontario's Housing Crisis

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) recently released a [report](#) on the current state of mental health in Canada. The report highlights how Ontario's current housing crisis disproportionately impacts those with mental illnesses. Rising housing costs and shortages, combined with poverty, exacerbate challenges for those with mental health and substance use issues. The report criticizes inadequate support for harm reduction services and highlights a lack of coordinated funding for

supportive housing. The province spends less on mental health than recommended, and emergency department visits for mental health crises have surged, particularly among youth. The report urges that all levels of governments address housing and mental health needs comprehensively.

REMINDER: Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada Funding Opportunity

The **Youth Mental Health Fund: Call for Proposals** is now open, offering funding to organizations focused on improving mental health outcomes for youth across Canada under the following priority:

- *Building capacity in and supporting community-based organizations that provide mental health services to youth with the goal of facilitating and strengthening linkages to the broader mental health care system, such as Integrated Youth Services (IYS) networks to expand their reach and serve more youth.*

The deadline to submit proposals is January 22, 2025. Please click [here](#) for more information, including the applicant guide and application form.

Advocates Call for Increased Investment in Black Youth

Recently, a coalition of organizations, including CEE Center for Young Black Professionals, Skills for Change, Eva's Place, Tropicana Community Services, and the Ethiopian Association Toronto travelled to Ottawa to urge the federal government to enhance investment in young Black Canadians.

Representatives from these organizations [spoke about](#) the need for empowering Black youth by addressing systemic barriers to employment and providing pathways to success in key industries like technology, trades, and social services. They also emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for Black youth to bridge the gap in Canada's labor force.

Resources



Ontario Not-For-Profit Network

The [2024 State of the Sector Survey](#) is the fifth annual bilingual survey conducted by ONN to better understand how nonprofits in Ontario are faring. The core purpose of the survey has remained constant since 2020: to identify and share the state of the sector in a given moment of time and provide the sector, as well as other key stakeholders, access to consistent, high-quality data. Every year survey data is used to help create an enabling public policy environment for nonprofits, and to support them in influencing government, funders, and the wider public. This policy report focuses on broad trends informed by the last five years of data across subsectors and regions, as well as policy recommendations for the Ontario government alongside calls to action for the nonprofit sector and general public.

Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

[Resources for Activism Against Gender-Based Violence](#) (updated Dec 18, 2024) is an educational guide that aims to inform readers about the various forms of gender-based violence that exist worldwide, helping to foster understanding and encourage meaningful discussions in the workplace and beyond. It provides essential tools and practical guidance to approach these conversations with sensitivity and care. With a survivor-centered approach, it equips people with the knowledge and resources needed to support survivors and contribute to ending gender-based violence.

Significant Dates



January 4, 2025 [National Ribbon Skirt Day](#)

January 21, 2025 [OAYPA Member meeting \(2 – 4pm\)](#)

January 27, 2025 [Family Literacy Day](#)

Professional Development

SickKids Education Sessions

Below are the confirmed dates and topics for the 2024-2025 academic year. **Registration links and session details will be forwarded as they become available.**

TOPIC	PRESENTER	DATE	TIME
Youth in Conflict with the Law Register Here	Dr. Jenn Felsher	Jan 14, 2025	1:00 – 2:30pm EST
FASD Register Here	Dr. Cecilia Marino	Jan 28, 2024	1:00 – 2:30pm EST
Youth and the Opioid Crisis	Dr. Tea Rosic	Feb 11, 2024	1:00 – 2:30pm EST
Pharmacology	Dr. Cecilia Marino	Feb 25, 2024	1:00 – 2:30pm EST
Trauma Part 1	Dr. Susan Dundas and Janine Lawford, SW	Mar 25, 2024	1:00 – 2:30pm EST
Trauma Part 2	Dr. Susan Dundas and Janine Lawford, SW	Apr 1, 2024	1:00 – 2:30pm EST
Supporting Indigenous Youth Accessing Care Part 1	Dr. Deb Denard	Apr 15, 2024	1:00 – 2:30pm EST
Creating Safer Spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ Clients and Families	Cathy Maser, NP	Jun 10, 2024	1:00 – 2:30pm EST

SafeGuards Trauma-Informed Training

SafeGuards is a unique collaborative partnership dedicated to providing culturally informed knowledge exchange to address trauma and safeguard vulnerable children, youth, adults and families from abuse. OAYYPA is a member of SafeGuards with two of our members on the SafeGuards Board of Directors; Pete Embleton and Tamar Meyer. **Staff from our member agencies are entitled to a 10% discount** on all course prices. **Group Registrations:** Save an additional 20% off individual member fee with group registration of 4 or more participants. Download the group registration form [here](#) For more information and to browse their list of courses, click [here](#).

The following Jan/Feb courses may be of interest to you.

Advanced Interventions to Support Individuals with FASD

Trainer: Karen Huber, BA, CYC

January 28 & 29, 2025, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm ET [Learn more and register here](#)

In this advanced course, you'll learn to recognize the barriers to identification and support for individuals with FASD including trauma, racism and health inequities. Increase your knowledge of six key domains for intervention and dig deeper into strength-based strategies through case studies. Explore how adaptive skills inform the level of support across domains and how service providers and systems need to shift their approach to be inclusive of those with FASD.

Breaking Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma

Trainer: Lethicia Foadjo, BSW, MSW, RSW

February 11 & 12, 2025; 1:00pm – 4:00pm ET [Learn more and register here](#)

In this training, participants will engage in a conversation about race-based historical trauma in racialized communities, as well as the trauma responses and characteristics present among racialized parents and caregivers. The training will explore the strong connection between ITT & attachment as well as the relationship between the nature of traumas and parenting outcomes. Evidence-based intervention models will be presented, such as the Perinatal Interactional Model of approaching ITT within familial structures followed by some real-life case studies to apply the new learned skills.

Addressing Trauma and Attachment in the Classroom Environment

Trainer: Janet Cullen, MA, RP & Abby Doner, MSW, RSW

February 14, 2025, 12:30pm – 3:30pm ET [Learn more and register here](#)

Using an attachment and trauma informed approach, this training provides alternatives to behaviour first approach and supports the importance of taking a deeper look at what is beneath the behaviour. This is not about throwing structure, and expectations out the window, but rather an emphasis on the importance of merging those elements with the relationship into the structured environments. Participants will also gain an increased appreciation for their own attachment stories and how they have shaped the individuals they are today.