



March 31, 2020

The Ottawa Child & Youth Initiative's mission is supporting Ottawa's children and youth to grow up great. Our commitment to that mission is unwavering in the wake of the novel coronavirus pandemic. We are working with members of the OCYI network to keep open communication and to share resources as we all adapt to life in uncertain times. Specifically, the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and youth is the top priority of OCYI's response. Care for the most vulnerable during times of crisis has a lasting impact. We know that physical distancing is central to reducing the spread of the disease, however that can also make it harder to see and help those in need. We are being proactive to identify these needs. Needs including healthy nutrition, safe housing, healthcare, mental healthcare and access to educational and technological resources. No individual organization can address all of these needs at once, and that is why OCYI is working to foster the necessary collaboration to ensure Ottawa's children and youth can grow up great amid a global pandemic.

What OCYI is doing?

- The OCYI Steering Committee met to discuss how agencies and organizations in Ottawa are providing services to support children and youth, emphasis on vulnerable populations, making sure leaders are aware of resources.
- The OCYI Steering Committee identified areas where more collaboration and resources are needed, with key leaders identified to organize those needs.
- The OCYI website (<http://www.growingupgreat.ca>) and Twitter account ([@growingup_great](https://twitter.com/growingup_great)) is being updated daily as a place to find connections to resources and services.

Information for you

- Should you have concerns for safety and wellbeing of a child or youth, or if you are a caregiver who requires support to keep your children safe, please call the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa at 613-747-7800.
- If you are a child, youth, family member, or caregiver needing access to your usual resources, please contact the usual organization or agency where you receive help and support. Medical and mental health services are essential services and they are open, adapted for necessary infection control measures. Other services are adapting as information becomes available.
- If you are a child, youth, family member, or caregiver needing access to new care (related to covid-19 or not), please directly contact the appropriate organization or agency. If you are unsure where to start, you can contact 211ontario.ca or dial 211. Also check www.growingupgreat.ca for links to specific resources.
- If you are an agency or organization that supports children and youth, please contact info@growingupgreat.ca to share with OCYI your response to the pandemic. Also let us know if you need specific help or collaboration to continue your services. Groups can tag us or direct message us on Twitter ([@growingup_great](https://twitter.com/growingup_great)) so we can share your social media posts, too.

If you have any questions, please contact OCYI at info@growingupgreat.ca.

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