



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Reducing Inequality: the University of Ottawa designs a new program to help students leaving the child welfare system**

**OTTAWA, ON:** The University of Ottawa has created a new financial and academic support program to better guide and assist students who are or have formally been in the care of the child welfare system anywhere in Canada. The primary goal of this new program? To make sure that these students can more easily access the University's financial, academic, and mental health resources.

The [Youth in Care program](#), which was launched in September 2021, was initiated in partnership with the [Children's Aid Society of Ottawa](#) and [Child Welfare PAC](#), a national charitable organization that advocates for equitable opportunities for youth leaving the child protection system.

"Our goal is to raise awareness of the comprehensive support that we can offer to students who have been, or are still, under the care of the child protection system. We differ from other universities in that we offer not only financial support, but also personal support to these students," said program creator Tim Aubry, a professor at the School of Psychology and researcher at the Centre for Research on Educational and Community Services at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Ottawa.

In any given month, some 8,700 children and youth are in the care of Ontario's child protection services, according to the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (2022).

And according to a [report](#) published Child Welfare PAC founder, Jane Kovarikova, these youth are at much higher risk of experiencing low levels of education, unemployment, and housing insecurity. They also face financial barriers and may lack social support networks.

From age 18 to 21, those in care receive an allowance of approximately \$875 a month. When this support ends, pursuing a postsecondary education becomes more difficult.

"These students at uOttawa are often very resourceful, resilient, and motivated. But they are often very disadvantaged in comparison to their peers in terms of social, academic, and financial resources. These youth may be the first among their family or friends to attend university. We want to help them in their transition," said Tim Aubry.

University of Ottawa students who are eligible for this program will receive a scholarship along with orientation and mentoring services. The new uOttawa Youth in Care program has already given out two scholarships this year.

"Thank you to the University of Ottawa for supporting brighter futures for former foster

kids," said Ingrid Palmer, Board Chair of Child Welfare PAC. "The scholarships provided will encourage vulnerable youth from systems of care to take action to improve their lives."

"We want to provide better access to post-secondary education for people who have had a more difficult start in life. It's a question of accessibility," said Tim Aubry. "Our goal is to help them to succeed in their studies, to graduate, and to find employment."

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

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#### **Ontario Foster Care Quick Facts:**

- There are 12,000 children in state care in Ontario.
- Each year, about 1,000 exit the system or rather "age-out" at 18 years old.
- About 60% of foster youth drop-out of high school.
- If studies bear out, only 80 of 400 qualified foster youth pursue higher education each year.
- From age 18 to 21, youth receive an allowance of approximately \$875/month.
- At age 21, foster youth are expected to be fully independent, credentialed, and career-ready for life as contributing members of society - unrealistic expectations.
- Restrictive tuition waivers are unlikely to be effective.
- An estimated 100,000+ former Crown Wards are in Ontario.

#### **About Child Welfare PAC:**

The Child Welfare PAC is a federal charity that represents the interests of children raised by the government. The advisory committee consists of professionals from academia, law, business, advocacy & public service who have lived experience in child protection systems. The complete advocacy agenda may be reviewed here: [www.childwelfarepac.com](http://www.childwelfarepac.com)

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