

Ontario Looking After Children: OnLAC 101

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Introduction

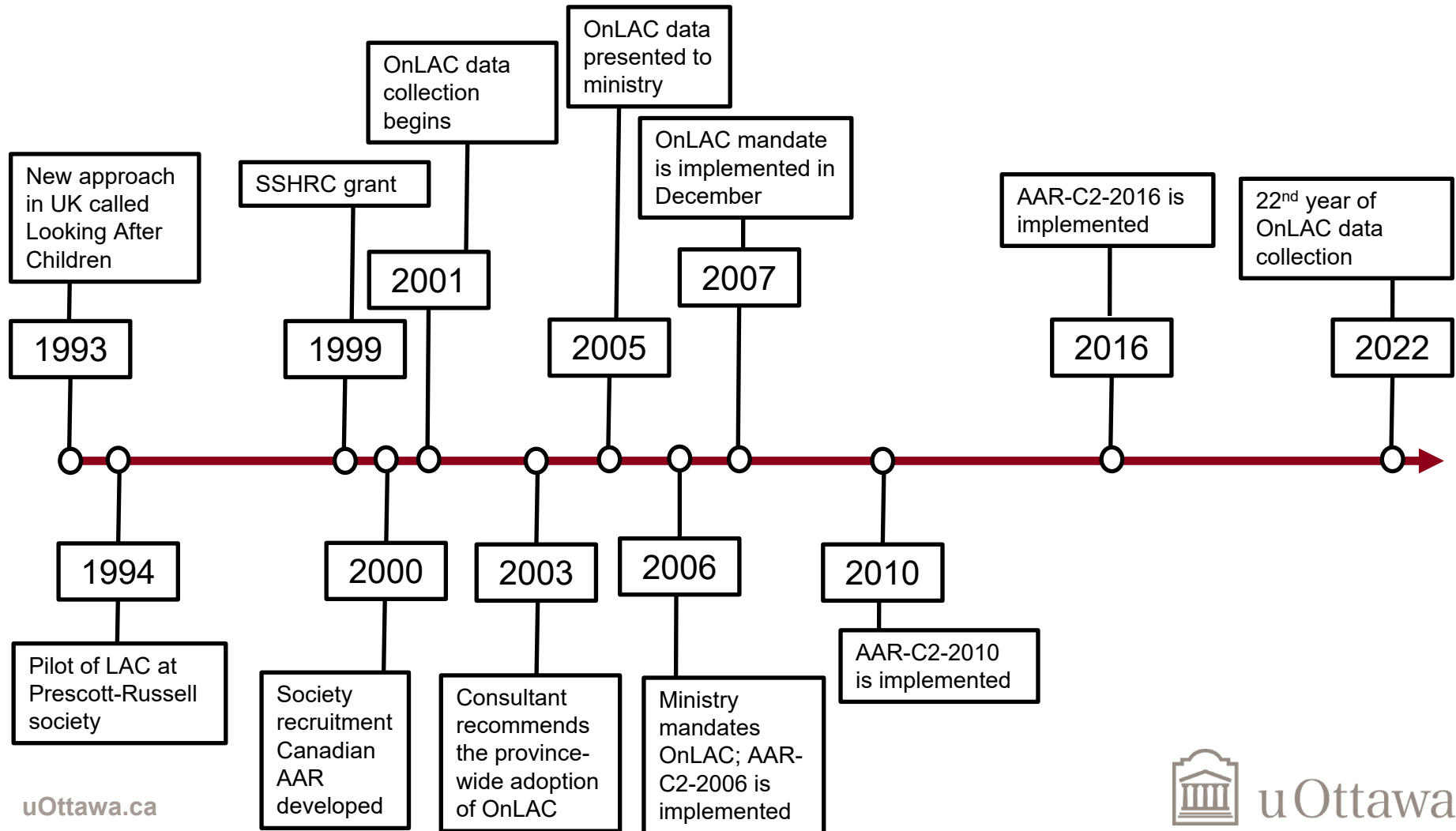
Centre de recherche sur les services
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A brief history of the Ontario Looking After Children (OnLAC) project



Why OnLAC?

Resilience Theory

“Resilient children grow up under unfavourable circumstances and still have successful adaptation, positive functioning and competence despite high risk chronic stress or prolonged severe trauma.” (Gilligan, 2000).

- Resilient individuals exhibit positive outcomes despite adversity or threats to development
- Life experiences: parenting, social networks
- Masten's ordinary magic: multiply opportunities for favourable experiences
- Positive relationships and perception of opportunities have much significance in the lives of at-risk young people
- Assessing behaviour from a resilience perspective is a positive approach

Why OnLAC?

The Developmental Model (Wolfensberger, Roos, and others)

- Developed as an alternative to the medical model
- Great influence in the field of mental health
- Goal of intervention to promote development and positive life experiences, to realize the tremendous potential inherent in the individual
- Rooted in developmental psychology and parenting research
- Early childhood is key period for brain development and skill acquisition
- Present actions have great influence on the future and can overcome disadvantages of the past – **it is never too late**
- Basic work of human service organizations is the promotion and provision of positive and valued life conditions and experiences
- Focuses on strengths and high expectations
- Accounts for individual needs

Why OnLAC?

OnLAC is a developmental framework

- Strives to achieve good outcomes for young people in care through high-quality substitute parenting
- Child welfare organizations must promote well-being, development and life success
- Child-centered
- Important people in the young person's life should come together routinely and proactively
- Life conditions and experiences we provide to young people in care, and their outcome targets must be equal to those of their peers in the community
- Positive action allows young people to develop to their potential

Why OnLAC?

Looking After Children: Good Parenting, Good Outcomes

1. Setting limits and making demands
2. Warmth, affection, and responsiveness

A good parent is:

- Guided to action by responsibilities, rather than rights
- Not limited to adults who have biological ties/bonds with the child
- One who takes care of promoting the welfare of the child at present and who also works to prepare the child for who they will become as an adult
- A mediator between the child and the surrounding world
- In a reciprocal relationship with the child

Why OnLAC?

- Parents are responsible for a child in varying degrees of intensity of the course of their life
- Parents create a home that will be the primary setting for development
- Parenting is the daily attending to child development and is oriented to the future
- To parent is to act as a mediator between the child and the world; providing opportunities, but ensuring security and a level of success
- As young people develop they come to depend on many more people; interdependent relationships is the basis for community integration

Why OnLAC?

- Coming into care often means relationships are often disrupted
- Resilience theory: in the absence of good parenting, other adults can play a significant role in shaping a young person's development
- When a child comes into care, child welfare societies become parents.
- Child welfare societies caring for young people are accountable for their outcomes
- Good outcomes depend on the quality of life experiences and conditions mediated by the child welfare society
- Minimum standards of service \neq good parenting

Why OnLAC?

*“In order to develop normally, a child needs the enduring, irrational involvement of one or more adults. In short, **somebody has to be crazy about that kid**. But that is not all the proposition stipulates. Someone also has to be **THERE**, and to be **DOING SOMETHING** – not alone, but together **WITH** the child.”*

- Bronfenbrenner & Weiss

Why OnLAC?

Good parenting and high expectations

High expectations:

- Are adaptive: people tend to live up (or down) to expectations
- Have an important impact on how young people will meet developmental challenges and adapt to the world
- Are a key feature of good parenting

- Parents provide opportunities for children developing competence by setting up and supporting developmental challenges
- Self-expectations are also important and are interrelated with the expectation of others

The Assessment and Action Record (AAR)

- Provides a methodology to plan and intervene with young people in care using a positive perspective while building on competencies and strengths to increase level of positive functioning
- Assists in identifying needs and planning
- Conversational interview led by the child welfare worker, with the caregiver and the youth
- Young people have a voice and must be listened to
- Promotes the development of important partnerships with all the relevant adults in a young person's life

The AAR

- Assists to identify and measure the progress of a young person's development in 7+1 dimensions

Background Information

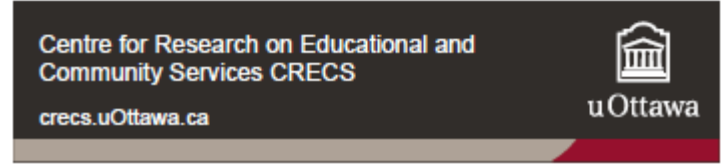
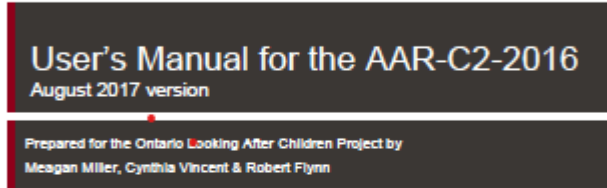
- Health
- Education
- Identity
- Family and Social Relationships
- Social Presentation
- Emotional and Behavioural Development
- Self Care Skills
- + Developmental Asset Profile

Using the AAR

- Best practice – conversational interview led by the child welfare worker
- Time to complete – it *should* take time!
- Listening and understanding
- Setting objectives, tasks, timelines, and commitments
- Youth-centered
- Invites young people to play an active role in choosing a course of action in the present and shaping the future
- Standardized instrument – a tool at the individual planning level and at the program, practice, and policy level.

Measures included in the AAR

- Aligned with the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth
 - Ages & Stages 3 Questionnaires
 - Ages & Stages: Social Emotional
 - Developmental Assets
 - Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire
 - Casey Life Skills Inventory
 - Positive Mental Health short form
 - Parenting Practices scale
- User's Manual for the AAR-C2-2016 (Miller, Vincent & Flynn, 2017)



The AAR and the Plan of Care

The AAR process:

1. Assessment: daily life conditions and experiences; support received; how the young person is doing
2. Action: identify issues that require attention; tasks that can support objectives and goals in the Plan of Care

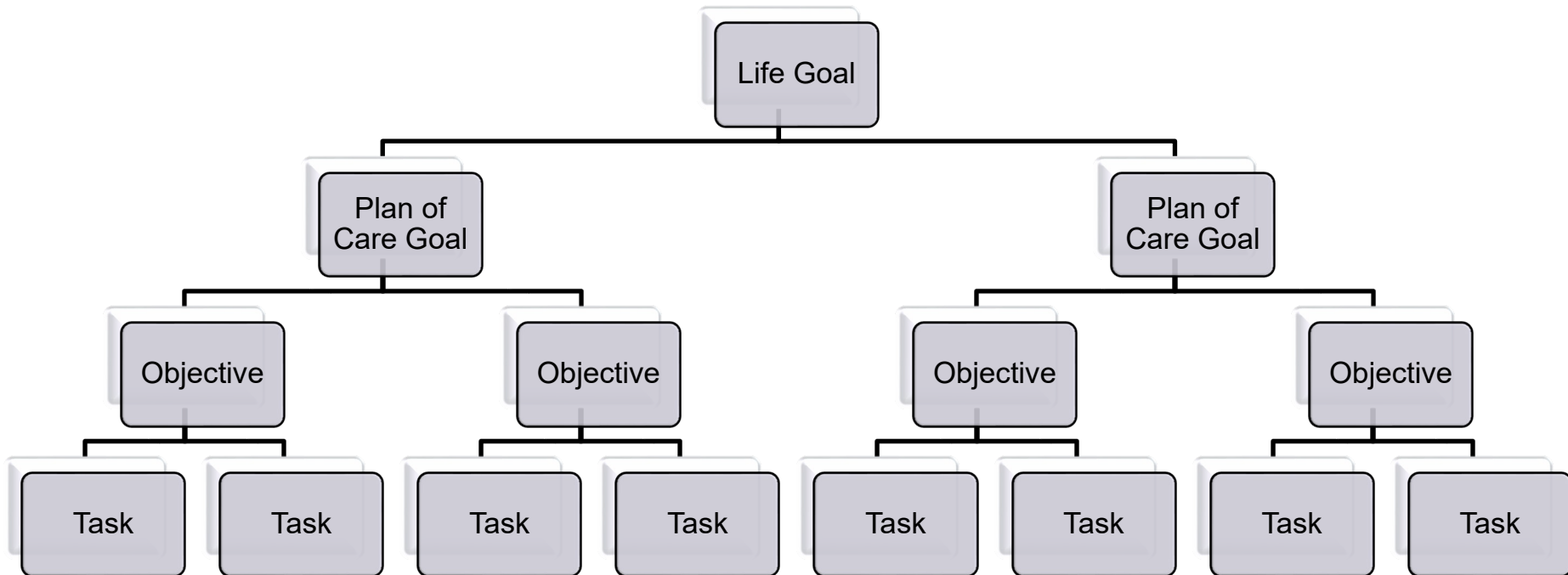
Assessment without action is unethical

The Plan of Care is:

- An intermediary step between assessment and action
- The benchmark for measuring progress and commitment to action; a document of accountability; a memory tool; a document of expectancies and hope

The AAR and the Plan of Care

How do you eat an elephant?



One bite at a time!

The AAR and the Plan of Care

- Plan of Care requires that those responsible for carrying out tasks and a timeframe for those tasks are identified
- As specific as possible
- Goals and objectives should be clearly linked
- Anticipate problems and obstacles: contingency approaches
- Positive is always better than negative
- Linked to the AAR

The AAR for programs and policy

- More than an assessment and planning tool
- Input, output, and outcome data aggregation
- Front-line staff supervision: caseload trends and collective action
- Establishing society priorities, resource allocation, and strategic direction
- Systematic evaluation of services and processes, not anecdote

The AAR for programs and policy

- Quality – efficiency and effectiveness – assessed based on the results achieved with young people
- Monitor individual progress from year-to-year, benchmark against other looked after children, and against children in the general population
- Establishing a baseline
- Aggregated comparison to leaders in the field
- Aggregated comparison to average performance of similar organizations
- Aggregated comparison to the ideal – most challenging

The AAR for programs and policy

- What gets measured gets attention
- Good at monitoring service input and process, but what is the experience of those receiving service, during and after?
- Pay attention and be seen to pay attention
- Everyone has a role in data aggregation, interpretation, and decision making
- Ontario Child Welfare Performance Indicators
- OnLAC bibliography
- *Outcomes and well-being of young people in care: Findings from the Ontario Looking After Children project*

Ontario Looking After Children

- Assessing and planning the lives of young people in care is important and complex: OnLAC is not an easy fix or shortcut
- Three levels
 1. Case-level
 2. Agency-level
 3. System-level
- Child welfare is about providing better futures for young people who have faced adversity.

Thank you!

- Questions and comments
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