



2023-2024 Business Plan

Introduction

This document represents the 2023-24 Business Plan for Linck Child, Youth and Family Supports (Linck). It highlights the mandate, strategic priorities, key activities and child welfare performance indicators of the organization. As an integrated child welfare, child and youth mental health, youth justice and developmental services agency, the plan also demonstrates how Linck continues to improve services and outcomes in Chatham-Kent.

About Linck

Linck is a multi-service agency that responds to the unique dynamics of families in Chatham-Kent.

Together, Linck's employees strive to foster an environment that encourages positive growth, professional development and progressive change. Our mission, Strong Connections for a Better Future, guides Linck as an inclusive and trusted local resource that supports families at all life stages. A network of schools, healthcare providers, childcares and municipal services allows Linck to promptly provide free mental health and wellbeing resources in a safe space. Through our network of community partners, including childcare, municipal services, education, health care providers and others, we are able to ensure that there's no wrong door for children, youth and families needing support.

Linck — Wellness rooted in children, youth and families in Chatham-Kent.

Mission, Aspiration and Values Statement

MISSION

Strong Connections for a Better Future

VISION

Progressive improvements to well-being and safety for children, youth and their families.

VALUES

Collaboration

We aim to be to be good colleagues and community partners

Respect

Our aim is that all children, youth, parents, families, caregivers and staff feel respected by the Agency

Equity

Our aim is to deliver a more equitable service, reducing barriers and disproportionality in our services

Accountability

Our aim is to be accountable for our service quality, with our resources, and to our community

Trust

Our aim is to continue to build trust with communities with whom trust has been broken, with our staff and our families.

Empowerment of families

Our aim is to facilitate families to build on their strengths toward a better future.

Support

We aim to provide the support the children, youth, and families in our community need.

Our Values

Together with our community, Linck CREATES

Collaboration ✦
We aim to be good colleagues and community partners.

Respect ♥
Our aim is that all children, youth, parents, families, caregivers and staff feel respected by the agency.

Equity =
Our aim is to deliver a more equitable service, reducing barriers & disproportionality in our services.

Accountability ⚖️
Our aim is to be accountable for our service quality, with our resources and to our community.

Trust ♥
Our aim is to continue to build trust with communities with whom trust has been broken, with those we support and our staff

Empowerment of Families 🏡
Our aim is to facilitate, to build upon their strengths toward a better future.

Support ●
We aim to provide the support children, youth and families in our community need

Child Welfare Mandate

Children's Aid Societies are independently governed not-for-profit organizations that are responsible for providing mandatory and critical child protection services. Children's Aid Societies have been providing these services to communities in Ontario for over 120 years.

They are legislated to perform certain functions under the provisions of Section 35 (1) of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, (CYFSA). The mandate of CASs, as described in this section of the CYFSA, includes the following functions:

- investigate allegations or evidence that children may be in need of protection;
- protect children where necessary;
- provide guidance, counselling and other services to families for protecting children or for the prevention of circumstances requiring the protection of children;
- provide care for children assigned or committed to its care under this Act;
- supervise children assigned to its supervision under this Act;
- place children for adoption under Part VIII (Adoption and Adoption Licensing); and,
- perform any other duties given to it by this Act or the regulations of any other Act.

This legislation and the supporting regulations, directives and standards prescribe specific and detailed requirements for what services CASs must provide, how they must provide these services, including services to First Nations, Inuit & Métis (FNIM) children and families and French language services.

Children's Aid Societies provide critical and essential services which are a safety net for the most vulnerable members of our society – infants, children and youth who are, or are at risk of, experiencing physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, neglect or abandonment. CASs are mandated to intervene if a caregiver cannot adequately care for or provide for a child/youth.

Children's Aid Societies protect and safeguard most children/youth while they remain with their families in the community. This family-based support takes the form of intensive assessments and service plans, contacts with numerous other professionals and service providers, as well as ongoing supervision of the child/youth while they remain in the family home. These are complex cases in which child protection concerns have been verified and there are risks of, or actual, abuse and neglect. As such, the work must be performed by skilled, qualified child welfare staff. Serving these young persons in the context of the home when it is safe to do so is consistent with the legislative and regulatory mandate and with the policy direction of government.

Although not mandated services, many of these criteria also apply to the delivery of child and youth mental health, development and prevention services.

Signs of Safety

Signs of Safety is a strengths-based and safety focused approach to working with the children, youth and families we serve. It is grounded in the philosophy that families are their own experts and know best what needs to change. Signs of Safety is also a solution focused approach. This means focusing solutions around the family's vision. It is based on the belief that problems are best solved by focusing on what is

already working and how a family would like their life to be. It is imperative that children/youth and families are an integral part of process and planning.

Implicit in this approach is to bring the family's network together to help facilitate a plan that addresses safety and the overall well-being of the family. Families that come up with their own solutions and plans are believed to be more committed to the change necessary to move forward.

The Signs of Safety approach seeks to create a culture which includes working relationships between professionals and family members, thinking critically, and fostering a stance of inquiry.

Building healthy relationships is the bedrock of human change. Linck is committed to building better relationships with the children, youth and families we serve and our community partners. We strive to facilitate change and build on strengths with everyone we serve. This is an inclusive and ongoing process of listening, engagement and facilitation. Children, youth and families are at the center and the drivers of our solution focused approach.

Signs of Safety is not a destination but a journey that requires ongoing reflection and change that Linck embraces.

Highlights

Signs of safety – strengths-based approach to working with families

41 %

Since 2015 we have reduced the average number of children in care from 240 to 135, (even through age of protection increases and pandemic has paused aging out)

11 %

Decrease in families having a recurring child protection concern within 12 months of our ongoing support since 2015/16

- Mental health average client outcomes show improvement for all problems/symptoms for all clinical programs (things like conduct, anxiety, family conflict, mood, and school participation)
- Even after more than one year since receiving service, most mental health clients maintain their treatment gains, coping skills and improved mental health

Mental Health Mandate

Child and youth mental services are funded by Ontario to achieve the vision of an Ontario in which child and youth mental health is recognized as a key determinant of overall health and well-being and where children and youth grow to reach their full potential. Ontario-funded child and youth mental health services are provided to children and youth under 18 years of age and under the authority of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA). These services are not mandatory under the CYFSA but are provided to the level of available resources. Services and supports that address a range of social, emotional, behavioural, psychological and/or psychiatric problems are provided to children and youth who are at risk of or who have developed, mental health problems, illness or disorders.

[A Shared Responsibility: Ontario's Policy Frame for Child and Youth Mental Health](#), outlines four goals for CYMH services.

- Promote optimal child and youth mental health and wellbeing through enhanced understanding of and ability to respond to child and youth mental health needs through the provision of evidence-informed services and supports.
- Provide children, youth, and families with access to a flexible continuum of timely and appropriate services and supports within their cultural, environmental and community context,
- Provide community-based services that are coordinated and collaborative and integrated, creating a culture of shared responsibility and
- Be accountable and well managed.

Child and youth's mental health core services include: mental health access and intake, crisis services, counselling and therapy services, brief services (single session and brief in 3), family capacity building and support (single session parent consultation, and parent education), specialized consultation and assessment, case management and service coordination, intensive treatment services (day treatment).

Roadmap to Wellness

Linck has worked diligently alongside our core service providers to address the identified local gaps in children's mental health services. The introduction of the **Roadmap to Wellness: A Plan to Build Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System** provides a clear strategy towards further improvement. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/roadmap-wellness-plan-build-ontarios-mental-health-and-addictions-system>

The plan will enable a system that will effectively respond to the needs of every child or youth with mental health needs. The four pillars outlined in this roadmap are designed to support service delivery, *improve quality, expand existing services, implement innovative solutions and improve access.*

There is a growing need for children & youth mental health services in Chatham-Kent. The pandemic has dramatically altered the way of life for many of our youth and families. The pandemic, for many youth, heightened their stress and anxiety and depression has progressed to serious mental health concerns. This urgent and growing need for mental health services and a current wait list for services requires increased funding and a wait list reduction strategy.

Lead Agency

Moving on Mental Health is a province-wide action plan which was initiated by Ministry of Children and Youth Service in 2014. The purpose is to fix a Children and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) System that is fragmented and difficult for both families and professionals to access and navigate. The goal is to increase the degree of coordination, responsiveness, and ease of access for all children and families that need mental health services. In 2019, responsibility for funding CYMH services was transferred to the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care.

Linck serves as Lead Agency for the Chatham-Kent service area. As Lead Agency, Linck is responsible to work to improve the functioning of the system collaboratively with other agencies in our area that that receive funding to deliver at least one of a set of seven specific children and youth mental health services, including brief services, crisis services, counselling and therapy, family caregiver support, residential/intensive Services, targeted prevention, and specialized consultation and assessment.

To read more about the changes occurring across Ontario visit:

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/specialneeds/momh/moving-on-mental-health.aspx>

Mental Health Accreditation

Linck Child, Youth & Family Supports is proud to be accredited through the Canadian Centre for Accreditation. The Canadian Centre for Accreditation (CCA) is a national not-for-profit offering accreditation to community-based health and social service organizations in Canada. Accreditation provides an external review of an organization's operations in relation to accepted standards of good practice and risk management. Standards address all aspects of the organization, including governance, management, programs, and services. It is also a system to promote learning, improvement, excellence, and innovation.

Linck has been approved for the period of October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2026.

Developmental Services

Special Needs Resourcing Supports to Childcares

Child & Family Consultants provide the following Special Needs Resources for licensed childcare providers:

- Childcare support and consultations and program recommendations for infants, toddlers and preschool aged children.
- Education, support, and coaching for early years professionals
- Informal developmental screening and collaborative goal-setting.
- Community-wide service planning.

Early Developmental Support Workers (EDSWs):

- Provides direct assistance to childcares to increase inclusion within the childcare environment.
- Assists educators to respond to the mental health and developmental needs of the child while promoting growth and development in the childcare environment.

Infant and Child Development Program (ICDP)

The Infant and Child Development Program is a free, primarily home-based early intervention program available to families who have concerns about their child's early development.

ICDP services include, but are not limited to:

- Help with information about the child's needs.
- Working with children and their parents/caregivers to build skills and capacity for supporting the child's needs in the home and daily environment.
- Support for parenting and positive parent/caregiver-child interactions.
- Collaborative provision of supports with other local provides in our community.

2022-2025 Strategic Plan

In March 2022, Linck completed a major rebranding. This renaming was the intentional effort to ensure the agency is visible, recognizable and representative to the community as a supportive and caring resource to children, youth and their caregivers in Chatham-Kent. As an integrated agency, with a mission to work with children and families toward a better future, the agency is committed to being a trusted support to the members of the community.

We commit to providing the right service, in the right way and at the right time. We commit to being an employer of choice that reflects the diversity and uniqueness of our vibrant communities so that those seeking support see themselves reflected in our staff. Our dedicated and skilled staff will continue to provide the same excellent standard of care and service with a renewed energy to support those we serve to achieve their full potential and thrive. Linck stems from the concept of a chain linked together, we are building strong connections between families and youth and the resources available to help them. Linck is welcoming and helpful. It isn't about achieving a certain "status" or "state" , it is recognizing where people are today and connecting them to help in a way that feels right.

The rebranding announcement was made in conjunction with the launch of Linck's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.

The plan has 6 priority areas:

- Timely access to the right support
- Linck is a learning organization that innovates, improves, and implements best practices
- Linck in the community
- Reconciliation, equity, and inclusion
- Empowered, collaborative workforce
- Youth & family Engagement

The child and youth mental health and child welfare sectors are at a place of transformation. Movement is underway to ensure that supports and services are more culturally responsive, with a focus on early help and prevention so that people can access help and supports before things have turned into a crisis. The voices of children, youth and families will inform and influence what and how services are designed and delivered.

Linck has positioned our commitments to Reconciliation efforts with Indigenous children, youth and families and the First Nations as a priority. Recognition of services that embed an inclusive and social justice lens with demonstrated actions to address racism and other forms of oppression is a public promise that we make to everyone in Chatham-Kent.



Strategic Plan

2022-2025

Over Spring and Summer 2022

In 2021, we set out to build an ambitious plan spanning the next three years to further our mission of creating stronger families for a better future. The strategic plan we've been operating with was developed through engagement with youth, parents, families, volunteers, community partners and our staff to make sure our plans are rooted in the needs of all our stakeholders. We want to again thank everyone who shared their voice and helped us to develop this plan.

Throughout 2022-2023 Linck has enacted initiatives directly aimed towards fulfilling the strategic plan.

Timely Access to the Right Support

- Emergency shelter onsite has been the most pressing challenge to ensure the basic needs of youth in the community are being met
- Medavie funding to address waitlist pressures by increased staffing
- One Stop Talk/Parlons Maintenant launched- virtual platform to connect with a therapist across Ontario

Linck as a Learning Organization

- Growing and evolving from our practices to increase responsiveness of care
- Q&A format to respond to organizational changes
- Let's Linck as a townhall forum to increase communication
- Another successful accreditation award through Canadian Centre for Accreditation

Linck in the Community

- Increased community engagement
- Internal staff Open House
- Ontario Health Team Affiliate membership

Reconciliation, Diversity and Inclusion

- File review meetings for shared support to Indigenous families
- Point-In-Time Equity audit
- Collaborative partnership with the Muslim community of CK
- French Language Services workplan
- Equity logic model
- Increase in family-based care
- Strengthened commitment to customary care
- Continuous effort towards greater understanding and improved service delivery



Service Statistics/Highlights

Service Statistics

Intake/Family Services

110 Cases Opened

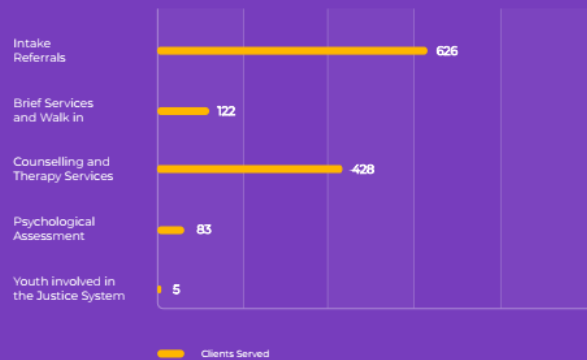
221 Cases Open at End of Year

627 Total New Investigations
-20% from 2022-23

287 Investigations Not Required

1793 Total Reports Received
-9% from 2022-23

Children's Mental Health



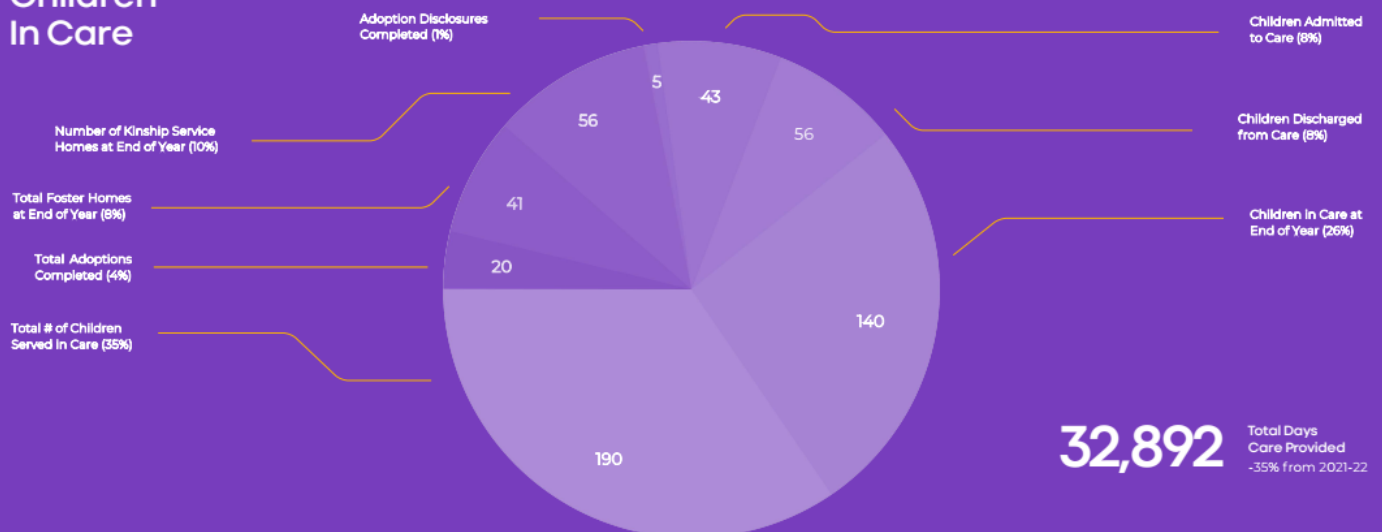
45 Clients Served Childcares and Early Learning Programs

29 Clients Served Infant Development

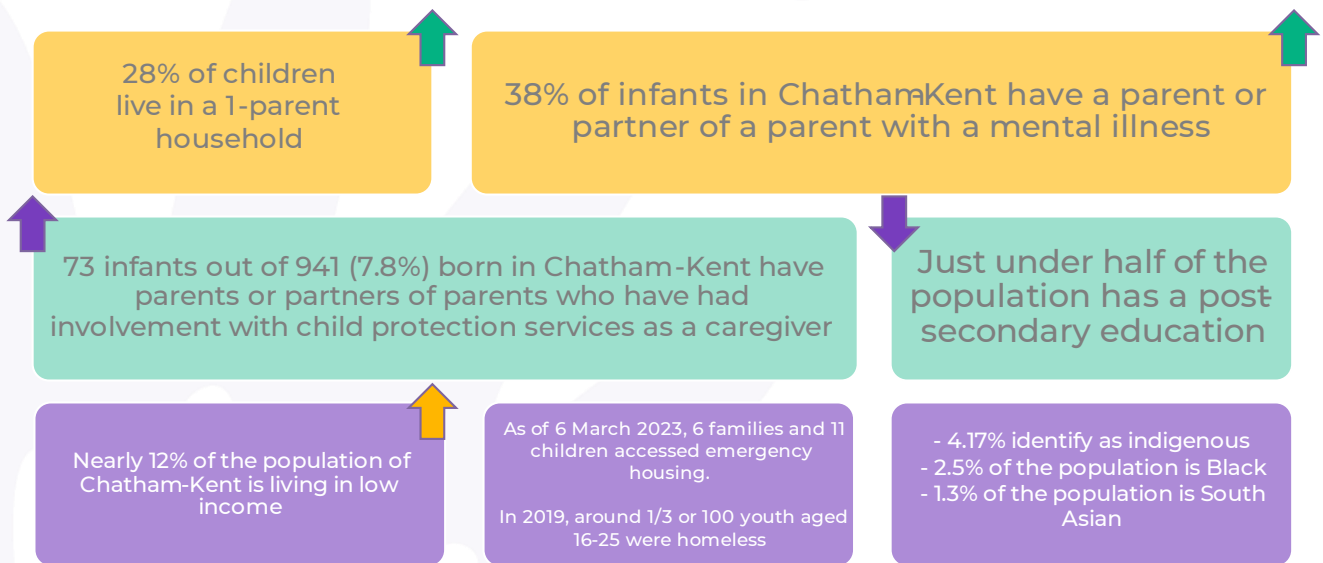
Service Statistics

About us

Children In Care



Linck Serves the Whole CK Population (2021)



2023

Gaps in Service for Children, Youth and Families in CK

Children Residing out of CK (supports not available locally)

- 6 youth residing in group care
- 3 youth in live in mental health treatment
- 12 youth in foster homes
- *these youth are between the ages of 1 and 18)
- 6 youth aged 16-22 that we support do not have housing
- Housing options for children within CK are lacking and have resulted unacceptable living conditions

Children with Complex Needs

- We are seeing an increasing number of youth with complex mental health, behavioural, or physical health needs
- The lack of respite support and challenges accessing health, home care, and community supports have led to families not being able to support their children's needs at home.

Mental Health Services

- Mental health waiting times are getting longer in the post-pandemic period
- 146 youth on waiting list for counselling and therapy
- 18 youth on waiting list for brief
- Current waiting times:
 - Brief services – 32 days
 - Long term – 92 days
- On average 3 children per week attend the hospital ER for mental health care
 - They are served by Linck staff
 - Almost half of them (49.3%) present for suicidal ideation or attempted suicide



2023

AGENCY DESIGNATIONS/INITIATIVES/PROJECTS

One Stop Talk Partnership

The years of isolation due to the pandemic have magnified the longstanding mental health crisis in Canada. More than ever, children and youth are facing increasingly difficult mental health challenges, yet finding needed mental health supports is a challenge itself. One of the largest barriers to children and youth seeking out mental health services is accessibility; accessing mental health services can be both cost prohibitive and services can be difficult to navigate.

As part of our commitment to timely access to the right supports for our community, Linck has partnered with One Stop Talk/Strides Toronto on the launch of Parlons maintenant.

One Stop Talk is an online service which provides free and immediate access to single session mental health services to children and youth within 18 years of age – connecting children and youth to a team of certified therapists who provide culturally-sensitive and caring support. One Stop Talk/Parlons maintenant became available to Linck clients on March 6th of 2023 before becoming available Ontario wide on May 1st to coincide with the first day of the Canadian Mental Health Association's Mental Health Week.



YMCA – Linck Childcare

In September of last year, Linck Child, Youth and Family Supports and the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario, along with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent opened the doors of a new childcare facility for the community of Chatham-Kent. The YMCA-Linck Childcare Facility currently provides childcare services for up to 50 children and provides employment opportunities for up to 20 staff.

Be Safe

As part of our work supporting our community's well-being, Linck, in partnership with the United Way and the Social Planning and Action Tables, is excited to announce that Be Safe has launched in Chatham-Kent!

Be Safe is a free app for IOS and Android designed to connect users with the right resources in their time of crisis, help them to build safety plans as well as other resources to support user's continued safety.



Shared Services

The Agency continues a shared service partnership with Sarnia Lambton CAS. By capitalizing on opportunities as they presented, we leveraged the talent and resources to drive innovation and efficiency. The shared service functions that are led by Linck staff include finance, information technology, property and procurement. Human resources is led by Sarnia Lambton staff. Collaboration such as this is our commitment to a sustainable service model that is responsive to the needs of children, youth and families.

Chatham-Kent Youth Social

The Chatham-Kent Youth Social is a drop-in space available that supports youth with social skills, recreation, and learning life skills. The program was developed by the Youth Engagement Team at Linck. During the school year programming runs one night a week in Wallaceburg and three nights a week in Chatham.

June 2023, Linck Child, Youth and Family Supports has received \$192,800 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Resilient Communities Fund to expand the Chatham-Kent Youth Social. This funding will allow CKYS to expand its operational capacity to 4 nights a week for the next two years.



Truth and Reconciliation, Diversity and Inclusion

Linck remains in the space of learning, growth, discovery and action related to Truth and Reconciliation. We maintain our commitments to Indigenous children, youth and families, First Nations and community partners to acknowledge and repair past and ongoing harms. As an agency and as part of a provincial system, we are responsible for the actions that continue to oppress and repress Indigenous peoples.

This requires "heart over head" personal and professional commitments. We continue to seek knowledge and awareness, welcome ongoing teachings and promise to do better. We support the inherent rights of First Nations to care for the safety and wellbeing of their children and youth. The physical, mental, social and spiritual wellness for Indigenous children and youth, provided in culturally responsive local services is an outcome that we fully support.

Examples of action include:

- Participation in National Indigenous Peoples Day and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Provision of the "A Road to Understanding Indigenous Culture" guide to all agency staff as part of broadening a better understanding and strengthening connections
- Commission of an Indigenous art wall mural
- Ongoing learning and relationship building

The work of our Equity Committee has sharpened its focus. They created a calendar of cultural celebrations that allowed each team to host a variety of diverse events for the Linck team to experience and deepen our awareness. The committee has also reached into the community, hosting an annual BBQ with CK Pride at the Agency. The committee has also worked through a process improving our tools to better understand who we're serving across the community, to ensure that we are an open and welcoming environment for all families.

Staff undertook a mandatory 2SLGBTQ+ foundations course through Rainbow Health Ontario. Staff have worked to inform and prepare the Indigenous Wellness room at the agency as a space for smudging, reflection and learning.

We have been invited to join in new culturally integrative model of working with Muslim and other collectivist communities. We will be working with the Chatham Islamic Centre, University of Western, and London's Muslim Resource Centre to bring this project to life.

Equity Statement

At Linck, we are committed to a diverse, inclusive and equitable organizational climate where all employees, volunteers, foster parents and Board of Directors whatever their age, ability, education, ethnicity, gender, identity, national origin, race, or sexual orientation, feel-valued and respected.

All individuals are treated with dignity and fairness, recognizing that every person has the right to live, work, serve and be served in an environment free of individual as well as systemic discrimination and harassment.

Linck adopts a nondiscriminatory approach and provides equal opportunity for employment and advancement in all our departments and programs. We respect and value diverse life experiences and heritages and ensure all voices are valued and heard.

Equity Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge and extend credit to three key frameworks that have significantly informed and influenced Linck's Strategic and Operational Plans.

Alignment to these frameworks will continue to direct our work, as will other community-inspired solutions that continue to emerge as led by the bravery of those with lived experiences.

