

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Province Recognizes Success of SOS Children's Villages Model by Launching Caregiver Support Network, But with One Fundamental Flaw

Surrey, British Columbia At the beginning of July the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) put out a call for Caregiver Support Network homes in the Tri-Cities, Delta, and Chilliwack to support a move towards permanency for children and youth in care. This program is the result of a review of the residential foster care system and the publication *Residential Review Project Final Report* from June 2012. SOS Children's Village BC (SOS BC) applauds the efforts of the Province of British Columbia to improve the foster care system with this new initiative based on an SOS model that is successful around the world. **One specific flaw in B.C.'s version of the program concerns the charity greatly.**

A Caregiver Support Network will involve six to ten foster family homes organized around a Lead Home which will facilitate the network and provide a range of direct supports, acting as a conduit for information flow between the foster caregivers and agencies or MCFD, participating in planning for children in the network, and advocating for services and supports for children, youth, and their caregivers.

This co-operative network of family care homes will provide each other with mentoring and mutual peer support, shared care, consistent relief or respite care, social and recreational networking, and shared training and collaborative team work among network members, with wraparound supports provided by professionals via an MCFD team. **SOS BC wholeheartedly supports this approach, since SOS International has for the last 65 years been building Children's Villages around the globe, in 134 countries, with this core idea of "It takes a village to raise a child" at its heart.** While the core concept of mutual support is proven and highly successful, this particular version has one flaw.

The flaw in the B.C. model is the expectation that one caregiver will be the coordinator of up to ten foster homes. This is due to the long established position of prior Provincial Governments - that foster parents are caring individuals who do it for love and minor compensation, whereas SOS Children's Village BC maintains that it is a vital occupation. Globally, the SOS model shows the effectiveness of the 'foster parent as occupation' approach. A professional 'Mom' or 'Dad' leads a household in a supportive village environment, with the core Lead Home being the SOS team who provide the coordination as well as wraparound services.

In Chicago, where there is also an SOS village, a professional State employed Social Worker will only have a caseload of 15 children or youth. It is unreasonable to expect 'caring parents' to take on coordinating all the support elements to ten families. **SOS Children's Village BC strongly believes this role should be a trained professional, and foster parenting should be recognized as a 'professional' activity receiving both the financial compensation and**

professional education necessary.

SOS Children's Village BC has had a village in Surrey for a decade and a half, the only one in all of Canada. SOS BC would welcome the opportunity to work with the Ministry of Children and Family Development to be the Lead Home in one or more of these new 'virtual' villages in our province, as the SOS model internationally has already displayed significant benefits:

- improved child safety and well-being
- greater placement stability and continuity of care
- maintenance of connections with siblings and birth families
- facilitation of permanency (reunification or placement with an alternate permanent family)
- increased caregiver engagement and retention

More about the new Caregiver Support Network at bcfosterparents.ca/provincialregional-news-and-events/

About SOS Children's Villages International

SOS Children's Villages is the world's largest non-governmental, non-denominational child development organization for orphaned and abandoned children. It has existed for over 64 years with presence in 134 countries with 74,000 children in full-time care in 545 Villages/402 Youth Homes. SOS operates: 624 Family Strengthening Programs, 222 Kindergartens, 182 Schools, and 54 Vocational Training Centres which in total teach more than 153,000 children. SOS also operates: 46 Adult Training Centres which train over 8,500 SOS Mothers/Foster Parents annually, 74 Medical Centres, and 16 Emergency Relief Programs. In all there are over 2,365 SOS Children's Villages programs worldwide.

About SOS Children's Village BC

British Columbia is home to the only SOS Children's Village in Canada. SOS Children's Village BC was established in 1985, and through working with MCFD and Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society has provided stable homes, a supportive and healing Village environment, and community-based family care programs to help foster children and youth in-need grow into caring, self-reliant adults.

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Please visit our Media Room: www.sosbc.org/news-events/media-room

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