

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**With the Commencement of B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week, SOS Children's Village
B.C. Offers Solutions to Four Critical Issues in Foster Care**

Surrey, British Columbia The first week of June in British Columbia is Child and Youth in Care Week, but with shocking articles being published about the foster care system – such as the recent one by respected journalist Daphne Bramham in *The Vancouver Sun* with the headline **“B.C.’s child welfare system is broken, racist and in urgent need of change”** – this is certainly not something to celebrate.

SOS Children's Village B.C. has identified four key problems in the foster care system and is moving to ensure each foster child and youth living in the village has the absolute best and most nurturing care possible. The four issues include: **lack of permanency for foster children, brothers and sisters being split up within the system, failure to recognize and treat trauma foster children and youth have been through, and lack of access to therapeutic services to aid in healing.**

Kids in foster care face challenges that most young people could never imagine. They endure crises, family breakdown, and perhaps see people they love and depend on abusing drugs and/or alcohol or suffering mental health problems.

Maybe they have been abused themselves, physically, mentally, or sexually, and their childhood has been a living nightmare. **On average, a foster child's life becomes a travelling circus of seven homes, seven families, seven schools, and seven neighbourhoods.**

The first of four pillars of SOS Children's Village B.C.'s solution is **Permanency**. The charity prides itself on the fact that children who come to the village are not constantly shuffled around to different homes, as is the norm in the rest of the foster care system. Simply put, what this stability means is that these youth will have less destructive experiences in their lives.

Every single time a child is moved within the system it leads to them having to switch schools, which encompasses losing friends and having to find a whole new social group, on top of the disruption to their education. **Children in care are already ostracized because they don't have a 'normal' family.** They feel as if they have to completely start over every time they are moved, in comparison to many families who have a hard time moving just once.

One can imagine the negative feelings and thoughts that go through these children's minds as a result. **Essentially, they no longer have a strong sense of who they are, and their values are left in disarray.** The B.C. foster care system treats each child like a product. For example, in

group homes the caregivers are shift workers, so there is no stability in guardianship and nothing to hold onto.

“The foster children who come into our village are initially very untrusting,” Kistie Singh, Village Director, states. “They exhibit bad behaviour because they think they’ll be moved again in no time, but once they realize they are staying for good, their attitudes really become more positive.”

The children and youth in care at the SOS village in Surrey have expressed to staff that they feel like they belong, that the village of five stable homes is like a family to them, and that they don’t feel isolated and alone in their trauma. SOS Children’s Village B.C. always has a number of permanent residents, and some have even transitioned out and are now living independently.

Permanency is the hallmark of an effective child welfare system – that would be something to celebrate.

About SOS Children’s Village BC

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 65 years with presence in 134 countries and 553 Villages. British Columbia is home to the only SOS Children’s Village in Canada. SOS Children’s Village BC provides 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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We hope that you will be inspired to pick up our ‘dark side of foster care in B.C.’ series over the rest of the week.

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