

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week: Therapy and Trauma-Informed Programming
Differentiate SOS Children's Village B.C. from the Foster Care System**

Surrey, British Columbia Most of the wide-eyed babies that social workers place in the SOS Children's Village in Surrey suffer from Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. This can mean abnormal facial features, growth problems, and central nervous system problems - learning, memory, attention span, communication, vision, and/or hearing are affected. Other children come to the Village at a later age and end up acting out as a result of their fear, anxiety, and anger over appalling abuse they have previously suffered. **It is B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week, and a strong focus on mental health is something that differentiates SOS B.C. from the provincial system.**

Children in foster care face challenges that most 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.

Foster children who live in the SOS Village are never put on a waitlist for the services they need to become emotionally healthy again. Children in care need support and counselling to move on with their lives – this should never be optional. The wonderful park-like atmosphere of the 2.5 acre Village campus is healing to its inhabitants, with specialized counselling available and caregivers looking out for each other's children when they are playing outside.

“These kids have expressed to us that their neighbours within the Village are like extended family and many say that even though they are all different, they are all in foster care and can share that with one another,” said SOS Children's Village B.C. executive director Douglas Dunn.

The services provided to the foster families – free of charge thanks to charitable donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations – include cognitive remediation and behavioural counselling, art and play therapy, cutting-edge Neurofeedback training, and narrative therapy.

At the core of the SOS B.C. model of care is supporting the mental and emotional health of foster children. However, like any parent, SOS B.C. wants to give these children every opportunity. Therefore recreational activities, camps, music lessons, academic assistance, and cultural engagement are provided to help them become well-rounded and caring adults.

In recognition of the vital importance of therapeutic support, SOS B.C. is striving to implement a trauma-informed approach to everything they do as an organization. **As soon as a child has to**

be removed from the care of biological parents and placed in the foster care system, SOS Children's Village B.C. acknowledges that there is clear trauma from that experience, and from past experiences the child has gone through leading up to that event. The charity is setting an example to other provincial agencies when it comes to recognizing trauma that children have experienced, how it affects their behaviour, and therapeutic methods that are informed by trauma knowledge. SOS B.C. doesn't assume to know what is best for a client. Their staff meet each person where they are at by creating a safe environment and working together through the healing process.

The **four core principles of being trauma-informed** are: trauma awareness (of triggers, for example), safety and trust, choice and collaboration, and skill building (healthy coping).

Children in care typically have myriad challenges that are preventing them from moving forward. Their lives have been interrupted by gruesome events that are causing them grief and confusion. As a result, they feel vulnerable or afraid, and unable to carry out even simple day-to-day tasks. Some might even be facing personality change as a result of the trauma. Providing waitlist-free professional counselling to help make sense out of the disorder in their lives is a hallmark of the SOS B.C. model of care.

About SOS Children's Village BC

SOS Children's Villages is the world's largest non-governmental, non-denominational child development organization and cares for fostered, orphaned, or abandoned children. It has existed for over 65 years with presence in 134 countries and 572 Villages. British Columbia is home to the only SOS Children's Village in Canada. SOS Children's Village BC provides homes, a supportive community, and programs to help foster children and youth in need grow into caring, self-reliant adults.

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