

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week is Not a Time to Celebrate: Sibling Groups

Surrey, British Columbia It can be difficult to imagine being removed from the care of one's biological parents and being placed in a stranger's home, but on top of that, envision being split up from one's brothers and/or sisters as well. This is the ruthless reality of B.C.'s foster care system. More often than not, siblings are split up and put into different homes, for a variety of reasons. SOS Children's Village B.C.'s unique and globally-proven model of care seeks to rectify that.

The charity 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.**

The second of four pillars of SOS Children's Village B.C.'s solution is **Sibling Groups**. This topic is linked to Permanency – the first pillar – as the Surrey-based charity seeks to prevent worsening the utterly broken situation foster children and youth find themselves in. Yes, the child can no longer live with their parents, but the rest of the family – the siblings – should never be far away. Brothers and sisters have a shared bond which should be preserved after they enter foster care, to allow the most stable and healthy development of the children.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development incessantly struggles to keep siblings in the foster care system together. **In contrast, the homes at SOS Children's Village B.C. have enough rooms to allow all siblings to live under one roof with the same foster parent(s).** Prioritizing the necessity to keep siblings groups together is what SOS Children's Villages is renowned for, and there are multiple sibling groups currently residing at the Surrey village. Even if a child in care doesn't have any siblings, the permanency of the SOS B.C. environment means that the child can develop sibling-like bonds with the other foster children in the home.

"Oftentimes, in the foster care system in British Columbia, siblings will only get to see each other one single day a week," says Kistie Singh, Village Director. **"Some even try to run away from their foster home to find their brothers or sisters.** Staff at SOS B.C. have heard of many parents who don't turn to the foster care system when they should, because they know that their children might get split up."

Keeping sibling groups together is the hallmark of an effective child welfare system that raises stable youth who feel loved and who become contributing members of society – 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.

For more information please contact:

William Brennan, Manager of Communications
SOS Children's Village BC
T: (604) 574-2964 ext. 231
E: williambrennan@sosbc.org Web: www.sosbc.org

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