

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week is Not a Time to Celebrate: Graduation Rates**

**Surrey, British Columbia** For most of British Columbia's young people, high school graduation is a given. Their parents graduated, they'll graduate, and their children will graduate. High school is the most basic of stepping stones towards a stable future. And yet, one large section of society isn't graduating high school at alarming – even jaw dropping – rates. **In the midst of B.C. Child and Youth in Care Week, this is certainly not something to celebrate.**

**For youth in foster care in this province, only 24.5 per cent graduate high school.** Think about that for a minute. That's about a quarter of the entire population of children under the custody of the state. Contrast that rate with a graduation figure of 74.4 percent for the general youth population<sup>1</sup>. It is almost as if things in the foster care system are flipped backwards.

Youth under the care of the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) or Vancouver Aboriginal Child & Family Services Society (VACFSS - Vancouver's Aboriginal Authority) unquestionably do not have the support that they need to complete school successfully. **Children who are coming into care typically have already suffered through trauma, and the actual process of coming into care and living in care compounds the trauma.** Imagine not receiving the support required to properly deal with past histories and the complexities of living in care, such as moving from home to home, changing foster parents and siblings, and the inevitable disruption of schooling.

**The Ministry of Child and Family Development lacks the funding needed to provide necessary supports, and individual social workers have massive caseloads that do not allow them time to sufficiently support their clients.** In fact, it is not unusual for a social worker to go on maternity leave or sick leave, and their position remaining open. Sadly, their cases are merely divided amongst the remaining workers. The result of this unfortunate situation at MCFD can be detrimental to the children and youth being served.

Without the basic necessities of life, youth in care undeniably have poor educational outcomes. Teens - regardless of their situations - need stability, positive and longstanding connections to adults, opportunities for counselling, encouragement, and support. **Disgraceful educational outcomes for kids in care in a country as prosperous as Canada doesn't just impact the youth themselves, but also our society as a whole.**

Is it not our responsibility as a society to support and protect these children and place them in a situation where they are healthy, able to learn, and reaching their potential? **This is their right.** Canada's international commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child cements

quality care as a fundamental right. If we know precisely what is needed to fix B.C.'s broken foster care system, why isn't this necessary support for youth a priority for our government and our communities?

**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 60 years with presence in 133 countries and over 550 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 BC' series over the next few days.**

**For more information please contact:**

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<sup>1</sup> Source: *Kids, Crime and Care*, Joint Special Report, Representative for Children and Youth and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, 2009. Statistics on foster care are scarce in Canada, and this is the last solid graduation rate from a non-partisan entity.