

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Family Day No Celebration For Thousands of BC Kids in Foster Care**

***SOS Children's Village proposes alternative system of care***

While many British Columbians enjoy Family Day, there are 6,698 children and youth who have little reason to celebrate. Forced to leave their homes due to abuse, neglect, extreme poverty or safety concerns, they are now living in the foster care system.

The current Ministry of Children and Families and those who work in the system are doing their best, but there simply isn't enough training or resources to raise and support a child who has experienced trauma.

"We believe a different model of foster care can lead to better outcomes for children and help prevent tragedies," says SOS Children's Village Director Kistie Singh, pointing to a disturbing number of fatalities from the opioid crisis.

"19 children, including a ten year old boy died of overdoses in 2017. Most were either in foster care or receiving ministry services," says Singh. "Those kids were supposed to be growing up in a safer place than their familial home. Now, they're dead. It's totally unacceptable."

The position of prior governments has been that foster parents are caring individuals who do it for love and minor compensation, whereas SOS Children's Village BC maintains it is a professional and vital occupation. Most children have already experienced trauma before being removed from their home. Once in care, they'll change foster homes an average of seven times before turning 19, when suddenly they find themselves on their own.

SOS Children's Village BC is urging the government and Indigenous leaders to consider an alternative model of foster care.

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### ***SOS Children's Village proposes alternative system of care (Cont'd)***

Executive Director Douglas Dunn says “Professionally trained foster parents who are carefully screened and monitored provide loving care in the SOS Children’s Village BC. No child has died while at SOS, nor has there ever been an overdose or suicide. We have onsite, wrap-around services including counselling, play and music therapy, neurofeedback, a homework club, organized activities and support workers.”

SOS Children’s Village is committed to working with all stakeholders in the foster care community to change the system and enable foster children to thrive in a loving home and community of caregivers, with lifelong connections.

- SOS Children’s Village has proven its successful model of foster care for 70 years at 572 villages around the world.
- Onsite, independent living suites for youth who have aged out of government care. In the ‘Transition to Adult’ program they learn to apply for a job or higher education, cook, pay rent and other life skills.
- 100% high school graduation rate (only 40% graduation rate within regular foster care system.)
- After leaving the Village, youth have an SOS family to turn to for help - - forever!

#### **For more info or interviews, please contact:**

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#### **Backgrounder:**

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 70 years with presence in 135 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.

**Photos and videos:** <https://www.sosbc.org/the-village/media-room/>