



Healing, hope and home for every child, young adult, and family.

OVERVIEW

SOS Children's Villages Florida (SOS) opened in 1993 to care for children entering foster care in Broward and Palm Beach Counties. Currently, SOS is home for up to 72 foster children ages newborn to 18. At SOS, special emphasis is placed on keeping biological siblings together.

At one of the most difficult times in their young lives, our Village offers a safe and supportive environment for our community's foster children in 13 single-family homes with full-time house parents in a residential neighborhood cul-de-sac in Coconut Creek. In addition to safety, security, and stability, we are committed to providing vital support services for our children, to help them deal with their emotions, deficiencies in school, and social skills and behavior. We are also committed to preparing our kids to live independently. The SOS on-site programs include mental health counseling and medical services, a behavioral step system program in each home, entertaining activities, educational tutoring, a mentoring program, independent life skills classes, and Next Steps services for youth who have aged out of foster care and have transitioned to life beyond SOS.

Over the past years, SOS has helped to raise more than 1200 foster children who have grown into healthy, successful, contributing members of our community. SOS kids are twice as likely to complete high school, and six times as likely to graduate college than foster kids in the general population. For the past fifteen years, 100% of our high school seniors have graduated AND enrolled in college or trade school. Outcomes for which we are most proud and demonstrate the life-changing impact of our support programs.

RESIDENTIAL CARE

We consider the children and teens living at SOS Children's Villages Florida to be part of our family and their complete wellbeing is of the utmost importance to us. To address the often-complex needs of our residents, we offer a comprehensive Residential Care Program and utilize an innovative team-based approach to offer each of them the individualized physical, emotional, developmental and educational services they require to succeed now and into the future. Each child's progress is measured on their Individual Service Plan (ISP) based on the goals set by the team, and their plans are adapted as needed. Should a child demonstrate behavioral or mental health issues, a case conference is scheduled before the next team meeting. Our comprehensive Residential Care program offers:





Case Management Services: We have six full-time case managers that oversee individual service plans for each child. The case managers find the children the appropriate services and connect the children to the community-based care providers to address their needs and challenges. They advocate on behalf of the children in at school and in judicial settings and provide crisis intervention, as needed.



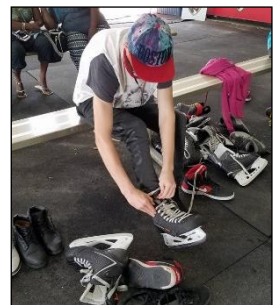
Due to poverty, substance abuse, and parental neglect and abuse, foster children are far more likely than other children to have health problems. According to the study “Foster Care by The Numbers” released by Casey Family Programs, 50% of children in foster care have chronic medical problems and 25% suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (this lifetime prevalence rate is like that of many U.S. war veterans). Additionally, between one-half and three-fourths of the children in foster care exhibit behavior or social competency problems. This rate is significantly higher than that which typically occurs in the mainstream population. Clearly, this population needs additional help to cope with the medical and mental health issues stemming from their abuse which ultimately contributes to poor educational outcomes and difficulty gaining or maintaining employment. We have dedicated staff members on site to address these issues.



Medical and Support Services: Features a full-time medical coordinator who monitors the needs of our children, including psychotherapeutic and other prescriptions, and serves as the point of contact with the children’s physicians, psychiatrists, and dentists; the coordinator manages the health care needs of the children by scheduling medical and dental appointments, managing medication plans. In addition, children are taken off site for doctor visits as necessary.



Mental Health Services: Our children benefit from a full-time mental health counselor providing individual, family and group counseling to our children with a variety of issues including abuse, abandonment and neglect, post-traumatic stress disorder, attachment disorder, grief, and loss as well as any number of other early childhood traumas. Our goal is to help the children to move beyond these traumas and to make choices that can result in happier and more productive lives, in a safe and supportive environment.



A Step System Program: Everyone at the Village uses this program designed to teach appropriate behaviors that will improve our children’s social skills and school performance as well as enhance their self-esteem. Further, the system assesses life skills to ensure that mastery of vital skills is attained.



Independent Life Skills Program: Within 30 days of their 13th birthday or ages 13-18 for those arriving at the Village, children receive the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment comprehensive test that identifies their strengths and highlights areas where more knowledge or improvement is needed. They are then enrolled in an individualized and comprehensive on-site life skills curriculum where youth begin working on daily life skills, such as interpersonal communication skills, nutrition, health care, personal hygiene, meal planning and housekeeping. Also included are educational and career planning, job application and interview training and personal money management. Classes are held on a weekly basis and are taught by our IL Manager, Case Managers and outside volunteers in a small group setting.



Tutoring: Is offered in the on-site Study Zone to all school-age children living at the SOS Children’s Village-Florida. Four tutors and a supervisor are available for two hours, four days a week to help the children with reading, math, homework assistance and study skills. An initial assessment is completed for each child and a learning plan is created based on individual needs.



Behavioral Modification System: All staff, foster parents and children adhere to a reward and consequence system to ensure appropriate behavior, personal growth, and continuity of care.



Volunteer/Mentoring Program: Screened and trained volunteers spend one-on-one time with children as mentors or study buddies often forming long-term bonds and support.

Enrichment services: Most of the foster children living at SOS Children's Village - Florida have spent their young lives in the foster care system, moving from placement to placement without the stability and nurturing they need. As a result of their early trauma, they require intensive support services to be able to heal emotionally and physically, to catch up educationally and to overcome obstacles facing their future.



At SOS, we provide each foster child in our care with a supportive neighborhood to help them heal and grow, and we strive to give our children well-rounded life experiences. A critical part of creating our nurturing environment is our enrichment activities that enables each child to take part in school-based and extracurricular activities such as art classes, yoga, photography, music classes, college prep courses, field trips, and a 9-week day camp program and one week at sleep away camp.



Participation in activities and summer camp creates a positive, social environment and brings together SOS children with non-foster children, allowing them to integrate, socialize, and develop their personal skills outside of the classroom. As our children develop interests in specific activities, they discover new aptitudes and talents. They blossom as their self-esteem grows through personal success and a sense of accomplishment. Every child in the Village is offered this opportunity.





NEXT STEPS PROGRAM

Children, especially those aging out of the foster care system, need a solid support system to provide them with a safe, stable and health way to transition into adults. Without the proper resources and assistance, the likelihood that they will succeed as adults could be compromised. In addition, children aging out of foster care can face unique challenges based on their previous exposure to parental abuse, neglect, abandonment, violence in their home, separation from birth families, illicit substances, and frequent changes in placement. ***The current South Florida housing crisis has adversely impacted this population and assisting them with securing affordable housing is our number one priority. Without stable housing our young adults are not positioned for success.***

The goal of the program is to support our young adults in becoming independent and productive members of society. We provide them with assistance in proactively managing their housing, finances, medical services, transportation, education, and career goals. We also provide targeted support services for those with children of their own; and the “411” program component which addresses salient issues such as dating relationships, weight management, self-esteem, sex education, and self-defense. We currently have 200 young adults enrolled throughout the community.



IMPACT OF SUPPORT

- 75% will improve/maintain their academic level
- 75% will improve/maintain their independent living skills
- 75% of young adults participating in the Next Steps Program will be enrolled in school or employed full time
- 90% of young adults in the Next Steps program will not be homeless

While the state of Florida provides funding to meet the basic needs of food and shelter for the children at SOS, our support programs are made possible entirely by the generosity of caring, community partners, like you. We appreciate your involvement more than you know.

The funding support we receive will ensure the continuation of the innovative, quality care we provide to the foster children and teens we serve in our south Florida community. Preparing and supporting youth to become stable and productive citizens yields huge social and economic benefits for each individual and breaks the cycle of abuse and poverty in our community.

Contact: Dawn Seay, Chief Development Officer
dseay@sosflorida.com
954-444-2610

