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ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

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Gov. Blagojevich announces innovative foster care program for siblings and pregnant teens in Chicago area

Illinois Housing Development Authority and Department of Children and Family Services partner with City of Chicago to open SOS Children's Village

CHICAGO – Gov. Rod Blagojevich today announced that one hundred foster children will soon be introduced to a stable, nurturing environment at SOS Children's Village in Chicago, a new foster home that opened Thursday after receiving critical financing from the Illinois Housing Development Authority and the Department of Children and Family Services.

“This marks the beginning of a new chapter for each and every one of the 100 children who will live here,” Blagojevich said. “These children will be living in safe, stable homes under the guidance of professional foster parents and they will be reunited with their biological siblings.”

SOS Children's Village in Chicago's Auburn Gresham neighborhood will provide foster care for groups of siblings who have been separated and for expectant teen mothers. There are 20 duplexes and townhomes and a 12,000-square-foot community center that will offer reading, writing and art programs. SOS also provides support services and counseling for the children.

The development became a reality after IHDA's board approved last year a \$750,000 Affordable Housing Trust Fund grant, as well as a \$1 million state tax credit. DCFS provides approximately \$2,724 per child per month for room, board, and social services, and has earmarked \$2 million for SOS in fiscal year 2005. The City of Chicago contributed financing and donated 7.5 acres of land for the home.

“This is a classic example of how very different branches of state and local government can work together – and work with the private sector - to meet a critical need of the state,” said Kelly King Dibble, IHDA’s executive director. “We are stepping up to bat for these children who desperately need a stable home life that includes their siblings.”

DCFS will offer several programs for the children at SOS, including a family recovery program that allows troubled families to be mentored and nurtured by foster parents who will teach positive behavior. Pregnant teens also will take courses on parenting and will be exposed to a healthy, nurturing environment. Traditional foster care will be provided to large sibling groups and older children.

“This unique, cutting edge concept will become a model for other cities in the country to emulate,” said Bryan Samuels, DCFS director. “SOS is getting help to those who need it by providing a nurturing, supportive environment that embraces both natural families and foster families. The department will do everything we can to ensure the long-term success and viability of this program.”

The children will live with their siblings and a professional foster parent at SOS, in families of five or six. Additionally, a studio unit in each building will house an expectant teen mother.

SOS Children’s Villages also operates a foster home in Lockport, which opened in 1994, and more than 400 facilities in 131 countries. There are 40 children who receive foster care at the Lockport facility.