

## Fast Facts

### About Closer to Home (CtH):

- Provides a continuum of programs designed to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families
- Known for demonstrating flexibility and creativity in developing programs that respond to identified needs within the community.
- Services range from early intervention programs to group homes.
- Stakeholder-driven, community based and guided by a commitment to quality assurance, accountability, and measurable outcomes.
- Fully integrated with community, municipal, provincial, and federal support systems.
- By CtH having both formal and informal relationships allow a variety of resources to be accessed that meet unique needs of children and families within their own communities.

### Foster Care Program stats:

- 96% of children are prevented from transitioning to a more restrictive placement such as group care.
- Most children return home to their families within 90 days.

1 Year SROI 1 : 1.06

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**“It’s been an enriching journey giving us a deeper understanding not just of our own family but of the community at large.”**

- Margaret, Foster Care participant

## Program Background:

The Foster Care Program offers a supportive family environment to children who have been removed from their families and placed into the care of Alberta Child Welfare. The children experience a normalized home setting that is located within their own community, which allows them to access the support they need with a minimum of disruption to their daily routine.

Closer to Home’s Foster Care Program accepts children who would otherwise have been referred to a more restrictive placement due to the severity of their behavioral issues and other needs.

The children are placed in a nurturing home environment where they learn how to identify and to stop negative interactions with family members. They develop decision-making skills that lead them to make positive choices during times of uncertainty. The children are taught to set goals for themselves in school, in relationships and in life. The environment and learning keep children focused on their future and are an important foundation for success later in life. These skills are essential if a child is to decide reunite with their family.

## Social Value Created:

While some children enrolled in Foster Care return home within 90 days, the majority will stay in care for a long period of time. As all children and youth participate in the

development of their treatment plan goals, they have more hope for the future. This helps to prevent the child or youth from running away, which would likely result in homelessness and being at further risk in the community.

Children or youth who are not successfully nurtured, supported and therefore end up on the street would require access to emergency shelters. Many are likely to engage in criminal activity in order to feed themselves and meet other daily needs.

As they receive proper care, supervision and support, children and youth in the Foster Care program are more likely to be physically healthy

and less likely to develop mental health issues requiring treatment in the future.

The Foster Care Program provides services and support to an average of 50 children and youth per year, creating an annual social value of **\$1,126,511**.

## Foster Care Clientele:

The average age of children in Foster Care is seven years-old. Many of the children come from homes that are impoverished, economically and emotionally. As a result, the children have not experienced much social support, which has disrupted their social and physical development.

On average, 59% of the children in the Foster Care program report they have been emotionally neglected. 40% report deprivation of affection and having been threatened,

**Theory of Change**

*If children in care experience a natural, nurturing home environment where they learn important life & social skills and are supported as they apply these skills in other settings, these children are more likely to create positive relationships, earn the trust of others and demonstrate maturity that become a springboard to building success across all settings of their life.*

criticized and humiliated. 23% confirm they have experienced physical abuse by a parent or another adult/sibling. At the time of intake, many children display behaviors that are considered odd or out-of-control.

## Case Study— Social Value Created: SROI Calculation

The Foster Care Program provides many benefits to the children enrolled. This SROI calculation below only reflects the social value created by the monetizable changes experienced in the children’s lives. Other important changes are difficult to assign a dollar figure, such as increased confidence, improved skills to manage conflict and improved relationships.

The Foster Care Program admits approximately 50 children per year and operates on an annual budget of \$1,062,717. Three main monetizable SROI indicators are included in the SROI calculation: 1) reduced police calls; 2) the opportunity to receive counseling services; and 3) the reduced need for more restrictive child welfare placements.

As every child will experience different changes in their life as a result of their participation in the Foster Care Program, the SROI calculation has attributed a percentage to each monetizable indicator listed (see the third column in **Table 1**), representing the percentage of the 50 children that experienced each specific change in 2007.

Closer to Home uses the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS) for children aged seven and over, and the Pre-school and Early Childhood Functional Assessment Scale (PECFAS) for children ages three to seven, in order to assess impairment in day-to-day functioning of children and adolescents.

Children are assessed by trained support workers in the use of the CAFAS/PECFAS methodology in order to determine appropriate treatment, and child’s ongoing development is re-assessed every three months. If a child scores higher than 20 on the CAFAS/PECFAS assessment it means they exhibit major or persistent disruptive behaviors. Children that score close to 30 (the maximum) on the CAFAS/PECFAS scale exhibit behaviour that is so severely disruptive, they are considered incapacitated.

70% of the children in the Foster Care Program score above 20 on the "community" CAFAS/PECFAS indicator, which indicates a high risk of needing police intervention. With the average age of children in foster care being approximately seven years old, they would not be arrested or incarcerated. However, the police are still responding to crisis in their lives. We have estimated children or their families would otherwise call the police to assist them with crisis situations at least twice a month if the children were not in the Foster Care Program.

83% of the children in the Foster Care program score above 20 on the "thinking" CAFAS/PECFAS indicator, indicating a need for counseling services due to mental health issues and/or severely inappropriate behaviour. Based upon sessions provided by Closer to Home, we have estimated that these children would access 15 counseling sessions each, per year. This is acknowledged as a cost in the calculation, outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Monetizable SROI indicators:		\$\$ value per change in Year 1	% of client base experiencing this change.	\$\$ value for entire group (50 children)	Notes There are a total of 50 children within the client base
1	Reduced police calls	\$15,000	70%	\$525,000	70% of total client base (i.e. 35 people) would otherwise call police 24 times per year. (\$625 per call)
2	Counselling services provided to improve mental health long term.	-\$1,433	83%	-\$59,449	83% of client base would require counselling. \$95.50 for 15 counselling sessions.
3	Reduced need for more restrictive child welfare placements.	\$13,770	96%	\$660,960	96% of children would have otherwise been placed in more intensive treatment for a 90 day period @ 153\$ per day.
<b>Social value created annually for group of 50 children:</b>				\$1,126,511	
<b>Total annual investment in group of 50 children:</b>				\$1,062,717	
<b>SROI attributed to Foster Care program (In Year 1)</b>				<b>1.06</b>	

If it wasn't for the Foster Care Program, 96% of the children would have otherwise been put into group care or more restrictive care due to the severe behaviours they exhibit. The Closer to Home Foster Care Program is an alternative for these children. Group homes and residential homes cost approximately \$219 per day, per child. The Closer to Home cost for foster care is \$66 per day, per child. This is \$153 per day diverted, per child, as a result of enrolling children in the Foster Care Program.

The monetizable social value created by the Foster Care program for 50 children in Year One is **\$1,126,551**. This is

an SROI ratio of **1 : 1.06**.

There are many other benefits the child would experience as a result of the Foster Care Program that cannot be monetized, such as increased confidence, skills to manage conflict, communications skills, and improved relationships with peers and family members.

For those children who reported being physically abused, the Foster Care Program provides an alternate, safe and nurturing family environment geared to support their ongoing development and prospects for the future.

## Conclusion

Children or youths who are given an opportunity to live in a nurturing family-based environment have the opportunity to learn important skills such as conflict management, communication skills and interpersonal skills. These skills will help them succeed in all areas of their lives and will

result in them being more likely to become productive members of society and live independently in the future.

## Success Story:

Carter and Jacqueline are siblings age eight and twelve and are living with their father. They are often left alone in the home to care for themselves due to their father's lifestyle choices.

The father is suspected of using illicit drugs. This results in him not meeting their basic needs for proper nutrition, supervision, and basic parental guidance on day-to-day life and relationship skills required for successful child development.

Although both children still attend school, follow through with their studies and return home on a daily basis, they begin to show signs of being emotionally. Both become withdrawn and show signs of depression. This leads to Child and Family Services Authority apprehending the children with the intention of never having them return to their father's care.

Once brought into the Foster Care Program, both Carter and Jacqueline begin to show signs of being in distress. Jacqueline turns to a negative peer group at school and is soon caught shoplifting in the community. Carter remains withdrawn and is depressed. At this point, their Closer to Home Foster Parent begins to teach the children social skills, such as expressing feelings, managing conflict and problem solving. These skills can be used in settings outside the home, such as in school or in relationships with

their peers. These skills help the children function successfully in various environments and situations.

Carter and Jacqueline begin to apply their newly learned skills in settings such as school and home visits with their father. As each home visit results in successful teachings, the likelihood of the children returning home to Dad's care becomes probable.

Carter and Jacqueline have consistent contact with their father via supervised visits, three times a week. By the second month, their social skills have improved and they are regularly applying them in their natural home setting with their father.

By the third month, Jacqueline has disengaged from the negative peer group at school, has had no other incidents in the community or school and continues to present self as positive and upbeat. Carter begins engaging in conversation with teachers and other adult supports and appears to be happier and more content with himself.

After 99 days in care, both children are returned to the care of their father. The father successfully meets Child Welfare concerns by providing proper nutrition, supervision and basic parental guidance to his children. The family still remains together one year later.

*My new Foster Parents gave me the skills I need. If we're ever mean to each other, my Foster Parent stops us and teaches us how to control our anger."*