

Denise Kingdom Grier



Thanks to you, 2022 was a remarkable year for Setshabelo Family and Child Services (SFCS), South Africa’s first black-owned child adoption agency. Here’s a reflection from one of the social workers: “A mother came to Setshabelo Family and Child Services because she was concerned about her parenting skills. She became so enthused and engaged that she qualified to be a “temporary place of safety” home for abandoned babies. She now hopes to adopt a little guy who has been identified and temporarily placed in her home.”

SFCS at its conception offered housing for orphaned children at the Children Youth Care Center [CYCC]. Now that they are a child-placing agency, they work with the local churches to identify homes for children as an alternative to an isolated setting. The CYCC has been repurposed to provide temporary housing for children in need of therapeutic services. Seventeen children with intellectual disabilities and conduct disorders from all over the Free State Province found a home at the CYCC in 2022. This is the only facility in the Free State of this kind so parents are willing to travel many miles to visit their children and learn from the SFCS staff how to care for their children. **These families would be helpless without you.**





Our challenges of 2022

Ms. M arrived at the police station in February 2022, here are the notes from the interview: “The complainant alleged she was sleeping at home when she woke up and saw someone entering the house through the window on February 5. She noticed it was Vungile, who had a knife. He overpowered the victim and raped her. At that stage, she was afraid of the suspect as he threatened to kill her and therefore decided not to report the case. On 2022-02-11, the suspect caught her fetching water outside, forced her again into her house, and raped her several times through the night. In the morning, the complainant managed to report the incidents to the police...” where she was greeted by SFCS Social workers who are stationed at the police station to offer psychosocial support to victims of rape.

Gender-based violence continues to bring challenges to the life of women and girls living in Botshabelo. SFCS collaborates with the two police station offices in Botshabelo, via their Victim Empowerment Centre, where our social workers meet and counsel victims of physical and sexual abuse. They aim to protect children in families where abuse is present and help heal the community so adopted children can find healthy loving families.

My greatest challenge as the mission liaison for this project was connected to the inability to travel to South Africa because of COVID risks. I haven't been on the ground in Botshabelo since February 2020. Communication with the staff at SFCS has been limited to Video Chat, email, and WhatsApp, which limits the free-flowing exchange of information and the intimate connection to the people and the work. I'm eager to return to Botshabelo in February 2023.

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Supporting adopted children who are survivors of GBV



Nourhanda Motswali

"We recommend adoptive families to be trauma-informed so that they provide care that is responsive to the needs of their children."

There are parenting an adopted child that is a survivor of gender-based violence (GBV) is important for you and the child to get psychological counselling.

This according to Nourhanda Motswali, the Executive Director and Adoption Social Worker for Botshabelo Family and Child Welfare Services based in Botshabelo in the Free State.

"The emotional families, newly adoptive families, to be trauma informed so that they provide care that is responsive to the needs of their children but also facilitates a sense of safety, belonging, and healing."

"Counselling program

According to Motswali, the parents to be on the same page when a child has disruptive behaviour or has certain emotional reactions as a result of trauma associated with GBV. Keeping in mind that adopted children also have unique needs in terms of grief and missing affection," said Motswali.

Motswali is Family and Child Welfare Services in the first black-owned adoption agency in South Africa. It also has competency programmes that assist survivors of GBV. It recently received R300 000 from the National Development

Agency to provide victim empowerment services at two police stations within Botshabelo.

Motswali added that counselling helps child survivors to heal, learn to trust again and have secure attachment with adult figures.

"Counselling helps curb the negative effects of Abuse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs are traumatic events that occur in childhood. ACEs can include violence, abuse, and growing up in a family with mental health or substance use problems."

Healthy families

She added that a healthy and resilient family is a basic unit where children get their primary sense of safety, security and belonging for them to thrive.

"Adoption is unique and is unlike many other life situations families face. The process in itself can be overwhelming for adoptive parents and adopted children. It is even more challenging for a family if the

child is a survivor of GBV."

Motswali said GBV can have a child scarred forever if trauma counselling therapy is not provided.

"Families can only heal their children from their wounds if they have healed and are aware of the trauma a child experienced. That means it's important to have a counsellor working with the family through those experiences."

She added that pre-adoption counselling, specifically about trauma, can prepare prospective adoptive parents for the effects that trauma might have on the adopted child.

Keeping adoption a secret

Motswali advised families not to keep the adoption a secret to ensure that the adopted child will not be brought into the family system.

"Parents should communicate with their families about the adoption even before the child is placed in their care. "Close the child is part of the family, we encourage families to have a regular, positive conversation about adoption, using heartfelt narratives to demonstrate the beauty of adoption."

She said parents should use adoption as an opportunity to create a new family history and a family tree of which a child forms part of.

"It is important to ensure a family tree is one of the stories that can be used for that purpose," said Motswali.

Did you know?

- Botshabelo Family and Child Welfare Services have an open-door policy for survivors of GBV who are walk-ins.
- The organisation also has a 24-hour phone line, 051 531 9001.
- Survivors of GBV can also access the services of Botshabelo Family and Child Welfare Services through the SAPS referral system.
- Botshabelo Family and Child Welfare Services assist survivors with social worker's intervention if needed, trauma counselling, debriefing, and screening for social worker's report.

As we commemorate the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children, it's important for survivors to know where they can get help.

Call the GBV Command Centre at 8000 028 028, send a Text or Call Me to 102-75676 or SMS help to 30321. A Skype Line is also available for members of the local community (just message GBV to your Skype contacts).

For more information about Botshabelo Family and Child Welfare Services 051 531 9001 info@sfcsa.org.za



Botshabelo Victim Empowerment Centre



Please pray

Please pray for me as I prepare to return to South Africa in February with General Synod President Rev. Dwayne Jackson and a group of other RCA pastors and leaders. In addition to spending quality time with partners in Botshabelo, we intend to also visit Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) Belhar in Cape Town to experience the source of the RCA Standard, [The Belhar Confession](#).

Please continue to pray for God to completely eradicate Gender-based violence in the world. Ask God to protect Kaybe and the entire staff's minds, bodies, and spirits as they navigate places of violence for the sake of vulnerable children.

Please pray for the churches, both in Botshabelo and in North America, to listen and respond

to God's call to participate in the work of redemption and revealing God's Kingdom on Earth as in Heaven so that infertile parents find children and orphaned children find loving families.

Thank you,
Denise

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