

# Plan to place children with foster families by 2017

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Children in orphanages will be placed with foster parents as part of the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry's plans to ensure they grow up in a family-based environment.

Its deputy minister, Senator Datin Paduka Chew Mei Fun, said the plan, which would come into force by 2017, was formulated in the Child Bill amendment 2015.

The bill introduces the concept of family-based care.

"This approach will be the first option taken by the courts when

considering the placement order on a child in need of care.

"Protection and rehabilitation with a placement in welfare institutions would be the last resort," said Chew at the "Deinstitutionalisation of Children: Overcoming Challenges and Tribulations" conference here yesterday.

Chew said the ministry was preparing the details on how to implement the concept.

"The vested interest of the child always comes first. We would like them all to grow up in a family-

based environment. We know that there is an impact to their development for children who stay in institutions.

"We need to go through a process of educating our people, such as social workers and officers in all institutions," said Chew, adding that four officers from the ministry had been sent to Lumos, a charity based in London whose mission was to end the systematic institutionalisation of children in Europe.

Chew said the challenge with family-based care was to ensure the spir-

it and values of upholding family first continued.

"This includes strengthening the current system by having in place new and sufficient laws, and heightening capacity building and funding for the institutions and those who are running them," she said.

OrphanCARE Foundation chairman Tan Sri Faizah Mohd Tahir said orphanages were not conducive and could be harmful to a child's full potential development, and that a family environment provided a more comprehensive atmosphere,

including care, love and meeting basic needs for a child's physical and mental advancement.

"Institutions require high maintenance. The same funds should be used to support families to keep and look after their own children," said Faizah after the launch of the conference.

According to an ongoing study by Universiti Putra Malaysia, children living in an institution tend to have social and behavioral abnormalities and delays in social and emotional development.