

Central Region Fostering Focus Team Meeting Minutes

November 6th 2018

Dartmouth

Present: Sue Giffen, Susan Pace, Heather Kearney, Darrin Pope, Donna Kaulbeck, Darlene McKelvie, Taryn Haynes, Susan Logan, Maureen Wickwire, Nancy Baker, Jill Martin, Debbie Thibault, Iona Smith, Dorota Forfa, Gary Landry, Jennifer Skinner, Sylvia Oulette, Tracey Embrett, Patricia Cain, Lori Muise, Ann Jenner Roberts

Minute Taker: Darrin Pope has volunteered

Review of previous minutes: June 12th, 2018

RE: # 3-Mirrors, Donna agreed to follow up with access regarding whether they are using rear view mirrors to transport children, especially those with special needs. Jennifer Skinner noted that they could purchase a supply of mirrors for the Dartmouth office noting that they are not overly expensive. There was a question of whether this point should be in policy and that the Car seat trainers haven't brought this up. It was suggested that maybe it could remain in the good suggested practice realm rather than changing policy.

Discussion topics:

Contracted care for sexually exploited youth: Foster care coordinator Sue Giffen shared that DCS has in development a new initiative to respond to sexually exploited or at risk of being sexually exploited youth for ages 12-18. This will involve the development of competencies and specialisations for a cohort of existing foster parents who are interested in providing care to this population as well as the procurement of residential options. Foster parents are encouraged to put their name forward if they are interested to their social worker.

Access and transportation: Tracey Embrett, director of service delivery shared that the program has underwent an extensive operational review and thanked the participation of foster parents in this process. The most significant change is that the Access teams will be decentralized and aligned with the protection teams across the region. This may reduce the number of case aids involved with a family, establish better processes for communication with social workers and a more efficient use of the program. Each case aid will also report directly to one supervisor. It is expected that this change will occur in May 2019 when the Quinpool office will be vacated due to redevelopment. There will also be a memorandum of expectation concerning access visits, to be reviewed with SW, families and case aides before a visit begins. Team leads will have a more active role in supervising case aides, where the current focus is more on scheduling.

FP's have expressed that they would like Access to be available for other tasks such as to transport children in care to appointments etc., and this may be considered at a future date after the department has a better understanding of how the resource is being used following the changes.

Peer Support program: Debbie Thibault shared that she would like a few more foster parents in central region who would be comfortable in working with the mentor program. Central has the highest number of new openings, however sometimes a central support person is not available. The application is on the website for those interested in being a peer support. Also, a reminder that the peer support line is available but that it appears that a lot of calls and queries have been routed through the federation's Facebook page. Sylvie Oulette mentioned that has been meetings with PART supervisors regarding how we can make it a better experience for foster parents who call in. There hasn't been any meeting since the last focus team meetings in June however.

It was noted that the name change to PART has to do with wanting it to be inclusive of providing after hours support to foster parents and not just emergency child protection.

Foster parent insurance: FP insurance has now been extended from age 65 to age 85. This does not apply to lost wages as there is an assumption that people have already retired. It was raised that 68 percent of foster parents are now over the age of 65. Additional information will be going out in the federation news letter and will be in the new handbook.

New searchable document for foster parents: A new document is being developed and will be housed on the federation website containing forms and anything in policy relevant to the role of a foster parent and including items found under 9.5.7, eligible expenses for children in care.

Alternate Family Care: A new policy begins in December that will allow relatives caring for children under an informal arrangement or under a third party/non-party supervision order to be provided with monthly financial support. These rates fall below what is offered to foster parents but will go a long way to support families in their ability to meet the children's needs and hopefully prevent children from entering care. Families will undergo the appropriate vetting processes including a child abuse registry and criminal record check.

Discretionary funds: Social workers now have the authority to spend up to 500.00 per year per child in care for items or services that do not fall within policy 9.5.7-Maintenance Expenditures for Children in Care, formally policy 94. Supervisors and Child Welfare specialists now have the authority to approve spending over and above what is established in this policy. For Supervisors, it can be up to 500.00 over and above and for CW specialists, up to 1500.00. This may apply in areas such as additional recreation or additional school activities. This does not apply to recurring items such as additional non-prescription

items which still require a budget estimate from the foster parent over a 3-6-month period and director approval.

Process of returning child back to their birth families or to an adoptive home: A foster parent shared that this process can sometimes be difficult, move to quickly and without the involvement of the foster parent. Discussions around setting guidelines and best practices. Foster parent agreed to send her written comments and thoughts to Donna Kaulbeck for further consideration. It was also raised that some decisions around a child leaving care can be made very suddenly by the courts. Sue shared that there is a curriculum through PRIDE being developed that speaks to transitioning children out of care.

Emailing minutes and agenda: It was agreed that minutes and agenda items will be mailed to the team prior to each meeting.