

*“A Communication
Link with
Foster Families
Across the
Province”*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

Board of Directors
2

**Report of the Board
Chair**
3

**Executive Director’s
Report**
4

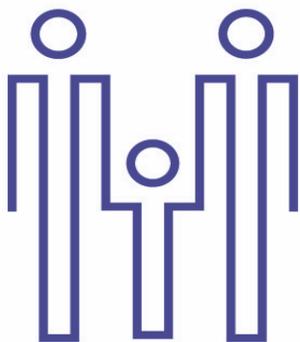
**Peer Support
Services**
5

**Foster Care
Redesign**
6

**Youth Transition
Study**
7

**Summer Activities for
Families**
10

Federation Staff
12



Fostering Community Newsletter

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Spring / Summer 2022

The Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia is a charitable organization funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services and governed by a Board of Directors who are foster parents.

Mission Statement:

The Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia is a collective voice for all foster parents in Nova Scotia. In pursuit of this mission, the Federation will ensure assistance and support for foster families and Foster Family Associations.

Objectives:

- To ensure the integrity of the Federation as the collective voice for all foster parents
- To better equip foster parents in the provision of the best possible child care
- To promote a positive profile of foster care
- To encourage the development of Foster Family Associations and Support Groups
- To continually work toward improving foster care in Nova Scotia

2023 AGM hosted by Mi'kmaw

May 26-28, 2023

Inn on Prince in Truro



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Greetings from the Board Chair...

Hello everyone,

I was elected Chair of the Board after the AGM this year. My family lives in the Western Region and I look forward to serving all foster families in the province in this capacity.

In early June, I travelled to several Foster Care Redesign Information Road shows. It was nice to meet some of you in person. It was also encouraging to see how engaged you were with your discussion and questions around Foster Care Redesign and Mockingbird Family.

The implementation of Mockingbird Family involves some significant changes to how foster care will be delivered in the province. One of the guiding statements from the Mockingbird Family Society is about “taking good care of those who take good care of our children”. I’m confident that with everyone’s input, this will result in improvements that are much overdue.

I hope you and your families can find time over the summer to spend quality time together and recharge. I see that some regional support groups are starting back up and I’d encourage everyone to plug into a local group if you haven’t already done so.

Please feel free to reach out to me at any time with any questions that you might have.

Looking forward serving you all!

Rob Richardson
Chair - FFFNS



Executive Director's Report

Over the past months, the FFFNS and DCS has continued to work together closely on DCS' Redesign Foster Care Project. The FFFNS Board continues to act as the Reference Group who are representing all the foster parents in Nova Scotia on this project. Wendy Bungay and her team meet with the Reference Group every two weeks, either in person or through the Teams platform, in order to get input and recommendations, as well as to update the group on the process and progress being made.

Again, this Spring, Regional Focus Meetings were held in each region. Some were well attended while others were not. These meetings give an opportunity for foster parents and social workers to ask questions, make comments, and hopefully creates a positive working relationship among those who work within the Foster Care System.

The Lunch & Learn sessions have been very successful this year as most were well attended by foster parents and social workers. Again, attending these sessions gave foster parents a great opportunity to gain information on the various Foster Care related services which are available.

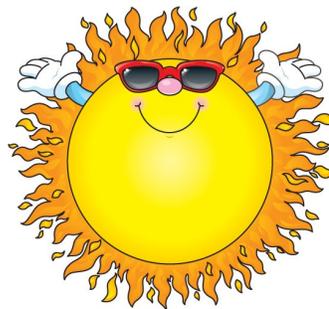
The Foster Parent Training sessions were very well attended this year, now that the COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted.

The 2022 FFFNS AGM took place virtually again this year. DCS senior staff presented an overview of the DCS Redesign Project, with a great deal of information being shared with the foster parents who attended. Foster parents in Nova Scotia are very fortunate to have such a dedicated team from DCS working on this project. They have been involving the Reference Groups every step of the way.

In closing, I want to thank all my coworkers at the FFFNS Office for all the support that they have given me and each other. We all work very well as a team and we always try to be respectful and professional when working with foster parents as well as with other community partners.

Respectfully Submitted,
Gary Landry

Gary Landry



Peer Support Services

This summer, cool down with a refreshing glass of iced tea! This recipe has become a favourite in my home and friend circle. *Kid-friendly Tip:* you can purchase decaffeinated orange pekoe if the children in your home like to guzzle this sweet nectar as much as mine do!

1. Bring 2 cups of water and 1/2 -3/4 cup of sugar to a boil.
2. Once boiling, add eight tea bags (I prefer orange pekoe, but you can use any black tea) and remove from heat.
3. Allow to steep with tea bags anywhere from 2 hours to overnight. Be sure to squeeze out the tea bags' excess liquid over the pot before discarding them.
4. Add 2 litres of ice water to the concentrate made above. Add lemon slices and/or fresh mint leaves if desired. Drink and enjoy!

-Submitted by Kim Bulger, Program Assistant, Peer Support Services



Peer Support Services wishes you a safe and happy summer of 2022! During the summer months of July and August, the Virtual Lunch and Learn program will take a break, resuming in September.

Our On-Call Support program remains active.

1-888-845-1555 – Follow the menu prompts to Peer Support Services to speak to a volunteer

**Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 4pm to 10pm
Saturdays and Sundays from 10am to 10pm**



Foster Care Redesign

The Foster Care Redesign project has ramped up planning and design activities in order to prepare the launch of two MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ Constellations in fall 2022. Additionally, the project has focused on engaging with staff and foster caregivers to facilitate their feedback and provide updates on what to expect with Foster Care Redesign.

Recently, the Foster Care Redesign team embarked on a roadshow. There were 29 sessions held across the province, with approximately 350 participants including foster caregivers, staff of the Department of Community Services and Mi'kmaq Family and Children Services (MFCS). During the week of July 11th, two virtual sessions were held and more than 50 staff and caregivers attended.

The goals of the roadshow were to:

- Build awareness of Foster Care Redesign among staff and foster caregivers
- Provide an opportunity for staff to ask questions about the changes
- Provide a follow up to the FFFNS AGM and an opportunity for foster caregivers to ask questions; and
- Create an understanding of the concerns and hopes of staff and foster caregivers.

The reception from caregivers and staff for the Redesign has been positive. There were specific questions from participants raised, and answers to those questions will be shared in the coming weeks.

There will also be further information provided on topics such as block funding, foster care approval wait times, responsibilities of a hub home, and more.

With the support and generous hearts of foster caregivers, this Redesign will strengthen the community of foster care in Nova Scotia. These changes to the foster care system will provide more ways to help children and youth in care thrive.

If there any other questions or concerns, FFFNS members can reach out to their foster care board representative or contact the Department of Community Services through fostercareredesign@novascotia.ca, and staff will get back to them.

Youth Transition from Child Welfare to Diverse Living Situations: A Mixed Methods Longitudinal Study of Risk and Protective Factors



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of Excellence

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Réseaux de centres
d'excellence

The Department of Community Services is excited to be partnered with The Resilience Research Centre at Dalhousie University to answer some tough questions about young people who transition from child welfare services.

Over the next few years, we want to find out: “Which pathways through Child Welfare Services are most likely to help young people develop the resources they need for success (resilience) and which pathways are more likely to predict precarious housing (like homelessness) after young people transition from child welfare services”. Rest assured, privacy and confidentiality have been fully considered. The first step is to nominate youth ages 14-18 to the study. Jillian Dahlgren, a Social Worker with the Department of Community Services, will be calling youth and asking them if they are willing to hear more about the study from members of the research team. Part of the incentive is the \$50 stipend youth receive when they participate, and the chance for the youth to help guide future services and supports. Guardians of youth under age 16 will also be contacted for their consent.

It is hoped that sharing this information will support your ongoing conversations with youth, in that they may be contacted by a Departmental Social Worker to discuss their potential interest in being involved.

A short video explaining the project can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0hNaY7II34>

For even more details, a description of the project is included on the next page.

If a youth you are caring for is contacted as a potential participant and you have questions, you may contact Jillian Dhalgren by phone at 902-474-7379 or via email:

Jillian.Dahlgren@novascotia.ca

On behalf of The Resilience Research Centre at Dalhousie University and the Department of Community Services, who helped develop the project, thank you for your support!

Background

Despite dedicated efforts by community services staff, using the best evidence available to support the transitions out of care of young people who have had contact with Child Welfare Services (CWS), a number of these youth are still experiencing periods of homelessness and other related forms of vulnerability. Few studies, however, have managed to follow a large cohort of young people through their transition out of CWS or identified the psychological, institutional, social, educational and political/policy aspects of young people's lives that enhance their resilience (and success) or put them at risk for homelessness.

Research Questions

To address this gap in the research, we have designed a study to answer the following questions:

- Which pathways through Child Welfare Services are most likely to help young people develop the resources they need for success (resilience) and which pathways are more likely to predict precarious housing after young people transition out of services?
- What are the specific risk and protective factors that most influence patterns of resilience and patterns of homelessness for youth who receive the many different kinds of Child Welfare Services, and how are these patterns specific to young people with different histories of abuse and neglect or families facing different challenges?
- How does the diversity of young people (their gender, sexual orientation, race, age, residence in a suburban or urban setting, and family's economic status) affect their access to the promotive and protective factors associated with resilience that affect service use, schooling, employment and, eventually housing after leaving care?
- How can results from research like this be shared so that they have the most enduring impact on policy and practice that promote resilience and prevent youth homelessness for youth exiting care?

Methodology

The study will target young people between the ages of 14 and 18 who are involved with all forms of CWS, from prevention and voluntary services to foster care and secure residential treatment. Using a mixed methods design, we hope to better understand the nuanced pathways that young people travel as they navigate their way through services and supervision to independence and success. While we cannot accurately describe every possible pathway of every individual youth (each youth's case history is unique), we can through careful research capture trends that explain young people's possible experiences as they move through CWS and transition to independence.

Role of The Department of Community Services

The Department of Community Services will be asked for support to locate young people, invite them to participate in the study, and facilitate access to some of the young people's case histories. The study is purposefully designed to limit the collective burden on workers within the Department, as well as prevent more than nominal costs to the Department.



4. Museums and Educational Activities

The learning doesn't have to stop with the last day of school! Take a fun day trip together with your foster family by visiting museums and doing fun educational activities. This can help them discover new interests and further enrich their education.

Need some ideas? Try some of these activities:

Visit the local library. Set a reading goal and challenge your kids to read more books. Entice them with a summer ice cream party as a tasty reward!

Do a science experiment outside (so the house doesn't get too messy)! Build an erupting volcano with baking soda and vinegar.

Have your kids find their inner Picasso and get inspired by visiting an art museum.

Discover and learn about cool animals with an adventurous day at the zoo or aquarium!

Many museums offer budget-friendly children's events. Visit their websites to find an event that fits your family's interests.

5. Outdoor Games

Who doesn't love a good game night? Outdoor games are a great way to help your foster family with some quality bonding time. A little friendly competition can also help kids learn valuable life skills such as good sportsmanship and empathy. Get your foster family involved in an outdoor game of soccer. Just kicking a ball around is an easy way to stay active and get a few good laughs in. Or dive into some fun board games, outside on the picnic table. Like Yahtzee, Ticket To Ride, or (my personal childhood favorite) Jumanji!

6. Nature Walk Journal

The best part about summertime is the serene nature walks. Many local parks have mapped nature trails that are easy to traverse with your foster family. Keep a nature walk journal to keep your kids engaged in discovery and learning. Have them write about the plants and animals they find. They'll have a wonderful time drawing the things they saw on the nature walk. The best thing is everyone can contribute to this activity journal and revisit fun memories the nature walks brought.

Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia



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We're also on the web!

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Do you have any news or articles you would like to see featured in this newsletter? If so, please contact our editor Denyse Hockley at (902) 424-3071 or denyse.hockley@novascotia.ca