

September 15, 2022

Dear Foster Caregiver,

The Department of Community Services is excited to announce the launch of MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ and Constellation homes as part of Nova Scotia's Foster Care Redesign

The Department is on track to launch the first two MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ Constellations, an extended family model consisting of one Hub Home and six to ten Satellite Homes.

A Hub Home is a foster caregiver "Grandparents house", a place that is familiar and comfortable, where the children or youth may go for fun or social events, as well as a location for peer support and respite care when the child, youth and/or foster caregiver needs a break.

A Satellite Home is a full-time foster caregiver and constellation supporter or could be a respite provider if needed.

The selection of the first two Hub Homes is underway. Using the criteria provided by MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™, a shortlist of potential Hub Home candidates has been identified. The following criteria were considered in this initial process:

- Has the demonstrated skills and experience to serve as resources and provide peer support to Satellite Homes
- Is in close proximity to Satellite Homes to ensure utilization of services and to promote connectedness.
- Is SAFE assessed and approved by the Department
- Has two open beds that are available nearly 24/7 for planned respite use by the Constellation
- Is comfortable talking with children / youth and with adults
- Is skilled in interacting with a group of children / youth
- Is sensitive and responsive to the diverse needs, culture and ethnicity of the children / youth being served and is able to provide leadership on anti-racism and anti-bias practices

While many foster caregivers fit these criteria, we will launch the program with two constellations, and take key learnings from these families before expanding across the province.

Over the coming weeks, the Department will be engaging Hub Home candidates to review the details and expectations of the role. The Foster Care Supervisor and Social Workers for these candidates will also be engaged in this process. A further update will be provided once the first two Hub Homes have been confirmed.

In the future, there will be many more opportunities for others to become a Hub Foster Caregiver.

### **Role of the FFFNS Board in Foster Care Redesign**

The Board is your voice and represents the interests of all foster families in Nova Scotia. The Department's Foster Care Redesign leadership team and your Board representatives meet biweekly for 2 to 3 hours to provide input into Foster Care Redesign, serve as subject matter experts, and champion the work underway. As your representatives, the Board members are available should you have questions, want to offer your ideas, or want to provide feedback about Foster Care Redesign.

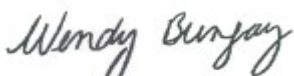
### **Youth Reference Group (YRG)**

The Department is committed to creating a Youth Reference Group to enable youth with lived experience in foster care to be engaged and help drive continuous improvements throughout the foster care system. The YRG will include up to 15 youth with lived experience in foster care between the ages 17 and 24 who will advocate for the needs of children and youth who are or will be connected to the foster care system in the future. The YRG will provide these youth with an opportunity to participate meaningfully in decision-making regarding the foster care system. If you know of any youth with lived experience in care who would be interested, please contact Alex Musial via email at [Alex.Musial@novascotia.ca](mailto:Alex.Musial@novascotia.ca)

The Foster Care Redesign Project team, along with the Foster Caregiver Reference group is planning to host a roadshow across Nova Scotia during the weeks of June 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>. The Roadshow is intended to build awareness; provide follow up and opportunity for foster caregivers to ask questions about Foster Care Redesign and to create an understanding of the concerns and hopes of foster caregivers.

We want to thank you for your continued commitment to caring for children and youth in care.

Sincerely,



Wendy Bungay

Director, CYFS Projects

Department of Community Services