

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

Fostering Community Newsletter

Issue: 60

Fall/Winter 2023

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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



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**2024 AGM hosted by
Eastern Region
Holiday Inn, Sydney
May 24-26, 2024**

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Here are some snippets from the Federation's very first newsletter....

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE -

This is our first Foster Newsletter to inform foster parents associations and agencies of what is going on province-wide. We invite letters, comments or replies to any article printed here, also any information of interest to either foster parents or agencies to help keep us all well informed.

FEDERATION OF FOSTER PARENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS in the past year are as follows:

- Organization of Canadian Symposium in Halifax, August 1982;
- Executive members visited agencies and foster parent associations throughout Nova Scotia;
- Two members travelled to P.E.I. to help the island form local associations. (requested and paid for by P.E.I.)
- Letters and copy of by-laws were sent to every foster parent in Nova Scotia
- Members sit on committees of Family and Child Welfare Association;
- Federation represented at program for permanency planning for children in care. Liz Robinson from British Columbia conducted the workshop;
- Norman Stubbington attends numerous meetings throughout the year. One meeting of significance was with a representative from the federal government regarding fostering and the training of foster parents in Canada. This is a definite step forward since the Canadian Foster Parent Association was formed and we are now being heard at a federal level also. We hope to receive a report on this study and will inform you at that time. Congratulations goes to Norman Stubbington of Sydney, newly elected President.

of the Canadian Foster Parent Association.



PLAN TO ATTEND

THE ANNUAL FEDERATION OF FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATIONS

Meeting will be hosted by Colchester County Foster Parent Associations in TRURO, May 7th, 1983, at the TRURO TRAINING SCHOOL. REGISTRATION begins at 9:30 a.m.

Guest speaker at the 6 p.m. banquet will be the Honorable Edmund L. Morris, Minister of Social Services.

LOCAL ASSOCIATION NEWS

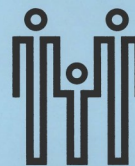
Halifax - Dartmouth & Co. - Foster Parent Society

Meetings are held the third Monday of each month. A social worker from Department of Social Services and C.A.S. attend. Our society is represented by one of the members on the board of directors of the C.A.S. Two of our members attend meetings which are pertaining to fostering at the Department of Social Services.

Throughout the year we have had speakers, family picnic, Christmas party with gifts for our children. A banquet and dance is held annually for our foster parents and workers.

Volume 1

No. 1
April 1983



Federation of
Foster Parent Associations
of Nova Scotia

Editorial Committee
- Betty Hamilton
- Helen Holland



Greetings from the Board Chair...

Greetings Foster Caregivers,

On the 40th anniversary of the Federation Newsletter, I want to thank you all once again for all your tireless efforts fostering those who have come into your care.


Many things have changed in the last 40 years. Your phone used to be attached to the wall, your television was too heavy to move and likely only had 3 channels, there was no such thing as social media, and we won't even talk about the fashion and hair styles that some of us sported while thinking that we were cool!

But one thing hasn't changed – there are still children and youth who come into care who need a loving, stable family to be there for them, and time and time again, there are foster caregivers willing to step up and be a part of their lives. That part hasn't changed! There are those of you who have been fostering for 40 years or more – and my hats off to you for persevering and doing so!

With the upcoming rollout of Mockingbird constellations, fostering in Nova Scotia is undergoing a transformational change. We are soon to be in the first round of constellation rollouts after the initial trial period so be sure to reach out to your Foster Care Social Worker or your local board member if you have any questions during this time of transition. Constellations will continue to roll out across the province with the goal of all foster caregivers being supported by a constellation by mid 2024.

Your regional associations and focus groups are beginning to meet again (in-person and virtually). These are great opportunities to connect with other foster caregivers in your area and to ask any questions that you may have. Please never feel that you are fostering alone – your Federation is always here for you.

Kind regards,



Rob Richardson
Chair, FFFNS

Greetings from the Vice Chair...

40th Anniversary Newsletter

Four decades ago, a couple of Foster Parents recognized the ongoing need for collaborating and communicating so they established this newsletter for Foster Families. There has been many changes since then; our means of communication have increased and evolved, our numbers have surged and declined, but the need to speak together as a Provincial voice continues.

By the time we are enjoying the 41st year edition, of the FFFNS Newsletter, we will all be tucked into our new Mockingbird Constellation families. It will be an era of new learning for us all and we will manage through the ups and downs of the many changes; because that is what we do! And we do this work for all of our children and their families!

In our home, one of the survival go-too's, in navigating changes, is quick, simple and children approved recipes!! This Christmas one, is a favourite indulgence year-round for school snacks, potlucks or just teens hanging around watching movies! Enjoy!!

“Christmas Crackers”

1c butter

1c brown sugar

40 saltine crackers

1 ½ c chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 400°F

Line or spray cookie sheet

Arrange crackers in single layer on cookie sheet

In a pot over medium heat add butter and sugar and stir constantly until mixture comes to a boil.

Reduce heat and boil 3-5 mins.

Pour over crackers and spread evenly.

Bake 5-6 mins in hot oven.

Remove from oven – cool 3 mins!

Sprinkle chocolate chips and spread carefully as they melt.

Refrigerate

Break pieces to eat! Yum!!

Yours in Fostering,

Mary Ann Burke

Northern Region

Executive Director's Report

First of all I would like to acknowledge the 40th birthday of the Federation Newsletter. 40 years is certainly a milestone and the Federation should be very proud of this newsletter's longevity. Hopefully, this newsletter will continue to be part of the Federation for many more years to come. Thank you to my assistant, Denyse, for bringing this important birthday to our attention.

For those who attended this year's Foster Family Appreciation Launch, it appeared as it was enjoyed by all family members. Hatfield Farm is always a fun place for kids of all ages.

I hope that you all had the opportunity to attend the Foster Family Appreciation Events in your area. Hopefully, the Fall season was more relaxing for all of you as I am aware that a number of Foster Parents were affected by wild fires and floods earlier this summer.

Foster Care Redesign (FCR) continues to be at the forefront of the DCS' Foster Care System.

Block Funding was rolled out in July. We heard very positive comments about this new system and now foster parents don't feel as they need to ask for money from the social workers for every expense. On the other hand, we also hear that some foster parents have concerns that they may not have sufficient money to meet the needs of the children in their care under this new system. If you are one of those foster parents, do not hesitate to contact your social worker and explain your concerns. The sooner your concerns are addressed, the better it will be for all involved.

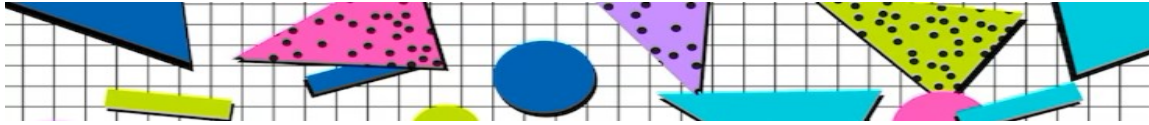
The Department of Community Services, essentially the Foster Care Redesign Team, is continuing to work to establish more hub homes as well as to attach the satellite homes to form constellations. Hopefully, all this can be put in place in time for it to be complete by April 2024.

The Regional Foster Focus Meetings, which have not been taking place since Covid started, will be reinstated in the month of December 2023. These meetings will take place on the Microsoft Teams platform. A Save the Date was sent to all foster parents who we have an email address for a month or so ago. The Focus Meetings for the Mi'kmaw Office Mainland and the Mi'kmaw Eskasoni office will take place at the end of November 2023.

Plans are already underway to organize the 2024 FFFNS AGM which will take place at the Holiday Inn in Sydney on May 24-26, 2024. Please mark these dates down on your calendar as you would not want to miss this fun and informative weekend of training and entertainment.

Please remember to check out the FFFNS website and Facebook Page for news, events, board meeting dates and minutes, training information, etc.





Also, don't forget to contact the FFFNS Allegation and Support Social Worker, Jill Martin, if ever an allegation is made against you. She can offer you great support in getting you through the process. Her contact information, as well as all other staff members, including myself, can be found on the FFFNS website. You can also find contact information for your regional board representative if you want to discuss foster care related issues.

Hoping you all enjoy the upcoming winter season.

On behalf of the Federation staff, thank you all for everything you do for the children/youth that you accept in your home.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Landry".

Gary Landry
Executive Director

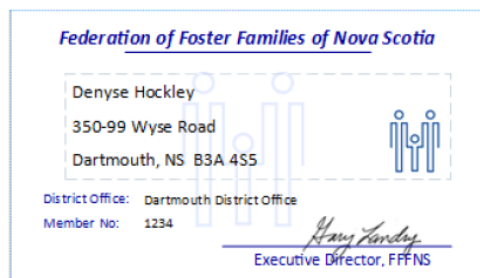


Staff News

A big congratulations goes out to our Federation comptroller, Rose (Callaghan) Alguire. Rose married her sweetheart, Adam Alguire, on August 26th, 2023 in Cuba surrounded by family and friends, followed by a reception in Dartmouth when they returned. We couldn't be happier for Rose & Adam and wish them a lifetime of happiness together!!

Rose has changed her last name to Alguire, therefore, her new e-mail address is rose.alguire@novascotia.ca

Attached to this newsletter you will find an expiry date sticker for your Federation membership card. These membership cards are included in the welcome package sent to new foster homes. Each year a new sticker is sent out with the Fall/Winter newsletter or Holiday card.



**Expires:
December 31st
2024**

Facts on MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™

A Year of MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™

The first two MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ Constellations were launched by the Department of Community Services (DCS) in December 2022, and we are excited to begin creating constellations across the province.

With the help of the first two Hub Homes and the Satellite homes, we have learned a great deal that has helped us plan for the full roll-out that starts within the next few weeks. Some key things to remember:

- It takes time to build the relationships that give the constellations their strength.
- Those relationships and connections have made it possible for foster caregivers to help one another through day-to-day challenges and other more exceptional situations.
- Over time, the children and youth have grown more comfortable with one another and with other foster caregivers within the constellation, similar to how they would within an extended family.

The Mockingbird Society monitored the progress of our constellations, and recently indicated that **we are 98% aligned with their fidelity criteria**. This means that Nova Scotia is ready and well positioned to get the maximum benefits from the constellation approach now and over the long term.

Rolling out MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ across Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia is moving forward to roll out MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ Constellations across the province. Over the coming months, all foster caregivers and children and youth in care will have an opportunity to start building this extended family community. The roll-out will happen in groups, with the first one in December 2023 and additional groups in the months that follow. All foster caregivers will be part of a constellation when roll-out is complete in April 2024.

Benefits of Being in a Constellation

- Improved placement stability and reduced placement breakdown
- A network of strong relationships and connections like an extended family
- Improved experience of peer support and sibling contact
- Improved process for planned and unplanned respite
- Improved levels of recruitment and retention of foster caregivers
- A resilient structure to support children, youth, and foster caregivers through times of crisis and transition

“MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ is a good thing for the kids because they can have sleepovers. The children come into care that are siblings, if they all can't be placed in the same home, they can be placed within the constellation. That way they're able to be in contact with their siblings more often than if they're placed all across the province. Even for foster caregivers looking for information or guidance, they can easily call other homes in a Constellation to help with the answers.”

- Current Nova Scotia Hub Home

Board News

Greetings!

Hope everyone is doing well! Can you believe we are in November already?

The Board has been busy with meetings and we are having numerous conversations about the hub homes and block funding. Joining us in our meeting in October was Georgeina MacKinnon and Mairi MacLean from DCS. They joined us to talk more about the hub homes and block funding and to answer questions that we had from foster parents. The Board will be meeting again in Antigonish on November 24th and 25th with a meet and greet for foster parent in the Northern Region on Saturday night.

I would like to wish all of you a happy and peaceful holiday season

Ann Jennex-Roberts

Central Region Board Rep



2023 Launch to Foster Family Appreciation Week
~ Hatfield Farm ~



Association Updates

Central Region Association

Happy Fall Ya'!!!

We are well into November, and time is flying.

This is the perfect opportunity to remember & be grateful for those foster families that are involved in the military/retired military/ and peacekeepers in our communities, we remember.

Sending a warm welcome on behalf of Central Region Foster Parent Association to all the new families that have jumped on board recently! Please connect with other families if you haven't already – fostering is not easy – but with community and support it is much easier to navigate. There are many changes happening in foster care, and we want to meet you and help connect you!

Our Christmas Party planning is almost done, and we look forward to welcoming all your families to another year of Christmas Chaos, we have some exciting things planned this year! The association has been fundraising all year to host a fun party for the kids – so come out and enjoy this special time on Dec 16 2-4. Please remember to RSVP to this event as sent out in previous communications, so we can plan accordingly.

Finally, we want to take this opportunity to thank each & every one of you for what unseen things you provide to our kids daily. The little things you do & your consistent contribution to these little lives is truly invaluable, and you are so appreciated.

Wishing you Happy Holidays, and all of the wonderful things this season has to offer!

*Love & Gratitude,
Ann, Allie & Rachel
centralregionfamilies@gmail.com*

What has fostering meant to you?

It meant that it doesn't matter how long we have fostered, we don't know everything; we are still learning. It meant that we have learned so many things from the children we've brought into our home; they are great teachers. It meant that providing children with unconditional support gives them a sense of safety that allows them to flourish. It has meant that for all the children we fostered, our hopes are that we have given them something of value.

Ann Jennex-Roberts



Cape Breton-Victoria Association

Greetings Fellow Foster Caregivers,

As president of our local association I am extremely pleased to see the resumption of our Foster Family Christmas Gathering. This event was stopped like many other interactive activities, due to COVID. Now that we are beyond, we will once again gather at the Holiday Inn in Sydney for a fun filled day with lunch and a visit from Santa who will present all children/youth in attendance with a present. The event is open to all foster families in the Eastern Region and you should have received a notice but remember, you need to register by calling 902-862-8916, email ds.fraser@ns.sympatico.ca or text 902-574-3044. We need to know the age and sex of the children, and whether they would like a toy or a movie pass as a gift. The deadline to register is December 1st and the Gathering takes place on December 10th, from 12pm-4pm. Hope to see you there.

Our association has been meeting regularly since August and I would like to thank those who have attended thus far. These meetings are a great resource where you can problem solve with others for issues you may have. You meet others who may have been through a particular issue that could lend you support. You develop friendships, hear of news within the fostering community, learn tips and tricks of the trade and you are able to be reimbursed for child care and mileage. There is always correspondence from the Federation for these meetings so if you see an email from the Federation or receive an envelope in the mail, please be sure you open to read the information.

I want to extend congratulations to the staff of the Federation for keeping us informed for 40 years with our newsletter. This tool is a great way of communicating with others and also for being informed. The newsletter takes time to put together and is no easy task. Thank you to the Federation staff for your continued commitment and efforts to keep the newsletter going.

I also want to wish all our readers a Very Merry Christmas and all the Best in 2024. Hope to see many of you at our AGM meeting in May right here in the Eastern Region.

Take Care All, Wendell Fraser
Cape Breton Victoria FP Association President

Story from a Foster Mother

It was a new school year. And.....another new school for this timid, tiny (for his age) 8 year old who had recently come into care. As trauma and neglect often spills into the physical, he was experiencing frequent incontinence issues and until we could gain some normality with this, he asked to wear pullups during school.

So embarrassed by his 'accidents' he could not face utilizing the school bathroom with his peers.

As his distress over this increased daily, I discreetly approached the school principal for a possible, temporary solution.

Since physical causes were ruled out, I knew healing from psychological/ emotional trauma would expand into physical healing.....but it would take time. A few days went by, with his distress increasing daily, until.....It was a Wednesday after school when this little boy jumped into the car with me, grinning excitedly and bursting with news. "You know how I won't go to the bathroom at school with the other kids? Well now I don't have to!! Mr H. (the principal) got me my very own bathroom!!!! It used to belong to someone called STAFF but he must have left because now it's all mine!!!!!!!"

Submitted by Sandi Brown

Facts on Foster Care Block Funding

Block Funding in Place since July

In July 2023, the Department of Community Services and Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services shifted to the new foster care funding model – block funding, which is issued in advance every two weeks.

No More Out-of-Pocket Expenses

Block funding is designed so foster caregivers will not be out-of-pocket for expenses related to the child or youth in their care. The amount covers all the regular costs of caring children or youth in care without the need to submit receipts. The total biweekly funding amount is determined by the level of care the children require (general, specialized, or medical), and the number of children in care within that home. As this is advance reimbursement of expenses, CRA has determined it is not income and therefore not taxable.

The only time additional funding is required is in extraordinary situations where the foster caregiver is not receiving enough via block funding to meet the specific needs of the child or youth in their care. In that case, the foster caregiver can discuss this unique situation with their social worker to determine if additional funding is required.

Why the New Funding Model was Created

Block Funding was created based on issues and concerns raised by foster caregivers and staff over several years through different dialogues and feedback. Block funding was determined to be an important part of redesigning foster care to resolve many of those issues.

Below are some of the issues that were raised and how Block Funding is intended to address them:

Issues raised by caregivers	What block funding does to address it
A mix of automatic and receipted reimbursements, requiring receipts and approvals that can cause delays	▶ A single block funding amount that covers virtually all expenses for the child(ren) or youth being cared for
Retroactive funding only, provided monthly, quarterly and when expenses submitted	▶ Funding provided in advance every two weeks , based on the placement type of a child or youth in care
Static rates that do not reflect the costs of caring for a child	▶ Rates that are adjusted annually based on inflation and are more reflective of the costs of caring for a child
Time and energy burden on foster caregivers for administration	▶ Reduced administrative burden on foster caregivers & staff by eliminating the need to submit expense receipts
Limited respite and breaks from being a foster caregiver	▶ Expanded respite (up to 4 days per month) availability

Once all MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY™ constellations are rolled out across Nova Scotia, we will also put in place the increased allowance for annual leave. It will start at two weeks per year and increase based on years of service. More information will be shared in April 2024.

Respite, Childcare and Babysitting

We’ve received quite a few questions on this topic. Here’s how the terms are used and what is included in block funding.

	Respite	Childcare	Babysitting
Description	Overnight Childcare that is provided by an approved foster caregiver or respite exclusive caregiver. Paid per night per child, rates dependent upon the child's placement type.	Provided by a licensed daycare, family day home or an approved childcare provider. This occurs on a regular basis.	Care that is provided by an approved childcare provider. Typically, on an ad-hoc basis for a few hours.
Included in Block Funding?	No	Yes*	Yes

*If a foster caregiver has two or more children in care who require full-time childcare, the foster caregiver will pay for childcare for the first child from the block funding amount they receive. The foster caregiver would be provided with advance monthly funding for the amount spent on childcare for any additional children in *full-time care* by working closely with their social worker. *Please note:* full-time childcare is referred to as full days on a regular basis. After-school childcare is included in the block funding and is not considered full-time childcare.

Extended Breaks: When full-time childcare is required during extended school breaks, such as summer, March break and December holidays, that is classified as childcare and is encompassed in block funding for the first child and is outside block funding for additional children.

What’s Not Included in Block Funding?

Things that are not included in block funding and which are direct billed to the Department:

- Dental care (including braces)
- Prescription Medication, Ramps, Wheelchairs, Glasses / Contact Lenses, Hearing Devices
- Car Seats, Cribs
- Therapeutic Services
- Purchase / lease of Accessible vehicles that are deemed necessary based on the specific needs of the child or youth in their care (approval required from CFW Director)
- Tutoring
- Post-Secondary Education
- Cultural Clothing
- Respite

REMINDER: If you have outstanding expenses from before block funding was implemented, please submit your receipts as soon as possible following the regular process.



What was happening in 1983?



On January 1, 1983 - The metric system of weights and measures was adopted as the official standard of measurement in Canada



The Premier of Nova Scotia was John Buchanan



The first worldwide mobile telephone, the Motorola DynaTAC, enters the market.



The TV show Reading Rainbow debuted on PBS



The Prime Minister of Canada was Pierre Trudeau

