

Eastern Foster Care Focus Group
Virtual Meeting
June 13th, 2024

Meeting Minutes

PRESENT:

Federation Staff:

Gary Landry, *Executive Director*
Jill Martin, *Foster Allegation & Support Social Worker*
Shirley Howard, *Coordinator of Training*
Denyse Hockley, *Executive Assistant*

Department of Community Services:

Margaret MacMillan, *Foster Care Coordinator*
Erin Warner, *Service Delivery Manager*
Wendy Thorn, *Foster Care Supervisor*
Shaun Butler, *Manager of Regional Service Delivery*
Donna Deveaux-McLeod, *Manager of Regional Service Delivery*
Jennifer March, *Supervisor*
Kevin McGrath, *Casework Supervisor, Eastern Resource Unit*

Foster Caregivers:

Rob Richardson, *Western FFFNS Board Rep & Board Chair*
Sheila Hill, *Eastern FFFNS Board Rep & Association President Inverness-Richmond*

REGRETS:

Aliesje MacInnis, *Acting Director, Employment Support Services*
Kimberly King-MacDonald, *Casework Supervisor, Child & Family Wellbeing*
Maggie Ellis, *Manager of Service Delivery*
Georgeina MacKinnon, *Director of Foster Care Redesign*
Mairi MacLean, *Coordinator of Foster Care Redesign*

1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting Chairs – Gary Landry & Margaret MacMillan
Minute Taker – Denyse Hockley

2. Meeting Participation

- Discussion around ways to improve meeting participation
- Suggestion was made to meetings in May instead of June next year, but this is the Federation's busiest time as the AGM is always at the end of May
- Another suggestion was to have them in April
- Point was made that attendance was better before Covid when meetings were held in-person and after hours
- Request was made to book 2-3 meetings at a time so supervisors and staff can add to their calendars before they book other meetings
- When the meetings were in-person, only a small group of people were invited due to cost, now all foster caregivers are invited
- Suggestion of having hybrid meetings that are in-person and virtual
- Sheila offered to call caregivers in her area before the next meeting to try to encourage more to attend
- Sheila will also bring the minutes from this meeting to discuss at her Association meeting and/or Hub gathering
- Could we encourage Hub Homes to have more of a role in attending these meetings?
- Maybe ask the Hub Homes to give their constellation more information about Focus meetings
- We could look at giving gift cards to people who attend or some other incentive
- Margaret suggested we could look at updating the Terms of Reference to be clearer and more consistent and they could be tailored to each region,
- Reminder that the Focus meetings came about because of recommendations from the Dialogue report and are an opportunity to come together and share concerns

3. FFFNS Updates

- Gary thanked those who were able to attend the AGM, next year is being hosted by Western and will probably be held somewhere along the South Shore side
- Launch this year will be in Port Hawkesbury on Oct 20th
- The new Coordinator of Training, Shirley Howard, started in February
- Shirley is working on updating the Sensitivity program for Fall and it will be one day instead of two, all foster caregivers will be asked to attend
- Spring Training is wrapping up
- Shirley is also looking at providing a blended NCI training, there will be a 3-hour online piece and a 4-hour in-person piece

4. Allegation and Support Program Update

- This past fiscal year the numbers were up a little from last year
- CAIT is now handling all foster home investigations
- Jessica Ali from CAIT had a table set up at the Friday night meet and greet at the Federation AGM in May
- Jill has one file wrapping up today
- CAIT is achieving its mandate of wrapping up investigations respectfully and quickly

- Jill attended Preservice sessions in all regions except Mi'kmaw this past Spring

5. Child and Family Well Being Program Update

- Margaret discussed the upcoming review of the FOTS program
- DCS is looking at removing the referral process and having a FOTS worker for each constellation
- The referral process has led to some stigma for those being recommended to the program
- FOTS supervisors would like some more procedural info as well
- Margaret also discussed the Emergency Receiving Program which should start in the Fall, one ERH in each region to start
- Emergency receiving homes would not be providing respite, just taking emergency placements
- Question about how they will they decide who will do emergency receiving? It will probably be in consultation with individual foster care teams but not sure yet
- DCS is looking at how they would be reimbursed under Block Funding

6. FOTS Update

- Education session, Queer 101 was put on
- Kevin has also offered some drop in Tea Talks but attendance has been low
- FOTS can put on support groups or offer individual support
- Any ideas or possible topics should be sent to Stephanie Reynolds or Kevin for future sessions
- Suggestion to offer education on how to deal with a suicidal child
- Sheila sends information about all these sessions to her constellation
- Stephanie Reynolds attended one of Sheila's Hub gatherings
- Sheila suggested having First Aid somewhere local
- On the recruitment side, Kevin has noticed an increase in foster care inquiries over adoption inquires
- Preservice training just finished, and he is hoping to offer more in June & July in Baddeck

7. Foster Caregiver Updates

- Sheila has heard lots of good things about Block Funding overall and Mockingbird
- Sheila had a call from a foster caregiver who was upset that they had bought luggage for children who were in a temporary placement with them and was not reimbursed, they were told this amount should be included in block funding
- Reminder that in situations like this when someone has a concern they should first reach out to their worker/children-in-care worker and then supervisor if they are not satisfied
- Also good to reach out in advance if there is a potentially unusual expense to see if it would be included in Block Funding or reimbursed
- Sheila has been doing quite a bit of respite which has allowed her to get to know the kids in her constellation

- Rob and the Board have been busy working on increasing the profile of the Federation, hosting meet and greets, sending out monthly “Did you Know” emails, and fielding many foster related questions
- Rob & Sheila are always available for questions

8. Positive Stories

- Sheila has a child who was in a TEA (Temporary Emergency Arrangement) and is doing wonderful compared to when she first arrived
- TEA numbers have been cut in half due to more children being placed with foster families

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

- Gary and Margaret will discuss and look at having an in-person session in the Fall
- Invites with date for next session will be sent out as soon as possible

Minutes taken by Denyse Hockley