

Western Foster Care Focus Group
Virtual Meeting
June 19th, 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*
Melanie Mood-Deveau, *Foster Care Supervisor, Western*
Robert Myles, *Supervisor, Regional Resources, Western*
Gordon Maskell, *Social Worker*
Hannah Wallace, *Education & Training Social Worker*
Renee Schofield, *Child & Family Wellbeing Specialist*

Foster Caregivers:

Rob Richardson, *Western FFFNS Board Rep & Board Chair*
Jenn Bishop
Tammy Weagle

REGRETS:

Callum Page, *Manager, Service Delivery*
Georgeina MacKinnon, *Director of Foster Care Redesign*
Mairi MacLean, *Coordinator of Foster Care Redesign*
Cheyenna Scott-Banks, *Regional Service Delivery Manager*
Terri Chaytor, *Casework Supervisor*
Melissa MacNeil, *Foster Care Outreach Worker*
Laurie D'Entremont, *Director of Service Delivery Western Region*
Julie West, *Care & Custody Supervisor*

1. Welcome and Introductions

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

2. FFFNS Updates

Gary:

- Gary thanked those who were able to attend the AGM in Sydney last month
- Workshop sessions were held on Trauma Informed Care and The Court Process
- DCS held a session to provide updates to Foster Care Redesign
- Next year AGM will be hosted by Western region the weekend of May 30,31, & June 1
- The Launch to Foster Family Appreciation Week will be held in Port Hawkesbury this year on Oct 20th
- Spring/Summer newsletter will go out first week of July
- FFFNS hired a new Coordinator of Training in February

Rob:

- Regional elections for the board of directors were held before the AGM
- Lloyd Sweeney was re-elected for another term
- Rob & Lloyd are always available if foster caregivers have any questions
- Rob is sending out monthly “Did You Know” emails on behalf of the board

Shirley:

- Shirley is working on an update to the Sensitivity Program
- The new program will be one day instead of two
- It will be rolled out in waves and each constellation will take the training together
- The morning will consist of learning new material and the afternoon there will be guest speakers
- The NCI refresher is being updated as well
- The Fall refresher will be a blended model of part online and part in-person
- There will be three hours of online work and only four hours of in-person work presented during a morning session

3. Allegation and Support Program Update (Jill)

- Jill saw an increase in files for the fiscal year that ended in March
- She had 22 files compared to 17 files from the previous year
- CAIT program now has two social workers: Jessica Ali and Jody Rudderham
- Files are being resolved more quickly under the CAIT program
- Jill is also finishing up attendance at preservice training
- Last session for Spring will be tomorrow in Berwick

4. FOTS Update (Gordon)

- FOTS workers are waiting to see if their role will change with new Mockingbird model

- Deana Bryan (Prevention & Early Intervention Specialist) invited FOTS workers to the Community of Practice meetings
- They had meetings in West Hants and Liverpool and met with different community resources
- FOTS workers are looking at who they can connect families with especially youth that are graduating out of the system

5. Child and Family Well Being Program Update

Margaret – New Practice Framework

- a full review of the FOTS program has been underway
- some regions have been proactive & assigned FOTS workers to constellations
- these workers have attended the Hub gatherings and have the chance to talk to foster caregivers to see what types of services would be helpful, instead of using a referral-based system
- Current FOTS program is being delivered by social workers in some areas and access workers in other areas
- DCS is looking at bringing more consistency to the program and deciding what the best delivery model will be
- There are approximately 50 constellations in the province right now

Margaret - Emergency Receiving Homes

- These homes will be launched in the Fall
- Hoping to have one per constellation
- They will be required to be available 24 hours & have no primary placement
- The purpose will be to keep children in the same community until long term placement is found (if necessary)

Margaret – Ambassador Program

- Ambassador Program will consist of current foster caregivers/former children in care
- This is an extension of the current recruitment strategy
- There will be up to 2-3 ambassadors per region,
- FFFNS is in process of hiring someone to oversee program

Melanie

- Western has 10 constellations
- Rollouts started in Dec and ended in April
- Homes are at very different stages of Redesign
- They are working on a calendar of events for each constellation
- Everyone is seeing the benefits of the Mockingbird model and there have been so many positive experiences
- Going well does not mean everything is perfect and they are looking at how to encourage engagement from all families
- Melanie is confident as new families who join they will be excited by this model

6. Foster Caregiver Updates

- Tammy & Jenn are both Hub Homes for smaller constellations
- Most experiences have been positive, but they have experienced some resistance
- Kinship homes seem to be the most resistant
- Children all seem to love the gatherings
- Being a single parent and a hub home may present some more challenges, than a two-parent home would experience
- Jenn organized a puppet making day for one of the gatherings and it was a big hit with the kids

- Rob (and wife Crissy) are Hub Home to large constellation of nine families
- Rob's constellation were all friends before the start of Redesign
- This probably ensured a smoother transition
- In the winter some of their gatherings were at a local skating rink and a few kids learned how to skate
- Rob invested in two bouncy castles for the summer gatherings, and they have been borrowed by respite families and getting lots of use

7. Positive Stories

- Everyone has heard lots of positive stories about Redesign, happy to see three hub homes attending this meeting
- We want to recognize all of the positive work the hub homes are doing

8. Additional Agenda Items

- Bursary deadline was extended to July 5th

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting??

- Sometime in Fall 2024, Gary and Margaret will decide
- First week of November would be better than later in the month as the lobster fishery opens then

Minutes taken by Denyse Hockley