

# Central Foster Care Focus Meeting December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

## Meeting Minutes

### **PRESENT:**

#### Federation Staff:

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

#### Department of Community Services:

Margaret MacMillan, *Foster Care Coordinator*  
Heather Carrington, *CIC supervisor (virtual)*

#### Foster Caregivers:

Rob Richardson, *Western FFFNS Board Rep & Board Chair (virtual)*  
Melissa Pettipas, *Foster caregiver*  
Jenn Boyne, *Foster caregiver*  
Robyn Day, *Foster Caregiver*  
Barb Pike, *Foster Caregiver*  
Willa London, *Foster Caregiver*  
Allie Pitre, *Foster Caregiver & Hub Home (virtual)*  
Arran & Kerry Fraser, *Foster Caregivers (virtual)*  
Jennifer Weston, *Foster Caregiver (virtual)*  
Morgan Blackmore, *Foster Caregiver (virtual)*  
Joelle Badman, *Foster Caregiver (virtual)*  
Taryn Haynes, *Foster Caregiver & Hub Home (virtual)*  
Belinda Matheson, *Foster Caregiver & Hub Home (virtual)*  
Ann Jennex- Roberts, *Foster Caregiver & Hub Home (virtual)*

### **REGRETS:**

Kassandra Knight, *Service Delivery Manager*  
Heather Kearney, *Director of Service Delivery, Central Region*  
Shannon MacMichael, *Director of Service Delivery (CAIT, PART & Disclosure Program)*  
Chelsea Bent, *CIC Supervisor*  
Georgeina MacKinnon, *A/Director of Placement Services*  
Sabah Randell & Mikisha Johnston, *P&EI Specialists*  
Susan Pace, *Foster Care Supervisor*  
Jennifer Skinner, *Provincial Resources Supervisor*  
Mairi MacLean, *Coordinator of Foster Care Redesign*

Maggie Ellis, *Access and Transportation Supervisor*  
Nancy Baker, *Child and Family Wellbeing Specialist*  
Mandy Levine, *FOTS and Assessment Supervisor*

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1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting Chairs – Gary Landry & Margaret MacMillan  
Minute Taker – Jill Martin

2. FFFNS Updates

Gary: Gary let everyone know that the Federation's 2025 AGM will be held from May 30<sup>th</sup>- June 1<sup>st</sup> at the Best Western in Liverpool. The Federation is working with DCS on the development of an Ambassador program to assist with the recruitment of new caregivers. We are also looking to hire for the designated FASW/Ambassador position; however, we have been unable to fill it thus far.

Rob: Rob encouraged foster parents to reach out to their local board reps (Ann Jennex-Roberts and Allie Pitre and/or ANS reps Patricia Cain and Glenda Marsman) if they have questions or concerns. Rob also reminded the group about the regular "Did You Know" emails that the Federation sends out and encouraged people to take a moment to read them as they often contain timely information and important updates.

Shirley: The rollout of the new 1-day Sensitivity training program for caregivers began this Fall (taken with your constellation). There will be more sessions coming in the Spring. A blended model for NVC refresher was also offered, with participants completing 3 hours of material online at home and then completing 3 hours in class. This was well received and will be offered again in the Spring along with the regular 1-day refresher in person and the 2-day basic for new homes. The issue of childcare coverage for medical homes was raised, as well as whether the training is necessary for this who only take babies or medically fragile placements.

3. Allegation and Support Program Update (Jill)

All foster home investigations continue to be conducted by CAIT (social workers Jody Rudderham and Jessica Ali, based out of the Dartmouth office). FASW continues to attend Pride Preservice training throughout the province each Spring/Fall to talk to prospective foster and adoptive parents about the Federation and about allegations/safeguarding. The Federation/Jill is now hosting the monthly Hub Home support meetings (virtually) on the last Tuesday of each month.

#### 4. FOTS Update

The delivery of FOTS throughout the province is being reviewed as it looks a bit different in each region. Some areas have assigned an outreach worker to constellations for regular support/a point of contact.

#### 5. Child and Family Well Being Program Update

-DCS is moving ahead with the final phase of Foster Care Redesign, which is due for completion on March 31, 2025.

-The final focus is on recruitment and retention. There has been a needs assessment completed to determine who we most need to recruit to meet the needs of children in care, a large media campaign, and a review of the full approval process from the point of first contact through to final approval.

-The online Pre-service training option for foster care and adoption applicants will be launched in the new year and will require a final determination as to who will be responsible for adding and removing applicants as they register and complete training. A hybrid delivery model with some pre-service to still be offered in person as needed and/or requested is being explored. We also need to take into consideration the wait list for assessment and ensure those who have completed training are not waiting extended periods of time for the completion of their SAFE assessment. We also need to consider the recent announcement of changes to the reporting structure for regional resource trainers and pre-service and recruitment social worker. There are a number of factors which need to be worked out and so there has been a delay in that change over, but it is anticipated to take place in the new year. Further information will be shared as it becomes available. It will still be the responsibility of the Foster Care Program on program development for all required training for new and approved foster care givers.

-The Ambassador Program is currently being operationalized with the assistance of the FFFNS who will deliver the program with on-going support from DCS. For the time being Jill Martin will be working with Mairi MacLean, Coordinator of Foster Care Redesign to determine key aspects of the program which require further development i.e. selection, training and on-boarding of ambassadors. This will consist of current FCG's, retired FCG and previous children with care experience as well as community members. DCS has also connected with community organizations to support this recruitment effort and will work closely with the FFFNS in support of recruitment efforts to build interest in the program.

-Emergency receiving homes (ERH) for foster care placement is the final roll out of Foster Care Redesign. Key members of the FC Redesign are currently connecting with FC teams in each region to identify potential interest from FCG's who would be interested and have the necessary training and skills to offer this support service. ERH will not have primary placement, and the goal is to be available 24/7 for short term emergency placement not to

exceed 14 days while a full-time placement within FC is sought. Funding will be in advance on a bi-weekly basis similar to block funding and will continue as an automatic payment so long as the ERH is available and willing to take placement. Hub Homes cannot continue in their role and also be an emergency receiving home at the same time. The goals of the ERH's are to ensure children stay in their communities in a family type home environment while full-time placement is being secured. It is the hope that each region will have several ERH's to support their current placement needs. Further recruitment of new foster caregivers is key to the long-term success of this emergency receiving FC service.

6. Foster Caregiver Updates

-The lack of available childcare spaces was raised by caregivers as an important issue. Some homes are unable to accept placement if they work and cannot easily secure a daycare space. Others have resorted to paying for a space themselves so that they can hold it for when their next placement arrives. The question was raised as to whether DCS could maintain some spaces for children in their care.

-Accountability regarding Hub Home funding was also raised as there appears to be variation throughout the province in how those funds are dispersed/utilized. Respite availability also varies as some hub homes have no full-time placements and others have up to four. Needs of the constellations also vary as some homes have respite exclusive arrangements and don't necessarily rely on the hub for this support. There are also difficulties with medical needs children in constellations where no one is able to provide respite due to the level of care required. There was some discussion re: constellations connecting people within but not between constellations (i.e. connections have been lost with caregivers outside their own constellations).

7. Positive Stories

A story was shared by two caregivers who partnered up to take a child from each of their homes on a trip to Disney through Make-A-Wish.

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be in the Spring, likely in June after the Federation's AGM.

*Minutes taken by  
Jill Martin*