

Western Foster Care Focus Meeting  
November 19, 2024 (Hybrid in-person/virtual)  
Kentville Child & Family Wellbeing Office

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*  
Melanie Mood-Deveau, *Foster Care Supervisor, Western*

Foster Caregivers:

Rob Richardson, *Western FFFNS Board Rep & Board Chair*  
Chrissy Richardson, *Hub Home & Foster Caregiver*  
Jolene Wood, *Hub Home & Foster Caregiver*  
Jo Cataford, *Hub Home & Foster Caregiver*  
Meagan Smith, *Foster Caregiver*  
Kathleen Murphy, *Foster Caregiver*  
Jenn Nichols, *Foster Caregiver*  
Jeff Bickel, *Foster Care social worker & Foster Caregiver*

Regrets:

Robert Myles, *Supervisor, Regional Resources, Western*  
Gordon Maskell, *Social Worker*  
Hannah Wallace, *Education & Training Social Worker*  
Renee Schofield, *Child & Family Wellbeing Specialist*  
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*

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1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting Chairs – Gary Landry & Margaret MacMillan

Minute Taker – Jill Martin

## 2. FFFNS Updates

Gary:

- The Federation's 2025 AGM will be hosted by the Western region (Best Western – Liverpool) from May 30<sup>th</sup>- June 1<sup>st</sup>.
- The 2025 Launch of Foster Family Appreciation Week will be hosted by the Northern region.
- The FFFNS is working with DCS on the development of the Ambassador Program, which will support the recruitment of new foster caregivers by utilizing current and former caregivers and former youth in care who can speak to the experience first-hand.

Rob:

- Rob encouraged caregivers to read the Did You Know emails which are sent regularly by the Federation with important/timely information. Board reps for the region are Rob Richardson and Llyod Sweeney. Rob encouraged foster caregivers with questions or concerns to reach out to them.

Shirley:

- Updated Sensitivity (1-day) gradually rolling out this Fall with many more sessions in the Spring
- The Federation is also trying a blended NVC refreshers this Fall, which is 3 hours of online learning at home and then 3.5 hours in person to review the disengagement skills.
- The 2-day basic and regular 1-day in person refreshers are all taking place throughout the province.

## 3. Allegation and Support Program Update (Jill)

- Allegation support worker works closely with CAIT program's 2 social workers who complete the foster home investigations.
- FASW also attends pre-service training for prospective foster/adoptive parents throughout the province
- FFFNS is now hosting the monthly virtual Hub Home Peer Support meetings on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month. Next scheduled meeting is November 26<sup>th</sup>.

## 4. FOTS Update

- The delivery of FOTS continues to be under review by the FC redesign team leadership as part of Redesign to ensure each region is delivering necessary and supportive services. Some regions have assigned FOTS worker to Constellation and it is reported to be working very well. Consideration at this time is ensuring consistency with the delivery of this service taking into consideration regional needs in terms of staffing compared to number of Constellations and service request. It may be that a referral-based design is no longer the best fit.

## 5. Child and Family Well Being Program Update (Margaret)

- DCS is moving ahead with the final phase of foster care design 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 on-line Pre-service training option to foster care and adoption applicants will be launch in approximately 6 weeks and will require a final determination as to the Super user who will be responsible for adding and removing applicants as they register and complete training. We are looking at a hybrid delivery with some pre-service to still be offer in person as needed and/or requested. We also need to take into consideration the wait list for assessment and ensure we do not have persons who have completed training and then are waitlisted for extended periods of time for completion of there 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 get 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, Coor. Of FC Design 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 is also connect 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 FC redesign and Resign meeting is currently connecting with FC teams in each region to identify potential interest from FCG who would be interesting 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. Payment 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 can not continue in their role and also be an emergency receiving home at the same time. The goals of the ERH's is 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 care givers is key to the long-term success of this emergency receiving FC service.

## 6. Foster Caregiver Updates/Questions

-Jolene expressed concern with the NVCi holds taught in training. They have been passed to the coordinator and E.D. Gary added it to his list to discuss with Margaret at their next meeting (December 11<sup>th</sup>).

-Rob provided an update on the meeting with Minister of Community Services (Brendan Maguire). The top 2 issues raised at their September meeting were lack of childcare spaces in many

communities, which can prevent working caregivers from accepting placements who are not yet school age, and the importance of supports for youth when aging out of care.

-Ethel asked who is eligible to attend constellation gatherings. Margaret emphasized the importance of hub homes knowing who will be attending an event due to possible checks needing to be done. If in public, other family members etc. may be able to attend along with satellite homes, however, the hub home would usually only purchase admission tickets, provide food etc, for the members of the constellation.

-Question came up re: whether or not respite exclusive homes would be included in constellation gatherings. The answer is generally not, however, if they have placements from the constellation with them for respite they would be invited to attend with the children/youth.

-Various possible ways to help familiarize children/youth coming to a foster home were discussed (i.e. photo album, digital photo page etc.). This is a work in progress as technical solutions are explored. There is also an addendum to the PIC tool being developed that helps capture the child in a more personal way (“All About Me”) to help caregivers get to know a bit about them.

-Melanie provided an update for caregivers, letting them know that Aiden Deveau (Windsor office) will be the placement social worker for the region (similar to Central), so foster caregivers may be hearing from him instead of their own F.C. social worker when placement is needed.

-Concern regarding length of time between completion of pre-service training and SAFE assessment was raised. Strategies to clear the backlog of waiting assessments are being explored. There is no plan to pause training at this time.

#### 7. Positive Stories

-Ethel shared a story of putting a message out on social media for assistance and 3 former placements offering help.

-At the end of the meeting, Jolene shared a story of a successful transition to adoption.

#### 8. Additional Agenda Items

-None

#### 9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

-TBD, likely early June. A decision will be made in the new year whether to continue with in person, virtual, or a hybrid model.

*Minutes taken by Jill Martin*