

# **Federation of Foster Families**

## **Board Meeting Minutes**

**Date: September 12, 2025**

### **Attendance**

In Attendance: Rob Richardson, Mary Ann Burke, Brenda Pettis, Executive Director- Susan Pace,

Lloyd Sweeney, Darlene

Arsenault-Kennedy, Allie Pitre, Wendell Fraser, Ann Jennox-Roberts, Glenda Marsman

Not in Attendance: Darlene Francis

Regrets: Sheila Hill, Patricia Cain

Special Guests: Georgina McKinnon and Stacey Greenough

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- Stacey introduced herself as Director of Care, responsible for foster care, adoption, child and youth care, and the children in care programs.
- She shared her background, including prior roles in children's services, transportation, and access support, and noted her longstanding experience working with Susan and others in the sector.

### **2. Foster Care Redesign Updates**

- Ambassador Program: Ready to launch in partnership with the Federation. Communications to staff have gone out. The Federation will invite foster caregivers to apply. Applications will be vetted, orientation provided, and ambassadors matched with recruitment staff.
- Emergency Receiving Homes: Launching within weeks. Homes will be regionally distributed (1 Eastern, 1 Northern, 1 Western, 2 Central). Criteria include a 24/7 caregiver, ability to accept 2 children, and a maximum stay of 14 days. Communication will go to foster caregivers and staff, inviting expressions of interest. Review planned after six months to assess effectiveness and need for expansion.

### **3. Training and Assessment**

- A provincial training team is now in place for consistency across regions.
- Online PRIDE preservice modules have been purchased and are being adapted for the Nova Scotia context (launch goal: end of year).
- Hybrid delivery is planned: self-directed modules plus group check-ins.
- A provincial SAFE assessment team has been established with dedicated supervisors.
- Over 100 assessments are in progress, aiming to clear backlogs and bring on 100–120 new foster/adoptive families by year-end.

### **4. Foster Focus Groups**

- Planned for November, with in-person sessions across regions and with Mi'kmaq Family & Children's Services.

- Goal: strengthen caregiver input and improve departmental responsiveness.

## **5. Foster Parent Appreciation Week**

- Launch event planned in the Pictou region on October 19.
- Regional banquets scheduled mid-week.
- The art and poetry contest has concluded; winning pieces will be featured on caregiver thank-you cards.

## **6. Path Program (Post-Care Support)**

- Evaluation is underway, with the final report pending.
- The program provides \$20,000 annually (declining over time) for young adults leaving care.
- Discussion acknowledged both successes and challenges: concerns about preparedness, misuse of funds, and capacity issues; supports such as trusteeship options, youth outreach, and earlier preparation.
- Human rights obligations prevent arbitrary restriction of funds.
- Board members shared mixed perspectives regarding accountability, readiness, and available supports.

## **7. Policy and Practice Updates (Georgina McKinnon & Stacey Greenough)**

- Social workers must now visit within five days of a new placement and complete in-person visits every 60 days thereafter.
- Staff are being trained through weekly online sessions as the new procedures are implemented province-wide.
- Respite Exclusive Homes now require an annual in-person review and quarterly phone check-ins. Homes cannot provide full-time care unless formally approved as kinship or foster homes.
- Language updates: 'Child protection' → 'Child safety and family preservation'; 'Placement' → 'Where a child lives'; 'Case plan' → 'Family plan'; 'Foster parent' → 'Foster caregiver'.

## **8. Recruitment and Application Process**

- The department is launching a new streamlined foster/adoptive application.
- Several forms have been merged, questions simplified, and fostering/adoption processes aligned.
- The final draft will soon be released to the training team.
- Virtual information sessions will increase accessibility.
- Assessment timelines are now targeted at 6–12 months, down from 2–3 years.

## **9. Governance Discussion**

- Governance training recommended adding two community members to the board for broader perspectives (finance, legal, education, community).
- This will be considered in the next Service Level Agreement (April 2026).

## **10. Caregiver Questions & Open Discussion**

- Access Visits: Concern about visits interrupting school time; suggestion to advocate for improved scheduling.
- Placement Information: Caregivers requested clear contact lists for the social worker, supervisor, and manager at the time of placement.
- Levels of Care: Clarified that care levels are based on daily care needs, not diagnosis, and are reviewed regularly.
- Wheelchair Accessibility: Ongoing delays in equipment delivery were noted as a systemic issue.
- Funding Delays: Block funding payments should occur within days of registration; any issues will be followed up.
- Childcare/Daycare: Ongoing shortages; block funding expected to cover costs, with extraordinary expenses available if insufficient.

## **11. Financial and Budget Matters**

- Concern raised that budgets have not increased since 2019 despite rising costs.
- Current strategy involves internal reallocations, with the option to request increases if necessary.
- Discussion covered balancing priorities including the Ambassador Program, FASS position, and other initiatives within existing funding.

## **12. Next Steps & Action Items**

- Launch Ambassador Program and Emergency Receiving Homes.
- Proceed with November Foster Focus Groups.
- Prepare for Foster Parent Appreciation Week (October 19).
- Communicate board composition changes and membership vote process.
- Follow up on block funding and payment delays.
- Circulate revised policy language glossary to caregivers.

## **13. Adjournment**

*Brenda Pettis*