



# Standing Committee on Community Services Foster Care Funding

June 5, 2018

# Background

- DCS protects one of Nova Scotia's most vulnerable populations – children in situations of abuse and/or neglect.
- There are approximately 1,055 children in care who rely on DCS to keep them safe and provide them with a range of supports to meet their basic needs.



Average age of child in temporary care:  
**6.3 years old**

Average age of a child in care:  
**9 years old**

Average age of child in permanent care:  
**10.2 years old**

- Placement options available for children/youth in care include 663 foster homes and 19 residential child-caring facilities.
- Foster families provide day to day care for approximately two thirds of children in the Minister's care.

# Foster Care Overview

- When a child cannot safely remain in parental care, and there are no other options available within the child's extended family, foster family placement is the next best option.
- Foster care is the most therapeutic placement resource for most children in care, and maintaining a viable pool of trained, competent, approved foster families is the work of the foster care program.
- Foster families provide temporary but stable, nurturing care to children who are unable to remain with their birth families, while their parents work with the child protection program to ameliorate the concerns that brought them into care.
- Foster parents provide children with 24/7 care, and in doing so, they accept a high degree of scrutiny and intrusion into their lives. In return, they need and expect support, development opportunities and a respectful relationship with their partners at every level.

# Types of Foster Care

## Foster Care (General)

- Provides temporary, stable, nurturing family care to children in care who are unable to remain with their birth families.

## Kinship Care

- This temporary, care is provided to the child by a relative or someone who has an established relationship with the child.

## Contracted Foster Care

- Care for children with extraordinarily high needs is provided by foster families who have the specialized skills and ability to commit to meeting these needs.

# Funding Streams

## Per diem

Foster parents receive financial support, in the form of a monthly payment, to offset the expenses associated with providing day to day care to children placed with their families. The payment is based on a daily (per diem) amount of either \$19 or \$27.50, and is called the “board rate”.

## Competency payments

Approved general foster parents will receive financial recognition, through competency payments, for their participation in training and demonstration of knowledge and skills within the five PRIDE competency categories.

## Maintenance of children in care

All children in care, regardless of placement, are eligible to receive funding that addresses their developmental and other needs, for example recreational or therapeutic services. All decisions on purchases for children in care must be consistent with ongoing planning for the child and reviewed/supported during the case planning process involving the social worker, casework supervisor, the child, as appropriate, and the child’s caregiver.

# Foster Care Statistics

## # Children by Region

*As of March 31, 2018	Foster care (General)	Kinship Care	Contracted Foster Care	Total
Central	163	42	16	<u>221</u>
Northern	107	9	6	<u>122</u>
Eastern	109	99	13	<u>221</u>
Western	82	17	21	<u>120</u>
<b>Total</b>	<u>461</u>	<u>167</u>	<u>56</u>	<b>684</b>

## # of Foster Care Homes by Region

*As of March 31, 2018	Foster care (General)	Kinship Care	Contracted Foster Care	Total
Central	158	37	11	<u>206</u>
Northern	109	9	4	<u>122</u>
Eastern	102	83	14	<u>199</u>
Western	113	13	10	<u>136</u>
<b>Total</b>	<u>482</u>	<u>142</u>	<u>39</u>	<b>663</b>

# Cost of Foster Care

## Cost by Funding Stream

Type of Foster Care	Actual Cost in 2017-18
Per Diem	\$6.6 million
Competency Payments	\$0.6 million
Maintenance of Children in Care	\$8.5 million
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>\$15.7 million</u></b>

## Foster Care Reimbursement by Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year	Total Cost
2017-18	\$15.7 million
2016-17	\$14.9 million
2015-16	\$15.8 million

# Foster Care Improvements

As a result of increased investments (\$1.2 million last year, a budgeted \$1.6 million for this year), DCS has recently implemented the following improvements to improve the Foster Care program:

- Funding for a mentoring program for new foster parents and an on-call peer support program;
- After hours supports so foster parents will have a single point of contact for all children in care issues that arise after regular business hours;
- Immediate provision of emergency funding of \$200 per child to foster parents to obtain basic necessities when a child initially enters care;
- Three new automatic payments - \$30 per month for non-prescription items, up to \$150 per month for infant needs, and \$50 a month for a child's travel, with the ability to submit receipts if more is required;



# Foster Care Improvements – cont.

- An increase in the respite rate to \$56 per day, the baby-sitting rate to \$10.60 per hour for the first child and \$4 per hour for each additional child for up to four children per household, and the daily per diem for children up to nine years of age to \$19, and for children 10 years of age and older to \$27.50;
- Streamlined financial reimbursement process to make submitting expense claims easier and faster for foster parents (average processing time is 3 business days); and
- A new quarterly autopayment for a child’s recreational expense of \$90 for children age 0 to 4, and \$150 for children ages 5 to 18 years of age.
- Efforts to recruit more foster parents, including reducing the time from application to approval, targeting recruitment efforts in African Nova Scotian communities, a n upcoming re-branding of foster care and a rapid respite approval process which is allowing us to “fast track” promising candidates before they complete training to offer respite services to other foster parents and introduce them to foster care. These measures contributed to an increase in more than 80 foster parents in the last year.

# What's Next?

- The department will introduce a new Foster Parent Screening and Approval Process to make it faster and more efficient to approve foster families.
- Continuing Dialogue with Foster parents with focus on strengthening foster care program.
- Completion of Foster Care Handbook for easy reference and consistency.
- Targeted recruitment of contracted foster care providers for specific child in care populations and foster parents from the African Nova Scotian community.
- Developing a new marketing campaign aimed at “re-branding” foster care with targeted recruitment via social media.



Thank You!