



# Network Provider Manual





**Dear Network Provider,**

Welcome to Community Based Care in Florida's Southeast Region. ChildNet appreciates your interest in partnering with us as we continue to enhance the quality of life for the children and families of Broward and Palm Beach Counties. We greatly value your role as a current or potential Network Provider and recognize the work that you do as critical to achieving our mission. Most importantly, we thank you for your decision to provide services for the children and families in our community.

Since the start of the transition to a privatized child welfare system in Broward in July 2002, ChildNet and its community partners have been top performers in the state of Florida and our Network continues to expand and improve as new services are designed to meet the unique and individualized needs of our families. ChildNet continues to consider itself, as the lead agency, and its partners, advocates who bring together every resource at our disposal to provide for the safety and best interest of each child in our care. ChildNet's network consists of a continuum of services from system entry to exit that emphasizes continuity of care, capacity building and development of quality services which meet the needs of children and families. In addition, ChildNet continues to be guided by a board of local community leaders, prominent in supporting child welfare issues and whose decisions are based on the needs of the children.

We hope this manual effectively provides orientation and training to all of our Network Providers. Our Network Management Plan and Utilization Management Overview are additional resources that we expect will assist you in becoming familiar with ChildNet's business operations. Again, thank you for your commitment and willingness to provide services crucial to the well-being of the children and families of Broward and Palm Beach counties. It is our mission to protect the abused, abandoned, and neglected children of the communities we serve and we are deeply grateful for your devoted service and for joining us in its effective execution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Emilio Benitez', is positioned above the printed name and title.

Emilio Benitez  
President/Chief Executive Officer



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**Our Mission:**  
To protect abused,  
abandoned and  
neglected children in  
the communities  
we serve.

## **1. Introduction**

### **About ChildNet**

ChildNet has been chosen by the Florida Department of Children and Families to serve as the Community Based Care (CBC) lead agency in both Broward and Palm Beach counties. As such, it is the single private non-profit entity responsible for administration of the local child welfare systems in each county. It fulfills this responsibility by managing comprehensive networks of child welfare services providers and, in Broward, by also serving as the single centralized child welfare case management provider. It also ensures the delivery of a comprehensive local system of care by subcontracting with more than 37 social service agencies and by purchasing services from more than 170 additional credentialed agencies and private practitioners to provide a full array of child welfare services. The agency's mission is to protect abused, abandoned and neglected children in the communities it serves. Fulfillment of this mission requires constant input and support from local stakeholders and its effective implementation depends upon their continued support.

### **About Community Based Care**

Broward County's community based care initiative was formed in response to the Florida Legislature's mandate that child welfare services become privatized. The following timetable illustrates the beginnings of our local community based care initiative and how we got to where we are today.

**1999** - Florida Statute 409.167 mandates that Florida embark on a sweeping effort to transfer child welfare services from the Department of Children & Families to local communities and community based agencies.

**2000** - The Broward Child Welfare Initiative (BCWI), an advocacy group comprised of local citizens, business leaders and social service experts, was formed. With funding from the United Way, a business plan was developed based on community input.

**July 2001** - The Department of Children & Families released an Invitation to Negotiate. In a competitive and public process, Community Based Solutions, now called ChildNet, was chosen as Broward's lead agency for Community Based Care, responsible for the administration and management of foster care and related services.

**July 2002** - ChildNet begins to prepare for the transition to Community Based Care, with start-up funds supplied by the Department of Children & Families and the Children's Services Council.

**April 2003** - ChildNet officially began transitioning services from the Department of Children & Families. This included assuming responsibility for intake and placement services, foster home management and child welfare case management.

**July 2003** - ChildNet entered into a three year services contract with the Department of Children & Families to assume responsibility for the administration and management of the balance of child welfare services. ChildNet subsequently entered into contracts with 27 community agencies to provide intervention, prevention, shelter and group care, assessment and case management services.

**August 2003** - ChildNet began transitioning cases and staff from the Department of Children & Families. This transition was completed in four phases beginning with the North Service Center and continuing with the transition of an additional 25% of the Broward County cases each in November, February and April 2004.

**April 2004** - Broward County's transition to Community Based Care is completed with the transfer of the remaining cases from the Department of Children & Families to ChildNet. ChildNet is now fully responsible for the administration and maintenance of the child protection system in Broward County.

## **Mission Statement, Vision, and Core Values**

### **Our Mission**

To protect abused, abandoned, and neglected children in the communities we serve.

### **Our Vision**

ChildNet will lead every child in our care to safety, permanence, and stability.

### **Our Core Values**

- ChildNet uses a family-centered, strength-based, needs-driven approach to promote appropriate services for the children and their caregivers.
- Field staff and their immediate supervisors are the backbone of ChildNet and ChildNet staff will support them in pursuing their duties in an assertive and proactive fashion.
- ChildNet recognizes that foster and adoptive parents are an essential and invaluable part of the System of Care, and will provide them with comprehensive support services.

- The service provider network is essential to the well-being of the children ChildNet serves, and ChildNet staff members will be fair and honest partners in working with them.
- Informed public opinion and support is the key to establishing and maintaining a sound child welfare system; ChildNet will operate openly and actively to seek public participation and support.

### **Philosophy and System of Care**

Every year in Broward County, several hundred children enter the child welfare system due to abuse, abandonment or neglect. Led by ChildNet, community based care in Broward has been, and will continue to be, a resounding success. Our initial work with service providers and community stakeholders in Palm Beach suggest that similar success there is imminent. In both counties ChildNet, a vast array of talented Network Providers, generous public and private supporters of health, education and human services and an involved and caring community that includes both local businesses and the hundreds of incredible citizens who serve as foster and adoptive parents, are together transforming the local child welfare system. In both counties the number of children in the system has decreased dramatically and their stays in the system have become far safer and shorter. The local child welfare systems now operate effectively, efficiently and economically. Services are comprehensive, accessible and responsive to the complex needs of children who have been or are at risk of being abused, and their caregivers. Lead agency governance rests with a well-structured board of prominent local community members and a vast and diverse group of local stakeholders participate in, support and monitor the systems. Standards are high and well defined with accountability and oversight, both internally and externally. Staff are experienced, well qualified and well trained. Technology is sophisticated, and data secure. The inventory of local foster homes is growing, high quality and increasingly able to serve those who have historically been difficult to place. Financial management is sound, professional and aggressive in recognizing and responding to the challenges of a troubled state economy and the need for alternative sources of revenue. All partners are doggedly focused on reducing lengths of stay, while safely and expeditiously leading children to permanency. In both Broward and Palm Beach the local child welfare system is becoming precisely what community based care was intended to and should be.

ChildNet's basic belief was and continues to be that the lead agency's role is management of the local child welfare system and, in fulfilling that role, it is absolutely essential for the lead agency to develop and financially support a comprehensive network of providers to deliver services to system clients. In service of this belief, ChildNet relies upon organizations and individual professionals to provide programs and services that include but are not limited to prevention, intervention, foster home management, group and shelter care, adoption support and assessment services. ChildNet further believes that our Network Providers are so crucial to the success of community based care and the network administration that it is incumbent upon us to do all that we can to ensure the strength of Network Providers, to nurture emerging agencies and work with established ones through periods of crisis and change.

ChildNet recognizes that the well-being and healthy development of dependent children additionally requires their fullest possible access of quality services that ChildNet does not always have the resources to directly purchase. Such services are still considered part of the Network and may include childcare, developmental disabilities, domestic violence, education, juvenile justice and mental health and substance abuse services. ChildNet relies on its Service Coordination department to facilitate our effective participation with those agencies, boards and committees that develop, administer or monitor such services, often through the development

and implementation of interagency agreements with those entities. Included among such key entities are the Broward and Palm Beach offices of the Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA), Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program of the Department of Children & Families, Workforce One and the Children's Services Councils (CSC), Early Learning Coalitions, Boards of County Commissioners, Hospital Districts, Managing Entities (ME), United Ways and School Districts and Boards of each county.

### **Office Locations and Contact Information**

Administrative office hours are from 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday. Safe Place, ChildNet's intake center in Broward is open 24 hours, 7days a week. In the event you cannot reach ChildNet personnel during regular business hours and an emergency is occurring, please contact the ***After Hours Emergency Number: (954) 414-6005.***

#### **ChildNet Broward County**

##### **Administrative Offices**

1100 W. McNab Road,  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33309  
(954) 414-6000  
Fax: (954) 414-6019  
[www.childnet.us](http://www.childnet.us)

##### **Safe Place**

1100 W. McNab Road,  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33309  
(954) 414-6005  
Fax: (954) 321-3076

#### **ChildNet Palm Beach County**

##### **Administrative Offices**

4100 Okeechobee Blvd  
West Palm Beach, FL 33409  
(561) 352-2500  
Fax: (561) 352-2480

### **Key Staff, Stakeholders and System Documents**

**ChildNet's management team** is comprised of a group of committed professionals that provide the leadership and focus necessary for continued success. Its key members include:

- ❖ Emilio Benitez, ChildNet President/Chief Executive Officer
- ❖ Ainsworth Geddes, ChildNet Chief Financial Officer
- ❖ Larry Rein, Executive Director, Palm Beach County
- ❖ Monica King, Executive Director, Broward County
- ❖ Derrick Roberts, General Counsel

- Donna Skees, Assistant Vice President of Administration
- Mark Shults, Assistant Vice President of Operations
- Dawn Liberta, Assistant Vice President of Case Management
- Theresa Kennedy, Assistant Vice President of Adoption & Youth Services
- Deena Ponto, Assistant Vice President of Support Services

**Community Alliance:** The stakeholder group created in Florida Statute and defined as responsible for local oversight of and input into local child welfare services. In Broward the Community Alliance has chosen to call itself the Children and Families Leadership Association (CFLA).

**Child Caring Agencies (CCA):** Responsible for providing staffed 24 hour care for children in facilities licensed for such purpose. Facilities include shelters and group homes which are administered by agencies and not considered private residences.

**Child Placing Agencies (CPA):** Responsible for licensing new foster homes and all re-licensure activities for existing foster homes. Child Placing Agencies use a Department approved pre-service training curriculum when licensing new homes. They provide support to foster parents and overall are responsible for the management and retention of foster homes.

**Child Resource Record (CRR):** Often called the “Blue Book,” it consists of legal documentation and medical information on a child in foster care. The book remains with the child in licensed foster care and is designed not only to provide information about the child but also to assist the family foster home with the child’s planning.

**Contract Managers:** ChildNet staff who are the point of contact for all new procurements and provides direct oversight of all ChildNet’s contracts. This includes the design, writing, negotiation, and execution of all service contracts and any amendments to them. Additional responsibilities include monitoring ongoing compliance, assisting providers to improve the quality of service delivery, and analyzing data, preparing reports and making recommendations.

**Dependency Case Manager (DCM):** The person coordinating all services rendered to the child or family and who serves as the single and continuous point of contact for the child and family from entry into the child protection system until exit from the child protection system to the extent feasible. In Broward these are ChildNet personnel and are called Child Advocates. In Palm Beach, all Dependency Case Managers are subcontracted Children’s Home Society personnel.

**Intake & Placement Advocates:** ChildNet staff who serve as ChildNet’s centralized referral source responsible for the placement of dependent children in out of home settings. They accept calls from Child Protective Investigators (CPI) for children needing licensed care placements and coordinate with Child Placing and Child Caring Agencies to secure placements within the network. They are also known as Intake Placement Advocates (IPA) and they also accept children into Safe Place and Safe Place, II where they are provided temporary care.

**Licensing Specialist:** ChildNet staff who are responsible for the evaluation, and licensing of foster homes and child caring agencies.

**Quality Advisors:** ChildNet staff who are responsible for establishing and maintaining a culture of quality throughout the agency and network by conducting reviews of internal and contracted

services. In addition, the Quality Advisors review and analyze data which is reported to staff members and stakeholders through committee structures and written reports.

**Network Providers:** An individual or agency rendering their time and efforts to provide programmatic services directly to or on behalf of ChildNet's clients. Such services may include but are not limited to, evaluations, consultations, placement services, prevention services, reunification services, visitation services, legal services, mental health services, substance abuse services and other social services. All Network Providers must be approved through ChildNet's application and credentialing process.

**Contracted Network Providers:** Entity with whom ChildNet maintains a formal contractual relationship for services according to agreed-upon terms. These entities go through ChildNet's application, contracting, and monitoring processes.

**Non-Contracted Network Providers:** Entity for which ChildNet refers children and families for specific services based upon individual client needs although no formal contractual relationship exists. These entities are viewed as an integral part of the service array but are not subjected to the standard contracting approval and monitoring process.

### **Defining the Network and Its Services**

ChildNet is dedicated to maintaining a comprehensive array of effective services and supports for abused children and their caregivers, offered by a diverse and qualified network of service providers. The "networks" of child welfare services that ChildNet "administers" are actually uniquely local hybrids constructed of services supported, managed and monitored by several entities and funding sources. ChildNet delineates its service network into three separate components.

#### **SUBCONTRACTED SERVICES**

At the core, and most closely and directly controlled by ChildNet, are those fundamental child welfare program services which ChildNet pays for and manages through traditional and formal subcontracts. These consist primarily of residential programs serving children who have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care, technically licensed out-of-home care. A much smaller but still substantial portion of this funding is now also directed toward comprehensive family strengthening programs that target families whose children have been removed, with a goal of facilitating the timely, safe and stable reunification of these children with their families. Additionally, several smaller subcontracts have been developed specifically to support specialized behavioral health assessments and services that are tailored to meet the unique needs and circumstances of families in the local dependency system. ChildNet has developed well-defined and multiple methods for the effective administration, oversight and access of all these subcontracted programs. Subcontracted program services are procured in a manner that maximizes their quality and benefit to clients, minimizes the disruption of their delivery and is cost effective. Procurement of services is guided by a system of uniform purchasing procedures that encourage public confidence by promoting fair and open competition, impartial and well-justified decisions and full consideration of ethical and best practices. Given the nature of the industry and the need to swiftly initiate services for clients, purchases may be authorized for the procurement of services without competition. Providers are

selected for their capability to meet the needs of ChildNet and its clients in the most economical and efficient manner possible. Providers must be approved through the credentialing process.

### **PURCHASED SERVICES**

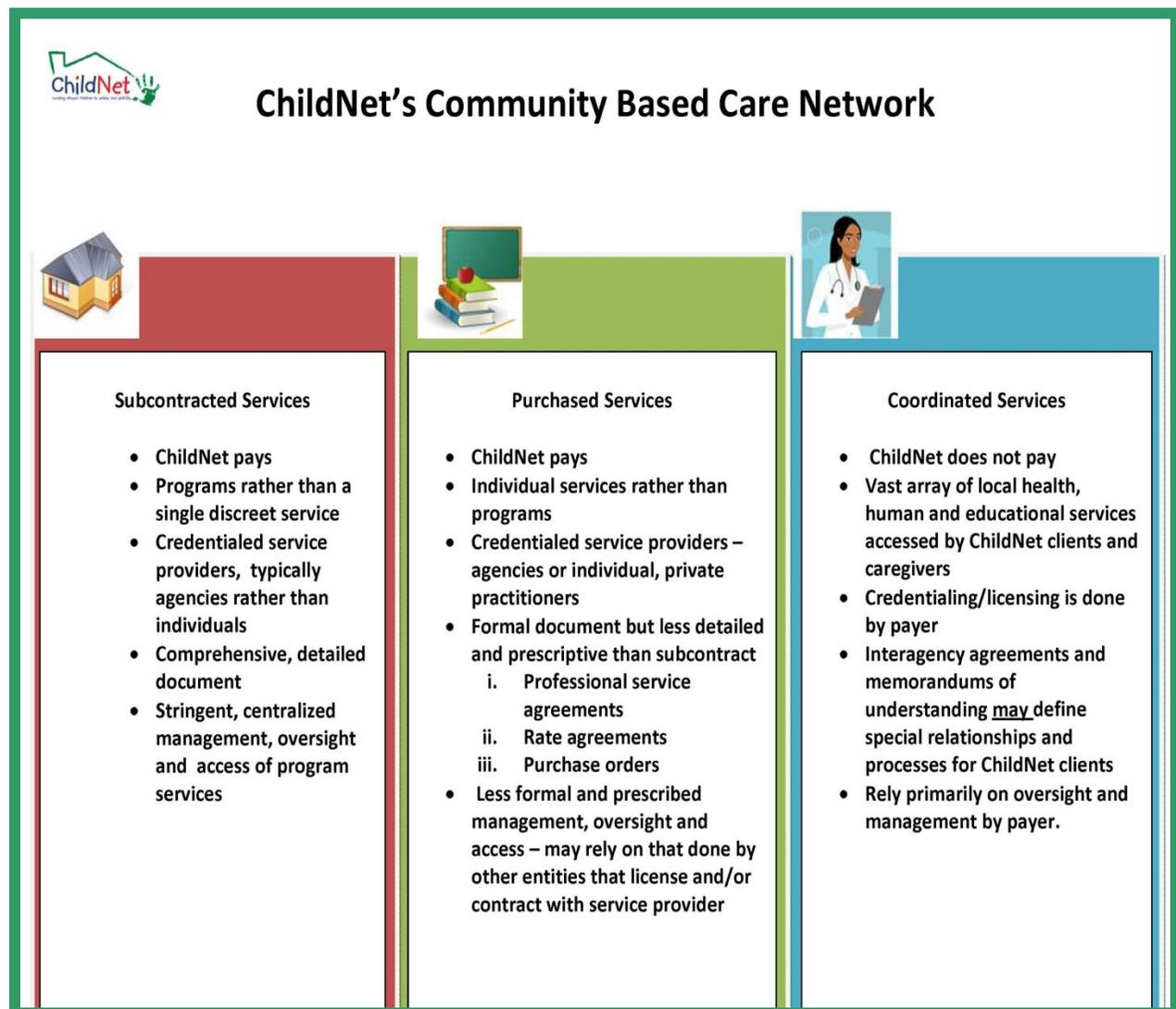
A second component of the network is those individual services, as opposed to programs, which ChildNet also pays for but does so by directly purchasing them from service providers usually on an individual case by case basis and using briefer, less detailed processes and documents such as professional service agreements, purchase orders, and rate agreements, as opposed to more intricate and prescriptive subcontracts. These include services offered by both agencies and by individual and private practitioners such as tutoring, legal services and specialized assessments or therapeutic interventions that ChildNet must use its funding to purchase because they are not supported by other local, state or federal funding. ChildNet systematically and carefully credentials the providers of these services.

Of the three documents used to define purchased services and the reimbursement for their access, the Professional Services Agreement is the only one entered into in advance and reviewed, updated and renewed on a regular, usually annual, basis. It also is the only one that defines a total number of clients to be served, includes clearly defined deliverables, and allocates a total dollar amount to the purchase of the targeted service for those clients. Monitoring and evaluation of performance, however, is often less direct and less intricate than with the subcontracted programs. Outcomes often, for instance, may consist simply of the timely and complete provision of the specified service or assessment rather than the more global indicators of client success demanded of subcontracted programs. Rate agreements are employed almost exclusively to purchase a single residential bed or placement for a specific dependent child whose unique needs cannot be met by a subcontracted service provider. This may include placement at a residential program in a Florida circuit outside of Broward or Palm Beach counties, operated by a service provider who is a subcontractor and/or a member of the network managed by that circuit's Community Based Care lead agency. Alternatively, the residential program may be one, either in or outside of Broward or Palm Beach counties that provides specialized or therapeutic services and is licensed and or contracted to do so by another state agency such as the Agency for Healthcare Administration or the Agency for Persons with Disabilities. Collection and review of copies of contracts, licenses and monitoring reports generated for these programs by the primary funding or licensing entity is the responsibility of ChildNet's Contract Manager. Purchase orders are used to formally describe ChildNet's payment for the one time access of a single specified service by an individual client. The document describes the cost of the unit of service to be provided, the number of units to be provided and/or the limited time for which the service will be provided. Services purchased through rate agreements and purchase orders are authorized in advance in writing by the Director of Service Coordination and are processed and tracked by ChildNet's Contract Management unit.

### **COORDINATED SERVICES**

The third component of the network is comprised of all those services received by the children and families under ChildNet's supervision which ChildNet does not pay for. These include a broad spectrum of health, educational and social services funded by the Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA), Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program of the Department of Children & Families, Workforce One and the Children's Services Councils

(CSC), Early Learning Coalitions (ELC), Boards of County Commissioners, Hospital Districts, Managing Entities (ME), United Ways and School Districts and Boards of each county, In both Broward and Palm Beach these services are especially plentiful and especially crucial to the local success of Community Based Care. Special processes and features of these services designed specifically to meet the needs of ChildNet clients are frequently, but not always, described in interagency agreements or memorandums of agreement. These agreements may sometimes include descriptions of desired outcomes and mechanisms for reporting of client progress but more global reports of program effectiveness and outcomes typically remain the responsibility of the entity funding the service.



## **How to Become a Network Provider**

In efforts to strengthen its business relationship with individuals and organizations, ChildNet requires any individual or organization wishing to conduct business with ChildNet to hold formal network status and undergo an Application and Credentialing process. This process requires the collection of documentation to verify expertise, licensure, and/or accreditation. Completion of the application serves as a request from an applicant to become or remain a member of ChildNet's Network. If the applicant is determined to meet eligibility criteria, they may be conveyed network status. However, network status does not guarantee provision of referrals or a contract. The following are general steps of the credentialing process:

1. The individual or organization completes and submits ChildNet's Network Provider Application Form, (**see Appendix A**), documenting their service experience, licensure and accreditation, professional references, and liability insurance coverage. An Affidavit of Service Provider Standards form, (**see Appendix B**) must also be submitted by the individual or organization enabling ChildNet to determine whether or not approval must be granted by the Department of Children and Families prior to any subcontracting with such individual or organization.
2. ChildNet's Contract Management staff review the Network Provider Application Form and supporting documents for completeness and verify the documentation (i.e., copy of current license(s) and accreditation(s), copy of proof of insurance, reference checks).
3. The Assistant Vice President of Administration or designee approves and signs all Network Providers' application forms allowing the individual or organization to hold formal network status. If an application is denied, the reason for the denial is documented on the form and sent by certified mail to the applicant notifying them of the denial.
4. In order to be re-credentialed as a formal Network Provider, providers are required as part of the contract renewal process or annually to submit verification of any pertinent changes in the information attested to on the Network Provider Application Form or in the executed contract document. The assigned Contract Manager informs the Assistant Vice President of Administration or designee of any problems with re-credentialing. In making a determination about re-credentialing, Contract Management staff may consider utilization information, reviews of site visits, reviews of client complaints/grievances, satisfaction data, and review of all quality assurance and improvement reports.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

As part of the application process to become a Network Provider, all individuals and/or organizations must also complete a Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement and Disclosure Form (**see Appendix C**). This form is reviewed and evaluated as part of the Network Provider credentialing process described above. All Network Providers must ensure that business conducted on behalf of ChildNet is done in a manner which is fair, impartial and always in the best interest of the children and families served. ChildNet and our Network Providers are required to have a process for employees to disclose any and all relationships that exist between them and any other services, service providers or staff being managed or provided by or through ChildNet. ChildNet specifically requires each Network Provider to have an ongoing process for the disclosure and review of any perceived and /or potential conflict of interest for all its employees, independent contractors, and board members. This process must include a

formal review and evaluation of any and all potential conflicts of interest and recommendations for resolution of any perceived or potential conflicts.

## **2. Critical ChildNet Policies and Procedures**

ChildNet recognizes that it is essential that Network Providers be trained on various policies and procedures that are related specifically to the services that they provide or the Network as a whole. Adherence to the following policies is considered to be critical to the success of the Network and therefore Network Providers must ensure their familiarity with them. The following pages provide a synopsis of some of ChildNet's policies and procedures. Each full Policy and Procedure can be accessed through ChildNet's website.

### **Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect**

Network Providers are legally required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect they encounter to authorities. This responsibility includes abuse that may occur amongst children in family foster homes or child caring facilities. The phone number to call in a report is 1-800-96ABUSE. Also, any report that is made should be immediately reported to the child's assigned Dependency Case Manager or Child Advocate. Chapter 30.201 of Florida Statutes states that mandated reporters must provide their names to the hotline staff. The name of the reporter will be entered into the record but will be held confidential.

### **Incident Report Identification and Response**

Network Providers must comply with ChildNet's Incident Reporting Identification and Response Policy and Procedures. Specifically, if a Network Provider becomes aware of an incident, they must call or e-mail the Child Advocate/Dependency Case Manager within 24 hours of becoming aware of the Incident. Network Providers are also responsible for documenting all incident reports/safety concerns on the ChildNet Incident Reporting Form and shall submit the form electronically to the e-mail address specified on the form.

### **Prevention and Placement of Child Victims and Sexual Aggressors**

ChildNet has specific procedures and safeguards for identifying and assisting children in substitute care who are known or alleged juvenile sexual offenders, sexual aggressors, sexually reactive children or known victims of sexual abuse. This ensures that the unique needs of these and all children in care are taken into account when making decisions about assessments, services and placements. This also significantly helps reduce the potential risk of additional child on child sexual abuse, sexual assault, seduction or exploitation.

### **Exit Interviews**

Children ages 5 to 17 who have been placed in a Family Foster Home or Group Home for at least 30 days (before leaving the home) must receive an Exit Interview. Exit interviews are to be completed by the Child Advocate/Dependency Case Manager. Exit interviews are shared with Child Placing and Child Caring Agencies.

### **“Reasonable and prudent parent standard”**

ChildNet ensures that children in care are provided a normal living environment as it relates to acceptable, age appropriate activities. This includes balancing the goals of normalcy and safety for youth and providing caregivers with as much flexibility as possible to enable youth to participate in normal life experiences. Recognizing the importance of normalizing the lives of children in foster care, the reasonable and prudent parent standard was incorporated into Florida Legislation in 2013. The “Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard” is defined as the standard characterized by careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the child’s health, safety, and best interests while at the same time encouraging the child’s emotional and developmental growth, that a caregiver shall use when determining whether to allow a child in out-of-home care to participate in extracurricular, enrichment, and social activities.

### **Psychotropic Medication Administration**

Safe and effective use of psychotropic medications is vital to the health and well-being of children in the care and custody of ChildNet. These medications are defined as any chemical substance prescribed with the intent to treat psychiatric disorders and those substances which though prescribed with the intent to treat other medical conditions have the effect of altering brain chemistry. Psychotropic medication use requires either the express and informed consent of the child’s parent or legal guardian, or the alternative of court authorization. Such medication may be administered in advance of a court order or parental express and informed consent when the child is admitted to a hospital, Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU), or a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Center/Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Program (SIPP) provided other processes and procedures described in Florida Statute are followed.

Licensed caregivers are responsible for recording the administration of these medications when given, on a ChildNet approved Medication Log. This record includes who received the medication, what medication(s) was administered, and when and by whom the medication(s) was administered. Additionally, ChildNet ensures that licensed caregivers receive medication management training annually and that required medication documentation forms are completed.

### **Re-licensing of Family Foster Homes**

ChildNet requires child placing agencies to submit re-licensure packets for foster homes to ChildNet at least 45 days prior to the expiration of the home’s license. After ChildNet reviews and approves the recommendation to license a home, the application packets are sent to DCF for issuance of a license. ChildNet is contractually required to submit a re-licensing application to DCF at least 30 days prior to the home’s expiration.

### **Institutional Abuse Staffings**

Florida Abuse Hotline reports on abuse, neglect or exploitation involving ChildNet’s subcontracted child caring agencies or foster homes are reported immediately to ChildNet. If the Hotline receives an abuse report on a foster home, group home, or shelter, an Institutional Staffing is held with all interested parties. ChildNet notifies the Network Provider upon receipt of the institutional abuse report and advises them when a staffing is to occur.

Child Protective Investigation Services (CPIS) , in Broward the Broward Sheriff's Office (BSO) and in Palm Beach the Department of Children & Families, conducts investigations and works with ChildNet and the Network Provider to determine the need for a corrective action plan. If BSO determines that there are some indicators or a verified report of abuse, neglect or abandonment, a Corrective Action Plan must be completed. ChildNet does not facilitate any new placements on a home that has an open investigation. Depending on the severity of the abuse and the outcome of the protective investigation, a Network Provider or foster home license may be recommended for revocation.

### **State Institutional Claims for Damages caused by Foster Children**

When a foster parent or Network Provider advises a Child Advocate/Dependency Case Manager of expenses they have incurred as a result of personal injury or property damage caused by a shelter or foster child, the Child Advocate/Dependency Case Manager will assist the claimant in completion of a Restitution Claim Form. The form must be completed in its entirety and include receipts (or estimates) from a licensed vendor.

### **Placement Waivers**

ChildNet has an established system of limitations on the number of children to be cared for in one home and a waiver system to address exceptions as they arise. The two most common situations where a waiver is requested involve the following limitations: (1) The total number of children (including biological and adoptive children) who may live in a family foster home is five, and; the total number of infants under twenty-four (24) months of age who may live in a family foster home is two (2). Prior to requesting a waiver, an assessment of each child in the home and of the child being placed in the home is completed by the Child Advocate/Dependency Case Manager and approved in writing by the Supervisor.

Waivers are approved in writing by ChildNet's President/Chief Executive Officer, its local Executive Directors or their designees. Generally, a waiver may not exceed thirty calendar days. Subsequent waivers may be approved for a ninety day extension in writing by ChildNet's President/Chief Executive Officer, the local Executive Director or designee. A waiver may be issued for 180 calendar days if it is issued to accommodate a sibling group larger than five if the children of that sibling group are the only children placed in the home.

A waiver must be reviewed and revised if there is any change in the child population of the home. A waiver will automatically expire when the total number of children in the home is at its current licensed capacity or an increase in capacity is approved and in place.

### **Clients Participating in Research**

ChildNet formally and rigorously reviews requests and proposals that involve its client's participation in research to ensure the benefits of such projects are ample and that any potential risks to the clients are appropriately and effectively identified and managed. Network Providers must request from ChildNet permission to have any client participate in any research. All requests and proposals seeking the participation of ChildNet clients are reviewed by an internal agency review board which must approve such participation and report on each of its recommendations to ChildNet's President/Chief Executive Officer and the Board of Directors.

## **Behavior Support and Management**

ChildNet focuses on minimizing the use of restrictive behavior management interventions and reinforcing positive behavior. ChildNet's contracted licensed caregiver agencies, including residential direct care staff and foster parents, are to support positive behavior by developing positive relationships with clients, building on strengths and reinforcing positive behavior, and by responding consistently to all incidents of harassment or violence. Residential staff and foster parents are to receive behavior support and management training that promotes a safe work and service environment, and a reduction in emergency situations. Training includes initial and ongoing competency-based training on the organization's behavior support and management intervention policies, procedures, and practices and also supports the development of a culture and structure within every facility and foster home that promotes respect, healing, and positive behavior and prevents the need for restrictive behavior management interventions.

## **3. Financial**

### **Board Rates**

Board rates are determined by a child's needs and placement setting whether this rate is for a foster parent, child caring agency, or child placing agency. Foster parent board payments are made directly by ChildNet to the licensed caregiver. ChildNet ensures payments are made to foster parents no later than 25 days after the end of each month for room and board services which were provided to a client. Additionally, foster parents are reimbursed for 12 respite days per calendar year. The rate which a foster parent is reimbursed for a respite day is equivalent to the rate that they would be reimbursed if the child(ren) was in the home.

Each child placing agency must have an identified person within the agency who is responsible for communicating any concerns between the foster parents and ChildNet regarding payments. If a foster parent has a concern with their payment, they directly contact their agency's liaison who will resolve the issue directly with ChildNet and report back to the foster parent.

Child caring and child placing agencies submit an invoice monthly for the prior month's services. Invoices are paid as noted under the Network Provider Payment section below.

### **Initial and Annual Clothing Allowance**

An initial clothing allowance is provided to all children initially entering licensed care ages birth to 18. The clothing items purchased with these funds are specific to the child and must follow the child. Children ages 0 through 11 receive \$50.00 and children ages 12 through 18 receive \$70.00.

The annual clothing allowance is a one-time annual payment per child who has been adjudicated dependent. Children ages 0 through 4 receive \$200.00 and children 5 through 18 receive \$300.00. It is the responsibility of the foster parent or Child Caring Agency to return any clothing allowance monies associated with any children that are no longer in their care.

### **Network Provider Payments**

ChildNet pays for services provided by Network Providers according to the terms and conditions of contractual agreements, professional service agreements, purchase orders and rate agreements. ChildNet has an established protocol for processing all Network Provider invoices and maintaining utilization spreadsheets for the purpose of monitoring over or under utilization of budgeted funds. The following steps are consistently followed:

1. Network Providers submit invoices to ChildNet in a manner and format described in the Network Provider's contract or purchasing document. An original invoice on the required form plus two copies and all required back-up documentation is to be received by ChildNet within ten days after the end of each month for all services provided during such month.
2. Contract Managers have up to 5 working days after receipt of an invoice to approve or deny the invoice. Invoices that are approved are sent to ChildNet's finance department for payment.
3. If the invoice is denied, the Contract Manager composes a denial letter indicating the area(s) of the invoice that was found insufficient and emails the letter to the Network Provider.
4. Network Providers have 30 days from the time of notification by ChildNet to correct problems with the invoice and resubmit for reimbursement.
5. Payments to Network Providers are made within 45 days after ChildNet's receipt of a timely and properly completed invoice. Invoices that are submitted past the ten days after the end of each month are considered late. Late invoices are processed with the following month's invoice and result in a delay of payment according to the subsequent month's reimbursement date. ChildNet is not responsible or liable for payment of any invoice submitted to ChildNet more than 90 days after the end of the month in which the services were rendered.

### **Fiscal Year Closing Procedures**

All unpaid invoices for services rendered within each fiscal year are required to be submitted no later than the close of business July 15<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, final invoices for payments must be submitted to ChildNet no more than 15 days after any contract ends or is terminated. Invoices that are not submitted within these time periods will not be paid.

### **Overpayments and Recouping Payments**

Network Providers must return to ChildNet any overpayments due to unearned funds or funds disallowed. In the event that a Network Provider or its independent auditor discovers that an overpayment has been made, the Network Provider repays ChildNet the total amount overpaid immediately without prior notification from ChildNet. In the event that ChildNet first discovers an overpayment has been made, ChildNet notifies the Network Provider in writing. Should repayment not be made forthwith, ChildNet reserves the right to withhold and/or offset the overpayment against any monies due to a Network Provider for services.

Occasionally, foster parent room and board payments, and/or other support payments (for example the annual clothing allowance) are processed based upon the most accurate

information at the time, but sometimes events occur or information becomes available which alters the amount of the payments that should have been made. When this results in a determination that an overpayment has been made, it must be repaid by the person receiving the payment. If a foster parent is overpaid and they have other children for whom they receive room and board or other support payments, a payback plan will typically require ChildNet to deduct the overpayment from future payments. If a foster parent is overpaid and they do not have other children for whom they receive room and board or other support payments, ChildNet will recoup this money by billing for the overpayment and engage the Child Placing Agency in the collection process.

## **4. Court Processes**

Although only ChildNet and Children's Home Society currently performs the child welfare case management function in the Southeast Region, it is imperative that local Network Providers understand the basic judiciary process and terms associated with the legal system. By understanding these terms and processes, we are better equipped to work together in planning and providing services to achieve permanency for our youth.

### ***Removal and Shelter:***

When a removal occurs, a Court appearance is held within 24 hours of the removal. This first Court appearance is called a "shelter hearing". At this time, the Court decides whether or not the Department of Children and Families had "probable cause" to remove a child(ren) from the home. If the Court finds DCF did have probable cause, the child(ren) will remain out of the home. However, if the Court does not find probable cause then the child(ren) may be returned to the parent(s) at that time.

### ***Adjudication and Disposition:***

Adjudication is a court proceeding that establishes the legal status of the child as being "Dependent" and therefore governed under the proceedings of Chapter 39, Florida Statutes. The disposition hearing is often thought of as the most important stage of the dependency process. It is at this hearing that the Dependency Court accepts the case plan and orders tasks to be completed.

### ***Case Plan:***

A Case Plan is the document prepared with the birth parents that outlines the tasks that the parent must complete to assure their child can be safely returned to their care and custody.

### ***Judicial Review:***

A hearing in which the Court is apprised of the family's progress that occurs within 90 days of the Disposition hearing and every six months thereafter until the Court terminates supervision. This hearing occurs every 90 days when a child is placed in a Residential Treatment Center.

### ***Permanency Goals:***

Reunification, Adoption, Permanent Guardianship, Placement with a Fit and Willing Relative, and Another Planned Permanent Living Arrangement.

***Permanency Hearing:***

A hearing in which a determination of a child's permanency goal is decided upon, in order of priority.

## **5. Performance and Quality Improvement**

### **Contracted Network Provider Performance**

ChildNet has the responsibility to both ensure program and service effectiveness of its direct subcontracted entities and also to work collaboratively with other stakeholders to ensure that potential modifications are identified and made to improve the local network and system efficiency and effectiveness. Additionally, ChildNet is responsible for the overall system performance and obtaining outcomes for children and families that are consistent with state and federal mandates and overall identified goals for the local child welfare system. As part of a Quality Management Plan, ChildNet works collaboratively with community stakeholders and contracted Network Providers to help define success and to establish quality management data collection and reporting systems, to review performance, and to institute changes at the system level in order to ensure continuous improvement within our Network.

Specifically, in ensuring quality performance of its subcontractors, ChildNet relies upon three distinct teams. These include a Contract Management Unit, a Licensing Unit and a separate Contract Monitoring unit. The Contract Management Unit consists of Contract Managers who have the ongoing responsibility for ensuring subcontractor compliance with contractual obligations. Contract Managers complete ongoing monitoring activities which include review of the following:

- ❖ Financial Utilization – Monthly
- ❖ Cash Match as applicable – Monthly
- ❖ Verification of Cost Reimbursements – Monthly
- ❖ Number of Clients Served – Monthly
- ❖ Safety Concerns – Monthly
- ❖ Outcome Reports – Quarterly
- ❖ Site Visits - Quarterly (or more frequently as needed)

Contract Managers also facilitate Network Provider meetings with subcontracted agencies monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly, depending on the need. During these meetings, information is shared that can be used to improve system issues and impact the quality of service delivery.

In addition to Contract Managers who work daily with Network Providers, ChildNet's Licensing Unit also works closely with many child placing agencies. They perform a review of all foster home license applications and annual renewals. Licensing personnel have the ultimate responsibility of ensuring that all relevant Florida Statutes and Administrative Codes are being met and that the overall quality of licensed placements meets the standards established by ChildNet and the state. The Licensing Specialists share information regarding the licensure of programs during pre-monitoring strategy meetings which are completed by ChildNet's CQI Department.

## **On Site Monitoring**

All ChildNet contracted Network Providers are responsible for and held accountable to performance on deliverables and other contract requirements through a comprehensive on site monitoring process. While Contract Managers perform ongoing monitoring activities, ChildNet's Quality Advisor (QA) personnel who are part of the Continuous Quality Improvement department (CQI) conduct the formal, programmatic on site monitoring of contracted providers. Predetermined selection criteria are used to standardize decision-making as to the contracts selected for monitoring each year. This process is based on a Risk Assessment Tool and provides a weighted ranking of High, Medium, or Low risk based the following criteria:

- ❖ Contract Dollar Value
- ❖ Nature of Services
- ❖ Number of Clients Served
- ❖ Prior Provider Performance and Performance Improvement Plan
- ❖ New Provider or Significant Changes at Provider
- ❖ Last Monitoring Visit
- ❖ Accreditation
- ❖ Outcome Measure Performance.

Network Provider contracts rated as "high-risk" should never go more than one (1) year without being monitored. "Medium Risk" contracts should be monitored every other year, while "Low Risk" contracts can be monitored every three (3) years. Unless a need is identified, new contracts are not typically monitored during the first fiscal year. Once a QA is assigned the Team Leader role for a particular contract or contracts to monitor, certain pre-monitoring activities are performed. These include:

- Research of all available materials with regard to the contract. Most of these materials will typically be found in the Contracts file.
- Facilitation of a Strategy Meeting with both the Contracts Department and Licensing Unit to discuss any questions or concerns with the Contract Managers as well as written changes to the contract and verbal agreements. The Contract Manager and Licensing Unit make the QA aware of any licensing requirement, assurances, or certifications that were part of the contract award. If appropriate, the QA will include these issues in the monitoring.
- Development of a Contract Monitoring Plan Outline. This outline will indicate on which dates the QA intends to complete specified activities, which locations will be visited, formats which will be used, interviews which will be undertaken, etc. The Contract Monitoring Plan is dynamic and its contents may vary as appropriate to the nature of the contract. The QA will review the Contract Monitoring Plan with the Director of CQI before implementation.
- Notification of the provider that the monitoring will take place via a 'save the date' email as soon as the monitoring schedule is complete. A formal letter will be sent to the provider thirty or more calendar days prior to the monitoring date. The purpose, scope (file reviews, interviews, observation of service delivery, etc.), and schedule of the monitoring visit will be included in the letter to the provider. The provider must assign a liaison to the QA who will serve as the readily available contact person while the

monitoring takes place. This liaison must arrange workspace for the monitoring team and assure access to all necessary records and staff.

- Network Providers receive a copy of all applicable monitoring tools with the official notification.
- The Team Leader will contact the Liaison at least one business day prior to the site visit to confirm that the client interviews have been scheduled, the files are ready for review, a work space is available, and obtain directions to the work space if needed.

During the actual monitoring site visit, a brief entrance conference is held by the team leader to explain the process to provider staff. A walk through is conducted for residential programs, staff and client files are reviewed, and staff and clients are interviewed. At the end of the monitoring day, a de-briefing is held with provider staff to discuss every item rated as deficient. The Team Leader ensures that a list of all items not found during the review of the client and personnel files is sent to the Provider. The Provider is permitted at least one week to submit he documentation/information to the monitoring team. Subsequent to the visit, within thirty working days, a draft report is completed by CQI and sent to the provider along with a date for the formal exit conference held at ChildNet's Administrative office.

During the exit review, Network Providers are given the opportunity to provide any further documentation before the final report is issued. Based on the results, a Network Provider may be required to complete a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). If required, a copy of the PIP is due to the designated Contract Manager and Team Leader within thirty calendar days of the exit review. Compliance with the PIP is monitored during quarterly site visits by the Contract Managers.

The Contracts Department and Licensing Unit along with the CQI Contract Monitoring team work closely together, updating any contract changes, participating in strategy meetings prior to formal monitoring site visits, providing feedback in the draft report, and participating in exit review meetings with the provider. This team approach provides comprehensive ongoing support and technical assistance to ChildNet's Network Providers.

In addition to the Contract Monitoring process conducted by the CQI Department, the Chief Financial Officer or designee assigns appropriate staff to conduct an administrative and financial monitoring. The Administrative/Financial Monitoring will be conducted at least annually for a sample of contracted providers. The sample will generally consist of high risk providers, which are determined through quarterly financial analysis and through discussion with ChildNet's Contract Management department. However, administrative monitoring may be limited to contracted providers with accreditation from the Council on Accreditation (COA), Commission on *Accreditation* of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), or The Joint Commission to every three (3) years except for determining that services paid for are being provided, investigating complaints or suspected problems, monitoring compliance with terms and conditions that are not of a general nature, and ensuring compliance with state and federal laws, regulations, and rules if doing so would not be duplicative of the accreditation agency's review in accord with accreditation standards.

The Administrative/Financial Monitoring will focus on two (2) main goals.

1. To determine if the provider is expending ChildNet funds for ChildNet programs.
2. To determine if the provider has sufficient human and financial resources to fulfill the terms of the contract.

The following are the basic monitoring responsibilities of the finance/administration representative conducting the Financial Review:

- Review quarterly financial statements/expenditure reports for the fiscal year being monitored for a sample of ChildNet funded programs including:
  - Income statements,
  - Balance Sheets,
  - Statements of cash flow,
  - Comparison between the expenditures and the budget,
  - Accounts payable aging reports.
- Review the provider's current Independent and/or Single Audit and management letter.
- Analyze a sample of transactions to test proper and allowable expending of funds transferred by ChildNet. A sample selection will generally consist of 25 transactions based on the assumption that there have been no past or current financial issues that ChildNet is aware of. If the provider is determined to be of higher risk ChildNet will increase the sample size to 40 or 60 transactions to gain an additional level of comfort. In addition, if exceptions occur during testing procedures, this may result in an increase in sample size based on the extent of exceptions encountered.
- Review quarterly payroll tax returns (i.e. 941, UCT-6, etc.) to determine the provider is remitting payroll taxes on a timely basis.
- Analyze a sample of employee's personnel files associated with the contract to test that they are providing services under the contract, pay rates have been approved and are allowable, and all required documentation is included within their personnel files (i.e. background checks, I-9, certifications, training, etc). A sample will generally consist of a minimum of ten employees, which is dependent upon on the number of employees providing services under the contract.

### **Performance Measures**

Performance measures and targets are developed and then stipulated in each of our Network Provider's contracts. ChildNet builds contracted outcome measures that align with those found in ChildNet's contract with the Department of Children & Families, as well as with the federal outcomes for child safety, permanency, and well-being. Network Providers who have standard contracts with ChildNet submit quarterly outcome reports showing the level of performance on each measure. As part of this report, Network Providers also address areas where targets have not been met and describe corrective action steps or improvements that will be put into place to address these areas in the upcoming quarter. The outcome reports are reviewed and validated by the Contract Managers and the CQI Contract Monitoring team during site visits.

To strengthen contract compliance and performance outcomes, ChildNet has recently begun to develop incentives for Network Providers. Incentives may include financial rewards or increased volume of business. If specific performance requirements are not met ChildNet has the discretion to impose penalties, require development of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), increase the frequency of contract monitoring or site visits, reduce funding, or terminate the contract.

Reports on Performance, outcome expectations, and achievements regarding contract performance measure data and other identified best practice measures are presented to internal and external stakeholders quarterly and ChildNet also tracks all of its performance measures on its electronic Dashboard. The Dashboard presentation is available on ChildNet's web site for the public to review. Presenting this data on a site available to all our Network Providers, community stakeholders and consumers helps ensure its effective use as an essential tool for continuous quality improvement throughout the local child welfare system.

### **Network Workforce Analysis Data**

As part of the Network's overall Quality Improvement Process, all subcontracted Network Providers are required to complete a workforce analysis on an annual basis. The purpose of this analysis is to review the demographic makeup of the Network's Providers in order to determine whether the current demographic and cultural characteristics are reflective of our service population. This analysis is completed annually with goals established as needed in order to improve services and close any gaps that may exist in our system of care. This report is submitted to the Assistant Vice President of Administration annually and is reviewed as an essential component of agency planning and assessment of annual and long term goals and objectives.

## **6. Network Communication**

ChildNet implements multiple levels and methods of communication and information sharing and is committed to ongoing communication with existing and prospective Network Providers. The following meetings and activities describe some of the ways that ChildNet communicates and interacts within the local child welfare system:

- Quarterly meetings of the Chief Executive Officers of all the contracted agencies are convened by ChildNet to provide the chance to together raise and address broader service delivery issues and subsequently develop and implement remedial strategies through smaller workgroups comprised of agency senior administrators and managers.
- The actual "nitty-gritty" of day to day service delivery system practice and problems are worked out in monthly meetings of program directors and staff from agencies providing like services. Specifically, ChildNet's Contract Management staff host provider meetings on a monthly basis, allowing a venue for announcements, updates on system of care policies and procedures, and discussion of provider concerns.
- Network Management staff make informal visits to each network provider agency a minimum of four times per year. During the site visits, ChildNet staff discusses a range of topics that include specific contractual issues and concerns, program and strategy development, and data collection and progress reporting. It is important to understand that these visits are not merely for monitoring purposes, but rather to maintain a level of communication within the network and ensure Network Provider support. Agency directors and program staff are asked and encouraged to share any concerns or suggestions for ChildNet's consideration. Contract Management staff are always available to provide one-on-one technical assistance to agencies and consistently work

with individual program staff to immediately address pressing and critical individual program issues and problems.

- Many of ChildNet's Network Providers have access to an electronic portal which is set up and monitored by ChildNet. Through this portal, links to system of care resources such as Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) can be accessed.

ChildNet recognizes that to have a successful network, it is essential to maintain open communication with a variety of other stakeholders in the community. Communication and resolution of programmatic and systemic problems is facilitated by ChildNet's collaboration in a host of venues and meetings. The following is a list and brief description of several meetings in which ChildNet and many Network Providers participate and in many cases facilitate:

- ❖ Community Alliance/CFLA – monthly meetings, update of ChildNet progress is a standing agenda item and is generally presented by CEO or local Executive Director
- ❖ FAPA (Foster & Adoptive Parent Association) – In Broward monthly and Palm Beach quarterly meetings, ChildNet representatives always present
- ❖ Foster Care Steering Committee – quarterly meeting, focus on identifying and finding solutions for educational issues/challenges facing children in care
- ❖ Broward and Palm Beach Legislative Delegation Public Hearings – held annually
- ❖ Crossover Committee – meets monthly, addresses issues of children that are dually delinquent and dependent
- ❖ CBC Management Meeting – quarterly meeting presenting agency's performance on contract measures, census and key program issues
- ❖ Network Executive Meeting – quarterly meeting, attended by leaders of all provider agencies
- ❖ Program Director Meeting – held monthly for each specific program (Shelter Care, Foster Home Management, Group Care, Diversion)
- ❖ State and National Conferences – include Florida's Annual Dependency Summit, Florida Coalition for Children Annual Conference, national meetings convened by Casey Family Programs, Child Welfare League of America.
- ❖ CEN (Children with Extraordinary Needs) Meeting – held monthly in Broward,
- ❖ Funders Forum – held monthly in Broward, representatives from all entities that fund health human services for children and families

In keeping with society's technological trends, day to day communication and knowledge sharing is optimized through ChildNet's email system. Additionally, ChildNet also maintains a website that serves many useful functions. Among them is the ability to communicate with existing and potential Network Providers and the ability for Network Providers to communicate with ChildNet. Some examples of the website features that demonstrate this communication are, posting of upcoming events, posting of funding opportunities through RLI's, ITN's, and RFP's, and links to sites that detail model programs, research, and best-practice approaches. This corporate website is also the doorway for providers and community members to access information about the system of care including its mission and core values, successes, events, locations, history, range of services, Board of Directors, and Executive Team.

## **7. Complaints, Grievances, and Appeals**

### **Client Complaints and Grievance Processes**

A client has a right to file a complaint or grievance at any time without interference or fear of retaliation. ChildNet works with Network Providers to ensure that a client's services are continuous and consistent while a complaint resolution is formulated. Client related complaints that are brought to Network Providers should be forwarded to ChildNet's Administration. Network Providers are required to submit any and all information necessary for ChildNet to resolve client grievances. Network Providers may also attend hearings and otherwise cooperate with ChildNet in the resolution of client complaints. Clients may also directly contact ChildNet through the website at [www.childnet.us](http://www.childnet.us), by phone, mail, fax, or email.

### **Internal Complaint/Appeal Process for Current Network Providers**

ChildNet encourages Network Providers to resolve complaints and appeals at the local level. Each Network Provider is required to have a client complaint and grievance process that is transparent and easily accessible to their customers. ChildNet also believes our Network of Providers should monitor their customer service in order to effectively address identified trends and actively implement policy and/or provide staff training as appropriate. As part of an overall Performance and Quality Improvement process, ChildNet may request information regarding quarterly complaint and grievance statistics from our Network Providers.

### **Appeal Process for Procurement of Services**

As part of any competitive procurement process, applicants who have applied to be a contracted provider through the solicitation process are provided with an appeal procedure. The procedure provides recourse to applicants/bidders who believe that their proposal did not receive proper consideration. Applicants entering a protest or appeal should be prepared to document specific factors, which put them at a competitive disadvantage, and/or document violations of specific sections of state or federal regulations and the procedures set forth in the respective competitive procurement solicitation document. ChildNet reserves the right to refuse to consider an appeal that does not identify specific procedural shortcomings. ChildNet utilizes the following language and processes providing recourse to any applicants/bidders who desire to protest a contract award:

- All bidders have the right to protest an award. Parties wishing to protest a contract award shall file a notice of protest in writing to ChildNet's President/Chief Executive Officer within 72 hours after the award is posted on ChildNet's website. The formal written protest shall be filed within 10 days after the date the notice of protest is filed. The formal written protest shall reference the Name of the Solicitation, submission date of the application, and shall state the facts and laws upon which the protest is based, including full details of adverse effects and the relief sought.
- When protesting a decision, the protesting party must post a bond equal to one percent (1%) of the estimated contract amount. The estimated contract amount shall be based upon the contract price submitted by the protestor. If no contract price was submitted, ChildNet shall provide the estimated contract amount to the protestor within 48 hours of the receipt of the protest notice (excluding Saturdays, Sunday and agency recognized

holidays). Failure to file the proper bond at the time of filing the formal written protest will result in a rejection of the protest. In lieu of a bond, ChildNet will accept a cashier's check, official bank check, or money order in the amount of the bond.

Upon receipt of a protest or appeal, ChildNet's President/Chief Executive Officer will provide the protest information to ChildNet's Senior Management committee. This committee will investigate the complaint and issue a written finding and resolution to the protesting party within 10 business days of the appeal.

### **Appeal Process Related to Network Provider Payments**

Network Providers may appeal a payment denial pursuant to the dispute resolution terms set forth in the contract or rate agreement. After a written request for dispute resolution is submitted by the Network Provider to the Contract Manager, representatives from each agency will conduct a face to face meeting for the purpose of resolving the payment disagreement amicably. If the representatives are unable to reach a mutually satisfactory resolution, either representative may request referral of the issue to their Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officers will then confer in an attempt to resolve the issue. Nothing precludes ChildNet or the Network Provider from seeking relief from a court of law relating to any unresolved differences or disputes regarding payment for services.

### **Appeal Process Related to Network Provider Application and Credentialing**

All applicants have the right to appeal the denial of an application to hold formal network status with ChildNet. Individuals or organizations wishing to appeal such denial shall file a notice of appeal in writing to ChildNet's Chief Executive Officer within 72 hours after receiving the certified letter notifying them of the denial. The Chief Executive Officer will provide the appeal information to ChildNet's Senior Management committee. This committee will review the appeal information and reason for the denial and issue a written finding and resolution to the appealing individual or organization. ChildNet reserves the right to deny an appeal that does not identify or document violations of specific sections of state or federal regulations.

### **General Complaints or Concerns by Network Providers or Foster Parents**

ChildNet utilizes a Provider Communication form to assist Network Providers and foster parents in communicating general comments and concerns. See **Exhibit D**. Network Providers and foster parents are encouraged to notify ChildNet if they have a concern regarding an assigned Child Advocate/Dependency Case Manager or if they have a concern about any other ChildNet staff or general matter. ChildNet believes this type of communication is important so that we can better problem solve and remedy areas of concern. The form can be submitted by email, faxed or a hard copy mailed directly to ChildNet.

ChildNet's website also includes features that allow stakeholders to express their opinions and the "Contact Us" icon on the home page should be selected. It will lead to the screen that allows a person to directly type in their comments and then send to ChildNet. All inquiries or items sent through this site will subsequently generate a return response back to the sender. Concerns are sent directly to ChildNet's Senior Management team and follow up, when required, is promptly initiated, and a response will be generated no later than within 15 business days of receipt of the complaint.

Network Providers can also always speak directly with their Contract Manager to voice any concerns or complaints they may have. If not satisfied with the recommended resolution presented by the Contract Manager, the Director of Contracts can also be contacted and consulted for a review and resolution.

### **Network Provider Standard Subcontracting Dispute Process**

ChildNet works with its subcontractors in a systematic way to resolve differences in the interpretation of the contractual obligations of ChildNet or Network Providers and to resolve disputes as to the adequacy of either entity's compliance with their respective obligations under a Subcontract. ChildNet and Network Providers each designate one person to act as the party's representative for dispute resolution purposes, clearly identifying that person's name and business address and telephone number. Within five working days from delivery of a written request for dispute resolution to the designated representative of the other party, the representatives conduct a face to face meeting for the purpose of resolving the disagreement amicably. If the representatives are unable to reach a mutually satisfactory resolution, either representative may request referral of the issue to the Chief Executive Officer of the respective parties. The Chief Executive Officers will then confer in an attempt to resolve the issue. Nothing precludes ChildNet or Network Providers from seeking relief from a court of law relating to any differences or disputes arising under a Subcontract.

### **Final Authority for all Appeals and Complaints**

ChildNet's President/Chief Executive Officer retains final authority with respect to the review, address and resolution of any appeal, complaint or grievance not otherwise resolved through the regular appeal, complaint, and grievance processes described above.

## **8. Training**

### **Pre-Service Classroom Training**

ChildNet offers Pre-Service Classroom Training to certain subcontracted agency employees who work in the child welfare/child protection arena. Pre-Service Classroom Training provides knowledge and skill-based learning on child welfare maltreatments (domestic violence, sexual abuse, substance abuse, etc.), dependency court process, Federal and State laws that impact child welfare, assessment skills and interviewing/interpersonal skills. This training is for all persons needing to meet the requirements of being a State of Florida certified Child Protection Professional.

### **In-Service Training**

ChildNet in partnership with other child welfare professionals offers an assortment of In-Service trainings that are open and available to all community partners and providers. Training topics include child welfare, child protection, mental health and substance abuse, medication management, trauma informed care, and other topic areas affecting the children and families we work with on a daily basis. ChildNet also offers specialized training in the following areas:

- System of Care General Overview - training designed for Network Providers that addresses ChildNet's system of care. Specifically, the session provides information on how children come into care, general court processes and describes the practices and processes of ChildNet's individual functional areas.
- Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN) Training - designed to offer hands-on training in the current State of Florida database system.
- Parent Preparation Pre-service Training - designed to provide selected participants the skill-based learning to facilitate pre-service training classes for potential foster and adoptive parents.

### **Collaborative Training Initiative**

ChildNet conducts bi-annual training committee meetings comprised of our community partners and Network Providers. The purpose of this meeting is to identify training gaps and training needs amongst staff in order to provide professional development and ongoing training on the various issues of child welfare and child protection work. ChildNet encourages all Network Providers to participate in these meetings.

### **Notification Process for Training Opportunities**

Training opportunities are announced by email communications and flyers. Current Network Providers and various community partners receive a quarterly email notification of all upcoming training opportunities.

### **Your Satisfaction**

ChildNet values the opinion of our Network Providers and foster families. We welcome your constructive feedback related to our services, procedures and processes. ChildNet is committed to on-going support of our Network Providers and will work diligently to ensure that you receive the support, training, guidance, and assistance needed to deliver the quality care our clients require and deserve.

**APPENDIX A:** Network Provider Application

**APPENDIX B:** Affidavit of Service Provider Standards

**APPENDIX C:** Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement and Disclosure Form

**APPENDIX D:** Provider Communication and Concern Form

