



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

January 26, 2024

Board of Directors:

Amy Black, Board Chair; Victoria Thurston, Vice Chair; Rebecca Brock, Secretary, Meghan Russell, Treasurer, Chelsea Bellew, Donna Korn, Josefa Benjamin, Lois Marino, Mark Dhooge, Michael Lepera, Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Paul Adams, Ronald Ford, Sabria McElroy

Unable to Attend:

Michael Lepera

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Neiko Shea, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Susan Eby, Rae Bullard, Nicole Slade, Deena Ponto, Shanny Tozzi, Tina Lewis, Laura Leese, Jennifer Leslie, Lena Blythe, Dominique Carn, Krystal Kenison, Lindsay Pierre Louis, Ted Ponto, Daffodil Otto, Marcellita Mark, Nancy Hennon, Emily Miller, Gevette Gales, Gloria Francoeur, Shanell Williams, Julie Janello, *DCF:* Dennis Miles, Teresa Janeczek, *Traci Schweitzer*, *Isis Williams*, *PB County Youth Services:* Elisa Cramer

CALL TO ORDER – Amy Black, Board Chair

- Amy Black, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Rebecca Brock, Board Secretary

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The November 17, 2023 meeting minutes were reviewed. *A motion* was moved and seconded to approve the minutes. *A vote was taken.* The ayes have it and *the motion was adopted.*

CHILDNET BOARD EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD – Rae Bullard, CHRO

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employees:
 - November 2023 – Gevette Gales, Dependency Case Manager Supervisor - Unit B4 (Bwd) and Gloria Francoeur, Adoption Specialist – Unit B (Bwd)
Nancy Hennon, Behavioral Health Services Specialist (PB)
 - December 2023 – Emily Miller, Lead Dependency Case Manager – Unit 123 (PB)
Lindsay Pierre-Louis, Intake & Placement Supervisor (PB)

ITEMS FOR BOARD REVIEW AND APPROVAL – Amy Black, Board Chair

- **Resolution #259 – Signature Authorization for Contract Year 2024** – This resolution provides Larry Rein, CEO and President, and Donna Eprifania, CFO, signing authority for the contract year. This resolution is signed on a yearly basis.



A motion was moved and seconded to approve Board Resolution #259. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

- **Board Candidate – Dr. Heidi Schaeffer** - Larry Rein and Amy Black met with Dr. Schaeffer. Dr. Schaeffer has led community groups and advocacy groups to help and support victims of Human Trafficking. Dr. Schaeffer is an amazing, dynamic, and energetic person who always tries to do things on behalf of children. Dr. Schaeffer resides in Palm Beach and works in both counties. They both feel that Dr. Schaeffer would be a tremendous asset to the Board.

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Dr. Heidi Schaeffer as the newest member of the Board of Directors. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

- **Career Development Department – Laura Leese, Career Development Manager** – Laura Leese provided a brief overview of the Career Development department. The team consists of eight members split between Broward and Palm Beach. The focus is on pre-service training, including coordination, collaboration with HR and case management, and providing training for the Florida Certification Board (FCB) examination. The four Career Development Specialists manage pre-service cycles lasting 7-8 weeks, coordinate training for DCF, covering topics like car seat and defensive driving training. The three Development Counselors manage in-service training, certification workshops, and provide support to new Dependency Case Managers (DCMs) through observations, feedback, and co-training with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Laura Leese, as Manager, oversees the department, managing day-to-day operations, ensuring communication with internal/external partners, handling FCB requirements, and supporting various training initiatives. She collaborates with stakeholders, manages compliance, and engages in broader roles, including membership in the Florida Certification Board and Child Welfare Advisory Council. The department offers a range of in-service and training support, covering topics such as de-escalation training, human trafficking, and safety planning series. They also provide unit and division support for practice-model issues and collaborate with other departments for training needs.

NEW BUSINESS – Neiko Shea, COS

- **Centene Pre-Delegation Audit: Fraud, Waste and Abuse Training** - Neiko Shea informed the Board about the transition of the contract from Community Based Care Integrated Health (CBCIH) to Sunshine Health. Due to this change and the direct flow of Medicaid funds, additional training on fraud, waste, and abuse related to Medicaid funds is required. The training will be mandatory for all staff involved in the contract, including leadership and the Board of Directors. Ms. Shea anticipates a 30 to 45-minute virtual training and more details will be shared once available. The board members expressed readiness and suggested completing the training at their convenience through provided links.

FINANCE REPORT – Meghan Russell, Board Treasurer and Donna Eprifania, CFO

- Donna Eprifania, CFO reported that the Finance Committee met and covered four main topics:
 - 1) **Audit Update** - The year-end closeout has been received, enabling the preparation of the financial component of the audit. The audit is on track and expected to be available in February, aligning with the March 15th deadline set by the Department of Children and Families.
 - 2) **Discretionary Funding Report** - For the first half of the year (July 2023 to December 2023), the organization created an additional \$123,000, bringing the total to close to \$2.6 million. This is



slightly below the previous year due to timing, but the second half is anticipated to bring in more resources.

- 3) Discussion on Governance, 403(b) Plan and Financials - The organization is 50% through the year, and spending is consistent with the budget for all line items except for a deficit in residential group care, particularly in Broward and Palm Beach counties.
- 4) Special Appropriation for Palm Beach County - An agreement with DJJ for a special appropriation for a Small Census Group in Palm Beach County is executed, which will help offset part of the deficit in residential group care.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

- **Community Engagement Committee – Lois Marino, Committee Chair and Shanny Tozzi, Director of Community Relations**

Lois Marino noted that the Community Engagement Committee is about the 3 C's - connecting, having conversations, and collaborating.

- 9th Annual Care for Kids Luncheon - “Embracing Smiles” – Friday, February 2, 2024 – Boca West Country Club. Sponsorships and ticket sales already totaling \$67,000. The Board is encouraged to bring guests to the luncheon to learn about ChildNet. A new Circle of Supporters program will be introduced at the event.
- Great Charity Challenge – Saturday, February 3, 2024 at the Polo Club in Wellington. This is an equestrian competition where ChildNet is a recipient, potentially receiving between \$15,000 and \$75,000.

- **Governance/Executive Committee – Dr. Victoria Thurston, Committee Chair**

- Corebridge 403(b) – Donna Eprifania, CFO discussed the challenges faced during the previous year's 403(b) audits and emphasized the need for a better platform for their employee base. The current platform, Corebridge, in partnership with VALIC, has caused difficulties with the third-party evaluator. As a result, we reconsidered the necessity of having the third-party administrator outside of the plan and decided it was not necessary. ChildNet sought assistance from Marsh McLennan, our broker, and learned about their plan's setup 20 years ago, realizing ChildNet could benefit from a group-based 403(b) plan. Moving from an individual contract to a group-based plan would provide more services from the plan itself, including day-to-day activities and a designated point person for ChildNet. The transition is expected to significantly reduce expenses, moving from \$430,000 to \$175,000, offering better service and a more contemporary approach. There will be notifications to all participants about the transition, ensuring transparency and compliance.
- Quarterly Strategic Plan Update – Quarter 4 - Discussion was held on the 4th quarter of the Strategic Plan for 2023 to 2025, a copy of which was provided to the Committee members. It was noted that at the Governance Committee meeting that no changes are needed to the Strategic Plan Goals as/of yet. We may take a broader look into data and detail.
 - Goal 1 – Improve and sustain ChildNet’s workforce by implementing proven and innovative practices. *Evidence of goal progress in one year: ChildNet will reduce annual external voluntary turnover from 30% to 28%.*



Rae Bullard reported that we are on track with turnover. As of December 2023, ChildNet's annualized turnover is at 20.41% and the 4th Quarter Year-Over-Year turnover is at 7.25%, up from 6.25% from last year.

- Goal 2 – Expand the array of appropriate placement and treatment options for children. *Evidence of goal progress in one year: ChildNet will reduce the percentage of children with stays over 14 days at SafePlace from 32% to 30%.*

Susan Eby reported that we are heading in the right direction as Palm Beach is @ 32.77%, Broward is @ 26.67% and both overall is @ 29.10%.

- Goal 3 – Improve identification and support of kinship caregivers. *Evidence of goal progress in one year: ChildNet will increase the percentage of children in kinship placements to 60%.*

Julie DeMar reported we are still struggling with this goal. Palm Beach is @ 52.77%, Broward is @ 49.27% with both overall @ 50.89%.

- **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein reported we are awaiting on the application from Rudy Salgado. We have received the application from Malala Mezerhane, and the next steps are for her to get background screening and then a meeting with the Board Chair. In addition, the Governance Committee approved to move forward for Larry Rein to provide the Board Candidate Application to Nicole Flier, VP for Community Development at Miller Construction and Bill Reicherter, a businessman heavily involved in philanthropy in Broward and Palm Beach Counties.

- **Program Quality Committee – Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Committee Chair**

The Committee discussed two reports from Julie DeMar, the first being on the DCF Accountability Metrics for 2022-2023. Palm Beach achieved a score of 3.3, the third highest in the state, while Broward scored 3.2, tying for fourth place. The areas of improvement include kinship placement and more timely permanency. The discussion highlighted comparisons with other circuits and emphasized the demographic differences impacting scores. The second report focused on Life in Case Tool Review. It aimed to provide insights into the Department's Quality Office and their process for reviewing case files. The discussion covered the challenges, pros and cons of the process, emphasizing the use of information to drive improvement strategies despite some subjective challenges.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- ChildNet's Anti-Racism Workgroup Update – Nicole Slade reported that the Workgroup is currently planning festivities for Black History Month. The group will organize daily facts, quotes, weekly trivia, and bring back the successful activity "Wheel of Fortune" from the previous year. The workgroup is also exploring the topic of black mental health and plans to watch a documentary, considering its potential for agency-wide viewing and discussion. Additionally, they are considering inviting a speaker to address the challenges of battling racism.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Amy Black

- Amy Black highly encourages attendance at the PB Care for Kids luncheon.



CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- Procurement – Larry Rein reported we successfully submitted our response to the Department's invitation to negotiate for Broward and Palm Beach County. Our submission was made a day before the deadline, and we received confirmation that the Department received it. Mr. Rein noted that there seems to be no competitive bids for Broward or Palm Beach, as only existing community-based care lead agencies submitted proposals. Mr. Rein noted that negotiations will be the next step.
- Staffing – Larry Rein discussed the implementation of a staffing recalibration, involving the elimination of 15 positions. The reasons behind this move included the need to balance the budget for the current year and adapting to a significant change in the population. The recalibration aimed to address the decrease in demand for certain positions, some of which were created over a decade ago when the child welfare system had a higher caseload. The process went smoothly, and efforts were made to ensure affected employees could transition to other positions within the organization without a reduction in compensation. Mr. Rein reassured staff that these measures are part of future planning and emphasized that there are no plans for layoffs or terminations at this time. Mr. Rein expressed gratitude to the senior leadership team and HR for their support during this challenging process.
- Appropriate Placements for Children – ChildNet is planning to take a more active leadership role in ensuring appropriate placements for children by focusing on providing the right behavioral healthcare services for the entire community of children in both Broward and Palm Beach. The goal is to prevent children from entering foster care due to unmet behavioral healthcare needs. The recent addition of Neiko Shea to the team has facilitated this effort, and we aim to have a broader impact on mental health services for families beyond the foster care system in both counties.
- Legislative Session – Mr. Rein discussed recent legislative developments, particularly Senate Bill 536 and House Bill 1061, addressing accountability issues identified through a forensic audit of lead agencies. Concerns include potential impacts on Community Alliances, limiting CBC contracts to a 5-year term, and a proposed funding model. The first concern about Community Alliances has seen positive changes, while issues regarding contract terms and funding model authority remain. The situation is dynamic, and further updates are expected.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- Friday, February 23, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. in person and via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT

- Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:41 a.m.

Rebecca Brock
Board Secretary

2.28.24

Date

(Corporate Seal)