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# BOARD MEETING MINUTES

## January 28, 2022

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### **Board of Directors:**

Michael Lepera, Board Chair; Amy Black, Vice Chair; Victoria Thurston, Secretary, Joseph Rogers, Treasurer, Chelsea Bellew, Josefa Benjamin, Meghan Russell, Melida Akiti, Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Paul Adams, Rebecca Brock, Ronald Ford, Tom Lukasik

### **Unable to Attend:**

Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Paul Adams, Tom Lukasik

### **Other Attendees:**

*ChildNet Staff:* Larry Rein, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Rae Bullard, Susan Eby, Sheryl Williams, Nicole Slade, Andrea Cunningham, Julie Janello, Samantha Ramsaran, Hillary Kofsky, Sanflore Taylor, Nyasha Nedd Wright, Shanice Dehaney, Katherine Vella, Shakeyia Brown, Brittany Burnette, *Marcum LLP:* Branden Lopez, Adam Firestein, *BDO:* Joey Epstein, *DCF:* Dawn Liberta, Elisa Cramer, Teresa Janeczek

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### **CALL TO ORDER – Michael Lepera, Board Chair**

- Michael Lepera, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Dr. Victoria Thurston, Board Secretary**

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The November 19, 2021, 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.*

### **WELCOME – Michael Lepera, Board Chair**

- Michael Lepera welcomed new Board Director, Paul Adams.

### **CHILDNET BOARD EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD – Rae Bullard, CHRO**

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employees:
  - November 2021 – Hillary Kofsky, Dependency Case Manager, Unit 104
  - December 2021 – Shanice Dehaney, Dependency Specialist

### **DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW**

- Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP) – Samantha Ramsaran, Director of Permanency and Youth Services provided a brief overview of the Guardianship Assistance Program (GAP). The GAP is financial support for our relative/non-relative caregivers. After a child has been placed with a relative/non-relative caregiver, and the caregiver has been licensed as a Level 1 foster parent for at least 6 months, the family has an option to enter into Guardianship Assistance Program. To enter GAP, you have to close your case permanent guardianship. Once the case has closed permanent guardianship, the family enters into



the Guardianship Assistance Program. The GAP consists of continued financial support up until the child turns age 18. The family receives \$333/month to help support that child. With the GAP, the caregivers are able to move anywhere they wish to reside. The Program also comes with a tuition waiver once that child turns 18. Then that child can attend any public school in the State of Florida, tuition free, until age 28. The child continues to receive Medicaid until age 18. With this Program, the caregivers continue to receive support from the community-based care lead agency. ChildNet is required to reach out once a year to the caregiver to see if any support is needed. In addition, the caregivers can reach out to any Kinship staff to receive support. Palm Beach has 103 kids in the GAP Program and 3 kids in Extension Guardianship Assistance Program (EGAP). Extension Guardianship Assistance Program (EGAP) is when a case closes permanent guardianship and the child is either 16 or 17, the financial assistance to the caregiver can continue until the child turns 21 if the child is participating in a qualifying activity.

#### **ITEM FOR BOARD REVIEW AND APPROVAL – Amy Black, Vice Chair**

- **Resolution #231 – Signature Authorization for Contract Year 2022** – 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 #231. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.*

- **Board Candidate – David Prather** - Larry Rein and Michael Lepera met with Mr. Prather, an attorney in Palm Beach County. Mr. Adams was recommended by Judge Rowe. They both feel that Mr. Prather would be a great asset to the Board.

*A motion was moved and seconded to approve David Prather as the newest member of the Board of Directors. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.*

- **Proposed Amended Bylaws** – Rein reported that the Bylaws were amended to clarify the process of the selection of non-voting provider representatives (Article III, Section 5 – Nominations). The following wording was added at the end of the paragraph “*As part of the selection process for provider representatives, this committee will review a list of all subcontracted service providers and ensure that the selected provider representative is from an organization that provides services in both Palm Beach and Broward counties.*”

*A motion was moved and seconded to approve the amended Bylaws with changes noted above. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.*

#### **AUDIT PRESENTATION – Adam Firestein and Branden Lopez, Marcum LLP**

- Joey Epstein, who serves as an AdHoc member on the Audit Committee, introduced Adam Firestein and Branden Lopez from Marcum LLP. They gave a brief presentation on ChildNet’s Audited Financials for FY 2020-2021. ChildNet again received a clean or “unmodified” opinion with zero findings. No issues is due 05-15-21.

#### **FINANCE REPORT – Joe Rogers, Board Treasurer and Donna Eprifania, CFO**

- Mid-year projections have been submitted to DCF. Broward overall has a projected surplus of \$3.2 million by means of current spending patterns. At budget approval, an additional \$3.7 million of roll-forward funds were infused into 21-22 fiscal year service array. Our current spending of those additional dollars would potentially only use \$500,000 of that. The good news is that we are projected to utilize the full 21-22 allocation this fiscal year in Broward. Forthcoming in addition to the \$3.2 million projected surplus is the restoration of adoption and guardianship assistance shortfalls



in the amount of approximately \$350,000. In Palm Beach, the projected overall year-end posture is still going to be negative, as we budgeted a \$720,000 deficit. We are spending exactly as anticipated. At mid-year, we had a \$45,000 surplus. We are able to erode some of that potential deficit with the utilization of surplus/roll-forward generated last fiscal year, leaving a net negative posture of approximately \$400,000.

### **COVID-19 UPDATE – Larry Rein, CEO and President**

- **COVID-19 Update** – Larry Rein reported there is an uptick in ChildNet related reports in positive cases. We continue to hold regular meetings with emergency response team. No plans of returning back to the offices at this time. New employees are meeting face-to-face with supervisors on a weekly basis. Discussion was held that ChildNet has three different EAP services. Melida Akiti requested that Human Resources send out awareness of these services to all staff.

### **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- **Advisory Board Committee** – Col. Josefa Benjamin, Committee Chair

Col. Josefa Benjamin reported the committee discussed the quarterly census and the staffing challenges related to dependency case managers. ChildNet Palm Beach is leading the state in licensing of Level 1. Discussion was held on the challenge of foster care placement for teenagers. ChildNet is offering special training to equip foster parents with the tools to better manage the teenagers. Senate Bill 80 was discussed which is a major system change which mandates a multi-disciplinary approach prior to placement of children. All stakeholders at the table are given a voice including birth parents. The ultimate say, however, is the legislative. ChildNet is above standard in terms of serving sibling groups together in foster homes or relative/non-relative care.

- **Adolescent Services AdHoc Committee** – Melida Akiti, Committee Chair

Shakeyia Brown, Director of Service Coordination and Brittany Burnette, Adolescent and Young Adult Specialist, gave a brief presentation on the Adolescent & Young Adult Project, of which a copy was provided to the Board. This project includes the top 21 youth in both counties, ages 13-17, to receive the necessary skills and services in their natural environment so they are able to transition into young adulthood with more positive outcomes. 15 out of the 21 youth are showing academic improvements and 14 out of the 21 youth are engaging in Life Coach/Mentoring services. The identified trends impacting youth are educational placements and supports, quality of placement, placement changes, and youth refusing services. They discussed action planning for these 21 youth. Motivational speakers at Memorial will take place in the next couple months.

Melida Akiti has recommended that this AdHoc Committee transition into a Standing Committee. Further discussion will be held at the next Governance/Executive Committee meeting.

- **Fundraising Committee** – Andrea Cunningham, Director of Community Relations

Andrea Cunningham reported on the following:

- **The Care For Kids Luncheon for Palm Beach** is on March 8, 2022 at Woodfield Country Club in Boca Raton. We are honoring Kathy & Paul Leone. Kathy has invested incredible amounts of time, energy, and money to try to improve foster care in Palm Beach County over the past 3 years. Paul is the CEO of The Breakers Hotel and has been very supportive of us through the use of the Breakers Hotel. We are also recognizing FPL as our Community Advocate honoree. To date, we have secured \$51,700 in sponsorships (which includes a total of 154 guests) and a total of 35 individual tickets sold to date. Our newest sponsor is Palm Beach Sheriff's Office. In addition to our auction this year,



we will also have Pop Up Shops. Some shops that have come on board so far are: Christian Dior, McLaughlin, Wonderland, Bent & Bree, and Victoria Bronfman Art.

- The Broward Care For Kids Cocktail Reception is on April 9, 2022 at Lauderdale Yacht Club starting at 6:00pm. We are honoring Sigrid McCawley. We currently have \$60,500 in sponsorships (a total of 108 guests with these sponsorships). We have sold 4 individual tickets to this event so far. Our most recent sponsor is the Loof Family Foundation. In addition to our auction, we will also have the same Pop-Up Shops from the Palm Beach Luncheon, along with a Cigar Roller.

- **Governance Committee – Amy Black, Committee Chair**

- **Quarterly Strategic Plan Update**

- Goal 1 – Create a 1% total budget contingency fund through a combination of fundraising and revenue maximization. At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the third fiscal year, we have exceeded the goal of 1%. We are at 1.235% of the goal amount of \$1,402,190.
- Goal 2 – Safely decrease the use of residential group care by 30%. At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the third fiscal year, the number of children in residential group care - Annual Mean for Broward is a 22% decrease from FY 18-19 and for Palm Beach is a 31% decrease from FY 18-19.
- Goal 3 – Create a fully implemented new corporate structure with management company and two unique organizations with individual boards by May 2020. At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the third fiscal year, ChildNet is completing a draft of a formal contract consolidation proposal and scheduling a meeting with the DCF Secretary for Administration to review it prior to presentation to the legislators.

The Inspector General's final report on Contractor Related Parties, issued 12-03-21, finds conflicts of interest for two CBC lead agencies who entered into a non-competitively procured agreement with a separate but related entity to provide management and administrative services which was structured the way that ChildNet's original plan was, which was to create a separate management organization which was then subcontracted by the lead agency. The Inspector General recommended to the Secretary that they make changes in the CBC lead agency contracts to preclude that sort of relationship from happening.

Discussion was held that a Board Retreat was held, and a consultant was hired to give guidance on the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. Should the Board desire, we can do the same for the new 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.

- **Membership Recruitment**

- No report this month.

- **Program Quality Committee – Joe Rogers, Committee Chair**

Julie DeMar reported that the committee discussed our new presentation of our performance as it relates to DCF's new Quality Office metrics and the circuit ratings. We are transitioning from a scorecard to a report card. The report card has 15 items that we will be paying close attention to. The Service Quality Department presented information on the foster care survey that is collected on a quarterly basis. This information is then shared with the Program Quality Committee.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- No new business.



## CONTINUING BUSINESS

- ChildNet's Anti-Racism Workgroup Update – Sheryl Williams, Program Officer of Case Management and Adoptions reported that some of the discussions were that we are overcoming racial equity fatigue due to not seeing a lot of change. While ChildNet has made great strides within this workgroup addressing racial equity within our community and within child welfare, sometimes we feel like we are not doing enough. New ideas for this year, 2022, will include sending out an email for new members to join the workgroup. The workgroup will be bringing in a consultant to educate staff on critical race theories as part of training for Black History Month. Some discussion held on House Bill 7 and how do new bills impact our community, impact child welfare, and as an agency, what can we do as a whole.

## BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Michael Lepera

- Michael Lepera noted that since becoming Board Chair in June 2020, all Board meetings have been virtual (no face-to-face). A suggestion was made to have a social event for all Board members to meet face-to-face and get to know one another as many members, especially new ones, are feeling disconnected. The Board Directors agreed this was a good idea. In addition, we will work to have the Annual Board meeting in June be in person as well. Discussion held that the hope is to have the social event take place prior to the annual board meeting.

## CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- Legislative Update - The Florida legislature has already convened its regular session. There does appear to be a lot of state revenue, more than expected, and we continue to push for an appropriation from the legislature for the creation of a minimum annual starting salary for dependency case managers at \$45,000. The main challenge with this request is there are many other organizations in the State of Florida who are also seeking some sort of increase, such as healthcare workers and teachers. There is a Bill sponsored by Senator Book which would enhance support to relative caregivers. It has been identified that recruitment and retention of dependency case management staff is a statewide challenge. ChildNet is beginning a series of incentive and reward programs to try to address this. ChildNet has the resources at this time to move forward. Residential group care has been reduced. However, we need to develop residential options that meet the needs of the most challenged youth (locally and statewide).

## PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

## NEXT MEETING DATE

- The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 25, 2022, via Zoom.

## ADJOURNMENT

- Having no further business, a *motion* was moved to adjourn the meeting. A *vote was taken*. The ayes have it and *the motion was adopted*. The meeting was adjourned at 9:46 a.m.

  
Dr. Victoria Thurston  
Board Secretary

  
Date

(Corporate Seal)