



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

January 30, 2026

Board of Directors:

Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair; Rebecca Brock, Vice Chair; Michael Lepera, Treasurer; Lois Marino, Secretary; Bill Reicherter, Carolina Raineau, Charles Hanna, Donna Korn, Dr. Heidi Schaeffer, Karen Cabrera, Maria Mezerhane, Michael DiBrizzi, Nancy W. Stamper, Paul Adams, Dr. Ronald Ford, Sabria McElroy, Stefanie Title, Dr. Victoria Thurston

Unable to Attend:

Bill Reicherter, Maria Mezerhane

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Neiko Shea, Donna Eprifania, Julie DeMar, Alcolya St. Juste, Rebecca Lindstadt, Shanny Tozzi, Tina Lewis, Deena Ponto, Sheryl Williams, Noelle Brillembourg, Brittani Brooks, Jennifer Leslie, Daffodil Otto, Andrew Wallick, Manouchea Satine-Luc, Nyasha Nedd Wright, Kendall Williams, Brittany Ceasar, Sheryl Miller, Julie Janello, *DCF:* Christy Gillis, Adrienne Reid

CALL TO ORDER – Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair

- Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Lois Marino, Board Secretary

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The November 21, 2025 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 – Tina Lewis, HR Officer

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employees:
 - November 2025 – Brittani Brooks, Dependency Case Manager Supervisor – Unit B2 (BWD)
 - December 2025 – Kendall Williams, Adolescent Care Coordinator (BWD)
Manouchea Satine-Luc – Dependency Case Manager – Unit 101 (PB)

ITEMS FOR BOARD REVIEW AND APPROVAL – Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair

- **Resolution #297 – Signature Authorization for Contract Year 2026** – This resolution provides Larry Rein, CEO and President, Donna Eprifania, CFO, and Neiko Shea, Chief of Staff, signing authority for the contract year. This resolution is signed on a yearly basis.

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Board Resolution #297. *A vote was taken.* The ayes have it and *the motion was adopted.*



NEW BUSINESS/BOARD TRAINING

- **Strategic Planning Training** – Neiko Shea, COS, provided to the Board an overview of strategic planning, emphasizing its collaborative role in setting mission-aligned goals, monitoring progress, and adjusting priorities to ensure strong system performance. The current plan focused on workforce stability, placement expansion, and kinship support. Looking ahead to 2026, leadership’s preliminary priorities include 1) continuing to strengthen the workforce, particularly shifting greater focus to improving dependency case management; 2) increasing targeted services and supports for adolescents due to their higher risk and cost within the system; and 3) enhancing financial sustainability in response to ongoing funding challenges and reliance on the risk pool. Specific language and measurable targets are still being developed, with further discussion to come as the new plan is finalized.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

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

Ripple Effect Gala – Saturday, May 9, 2026 - Lois Marino reported that the Gala has strong community engagement and approximately \$131,000 in sponsorship commitments to date, with more pending. The Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino has signed on as presenting sponsor, offering extensive support, and there is potential for additional proceeds through its gaming “change” donation program, which generated \$25,000 last year. The event will feature a unique cultural performance by Nestor Torres, joined by symphony musicians and a children’s choir, with his costs underwritten by the honorary chairs. We have secured notable auction items, including a boat experience, luxury shopping package, and Miami Marlins club seats, and additional sponsorships and auction contributions are encouraged.

Grant Requests – Lois Marino provided the following grant request updates:

- 1) Community Foundation of Broward - \$135,000-per-year, three-year request for the Youth at Work program,
- 2) Pulte Family Foundation - \$20,000 general operating request,
- 3) United Way of Broward County and Henderson Behavioral Health - Collaborative proposal to support at-risk youth through behavioral health services aimed at preventing foster care entry.

Leadership Broward - through a partnership with Leadership Broward, a team of eight participants will renovate and enhance the SafePlace site, creating “The Sanctuary at Safe Place” with upgrades such as cabinetry, beds, and murals.

Board Chair Report – Josefa Benjamin encouraged the board to continue supporting both the Gala and the Ripple Effect campaign through sponsorship outreach, social media engagement, and participation in a new “Beyond the Boardroom” spotlight initiative highlighting board members’ personal connections to ChildNet’s mission.

- **Finance Committee** – Michael Lepera, Committee Chair and Donna Eprifania, CFO

Michael Lepera reported that the Finance Committee met and reviewed the external audit, the KPMG funding model, and routine financials for Broward and Palm Beach, noting no significant issues. Donna Eprifania shared that the external audit is about a month behind due to delayed federal compliance guidance, but ChildNet remains in full compliance. Draft financials and the single audit testing selection have been received, with finalization expected by mid-February and presentation at the next board meeting.



KPMG Funding Model – Larry Rein provided an update on the funding model. Now in its third year of development, the latest recommendation of an actuarially sound, cost-based model was submitted on time and received a more favorable initial Senate review. The revised model improves on prior versions by using multiple per-member-per-month rates based on level of care, adding a cost-of-living adjustment, and recommending approximately \$116 million in additional statewide funding. However, key concerns remain funding tied to caseload projections could require agencies to return funds if numbers decline, and the model continues inequities by relying on historical spending rather than true costs, an issue raised in the Senate by Senator Rouson from Hillsborough County. Locally, it would further widen the funding gap between Broward and Palm Beach. While supportive of the increased funding, most lead agencies favor placing the model in the annual appropriations bill with proviso language, rather than in statute, to facilitate continued modifications and fixes. Discussions continue among lead agencies and with the Florida Coalition for Children, with the outcome dependent on legislative leadership.

▪ **Governance/Executive Committee – Rebecca Brock, Committee Chair**

- **Discuss Real Estate Committee** - Rebecca Brock reported that the Governance/Executive Committee met and discussed the status of the Real Estate Committee. Because Donna Korn, who had been leading the effort and has the most real estate expertise, has had a shift in work responsibilities, the Governance/Executive Committee agreed to pause active work on real estate acquisition. Therefore, the Real Estate Committee will be suspended for now, with the issue revisited through Governance check-ins at the three- and six-month marks. Leadership noted that current leases do not expire until 2029 and 2030, allowing time to plan. While the committee is inactive, staff will continue high-level space planning discussions related to future needs, including hybrid work arrangements. Mike DiBrizzi offered to share his organization’s experience purchasing real estate if needed, and leadership welcomed that support.
- **Accreditation** – Larry Rein discussed reaccreditation with the Council on Accreditation (COA), and it was recommended not proceeding due to a sharp fee increase, limited added value, and the fact that accreditation is no longer required in Florida. Neiko Shea highlighted ChildNet’s extensive existing oversight and a strengthened internal policy and procedure review process that replaces COA’s primary benefit. Accreditation is not required by current or prospective funders, with rare exceptions manageable through partnerships. After consulting outside counsel, ChildNet leadership agreed to explore a more targeted alternative accreditation that better fits the organization’s needs and may reduce insurance costs, with updates to be provided to the board.
- **Quarterly Strategic Plan Update – Quarter 4** - Discussion was held on the 4th quarter of the 3rd year of the Strategic Plan for 2023 to 2025, a copy of which was provided to the Board members.
 - Goal 1 – Improve and sustain ChildNet’s workforce by implementing proven and innovative practices. Evidence of goal progress in Year Three: ChildNet will reduce annual external voluntary turnover to 18%.

Tina Lewis reported that employee turnover decreased to 18.26% in 2025, a substantial improvement from 27% in 2023 and just above the annual goal. Progress was attributed to consistent retention strategies, including enhanced exit data analysis, focus groups, expanded training, a retention committee, and improved recruitment screening. Turnover remains highest in the first year, driven mainly by personal and compensation-related factors. Additional efforts included new employee surveys, departmental turnover analysis,



peer comparisons, and expanded engagement and wellness initiatives, with plans to further strengthen the retention strategy in 2026.

- Goal 2 – Expand the array of appropriate placement and treatment options for children. Evidence of goal progress in Year Three: ChildNet will reduce the percentage of children with stays over 14 days at SafePlace to 25%.

Dr. Rebecca Lindstadt reported continued progress in reducing extended stays at SafePlace, with the rate reaching 28.13% against a 25% goal. Efforts emphasized data-driven analysis and improving access to behavioral health services, with further enhancements planned for 2026. Key actions include crisis intervention partnerships, leadership in behavioral health integration, upcoming judicial training, expansion of therapeutic foster homes, strengthened foster home recruitment, and continued progress on kinship and Level 1 licensing, particularly in Palm Beach County.

- Goal 3 – Improve identification and support of kinship caregivers. Evidence of goal progress in Year Three: ChildNet will increase the percentage of children in kinship placements to 62%.

Julie DeMar reported overall progress on kinship placement outcomes, with the year ending at 52.87%, reflecting improvement throughout the year despite not reaching the 62% target. Both Palm Beach and Broward showed gains. Ongoing efforts include regular review of family-finding data, focusing on initial kinship placements, quarterly coordination with providers and DCF, and completion of the KINFIRST project to analyze kinship placement disruptions. Additional actions include continued review of group care and reunification options, initiation of a procurement for Kinship Support Services in Broward County in early 2026 and continued use of Level 1 licensing to strengthen kinship placement stability.

- **Strategic Plan - Future Planning** - Larry Rein and Neiko Shea highlighted progress made over the past three years and stressed the need to start planning the next three-year strategic plan. Mr. Rein shared that draft goals will be ready soon, focusing on staff stability (especially in dependency case management), better services for teens and complex cases, and improving financial stability to address fiscal fluctuations between Broward and Palm Beach. The goal is to present the new strategic plan to the board for review and approval by the March 2026 board meeting.
- **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein reported that following board approval to expand membership from 18 to up to 25, we plan to invite two Palm Beach–based candidates to apply to the ChildNet board: Samantha Ramnarine, an active and engaged supporter of ChildNet, and Kerry Diaz, an attorney, former foster parent, former CEO of the Quantum Foundation, and current nonprofit consultant.

Joe Rogers - The committee also discussed reaching out to former board member Joe Rogers, who previously termed out but has continued to contribute extensively to committee work and to support ChildNet financially and personally. Larry Rein will explore whether Mr. Rogers is interested in rejoining the board now that the required time away from our board has passed.

- **Program Quality Committee** – Nancy W. Stamper, Committee Chair

Nancy Stamper reported that the Program Quality Committee met on January 14. No policy or procedure reviews were conducted. The committee received three reports: an update on the Council on Accreditation (already covered by the board), Adolescent Care Quality Updates, and an incident report. The latter two reports are included in the board packet, with no additional updates provided.



CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- **National Issues** – Larry Rein reported on positive national developments in child welfare, highlighting discussions with Alex Adams, the new Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Mr. Adams, a former state child welfare leader with a finance background, is pursuing significant reforms to improve federal oversight and funding of foster care. Mr. Adams is seeking to overhaul the long-criticized Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR), which have been widely viewed as burdensome and ineffective. A new federal pilot would allow states to opt in and focus on a single priority, building an adequate supply of foster homes, using state-defined measures, without penalties, as long as a plan is developed and implemented. Florida leaders, including ChildNet and other lead agencies, strongly support opting into the pilot and have communicated that position directly to DCF leadership. Mr. Adams is also exploring reforms to modernize and streamline federal child welfare funding by consolidating outdated grant programs.

PUBLIC COMMENT

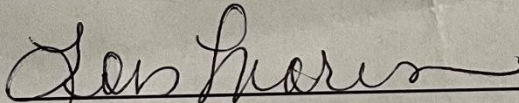
- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

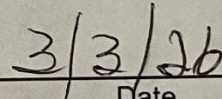
- February 27, 2026 @ 8:00 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

- Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:39 a.m.



Lois Marino
Board Secretary



Date

(Corporate Seal)