



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

February 23, 2024

Board of Directors:

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

Unable to Attend:

Amy Black, Meghan Russell, Nancy Stamper

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Neiko Shea, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Susan Eby, Nicole Slade, Deena Ponto, Nicole Slade, Samantha Ramsaran, Shanny Tozzi, Gail Johnson, Tasha Theoc, Aziza Suleiman, Valerie Polynice, Julie Janello, *DCF:* Dennis Miles, Teresa Janeczek, Isis Williams

CALL TO ORDER – Dr. Victoria Thurston, Vice Chair

- Dr. Victoria Thurston, Vice Chair, on behalf of Amy Black, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Rebecca Brock, Board Secretary

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The January 26, 2024 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 – Julie DeMar, CPO

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employee:
 - January 2024 – Gail Johnson, Dependency Specialist (PB)

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

- **Board Candidate – Maria ‘Malala’ Mezerhane** - Larry Rein and Amy Black met with Ms. Mezerhane who is the Director of M Foundation. They both feel that Ms. Mezerhane would be a tremendous asset to the Board.

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Maria ‘Malala’ Mezerhane as the newest member of the Board of Directors. *A vote was taken.* The ayes have it and *the motion was adopted.*

- **Resolution to Authorize Individuals to Act – 403(b) Plan** – Donna Eprifania, CFO, explained that transitioning from individual to institutional platforms involves increased oversight through ChildNet. This shift necessitates authorization from the Board for certain individuals to execute daily opera-



tions outlined in the plan. The resolution seeks approval for these individuals to carry out day-to-day actions, while Donna Eprifania, CFO, Larry Rein, CEO and President, and Neiko Shea, Chief of Staff, oversee plan execution on the institutional level.

A motion was moved and seconded to approve the above noted Resolution. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

- **Visitation and Internship Program** – Susan Eby, CCQO, provided a brief overview of the Visitation and Internship Program. The team includes Kenia Allen, Director of Children's Wellbeing, and Tahnese Veard, Internship and Visitation Program Manager. Each county has a Visitation Specialist, an Administrative Assistant, and Visitation Monitors. The visitation centers in Broward and Palm Beach have been remodeled, thanks to initiatives by Donna Eprifania. The program offers monitored, supervised, and therapeutic visitation, with plans to expand services in Broward. The internship program aims to familiarize students with the child welfare system, with interns involved in various activities including visitation, case management, and anti-racism work. The program has seen success with former interns now employed at ChildNet. Affiliation agreements with universities facilitate internships, with a focus on social work degrees. The visitation data shows higher numbers in Palm Beach, partly due to dedicated visitation monitors and higher judicial demand. Community donations support the program, with plans to survey interns for feedback.

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

- Donna Eprifania reported that the Finance Committee will meet next week.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

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

Lois Marino began by expressing gratitude for the successful new luncheon and announced a change in the Committee's meeting frequency. She emphasized refocusing on engaging with individuals and companies in the community. Ms. Marino underscored the importance of cultivating relationships with new partners and shared a story about a supporter who was inspired to donate Easter baskets after receiving ChildNet's newsletter. Ms. Marino emphasized the value of personal touchpoints and encouraged ongoing engagement with partners through various channels.

- 9th Annual Palm Beach Care for Kids Luncheon - "Embracing Smiles" – 02-02-24. It was noted that Board attendance increased from 22% to 80% from last year's luncheon. Shanny Tozzi highlighted the significant number of new attendees and sponsors (42% new attendees). The net revenue was \$91,258.
- 9th Annual Broward Care for Kids Cocktail Reception – Wednesday, May 22, 2024 is honoring Kip Hunter and Joey Epstein. Last year the cocktail reception netted \$98,000.
- **Governance/Executive Committee** – Dr. Victoria Thurston, Committee Chair
 - **Slate of Board Officers for 2024-2025** – Discussion held that all five members of the Governance/Executive Committee ends their terms, as per the bylaws, at the end of this fiscal year (June). Mr. Rein emphasized the need for further discussion on how to proceed. Donna Korn asked about the process of nominating candidates, to which Mr. Rein explained the role of the Governance/Executive Committee in developing a potential slate.



- **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein reported there are two potential candidates in the application process in Palm Beach, Nicole Flier and Bill Reicherter.

- **Legal/Human Resources Committee – Rebecca Brock Chair**

Jason Tracey provided an update on the Legal HR Committee meeting held on 02-05-24. Due to a lack of quorum, approval of minutes from the prior meeting was deferred to the next meeting in May 2024. The meeting discussed an incident report for the second quarter, noting one level 3 incident in Broward but none in Palm Beach County. They also addressed a matter involving a former employee referred to the insurance carrier. Plans were made to meet with new judiciary members in Palm Beach County and possibly organize an event similar to one held by the Hispanic Bar Association in Broward. Rebecca Brock offered assistance in mobilizing organizations for this purpose. Mr. Tracey mentioned coordination efforts with Larry Rein to meet new judges and strengthen relationships. Tina Lewis, the HR Director had no updates to share.

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

Julie DeMar reported that the Committee met on 03-14-24. The meeting featured presentations, including one from Susan Eby, on evidence-based programs implemented in both counties, highlighting outcomes, trends, and any challenges faced. Another presentation by Mr. Rein focused on census trends, providing information on children entering care, their placements, and destinations. Attachments of the evidence-based program presentations for Broward and Palm Beach counties, as well as the census trends, were provided for review.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- **ChildNet's Anti-Racism Workgroup Update** – Nicole Slade discussed that the focus is on Black History Month activities this month. Daily facts have been shared through email, along with weekly trivia and a "little fortune" game held twice, with the finale scheduled for next week. An in-person meet-up, doubling as a recruiting event, is planned for next week, where members of the Anti-Racism Workgroup will bring along individuals to gain more members and discuss the focus for the upcoming year.

CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- **Welcome** – Larry Rein welcomed new Board Director, Dr. Heidi Schaeffer. It was noted that Dr. Schaeffer will be honored two times on 02-27-24 by AVDA and by FLITE Center.
- **ITN** – Larry Rein reported that ChildNet submitted a single application for both Broward and Palm Beach county on 01-23-24, following the Department of Children and Families' directive. There were no competing applications in either county, indicating the lack of competition in the lead agency procurement process statewide. The Department has scheduled negotiations with ChildNet for March 26th and 27th, and the senior leadership team is reviewing a draft supplemental contract. Mr. Rein expressed concerns about legislative restrictions potentially stifling competition in the procurement process.
- **Legislative Session** – Larry Rein provided an update on two significant bills in the Legislature, Senate Bill 536 and House Bill 1061, both concerning the operation of lead agencies in child welfare. Senator Garcia introduced SB 536, proposing a 15-year term limit for lead agency contracts and civil penalties for conflicts of interest involving board members. Representative Macfarlane's HB 1061 initially mirrored SB 536 but has undergone significant revisions after discussions with



stakeholders, making it more acceptable. However, SB 536 remains contentious, with Sen. Garcia staunchly defending its original provisions. The fate of these bills remains uncertain, but reconciliation is necessary for any new legislation to pass. Mr. Rein highlighted the importance of these developments, particularly regarding potential impacts on board membership.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- Friday, March 22, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. in person and via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT

- Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:03 a.m.

Rebecca Brock
Board Secretary

Date

(Corporate Seal)