



# BOARD MEETING MINUTES

March 26, 2021 (Rev. 04-23-21)

## Board of Directors:

Michael Lepera, Board Chair; Amy Black, Vice Chair; Victoria Thurston, Secretary, Joseph Rogers, Treasurer, Armando Fana, Josefa Benjamin, Meghan Russell, Melida Akiti, Rebecca Brock, Ronald Ford, Sigrid McCawley

## Unable to Attend:

Joseph Rogers, Michael Lepera, Sigrid McCawley, Victoria Thurston

## Other Attendees:

*ChildNet Staff:* Larry Rein, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Rae Bullard, Susan Eby, Tamaru Phillips, Andrea Cunningham, Allyson Gaiser, Julie Janello, Andrea Chenet, Shakeyia Brown, Ashley Kiernan, Brittany Burnette, Whitney Louis, *DCF:* Dawn Liberta

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## CALL TO ORDER – Amy Black, Board Vice Chair

- Amy Black, Board Vice Chair, on behalf of Michael Lepera, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Amy Black, Board Vice Chair

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The February 26, 2021 meeting minutes were reviewed. *A motion was moved to approve the minutes. A vote was taken. The motion was passed unanimously.*

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

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employee:
  - February 2021 – Whitney Louis, Child Advocate, Unit A1

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

- Process Quality Improvement Department – Andrea Chenet, Director of Continuous Quality Improvement-Broward, provided a brief summary of the Process Quality Improvement Department. The Regional Department currently has 14 staff. Ms. Chenet oversees two IT Developers who are responsible for all of our software applications and development within our agency, and any process improvements that we implement. Currently, we are focusing on putting a lot of things in an electronic format, both on computers and cell phones. Ms. Chenet oversees a Quality Manager for both counties, who oversees our auxiliary aids for our Deaf and Hard of Hearing population, and assists with all of our testing in-house for our IT Developers, prior to us putting that process/application into a pilot form. In addition, Ms. Chenet oversees a Data Security Officer who oversees 6 staff in Broward and 3 in Palm Beach who are responsible for all data entry into Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN), for all placements, they handle Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCAR) errors, and they do Temporary Assistance for Needy Families



(TANF) for out of home placements. The Process Quality Improvement department also oversees our Child Placing License, any HIPAA complaints for our clients and we also do COA Accreditation.

#### **ITEM FOR BOARD REVIEW AND APPROVAL – Joe Rogers, Program Quality Committee Chair**

- Approval of P&P – CN 001.009 – Policies and Procedures – Due to a DCF Contract Oversight Unit (COU) Monitoring finding, the “Policies and Procedures” policy and procedure was created, even though ChildNet has always followed this function. This P&P explains how policies and procedures are developed, titled and how they are to be reviewed and approved. It provides clear guidelines on how to manage a policy and procedure.

*A motion was moved to approve CN 001.009 – Policies and Procedures once today’s date is added and N/A is added after “policy revised date” and “policy sunset date”. A vote was taken. The motion was passed unanimously.*

#### **FINANCE REPORT – Donna Eprifania, CFO**

- Donna Eprifania discussed the forthcoming DCF Amendments for both Broward and Palm Beach to cover the shortfall for the adoption subsidies, and to include additional dollars that were held in reserve for Level 1 licensing payments. We now license relatives and as we license them, they receive a stipend in similar fashion to traditional foster parents. ChildNet had their initial conversation with our insurance company, Marsh & McLennan, as we prepare for our renewal of general liability, excess coverage, property, etc. The environment is one in which we expect to have increases. It was suggested that the increase could go as high as 25% for the general and excess liability coverage. The 403(b) Audit was filed and the 990 organizer has been submitted to the accounting firm who is preparing our taxes. We will file an extension so that we may be filed with the IRS by May 15, 2021.

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

- Larry Rein reported that nothing substantial has changed in terms of the Department’s or ChildNet’s operations. Through our partnership with DCF, especially with Dawn Liberta and Elisa Cramer, they were able to open up to our staff, who have direct contact with clients and community members, the opportunity to be vaccinated. Melida Akiti recommended leadership to develop a plan for next steps for staff returning to work.

#### **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

- Advisory Board Committee – Armando Fana, Committee Chair

Armando Fana reported the committee met and a thorough presentation was provided on the outcomes for the Oak Street Project, which is the 4-bed group home for the most challenging, dually dependent, and delinquent young men in Palm Beach County. The results that were presented were astounding. There were tremendous increases in school attendance and performance, and tremendous decreases in juvenile delinquent outcomes, decreases in arrests and probation violations, and complete and total placement stability compared to what these young men had prior to coming to Oak Street. Also discussed, however, was the challenge in preparing these young men after turning 18 and leaving Oak Street. Three of the youth turned 18 within the last 6-9 months. Unfortunately, not one of these three young men, who moved on to transitional independent living housing programs in the community, where they get some support but not the level of support, they received at Oak Street, have succeeded.



There is more that ChildNet needs to do to help transition these youth. This needs to be a gigantic focus for ChildNet and for the community. These youth started at Oak Street at the age of 16. We did not have sufficient time and/or we did not do intensive enough work to prepare them for adulthood. We need to start preparing them at a younger age. There still is not sufficient support to help them through this really challenging time.

Mr. Rein noted that we have replicated Oak Street in Broward with 4 young males and are on the verge of starting a 4-bed group home for girls in Broward.

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

Andrea Cunningham reported on the following.

- Palm Beach County IL Graduation - originally scheduled for June 24th will now take place on July 7, 2021 from 2-3pm-virtually.
- Volunteer Committee – this committee meets virtually once per month. We share our ongoing needs with them and in a very organized, structured way they go out and set up donation drives based on the current need or holiday driven initiative (for example, Easter and Thanksgiving, as well as diaper drives, shoe drives, etc.). Thank you to Rebecca Brock and Lt. Col. Benjamin for joining this committee.
- Circle of Supports - We now have 11 Circle of Supporters members. Two of them joined after they joined our Volunteer Committee. The funds raised from this membership will help pay for pro social activities like participation in sports, music and art camps, help to pay for a suit and tie for an interview and many other needs that our teen population has.
- Back Packs - Elisa Cramer with The Department of Children & Families graciously put us in touch with a company that donated hundreds of new back packs which are being stored at DCF in Broward. This helps us tremendously as we start preparing for our Back-to-School Drive.
- Easter Baskets - we will be delivering 200 Easter Baskets to case managers to bring to some of the kids in our care.

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

- **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein reported we have sent a Board candidate application packet to:
  - Karen Harrington, recommended by Melida Akiti
  - Tom Lukasik at 4Kids who will fill the vacancy of the provider representative on our board
  - Nancy Gregoire, a prominent attorney.

In addition, Judge Kathleen Kroll who chairs the Palm Beach Community Alliance created an AdHoc committee for Board Recruitment which Mr. Rein chairs. The AdHoc Committee had their first meeting to discuss what ChildNet was looking for in terms of board membership. The members of the AdHoc committee will contact Mr. Rein with recommendations of candidates. Judge Kroll has recommended former Judge Debbie Pucillo, currently Chair of the Food Bank Board of Directors in Palm Beach.

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

Julie DeMar reported that the Committee met and reviewed a presentation on ChildNet performance for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter on the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR), which was overall positive in



both Broward and Palm Beach. Susan Eby and her team reviewed the contract monitorings that have been occurring through the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter. There was also a presentation on ChildNet's Medical Unit intended to help Dr. Ford fully understand its roles and functions. Dr. Ford subsequently met separately with Susan Eby and her staff to discuss the role of the nurses and the scope of their practice. Since they almost exclusively serve in an administrative role, Dr. Ford did not see where there was a need or opportunity for medical supervision. They have resources to go to when they have questions. Therefore, Dr. Ford feels that the supervision arrangement the Medical Unit has currently is adequate and appropriate.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

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

Melida Akiti noted that this Ad Hoc committee was created to look at available services, and at services actually accessed, for youth ages 13-17. Larry Rein reported that in Broward, in particular, there is a plethora of transitional independent living services available to support adolescents and young adults. Mr. Rein noted, however, that while these services exist, ChildNet has never dug deep enough to see if our children were accessing them, if they are effective with our children, if they are having an impact, if they are having good outcomes, and if they are meeting the needs of these children. Answering these questions is what the newly created Adolescent & Young Adult Project is about.

The first step in the Project was creating an Adolescent and Young Adult Specialist position, filled by Brittany Burnette, a former Child Advocate. Brittany will report directly to Director of Service Coordination Shakeyia Brown. Brittany will focus on first identifying current services and issues and determining what are the gaps, what do we need to do to fill the gaps, and what do we need to do to improve the services that are provided to these youth to effectively prepare them to become adults. Shakeyia Brown then shared a PowerPoint presentation that gave a brief overview of the "Adolescent & Young Adult Project", a copy of which was provided to the Board. She described in detail how the Project will also focus on and work with a target group of 10 "high risk" youth from each county. Acting Col. Josefa Benjamin offered assistance with filling gaps between leaving foster care and moving into the adult system and providing help, if needed, with challenges that have recently arisen with youth who have transitioned out of ChildNet's innovative Oak Street home in West Palm Beach.

## **CONTINUING BUSINESS**

- **ChildNet's Anti-Racism Workgroup Update** – Dr. Tamaru Phillips reported that ChildNet leadership approved the Workgroup's proposal to recognize Juneteenth (June 19<sup>th</sup>) to be a paid holiday at ChildNet, beginning this year. Melida Akiti asked for staff to set up a volunteer project for Juneteenth. Dr. Phillips noted that this is already in the works.

## **CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein**

- **New DCF Secretary** – Mr. Rein reported he had his first working meeting with the new DCF Secretary, Ms. Shevaun Harris. Mr. Rein is very impressed on how quickly she has stepped up and provided solutions to some long-term issues.
- **Introduction of new Chief Legal Officer** – Mr. Rein introduced Jason Tracey, ChildNet's new Chief Legal Officer. Melida Akiti asked Mr. Tracey and his legal team to research that ChildNet is in compliance with in-person versus virtual meetings.



- **Legislative Update** - Mr. Rein reported that this is the most unique session ever due to the pandemic. Contact with legislators has been severely restricted because of the pandemic. However, one of the good benefits has been that we have a lot more communication with legislative staff than in past years, albeit electronically.

**Budget** - The expected reductions in this year's funding for child welfare and substance abuse and mental health will not happen. It appears that Florida's economy is healthier than anticipated and federal COVID-related recovery funds are substantially filling a lot of the state's revenue gaps. The indication so far is of a flat funding for child welfare in the budget for next year.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- There was no public comment.

#### **NEXT MEETING DATE**

- The next Board meeting is scheduled on Friday, April 23, 2021 via Zoom.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

- Having no further business, a motion was *moved* to adjourn the meeting. *A vote was taken. The motion was passed unanimously.* The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 a.m.

  
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Dr. Victoria Thurston  
Board Secretary

  
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Date

(Corporate Seal)