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# BOARD MEETING MINUTES

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**March 27, 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, Joseph Rogers, Karen Cabrera, Kerry Diaz, Maria Mezerhane, Michael DiBrizzi, Nancy W. Stamper, Paul Adams, Dr. Ronald Ford, Sabria McElroy, Stefanie Title, Dr. Victoria Thurston

**Unable to Attend:**

Michael Lepera, Nancy Stamper, Sabria McElroy

**Other Attendees:**

*ChildNet Staff:* Larry Rein, Neiko Shea, Donna Eprifania, Julie DeMar, Alcolya St. Juste, Rebecca Lindstadt, Shanny Tozzi, Tina Lewis, Deena Ponto, Nicole Slade, Noelle Brillembourg, Victoria Faucher, Julie Janello, *DCF:* Christy Gillis, Adrienne Reid, Traci Schweitzer

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**CALL TO ORDER – Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair**

- Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Lois Marino, Board Secretary**

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The February 27, 2027 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 – Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair**

- Josefa Benjamin new board director Kerry Diaz and former and new board director Joe Rogers.

**CHILDNET BOARD EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD – Tina Lewis, HR Officer**

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employees:
  - February 2025 – Nicole Slade, Program Officer of Case Management and Intake & Placement (PB)

**ITEM FOR BOARD REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

- Resolution #302 – Draft 990 – The board reviewed Resolution #302 regarding filing ChildNet's IRS Form 990 following the recent external financial audit. Donna Eprifania explained that ChildNet is in a slightly improved financial position with a smaller net asset deficit, which is important for securing a performance bond. She also noted a ChildNet policy change reducing vacation hour carryover from 120 to 80 hours to lower liabilities on the balance sheet.



A *motion* was moved and seconded to approve Resolution #302 – Draft 990 and for Ms. Eprifania to proceed with filing the 990. A *vote was taken*. The ayes have it and *the motion was adopted*.

## **NEW BUSINESS/BOARD TRAINING**

- **Financial Literacy Oversight Training** – Donna Eprifania, CFO, provided the annual required training on Financial Literacy Oversight, a copy of which was provided to the board.

## **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

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

Ripple Effect Gala - Lois Marino provided an update on the upcoming Ripple Effect Gala, emphasizing its importance as a major fundraising effort supporting ChildNet's work. The event includes pre-event fundraising (sponsorships, tables, underwriting), activities during the event (auctions and donations), and post-event engagement to maintain long-term supporter involvement. So far, the Gala has secured about \$131,000 in commitments before the event, indicating strong early support and positioning it to be profitable. Funds have come from sponsorships, underwriting, and table sales, with additional revenue expected from auctions and donations. Board members were encouraged to stay actively involved, especially by securing sponsorships, filling tables with engaged attendees, and promoting the event. The goal is not just fundraising but building lasting community support and awareness for ChildNet's mission.

Grants – Ms. Marino noted that staff is seeking a wide range of grant opportunities, particularly in areas like mental health, workforce programs, and general support, and encouraged board members to share any leads for evaluation. Ms. Marino noted the importance of securing multi-year grants, which provide more sustainable funding compared to one-time awards, helping ensure long-term continuity of services.

Graduation – Ms. Marino highlighted an immediate need for 25 laptops for youth graduating in May and June. While one partner organization has already secured laptops for Palm Beach County, we are still seeking donations for Broward County. Board members were encouraged to contribute by donating or purchasing laptops, noting this as a meaningful way to fulfill their giving commitments and directly support graduating youth. ChildNet does not provide a laptop to everyone who is graduating, only to those that are enrolled in college and are continuing their education.

Ribbon Cutting – Saturday, May 16, 2026 @ 1:30pm. Ms. Marino shared an update on the SafePlace renovation project, initiated through collaboration with Leadership Broward. What began as a simple refresh (painting and cleanup) turned into a more extensive effort, including a full kitchen renovation. The project is nearly complete.

Board Chair Report – Josefa Benjamin emphasized strong support for the upcoming Gala and encouraged 100% board member attendance to demonstrate commitment to the community and ChildNet. She thanked several members for their contributions and reiterated that there are many ways to support the event.

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

Donna Eprifania reported that the Finance Committee discussed three main topics: filing the IRS 990, upcoming insurance renewal effective June 1st, and a review of financial performance for Broward and Palm Beach counties. The insurance broker provided an update on the property and casualty insurance market, and applications for coverage have been submitted for the next fiscal



year. Financials are generally tracking as expected, though Broward County continues to experience strain in residential group care, for which additional funding support has been requested.

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

- **Board Service Term Accrual** – Larry Rein explained that as the board prepares for upcoming officer selections, members are being reviewed based on their remaining terms. While the standard limit is three two-year terms, serving as a Board Officer pauses term limits, allowing some members to serve longer than six years. He noted that this flexibility has helped retain experienced and highly engaged leaders and has worked well alongside the board’s expanded membership. Mr. Rein discussed upcoming changes to the Board Officer slate as all current officer terms are expiring in June 2026.
- **Board Skills & Committee Matrix** – The committee reviewed the board skills and committee matrix, which tracks each member’s expertise and helps guide board composition and committee assignments. It is informational and useful for identifying gaps and assigning members effectively. Discussion also held on pending committee assignments for new Board Directors Kerry Diaz and Charles Hanna.
- **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein explained that recent bylaw changes allow the board to expand up to 25 members, putting ChildNet in its strongest position yet in terms of both board size and quality. While there is still room for additional members, recruitment is no longer urgent. However, Mr. Rein encouraged suggestions for strong potential candidates, noting that leadership will evaluate and pursue promising additions as appropriate.
- **Accreditation** – Discussion held that ChildNet is still exploring additional accreditation options, but no new developments have occurred. In the meantime, we are continuing to review and strengthen policies and procedures, going beyond prior accreditation requirements to ensure full compliance with legal and contractual obligations.
- **2026-2028 Strategic Plan** – Neiko Shea reported that the four new goals have been established and staff are working on the metrics. The four key goals: 1) improving case management retention to be measured by setting benchmarks based on national and state turnover data, 2) increasing support for adolescents to be measured by reducing the overall number in care and promoting permanency outcomes, 3) strengthening financial sustainability by better utilizing available funding, and 4) expanding foster home capacity, including increasing licensed relative caregivers.

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

Julie DeMar reported that the committee met on March 11th and reviewed monthly performance data from the Department of Children and Families Quality Office. The discussion focused on contract outcomes for both Broward and Palm Beach counties. No policies or procedures were reviewed during this meeting.

**CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein**

▪ **Statewide Issues**

Larry Rein provided an update on statewide legislative issues, noting that Florida legislature adjourned without passing the required budget, forcing a special session that has not yet been scheduled. Proposed budgets include no funding increases for community-based care, though there is some potential relief through “back of the bill” funding that could help address a projected \$1.9



million deficit in Broward and other gaps across lead agencies. There have been few major policy changes, which are viewed positively after years of heavier legislative intervention.

Florida Coalition for Children (FCC) - Mr. Rein also discussed leadership transition at the Florida Coalition for Children (FCC), with Denise Marzullo now serving as CEO. A recent FCC board retreat was described as energizing, with a renewed focus on positioning FCC as a leading authority in child welfare reform.

▪ **National Issues**

National Center for Community-Based Child Welfare - Larry Rein noted the need for national leadership in child welfare policy, noting that organizations like the National Center for Community-Based Child Welfare, of which he is a board member, should actively guide legislators rather than rely on policymakers who lack frontline experience. Mr. Rein described recent input provided to a congressional office advocating simplifying federal funding by combining multiple grant streams into a single flexible funding source, which would allow states and agencies greater ability to tailor spending to community needs.

HHS - Larry Rein reported that HHS is advancing an initiative focused on expanding foster home capacity, including licensed relative caregivers, and expressed strong support for Florida participating in a potential pilot program. Mr. Rein believes the initiative aligns well with the ChildNet's strategic goals and would be highly beneficial if federal, state, and local agencies collaborated on it. However, DCF has not yet decided whether to participate, and Mr. Rein noted ongoing encouragement from lead agencies to support the effort.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

- There was no public comment.

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

- April 24, 2026 @ 8:00 a.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

- Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:26 a.m.

Lois Marino  
Board Secretary

Date

(Corporate Seal)