



# BOARD MEETING MINUTES

**April 24, 2020 (Rev. 08-19-20)**

**Board of Directors:**

Sigrid McCawley, Board Chair; Michael Lepera, Vice Chairman; Christopher Cade, Treasurer; Amy Black, Secretary, Jillian Smath, Joe Rogers, Josefa Benjamin, Melida Akiti, Rebecca Brock, Sigrid McCawley, Tex Guignard, Victoria Thurston

**Unable to Attend:**

Armando Fana

**Other Attendees:**

*ChildNet Staff:* Larry Rein, Donna Eprifania, Dionne Wong, Julie DeMar, Susan Eby, Sheryl Williams, Deena Ponto, Andrea Cunningham, Julie Janello, *DCF:* Dawn Liberta, Teresa Janeczek, Mark Holsapfel, *Parent's Information & Resource Center (PIRC):* Janet Ward

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**CALL TO ORDER – Sigrid McCawley, Board Chair**

- Sigrid McCawley, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Amy Black, Secretary**

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The February 28, 2020 and March 27, 2020 meeting minutes were reviewed. *A motion was moved to approve both meeting minutes. A vote was taken. The motion was passed unanimously.*

**FINANCE REPORT – Chris Cade, Treasurer/Finance Chair and Donna Eprifania, CFO**

- Chris Cade reported the Finance Committee met and discussed what the agency is doing in response to COVID-19, which included some one-time assistance payments to our families. ChildNet is in the process of taking advantage of some potentially forgivable loans under the CARES Act, specifically under the Paycheck Protection Program. Broward continues to operate in a very strong position partially due to low census numbers. Palm Beach was favorable for the period.

Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) - Donna Eprifania reported that ChildNet contemplated the participation in this program because there is a caveat that you have to demonstrate the need for revenue or loss thereof. We continue to receive a steady stream of funding from the Department on a monthly basis. After further discussion of the senior leadership team and other lead agencies, we recognized that there may still be an opportunity to submit an application because we are not necessarily being funded or have the revenue to support all of the initiatives that we are being forced to impose or cover as a result of COVID-19. We have prepared the application similar to other institutions. However, at this point in time, the federal government allotment is insufficient to fund current applications thus putting ChildNet in a suspense posture. If this option is no longer available, ChildNet will move to capitalize on the other option available under the CARES Act - Payroll Tax Credit. Organizations must select between one of the four options available.



Chris Cade noted that the forgivable amount of the PPP loan is only for the 8-week period that starts on the date that the loan is received. Any funds beyond that 8-week period would not be considered forgivable,

Assistance to Families – ChildNet processed the funds to the foster home families – level 1 and level 2. ChildNet staff have talked about the fact that the Independent Living population that state funds can only support youth in Extended Foster Care (EFC) and not Secondary Education settings (PESS and ETV). In order to support all of the youth under ChildNet’s umbrella, Andrea Cunningham secured a \$25,000 grant from AT&T. and now we can disburse an additional stimulus stipend to Independent Living youth in extended foster care, as well as in the secondary education program and continues to see other grants and opportunities to fund the full \$30K expense.

DCF Amendments – ChildNet was restored 50% of our adoption projected deficit for Broward and there was no projected deficit for Palm Beach. That was based on our December 2019 projections. The reason we have only received 50% so far is the other half is in a budget amendment that has not yet been signed by the Governor. There is full expectation that this will be fully funded as it is a federal separate bucket of money that is matched by state dollars.

## COMMITTEE UPDATES

- **Advisory Board Committee – Armando Fana, Committee Chair**

Larry Rein reported that he provided the Committee an update on ChildNet’s response to the health emergency. They had an in-depth discussion on the quarterly census which in Palm Beach is moving in the right direction. Our total number of children in care is below 1,700 for the first time in quite a while. The number of children in residential group care is the lowest it has ever been - down to 79. Our increases are in children in relative/non-relative care and we are using more foster home beds than we ever had before. Removals in Palm Beach are significantly down. For the last four months there has been a reduction, compared to last year, of over 40%. In the month of March 2020, the decrease, compared to last year, was over 50%. The investigators are still going out as they normally would doing face-to-face visits (Broward Sheriff’s Office (BSO) in Broward and DCF in Palm Beach). There had been a decrease statewide in the number of reports to the abuse hotline. For children already in the system, and for those children who need to have face-to-face visits, we continue to do monthly visits in both counties. In addition, we do weekly audio or video visits with these cases as well. In the majority of cases, we are only doing visits by video, and we are now doing those visits weekly instead of monthly. So now, we are actually having more contact with the children in our care than we did prior to the health emergency.

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

Andrea Cunningham, noted the following:

- AT&T Grant – ChildNet secured a \$25,000 grant from AT&T to go towards Independent Living (IL) youth in both counties. Ms. Cunningham noted that we secured another \$5,000 yesterday to put towards the deficit that Ms. Eprifania noted earlier for the IL youth.
- PR/Marketing Strategy – We are changing our PR and Marketing Strategy. We are asking ChildNet staff to do a 60 second video to show a day in the life of staff during the COVID-19 crisis. We will use the videos on social media. The purpose of this is to raise funds and also to bring awareness to what we are doing in the community. She shared that there is a global study that shows that 67% of people who watch these types of fundraising videos actually donate to that particular cause. We have a web banner at the top of ChildNet’s website for people who



wish to donate for COVID-19 needs. ChildNet was mentioned in the South Florida Business & Wealth magazine for free (\$900 value). This is another huge opportunity for ChildNet since this magazine goes out to many people.

- Global “Giving Tuesday – is Tuesday, May 5, 2020.
- Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Graduation – Both the Palm Beach and Broward TIL Graduations are currently on hold.
- Care for Kids Luncheons – Palm Beach was scheduled for April 2020 and has been postponed, and Broward is not yet scheduled.

- **Governance Committee – Michael Lepera, Committee Chair**

- COVID-19 Update – Larry Rein reported that operations continue to go remarkably well under the circumstances of working largely remotely. Our case managers are still going out to homes for those children who we determined needed to have a face-to-face visit. The balance of their visits is being done through video and telephone on a weekly basis. Both court systems continue to operate and are doing everything they can to keep things moving through the court system.

Internally, we have scaled back from a daily to a once a week update email from Mr. Rein to all staff. In addition, we have scaled back the daily conference call with our “Emergency Response Team”, which consists of 42 staff members, directors, managers, and C-level staff to once a week as well.

Two (2) staff from 4Kids of South Florida, who operate SafePlace in Palm Beach, tested positive. That became a challenge because the Department of Health then advised 4Kids that any staff that had come in contact with the two staff that tested positive needed to be quarantined. That put five (5) full-time 4Kids staff on quarantine. Therefore, we reached out to ChildNet staff to see if anyone would be interested in working extra to assist 4Kids. It is gratifying to note that more than 20 people responded that first evening. Julie DeMar is working with this team of staff in filling those spots in SafePlace that 4Kids does not have staff to cover.

Only one (1) child in our care has tested positive (in Palm Beach) who resides with a non-relative. There has only been one (1) ChildNet employee that tested positive (in Broward). There have been three (3) provider staff in Palm Beach and 1 provider staff in Broward that tested positive. There has been 1 birth parent in Broward, 1 non-relative in Palm Beach and 2 non-relatives in Broward that tested positive. There have been no foster parents in Palm Beach and 4 foster parents in Broward that tested positive. The impact so far in the number of infections has been very low. We have a good supply of PPE’s (gloves, masks, surgical masks, sanitizer) to provide to staff, and should receive some NP95 masks purchased statewide by the Florida Coalition for Children (FCC).

Our fears continue to be a potential increase in the number of removals, which could happen one of two ways: 1) as things get more back to normal, reporting of abuse could increase or skyrocket, and 2) despite the fact that the courts are working through video, there are certain things, like termination of parental rights trials, that cannot go forward, so we may see some children lingering in the system longer than normal. The legal community is working very hard on this issue.

- Discussion for Recommendations of Board Officer Slate for FY 2020-2021 – Dionne Wong reported that discussion was held on the current roster of Board Officers and nominations for FY 2020-2021, where some recommendations were made by the Committee. The Board will be



presented with a recommended slate for review and approval at the June 2020 Board Meeting. As Armando Fana was unable to move into the Board Chair position for the current FY 2019-2020, the Committee requested that Mr. Rein contact Mr. Fana to determine his availability to serve as Board Chair for this upcoming FY 2020-2021. Unfortunately, Mr. Fana is still unavailable to move into the Board Chair position. One outstanding matter from the Committee meeting was regarding Dr. Victoria Thurston's availability to accept the nomination of Board Secretary for FY 2020-2021. Since that Committee meeting, Dr. Thurston has notified Ms. Wong of her acceptance of the nomination as Board Secretary. Therefore, at the May 2020 Governance/Executive Committee meeting, the below recommended slate will be presented. At the June 2020 Board meeting, the full Board will have an opportunity to take action on the recommended slate by resolution and provide a final vote. The proposed slate of Board Officers for FY 2020-2021:

Board Chair – Michael Lepera  
Vice Chair – Amy Black  
Treasurer – Christopher Cade  
Secretary – Victoria Thurston

- Board Survey – Michael Lepera clarified that rather than issue the survey for completion, we should ensure the survey captures the right questions. Melida Akiti also noted her support of reviewing the survey questions. Therefore, the Committee requested that the survey questions be sent to the full Board for input/recommendations prior to the survey being sent out for completion. Dionne Wong noted that the goal is to receive the survey results back in time to be able to provide a report at the annual Board meeting in June 2020. Julie Janello will submit the current survey questions to the Board for input/recommendations.

- **Program Quality Committee**

- Julie DeMar reported that the meeting focused on the roll-up of data that finished in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter. They reviewed the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the Child & Family Service Review (CFSR) results and talked through both county's performance. Susan Eby shared information on the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter foster parent survey results for both Broward and Palm Beach County. The survey is being done at the end of each quarter with everyone who has had a placement during that quarter about their interactions with the entire system and what is done with that information as we receive it. There was some in-depth conversation about CBCIH and Sunshine Health and the HEDIS measures and what those metrics mean and what impact that has on our children. There was a Procedure update on Supervision that was reviewed by the committee.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- There was no new business to report.

## **BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Sigrid McCawley**

- Ms. McCawley requested an email list of all employees who stepped up to volunteer at SafePlace in Palm Beach so that the Board can send a note of acknowledgement to them. In addition, she would like the Board to send messaging (either through email or video) to the entire staff and will work with Andrea Cunningham to set-this up.



## CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- Legislative Update – Mr. Rein reported that ChildNet did remarkably well at the last legislative session. For CBCs statewide, the legislature approved:
  - \$25 million increase in lead agency Core Funding,
  - \$20 million in Back-of-the-Bill Funding, which would help ChildNet Palm Beach with its projected deficit under our DCF contract for this fiscal year,
  - \$5 million in Risk Pool Funding, and
  - A Special Appropriation of \$250,000 for ChildNet to replicate Oak Street Home, our very successful program for the four most challenging teenage boys in Palm Beach to now do it with four teenage girls.

We previously misunderstood and thought that immediately upon the end of the legislative session, the Governor had two (2) weeks to approve the budget that is presented to him by the legislature. In fact, the Governor has two (2) weeks from when he receives the budget from the legislature, and at this time, the Governor still has not received the budget. At this point, no one is sure when the Governor will receive the budget and when the two (2) week timeframe will start. Clearly, there is a fear that under the current circumstances, there will be more vetoing of items and line items, such as our special appropriation, than would normally occur. On the positive side, the Senate President has said he will not call the legislature back for a Special Session until after the November elections (which is the next fiscal year). The Senate President has expressed confidence that many of the shortfalls that the State may experience could be back filled by the federal government. If budget cuts are to come, it looks like it would probably be well into the next fiscal year.

## OLD BUSINESS

- There was no old business.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

## NEXT MEETING DATE

- The next scheduled Board meeting is Friday, May 15, 2020 via teleconference.
- 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 9:01 a.m.

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Amy Black  
Board Secretary

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Date

(Corporate Seal)