



# BOARD MEETING MINUTES

**April 25, 2025**

**Board of Directors:**

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

**Unable to Attend:**

Heidi Schaeffer, Meghan Russell, Michael Lepera

**Other Attendees:**

*ChildNet Staff:* Larry Rein, Neiko Shea, Donna Eprifania, Julie DeMar, Alcolya St. Juste, Rebecca Lindstadt, Deena Ponto, Sheryl Williams, Tina Lewis, Shanny Tozzi, Tara Daniels, Courtney Guignard, Brianna Waite, Wiline Profit, Nyasha Nedd Wright, Makayla Williams, Julie Janello, *DCF:* Traci Schweitzer, Isis Williams, Adrienne Reid, Christy Gillis, *PB County:* Elisa Cramer

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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 March 28, 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, Director of HR**

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employees:
  - March 2025 – Brianna Waite, Lead Dependency Case Manager, Unit 106 (PB)  
Courtney Guignard, DCM Supervisor, Unit A2 (BWD)

**NEW BUSINESS**

- **Board Overview of ChildNet's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)** – Donna Eprifania provided an overview of the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), which ensures that essential services continue, and people and property remain protected during any disaster. It includes strategies for both predictable events like hurricanes and unexpected emergencies such as fires or pandemics. The plan identifies key staff, prepares alternate work sites, and maintains communication through hotlines and emergency teams. Preparedness efforts begin early in the year, with responsibilities assigned and resources like fuel secured. A communication system ensures staff safety and guides recovery efforts post-disaster. The COOP is reviewed and submitted annually to maintain readiness and compliance.

## COMMITTEE UPDATES

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

- March 7<sup>th</sup> Palm Beach Care for Kids Luncheon - Shanny Tozzi reported that we received \$155,000, with \$23,000 of in-kind donations. We had a net revenue of \$117,000, which is a 42% increase over last year.
- May 14<sup>th</sup> Broward Care for Kids Cocktails & Cheer - 6:00–9:00pm at the Hard Rock Hotel, featuring a live band. We are expecting 250 guests. There will be open seating, with sponsors having reserved seating.
- Grants – Shanny Tozzi reported increased grant activity since March, detailing applications in progress, including those for the Honda Classic, Men Giving Back, and Citibank. She encouraged board members to share potential leads. Discussion was held on the Florida Blue grants focused on mental health and food security, with a May 4 deadline, and Lois Marino and Stefanie Title offered to assist through their connections. Additional support was offered by Dr. Ron Ford for the Memorial Health grant, and Donna Korn and Dr. Rebecca Lindstadt suggested new opportunities with the Florida Panthers Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- Upcoming Events:
  - Easter Basket Drive – 457 baskets were collected.
  - Spring Employee Picnic – May 9, 2025 will feature a mobile farmer's market offering \$10 produce vouchers for staff, thanks to Lois Marino's efforts.
  - Cocktail & Cheers event - May 14, 2025
  - HANDY Scholars Breakfast – May 23, 2025 – Larry Rein is being recognized.
  - TIL Graduations – Palm Beach on June 3, 2025 at Palm Beach State College and Broward on June 26, 2025 at Broward College.

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

Donna Eprifania reported that the Committee discussed the upcoming renewal of property and casualty insurance, awaiting final underwriting details due by May 1. Current estimates show a potential 6–9% premium increase, with hopes for a lower rate based on favorable loss ratios. March 2025 financials were also reviewed: Palm Beach is slightly under budget thanks to residential group care reductions and contingency fund allocations, while Broward faces ongoing financial strain due to higher-than-budgeted residential care and one-to-one support needs for children with complex cases. The Committee also began preparing for the FY 2025–2026 budget, with expectations of flat funding for the third consecutive year.

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

- Vacancy of BOD Provider Representative - At the last Governance Executive Committee meeting, the Committee agreed the ideal candidate should be a contractor providing services in both Palm Beach and Broward counties. After outreach, Mike DiBrizzi, CEO of Camelot Community Care, expressed strong interest. Mr. Rein noted Mr. DiBrizzi's long-standing leadership and statewide experience, which could offer valuable insights and complement existing perspectives. The Committee recommended moving forward with his application, pending standard background checks. The process also prompted discussion about possibly amending bylaws to formalize selection criteria for provider representatives in the future.
- Membership Recruitment - Larry Rein noted that we would like to maintain the long-standing relationship with FPL by identifying a new board representative following Amy Black's retirement.



Ms. Black helped identify a successor, Karen Cabrera, who expressed strong interest in joining the board. Both Larry Rein and Josefa Benjamin met with Ms. Cabrera, and her application and background screening are in progress.

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

The Program Quality Committee met and received two reports from Julie Demar, one on internal child performance and another on DCF contract oversight. The DCF data reviewed was from December 2024, with updated figures expected at the next meeting. Overall, performance in both counties was strong, especially in permanency outcomes. Staff regularly meet to track performance measures and share improvement strategies.

## **BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Col. Josefa Benjamin**

- **Board Retreat – Friday, May 16, 2025** - The Board Retreat is scheduled for Friday, May 16, 2025 at The Born on Purpose Project in North Lauderdale.

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

- **Federal Issues** – Larry Rein reported that ChildNet is continuing to monitor potential impacts on funding, with no current evidence of direct effects from federal changes. Membership in the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) has been valuable, providing weekly updates. The most significant federal concern is the proposed elimination of Head Start, which could slightly impact families enrolled in the program. There is also ongoing discussion about potential Medicaid enrollment cutbacks, though these would likely have a minimal impact on Florida due to the State's lack of Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act.
- **CBC Funding Methodology/Legislative Update** – Larry Rein noted that political tension between Florida's Legislature and the Governor is significantly impacting progress on funding methodology for community-based care (CBC) lead agencies. The proposed funding model, developed by KPMG through the DCF contract, originated from the Governor's office, prompting legislative resistance as it is perceived as a gubernatorial initiative. Despite flaws, the model represented a constructive first step and included a proposed \$58 million funding increase, but without legislative support, that increase is unlikely. Mr. Rein expressed disappointment at the Legislature's reluctance, emphasizing that the model, though flawed, was a constructive starting point. Currently, the Senate draft budget does not adopt the model and recommends no increase in CBC funding, suggesting instead an expansion of the model's tiers from 3 to 5, a move seen as complicating rather than improving the process.

Both Senate and House budget proposals maintain static funding levels for the third consecutive year, which is disheartening. There is slight optimism from Senate discussions about providing up to \$18 million in "back of the bill" funding to address current CBC deficits, though only \$9 million is currently committed and the House has not indicated similar support. Broader political issues, such as controversy surrounding the Governor-backed "Hope Florida" initiative, may also be indirectly influencing these funding decisions, even though community-based care (CBC) agencies are not directly involved in that initiative.

Reflecting this friction, the Senate also announced it will not consider confirmations for key agency heads this session, citing time constraints but likely signaling deeper disagreements. Shevaun Harris was appointed Secretary of the Agency for Health Care Administration, and Taylor Hatch was named her replacement at the Department of Children and Families. Both must be confirmed by the Legislature to remain in their roles. These changes come amid rising tensions between the Governor and Legislature, especially around the Hope Florida initiative, and a \$4.4 billion budget gap that may delay the Session's end. Concerns were raised over the Senate staff's lack of collaboration with child welfare experts when



drafting policy language. A proposal to reduce liability insurance requirements for agencies did not move forward, but the issue was acknowledged for future action. Due to increasing insurance costs, board members emphasized the need for further discussion at committee meetings or their upcoming retreat.

- **Introduction of New Chief Service Quality Officer** – Neiko Shea introduced Dr. Rebecca Lindstadt as the new Chief Service Quality Officer, filling a position that had been vacant for several months. With a background in child welfare and managed care, Dr. Lindstadt has over 13 years of experience, including work across 11 states to develop Medicaid-based child welfare programs. Dr. Lindstadt expressed excitement about returning to the field and looks forward to improving outcomes for children and families. In her role, she will oversee service quality, service coordination (behavioral health), well-being (medical and dental), and licensing.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- There was no public comment.

#### **NEXT MEETING DATE**

- Board Retreat – In-Person Only - Friday, May 16, 2025, 10:00am-2:00pm at Born on Purpose Project in North Lauderdale.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

- Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

*Lois Marino*

Lois Marino  
Board Secretary

6/27/25

Date

(Corporate Seal)