



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

April 28, 2023

Board of Directors:

Amy Black, Board Chair; Victoria Thurston, Vice Chair; Rebecca Brock, Secretary, Meghan Russell, Treasurer, Chelsea Bellew, David Prather, Josefa Benjamin, Joseph Rogers, Lois Marino, Michael Lepera, Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Paul Adams, Ronald Ford, Sabria McElroy, Tom Lukasik

Unable to Attend:

Lois Marino, Meghan Russell, Michael Lepera

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Susan Eby, Rae Bullard, Gary Blavat, Lisa Maille, Bobbi Combs, Shanny Tozzi, Deena Ponto, Julie Janello, *DCF:* Dawn Liberta, Teresa Janeczek, Dennis Miles, Elisa Cramer

CALL TO ORDER – Amy Black, Board Chair

- Amy Black, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Rebecca Brock, Board Secretary

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The March 24, 2023 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 – Rae Bullard, CHRO

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employee:
 - March 2023 – Lisa Maille, Financial Information Systems (FIS) Coordinator

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

- Financial Information Systems (FIS) - Gary Blavat, Director of Finance – Mr. Blavat provided a brief overview of the FIS Unit. Their overall responsibility is to maintain the state system, Florida Safe Families Network (FSFN). FSFN is the official record for all expenditures related to service provision for children, youth, and/or families receiving out-of-home placements, independent living support and adoption subsidies. The Unit consists of a Director, a Manager and six FIS Coordinators in both counties. The goals for the Unit: 1) ensure the FSFN system has current and accurate data to provide timely, detailed client payment and placement data history, 2) Collaboration – work with multiple departments to ensure the FSFN financial module is reconciled with client placements, and 3) Innovation – we achieve success with technology-supported platforms, i.e., Placement Portal, SharePoint, paperless transmission of supporting documentation.



BOARD SERVICE RECOGNITION

- Joe Rogers – Mr. Rogers was commended for his 14 years of service on ChildNet’s Board as a Director, a Board Chair, and as a Committee Chair of Program Quality. In addition to serving on the Board, Mr. Rogers is also a foster and adoptive parent of three children. Mr. Rogers will continue to serve on several committees as a non-board member.
- Tom Lukasik – Mr. Lukasik served for two years on ChildNet’s Board as the Provider Representative. Mr. Lukasik is also a former foster parent.

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

- Donna Eprifania reported that the committee did not meet this month. Some items on Form 990 needed to be modified. The modified Form 990 was received last evening and will be sent by email to the full Board after this Board meeting for review and approval. Form 990 has the comparison for both years. Form 990 is to be filed by May 15, 2023.

We are now three quarters through the fiscal year, and we are expending more resources than budgeted in both counties. In Palm Beach, the increase is the greater use of group care and our continued support of staffing at SafePlace. SafePlace is to be transitioned to the new provider within the next week. In Broward, we have taken some dollars and identified them from our current roll forward to do different types of innovative practices, i.e., evidence-based efforts and small census group homes. We have had great response to the small census group homes, so that too is adding an extra burden on the budget, but we have enough resources available through roll forward. For Palm Beach, we have asked for back of the bill funding for this fiscal year. The word from the Department is that our funding for core funding should stay constant this year.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

- Community Engagement Committee – **Shanny Tozzi, Director of Community Relations**

Shanny Tozzi, Director of Community Relations, reported on the following.

1. New Community Relations Manager: We hired Noelle Brillembourg as the new Community Relations Manager who will be working in both counties representing ChildNet and looking to increase the fundraising pool through individual and corporate donations.
2. The Broward Care for Kids Cocktail Reception is on Thursday, May 11, 2023 at the Lauderdale Yacht Club starting at 6:00pm. We are honoring Melida Akita from Memorial HealthCare System and a former Board Chair of ChildNet. As of 04-25-23, this event has raised \$67,000. Last year it raised \$72,000. Our goal for 2023 is \$100,000.

Guests will be welcomed by a violin serenade, cocktails, and lite bites. We will have an amazing high school student, runner up of the Jason Taylor Louder than the Bomb competition, who will recite his poem about foster care, and we will hear from Woodson Benjamin, an incredibly inspiring young adult who just aged out of our care and his path to success. Once more we will be auctioning a golf cart and a fantastic private dinner with an Opera Chef who has performed with Pavarotti and Bocelli. He will sing for us at the event to give us a taste of his talent.

3. Broward and Palm Beach Graduation Ceremonies are being planned for June. This is a great opportunity for individuals and companies that can afford \$500-\$1000 donations and want to join ChildNet in celebrating these children. For high school students needing volunteer hours, we are welcoming gift cards in exchange for those. Our graduating class would love to receive a little gift on their special day, and anyone can help by sending any denomination gift cards.



4. We had our Easter Baskets Drive and many children in our care had a very nice time thanks to those donations.
5. May is Foster Parent Appreciation Month. ChildNet, along with other agencies, are holding a brunch on May 20th to express our gratitude. If you have any unused gift certificates or gifts for these foster parents that you would like to donate, please contact Shanny Tozzi.
6. Fundraising Committee: Please join Lois Marino in the Fundraising Committee. Initially we will meet every 6-8 weeks to discuss ways in which we can expand our reach in the philanthropic community, whether it be through the Circle of Supporters or just raising awareness of how corporations and individuals can assist in bridging the budgeting gap we have. Your professional expertise is priceless and we would love to hear your voice.
7. Easter Basket Drive - We are receiving Easter Basket donations in both offices.

- **Governance/Executive Committee – Dr. Victoria Thurston, Committee Chair**

- **Quarterly Strategic Plan Update – Quarter 1** - The Strategic Plan is now by calendar year instead of by fiscal year.

Goal 1 – Improve and sustain ChildNet’s workforce by implementing proven and innovative practices. Evidence of goal progress in one year is ChildNet will reduce annual external voluntary turnover from 30% to 28%. Rae Bullard reported that the turnover is provided by calendar year. The 2022-2023 Comparison shows that in the 1st Quarter of 2022, turnover was at 7.06 %. In the 1st Quarter of 2023, turnover was at 3.81%. More data will be provided going forward, i.e., by county and by exit interview data, as we do have a formal exit interview process.

Goal 2 – Expand the array of appropriate placement and treatment options for children. Evidence of goal progress in one year is ChildNet will reduce the percentage of children with stays over 14 days at SafePlace from 32% to 30%. Julie DeMar reported that currently, Palm Beach is at 50% (16 of 32 children) and Broward is at 42.1% (24 of 57 children) with overall @ 44.94%. Going forward we will add raw numbers to show the number of kids this is impacting.

Larry Rein noted that this goal goes well beyond what is in ChildNet’s direct control. Mr. Rein has had discussions with Children’s Services Council of Broward and the Managing Entity in Broward to have these meetings because preventing youth coming into SafePlace is as equally important as moving them out. Going forward, with the agencies noted above, we are going to look at any children who newly enter foster care because of their behavioral health challenges and the inability of their caregiver to want to continue to care for them to review to determine what are we missing and what is not working as well as it needs at the front end.

Goal 3 – Improve identification and support of kinship caregivers. Evidence of goal progress in one year is ChildNet will increase the percentage of children in kinship placements to 60%. Currently Palm Beach is at 53.56% and Broward is at 49.22% with overall at 51.19%. Julie DeMar reported that ChildNet has hired a family finding supervisor and three family finding specialists.

- **Vacancy of Committee Chairs** – Discussion was held on the following committees that do not have a Committee Chair or need additional committee members. It was noted that any Board members who wish to serve on a committee to notify Larry Rein and/or Amy Black, Board Chair:
 - Adolescent Services Committee – Currently, Col. Josefa Benjamin and Lois Marino serve on this committee. Recommendation is to ask Col. Benjamin to serve as Committee Chair.



Note – Col. Benjamin accepted, by email on 04-28-23, the appointment of Committee Chair of the Adolescent Services Committee.

- Community Engagement Committee – Currently, Chelsea Bellew and Lois Marino serve on this committee. Discussion held to wait until after the May 2023 Cocktail Reception to get more information on the functions of this committee. Recommendation is to ask Lois Marino to serve as Committee Chair.
- Program Quality Committee – Currently Joe Rogers is the Committee Chair. However, Mr. Rogers terms out his board service at this month's Board meeting, so we need to appoint another Committee Chair. The other board directors serving on this committee are Col. Josefa Benjamin, Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Ronald Ford, and Dr. Victoria Thurston. Recommendation is to ask Nancy Gregoire Stamper to serve as Committee Chair.

Note – Nancy Gregoire Stamper accepted, by email on 04-28-23, the appointment of Committee Chair of the Program Quality Committee.

Note – Sabria McElroy responded, by email on 04-28-23, that she would like to serve on the Program Quality Committee.

- **Discussion of Potential Board Candidate – Provider Representative**

Larry Rein provided the Committee a summary of all providers who serve in both counties. A copy of the list of these providers were provided to the Committee. After much discussion, the recommendation was for Mr. Rein to contact either Camelot Community Care or Kids in Distress to determine their interest and availability to serve on the Board. The provider representative board service term is two years.

The Committee requested a summary of all providers and their services be provided to the full board. Another suggestion was the possibility of having the providers present at a board meeting on how they work with ChildNet.

- **Membership Recruitment**

The committee reviewed the Board Service Term Accrual and Diversity Matrix.

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

Julie DeMar reported that the committee met and reviewed four procedural updates. The Department now has a role in the review of all policies and procedures. The quarterly Census trends were discussed where the number in Broward is the lowest it has ever been. The number in Palm Beach is the lowest it has been in the 10 years that ChildNet has been in Palm Beach. Julie Janello will send the Quarterly Census Trends Report to the full Board.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- ChildNet's Anti-Racism Workgroup Update – Julie DeMar reported that the workgroup is working on a parent survey. They are also finishing the review of children in care the longest to see if any have had any movement.



CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- Legislative Update – The legislature is now in conference and operating behind closed doors. Kurt Kelly, CEO of Florida Coalition for Children (FCC) has not seen any sign of the request made by the FCC for back of the bill funding or for a statewide increase in CBC funding to meet the gaps and needs created by inflation. Both of ChildNet’s special appropriation requests for Palm Beach are in both budgets but at reduced amounts.

We, statewide, need to better serve the most complex kids and teenagers, dually dependent and delinquent teenagers, children with special needs, and children with behavioral healthcare needs. We are doing a lot better than the system used to do, but we still need to do better.

We need to work hard, all of us, board directors, community alliances, service providers, CBC lead agencies, in ensuring that the community-based care model thrives and stays strong. There is a natural tendency for people to not understand how important this model is and how it dramatically changed the face of foster care in the state of Florida and how it has made Florida a leader in the nation in child welfare. The state’s CBC model is far from perfect; it still needs improvement, but it is the way to operate the system and the way to make quick, flexible, important changes. If we centralize everything, if we give state agencies more responsibilities for providing service, we will get back to where we were 20-25 years ago, and we do not want that to happen. There is an attempt, led by Florida and Texas, to create a national organization of community-based care agencies. There may be value in this national organization going forward.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- The next Board Meeting is scheduled for Friday, May 19, 2023 in person and via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT

- Having no further business, a *motion* was moved to adjourn the meeting. A *vote was taken*. The ayes have it and *the motion was adopted*. The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 a.m.

Rebecca Brock
Board Secretary

5.22.23

Date

(Corporate Seal)