



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

May 21, 2021

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, Tom Lukasik

Unable to Attend:

Armando Fana, Josefa Benjamin, Ronald Ford, Sigrid McCawley

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Rae Bullard, Susan Eby, Deena Ponto, Sheryl Williams, Tamaru Phillips, Andrea Cunningham, Julie Janello, Karen Birchette, Krystal Kenison, Akilah Gilzene, Nadine Cotterell, Simone Gibson, Daffodil Otto, *DCF:* Dawn Liberta, Michelle Windfelder, Teresa Janeczek

CALL TO ORDER – Michael Lepera, Board Chair

- Michael Lepera, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Dr. Victoria Thurston, Board Secretary

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The April 23, 2021, 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:
 - April 2021 – Nadine Cotterell, Lead Child Advocate, Unit B2

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

- Palm Beach Service Coordination – Larry Rein noted that as many of the children who come into our care have significant mental health needs, Ms. Birchette in Palm Beach and her counterpart, Gayle McTighe in Broward, are the point people who monitor and ensure children who need more than traditional foster care or traditional group care get the therapeutic levels of care that they need. Karen Birchette, Senior Behavioral Health Services Specialist then provided a brief overview on her responsibilities in the Palm Beach Service Coordination department. Ms. Birchette's primary responsibilities include working with youth who require a more supportive therapeutic level of care. She helps transition them to therapeutic foster care, therapeutic group care and/or psychiatric hospitalization, when needed. She oversees the coordination of suitability assessments, oversees the child-specific staffing process and, while children are receiving treatment, she monitors their progress in levels of care to ensure they are receiving the care and support they need. The levels of care are: 1) Least Restrictive - Therapeutic Foster Care - done in the community. Our in-county



provider is Camelot Community Care, 2) Next Level of Care - Specialized Therapeutic Group - in-county provider is Home Safe, and 3) Most Restrictive - Psychiatric Hospitalization – primarily use Sandy Pines Hospital. All of these levels of care are funded by Medicaid. Our goal is to be able to provide the least restrictive level of care. Both Ms. Birchette’s and Ms. McTighe’s positions are funded by Community Based Care Integrated Health (CBCIH).

ITEM FOR BOARD REVIEW AND APPROVAL – Michael Lepera, Board Chair

- **Board Candidate – Nancy Gregoire** - Larry Rein and Michael Lepera met with Ms. Gregoire, an attorney in Broward County and a former teacher. Ms. Gregoire was recommended by Melida Akiti. They both feel that Ms. Gregoire would be a great asset to the Board.

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Nancy Gregoire as the newest member of the Board. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

- **Proposed Amended Bylaws** – Discussion held that there had been some confusion in the wording of the Bylaws regarding the Board Chair’s term (Article III, Section 4 – Election and Term). The wording was revised from “*In the instance that a Board Chair is concluding his/her term of service as Chair and has reached term limits for service as a member at large, this member...*” to “*Notwithstanding the foregoing, a Board Chair concluding his/her term of service as Chair*” ... may continue to serve as a member at large for a one (1) year term in order to effectively facilitate leadership transition.

A motion was moved and seconded to approve the amended Bylaws with changes noted above. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

FINANCE REPORT – Joe Rogers, Board Treasurer and Donna Eprifania, CFO

- Donna Eprifania provided a brief report on the March 2021 financials. We continue to be in a very positive posture in Broward County. We have taken the opportunity to start some evidence-based training in preparation for the FFPSA that is coming in October 2021. Palm Beach is in a stable position. We are now beginning to realize some of the positive consequences of us pushing some of our residential group care costs for June into last fiscal year. We made a transition in how we capture the data, and it is proving to be beneficial in potentially giving us an opportunity for a small one-time surplus this fiscal year. Once finalized, we will be able to start some evidence-based practices in Palm Beach County. Next week, the Finance Committee will meet and will begin discussions on the initial draft budget. The Committee will present the final proposed budget at the August 2021 Board meeting for review and approval.

COVID-19 UPDATE – Larry Rein, CEO and President

- Larry Rein reported that statewide, the number of daily new positive cases is below 3,000 – the lowest they have been in quite some time. For the past few months, we had been averaging 40 positive tests monthly between ChildNet staff, caregivers, providers, and children. So far in the month of May 2021, there has only been a single positive report of a child testing positive. The Senior Leadership Team has stepped up their efforts on the plan for staff to return back to the offices. We will phase the return over the next few months and hope to announce dates/times at the beginning of June 2021.



COMMITTEE UPDATES

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

Larry Rein reported the committee met and noted that we continue to move in the right direction. The number of dependent children in Palm Beach is below 1,500. Mr. Rein noted that both local special appropriation requests were approved: 1) Oak Street Program for teenage girls in the amount of \$600,000 and 2) Safety Management in the amount of \$325,000. We are awaiting the Governor's final approval.

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

Andrea Cunningham reported on the following.

- Virtual Auction – ChildNet's virtual auction will be held from June 1-7th. We have 70 items to bid on. To participate in the auction, you will need to register. Registration is free, but required, to bid on items. Registration link will be sent shortly.
- Media – We had a very busy month for public and media relations starting the month off with the Hughes family and Mr. Rein being interviewed for foster care awareness month. That was featured on the WSFL website. Following that, Lifestyle Magazine interviewed Mr. Rein and printed a three-page story in Lifestyle Magazine. And yesterday, the same article came out in the digital versions of the South Florida Business & Wealth and LifeStyle Media Group which has 400,000 subscribers. We have a scheduled interview with a successful young adult who is now a nurse. CBS asked for this story and as soon as it is finalized, we will share it with you. Lastly, we will end the month with a special on Saturday, May 29th at 7pm on NBC. There will be a half hour special featuring ChildNet on Foster Care Awareness Month.
- Save the Date - Care for Kids Luncheons –
 - Palm Beach is scheduled for 03-08-22. We will be honoring Kathy & Paul Leon.
 - Broward is scheduled for 06-22 and location TBD.

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

- **Discussion for Recommendations of Board Officer Slate for FY 2021-2022** – Discussion was held that all current officers (slate noted below) will be recommended for one more term of one (1) year at the annual June 2021 Board meeting:

Chair – Michael Lepera
Vice Chair – Amy Black
Treasurer – Joe Rogers
Secretary – Victoria Thurston

A motion was moved and seconded to approve the recommended Board Slate for FY 2021-2022 as noted above. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

- **Annual Board Survey** – Discussion was held on the annual board survey questions. The discussion focused on question #2 – “My familiarity with the organization's investment management and asset development is...” The committee was somewhat confused on what ChildNet's asset development is. Mr. Rein noted that we recently made an investment in another company. As we now have a good handle on what our discretionary monies are, we might be investing in things in the future with the discretionary money.



A recommendation was made to change the wording for question #2 to remove the word 'investment' and to include something about 'financial resources allocation/funding mechanisms and structure'. After the Governance/Executive Committee approves the new wording for question #2, Julie Janello will send the updated questions through a Survey Monkey link to the full Board for completion of the survey in order that the results of the survey can be prepared for the Annual Board meeting in June.

- **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein discussed that the Advisory Board, which was created in our Bylaws, is a way of maintaining formal contact with former board members. Mr. Rein will work with Jason Tracy, CLO, in reviewing the advisory board section of the Bylaws (Article IV, Section 9 – Advisory Bodies) to see if we need bulk up the section. Sigrid McCawley terms her board service in June 2021. Mr. Rein has spoken with Ms. McCawley who wants to remain very involved with ChildNet and noted her interest in serving on the advisory board.

- **Legal/Human Resources Committee – Sigrid McCawley, Committee Chair**

Larry Rein reported that this committee meets on a quarterly basis. The committee met on May 1, 2021, and it was noted that no new outside attorneys had been retained. In addition, Jason Tracey had provided a brief summary of the Risk Management Committee meeting Mr. Rein noted that Ms. McCawley had stated that she would like to remain on this committee once her board service terms out in June 2021.

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

Julie DeMar reported that the committee discussed the quarterly scorecard report. Overall, our performance is positive. A couple of areas in which we are concentrating: in Palm Beach, we are focused on reducing the number of children who return into care, and in Broward, we are focused on how to achieve permanency under 12 months. Susan Eby had presented on our contract outcomes and how those contracted providers are doing in terms of their performance, how they are doing with children not being abused, children's medical and dental care, and other things while they are living in foster care and group homes. Overall, we are trending in the right direction. The committee also reviewed the MOP (Management of Operational Procedures) which will be presented to the full board at the June 2021 Annual Board meeting. Melida Akiti asked what the average caseload is in both Broward and Palm Beach: Broward 1:12 (number of children), Palm Beach 1:20 (number of children). Ms. Akiti requested that a listing of all children in care, along with how many are assigned per case manager, to preferably include the complexity of each case, to be presented at the next board meeting,

NEW BUSINESS

- Board Director Meghan Russell encouraged all Board members to assist Andrea Cunningham, Director of Community Relations, with thank you calls to donors. Ms. Russell recently made her 'thank you' call which only took a small amount of time out of her day. She noted that the call was very well-received, and the donor was grateful to hear from a board member.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- **ChildNet's Anti-Racism Workgroup Update** – Sheryl Williams, P.O. of Case Management and Adoptions, noted that the "Implicit Bias and Microaggression Training" for staff will be held on 06-14-21 and 06-22-21, presented by Dr. Danniella Jones.



BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Michael Lepera

- No report this month.

CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- Welcome – Larry Rein welcomed new Board member, Tom Lukasik. Mr. Lukasik is Vice President of Community Engagement at 4Kids of South Florida.
- Legislative Update - Larry Rein reported that the legislative session ended. There were no increases or decreases to community-based care funding, which was a disappointment given that there was an influx of COVID-relief funds from the federal government. However, there was an appropriation to the Department of Children & Families of \$30 million for them to use to further child welfare best practices. There was a lot of legislation that passed that made some significant changes to the practices and procedures of the dependency system. These changes are good changes. However, in order to implement them will require additional and substantial financial resources. Mr. Rein also believes what the legislature wanted to do with the federal relief funds is not make long-term or recurring commitments. What they are doing is mainly using that money for building infrastructure and one-time source of funding. The feds are also investing, directly, a lot of that money into substance abuse and mental health services. Therefore, the managing entities will be receiving a good amount of that federal relief funding.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- The next meeting is the Annual Board Meeting scheduled for Friday, June 25, 2021, 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 9:12 a.m.



Dr. Victoria Thurston
Board Secretary



Date

(Corporate Seal)