



ANNUAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

June 28, 2024 (Rev. 08-21-24)

Board of Directors:

Amy Black, Board Chair; Victoria Thurston, Vice Chair; Rebecca Brock, Secretary; Meghan Russell, Treasurer; Bill Reicherter, Chelsea Bellew, Donna Korn, Heidi Schaeffer, Josefa Benjamin, Lois Marino, Maria Mezerhane, Mark Dhooge, Michael Lepera, Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Paul Adams, Ronald Ford, Sabria McElroy

Unable to Attend:

Amy Black, Chelsea Bellew, Meghan Russell, Michael Lepera, Nancy Stamper, Paul Adams

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Neiko Shea, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Susan Eby, Deena Ponto, Nicole Slade, Shanny Tozzi, Tina Lewis, Noelle Brillembourg, Lena Blythe, Lindsay Pierre-Louis, Shakema Tucker, Brittani Brooks, Julie Janello, *DCF:* Traci Schweitzer, Isis Williams, *PB Youth Services:* Elisa Cramer

CALL TO ORDER – Dr. Victoria Thurston, Board Vice Chair

- Dr. Victoria Thurston, Board Vice Chair, on behalf of Amy Black, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Rebecca Brock, Board Secretary

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.
The May 17, 2024 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:
 - May 2024 – Brittani Brooks, Dependency Case Manager Supervisor, Unit B2 (Broward)
Shakema Tucker, Intake & Placement Specialist (PB)

BOARD SERVICE – Jason Tracey, CLO & CCO

- Approval of Resolutions #264 - #267 – Election of Officers – The following names were brought to the Board for vote for Officer Positions for a one (1) year appointment, ending June 2025:
 - *Chair* – Col. Josefa Benjamin
 - *Vice Chair* – Rebecca Brock
 - *Treasurer* – Michael Lepera
 - *Secretary* – Lois Marino

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Resolutions #264-#267 for appointment of one (1) year, ending June 2025. *A vote was taken.* The ayes have it and *the motion was adopted.*



- Approval of Resolution #268 – Election of Directors – two-year reappointment – The following slate of Directors are up for reappointment of a two (2) year term ending June 2026:

- Amy Black
- Bill Reicherter
- Chelsea Bellew
- Donna Korn
- Dr. Heidi Schaeffer
- Maria Mezerhane
- Meghan Russell
- Nancy Gregoire Stamper
- Paul Adams
- Dr. Ronald Ford
- Sabria McElroy
- Dr. Victoria Thurston

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Resolution #268 for re-appointment of two (2) years, ending June 2026. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

- Approval of Resolution #269 – Election of Directors – less than two-year reappointment – The following Director is up for reappointment of less than a two (2) year term. The reappointment is noted as follows:
 - Mark Dhooge – 1 year, 2 months – ending August 2025

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Resolution #269 for re-appointment of less than two (2) years as noted above. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

ADDITIONAL ITEM FOR APPROVAL – Jason Tracey, CLO & CCO

- Approval of Resolution #270 – Compliance with License Requirements, Regulations and Decrees – Discussion was held by Jason Tracey that this annual compliance check is to ensure that all ChildNet licenses are in place.

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Resolution #270. A vote was taken. The ayes have it and the motion was adopted.

- ❖ **NOTE:** After the Election of Board Officers/Directors was approved, the Board meeting was turned over to the incoming Board Officers: Chair – Col. Josefa Benjamin, Vice Chair – Rebecca Brock, Treasurer – Michael Lepera, Secretary – Lois Marino and Member at Large – Dr. Heidi Schaeffer.

ANNUAL UPDATE – Jason Tracey, CLO & CCO

- Discussion of Sunshine Law – Jason Tracey noted that no changes have been made since last year. Mr. Tracey noted that per Sunshine Law, meetings must be open to the public and minutes are to be taken. No use of computers to conduct private discussions regarding board business. Julie Janello will send a link/video to the Board from the Inspector General that discusses Sunshine Law.
- Annual Board Survey Presentation – Jason Tracey gave an in-depth summary of the Board Survey results which discussed several key points. The purpose of the survey aims to gather feedback, identify strengths and opportunities, and fulfill accreditation requirements. The initial questions focused on engagement, with most responses indicating a high level of satisfaction, though there was a noted increase in the need for improvement over the past two years. The rise in improvement needs was attributed to new board members. A question about the length of service was added to explore this further. This year, the focus shifted to analyzing qualitative comments, which were shared with the board, excluding one specific to a committee. Board members reflected on their participation in events, with some confusion noted about certain questions, leading to suggestions for survey adjustments. The survey responses emphasized the importance of committees in facilitating deeper understanding and involvement within the organization. Also highlighted was the value of in-person events for connecting with the organization's mission and community. These findings provide a basis for ongoing discussions and improvements within the board.



- FY 2024-2025 - Board/Committee Meeting Calendar, Board Roster/Contact List, Board Committee Structure and Membership, Summary of Board Committees and Board Bios – These documents were updated and provided to the Board. Mr. Tracey noted that there will not be Board or Committee meetings in the months of July and December, unless otherwise requested by the Board Chair.
- Annual Acknowledgement Form – Annually, each Board member is to complete the Acknowledgement Form to note any conflicts of interest. Julie Janello will email the form to the full Board for completion.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

- **Adolescent Services Committee – Col. Josefa Benjamin, Committee Chair**

The committee reviewed data on adolescent care coordinators and updates on special projects, including a new school initiative. A grant was awarded by the Palm Beach County Youth Services Division to support youth employment, providing an employment coach and a part-time peer for youth aged 16 to 21. This initiative, starting October 1st, aims to improve youth employment outcomes, aligning with the committee's data on employment interest and success. Additionally, a board member suggested exploring military career options for foster care youth and improving educational challenges through the Pace School for Girls, facilitated by another board member's connections.

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

Lois Marino recapped a recent committee meeting, highlighting efforts for back-to-school supplies, aiming to serve 1,000 children this year, thanks to a donation of 1,000 backpacks from board member Bill Reicherter. An Amazon wish list is available for additional supplies, and companies are encouraged to contribute through drives or donations. Ms. Marino discussed successful recent events and sponsorships. She noted upcoming plans and honorees for the Palm Beach Care for Kids Luncheon, which will honor Don and Elise Sylvestri for their community contributions and adoption of four children.

Shannon Tozzi shared positive financial results with a 25% increase in revenue year-over-year and emphasized the importance of supporting graduation sponsorships. Ms. Marino and other board members highlighted the emotional impact of recent graduation ceremonies, highlighting the success and resilience of foster youth, including inspiring speeches from former foster youth who have achieved significant academic and personal milestones. Ms. Tozzi also noted that next year, the Broward Care for Kids Cocktail Reception may move from May to September/October.

- **Finance Committee – Donna Eprifania, CFO**

The Finance Committee is helping alleviate the strained budget as the organization transitions into the new fiscal year. A draft budget has been presented to the finance committee, but it remains uncertain due to incomplete information from the Department of Children and Families. Without clarity, a balanced budget cannot be submitted. Key points discussed include:

1. **Budget Drafting Process:** The committee reviews each general ledger code and past expenditures to propose the new budget.
2. **Rising Costs:** Residential group care remains the largest financial strain, with costs increasing from \$283 to \$308 per day.
3. **Group Care Reduction:** Plans to reduce the number of children in residential group care by 20 in Palm Beach and 13 in Broward by the end of the fiscal year.
4. **Financial Shortfalls:** The draft budget shows a shortfall of about \$1 million in Broward and \$2.2 million in Palm Beach, despite receiving additional resources.



5. **Contract Issues:** The organization signed a five-year contract with the Department but awaits a detailed schedule of funds to finalize the budget.

The discussion highlighted the ongoing challenge of managing residential group care costs, which are a significant financial burden. Efforts are being made to develop a strategic plan targeting reductions in group care, involving the entire organization. The Department of Children and Families has recognized the issue and is implementing measures to reduce the number of teenagers entering group care by ensuring all alternatives are explored before removal from their families.

Additionally, questions arose about the impact of children graduating from educational institutions on census numbers, with clarifications provided on how graduates still often remain involved with the organization through extended foster care programs. The State is taking steps to address these challenges, which are recognized both locally and nationally.

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

- **CEO Scorecard Evaluation:** The schedule for the CEO evaluation was outlined, with the final evaluation pending data from the Department of Children and Families, expected by August or September.
- **Membership Recruitment:** The board is close to having a full slate of 18 members, with one vacancy remaining in Palm Beach. Suggestions for potential board members are welcome.

- **Program Quality Committee – Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Committee Chair**

Nancy Stamper reported that the committee meeting included a presentation by Susan Eby, Chief Clinical Quality Officer, on foster care recruitment, examining referral rates, agency performance, and impacts on bed availability. The discussion highlighted the effects of the pandemic on recruitment and noted that while efforts are picking up, the process from initial interest to becoming a foster home remains lengthy.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- **ChildNet's Anti-Racism Workgroup Update** – Nicole Slade shared that they recently celebrated Juneteenth by providing historical information and videos. They are now planning agency-wide trainings, including a series called "Growing an Equitable Community," which covers race relations and biases, starting in August and running monthly through December. Additionally, there are plans for a movie or book discussion group in the next quarter.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Col. Josefa Benjamin

- Col. Benjamin expressed appreciation for the vote of confidence and commitment to representing both the board and ChildNet. Col. Benjamin highlighted three key focus areas: board engagement, attending and representing at events, and creating opportunities for face-to-face interactions among board members. She also mentioned the "Circle of Supporters" initiative, encouraging fellow board members to participate and she pledged to do so herself. Emphasizing the importance of advance notice for events, Col. Benjamin shared her personal motivation to connect with the youth, which solidifies her dedication to the board's mission.

CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- **ITN** – Larry Rein reported that a successful contract was executed with the Department of Children and Families for ChildNet to be the lead agency in Broward and Palm Beach counties, effective July 1st for five years with a potential renewal option. This followed extensive negotiations, ensuring the scope of services, and excluding micromanagement aspects. Financial penalties are still a contentious issue, with



no specifics yet defined. The Department is collaborating to address funding pressures, especially for complex childcare needs, and plans to advocate for appropriate funding with legislators. There is ongoing progress with a tiered reimbursement system for residential treatment, indicating effective collaboration between lead agencies and the Department. Celebrations are planned to acknowledge staff efforts in securing the contract, emphasizing the importance of recognizing achievements amidst ongoing challenges.

PUBLIC COMMENT

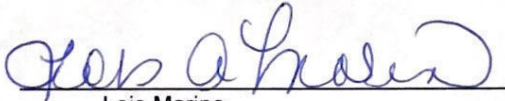
- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

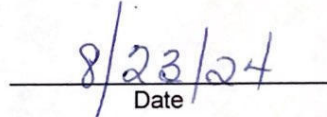
- There is no Board meeting scheduled in July 2024. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, August 23, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. in person and via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT

- Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:34 a.m.



Lois Marino
Board Secretary


Date

(Corporate Seal)