



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

October 28, 2022

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, Melida Akiti, Michael Lepera, Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Paul Adams, Ronald Ford, Tom Lukasik

Unable to Attend:

Michael Lepera, Nancy Gregoire Stamper

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Susan Eby, Rae Bullard, Andrea Cunningham, Deena Ponto, Alisha Patterson-Major, Krystal Kenison, Brittany Burnette, Julie Janello, *DCF:* Elisa Cramer, Teresa Janeczek, Dawn Liberta, Dennis Miles

CALL TO ORDER – Amy Black, Board Chair

- 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 September 23, 2022, 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:
 - September 2022 – Jomary SaintFleur – Dependency Case Manager – Unit 127

NEW BUSINESS

- Community Alliance of Palm Beach County Leadership – Chair Judge Kathleen Kroll and Vice Chair Kathy Leone were introduced. The Alliance wants to establish a relationship with the ChildNet Board. The Alliance meets quarterly and has three standing committees. Currently, the three committees are working together under the Strategic Workgroup Committee. The Strategic Workgroup was created to bring all stakeholders, who are involved in dependency together, at the highest leadership level who can attend, to help solve dependency issues that Palm Beach County may have. Currently, the Strategic Workgroup Committee is working on a mapping project, in conjunction with FAU, as we know the county and other areas are moving towards trying to understand prevention before the children get into the dependency system and determine what kinds of support the children and parents need to successfully stay together. They are also looking at housing and seeing if dependency cases are getting enough attention. How can we ensure that



reunification is not being delayed due to a housing issue. Committee is also ensuring that dependency children are educated equally to the rest of the students. Soon, there will be a statewide Zoom meeting of all county alliances in Florida. The Palm Beach Alliance has supported ChildNet by recommending potential Board candidates from Palm Beach.

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

- Service Coordination (Palm Beach) – Susan Eby, Chief Clinical Quality Officer, provided an in-depth overview of the Service Coordination Department in Palm Beach County, which currently consists of a Director, a Senior Behavioral Health Specialist, two Behavioral Health Specialists, a Family Preservation Specialist, an Education Specialist, a Psychotropic Medication Specialist, and an Administrative Assistant. The Family Preservation Specialist supports Child Protective Investigations with the goal of children remaining in the home. She provides family support services and manages the Safety Support Team process. The Behavioral Health Specialists manage all Baker Act Multi-Disciplinary Team Meetings, responsible for child placement agreements, and are the Human Trafficking Liaison. The Sr. Behavioral Health Specialist is responsible for placement of children into a higher level of care (Therapeutic Foster Care, Therapeutic Group Care, Qualified Residential Treatment Center, Psychiatric Hospitalization). The Psychotropic Medication Specialist is the subject matter expert regarding the psychotropic medication process, provides trainings regarding psychotropic medication to case managers, consults with the University of Florida, responsible for continuity of medication for all children coming into care, and maintains court order of parental consent. The Education Specialist is the subject matter expert on the education system, facilitates education transition staffings (ESSA), advocates for children regarding academics, and attends IEP and 504 meetings. The Administrative Assistant is responsible for the Sunshine Health Care Grants, maintains 100.806 documentation, responsible for FSFN uploads, and supports the Service Coordination team.

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

- Donna Eprifania reported on the status of the current audit. We are a little behind because DCF received some late submissions of final invoices from other community-based care agencies. We just received, yesterday, some reports that are associated with the ability to determine what programs need to be audited. This might will not allow us to have the audit completed in the month of November. However, the Finance Committee will meet at the end of November and will have an electronic vote of the audit in December 2022, as done in the past.

In the financials, we are tracking in a very constant and healthy position in both counties. The month-to-date in September 2022 shows both counties to be in a deficit posture because the Department encouraged us to use the federal funding bucket from the Corona Virus, so we distributed a significant number of stimulus checks to our foster families and group homes for children ages 14-22. We have not received that allocation. Once this month is finished that is when all of September will be reconciled. DC will owe us \$500,000 in Broward and \$375,000 in Palm Beach.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

- Adolescent Services Committee – Melida Akiti, Committee Chair

Brittany Burnette, Adolescent Care Coordinator, provided a summary. We meet with each youth quarterly. The Adolescent Outcomes show the percentage of compliance of monthly forms, children who have runaway episode, children receiving services by service type, children attending school, children making academic progress, children employed, children with a Baker Act, children arrested and number of children who were visited monthly. The Top 22 Update – twelve out of twenty-two



youth have aged out of foster care, and fourteen out of twenty-two youth are actively engaging in Life Coach/Mentoring Services. Action Planning – looking at dates for a motivational speaker presentation, working with Piney Grove FACTS Program (boy’s program) and Brands Mart. Regarding children attending school and children making academic progress, Larry Rein noted that both Brittany and Andrew Wallick did amazing work with the school districts of both counties and now we are trying to make coherent what is their very multiple and complex definitions of academic progress. We will need to individualize progress based on where the youth are within the school system.

- **Fundraising Committee – Larry Rein, CFO**

Larry Rein reported that Andrea Cunningham, former Director of Community Relations, has accepted a position at Nova Southeast University. We are retaining Andrea until we fill her position. In addition, Andrea is being retained under a consulting contract to handle a couple of things we did not want to lose momentum on, primarily the continued solicitation of donors and sponsors for the Care for Kids’ luncheon in Spring 2023. Andrea also volunteered to take on the continuing staffing of a group that convened for the first time this month, which consisted of former board members of ChildNet. This group showed a lot of interest, and we had a robust discussion about what they would like to focus on as a project going forward. Broadly, this project will involve transitional independent living youth and the preparation for their transition to adulthood and their early movement into adulthood.

- Toy Drive – Kimberly Lehmann, Community Relations Coordinator, is currently in charge of the Toy Drive. Julie Janello will ask Kimberly to send to the Board all information on the Thanksgiving and Holiday Toy Drives.
- National Adoption Day – Palm Beach – Friday, November 18, 2022, 11:30am-2:00pm, Palm Beach County Courthouse, 205 N. Dixie Hwy., West Palm Beach.
- National Adoption Day – Broward – Saturday, November 19, 2022 – 8:30am-1:00pm, Broward County Courthouse, 201 SE 6th Street, 3rd Floor, Fort Lauderdale.

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

- **ChildNet Board Committee Structure** – Amy Black, Board Chair, appointed the following Board members to specific committees:
 - Adolescent Services Committee – Lois Marino and Josefa Benjamin
 - Community Engagement Committee (formerly Fundraising Committee) – Chelsea Bellew
 - Legal/Human Resources Committee – Chelsea Bellew
 - Program Quality Committee – Josefa Benjamin
- **Discussion of 2022-2025 Strategic Plan** - Larry Rein reported that ChildNet Senior Management will meet with the Governance/Executive Committee and consultant, James Mueller on 11-15-22 in preparation for the Strategic Plan Retreat on 11-18-22. Three major points have been replanned.
- **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein reported that we are waiting for Ms. McElroy to complete and send back her application. In addition, the Community Alliance of Palm Beach County is working on recommendations for the last two vacancies for the board in Palm Beach.



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

The committee reviewed several procedural updates in preparation of the Council on Accreditation (COA) site visit on November 7-8, 2022. Julie DeMar noted that the COA Site Leader wants to interview the Board, as a whole, on Monday, 11-07-22 @ 9:00 a.m. Board members can attend in person or virtually. COA has several standards of primary focus on governance. Ms. DeMar will provide a sheet on the items that COA may ask about. In addition, the Census and Placement Trends were provided to the Board for their review.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- **ChildNet’s Anti-Racism Workgroup Update** – Nicole Slade reported that the workgroup is focused on an out-of-home care project which is looking at the disparities on race. We knew that looking at the kids with the longest length of stay that black children would be over-represented in that population. We took the highest length of stays in both counties and looked for some trends for us to be beneficial to that population. There are often barriers for relative placements for some of the kids in this population on intake, based on background and child welfare history. The workgroup broke down all the data and will talk about what our next steps might be. Some of the profiles can continue to be more strength-based and have a cultural aspect to them also. We did find that there were some kids in this population that were maintained in foster homes and how do we share some of those successes to ensure we can better recruit homes for this population. We are also recruiting new members to the workgroup.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Amy Black

- **Board Member Recognition** – Melida Akiti was recognized as she has termed out her Board Service. Amy Black reported that Melida joined the Board in September 2010 and has served on the board for 12 years. Melida served as Board Chair from 2017-2019 and serves as a role model to other Board members. Melida embodies what every board member should strive to – her leadership, her engagement, her knowledge, and her championing of this organization. Melida will be honored at the Broward Care for Kids Cocktail Reception in May 2023. Larry Rein noted how important Melida has been to this organization and to him personally. Melida has, and continues, to push ChildNet, the community and himself towards doing more and doing better. Joe Rogers agreed that Melida has had a dramatic impact on the direction of this organization and has provided tremendous leadership. Melida noted that she will continue to advocate for ChildNet, continue to be a strong funder for ChildNet and will continue to fight the fight for our foster children.

CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- **Trends in Census** – Larry Rein reported that group care numbers are inching up in both counties. We believe there are a couple of contributing factors. One is our shortcomings in terms of placing children with relative caregivers. This is a struggle in South Florida, and we are doing multiple things to try to improve this. We are in the initial stages of working with the Harvard Kennedy School of Government in getting technical assistance and advice from them. We had our first introductory steering committee with them, and they are working with our staff, led by Sheryl Williams, Program Officer of Case Management, BSO staff, and community stakeholders. We are also concerned that we are not growing our foster home community as well or as robustly as we once did. Susan Eby, Chief Clinical Quality Officer is gathering the most recent data and we are analyzing it by subcontracted child placing agency and will have discussions with leadership of the child placing agencies to talk about continuing to increase our foster home capacity, in particular to serve teens. As we noticed in our first quarter census, there is an increase in teens entering the system in both



counties. We are continuing to lead efforts to address this in both counties. A new challenge in Broward is that Covenant House, who historically served both runaway teenagers and young adults, up to the age of twenty-one, as of two weeks ago, will no longer be able to serve children under the age of eighteen, due to a licensing issue. ChildNet rarely has used Covenant House for dependent children. Our fear, however, is that in the absence of Covenant House, those non-dependent runaway children will start coming to us. This would be needless if the community can find respite and shelter care for them so that they do not have to come into foster care.

- Workforce – ChildNet has made good progress in getting our workforce where we need to, especially in Palm Beach. We are going to continue to overhire case managers to ensure we are in a good position. There are challenges outside of ChildNet. As reported last month, the subcontracted provider for SafePlace in Palm Beach, Florida United Methodist Children’s Home (FUMCH), is struggling with a combination of things including their inability to hire and retain staff. ChildNet staff is filling in to sustain that program in the short-term while allowing them time to fill their vacancies. As of now, ChildNet has been assisting FUMCH for five weeks.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- The next meeting, Board Strategic Plan Retreat, is scheduled for Friday, November 18, 2022 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 9:28 a.m.

Rebecca Brock
Board Secretary

Date

(Corporate Seal)