



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

November 19, 2021

Board of Directors:

Michael Lepera, Board Chair; Amy Black, Vice Chair; Victoria Thurston, Secretary, Joseph Rogers, Treasurer, Chelsea Bellew, Josefa Benjamin, Meghan Russell, Melida Akiti, Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Rebecca Brock, Ronald Ford, Tom Lukasik

Unable to Attend:

Michael Lepera, Ronald Ford

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Rae Bullard, Susan Eby, Sheryl Williams, Deena Ponto, Tamaru Phillips, Andrea Cunningham, Julie Janello, Samantha Ramsaran, Clarence Hickman, *DCF:* Dawn Liberta, Elisa Cramer, Teresa Janeczek

CALL TO ORDER – Amy Black, Vice Chair

- Michael Lepera, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Michael Lepera, Board Chair

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The October 22, 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.*

WELCOME – Michael Lepera, Board Chair

- Michael Lepera welcomed new Board Director, Chelsea Bellew.

CHILDNET BOARD EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD – Rae Bullard, CHRO

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employee:
 - October 2021 – Clarence Hickman, Dependency Case Manager, Unit 125 (Extended Foster Care Unit)

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

- Independent Living – Palm Beach – Samantha Ramsaran, Director of Permanency and Youth Services provided a brief overview of the Extended Foster Care (EFC) Unit in Independent Living (IL) in Palm Beach. The IL Unit gets children in licensed care transferred to them once they turn 17. The IL unit focuses on preparing them, both mentally and physically, to age out when they turn 18. The Extended Foster Care (EFC) Unit is for young adults 18 to 21 years of age. The main focus is getting them ready for independence. We subcontract with Vita Nova for our PESS young adults. PESS (Post-Secondary Education Services and Support) is for our young adults who are in college.



Vita Nova oversees the PESS program and works with our kids to ensure they are making progress in college and working on getting their degrees. We have seen an uptick in young adults getting their bachelor's degree in the last few years. In Palm Beach, there are 70 young adults in EFC and 40 in PESS.

For the young adults in college, some of the colleges have programs that allow the young adults stay at the dorms during school breaks. We work with former caregivers and former foster parents that allow the young adults to stay with them during school breaks. Larry Rein noted that Palm Beach just announced that they are launching a mentoring program through the United Way to provide enhanced mentoring for dependent and delinquent youth. In Broward, we are hopeful that Big Brothers/Big Sisters, in the new calendar year, will work to redesign a new program specifically geared to foster care children.

ITEM FOR BOARD REVIEW AND APPROVAL – Amy Black, Vice Chair

- **Board Candidate – Paul Adams** - Larry Rein and Michael Lepera met with Mr. Adams, an attorney in Palm Beach County. Mr. Adams was recommended by Board Director Rebecca Brock. They both feel that Mr. Adams would be a great asset to the Board.

A motion was moved and seconded to approve Paul Adams as the newest member of the Board of Directors. 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 discussed the October 2021 financials for both counties. Both counties are in a very healthy position. In Broward County, we have 69% of the budget remaining for FY 2021-2022, and in Palm Beach County, we have 67% budget remaining for the fiscal year. Part of the healthy position in the month of October was the receipt of the Cares Act Stimulus Funding that the Department gave ChildNet in a lump sum. Those funds are available to assist families with one-time resources. We have already distributed to Extended Foster Care (EFC) a \$1,500 stipend in the month of October. We are currently in the process of preparing all of the stimulus checks to our relation/non-relative caregivers in the amount of \$1,000 each. In addition, this funding extends to all children in out-of-home care. Those in foster homes, traditional foster homes and/or in group homes, they will also receive a \$500 stimulus. This is targeted to children ages 14-17.

COVID-19 UPDATE – Larry Rein, CEO and President

- **COVID-19 Update** – Larry Rein reported there is a drop off in ChildNet related reports in positive cases. This month, only one employee, one caregiver and four children tested positive. Senior leadership has decided to delay any decisions of returning to the offices until after the holidays.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

- **Advisory Board Committee – Col. Josefa Benjamin, Committee Chair**

Col. Josefa Benjamin reported that she attended the Trunk or Treat at the ChildNet Palm Beach office and had a wonderful time. The remodeling is complete in the Palm Beach office. Larry Rein reported that Place of Hope, one of two leading child placing agencies, made a business decision to no longer do traditional foster care management in Palm Beach and the Palm Coast. The decision is partly due to increases in liability insurance. The liability and risk issues have put a strain on their Board of Directors. They are shifting their business to prevention services including support of relative caregivers. We are in the process of transitioning their foster homes. 4Kids has the capacity to license many of Place of Hope's foster parents. In addition, ChildNet is now one of their options



as a child placing agency. We are beginning a series of meetings with the Place of Hope foster parents of what their options are and about the transition process. They can continue with either 4Kids or with ChildNet.

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

Andrea Cunningham reported on the following.

- Palm Beach Care for Kids Luncheon - scheduled for March 8, 2022, at the Woodfield Country Club in Boca Raton honoring Kathy & Paul Leon. To date we have secured \$48,200 in sponsorships.
- Broward Care for Kids Cocktail Reception – scheduled for April 9, 2022 at the Lauderdale Yacht Club honoring Sigrid McCawley. To date we have secured \$47,000 in sponsorships.
- National Adoption Day – Palm Beach – scheduled for today, Friday, November 19, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. via Zoom.
- National Adoption Day – Broward – scheduled for tomorrow, Saturday, November 20, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom.
- Annual Toy Drive – The toy drive is in full swing. We currently have 67 donors (companies and individuals).
- Circle of Supporters – A great opportunity to make a donation. More than 60% of donations are made in the latter part of December. Donations are a tax write-off.

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

- **Selection Process of Provider Representative** – Larry Rein reported that after further discussion, for future selections of provider representatives, a list of provider agencies that operate in both Broward and Palm Beach Counties will be presented to the Committee for their review and selection of a candidate to move forward in the board provider representative selection process. In addition, Jason Tracey, Chief Legal Officer, will update the ByLaws to include comparable wording as noted: “the provider representative is to be from an organization that operates in both Broward and Palm Beach counties” and will be brought back to the full board.

- **Membership Recruitment**

- David Prather – We are awaiting the board candidate application for Mr. Prather.
- Larry Rein reported he received a referral from Judge Rowe in Palm Beach. In the process of setting up a meeting to meet in person.
- Economic Council – Mr. Rein noted he is awaiting a meeting with the CEO of the Economic Council to identify candidates from the business community.

- **Legal/Human Resources Committee – Rebecca Brock, Committee Chair**

Rebecca Brock reported that the Committee met and discussed that ChildNet did not retain any new outside legal counsel. The Risk Management Committee met on 10-27-21 and reported that ChildNet Broward experienced one Level 3 incident and Palm Beach experienced two Level 3 incidents. Julie DeMar noted that Level 2 incidents require hospital visits (stitches, broken bones,



serious illness, children in car accidents, Baker Acts, arrests of children, child on child sexual abuse, or abuse allegations where the person alleged to have committed the abuse is the caregiver. Level 3 incidents are the same as Level 2 but involves media coverage, a child's death, or some other significant potential harm to children. In addition, Rae Bullard had reported that there were no employment legal issues.

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

- Quarterly DCF Accountability Measures Report – Julie DeMar provided an in-depth summary of the new quarterly DCF Accountability Measures Report, a copy of which was provided to the Board. The metrics are presented in green, yellow, and red, based on whether the entire region is meeting the measure or not. The data in this report is a little older reflecting performance for the period ending the 4th quarter of FY 20-21. The report is a work in progress. There is also a large focus on child protective investigations and Children's Legal Services, which are both part of the Department of Children & Families. All the items in the report will go into making up our rating as an entire circuit.

Larry Rein noted that two legislative sessions ago, the legislature passed the DCF Accountability Act that authorized DCF to create a Quality Office which was mandated to create a new CBC "report card." This new report not only rates the community-based care lead agencies but includes the other key child welfare players in the community. The first report card will include cumulative data for the entire current fiscal year and will be released sometime following the conclusion of this fiscal year (June 2022).

Larry Rein noted that having so many people involved in this report and showing the whole system and not just the lead agency or the case management agency, will hopefully prompt and facilitate the community identifying and working on some of the challenges together. The Southeast Region met the target in 48 of 84 metrics, which is 57%, and was actually the best performance in the state. A major challenge will be ensuring that the data is current. If it is not, this will be a significant barrier to improving things.

NEW BUSINESS

- Audit Committee – Donna Eprifania reported that the draft of the audited financials will be ready by the end of November. Since the Board does not meet in December, we will send the audited financials to the full Board for electronic vote and then will present them to our funders by 12-31-21. The auditors are in the midst of finalizing the single audit. When we receive federal and state funds from the State of Florida, in our contracts, we are required to have not only a financial audit completed but also a single audit. A single audit measures or evaluates the program compliance with the funding sources that we receive.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- ChildNet's Anti-Racism Workgroup Update – No update this month.

CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- Legislative Update - The Legislative Session begins in January 2022. They have just started filing new bills. One already filed again seeks to ensure that all dependent children have legal representation. ChildNet is a supporter of legal representation for foster children. In Palm Beach, Legal Aid is an important component of the system and does a tremendous job helping us get children to permanence quickly. There is also a bill that will seek to further restrict salaries of CBC



lead agency CEOs by including benefits in the calculation of executive salaries. That would only be fair if they also include benefits provided to the DCF Secretary whose compensation they peg the CEO salary limits to.

- **Special Appropriation Requests** – ChildNet submitted the same two special appropriation requests as last year: 1) replicate the Oak Street Project with 4 challenging young women, and 2) maintain and sustain our Safety Management Team who focuses on families and parents with substance abuse problems.
- DCF informed Eckerd Connects, the lead agency in Pinellas and Pasco County, that their contract is ending December 31, 2021. In addition, Eckerd Connects, who is also the lead agency in Hillsborough County, notified DCF that they were terminating their contract in Hillsborough County as of June 30, 2022. There is a real crisis in the west coast of Florida. The Senate President resides in Pasco County and the Speaker of the House resides in Pinellas County. DCF issued a procurement, and four organizations are interested in taking over in Pinellas and Pasco Counties. ChildNet does not have any interest in operating in the west coast of Florida.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

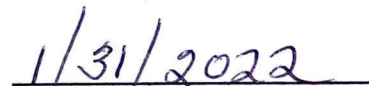
- The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, January 28, 2022, via Zoom.

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 9:11 a.m.



Dr. Victoria Thurston
Board Secretary



Date

(Corporate Seal)