



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

April 26, 2024

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:

Donna Korn, Lois, Marino, Meghan Russell, Michael Lepera, Paul Adams, Sabria McElroy

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Neiko Shea, Donna Eprifania, Jason Tracey, Julie DeMar, Susan Eby, Deena Ponto, Nicole Slade, Shanny Tozzi, Tina Lewis, Mirna Rodriguez, Noelle Brillembourg, Kristen Pittman, Rachel Schwartz, Julie Janello, *Marcum LLP:* Adam Firestein, Shelby Michels, *DCF:* Teresa Janeczek, Isis Williams, Traci Schweitzer, *PB County Youth Services:* Elisa Cramer

CALL TO ORDER – Amy Black, Board Chair

- Amy Black, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Rebecca Brock, Board Secretary

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The March 22, 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.*

WELCOME – Amy Black, Board Chair

- Amy Black welcomed new Board Directors Maria ‘Malala’ Mezerhane and Bill Reicherter.

CHILDNET BOARD EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARD – Tina Lewis, Director of HR

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employees:
 - March 2024 – Rachel Schwartz, Dependency Case Manager, Unit 104 (PB)
Mayra Velez, Records Management Project Coordinator (Bwd)

AUDIT PRESENTATION – Adam Firestein and Shelby Michels, Marcum LLP

- Adam Firestein, a partner with Marcum LLP, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to work with a nonprofit organization, emphasizing ChildNet’s commitment to giving back to the community. He acknowledged the team’s efforts and highlighted their positive engagement, particularly with Donna Eprifania, CFO and Tina Lewis, Director of Human Resources. Shelby Michels, a supervisor with



Marcum LLP provided an overview of the financial statements, noting new implementations like ASC 842 regarding leases. Both Mr. Firestein and Ms. Michels emphasized the clean audit opinion and commended the team for their work. They briefly spoke on the corporate governance letter and other updates before opening the floor for questions and receiving appreciation from the board.

Amy Black asked about upcoming approvals regarding taxes and retirement plans. Donna Eprifania confirmed that the retirement plan audit has been issued with no changes, and the taxes (Form 990) are due in mid-May. Ms. Eprifania anticipates having a draft ready by early May and plans to circulate it to the Finance Committee for review. Ms. Eprifania noted that as a non-profit, ChildNet discloses net assets rather than profit or loss. She also mentioned additional costs incurred due to delays from the Department, with the firm absorbing half of the expenses as a contribution back to the organization.

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

- Donna Eprifania reported the Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for next week. ChildNet is stable in Broward County but facing a deficit in Palm Beach, mainly due to residential group care. Ms. Eprifania mentioned ongoing discussions with the Department of Children and Families regarding projections and strategies to mitigate the deficit. Larry Rein explained the process for seeking relief from deficits, including risk pool applications and back-of-the-bill funding. He discussed changes in the process and political pressures affecting funding decisions. The projected deficit for Palm Beach is around \$900,000 for the current year, with a cumulative deficit of \$1.5-\$1.6 million. Broward County is managing its budget effectively and does not anticipate deficits. Mr. Rein emphasized the need for adequate funding for child welfare statewide and hinted at upcoming advocacy efforts.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

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

Shanny Tozzi reported that the committee is discussing stewardship notes, elevator speeches, and budget allocations for community engagement efforts. Identified areas of need like housing, hotel accommodations, food security, and tutoring, aiming for community support and partnerships. We have raised \$235,496 in the current calendar year, emphasizing the ongoing need for support. Ms. Tozzi provided updates on the following events and initiatives:

1. Broward Care for Kids Cocktail Event: May 22, 2024 at Lauderdale Yacht Club. \$65,000 raised to date with a goal of raising \$150,000, with a focus on sponsorships and donations.
2. Easter Baskets: Distributed 350 Easter baskets and received \$1,200 in cash donations.
3. Graduation Ceremonies: Organizing ceremonies for around 40 graduates in Palm Beach on 06-05-24 and 50 graduates in Broward on 06-20-24, with partnerships for venue and sponsorship opportunities.

It was noted that both Board Director Lois Marino and Shanny Tozzi, Director of Community Relations are joining the Finance Committee.



- **Governance/Executive Committee – Dr. Victoria Thurston, Committee Chair**
 - **Quarterly Strategic Plan Update – Quarter 1** - Discussion was held on the 1st quarter of the 2nd year of the Strategic Plan for 2023 to 2025, a copy of which was provided to the Committee members.
 - **Goal 1 – Improve and sustain ChildNet’s workforce by implementing proven and innovative practices.** *Evidence of goal progress in Year Two: ChildNet will reduce annual external voluntary turnover to 23%.*

Tina Lewis reported that we are on track with turnover. As of March 31, 2024, ChildNet’s annualized turnover is @ 22.08% and the 1st Quarter Year-Over-Year Comparison has increased from 3.81% to 5.47%.
 - **Goal 2 – Expand the array of appropriate placement and treatment options for children.** *Evidence of goal progress in Year Two: ChildNet will reduce the percentage of children with stays over 14 days at SafePlace to 28%.*

Donna Eprifania and Susan Eby reported that we are heading in the right direction as Palm Beach is @ 23.5%, Broward is @ 31.7% and both overall is @ 28%.
 - **Goal 3 – Improve identification and support of kinship caregivers.** *Evidence of goal progress in Year Two: ChildNet will increase the percentage of children in kinship placements to 61%.*

Julie DeMar reported we are still struggling with this goal. Palm Beach is @ 54.69%, Broward is @ 48.45% with both overall @ 51.34%.
 - **Board Officer Slate** – We are in the process of selecting new Board Officers.
 - **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein reported that there is one applicant in process in Palm Beach.
- **Program Quality Committee – Nancy Gregoire Stamper, Committee Chair**

Nancy Stamper reported that Julie DeMar gave a presentation of DCF’s expanded contract oversight that provides an overview, emphasizing positive feedback but also noting areas for improvement. Also discussed was the Child and Family Service reviews, highlighting Florida’s performance relative to the statewide average and the need for local solutions. The discussion touched on the challenges of obtaining timely performance data and ongoing efforts to improve reporting. Julie DeMar’s work in driving performance improvements was recognized.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

- **ChildNet’s Anti-Racism Workgroup Update** – Nicole Slade provided an update on Workgroup’s recent activities and future plans. They aim to increase awareness and education on racism beyond specific months like Black History Month or Juneteenth. Plans include ongoing discussion groups, training on implicit bias and racial disparities, and interactive activities to engage participants. Despite a decrease in attendance from the initial 20-25 members to 7-10, they continue to involve others through email support. They hope that increased engagement will attract more participants, especially new staff unaware of the group’s existence.



BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Amy Black

- No report this month.

CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- Teresa Janeczek – Larry Rein reported that Teresa Janeczek, Contract Manager at the Department of Children and Families, is retiring soon and this may potentially be her last board meeting attendance.
- Legislative Update – Larry Rein discussed recent legislative actions regarding child welfare funding and allocation in Florida. Mr. Rein mentioned the formation of statewide meetings to address the funding formula and contracting for community-based care. The Department of Children and Families is working with an organization called KPMG to develop a new funding formula. Mr. Rein emphasized the importance of the process and the potential for increased funding for child welfare services. However, Mr. Rein expressed caution about using a per member per month model, which may not align well with the goals of child welfare. Mr. Rein suggests focusing on meeting the complex needs of children in care and advocating for a different funding approach.
- ITN – Larry Rein reported on the delay in DCF announcing contract awards due to the absence of a final version of the proposed contract. Mr. Rein explained that negotiations were based on a document called the Supplemental Contract, but it was later pulled back for revisions. Despite the contract expiring on June 30th, the delay is not unusual, citing similar instances with other lead agencies in the past. Mr. Rein reassured the Board that extensions are possible if needed but expressed the desire to avoid such a scenario. Mr. Rein noted that they are currently in a holding pattern awaiting updates on the contract negotiations.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- Friday, May 17, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. in person and via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT

- Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Rebecca Brock
Board Secretary

5.21.24

Date

(Corporate Seal)