



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

May 29, 2026

Board of Directors:

Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair; Rebecca Brock, Vice Chair; Michael Lepera, Treasurer; Lois Marino, Secretary; Bill Reicherter, Carolina Raineau, Charles Hanna, Donna Korn, Dr. Heidi Schaeffer, Joseph Rogers, Karen Cabrera, Kerry Diaz, Maria Mezerhane, Michael DiBrizzi, Nancy W. Stamper, Paul Adams, Dr. Ronald Ford, Sabria McElroy, Stefanie Title, Dr. Victoria Thurston

Unable to Attend:

Bill Reicherter, Carolina Raineau, Charles Hanna, Paul Adams, Michael DiBrizzi, Heidi Schaeffer, Ronald Ford, Sabria McElroy, Karen Cabrera

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Neiko Shea, Rebecca Lindstadt, Shanny Tozzi, Tina Lewis, Deena Ponto, Sheryl Williams, Nicole Slade, Shatoria Means, Shauna Thomas, Samantha Ramsaran, Chiara Green, Courtney Guignard, Aaron Kmecik Julie Janello, *DCF:* Adrienne Reid, Traci Schweitzer

CALL TO ORDER – Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair

- Col. Josefa Benjamin, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Lois Marino, Board Secretary

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The April 24, 2027 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, HR Officer

- The ChildNet Board Employee Recognition Award was presented to the following deserving employees:
 - April 2026 – Chiara Green, Dependency Case Manager, Unit A2 (Bwd)
Samantha Ramsaran, Director of Permanency and Youth Services (PB)

NEW BUSINESS/BOARD TRAINING

- **Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)** – Neiko Shea, Chief of Staff provided an overview of the COOP, a copy of which was provided to the Board. This Plan ensures that essential services continue, and people and property remain protected during any disaster. It includes strategies for both predictable events like hurricanes and unexpected emergencies such as fires or pandemics. The plan identifies key staff, prepares alternate work sites, and maintains communication through hotlines and emergency teams. Preparedness efforts begin early in the year, with responsibilities assigned and resources like fuel secured. A communication system ensures staff safety and guides recovery efforts post-disaster. The COOP is reviewed and submitted annually to maintain readiness and compliance.



COMMITTEE UPDATES

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

Ripple Effect Gala - Lois Marino thanked the Engagement Committee, Event Committee, Board of Directors, and all participants for making the gala a successful, collaborative effort. Shanny Tozzi reported that the event attracted 410 guests, including 18 of 20 board members, and generated approximately \$415,000 in gross revenue and \$314,000 in net revenue. The gala also increased donor engagement, community visibility, and social media activity. Attendance was strong across the region, with 31% of participants coming from Palm Beach County, highlighting the importance of maintaining outreach there. Ms. Tozzi announced plans to begin preparations for the next gala, which will celebrate “ChildNet’s 25th Anniversary” on February 27, 2027, continuing the “Ripple Effect” theme.

SafePlace Broward Ribbon Cutting - ChildNet celebrated the successful renovation of SafePlace through a partnership with Leadership Broward. Volunteers and community partners transformed the facility over five Saturdays, providing significant in-kind contributions such as furniture, kitchen upgrades, and recreational spaces. This project resulted from relationship-building and community engagement rather than direct fundraising, demonstrating the lasting impact of partnerships in improving the experience and well-being of children served by ChildNet.

National Foster Care Day – ChildNet hosted an event for National Foster Care Day with local leaders and community organizations in attendance, including Rep. Robin Bartleman, Senator Lori Berman, the Children’s Services Council, Place of Hope, FLITE, and other partners. Together, they donated more than one hundred backpacks filled with supplies for children in foster care. Many backpacks were distributed immediately to meet urgent needs, while others remain available through the office so dependency case managers can provide support and help children get a fresh start.

Graduation Ceremonies – Shanny Tozzi shared that graduation celebrations for youth in Palm Beach are scheduled for June 3, 2026 at Palm Beach State College, Boca Raton @ 6:00 p.m. and in Broward on June 18, 2026 at Sound Post, Pompano Beach @ 6:00 p.m. Ms. Tozzi noted that a community partner, Love for Orphans, donated laptops for graduates, though additional funds are needed to purchase chargers and software. This year, instead of lower-cost laptops, the ChildNet received refurbished MacBook Pros from a company donation, and staff are preparing them with necessary software and exploring affordable Microsoft Office options for students. Donations were encouraged, especially gift cards, with a goal of giving each graduate a \$100 gift card.

Board Chair Report – Josefa Benjamin thanked the Engagement Committee and board for their strong support and participation throughout the year, noting that their engagement increased community awareness and support for ChildNet’s mission. She highlighted accomplishments including board growth, bylaw updates, successful events, employee recognition efforts, and refinements to ChildNet’s mission and vision. In her final report as Board Chair, Ms. Benjamin expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve, and Rebecca Brock recognized her impactful leadership and lasting contributions to strengthening ChildNet.

- **Finance Committee – Michael Lepera, Committee Chair and Donna Eprifania, CFO**

Michael Lepera reported that the Committee briefly reviewed the proposed budgets developed by Donna Eprifania and her team, noting that a detailed discussion will take place upon her return. While Palm Beach’s budget outlook is relatively strong, Broward is expected to require the use of reserve funds to balance its budget. It was emphasized that reserves were created for situations like this but should not be relied upon long term, as doing so reflects an operational deficit. The



committee also discussed concerns about potential state legislation that could restrict the ability to carry forward unused state funds. Overall, Mr. Lepera expressed confidence in managing current challenges while continuing to seek cost-saving opportunities and maintain financial stability.

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

- **Annual Board Survey** – The annual board survey is expected to be distributed shortly through SurveyMonkey, with board members asked to submit their responses by early June. This timeline will allow staff sufficient time to compile the results and prepare a presentation for the June board meeting.
- **FY 2026-2027 Board Officer Slate** - Rebecca Brock reported that the committee reviewed the proposed board officer slate, which was included in the meeting packet. The recommended officers are Rebecca Brock as Board Chair, Lois Marino as Vice Chair, Karen Cabrera as Treasurer, Nancy Gregoire-Samper as Secretary, and Heidi Schaefer as Member at Large. The committee recommends presenting the slate to the full board for a vote at the June board meeting.
- **Physical Location Discussion** – Larry Rein reported that Donna Korn, who has been leading the effort to evaluate location options ahead of ChildNet’s lease expiration in 2029, has recently indicated she may have more availability to continue the work. Staff are now coordinating the next meeting to resume discussions on long-term facility planning.
- **2026-2028 Strategic Plan** – The strategic plan for 2026–2028 is still being finalized because a financial metric needs further refinement. Although a draft metric was developed, the team is waiting for Donna Eprifania’s return and input, especially since recent legislative funding decisions may require changes. Leadership aims to complete the draft and send it to the board for the June annual meeting, where the three-year plan is expected to be reviewed and approved.
- **Accreditation** – Discussion held that ChildNet reaffirmed its decision not to pursue Council on Accreditation (COA) certification, citing similar decisions by peer lead agencies. DCF is procuring a consultant to do operational and financial audits of all lead agencies. A document is being prepared to identify potential redundancies, while ChildNet continues current operations pending further discussions with state leadership.
- **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein reported that one candidate from Palm Beach is progressing through the application process, with a background screening delay caused by an administrative error that is expected to be resolved soon. The candidate has been actively involved with ChildNet, including participation in the gala. Additionally, another prospective board member was identified through recruitment efforts and is expected to be contacted for further discussions. Initial review suggests this individual, an educator along with his wife, could be a strong candidate for board service. Overall, recruitment efforts remain active, with several promising prospects in the pipeline.

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

The Committee meeting was brief and did not include any significant issues or outstanding concerns. Quarterly risk and compliance reports were reviewed, with no major findings noted. Compliance updates included the completion of ChildNet’s annual compliance plan, fraud, waste, and abuse plan, and required compliance training for board members. ChildNet is also undergoing a Centene audit, and Neiko Shea reported that all required compliance documentation and activities



have been completed and are available for review. Overall, compliance and risk management efforts remain on track.

- **Program Quality Committee – Nancy W. Stamper, Committee Chair**

Nancy Stamper reported that the committee reviewed updates to policies on vehicle management, equipment maintenance, data security, and sibling placements. It also reviewed quarterly performance data, which showed strong outcomes across Broward and Palm Beach counties, with most measures exceeding 90% and continued improvements in placement stability, medical and dental compliance, and provider performance.

CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

- **Census** – Larry Rein reported that ChildNet is at record-low numbers of dependent children in care across Broward and Palm Beach counties, but foster home shortages continue to create placement challenges, especially for younger children and teens. ChildNet is strengthening foster parent recruitment efforts and expanding partnerships, including with 4KIDS of South Florida, to increase placement options for youth with specialized needs.
- **National Issues – Home for Every Child** – Larry Rein reported that while Congress is on recess, there have been no anticipated federal funding cuts affecting child welfare or foster care. He noted positive signs of potential increased support for youth transitioning out of foster care and former foster youth, although any action is unlikely before the fall. Mr. Rein highlighted Florida's involvement in the federal "Home for Every Child" pilot initiative, which aims to improve child welfare outcomes through performance planning and ensuring every child in foster care has a stable home. He praised Florida's participation as a positive step forward.

The Florida Coalition for Children has also been engaging with Assistant Secretary Adams regarding the pilot, with support for including Florida's lead agencies in future discussions. The Coalition is advocating nationally through the National Center for Community-Based Child Welfare to ensure community-based child welfare organizations have a role in federal initiatives. Mr. Rein described these developments as encouraging and expressed hope that the federal efforts will continue.

- **Statewide Issues – State Budget** - Larry Rein reported that while the Legislature was expected to approve the final budget that day, there are no funding increases for community-based care lead agencies and no progress on revising the child welfare funding model. Instead, the budget includes language directing stakeholders to continue working on the funding model over the coming year.

Special Appropriation Requests - ChildNet's Special Appropriations Requests fared well. The Palm Beach Visitation Center request for \$654,000 remains in the budget, as does funding for the SafePlace enhancement and expansion project in Broward. The Broward allocation is slightly higher than anticipated, at approximately \$154,000, and will allow the program to expand its physical space to better separate younger and older children, addressing an ongoing operational challenge. ChildNet's lobbyists have begun efforts to prevent any gubernatorial vetoes of these appropriations. Once approved by the Legislature, the budget will go to the Governor for final review, and leadership remains hopeful that the funding will be preserved.

Back of the Bill Funding - Larry Rein reported positive news regarding back-of-the-bill funding. ChildNet Broward had requested \$1.9 million to address its projected deficit, but because only \$3 million was available in the state's risk pool, ChildNet was initially expected to receive just \$170,000. However, after the Legislature approved more than \$28 million in statewide back-of-the-bill funding



for lead agencies, ChildNet was informed that it would receive nearly its full request, falling short by only about \$150,000. Given concerns about the Legislature's unpredictable session and the possibility that no additional funding would be approved, Mr. Rein viewed the outcome as a significant success and very good news for ChildNet.

Funding Model – Larry Rein emphasized that reforming Florida's child welfare funding model is the top priority for lead agencies, describing the current system as unsustainable. He noted that seven of the state's sixteen lead agencies are projecting a combined \$36 million deficit, yet no funding increases were approved. He criticized the existing funding model for relying on historical spending and a per-member, per-month approach that penalizes agencies that reduce the number of children in care and rewards those with higher historical spending. Mr. Rein highlighted statewide funding inequities, including \$96 million in surplus funds held by some agencies while others face significant deficits.

Standardized Provider Contracts - Mr. Rein expressed concern about legislative efforts to standardize provider contracts statewide, arguing that such changes could undermine the local flexibility and community-based approach that have contributed to improved outcomes for children and families. He called for stronger advocacy to secure fair funding and protect the community-based care model.

- **Thank you to Chair and Board** - Larry Rein concluded the meeting by recognizing the exceptional contributions of the Board and its Chair, Josefa Benjamin, over the past two years. He praised the Board's high level of involvement, engagement, and commitment, stating that while ChildNet has benefited from many outstanding board members throughout its history, the current Board stands out for its collective impact, energy, participation, and accomplishments. Larry described the Board's achievements as remarkable and thanked Josefa Benjamin for her leadership and dedication.

PUBLIC COMMENT

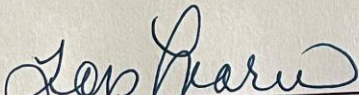
- There was no public comment.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- Annual Board Meeting – June 26, 2026 @ 8:00 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

- Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:41 a.m.


Lois Marino
Board Secretary

10/26/26
Date

(Corporate Seal)