



BOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 28, 2026

Board of Directors:

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

Unable to Attend:

Carolina Raineau, Charles Hanna, Karen Cabrera, Dr. Ronald Ford

Other Attendees:

ChildNet Staff: Larry Rein, Neiko Shea, Donna Eprifania, Julie DeMar, Alcolya St. Juste, Andrew Wallick, Tina Lewis, Deena Ponto, Sheryl Williams, Andrea Chenet, Wendy Hale, Falon Gillespie, Rachel Schwartz, Dylan Zaffuta, Tanikia Williams Kelsie Esposito, Julie Janello, *DCF:* Terrence Watts, Adrienne Reid, Robert McAllister, Traci Schweitzer

CALL TO ORDER – Rebecca Brock, Board Chair

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Nancy W. Stamper, Board Secretary

- Roll was taken, and quorum was established.

The June 26, 2026 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:
 - June 2026 – Andrea Chenet, Director of Process Quality Improvement/Data (Bwd)
Kelsie Esposito, Dependency Case Manager – Unit 1070 (PB)
 - July 2026 - Wendy Hale, Dependency Case Manager – Unit 104 (PB)

COMMITTEE UPDATES

- **Community Engagement Committee – Lois Marino, Committee Chair**

Larry Rein announced that a search is underway for a new Director of Community Engagement following Shanny Tozzi's departure. Mr. Rein reported receiving a strong pool of qualified candidates, many with significant fundraising experience, and expressed confidence that the new hire will strengthen ChildNet's fundraising efforts. Lois Marino emphasized that the committee's



mission extends beyond fundraising to community engagement and relationship-building and invited both board members and qualified community leaders to become involved.

2027 Gala - Lois Mario announced that ChildNet's 2027 Gala has been moved from February 27 to May 15, 2027, and will remain at the Hard Rock as part of ChildNet's 25th Anniversary Celebration. The committee also explored involving non-board members in committee service as a pathway to greater engagement with ChildNet, while agreeing that prospective committee members should undergo a formal vetting and governance approval process, potentially to be codified in the bylaws.

▪ **Finance Committee – Karen Cabrera, Committee Chair and Donna Eprifania, CFO**

- FY 2026-2027 Board Approved Budgets – Donna Eprifania reported that the FY 2026-2027 budgets previously approved electronically by the board were submitted to the Department of Children and Families and accepted as recommended. She noted that no additional board questions had been raised beyond those already addressed by email. Ms. Eprifania highlighted that ChildNet is relying on approximately \$4.5 million in reserve funds to balance the current fiscal year budget, while management continues implementing strategies to reduce that reliance. The approved budgets total \$61,663,199 for Palm Beach County and \$97,398,304 for Broward County.

A motion was moved and seconded to approve FY 2026-2027 for Broward and Palm Beach as noted above. *A vote was taken.* The ayes have it and *the motion was adopted*

- Funding Model Update – Donna Eprifania reported that the state's effort to develop an actuarially based child welfare funding model has entered its fourth year, with KPMG continuing to refine funding categories and "groups of care." Key challenges remain in accurately funding residential group care and dependency case management, particularly as residential care costs continue to rise due to higher staffing needs, increased support requirements for children with complex needs, and the use of smaller residential settings that improve outcomes but are more expensive to operate.

Larry Rein expressed concerns that the current funding model has become overly complex and has repeatedly failed to advance legislatively. He advocated for a simpler funding approach centered on dependency case management and residential group care, with consistent funding levels that would allow all lead agencies to provide competitive case manager salaries and quality services statewide. He also highlighted funding disparities among lead agencies and stressed the need for a more equitable statewide system. The discussion included advocacy efforts through the Florida Coalition for Children (FCC), which has engaged new lobbyists to support legislative efforts, and acknowledged that fully addressing the true cost of care could require substantial additional state funding.

▪ **Governance/Executive Committee – Lois Marino, Committee Chair**

- Board Resignation of Bill Reicherter – eff. 08-02-26 – Larry Rein informed the board that Bill Reicherter resigned from Board approximately due to increased professional commitments after returning to business ownership following retirement. Mr. Reicherter indicated that he could no longer devote the level of time and attention he believed ChildNet deserved. Larry noted that their subsequent conversations were positive and supportive, expressing appreciation for Mr. Reicherter's service and continued support of ChildNet.

- **Public Relations and Marketing Procurement** – Larry Rein reported that ChildNet completed a competitive procurement process to consolidate three separate marketing-related contracts into a single agreement. After reviewing 9 to 10 proposals and interviewing three finalists, ChildNet selected The Home Agency to oversee marketing, public relations, foster parent recruitment marketing, and website services. The agency has already begun working closely with staff and will lead an on-site strategic planning session. A procurement protest filed by a former vendor was reviewed and denied, and the outgoing vendors have cooperated in supporting a smooth transition. Larry Rein praised The Home Agency's organization, nonprofit experience, and early performance.

- **Board Committees** - Lois Marino encouraged board members to review the committee list and consider joining a committee, particularly the Community Engagement Committee. She also noted that committee participation can serve as a pathway for qualified community members to become more involved with ChildNet and potentially serve on the board in the future.

Audit Committee and Retirement Plan Review: Donna Eprifania announced the start of the annual audit process and noted the need to designate Audit Committee leadership. She also highlighted the importance of increased board involvement in overseeing and evaluating ChildNet's approximately \$28 million retirement plan. As ChildNet is now in a position to consider alternatives to its current retirement plan provider, Ms. Eprifania requested assistance from board members with expertise in retirement plans and provider evaluations to help assess options and provide guidance throughout the review process.

- **Membership Recruitment** – Larry Rein introduced Cornelius Dukes as a potential board candidate. Mr. Dukes was recommended through Stefanie Title and has significant expertise in education, an area of growing importance to ChildNet. After meeting with him and reviewing his qualifications, the Governance/Executive Committee expressed support for moving forward with his candidacy. Ms. Title also shared positive feedback from community leaders regarding both Mr. Dukes and his wife's strong involvement in education and local community networks. Mr. Dukes will begin the formal application process, after which his candidacy will be reviewed by the Governance Committee and brought to the board for consideration at a future meeting.
- **FY 2025-2026 CEO Scorecard/Evaluation** - Larry Rein reported that ChildNet is on schedule with its annual CEO evaluation process. Evaluation materials, including a quantitative scorecard and the CEO's self-assessment, will be distributed to the Governance/Executive Committee in September. The Governance/Executive Committee is expected to meet in October to review the evaluation and present its findings and recommendations to the Board.

▪ **Real Estate Committee – Donna Korn, Committee Chair**

- Donna Korn reported that the committee reviewed ChildNet's long-term facility needs and confirmed its decision to pursue leasing rather than purchasing future office space. The committee plans to issue an RFQ for commercial real estate advisory services to help evaluate options and negotiate leases. Staff are gathering information on current lease obligations, future space requirements, operational efficiencies, and long-term planning needs. The committee will meet again in October to review findings and discuss next steps. Donna Eprifania noted that ChildNet's Palm Beach lease expires in July 2029 and the Broward lease expires in February 2030, making this the appropriate time to begin planning.



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

Rebecca Brock reported that two incidents required outside counsel and one was resolved. Tina Lewis reported several organizational changes designed to improve operational efficiency. Background screening responsibilities were moved from Dependency Case Management to the Administrative Services team to better reflect the department's support role across the organization. She also noted that ChildNet was affected by the expiration of Temporary Protected Status (TPS), resulting in the loss of one valued employee who was no longer authorized to work in the United States.

It was reported that ChildNet's adoption services were officially subcontracted to Youth and Family Advocates (YFA) effective July 1. As a result of that transition, the Intake and Placement Unit was reassigned under Sheryl Williams' leadership, replacing the adoptions team within her area of responsibility. Overall, the committee reported that operations are running smoothly, and no additional issues were raised.

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

Nancy Stamper reported that the committee reviewed three procedure revisions. Neiko Shea reported strong progress on ChildNet's comprehensive policy and procedure review, with 28 policies and procedures reviewed to date, 24 updated, and 10 additional items currently under review. Larry Rein provided a census update, noting that both Palm Beach and Broward counties continue to experience declines in the number of dependent children served, reaching the lowest levels on record. While Palm Beach has seen an increase in teenagers entering care, Broward has experienced growth specifically among 17-year-olds, who often require more intensive services. Foster home capacity remains a priority concern, as some children have recently experienced temporary shelter stays at removal due to placement shortages, although recent improvements in foster home recruitment have increased capacity, particularly in Broward.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT – Rebecca Brock

No report this month.

CEO/PRESIDENT REPORT – Larry Rein

▪ **Statewide Issues:**

- **Property Tax** - Larry Rein informed the board about a proposed constitutional amendment that will appear in Florida's November ballot and emphasized the importance of understanding its potential impact on ChildNet, while noting that ChildNet is not taking a public position on the measure. He explained that, if approved, the amendment could reduce revenues for local governments and Children's Services Councils, which fund many prevention, family support, and substance abuse treatment programs that ChildNet families rely on. Although ChildNet does not receive direct funding from these sources, reductions in these community-based services could increase challenges for vulnerable families and potentially lead to more children entering the dependency system. Mr. Rein noted that the exact financial impact remains uncertain but expressed concern about possible reductions in critical support services.
- **DCF and Lead Agencies** - Larry Rein reported concerns about several actions being taken by DCF amid the continued absence of a permanent Secretary. DCF has chosen not to automatically renew the contracts of several lead agencies whose agreements are expiring, instead requiring them to negotiate substantially revised contracts by October 1. A major



concern is the proposed inclusion of significant financial penalties tied to performance measures, which could create financial strain for agencies already operating under limited funding.

Mr. Rein also raised concerns about DCF's decision to hire consultants to conduct additional financial and operational audits of lead agencies. While ChildNet is not included in the first round of audits, he noted that lead agencies already undergo extensive oversight, audits, and monitoring, making the additional reviews potentially costly, duplicative, and burdensome without clear benefit. Both the FCC and lead agencies are advocating against these measures and seeking more practical solutions. Donna Eprifania added that these increased oversight requirements ultimately affect not only lead agencies but also their provider partners, making it a broader statewide concern.

▪ **National Issues:**

- **National Center for Community Based Child Welfare** – Larry Rein shared that the National Center for Community-Based Child Welfare has secured funding to hire a federal lobbyist. The organization plans to work with this lobbyist to strengthen relationships with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, particularly Assistant Secretary Alex Adams, and to ensure that the voice of community-based child welfare agencies is represented in federal initiatives such as the Home for Every Child initiative.

PUBLIC COMMENT

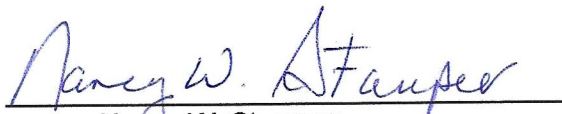
- A board member requested that the newly selected public relations and marketing firm be invited to a future Community Engagement Committee meeting to present its strategy and plans, which leadership agreed to do. Questions were also raised about notifying unsuccessful procurement respondents, and staff explained that procurement updates and award decisions are posted on ChildNet's website in accordance with established procedures. Finally, a question was asked about how changes to Temporary Protected Status (TPS) might affect children served by ChildNet. Legal counsel clarified that immigration status does not affect ChildNet's obligation to provide services, and that the organization continues to comply with all applicable laws while assisting eligible youth in care regardless of their status.

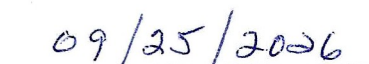
NEXT MEETING DATE

- September 25, 2026 @ 8:00 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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


Nancy W. Stamper
Board Secretary


Date

(Corporate Seal)