**Circuit 17 CFLA Meeting Minutes**

August 4, 2023; 8:45 AM

Zoom Meeting

**Attendees Present:** Alicia Castillo(DCF); Brittany Johnson (Regional Council); Cara Malave (FLITE Center); Casey Woolley (Nancy J. Cotterman/CPT); Cassandra Evans (Broward County- CPD) Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer (CSC); Deena Ponto (ChildNet); Donna Eprifania (ChildNet); Erica Herman (Voices for Children); Gina Leiser (CLS); Gordy Pyper (DCF); Henry Smith (BCPS); Joanne Correia-Kent (Smith Community Mental HealthJulie DeMar (ChildNet); Kasandra Phillips (GALO); Kaydion Watson (ChildNet); Krissa Ericson (BCPS); Kristin Stablein (Avidity); Lammy Askar (Voices of Broward); Larry Rein (ChildNet); Lisa Bayne (CSC); Maddy Jones (CSC); Michelle Thomas (); Mike Olbel (CBC); Monica Figueroa King (CFLA Chair, BHSC); Nancy Wall (); Neiko Shea (National Youth Advocate Program); (Norma Wagner (DCF/SAMH); Paige Patterson (DCF); Raul Ocampo (DCF); Regine Kanzki (BHSC); Robert Shea (DCF); Sandra Wallace (SOS); Shari Thomas (Henderson BH); Sheree Tortora (ChildNet); Sheryl Williams (ChildNet); Silvia Beebe (NYAP); Silvia Quintana (); Skye Cleek (BBHC); Judge Stacey Schulman (Delinquency Judge C17); Susan Eby (ChildNet); Suzette Fleishmann (DCF); Teresa Janeczek (DCF); Teri Roach (BHSC); Teves Bush (); Tiffany Csonka, (YSO); Tiffany Lawrence (BBHC); Tiffany Smith (DCF); Traci Schweitzer (DCF); Walter Honaman (Legal Aid Services of Broward)

* **Welcome and Chair Report: Monica Figueroa King, Chair**
* CFLA Chair, Monica King welcomed the group and called the meeting to order at 8:46am.
* July 7, 2023, CFLA Minutes were presented.

MOTION by **CINDY ARENBERG SELTZER** to approve the July 7, 2023, CFLA Meeting Minutes. SECOND by **CASSANDRA EVANS. MOTION CARRIED.**

* Tiffany Smith, the new DCF Regional Operations Manager for Broward County was introduced. Tiffany gave a brief greeting.
* **Court System Updates: Judge Stacey Schulman**
* The court systems update was provided by Judge Stacey Schulman. The judge reported that the transition from BSO to DCF for CPIS has not caused any problems. The judge also mentioned that the number of cases is stable.
* The funding approval has enabled the scheduling of cohort 3 of Hope Court, which is expected to begin its first docket in November. The selection process is underway, and some preparatory work is needed to coordinate with Nova/NFSU.
* The delinquency report included a meeting of the Respite Shelter Stakeholders held in July. The meeting discussed how to deal with the ongoing shortage of respite beds. The closure of Covenant House, which use to provide respite services, has been partly compensated for by another alternative.
* **DCF Update & Summary: Robert Shea and Tiffany Smith**
* DCF shared the latest information on CPIS staff recruitment. They have 45 staff members who are currently handling cases. They also have 44 new hires who are either in training, waiting for a class, or starting today. They hope to hire more people from the pool of about 60 potential candidates who attended the DCF hiring fairs, depending on their background checks. The challenge now is to assign the new hires to a class or pair them with existing staff for shadowing. Five people from the classes will be ready to take cases on August 28th. On September 19th about 30 more people will finish their training and join the field. Their caseloads will gradually increase over time, so it will take some time for them to reach their full capacity.
* DCF reported a significant decrease in caseloads. They had 929 open active investigations on July 6, when the transition happened. As of August 3rd, they had 792, thanks to the help from their neighboring regions and support teams from around the state. Only five people have more than 25 cases, and only two have more than 30 cases.
* MOUs that needed updating before the transition, with the language changed from BSO to the department, have been sent out by Robert Shea. A few more are pending. An MOU from CAPTA also requires urgent attention. A local meeting to discuss it is recommended to take place as soon as possible.
* A system of care presentation by all the community partners who offer various services needs to be planned for the new hires. Some partners have already been contacted about this, but the details of the event need to be finalized. DCF will reach out soon to those who are interested in participating. Jesstaine Holness the training manager for Broward, is responsible for coordinating these presentations.
* Denise Foster, who is a PA and a former manager at Broward Sheriff’s Office, has been selected as a Regional Program Manager. Denise will assume her new role on August 18th. The role will involve regional responsibilities, but still some involvement in Broward County.
* Tiffany Smith shared her work with the Behavioral Health Consultants (BHC), who have expertise in mental health and substance abuse matters. Next week, BHCs will undergo training to refresh their knowledge of the process that now requires BHCs to accompany PIs in the field to perform assessments on mental health and substance abuse. BHCs will also give their recommendations, which will assist with service referrals and cases that need removals. Moreover, the Plan of Safe Care (POSC) for families with substance-exposed newborns is under development.
* A new CPIS phone list will be distributed soon. A meeting with the School Board has been scheduled to review the process and ensure alignment for the school start. Training with JAFCO has also been arranged for Tiffany Smith to learn more about their abuse report process.
* A successful all-staff meeting was held to discuss important DCF aspects of the transition. Next week, a meeting with supervisors will take place, followed by a meeting with each CPIs to address any issues or concerns at each level.
* DCF CPIS is planning a provider fair. This event will invite all the providers to showcase their agencies with pamphlets and data for the new staff. The date for the provider fair is not confirmed yet, but it is in progress. The Children’s Services Council (CSC) offered to help organize providers to provide this education, explain CSC and how they can support it overall. Lisa Bayne was assigned as the contact person to coordinate. BHSC also expressed interest in the provider fair and shared their perspective.
* **ChildNet: Larry Rein**

A summary of the census and finances for the end of the fiscal year was given. ChildNet has not experienced any change in the number of children removals, which is good. Overall, there was a 4% decrease in the number of dependent children in Broward County from birth to 18, down to an average of 1600 kids for the year. Removals also continue to decline over the year, with an average of only 48 removals per month, down 14% from last year. ChildNet needs to improve on some areas that have been stagnant for a while. One of them is their use of kinship care, which is much lower than the rest of the state. They want to increase the use of relative and non-relative care for children. They hope that the collaboration with the Harvard Kennedy School of Government will help them with this goal. They have started to implement the training and processes that were created with their help. They are also trying to change their internal culture to focus more on kinship care and keeping children with family. ChildNet has not increased its use of Residential Group care this year in Broward, but it is still higher than two years ago. The main challenges are finding relative caregivers for kinship care and having enough foster homes. The use of foster homes decreased by 5% this year, which affects the Residential Group care numbers. However, the use of foster homes is still above the state average. ChildNet is trying to find some creative solutions for these issues. The two main goals are to increase foster home capacity and kinship care use.

* Donna Eprifania gave a summary of the financial situation for the previous fiscal year and some of the projections for the upcoming year. Establishing two new small group homes for the census was a great achievement. ChildNet funded some prevention evidence-based programs, but not all of them were as effective. There were some programs that were not continued. They did this because they had to use some of their surplus money from previous years to balance their budget. They used 5.5 million dollars last year and 6.5 million dollars this year. They are being conservative and strategic with their spending.. They have to evaluate the benefits of the programs and they want to keep investing in their workforce. As previously shared, the legislature added a new requirement in their Appropriations Bill. Now, community-based care lead agencies like ChildNet have to get approval from the Department of Children and Families for their budget. The Board of Directors has already approved their budget for the next fiscal year, but this adds to the pressure of being more careful with their spending.
* The Department hired Mercer, a consulting company, to create a new allocation formula for community-based care in Florida. The CBC lead agency and CEOs talked to the secretary and her staff to get an update and share some concerns that they had written before. The meeting went well because the secretary and her staff listened to and understood their concerns about Mercer’s work. They are going to ask Mercer to change some of what they are doing. Members were informed about the possible risks of this reallocation, so they can be prepared to talk to the legislature, if needed.
* **Children’s Legal Services: Gina Leiser**
* The CLS computer system, which is under development, is now operational. The CLS leadership had given a six month deadline to transfer all existing cases to the new system. However, in Broward, they decided to do this as soon as possible and formed a team to open the cases. As of today, they have opened all their cases in the new system. The orders will not change right away. The differences will be noticeable in September, when they will use a Statewide template for all circuits. This will make transfers easier, as the orders will be uniform and similar to what Broward already uses.
* The team is recruiting actively, despite the hiring challenges. They plan to add eight more attorneys, with different work arrangements and roles, such as remote work, Zoom hearings, or drafting petitions and orders. They are trying new ways of hiring to meet their agency’s needs. Four attorneys who took the bar exam will hopefully join the courtroom team this fall.
* **CSC Update: Cindy Arenberg-Seltzer**
* CSC will have a meeting with the judges from various divisions. The purpose of the meeting is to educate the judges about CSC’s role and the work done by CFLA members funded by CSC to help children in different systems. The meeting will also help CSC to learn about the judges’ expectations, the existing resources, and the areas of improvement. CSC informed Bobby Shea and Tiffany Smith about the issue with family court judges expressing confusion and difficulty in dealing with cases that involved potential abuse and required services. Legal Aid works with the family court on the community wide kinship effort, which is different from the dependency system under Chapter 39. The kinship system of care may need to be included in the training for the family court judges, who may also be confused about it. The goal of CSC’s meeting with all the judges is to understand their knowledge gaps and the best ways to deliver information. CLS also offered their support with this communication.
* Effective October 1, 2023, there will be some changes in the family strengthening programs. Some new programs will be available, while some existing ones will be discontinued. For the Mom’s program, the only option will be Memorial Healthcare, not Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies.
* **DCF SAMH Update: Suzette Fleischmann**
* SAMH is collaborating with BBHC and Henderson’s Behavioral Health consultant to ensure a smooth and consistent transition of their Behavioral Health Consultants. They are meeting regularly to address the historical and current needs of Broward County. Nydia Pena and Sydney Pollock are the behavioral health consultants, and one more is waiting for background screening. They are also recruiting a fourth BHC for Broward, who will be an expert on how behavioral health issues affect parental protection.
* Broward Behavioral Health Coalition is working on creating a trauma-informed system of care with the help of Dr. Stephanie Covington, a consultant. This will benefit Broward County by having a system that understands and addresses the effects of trauma on individuals and their needs. As a Governor’s appointee to the commission, Larry Rein presented to the Florida Commission on mental health and substance misuse disorder. The subcommittee on children and families, led by Representative Hunchofsky, was formed by the legislature. The subcommittee will submit their report to the commission on August 15th. Sue Gallagher was a key member of a data subcommittee and was invited to present at the children’s subcommittee. The meetings were enriched by Broward people who shared their work in Broward County. Sue Gallagher talked about the Baker Act pilot project and the integrated data system. Sylvia Quintana gave a presentation on the system of care and reported with her colleagues from Pinellas on how the School Board of Broward County and the managing entity worked together to provide behavioral health care to families through care coordinators. This was a great example of how the public school system and the community can meet the needs of children. This information is shared to highlight the outstanding and impressive work that is being done and how it is gaining attention. The Baker Act project, supported by CSC, is making great progress, and attracting a lot of interest and backing. Representative Bartleman is expected to request funding for it and there may be a need for some advocacy.
* **TIL System of Care Update: Cara Malave**
* YSO presented at the FCC and many attendees were interested and involved. The system professionals also gave positive feedback and filled out a survey. YSO is still conducting some follow-up discussions with them. YSO is looking for youth that have at least two years of aged out lived experience to join them. YSO will share their findings at the Daniel Memorial National conference in Denver and compare the national and local survey results. They will also present the same information at the DCF Summit.
* TIL System of Care organizes the monthly life coach meetings and plans various programs. TIL, CSC, and other partner agencies are preparing for the new school year. Many youth have asked for help with school supplies, backpacks, and clothing. They are still facing financial difficulties and rent prices continue to increase. The rent for tax credit properties in Broward County has gone up again due to the high market demand. FLITE center has secured some new tax credit properties that will be available in one to three years. Two of them will be ready by the end of this year in the south end of the county. TIL also received more funding from Broward County to help homeless youth. If you know any homeless youth who are 18 or older, from any background or situation, please refer them to the FLITE center for assistance.
* TIL faces the challenge of helping older youth who are returning for assistance. TIL needs more community partners who can offer rent or utility assistance to the youth they cannot support. They have a wide range of funding sources, but they are always looking for more options. Please share any contacts for such resources. They also refer everyone back to 211, which is a resource for Broward County, but they are open to other alternatives.
* **Announcements**
* Teves Bush, the new Chief Probation Officer, joined the meeting and introduced himself. He expressed his willingness to collaborate with the CFLA members on the issue of delinquency, which is often discussed during CFLA meetings. He appreciated the long-standing relationship between DJJ and CFLA and hoped to keep it going.
* Henderson Behavioral Health, a program that aims to prevent new families from entering the system, launched a new initiative called PAT in Broward County on October 1. PAT is based on the home builders’ model, which has proven to be effective and well-received by families in crisis. However, the home builders model only accepts families who are at imminent risk of removal, which means that many families who need help are turned away. PAT expands the target population to include families who are less in crisis, but still need support and intervention. This way, Henderson Behavioral Health can reach more families and prevent further escalation of their problems. PAT is an exciting opportunity for Henderson Behavioral Health to use the home builders’ model to have a broader impact in the community.
* Healthy Start announced they are the new administrator of the Healthy Families Home Visitation program as of July 1. This program was handed over from the former vendor and the field staff recruitment is almost done. The program’s main objective is to prevent child abuse and neglect and to provide home visits and additional services to assist those families in staying out of the dependency system.
* Healthy Start is also overseeing a federal grant called Healthy Connections. This grant serves pregnant women who use substances. This is relevant to the system of care that involves behavioral health consultants and their coordination. The grant will fund peers who will be hired by September and will focus on this population. The aim is to reach them before or after the birth of their baby and to offer them support in the system of care. The goal is to help them access treatment or support them in their recovery journey and prevent them from entering the child welfare system.
* The community ID program is successfully operational. Legal Aid has obtained alternative funding sources and is receiving positive feedback from the people they serve. Legal Aid has heard how the IDs have helped youth with housing, banking, employment, and check-cashing issues. The IDs are also recognized by law enforcement in Broward County. The program is very valuable and the link to apply for an ID was shared.
* October 27th is the annual Heroes Luncheon for TIL folks.
* YSO is a member of a statewide parent board that has regular conversations with the secretary about the department’s ongoing efforts to revamp the maltreatment index and the mandated reporting system. As Broward County prepares for the new school year, YSO wonders how to communicate this change to the teachers and encourage them to shift from mandated reporting to mandated supporting. YSO suggests that CSC could educate the teachers about the available services for families, similar to how they inform the judges.
* Christina Romero and Tiffany Csonka are organizing a “You have Rights” events to educate families about their rights and how to prevent entering the system. They have already hosted two successful events and are planning to invite more people, including professionals from their race equity group. The events will also include food, fun activities, and a chance to learn more about the available resources for families.
* Don’t miss the final Back-to-School Extravaganza hosted by CSC on Saturday, August 12 at Blanche Ely High School. You can get free backpacks filled with school supplies, medical check-ups, haircuts, and information about many services. If you know any families in need in that area, please let them know about this great opportunity.

*CFLA members decided to postpone the September meeting due to many of them attending the DCF Summit. It is also a holiday weekend so the meeting will resume in October. The next meeting is scheduled for October 6, 2023.*

*The meeting was adjourned at 10:11am.*