**Circuit 17 CFLA Meeting Minutes**

January 5, 2024; 8:45 AM

Zoom Meeting

**Attendees Present:** Alicia Castillo (DCF);Amber Gross (CSC);Asta Trinh (DCF/SAMH); Brittany Johnson (Regional Council); Cammie Cacase (MHS); Casey Woolley (Nancy J. Cotterman/CPT); Cassandra Evans (Broward County); Dawn Liberta (Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies); Deena Ponto (ChildNet); Dennis Miles(DCF); Donna Eprifania (ChildNet); Erica Herman (Voices for Children); Gina Leiser (CLS); Dr. Harleen Hutchinson (The Journey Institute); Heather Gelety (DCF); Jason Tracey (ChildNet); Joanne Correia-Kent (Smith Community Mental Health); Julie Demar (ChildNet); Kasandra Phillips (GALO); Kirk Brown (HANDY); Krissa Ericson (BCPS); Kristin DeSimone (OCCC); Kristin Stablein (Avidity); Kristin Guerrise (NYAP); Lammy Askar (Voices of Broward); Larry Rein (ChildNet); Lisa Bayne (CSC); Liz Meyers (Mental Health America of SE FL); Maddy Jones (CSC); Mark Dhooge (KID); Michelle Thomas (Florida Palms Academy); Mike Olbel (Community Bases Connections); Monica Figueroa King (CFLA Chair, BHSC); Monique Gustafon (DCF); Neiko Shea (ChildNet); Norma Wagner (DCF/SAMH); Raul Ocampo (DCF); Regine Kanzki (BHSC); Renzo Torenga (BBHC); Shari Thomas (Henderson Behavioral Health); Sheena Benjamin-Wise (GALO); Sheryl Williams (ChildNet); Sophia Mitchell (OCCRC); Judge Stacey Schulman (Dependency Judge C17); Sue Gallagher (CSC); Teresa Janeczek (DCF); Teri Roach (BHSC); Teves Bush (DJJ);Tiffani Dhooge (Children’s Harbor); Tiffany Csonka (Mining For Gold); Tiffany Smith (DCF); Tim Putman (4Kids); Traci Schweitzer (DCF); Walter Honaman (Legal Aid Services of Broward); Yolanda Brown (Court Administration)

* **Welcome and Chair Report: Monica Figueroa King, Chair**
* CFLA Chair, Monica King welcomed the group and called the meeting to order at 8:48m.
* December 1, 2023, CFLA Minutes were presented.

MOTION by **SHARI THOMAS** to approve the December 1, 2023, CFLA Meeting Minutes as presented. SECOND by **NEIKO SHEA. MOTION CARRIED.**

* Discussion regarding ChildNet’s request for exemption from the 35% Direct Services threshold as part of their service delivery network (Section 409.988(1) F.S.). The Department has now developed a CFOP that outlines the requirements for the exemption. The memorandum and related materials were reviewed by ChildNet CEO, Larry Rein. After providing background information on the request, there was a consensus to approve and move forward with ChildNet’s request for exemption from the 35% threshold. The memorandum also specifies that CFLA members will annually review and confirm ChildNet’s request for exemption.

MOTION by **WALTER HONAMAN** to approve ChildNet memorandum for exemption from 35% threshold. SECOND by **MARK DHOOGE. MOTION CARRIED.**

* **Court System Updates: Judge Stacey Schulman**
* Dependency Court. While the shelters have been relatively low in number and stable, the Court experienced an uptick in shelter numbers during the last quarter of the year. Probable cause is being found, it is unclear whether this trend is related to the shift from BSO to DCF or other factors.
* Juvenile Delinquency Division. January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Judge Stacy Ross has been actively involved in working with Rise Court, which is a therapeutic court in our community and a valuable asset to our community. There is a National Human Trafficking Awareness Day event on January 11th at Nancy J. Cotterman’s from 1:30 to 3:30, which will highlight Broward’s collaborative model. The 4th Annual Human Trafficking Youth Summit will be held on January 13, 2024, and the theme this year is “I am Responsible for My Safety.” Details for this event will be shared with interested parties.
* **DCF Update & Summary: Robert Shea**
* Bobby Shea noted that his data reflected some consistency with removals looking at an average of around 25 removals per month up to November. He would investigate the report from the Court system about a spike in December numbers.
* The Protective Investigators are in a pretty good place with some areas for improvement. The organization has hired all the necessary personnel over the summer and fall. Although they have experienced some attrition, they are actively taking caseloads and have more CPIs than they have supervision for at the moment. The ad for the supervisor position is open and active, as there are multiple spots to fill on that front. Additionally, the organization has another ad out right now. The last time they had an ad out for CPIs was in the summer, and they are hoping to be more selective in their hiring process this time around.
* **ChildNet: Larry Rein**
* They have been monitoring an increase in shelter numbers during the last quarter of the year. Overall, the census of dependent children birth to 18 in Broward County is at an all-time low. ChildNet staff have been satisfied with the quality of investigations.
* Senate Bill 536, introduced by Senator Garcia from Miami, was discussed during the November CFLA meeting. Senator McFarland introduced House Bill 1061, which appears to be companion to Senate Bill 536. Although it is not identical, it is less burdensome than the Senate bill. However, some provisions in the House bill are similar to those in the Senate bill and are challenging. Representative McFarland sought input from some of the CBCs. Apart from accountability issues, there are several key points that need to be addressed because they go to the heart of community-based care and could be truly threatening if this bill were to pass. The following are the key points that were shared to talk to local legislators and throughout the state about:
1. The Senate bill would eliminate the ability of the Community Alliance to be a voice in whether or not a lead agency exceeds the 65-35 percent rule.
2. Advocate that the Florida legislature continues to make the decisions about allocations and what goes where to avoid decreased funding to child welfare.
3. The bill would have lead agency contracts to be reprocured every five years and limit the reneal to 1 year. This frequent procurement could lead to instability for the system.
4. The Senate Bill speaks at length about penalties for lead agencies for non-performance, including what they call civil penalties, and it gives sole discretion to the DCF for determining these penalties. The size of these penalties may impact CBCs from surviving as businesses.

The issue related to removing community input is very concerning because each community is different. Larry Rein offered to talk to anybody amongst CFLA members to explain more, highlight the importance, and try to come up with a position that is consistent and skillful for everyone involved. If there are any significant concerns that arise regarding these issues between now and the next meeting scheduled in February, CFLA members will be informed appropriately.

* **Children’s Legal Services: Gina Leiser**
* CLS shared that they had 44 removal hearings in December, which is an uptick from previous months. Judge Schulman’s estimate of about 10 hearings per week seems to be consistent with this number. Of the 44 hearings, eight were for modification of placements for reopen cases, and the other 36 were new removals. The trend of increasing shelter numbers has continued into January. It was noted that there has been an increase in Sua sponte cases this month. A continued discussion was suggested to determine the best way to respond when noticing a rise in Sua sponte cases. The community’s biggest challenge is the kids that are coming into care either because of their behavior or their mental health issues, and that’s typically via Sua sponte cases.
* Discussion about the increase in shelter numbers led to concerns about the lack of referrals to Family Support Programs from the CPI division. Providers are not filling positions or reallocating staff in those programs. interested members were encouraged to present a refresher of their services at any DCF all-staff meeting. This is due to the many service providers within Broward County and the many staff recently hired as a result of the DCF/CPIS transition. Despite this, the issue remains a concern and should be kept in mind for follow-up during the next CFLA meeting. A subcommittee was proposed to address this issue separately, and many members expressed interest in participating. Bobby Shea offered to take the lead and work with Neiko Shea and Madeline Jones from CSC.
* The electronic portal platform is running where case management can upload documents directly to CLS. CLS started a pilot project last month with one division, Judge Ribas division, for receiving those documents. There have been a few IT hiccups with getting people into the system, but those who were in the system and operational have been able to upload documents smoothly, and CLS has been receiving them without any issues. It is expected that later this month, the portal will be available circuit-wide for Broward County. CLS is the first circuit in the state to be doing this pilot project, and the idea is to simplify the method where case management is able to get documents to CLS to e-file with the court. Legal requests will automatically be uploaded into the system for attorneys and paralegals to access and see, so they don’t have to figure out whose case it is or whether the case got reassigned. This will help avoid delays and prevent documents from being emailed to the wrong person. So far, the cases that have been put through the portal have experienced a seamless process.
* **CSC Update: Madeline Jones**
* The annual program performance review of CSC is being sent to the council and will be available at the January 18th monthly Council meeting. The report will also be available on their website at that time. The meeting is from 9:30 to noon, and all are welcome to attend in person. Alternatively, you can log on to the CSC website to get the link to listen in remotely if desired. CSC continues to work with DCF to ensure good coordination with the Family Support Programs and will follow up with DCF.
* **DCF SAMH Update: Norma Wagner**
* SAMH is working hard to fill some vacant positions. However, no other reports were shared at this time.
* **BBHC – Renzo Torrenga**
* No updates reported at this time.
* **TIL System of Care Update: Tiffany Csonka**
* Starting in February 2024, REWG and Mining For Gold will be hosting a series of Community Cafés. The goal of these cafés is to promote a shared vision of the future and gather valuable information from the community. They are also an opportunity to engage in supportive networking. To make these cafés even more beneficial, 25 parents who join are requested to attend a class, course, or earn a certificate. This will give parents the chance to build new skills and learn in ways that interest them. A few resources were presented, but other suggestions are welcome. CFLA members were asked to consider something that could be offered to 25 parents who will attend the Café. Alternatively, CFLA members can suggest other items that parents, or their families could walk away with. Please let Tiffany Csonka know by January 29th if you have any questions or would like to participate. Tiffany Csonka can be contacted directly mineforgoldtiffany@gmail.com. CFLA members are also encouraged to share this initiative with their networks and disperse it to parents, families, and community members who would like to participate.
* **Announcements**

None

*The meeting was adjourned at 9:56am.*