



Circuit 17 CFLA Meeting

November 1, 2024; 8:45 AM

Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86982383438>

Meeting ID: 869 8238 3438, Dial: (929) 205-6099

AGENDA

- | | | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|---|
| I. | Welcome | Monica Figueroa King, Chair |
| II. | Chair Report | Monica Figueroa King, Chair |
| | a. Approve October Minutes | |
| III. | Court System Updates | Judge Stacy Ross
Judge Stacey Schulman |
| IV. | TIL System of Care | TBD |
| V. | DCF Update | Robert Shea/Traci Schweitzer |
| VI. | ChildNet | Larry Rein |
| VII. | Children's Legal Services | Gina Leiser |
| VIII. | DCF SAMH | Norma Wagner |
| IX. | Broward Behavioral Health Coalition | Silvia Quintana |
| X. | Children's Services Council | Cindy Arenberg Seltzer |
| XI. | New Business/Announcements | ALL |
| XIII. | Next meeting dates: | |
| | a. December 6, 2024 | |
| XIV. | Meeting Adjournment | Monica Figueroa King, Chair |

Circuit 17 CFLA Meeting Minutes

October 4, 2024; 8:45 AM

Zoom Meeting

Attendees Present: Adrienne Reid (DCF); Alicia Castillo (DCF); Angela Mitchell (DJJ); Brittany Johnson (Office of Regional Counsel); Cammie Cacace (MHS); Carol Cook; Casey Woolley (Nancy J. Cotterman/CPT); Cassandra Evans (Broward County- CPD); Christina Romero (PATH); Connie Ridgeley (His House); Denise Foster (DCF); Gina Leiser (CLS); Dr. Harleen Hutchinson (The Journey Institute); Judit Sohr (Grace Place School); Kaydion Watson (ChildNet); Krissa Ericson (BCPS); Kristen DeSimone (OCCC); Kristen Guerrise (NYAP); Kristin Stablein (Avidity); Krysten Albertini; Larry Rein (ChildNet); Lisa Bayne (CSC); Madeline Jones (CSC); Malveria Carter (Children's Home Network); Mark Dhooge (KID/FAM); Michelle Thomas (DCF); Monica King (CFLA CHAIR/BHSC); Monique Gustafson (DCF); Natalie Gomes (CSC); Neiko Shea (ChildNet); Norma Wagner (DCF/SAMH); Raul Ocampo (DCF); Robert Shea (DCF); Sandra Wallace (SOS Children's Village); Shari Thomas (CFLA VICE CHAIR/Henderson Behavioral Health); Sheree Tortora (ChildNet); Sheila Gonsalves (GALO); Sheryl Williams (ChildNet); Silvia Quintana (BBHC); Sophia Mitchell (OCCC); Judge Stacey Schulman (Dependency Judge C17); Judge Stacy Ross (Delinquency Judge C17); Teri Roach (BHSC); Tiffani Dhooge (Children's Harbor); Tiffany Csonka (PATH); Tiffany Lawrence (BBHC); Traci Schweitzer (DCF); Walter Honaman (Legal Aid Services of Broward); Yolanda Brown (Court Administration)

• **Welcome and Chair Report: Shari Thomas, Chair**

CFLA Chair, Monica King welcomed the group and called the meeting to order at 8:48am.

August 2, 2024, CFLA Minutes were presented.

MOTION by **WALTER HONAMAN** to approve the August 2, 2024, CFLA Meeting Minutes as presented. SECOND by **TRACI SCHWEITZER**.
MOTION CARRIED.

• **Court System Updates: Judge Stacey Schulman / Judge Stacy Ross**

It was noted that dependency is stable and progressing well. They are planning their fourth HOPE Court cohort, starting in January, with a smaller group due to efforts to expand the program statewide. Judges from other counties have shown interest, and a 'HOPE Court in a box' model is being developed for broader adoption. Additionally, judges are preparing for potential courthouse relocations in January, but the current dependency judges are expected to remain in place. A reminder was given to vote in the upcoming elections, which include at least one judicial position.

Shelter numbers have remained steady, with occasionally slower weeks. Legislative changes are being implemented, but no significant impact is expected in Broward County. Compliance is being ensured, particularly regarding the Guardian Office.

Two General Magistrates, Randy Bowman and Vicky Plant, are planning to retire next year, with their retirements staggered. Magistrate Judge Bowman will retire first, early next year. As a result, you may see postings for Dependency or partial Dependency Magistrates. The advance planning should ensure a smooth transition.

Recently, Yolanda Brown and Chief Bush organized a human trafficking training at the courthouse, involving juvenile probation officers, court case managers, and service providers like FLITE Center and Nancy J. Cotterman Center. The collaboration was highly effective, allowing all parties to understand each other's perspectives. Agencies interested in a customized human trafficking refresher course should contact Jumorrow Poitier from the State Attorney's Office for tailored training to better serve our youth.

More participants are needed for RISE Court. If you know a child who would be a good fit, please contact Heather Able, the RISE Court Case Manager, and she will take the necessary steps.

• **DCF Update & Summary: Robert Shea/Traci Schweitzer**

The monthly shelter report from DCF was shared, providing a snapshot of tracked metrics and trends. Operationally, challenges are being faced with staffing: 62% of the staff have less than two years of experience, and nearly half of the supervisors are missing. This impacts efficiency, especially during busy months like October. There are 14 new trainees in the Academy class, and they are expected to complete training in November. During the review, it was shared that a statewide Decision Support Team (DST) process was finalized and rolled out. Broward has always had a DST process for pending removals, which is now mandatory during business hours and can be organized after hours. This aims to prevent removals, though it's not always possible. Data on DST outcomes, particularly removals, was requested to evaluate the process's effectiveness. Previously, ChildNet kept DST information, but now DCF uses a statewide Smartsheet for data collection. There is a need for more participation from community service providers on DST calls to enhance decision-making. Opportunities for improvement, potential partners, and challenges experienced with families were discussed.

• **ChildNet Update: Larry Rein**

The number of dependent children in Broward County, from birth to 18 years old, has reached an all-time low of 1,344, which is significantly lower than in the past. However, recent data shows an increase in child removals in the first three months of this fiscal year,

indicating a need for vigilance. Additionally, Broward County struggles with timely permanency for children, especially within 12 months, and ChildNet is facing high turnover rates among dependency case managers, now at 50%. To address these issues, ChildNet is hiring a new Chief Legal Officer to improve support and training for case managers and enhance accountability within the system.

ChildNet's new contract with the department included a draft amendment to implement recent legislative changes, notably the imposition of penalties for child welfare performance. This was seen as potentially harmful to non-profit child welfare agencies. Fortunately, the department negotiated to remove these penalties, except for a special appropriation in Palm Beach. However, challenges remain, such as the requirement for lead agencies to purchase performance and fidelity bonds, which are difficult or impossible to obtain. The department has dropped the fidelity bond requirement, but the performance bond issue persists, needing further resolution.

ChildNet presented a balanced budget for Broward County, approved by both their Board of Directors and the Department of Children and Families. However, maintaining this balance requires reducing the number of children in group care and using the last of their carry-forward funds. Without increased funding, Broward may face financial challenges. The department is working with KPMG on a new funding formula, with a draft report expected soon. There is concern that the new model might reduce funding for areas like Broward unless the legislature increases overall allocations. The department and KPMG acknowledge the underfunding of Florida's child welfare system and hope to advocate for increased statewide funding.

There was continued discussion about high turnover rates, particularly among Gen Z employees in behavioral health. Despite many enrolling in relevant graduate programs, fewer are willing to do fieldwork. This issue is affecting therapists and case managers, leading to significant recruitment and retention challenges. It was suggested to brainstorm solutions and meet with funders to adapt services to the needs of the community and the new workforce. The problem is widespread, impacting home visiting programs and community-based work. An article highlighted that Gen Z employees often leave jobs shortly after being hired, seeking better work-life balance, which is a major concern for the entire system.

In August, the Permanency subcommittee reviewed data on 158 complex cases to identify themes and improve processes. They focused on early intervention, identifying gaps, and ensuring all parties are involved before cases reach 12 months. The team, led by Julie Demar and Gina Leiser, conducted a mass staffing in September and continues to meet to enhance permanency outcomes, particularly for children in care over 24 months and those reluctant to exit care.

Susan Eby has resigned from ChildNet and will join a provider as Chief Operating Officer in either Hillsborough or Pinellas County. Best wishes were extended to her as she will be greatly missed. ChildNet is looking to fill her position quickly and may expand the role to include responsibilities similar to the former Vice President of Network Development, focusing on developing new services and providers. The ideal candidate will have clinical qualifications and oversee the quality of services for children and families. Susan has significantly improved service quality, and we aim to continue this progress.

Children's Legal Services: Gina Leiser

The Permanency subcommittee discussed the need for earlier case discussions and a holistic approach at the 12-month mark, involving all parties to address barriers and determine the direction, whether adoption or reunification. CLS pulls a list of 12-month cases for review, and meetings are held bi-weekly to ensure cases are on track. The team collaborates effectively to identify issues and follow up, aiming for permanency before the 12-month mark. The process has been deemed useful and will continue.

ChildNet, Susan Eby and Neiko Shea, organized a multi-agency training for lawyers across the Dependency Court Spectrum, including representatives from the Guardian Ad Litem office, Legal Aid, Regional Councils office, and CLS. The training focused on the service array in Broward County, aiming to improve the use and discussion of these services in court, particularly for reunification, conditions for return, and safety plans. The training addressed a knowledge gap among lawyers about available services and received positive feedback from all participating agencies. CLS expressed their gratitude for this valuable initiative. Susan is leading a new subcommittee focused on children's behavioral health within the Child Welfare Behavioral Health Integration meeting. Susan's group analyzed data on children entering care to identify areas for improvement, highlighting the importance of early intervention and specialized trauma treatment. Despite Susan's departure, the subcommittee will continue its work. ChildNet will maintain this focus and present a report on children entering the dependency system due to behavioral and mental health issues at the next CFLA meeting.

DCF SAMH Update: Norma Wagner

From the state perspective, the SAMH office has been mobilized to assist with disaster relief efforts, resulting in many staff members being deployed. In previous years, managing entity staff were primarily responsible for this task, but now Hope Florida and the SAMH office are both sending personnel.

South Florida Wellness Network was recognized as an agency during its 10-year anniversary celebration, which highlighted its growth and impact. Sylvia Quintana, Nan Rich, and others received awards. The organization, which is entirely peer-operated, has expanded to two offices in Broward and recently launched a Mommy-and-Me program and a new office in Miami. This underscores the importance of peer support in the system of care.

BBHC – Silvia Quintana

Silvia Quintana also praised the South Florida Wellness Network event, highlighting Susan's success in gaining community trust and support from multiple funders. The event demonstrated the importance of peer support in grant applications and showcased a successful collaborative approach. Susan has been mentoring others in setting up similar systems, leading to the creation of recovery communities. BBHC recently opened a unique Recovery Community Organization (RCO) for moms and babies, in collaboration with the Healthy Start Coalition, aiming to help pregnant women begin their recovery journey before childbirth. This initiative has been well received and is seen as a model for other parts of Florida.

Two new initiatives with BBHC were shared:

- **Involuntary Outpatient Commitment Program:** With new state funding, BBHC will provide services for both parents and children. This program aims to support families under the Baker Act or Marchman Act, ensuring continuous treatment through care coordination teams, including peers and clinical case managers.
- **Navigator Program:** In collaboration with CSC, BBHC is launching a program to help parents of children with behavioral issues who haven't been diagnosed. This program will guide families to appropriate services, whether funded by Medicaid, the county, BBHC, or CSC.

- **CSC Update: Maddy Jones**

Last Saturday, the Kinship Conference for CSC kinship families took place, organized by community providers and CSC staff after months of planning. The event had a fantastic turnout. The conference was a wonderful way to honor caregivers who dedicate their love, time, and resources to children in their care, helping to prevent them from entering the system. The organizers hope to continue this tradition annually.

On October 1st, CSC began its new fiscal year with most contracts fully executed. This year, CSC has implemented performance pay to improve staff retention and is exploring creative recruitment strategies, including partnerships with universities, to attract new graduates. Additionally, CSC has established a Resource Development Unit to promote their programs and community resources, aiming to increase utilization and support funded providers. CSC is open to ideas and suggestions to address program underutilization and enhance community support. The PATH team is interested in meeting to discuss how they can help distribute resources to families in Broward County. If events are being organized, PATH could participate as a vendor to offer support. Their goal is to bridge the gap between the community and providers, addressing the genuine concerns people have when seeking resources.

- **TIL System of Care Update:**

YSO has completed its research data gathering, despite challenges in collecting data from youth and children in care. They struggled with attendance at their cafes, often getting fewer participants than expected. However, they received excellent responses from system professionals, exceeding their target numbers. Last Wednesday, YSO finished the data analysis and now seeks permission to present their findings at next month's CFLA meeting, including a PowerPoint presentation and explanations of their insights.

YSO is collaborating with other youth voice organizations to help ChildNet, their CBC, establish a required youth coordinating council. Although YSO is not a youth council, they are working to meet this statutory requirement.

- **Announcements**

Christina Romero, a member of the Racial Taskforce in Broward County, announced their first community event, "Voices for Equity," on October 16, 2024, at 6pm. A flyer was shared to promote the event, and the BHSC CEO was invited to be a panel speaker. Members are encouraged to attend and join the discussion on supporting Broward County.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20am