



Brevard Family Partnership

A Community Based Care Agency

Board Report



February 15, 2018

Valerie Holmes, Executive Director

Narrative Report

In honor of Foster Parent Appreciation Week, the Desmond family will be recognized at the Board meeting and was also a featured family in the DCF selection of foster families on Social Media. Michael and Elisabeth Desmond have been foster parents in Brevard County since August 2016. In their first year and a half they have fostered ten children including different sibling groups. The Desmonds are currently caring for six children ages 1 through 6 and their two biological children (a pre-teen and teen). The Desmonds have mastered the art of co-parenting, advocacy and support. The Desmonds support biological parents in reunification, modeling and teaching positive parenting techniques and have assisted with a parent getting a car, beds for their children and ongoing support when the parents needed an outlet. They invite the biological parents to their home to celebrate holidays and supervise visitations to model positive co-parenting and partnership. The Desmonds are on the BFP Quality Parenting Initiative (QPI) Steering committee and Foster Parent Advisory Board. They participant in the PRIDE panel night for families interested in becoming licensed foster parents and are a great source of knowledge and information for new families.

Brevard foster parent Robin Whiting was honored with the national 2018 Casey Excellence for Children Award (CECA) earlier this month. These awards recognize ten outstanding individuals and leaders throughout the state who have demonstrated distinguished work, exceptional leadership and relentless dedication in improving child welfare in America. Award winners are selected in five categories: birth parents, alumni of foster care, foster or adoptive parents, kinship caregivers and child welfare leaders. Ms. Whiting was chosen from a large number of foster and adoptive parents from across the country who was nominated. Ms. Whiting has adopted five children and fostered more than thirty, most of them needing extensive medical care. A trained emergency medical technician, neonatal nurse and the first female firefighter in Brevard County, she helped launch the county's Medical Foster Care Program, which helps foster parents care for medically fragile children. Ms. Whiting credits the Brevard community for supporting foster and adoptive children. Amazingly, Lou Ann and Jonathan Hawes, also from Brevard, were presented the national CECA Award for Kinship Caregivers in 2017.

Efforts are continuing locally to address the opioid crisis. The opioid epidemic is causing more children to come into the system because their parents are dependent on opioids. The Opioid Task Force (through Together in Partnership) added a Law Enforcement subcommittee that incorporates the Public Defender's office, Department of Juvenile Justice, Palm Bay Police Department, a former Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms member, Brevard County Community Corrections, Drug Court and Juvenile Drug Court. The Managing Entity, Central Florida Cares, also started an ad hoc committee to examine State Targeted Response (STR) funding criteria for treatment, provider performance, spending trends and continued discussion on outreach and advocacy opportunities.

I met with Dr. Bennett at Florida Institute for Technology along with BFP Senior Director of Programs, Ashley Carraro. Dr. Bennett provides oversight and leadership of The Family Learning Program, one of Florida's few state funded sexual abuse treatment programs using Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) to treat child victims of sexual abuse, as well as their parents and siblings. Dr. Bennett expressed interested in partnering with BFP to provide additional training to staff and foster parents on trauma and is also submitting a proposal for a new therapeutic model that focuses on treatment for children in foster care that encompasses both the foster and biological parents. This aligns with the QPI best practice of positive co-parenting.

The University of South Florida (USF) Social and Behavioral Research Department is conducting an evaluation on the Title IV E Waiver in Florida. CBC leadership is being sought out to participate in another round of stakeholder interviews. This research is being conducted through the Department of Child and Family Studies. BFP's interview will take place on March 8.

The Families First Preservation Services Act (FFPSA), first introduced in 2016, was added to the funding bill passed by Congress; signed by the President on February 10. The FFPSA failed to pass the Senate in 2016. Chapter I of the Act, billed as "Investing in Prevention and Family Services," would allow Title IV-E funds to be used to

fund services to keep children out of foster care, including mental health and substance abuse treatment, parent training and counseling, and kinship navigator programs. The FFPSA amends the funding structure for the child welfare system by allowing states to use federal matching funds for programs addressing mental health, substance abuse, family counseling, and parent skills, education and training to keep at-risk children from entering foster care. It does not include services like domestic violence prevention, peer mentoring or support groups, crisis intervention, housing assistance, and many others that could be crucial to keeping families together. Chapter II of FFPSA is billed as “Ensuring the Necessity of a Placement that is not in a Foster Family Home.” The law deters the use of group homes as this chapter forbids federal reimbursement for a placement other than a family foster home (such as a group home often called “congregate care”) beyond two weeks without an “age-appropriate, evidence-based, validated functional assessment” that determines the child’s needs cannot be met “with family members or through placement in a foster family home.”

Sikamore appointed Astrid Palme and Kellie Sweat Darnell to the NewCo board. A meeting has been scheduled for February 27 in Ocala of the four identified board. This meeting will serve as a workshop to address such issues as outstanding questions including cost model for the data platform, plan for Utilization Management development, operational decisions for NewCo and the naming of NewCo.

Respectfully Submitted,

Valerie Holmes
Executive Director