



Brevard Family Partnership

A Community Based Care Agency

Board Report



May 17, 2018

Valerie Holmes, Executive Director

Narrative Report

The first annual “Foster Mother Paint Day” was held at Saw Grass Community Lakes Clubhouse; sponsored by April Howell Designs. The faith based toolkit promoting the “Just One’ initiative was finalized and has been distributed to the marketing subcommittee for review. The toolkit includes foster parent recruitment materials, sample church bulletins, the foster parent recruitment video, HUG campaign material, and information on recruitment for teens in foster care. The initial kickoff event was held at River Life Church in Merritt Island and a second was held at the Suntree United Methodist Church.

In honor of Foster Parent Appreciation Month, the annual Foster Parent Picnic was held at and sponsored by the Suntree United Methodist Church. There were approximately 256 foster parents and children in attendance participating in various festivities. Other event sponsors included Eastern Florida State University and Sunshine/Centpatico Child Welfare Behavioral Health. Director of Outreach, Auggie Allen, has been an instrumental partner for foster parent support and recruitment and is scheduled as a guest speaker at the upcoming Board meeting. The House Church also featured two foster parents on Mother’s Day that shared their journey of fostering.

I was contacted by a former Brevard C.A.R.E.S. Board Member, Dr. Kronman, whom offered in kind space in One Church. The proposed use of the space could be utilized for foster parent trainings and meetings, visits with families, consults, supervised visitation and Cribs for Kids safe sleep classes.

Brevard Youth Leadership Academy (BYLA) concluded in March and six youth successfully graduated. These youth have re-established the Youth Leadership Council. Development of the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Youth Thrive Protective and Promotive Factors Framework was included in the activities. The youth also supplanted the framework into the new Youth Leadership Council and established the vision/mission, by laws, member criteria and purpose that the BFP Youth Thrive Steering Committee will serve. The newly formed vision statement is: “All youth and young adults in the System of Care will have the opportunity to thrive.” The mission statement is reflective of the purpose of the initiative: the Brevard Youth Leadership Council will advocate for youth and young adults through voice and choice to improve the System of Care (SOC). The four priorities established by the council include: 1) Increasing foster homes for teens and additional homes that can provide specialized care; 2) Promoting normalcy throughout the SOC in all settings where foster youth reside; 3) Increasing mentors and supportive adults and 4) Building capacity of youth to successfully transition to independence. The priorities will be shared at the upcoming Youth Summit and will feature a youth panel and interactive discussion with community stakeholders. The BYLA provider, Smile for Budgie, is also offering educational scholarships to youth who are in need of support for tuition and/or books to pursue their educational goals. Funding may also be used for vocational and technical schools.

I am pleased to report that I am forming some new partnerships that address identified gaps in service delivery. The first is with Community of Hope; a faith-based, non-profit that provides housing for families with children to promote long term stability. The agency was formed in 2003 by leaders of Brevard County local churches; stemming from the shortage of housing options for families on a transitional basis. Community of Hope is a member of the Brevard Homeless Coalition and recent recipient of the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) contract from Brevard County Housing and Human Services. The agency also partners with the South Brevard Women’s Center and Habitat for Humanity. The partnership would entail access to dedicated housing units for families exiting the child welfare system who have achieved reunification. There are eight units throughout the county for use. Most of the properties have been obtained through endowments. Since there are a number of churches affiliated with Community of Hope, this collaborative effort could serve a dual purpose of also helping to advance the “Just One” recruitment initiative.

Additionally, I was also contacted by Greg Jones, Director of Special Projects, Brevard County Housing Authority, regarding housing services for child welfare involved families. An upcoming meeting has been scheduled to

discuss a joint grant application made available through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development titled the Family Unification Program (FUP); due on July 24, 2018. FUP provides housing assistance under the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program in partnership with Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWAs). The targeted groups in the population of focus include:

- Families for whom the lack of adequate housing is a primary factor in the imminent placement of the family's child, or children, in out-of-home care; or the delay in the discharge of the child, or children, to the family from out-of-home care; and
- Youth at least 18 years and not more than 24 years of age (have not reached their 25th birthday), who left foster care, or will leave foster care within 90 days, in accordance with a transition plan described in Section 475(5) (H) of the Social Security Act, and are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older. As required by statute, a FUP voucher issued to such a youth may only be used to provide housing assistance for the youth for a maximum of 36 months.

Based on the eligibility criteria, the vouchers would also be utilized for youth in Extended Foster Care and increase the number of youth exiting care with secured housing in addition to adding resources to transition and affordable housing options.

A state wide draft plan to prepare for the Florida Family First Preservation Services Act, Guardian Assistance Program (GAP) and Path Forward initiatives has been released by DCF. The broad scope of the plan is inclusive of a statewide feasibility assessment for implementation of new federal standards, identification of needed Florida policy and practice changes, stakeholder engagement (including a statewide communication plan) and any necessary FSFN redesign. The Office of Child Welfare is holding a statewide meeting next week to discuss further details of the GAP implementation. The Florida Institute for Child Welfare and Casey Family Programs has been engaged as consultants throughout the process.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Executive Director