

CITIZENS FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD INC. COLLIER COUNTY

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



CITIZENS FOSTER CARE
REVIEW BOARD, INC.
EST. 1992

P O Box 10746
Naples, FL 34101

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cfcrcollier@gmail.com



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PO Box 10746
Naples FL 34101
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A 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Thomas J. Wedlock
President
Lori Cohen
Vice President
Fernand Billon
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Robert Nossen
Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Doug Campbell
Donald Rauch
Michael V.2 Reagen, PhD
Kenneth I. Shevin

April 30, 2024

Dear Friends:

The Citizen's Foster Care Review Board (CFCRB) was founded in 1992 in response to concerns by the Hon. Ted Brousseau to a heavy caseload of dependency cases. Judge Brousseau recognized the value of this community partnership as a way to allocate each dependency case the time and attention that it deserved. The CFCRB supports the Dependency Court by conducting Judicial Reviews on a rotational basis with the Judge. In 2023 our volunteers heard 166 cases involving 244 children.

The CFCRB receives no governmental funding and must rely on fundraising and grants to support our mission. Your donation through our website www.cfcrcollier.org or by mail will help us protect and advance the interests of abused and neglected children who come under the jurisdiction of Collier County's Dependency Court.

It is truly an honor and a privilege to represent such a dedicated and determined group of volunteers devoted to a most valuable mission. 2023 marked our 31st year serving Collier's Dependency Court and children and families.

Thank you so much for your continued support and friendship.

With sincere gratitude,

Thomas J. Wedlock
President

Lori Cohen
Vice-President

MISSION STATEMENT

THE MISSION OF THE CITIZENS FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD (CFCRB) IS TO PROTECT AND ADVANCE THE INTERESTS OF ABUSED AND NEGLECTED CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS IN COLLIER COUNTY WHO COME UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE DEPENDENCY COURT BY PROVIDING WELL-TRAINED VOLUNTEERS TO OVERSEE THEIR SAFETY, STABILITY AND WELL-BEING.

2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Lt. Tom Wedlock
Vice President	Lori Cohen
Secretary	Fernand Billon
Treasurer	Robert Nossen
Director	Doug Campbell
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Director	Michael V. Reagen Ph.D.
Director	Kenneth I. Shevin

CITIZENS FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD INC			
2023 FINANCIAL ACTIVITY			
INCOME			
Donations		27,467	
TOTAL INCOME			27,467
EXPENSES			
Administrative		16,221	
Program:		2,036	
TOTAL EXPENSES			18,257
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)			9,210

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Stakeholders in the dependency court system share a common goal - to preserve families and protect children! Guided by core values of impartiality, fairness and integrity, the thirty-two volunteer panel members of the Citizens Foster Care Review Board (CFCRB) heard 166 judicial reviews involving 244 children in 2023. The number of cases heard in 2023 remained static compared to the number heard in 2022.

Pursuant to Florida Statute 39.702, the CFCRB submits its annual report to the 20th Judicial Circuit Chief J. Frank Porter. It is also shared with our dependency judges, state and local child welfare agencies and related stakeholders within the community.

This annual report summarizes the data collected by the CFCRB panel members during judicial reviews in a single year and compares it to previous years. The primary cause of entry into the system remains parental substance abuse (50%) followed by sexual abuse (12%) and mental health and neglect (10%). Children aged 6-10 years represented nearly 28% of the children served by the CFCRB in 2023, followed closely by children aged 0-2 years old at 26%. This younger population is especially vulnerable given that they may not be enrolled in school or daycare, therefore there are no extra community eyes monitoring these children. Placement of children outside of the home was equally shared between Licensed Foster Care/Group Homes (41%) and placement with relatives/non-relatives (41%). An unfortunate on-going trend is the placement of our children in care outside of Collier County due to a shortage of licensed foster homes in the community. This has shown to have a negative impact on our kids as long commutes and limited staff impose limits on the frequency and duration of parental and sibling visitation. In this situation education is either disrupted or the children face a lengthy commute across county lines to remain in the same school. Removal from familiar surroundings continues to negatively affect our kids by disrupting sports and other extra-curricular activities, medical and mental health treatments, as well as friendships. The Panel considers consistent and regular parental and sibling visitation, as well as uninterrupted mental health services to be key to achieving the timeliest permanency outcomes for our families. The Panel members consider Florida Statute 39.4021 regarding Placement Priority, when presented with requests to reassign a child's placement.

As changes and improvements in programs are made over the years, challenges remain. Stakeholders and the community must continue to work together to find solutions. This is where the CFCRB is in a unique position to serve as a link and voice to the community.

THE WORK OF THE CFCRB

The CFCRB was established in 1992 under Florida law, after a need was observed by Dependency Judge, the late Hon. Ted Brousseau Jr. Citizen panels allow more time and therefore more in-depth review of dependency cases, thus allowing judges to focus on other proceedings.

Panels consist of a cross-section of volunteers from the community who undergo specialized training to acquaint themselves with the Judicial Review process. Upon completion of their training, volunteers are sworn in by the Judge to hear Judicial Reviews and act in the best

interest of the children. Volunteers are also required to undergo a criminal history check and attend in-service training throughout the year.

Acting under the authority of the Dependency Court, panels of 4-5 well-trained volunteers conduct judicial hearings to ensure children's needs are being met and that progress is being made to bring the case to conclusion. They ensure that all necessary services are being provided to the families as well as monitor the welfare of the children.

Based on the information received at these hearings, the panels make recommendations to the Dependency Court Judge regarding the safety of the children and the progress of the family toward case resolution. Upon acceptance by the Judge, these recommendations become fully enforceable court orders.

Pursuant to Florida law, a judicial hearing in a dependency case must be held at least every 6 months to determine whether it is advancing in an expeditious and appropriate fashion.

Prior to each hearing, panel members review the case documents pertinent to the review, including Judicial Review reports, Guardian ad Litem reports, Comprehensive Behavioral Health assessments and prior court orders, to name a few. The parents, the Department of Children and Families, the case manager, caregivers, Guardians ad Litem, the children, and the attorneys representing the parties to the case have the opportunity to attend the hearing. All parties, including the children, are given an opportunity to be heard, thus encouraging open communication. Per Florida Rule 8.255(b), the child has a right to be present at all hearings. If a child is not present at a Judicial Review hearing, the Panel makes an inquiry and then a determination on whether or not it is in the best interest of the child to continue the hearing to provide the child an opportunity to be present.

The panel examines the safety, education, enrichment activities, physical (medical/dental), psychological and emotional needs of the children. When a need is identified, the panel seeks to identify a potential remedy, which is then included in its recommendations to the court. The goal of the panel is to reduce the instability that dependency instills in the children and their families. We encourage all parties to move effectively and efficiently to create a permanent solution for the child.

The panels help to ensure the safety and well-being of the children while expediting permanent placements. The panels bring the objective voice of the community to the dependency process. In addition, by bringing the experience, thought processes and intellectual efforts of five trained members of the community to bear on each hearing, a comprehensive analysis of each case will result. At the same time, the panels ensure the accountability of all participants in the proceedings, and afford all parties - but, particularly the children - the opportunity to be heard.

Finally, by assuming part of the burden of the Dependency Court, the panel's work provides the judicial process with the ability to focus more time and attention on each case in pursuit of an optimal outcome.

Our vision remains steadfast in its commitment to children, young adults, and their families in the Dependency system---*That every child has the most meaningful outcome; that the court reach timely resolutions; that every child and young adult lives in a safe, secure, healthy, and permanent home and that families are reunified whenever possible.*

2023 DATA REVIEW

- ❖ The CFCRB supports the Collier County Dependency Court by conducting Judicial Reviews on a rotational basis with the Judge.
- ❖ To accomplish this task, our Panel Volunteers contributed over 2,000 volunteer hours in 2023. Marking **our 31st** year, we look forward to continued service to the community and the court.
- ❖ The Panel conducted **166** judicial reviews involving **244** children in 2023.
- ❖ The number of Cases heard in 2023 was comparable to the number heard in 2022.
- ❖ As in previous years, the primary cause of entry into the system remains substance misuse (**50%**), followed by sexual abuse (**12%**), neglect (**10%**) and mental health of the parents (**10%**).
- ❖ **159** Children (**65%**) attended their Hearings, either in person, or via Zoom. The majority of those who did not attend had been excused by the Judge.
- ❖ Children ages **6-10 (28%)** and ages **0-2 (26%)** were the largest groupings by age served by the Panels. These were followed by children aged **11-15 (20%)**, **3-5 15%)**, **16-17 (7%)** and **18+ (3%)**.
- ❖ Placement of in Licensed Foster Care or Group Homes (**41%**), followed by placement with relatives (**31%**) and non-relative care (**10%**) were the predominant choices in 2023.
- ❖ **39%** of identified barriers/obstacles to obtaining permanency for children were associated with Case Management. The major barriers included a lack of or delayed documentation, delays in making necessary referrals, including **19** judicial review hearings without or with late reports, resulting in **7** hearings being rescheduled. Other significant barriers included immigration, parental incarceration, and housing.
- ❖ The most frequent goals recommended by the Panel in 2023 were Adoption (**31%**) and Concurrent Goals (**31%**), followed by Reunification (**20%**).
- ❖ A Guardian ad Litem was assigned to **96%** of cases heard by the panel.

The CFCRB gives special thanks and acknowledgement to . . .

20TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT UNIFIED FAMILY COURT COLLIER COUNTY JUDGE:

We welcome and thank our newest dependency Judge, The Honorable Erik Leontiev for his guidance and support.

20TH JUDICIAL COURT CHIEF JUDGE:

We are honored to serve under the auspices of Chief Judge J. Frank Porter.

THE RAY FOUNDATION:

We are grateful for their generous grant in memory of the late Hon. Ted Brousseau Jr. – a dear friend to both.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS:

Doug Campbell
Lori Cohen
Lois D'Alimonte
Joe Jaffe
The Hon. Shannon McFee
Ellen Moreau
Wayne Mullican
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Roxanne Parker

The Players Club & Spa
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John Salvino
Kenneth Shevin
William Swenfurth
Lt. Tom Wedlock
Wiltrude West



2023 VOLUNTEERS

TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS, WHO CONTRIBUTED OVER 2,000 VOLUNTEER HOURS IN 2023, WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR PASSION, TIME, HARD WORK AND FOR CARING ABOUT OUR COLLIER COUNTY CHILDREN.

2023 PANEL MEMBERS

Terry Abraham-Whalley

Michael Baumohl ^

Eileen Brooks

Sandy Bruce

Sandra Bryant

Doug Campbell * + ^

Lori Cohen * + ^

John D'Alimonte +

Lois D'Alimonte + ^

Bob DeHaven

** Board Member*

+ Chair

^ Steering Committee Member

Jennifer DeVries +

Frank Halas

Joe Jaffe + ^

Cheri Kooiker

Caren Langevin +

DeAnne Miller

Elaine Moorin

Ellen Moreau

Denise Murphy

John Neighbours

Heather Ochs

Danielle O'Connor

Claire O'Keefe +

Donald Rauch * + ^

Marsha Rogers

Ira Schwartz

Kathy Shoop

Elli Taylor

Roy Terry III

Harold Weeks ^

Willie West

Carmen Wise

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Michael Baumohl

Doug Campbell

Lori Cohen

Lois D'Alimonte

Joe Jaffe

Donald Rauch (Chair)

Harold Weeks

VOLUNTEER TRAINERS

Lori Cohen

Judy Groos

Joe Jaffe

Donald Rauch

COURT LIASION

Judy Groos

ADMIN ASSISTANT

Claire O'Sullivan



“Every child deserves a champion — an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best they can possibly be.”

Rita F. Pierson - Educator

PLEASE CONSIDER MAKING A DONATION

Give a contribution including, in honor or in memoriam of a child, friend or family member or in appreciation of the work of the CFCRB.

As a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization, we are independent of the 20th Judicial Circuit Court and rely on contributions and grants from the community and businesses.

YOUR SUPPORT WILL HELP US TO CONTINUE OUR WORK. PLEASE LOG INTO OUR WEBSITE WWW.CFCRBCOLLIER.ORG TO DONATE OR MAIL YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO:

**CFCRB INC.
P O BOX 10746
NAPLES, FL 34101**

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