



Minutes of the Meeting of the  
**Board of Directors**  
 Eckerd Community Alternatives Circuit 13  
 The Family Place  
 Tampa, Florida  
 Tuesday, February 24, 2015

BOARD MEMBERS		OTHER ATTENDEES
Attendees:	Dennis Hardiman	Ron Zychowski
	Joe Clark	Rich Semancik
	Patsy Feliciano	Pam Griffith
		Randy Luecke
		Will Jones
		Kathleen Cowan
		Melanie Owens
Excused:	Eileen Kamerick	Jody Grutza
		David Dennis
		Ellyn Evans
		Deb McGinty - DCF
		Jan Gregory - DCF
Recorder:		Laura Hunt, Secretary

The Board meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by the Chair, Mr. Dennis Hardiman.

**Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Dennis Hardiman presented the minutes of the October 28, 2014 ECA 13 Board meeting for approval. Mr. Hardiman asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Joseph Clark made the motion and Mrs. Patsy Feliciano seconded the motion. With no comments the motion was unanimously passed.

Mr. Hardiman asked the public if they had any comments. With no comments from the public Mr. Hardiman asked Ms. Kathleen Cowan to give the Operation report.

**Operations Report**

Ms. Cowan called the Board’s attention to the Executive Director’s Report which was added to the board packet. The first page of the report depicts the total number of children served, children entering the system and children exiting the system.

The report highlights of celebration and areas needing improvement.

Areas of Celebration: Collaboration and partnership with key stakeholders are critical in meeting the needs of children and achieving performance outcomes. Each key stakeholder plays a critical part in service delivery, including, but not limited to; the Judiciary, Guardian Ed Litem, private Attorneys, Attorney Ed Litem, Office of the Attorney General, Hillsborough County Sheriff's office, foster parents, case management and service providers. Similar to Eckerd's wheel, if the wheel of stakeholders is not balanced, it will impact permanency for a child and outcomes for the organization. The collaborative partnerships that we have established in Hillsborough County are helping us to reduce the total number of children currently receiving services in the child welfare system and we are happy to report a reduction of the last twelve months of 2%. Our Safety Reduction Workgroup was launched by Casey Family Programs to help support Eckerd's goal to safely reduce the number of children in foster care. The goals are to increase safety, permanency and well-being for Hillsborough county children and to add value to current child welfare improvement efforts. The most significant impact the workgroup has addressed is reducing the rate of children in Hillsborough county entering out of home care. Impact from the workgroup can be seen in a 9% reduction of removals this past year. As noted on the report, ECA-Hillsborough also initiated a Nine-Month Permanency Staffing Process. This initiative was launched to support our efforts in reducing the length of time a child has to spend in foster care prior to reunification. As a result of this process, permanency for children within 12 months has improved slightly from 49.1% for the first half of 2014 to 50.7% for the first half of 2015. Since implementing this process in October 2014, the Operations Team projects that permanency for children within 12 months of removal is slated to improve to 53% in January and 59% in February.

Areas Needing Improvement: Improvement is still needed in the area of adoptions. Although we have continued to meet our annual adoption goals, the process is complex with many facets. As an agency, we are always looking at opportunities to ensure the adoption process works smoothly for both the child and potential family. It requires the organization to have a strong recruitment program for potential adoptive parents; quality training for potential parents, comprehensive adoption homes studies and a clean match process to ensure the best match is made between the child and potential parent. Once the finalization occurs, it requires the organization to have a robust post-adoption support program. Currently ECA Hillsborough offers support to over 3,000 children and their families. Over the next few months, staff will be looking at all functions within the adoption process to develop strategies to improve efficiencies and effectiveness.

Ms. Cowan then went on to review the performance scorecard. The top section of the report reflects our contract measures with the Department of Children and Families. Eckerd made significant improvement in all measures needing attention. During the last board meeting Eckerd reported that 6 of the 8 contract measures were in the green (one in the red and one in the yellow). We are happy to report as of 12/31/14, 7 of the 8 measures are in the green.

As noted on the top chart, we have one measure remaining in the yellow- adoptions, in which we have experienced significant improvement having accomplished 52 adoptions during the first quarter and 91 the second quarter. It is also important to note that we are pacing ahead of the same time period of last year (115 versus our current 143). As mentioned above, we are evaluating all aspects of the adoption process to continue to improve performance. On the bottom of the page are our self-imposed measures. As

noted on the chart, Eckerd staff has done an amazing job driving these metrics to include achieving significant improvement in our efforts to safely reduce the number of children remaining in out of home care. The impact of the hard work of the leadership team and the implementation of the nine month permanency staffing has directly impacted the reduction of children remaining in out of home care greater than 12 months and the reduction of children in out of home care.

ECA Hillsborough is meeting three measures and continues to trend in the right direction. Eckerd continues to partner with High School Guidance Counselors and case management to ensure youth are on track for graduation (alternative diploma tracks are being discussed for youth as needed).

Mr. Clark commended the transparency of the new Executive Director Report format. He requested a status update on the use of predictive analytics to recruit foster parents that was discussed at the last ECA Advisory Board Meeting. Ms. Cowan indicated that ECA was satisfied with recruitment but they still struggled with recruitment of homes for teens and large sibling groups.

Ms. Feliciano asked if under the IL measures if we tracked the youth beyond high school. Ms. Cowan acknowledged that the information was tracked and will be reported in the future.

With no more questions from the Board, Ms. Cowan concluded her report.

### **ECA Finance Report**

Mr. Hardiman asked Mrs. Pamela Griffith to give the ECA Circuit 13 Finance update.

Mrs. Griffith informed the Board about the December financials stating that ECA-H is projected to have a surplus of \$2.2M. This surplus will carry forward to FY2016.

ECA13 is expecting a positive variance in all categories resulting in a projected surplus of \$2.2M. This is a \$1.2M increase from the last Board Report, August 2014. Listed below are three items that Mrs. Griffith highlighted in her report.

Lead Agency related expenses are projected to have a positive variance to plan of \$123K,. The contributing factor for the surplus relates to lapse dollars associated with staff vacancies.

Independent Living (IL) expenses are estimated to have a positive variance to plan of \$405Kt. Extended Foster Care (EFC) is a relatively new approach allowing youth to elect to stay in foster care after age 18. Greater participation was budgeted than the current demand. Ms. Cowan explained ECA took a conservative approach based on a DCF study of youth aging out of care. She further indicated that of the 66 youth aging out, 19% were attending college, 45% continued in foster care, 19% were receiving extended aftercare, 15% opted out of services and 2% were unknown.

Mr. Clark asked if staff have identified any barriers to youth taking advantage of the extended foster care option.

Ms. Cowan replied that one barrier to some youth were those that came into care late in life and children abandoned from the juvenile justice system.

Out-of-Home (OHC) Services expenses are expected to realize a positive variance of \$1.4M. The variance is attributable to higher than planned exits from out-of-home-care.

PwC Charitable Foundation, Inc. awarded ECA13 a \$25K grant to promote education and independence of foster youth in Tampa. Ms. Cowan explained the funds were being used for audio books for children on their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, a shark tank experience for middle school youth and a financial literacy component for youth aging out.

With no further questions from the Board or the public Mrs. Griffith concluded her report.

### **External Relations Report**

Mr. Hardiman asked Ms. Jody Grutza to give the Board an External Relations update. Below are a few of the events that Ms. Grutza highlighted in her report.

#itCANbedone Campaign – This DCF social media campaign highlights successes of Florida’s foster youth and former foster youth in pursuing their educational, professional and life goals. Eckerd’s kick-off event featured comments from independent living youth and stakeholders from both sides of the Bay. More than 100 community partners came out to participate in this event. Ms. Grutza thanked Mr. Hardiman and Ms. Feliciano for their participation.

onbikes Event – Onbikes has chosen Eckerd as it’s charity of choice. On Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, volunteers from onbikes and ECA 13 gathered at Amalie Arena to distribute 500 bicycles to children in foster care. The bikes were donated by onbikes who raises money each year to purchase bicycles for children in need through “Winter Wonder Ride” event in Tampa. This event attracted over 1,000 riders. Onbikes has been engaged for the Walk a Mile event this May.

ECA co-sponsored the screening of a tough love documentary about the personal view of the child welfare system. Over 200 people attended the screening.

ECA also partnered with volunteers so 12 children could experience a wilderness weekend camping. Mr. Clark was pleased ECA followed up with the hosts, helping to build advocates who are now more knowledgeable about foster care.

Upcoming events include an adoption family picnic, a foster family picnic and the ECA Walk a Mile for a Child signature event.

With no questions from the Board or the public Ms. Grutza concluded her report.

With no more questions from the Board or the public, Mr. Hardiman adjourned the meeting at 9:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Laura Hunt, Secretary