



Minutes of the Meeting of the  
**Board of Directors**  
 Eckerd Community Alternatives - Hillsborough  
 The Family Place  
 Tampa, Florida  
 Tuesday, February 26, 2019

	BOARD MEMBERS	OTHER ATTENDEES
Attendees:	Joe Clark	Josh Talkington
Via Phone:	Dennis Hardiman	Pam Griffith
	Ron Zychowski	Genet Stewart
		Chris Card
		Roxanne McNeish
		Don Dixon
Recorder:		Laura Hunt, Secretary

The Board meeting was called to order at 9:08 a.m. by the Chair, Mr. Joseph Clark

**Introduction**

Mr. Clark introduced Dr Don Dixon and Dr Roxanne McNeish who have been nominated to join the ECA 13 board and reviewed their backgrounds, qualifications and extensive experience in child welfare. Formal action will be taken at the Eckerd Connects board meeting.

**Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Clark presented the minutes of the November 14, 2018 ECA 13 Board meeting for approval. With no questions or comments the motion was unanimously passed. There were no outstanding items from the meeting to be addressed.

Mr. Clark asked the public if they had any comments and with no comments from the public, Mr. Clark asked Ms. Stewart to give the Operations report.

**Operations Report**

Ms. Genet Stewart stated that ECA 13 continues to face challenges associated with the sustained rate in which children are entering out-of-home care placement. The removal rate in Hillsborough County has outpaced the state average every month during the current fiscal year. Since July 2016, ECA13 has experienced a staggering 28% net increase in youth placed in substitute care which has resulted in higher cost, continued challenges with sufficient foster bed capacity and increases in case manager caseloads.

These system of care stressors have challenged our workforce and have directly impacted overall performance.

Despite ongoing efforts to ensure every child entering foster care has a licensed placement, we have continued to struggle with some teens refusing placement or providers not able to accept a youth due to concerns associated with ungovernable behaviors.

During the month of January 2019, we had 25 overnight incidents involving a total of 8 children (1 youth accounted for 11 of the overnight incidents). Our youth experiencing a temporary or overnight placement has fluctuated between a low of 7 youth to a high of 25 youth. The fluctuation in numbers can be directly attributed to the number of youths entering or re-entering foster care during the reporting week. Ms. Stewart also touched on the new corrective action plan, which will be included in the Board book going forward, stating that Eckerd meets monthly with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Office of Attorney General, and the diversion providers to address the items on the ECA 13 Corrective Action Plan.

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

Legislative update: Dr. Card gave the Board an overview of where we are with the legislative activity. Dr. Card said that he personally met with every legislator from Hillsborough County along with the Secretary of DCF. Dr. Card stated that the Secretary has taken some initiative and that he is committed to helping ECA 13. The Secretary is also reaching out to people around the State to help. Dr. Card stated that ECA 13 needs 12 million dollars to offset the deficit and get ahead of this system. Dr. Card will be in Tallahassee every week through the end of session.

### **ECA Finance Report**

Mrs. Pamela Griffith updated the Board on the finances for the month of December indicating that ECA 13 is projecting a \$2.3M deficit or a negative \$462K variance to budget after Risk Pool Allocation. The allocation for ECA 13 was \$2.72M which is 86.6% of the total amount requested. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) held back \$5.4M of the \$15M Risk Pool Funding to be allocated later in the fiscal year.

Mrs. Griffith also highlighted Client Related services stating that expenses are projected to have a negative variance to plan of \$501K. This variance is due to the increase of children in care and increased mentoring and supervision services to stabilize a few teens.

Mrs. Griffith also explained that Out-of-Home (OHC) Services expenses are expected to realize a negative variance of \$2.6M due to growth in residential placements. ECA 13 continues to experience a growth in the number of kids in paid placement. At the end of December there were 1027 kids in licensed care compared to 1016 twelve months prior. A decrease of 17 children has been realized since the last Board Financial Report (August 2019 reporting).

ECA 13 has also experienced higher placement cost increasing the average daily cost per child by \$7.97 equating to over \$2.9M annually. The agency is actively increasing efforts to address exits, while ensuring child safety. Additional actions involve drilling down on exceptional costs and stepping down kids.

With no more questions, Mrs. Griffith concluded her report.

The Board moved to accept the Financial report as submitted

### **Community Partners**

The ECA 13 Board had case management (DFL) and Foster Partner Association updates.

Ms. Kim Hernandez spoke on behalf of the Hillsborough County Family Partnership Alliance. Ms. Hernandez expressed some concerns about the recent changes to the adoption unit and the transfer of responsibility to the case management agencies. Ms. Hernandez spoke about her desire for more support of adoptive parents and shared challenges that she is having getting the services she and her family need. Ms. Hernandez advised that she believes leadership is too far removed from the front-line staff and requested that the Board trust the leadership it has hired in the community.

### **External Relations Report**

Mr. Clark asked Mr. Josh Talkington to give the Board the External Relations update.

National Adoption Day: 22 children were adopted by their forever families as part of National Adoption Day in Hillsborough County in November. Thank you and congratulations to the 13 families who adopted these deserving former foster children and gave each of them a home. This truly was a community effort and we are eternally grateful to be partnered with so many amazing organizations and individuals.

Thank you to the judges, sponsors, our community partners, and everyone who came out to support these children and adoptive families. We'd also like to offer a special thank you to all the Eckerd Connects staff that went above and beyond to make this event such a huge success.

Partnership with Church Brings in Thousands of Gifts: For the 3rd year in a row the congregation at Christ Fellowship Tampa has provided donations of gifts through their church-driven initiative, Fostering Hope. Fostering Hope is a labor of love that is a result of the church's pastor, Bruce Moore, and his wife Heather, adopting through Hillsborough's System of Care and letting their church know of the needs of children in foster care.

This year, Christ Fellowship's generous contribution resulted in approximately 1,400 bags full of gifts! Thank you to Christ Fellowship Tampa for this amazing partnership and for demonstrating their passion to help ensure that all kids in foster care receive Christmas gifts.

Military Service Personnel Buy Gifts: A group of local military service members went well above and beyond the call of duty this holiday season. They collected donations and purchased Christmas gifts for dozens of foster children in Hillsborough County. A special thank you to Sgt. Diandra Sims for leading this effort to donate gifts for 85 foster children. Gifts ranged from basketballs and dolls to bikes and tablets. These amazing men and women in uniform say they plan to sponsor children again next Christmas.

Ugly Sweater Pub Crawl: The inaugural Eckerd Connector's Ugly Sweater Pub Dash was held on December 15 in downtown Dunedin. In its first year the event had 144 participants and brought in a net of \$11,500 in donations for teens in the local foster care system. We also received television coverage to help promote the event from ABC Action News.

With no questions from the Board, Mr. Talkington concluded his report.

### **Chair's Report**

Mr. Clark directed attention to the section of Dr. Taylor's final report detailing the eight essential aspects of child welfare. The report discussed leadership, clinical expertise, workforce partnerships, inclusivity of action plans and continuous quality improvement. It was noted that Eckerd had effectively addressed all issues in these seven areas and now this was a work in progress. Dr. Taylor noted that the eighth factor is money; given the growth in the system, effective work cannot be sustained without new money.

The funding disparities around the state were again noted. Mr. Clark thanked all for their hard work in educating and informing our policymakers and the public on the necessity of addressing disparities and securing funds adequate to not only maintain the system but to ultimately effectively address the underlying issues that bring children into the system.

With no more questions from the Board, Mr. Clark adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Laura Hunt, Secretary