

CITIZENS FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD INC. COLLIER COUNTY

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



**CITIZENS FOSTER CARE
REVIEW BOARD, INC.
EST. 1992**



**CITIZENS FOSTER CARE
REVIEW BOARD, INC.
EST. 1992**

CFCRB Inc.
PO Box 10746
Naples FL 34101
CFCRBCollier@gmail.com
www.CFCRBCollier.org

A 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

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

DIRECTORS

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

May 31, 2023

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 2022 our volunteers heard 163 cases involving 257 children.

COVID-19 continued to provide unique challenges in 2022. Fortunately, in October, 2022 the Panels, as well as the Collier Dependency Court, under the direction of The Honorable Shannon McFee returned to conducting in-person Judicial Reviews. Accommodations continue to be made for parties upon request, particularly the children to continue to attend JRs via Zoom. This allows for less disruption in the child's day by avoiding what is sometimes a long commute to and from the Collier County Courthouse.

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 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. The year 2022 marked a milestone 30th 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.

2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Lt. Tom Wedlock
Vice President	Lori Cohen
Secretary	Fernand Billon
Treasurer	Robert Nossen
Director	Ann Campbell
Director	Doug Campbell
Director	Angie Cruz
Director	Donald Rauch
Director	Kenneth I. Shevin

CITIZENS FOSTER CARE REVIEW BOARD INC			
2022 FINANCIAL ACTIVITY			
INCOME			
Donations		839	
TOTAL INCOME			839
EXPENSES			
Administrative		8574	
Program:		2746	
TOTAL EXPENSES			11,320
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)			(10,481)

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 twenty-seven volunteer panel members of the Citizens Foster Care Review Board (CFCRB) heard 163 judicial reviews involving 257 children in 2022. As in 2020 and 2021, the majority of cases were conducted over zoom due COVID-19 Pandemic restrictions. The number of cases heard in 2022 remained fairly static compared to the number heard in 2021.

Pursuant to Florida Statute 39.702, the CFCRB submits its annual report to the 20th Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Michael McHugh as well as Chief Judge-Elect 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 followed by domestic violence and then by mental health. Children, ages 5 and under represented nearly 43% of the children served by the CFCRB in 2022. This 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. Over one-half of the children removed from their homes were able to be placed with relatives. For those not able to be placed with relatives, the majority were placed in licensed foster care. An unfortunate trend has continued to develop which shows a great number of our children are placed out of county. 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 visitation. Education is either disrupted or the children face a long commute across county lines in order to remain in their 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 visitation, as well as uninterrupted mental health services to be key to achieving the most timely 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 Ted Brousseau. 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 act in the best interest of the child. Volunteers are also required to undergo a criminal history check and attend in-service trainings throughout the year.

Acting under the authority of the Dependency Court, panels of 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 are entitled to be heard by the panel. The children who are the subject of the proceedings are required by law to be present, unless otherwise excused by the Court. They are offered the opportunity to speak with the panel, thus encouraging open communication.

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.

Upon deliberation, the panel makes recommendations to the Court. Once reviewed and approved, those recommendations become an order of the Court that must be complied with by all parties.

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.*

2022 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 2022. Marking **our 30th** year, we look forward to continued service to the community and the court.
- ❖ The Panel conducted **163** judicial reviews involving **257** children in 2022. Through September, 2022, judicial reviews were conducted via Zoom. Since October, 2022, we resumed in-person proceedings, while offering the option, upon request for children and some parties to continue to participate via Zoom.
- ❖ The number of Cases heard in 2022 remained about the same as the number heard in 2021. The local case management organization has rolled out a new program to work with families in a non-judicial capacity. We are yet unaware how, if at all, this program might affect the number of families involved judicially.
- ❖ The primary cause of entry into the system remains substance misuse (**52%**), with the secondary reason being domestic violence (**23%**).
- ❖ **172** Children (**67%**) attended their Hearings, either in person, or via Zoom.
- ❖ Children ages **6-10 (26%)** and ages **11-15 (24%)** were the largest groupings by age served by the Panels. These were followed by children aged **birth to 3 (23%)**, **3-5 (20%)**, **16-17 (5%)** and **18+ (2%)**.
- ❖ Placement of children with relatives, followed by placement in licensed foster care were the predominant choices in 2022.
- ❖ **71%** of identified barriers to obtaining permanency for children are associated with the parents. Lack of compliance with case plans, along with insufficient visitations were the leading barriers reported.
- ❖ The most frequently recommended goal in 2022 was Reunification (37%), followed by concurrent goals (24%) and then Adoption (22%).

*The CFCRB gives special thanks and
acknowledgement to . . .*

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

We are grateful to The Honorable Shannon McFee for his support and guidance during another challenging year. Judge McFee wasted no time shifting court to zoom at the start of the Pandemic. When court appearances resumed in-person, Collier's Dependency saw no backlog. Judge McFee will take up a new docket in Charlotte County in 2023. We wish him continued success and look forward to working with our newly assigned Judge, The Honorable Erik Leontiev.

20TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT CHIEF JUDGE: We are honored to have served under the auspices of Chief Judge Michael McHugh and we look forward to working under the direction of Chief Judge-Elect J. Frank Porter.

20TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT DEPENDENCY COURT CASE MANAGER FOR COLLIER COUNTY:

Mrs. Judy Groos oversaw the scheduling of CFCRB cases, distribution of court files and documents to panel members. We congratulate Judy on her retirement from Court Administration after nearly 25 years and are delighted that she will continue her role of serving the court as a member of the CFCRB family.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS:

Ann Campbell
Ray Foundation Inc.
Michael V. Reagen Ph.D.
Lt. Tom Wedlock

2022 VOLUNTEERS

TO ALL OUR VOLUNTEERS, WHO CONTRIBUTED OVER 2,000 VOLUNTEER HOURS IN 2022, WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR PASSION, TIME, HARD WORK AND FOR CARING ABOUT OUR COLLIER COUNTY CHILDREN.

2022 PANEL MEMBERS

Terry Abraham-Whalley	Jennifer DeVries +	Claire O'Keefe +
Michael Baumohl	Lynn Drexler	Donald Rauch +
Eileen Brooks	Joe Jaffe +	Michael Reagen
Sandy Bruce	Cheri Kooiker	Ira Schwartz
Ann Campbell *	Caren Langevin +	Fran Shipman
Doug Campbell * +	DeAnne Miller	Elli Taylor
Lori Cohen *+	Elaine Moorin	Harold Weeks
John D'Alimonte +	Ellen Moreau	Willie West
Lois D'Alimonte +	Susan Mullin	Carmen Wise

* *Board Member*

+ *Chair*

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Michael Baumohl
Ann Campbell (Chair)
Doug Campbell
Lori Cohen
Joe Jaffe
Donald Rauch (Chair)
Fran Shipman
Harold Weeks

VOLUNTEER TRAINERS

Fran Shipman
Joe Jaffe
Donald Rauch

PANEL CHAIR TRAINERS

Lori Cohen
Donald Rauch

ADMIN. ASSISTANT

Claire O'Sullivan

COURT LIAISON

Judy Groos



"Every Kid is One Caring Adult Away From Being a Success Story"

Josh Shipp – Youth Advocate

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**

REG: CH2818 - A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE (800) 435-7352 WITHIN THE STATE. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.
