

## La Causa, Inc. Board of Directors

Wednesday December 6th, 2023, 11:30am – 1:30pm

### Meeting Minutes

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Present: Nancy Jelen, Nicole Druckrey (Virtual), Scott Sanders, Erico Ortiz, Nilda Cintron-Cortez, Christian Laurinvicious, Joy Rivera, Bob Kotecki, Terri Severinsen, Bob Buttermore, Eddie Jimenez (Virtual), Luis Ayala

Absent: Kenneth Little

Staff: Sylvia Zapata, Joanne Diaz, Spencer Brink, Jacob Eisen, Karl Schroendorf, Kari Hendricks, Sarah Smith, Aderson Gonzalez

The meeting was called to order at 11:30am by Bob Kotecki and quorum was established. Bob Kotecki requested a motion to approve the previous meeting minutes and Scott Sanders so moved and seconded by Nancy Jelen

#### **New Business**

- The board addressed the retirement of both Nancy Jelen and Teri Severinsen
- Bob Kotecki gave a speech to the board, thanked them for their continuous years of service and presented each with a commemorative plaque.

As customary for every December/Year-End board meeting, each division leader gave a summary of accomplishments and challenges for 2023 and expectations for the upcoming year. Following, is the presentation generated along with comments and notes of conversations and/or questions raised during each segment.

## Information Technology (IT) update:

### Updates in 2023

- Updated all access points and extended WiFi range across all of CS
  - Replaced 50% of student and Staff Laptops
    - Installed new Firewall
- Reduced cellphone expense by 50%, Moved over to T-Mobile
  - Consolidated Fire alarm vendors and reduced expense
    - Improved Help desk response time
- Updated student firewall and computer policies
  - Created an inventory system



### Projects in the works

- Updating and consolidating all servers at Charter School and 809
  - Updating and consolidating our Camera system
- Replacing all switches at Charter School and 809 with up to standard PoE Switches
- Replacing the rest of the student and staff laptop inventory
  - Creating VLAN structure agency wide
- Consolidate the server room at Crisis Nursery



Both Bob Kotecki and Bob Buttermore asked several questions around data/network security and which servers and/or digital platforms are best for the organization. Aderson Gonzalez (Director of IT) ran each through how our infrastructure is currently set up and how our network is currently protected. Aderson also took everyone through a summary of data needs and how the organization is trying to balance IT needs with financial resources and utilize ESSER funds to try and mitigate costs.

## Human Resources Update:

### Target Areas: Recruitment, Staffing, Retention

La Causa, Inc. Turnover = 24.44%  
Non-Profit WI Average – 23%

Actions taken to reduce to turnover:



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1. Exit Interviews (04-01-2023)
2. Comp & Benefits review (2022 & 2023)
3. Implement pay increases (2022 & 2023)
4. Improve organizational communications (work culture) (08-2023)

30 Vacancies

### Goals for 2024

- Targeted recruitment per division
- Hire a recruiter
- Continue to improve culture through continued surveys and communication
- Streamline Processes - Implement the Onboarding module in Paylocity will reduce orientation 3-4 hours to 1.5 hours



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Joanne Diaz (Director of HR) emphasized the recruitment push through MRA which has yielded positive results – particularly among social services. Moreover, Joanne stressed the desire to streamline processes through system automation and fully optimize our current system platforms.

## Awareness & Engagement (A&E) Update:

### Increased Community Presence and Awareness



☀️🍂 This Thanksgiving, make room for one more at your table! 🍂☀️ Over 7,000 kids need loving foster homes, seeking a seat at a caring table. 🍂❤️ Can your home be their missing piece? 🍂👉 Join La Causa a...  
Sign up



- Created Full A&E team in Feb 2023
- 15+ community events attended + marketing partnerships
- Revamped Web page, Brochures and Social Media. Including targeted Advertising for Hiring and TFC.
- Staff and Parent Newsletter launch
- Community partnerships for volunteerism, donations, etc.



### 2023 Grants and Individual Giving

- Total Number of grants written: 37
- Number of grants received so far: 12
- Total Value of Grants: \$135,000
  - Herb Kohl Grant: \$75,000
  - 2022 total grants: \$108,700
- Total donations (excluding grants) as of 11/30/23: \$165,873.34



## 2023 Fundraising- Events



Number of Fundraising Events Held: 2

2023 Summer Celebration recap:

- Gross: \$101,700
- 22 sponsors
- 94 checked-in attendees
- Changed from plated dinner to small bites, no assigned tables, shorter event time.
- Challenges: A/V and OneCause issues

Facts and Familia Trivia:

- 47 tickets sold,
- Gross: \$2,480
- First-time event success.



## Eyes on the Future

**2024:**

**We will continue to:**

- ✓ Amplify the good work and stories from across La Causa.
- ✓ Increase La Causa's visibility in the community.
- ✓ Build and work relationships.

- ✓ Received Google Ad Grant to use \$10,000/month on Google ads.
- ✓ Save the Date: **September 19, 2024** for 2024 Annual Fundraiser.
- ✓ Telling the story of La Causa the Agency.
- ✓ Working relationships for Donor Advised Funds
- ✓ Renewed Focus on Donor and community partner engagement year-round with plan.



Spencer Brink (Director of A&E) stressed the importance of each board member becoming a vocal advocate of the agency via social media participation and general word of mouth. Moreover, Spencer talked about the directional change to our annual gala of becoming more entrenched in telling the history of our agency. Additionally, Spencer spoke to a renewed focus on advertising and marketing in a tactical move to attract donors.

## Early Education and Care Center (EECC) Update:

### Challenges

- Active supervision challenges – revised policies and procedures, hired outside trainers to retrain staff, implemented new tracking procedures
- Enrollment – steadily increased throughout the year – with current staff only having 10 open seats
- Hiring new staff – exploring colleges/universities as recruitment opportunities



### Celebrations

- 90% staff retention
- Hired 2 new staff after completing practicum classes with us



### Looking forward...

- YoungStar quality adjustment system returns – increasing our Shares dollars by 26%.
- Maintain 5-star NAC accreditation as we enter the re-accreditation process beginning with self-study ending with validation visit June 2025.
- Continue to increase enrollment and hire new staff.



Sarah Smith (Director of EECC), summarized challenges around the active supervision infractions that occurred over the summer of 2023, resulting in fines, performance improvement plans and a few employee terminations including the program coordinator. More importantly, Sarah went through what internal control measures have been implemented to avoid aforementioned infractions from occurring in the future. Sarah also touched upon the struggles faced with hiring, which is impeding the ability to open additional classrooms which negatively impacts enrollment.

Lastly, Sarah spoke about the 50% payment reduction that occurred over the summer which was administered through the state and reflected an intentional reduction of childcare count payments. Sarah stated that over the next few months there was uncertainty regarding status of payments and La Causa did not know whether funding will continue or be drastically impacted in 2024. Sarah announced she was notified that payments will continue through June 2024 along with the reinstitution of bonus star payments with a 26% increase potential.

#### **Crisis Nursery (CN) Update:**


## Historical Service

Annually we serve:



- 225-250 Families
- 450-500 Children
- 1,000 + duplicated stays

Through November 2023:

- 227 Families (214 families served 2022)
- 458 Children (460 served in 2022)
- 987 Duplicate Stays (761 in 2022)



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## Celebrate!



- 33 years of successfully preventing abuse
  - 10 years since the opening of the 522 W. Walker Street Location
- Dedicated Staff of 11, an average of 19 years of service
- Great continued relationships with Funders, Community, and Partners



Karl (Director of CN) expressed the need to have the Board more directly involved in promoting our annual gala.

### Social Services Update:

## Positive Developments

- With COVID-19 subsiding, Social Services has transitioned back to in-person services
  - While telehealth continues to be an option, it now has become secondary to face-to-face contact
- Hiring and retention have improved over the course of 2023
  - More individuals looking to rejoin the Social Services workforce
  - Adjustment in benefits has helped with hiring and retention
  - MRA postings
- Staff morale is higher than it has been in years
  - Staff are remarking that they like the direction La Causa is going compared to recent years





## Ongoing Barriers

- Engagement
  - Enrollees are less invested in receiving in-person services despite seeking out and demonstrating a need for them, resulting in more frequent crisis situations, a reduction in positive outcomes, and negative financial impacts, especially in fee-for-service programs
  - We have and are working with staff, system partners, and our contractors about how best to remedy this situation
  - Current solutions have been to:
    - Work to have staff engage with enrollees on a regular basis through meaningful and productive face-to-face contacts
    - Work with staff about eliminating any barriers they may have in promoting a sense of investment in services when working with enrollees
    - Have leadership and quality assurance staff reach out to disengaged enrollees to identify and solve any barriers toward re-engagement with services



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## Ongoing Barriers (cont.)

- Hiring and Retention
  - While hiring and retention have improved, there is still vacancies we are working to fill, including in leadership
  - Such barriers prevents us from seeking out new opportunities for growth given that we cannot reliably hire staff
  - Increased competition for qualified candidates across Social Services agencies in Milwaukee also limits our candidate pool and ability to hire qualified individuals
  - Current solutions have been to:
    - Increase our recruitment pool through collaboration with local universities and MRA
    - Increase our competitive edge via our benefits
    - Increase our brand presence whenever possible to promote La Causa as being a great place to work



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## Objectives of 2024

- Build Back Better
  - Complete hiring for all open positions
  - Revise and optimize training process
  - Conduct assessments on staff to determine who aren't meeting performance expectations
- Improve Collaborations
- Revenue Generation
  - Expand existing programs
  - Explore opportunities for new programming
  - Other revenue sources (donations, rental of open clinic space, etc.)



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## Conclusion

- While 2023 has proven to be difficult as it relates to hiring and retention of staff and engagement with enrollees, the Social Services division is committed to working through these remaining barriers with a renewed sense of optimism and purpose
- We are confident that we can continue to work through remaining barriers and stabilize our programs, which will allow us the opportunity to grow, prosper, and provide high quality services for those most in need of them.



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Thank You!

Jacob Eisen (Director of Social Services) summarized the need to continue to focus on hiring particularly among Recovery Support and Comprehensive Community Service. Additionally, the need to partner with the county to try and find creative ways to increase engagement among clients.

### Charter School Update:



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## Charter School

- **Successes**
  - Reduced staff turnover (8) from previous school year; same admin team; Security Guard added
  - Expansion of sports program, Sports Coordinator
  - Renewed partnership with First Stage, Walkers Point Center for the Arts
  - Accolades from MPS for our intervention protocols for academics and behavior
  - 4% increase on our state report card
  - 99% participation on the forward test in March 2023

# Charter School



- Challenges
  - Enrollment loss of 51 students from last year
    - 3<sup>rd</sup> Fri 570, current 581
  - State Report card is Meets Few Expectations
    - TSI – Targeted for Support & Improvement
    - Goal of 5% improvement annually will get us to Meets Expectations by contract renewal
  - Parental Involvement
    - School governance, Family Leadership Committee (PTO)
  - School guidance counselor
    - Support staff team

Scott Sanders asked about school security and whether the school looked into the possibility of having someone on staff. Kari Hendricks (Principal) replied that the Charter School indeed hired a security guard, and the progression is going well. Kari also spoke to a renewed focus on test scores and having an objective of a 5% per year increase over the next two years...which takes the school out of a “targeted school” distinction.

Several board members thanked our leadership team for their updates and mentioned how refreshing these yearly board meetings are because they hear directly from division leaders. Both Bob and Luis thanked the board for their continued dedication and Bob adjourned the meeting at 1:44 PM.