



# Department of Human Services

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## Family Resource Network (FRN) Regional Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 9, 2025

3:00-4:30pm, MS Teams

### Attendance

#### Present

- Marc Cowell
- Elizabeth Crowe
- Jorge De Santiago
- Susan Caskey
- Suzanne Crawford
- Kaycee Headrick
- Nancy Herbert
- Tom Mahowald
- Lexi Nolen
- Mandy Perera
- Karin Stayton
- Anne Tapp
- Johnny Terrell
- Julie Van Domelen

#### Absent

- BVSD (Vacant Seat)
- Robin Bohannan
- Dr. Perla Delgado
- Jennifer Leosz
- Christina Pacheco
- Simon Smith

#### Staff Present

- Georgina Becerril
- Emily Darrell
- Liz Izaguirre
- Joni Lynch
- Daphne McCabe
- Gwen Mossman

- Kristi Venditti
  - Katie Warning
  - Whitney Wilcox
  - Jim Williams
  - Hilda Zamora Hursh (proxy for Christina Pacheco)
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### **Welcome and Introductions**

The Family Resource Network (FRN) Regional Council Meeting was called to order by Marc Cowell at 3:01pm.

### **Approval of September 2024 FRN Regional Council Meeting Minutes**

Marc asked for a motion to approve or amend the September 2024 Meeting Minutes. Anne motioned to approve with Hilda seconding the motion. The motion to approve passed unanimously.

### **2025 FRN Chair and Vice Chair Elections**

Marc shared that according to FRN bylaws, there is no limit to the term for FRN Chair and Vice Chair. For continuity of efforts, Marc and Elizabeth both offered to retain their respective Chair and Vice Chair positions for an additional year. Julie made the motion to re-elect Marc as FRN Chair and Elizabeth as FRN Vice Chair for 2025; Karin seconded the motion. This motion passed unanimously with council members thanking Marc and Elizabeth for the additional year of service.

### **FRN Community Action Alert Event Debrief**

Marc asked council members to provide any thoughts or feedback on the FRN Community Action Alert event held on October 31, 2024 along with any potential impacts seen across their organizations. Several members expressed that they appreciated connecting in-person with organizations across the safety net, the well-organized nature of the event, the spirit of nonprofit alignment, and engaging in collective messaging to the community about safety net service provision needs. While in general it was difficult for members to attribute specific outcomes related to volunteerism and financial donations to the event, several members reported receiving questions from news outlets and community members who referenced articles read in newspapers about the event.

Marc then queried the group to assess whether the council would like to collaborate on other similar activities and if so, what ideas members had about how to build on the momentum from this event. Tom shared that he felt it was important to build on this effort in the first quarter of 2025 since many individuals and organizations plan their charitable contributions during this time frame; he supported releasing an Op Ed in area newspapers. Anne agreed that it was critical to keep this issue visible and suggested planning a follow-up event for mid-to-late March; Julie agreed with this time frame since the coming months hold some uncertainty with respect to the exact needs of the social safety net.

Elizabeth shared that it was difficult to define the advocacy arm of the messaging and asked the group if there were items on the upcoming legislative agenda about which the Council could encourage community members to stay informed. Hilda suggested bringing this topic up to local “friends boards” to encourage community member engagement.

Marc summarized the discussion by stating that the group appears to want to keep moving forward with these types of outreach events with a tentative target of early Spring 2025 for another round of engagement which would allow for time to see what the next few months bring to the safety net and the families it serves. Kaycee asked if future FRN-sponsored events would consist of another press conference, submission of regular Op Eds, and/or more generalized collective events. She also highlighted the importance of sharing success stories alongside requests for community member support. Jim offered that from a communication perspective, it might be worth exploring if there is a trusted community member who might serve as the spokesperson for a future event. Members agreed to continue exploring future options for collaborative messaging.

### **Benefits in Action (BIA) Program Updates**

Emily Darrell, special projects coordinator for BCHS, provided updates regarding this project. In response to partner organization feedback, BIA conducted community outreach in English and Spanish, established a dedicated Boulder hotline to provide application assistance over the phone, and hired a bilingual navigator dedicated to the Boulder region.

Karin asked if there was data related to the number of people BIA has supported with enrollment in programs and if there was a list of co-locations across Boulder County. Emily reported that application assistance numbers have ranged from 30-55 community members each month. Currently, BIA is co-located on a rotating schedule with Sister Carmen, Feet Forward, Walnut Place, Harvest of Hope, OUR Center, and Community Food Share; they will start providing services at EFAA towards the end of January. BIA is also working on a calendar to share with stakeholders that will provide information on location by date and time as well as whether walk-ins are accepted.

Hilda asked if BIA had the capacity to table at community events. Emily let council members know that BIA should have that capacity and to reach out to either her or BIA directly to make this request. Jorge asked whom staff should contact to have a BIA bi-lingual staff person connect with their clients. Emily replied that for now organizations should reach out to her directly; the bi-lingual BIA staff person has been hired and is currently onboarding to the program.

### **Findhelp Pilot Project Update**

Liz provided an update on the Boulder County Findhelp Pilot Project. The Findhelp Implementation Team has been meeting twice per month since the end of October. Recently the group reviewed potential branding options for the community-facing website; Liz shared the options considered as well as the final recommendation with the Council and asked for any thoughts or feedback. Additionally, launch trainings are tentatively scheduled for mid-to-late February; more information will be shared as those dates are finalized. There were no questions from council members.

### **Local Area Collaborative (LAC) Updates and Discussion**

Liz, Kristi, Joni, and Katie provided an overview of themes that have been discussed in the LACs this past month including safety of staff and community members, strain on the social safety net, and streamlined communication needs. Recently, front-line staff across multiple organizations have begun to report an increase in aggressive client behavior, particularly when an individual does not qualify for services. Multiple council members agreed that their staff were reporting similar experiences. The Council then discussed possible responses to these concerns including a collective framework across the safety net for responding to this type of encounter, increased staff support, shared resources (e.g., policies, signage, etc.), and clarity on when/how to involve law enforcement. Council members agreed to explore possible points of collaboration and rediscuss this issue during the March meeting.

### **FRN Priorities for 2025**

Elizabeth shared that there have been ongoing discussions surrounding how to focus the broader FRN on partners working together as a cohesive system while adding strategic value to existing processes and mechanisms as well as lifting up the needs and experiences of all community members. Marc asked if members had ideas about how to continue these discussions between Regional Council meetings. Suzanne suggested approaching the LAC themes through this framework of collective response. Julie mentioned the need for single, trusted sources of information, particularly during period of administration changes. Kaycee shared that from an early childhood perspective, parents were really struggling with childcare availability and affordability which the CCAP freeze has exacerbated.

Elizabeth asked if organizations felt like they already had identified trusted sources to obtain clarity on interpreting existing laws and policies or if this was an area that council members anticipated having questions about in the future. Anne shared that while they did have sources for this type of information, a lot of conversations were based on conjecture at this point; they did agree that it would be beneficial to have a single, go-to resource who is well-informed and can speak to the current situation. Members also discussed the importance of balancing current experiences against work that can be accomplished across the broader safety net.

Marc summarized the discussion by emphasizing the concern for safety at multiple levels, need to keep the communication wave moving forward, and eyeing what future changes might mean to service delivery and benefits for community members. Elizabeth added that she was hearing that the more collective action and strategic communication members can engage in, the better the benefit to our staff and community members. Tom asked how much of the incivility and uncertainty currently being experienced was new versus cyclical. Anne shared that the safety net always existed within a certain level of uncertainty but that the more organizations could plan and prepare, the better leaders of organizations would be able to alleviate fear or concerns of staff and clients. Jorge shared that while their organization has encountered many of these issues for years, the directionality of targeted attacks (both verbal and physical) were new causes of concern. Membership all agreed to continue to work together to address these issues in the coming months.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:32pm.