

Local foster agency gets new CEO  
By DEBORAH CIRCELLI, Staff writer 



Jones

DAYTONA BEACH -- Five years after overseeing case managers at Community Partnership for Children, Mark Jones will be returning to manage the entire foster care agency.

The board has approved hiring Jones as chief executive officer of the nonprofit which contracts with the state to provide services to more than 1,000 children in Volusia, Flagler and Putnam counties. He anticipates starting Sept. 1.

Jones replaces Bill Babiez, whose contract was terminated by the board in June. Babiez has since sued, claiming breach of contract. Jones is the agency's fifth CEO since the agency formed in 2001.

Jones, 53, is currently executive director of Neighbor To Family, a sibling foster care agency based in Daytona Beach. He has been with the agency for the past four years and has about 26 years in the social services field, the majority in child welfare.

Jones, who has a master's degree in human service administration, has served in leadership roles at several agencies locally that provide services to families and children in the child welfare system. He also has been an adjunct faculty member at Daytona State College and worked with adults and youth with mental health issues at other agencies.

Jones, who will make \$120,000 a year, was selected out of more than 30 candidates.

Search committee members pointed to Jones being widely known in the area and having a lot of experience.

"Mark understands what the issues are and what a lead agency should be," said Bill Griffin, board chair.

It's a critical time for the agency as it seeks to renew its contract with the state, which will go out for bids this fall. Griffin said Jones will be a "calming influence" and extend a hand of partnership with other agencies and help achieve the agency's goal of keeping children with their families.

Jones, who also had a brief stint as a police officer early in his career in Massachusetts, said he has a "big heart" for children and families.

When asked why he likes child welfare, he said, "The reward I get from doing the right thing every day and seeing results."

He has three priorities: ensuring the staff feels secure about the future; increasing partnerships with area providers; and helping biological families get reunited with their children.

Jones said he knows the agency has some future challenges with the lawsuit from the former CEO, the agency seeking national accreditation and trying to renew its foster care contract with the state. But he said he thinks the agency will "come out stronger."

With decreases in state funding, Griffin also said Community Partnership needs to look at strengthening partnerships with other foster care agencies in nearby cities such as Jacksonville and Gainesville.

Gordon Johnson, CEO of Neighbor To Family, said Jones has "done great" for his agency in developing programs, including one that provides more services to families in their home.

"I think he'll bring stability (to Community Partnership for Children)," he said. "I think the community will embrace him."

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