

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)

Monday, February 7, 2011

Alabama Institute for Training and Development

The AIACC met on Monday, February 7, 2011 at the Alabama Institute for Training and Development. In Co-chair Senator Cam Ward's absence, due to a scheduling conflict, the meeting was called to order by Co-chair Bama Folsom-Hager. Council members in attendance were as follows: Co-chair Bama Folsom-Hager, ex- officio member and State Autism Coordinator Caroline Gomez, Zelia Baugh, Julie Brown, Tristan Dunn, Jerimie Goike, Elmyra Jones, Melanie Jones, Hanes Swingle, and Kathy Welch. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Sue Berry, representing Nancy Buckner; Sarah O'Kelley, representing Fred Biasini; Dawn Ellis representing Don Williamson; Mabrey Whetstone representing Joseph Morton; Olivia Nettles representing Sandra Parker; David Savage representing Cary Boswell; and Teresa Thomas representing Carol Steckel;

Minutes of the last meeting, held October 19, 2010, were presented to the Council for review by e-mail. A motion was made to approve the minutes, it was seconded and the minutes were adopted.

Co-chair, Dr. Hager, thanked everyone for attending and stated that she is looking forward to working with Governor Bentley, and the new members of the legislature. Dr. Hager added that she sees a great opportunity to have new leaders in the State support and move forward the Council's efforts. Dr. Hager also stated, in reference to recently appointed Alabama Department of Mental Health (DMH) Commissioner, Zelia Baugh, that she has known her for many years and is looking forward to the chance to work with her again.

Dr. Caroline Gomez introduced the newly appointed DMH Commissioner, Zelia Baugh. She related that Ms. Baugh came to the DMH with a wealth of experience in healthcare, most recently as Administrator of Psychiatry at the UAB Center for Psychiatric Medicine. Dr. Gomez added that Commissioner Baugh (a) has served on the DMH Advisory Board of Trustees since 2008, (b) worked on the DMH System Reconfiguration Task Force, and (c) that the Commissioner's administrative and clinical practice experience will be valuable to the Council.

Commissioner Baugh stated that she was excited to be a part of the Council and looked forward to attending future meetings and determining where the DMH can bridge and foster

more community-based resources for families. She stated that one of her main goals as Commissioner is to provide excellent customer service to the consumers, family members, and providers who interact with the DMH. Ms. Baugh added that the service would include accessibility to resources, knowledge of resources, and resource sharing.

Dr. Gomez began her comments by sharing that the AIACC Logo, designed by Peggy Olson in the DMH Office of Public Information and Community Relations, had been entered into the National Association of Government Communicator's 2011 Blue Pencil & Gold Screen Awards Competition. The annual international awards program recognizes superior government communication products and those who produce them. Dr. Gomez added that the opportunity will give the Council recognition and exposure. The results of the competition will be announced in May. Thanks were expressed to the Council co-chairs, Senator Ward and Dr. Hager, who paid the submission fee.

Dr. Gomez stated that Governor Bentley was invited to provide the opening remarks at the 10th Annual Autism Conference on February 25th. She added that she had the opportunity to speak with Governor Bentley and that he is aware of the anticipation of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) community for his participation in their efforts. Dr. Gomez stated that she will begin the Autism Conference presentations with an update on Council activities titled, "Building a Vision in Alabama" and that the Autism Society of Alabama (ASA) will provide a special presentation during lunch. She added that the opportunity is instrumental in engaging more and more stakeholders in strategic planning, standards of practice, and special project efforts. Dr. Gomez stated that there are over 200 stakeholders participating from across the state and that she will be encouraging those in the audience, which is typically about 700 people, to join in committee efforts.

Dr. Gomez stated that follow-up invitations were sent to providers and organizations whose names were submitted as a potential listing on the *Alabama Autism Lifespan Resource Tree and Directory*. She stated that the resource is being compiled by the AIACC and ASA and will be available in print and on-line. Dr. Gomez reminded the Council that the *Autism Lifespan Resource Tree* is an information graphic organized by need from birth through adulthood and that under each category, statewide providers/resources are listed with links to the Directory. She added that the Directory provides detailed contact information and direct links, where available, for each of the resources on the Tree and that the deadline for submission is February 15, 2011.

Dr. Gomez extended thanks on behalf of the Council to the ASA for their continued support of the Council by providing space for meetings, conferencing technology, and inclusion of the Council in the efforts they initiate. She also thanked the ASA for using their discretionary monies to further ideas put forth by the Council. She offered one example stating that she passed on a suggestion to provide a boxed breakfast to the legislators, delivered by the ASD community on Legislative Day, knowing that the Council did not have the monies to do so. The ASA did not hesitate to provide the funds for the idea. Dr. Gomez added that clearly the Council could not have made the tremendous progress that has been made without the ASA.

Dr. Gomez ended her comments stating that the 2011 Regular Session of the Alabama Legislature will open on March 1, 2011. She added that the Council is required by Act#2009-295, the Riley Ward Alabama Autism Support Act of 2009, to submit an annual report on Council progress to Governor Bentley and the Legislature. Dr. Gomez stated that she will provide the Report to Council members for review prior to submitting the Report on March 10th.

Co-chair Dr. Hager, who is also a part-time employee of the ASA, stated that part of the ASA efforts have been focused on trying to de-centralize and place resources in Mobile and Huntsville. She stated that the ASA hopes to eventually place resources in Tuscaloosa, Anniston, and Dothan. Dr. Hager added that the Mobile office has been expanded recently with the addition of staff and resources, as part of the ASA strategic plan.

Dr. Hager provided an update from the Strategic Planning Committee for the AIACC. She stated that the Committee is very close to finishing and submitting the final plan to the Council.

Dr. Gomez, in the absence of Chairperson Alice Widgeon, stated that an update of the Standards of Practice (SOP) Committee was submitted at the last meeting and that more detail is available in the Report available on line. Dr. Gomez added that the task of developing SOP for Alabama Regional Autism Networks has been daunting because this is something that no other state has accomplished. The final SOP will advise the Council on appropriate standards, and provide information that will be used to monitor services and recognize achievements. Dr. Gomez stated that the committee is working on minimum, best practice, and gold standards.

Dr. Gomez reported that over time it has become apparent that more SOP workgroups are needed. She stated that there are currently six workgroups from diagnostic clinics through adult services and that specialists serving on these workgroups need to also have their own SOP

developed specific to their specialties. Dr. Gomez added that Dr. Langlow, Council member and psychiatrist, suggested that psychiatry also need be addressed. She stated that a number of new workgroups will be starting to meet in March.

Melanie Jones then gave an update of the Special Projects Committee. She reported that the Community Services workgroup has been in touch with an organization in Florida called *A Child is Missing*. Ms. Jones stated that *A Child Is Missing* assists law enforcement in the search and early safe recovery efforts of children via a rapid-response neighborhood alert program through recorded phone calls. She added that (a) there are currently a number of police departments who have already implemented the plan, (b) the service is at no cost, (c) there is a need to let families know of the service, and (d) they need to make Police departments, not currently involved, aware of the program. Ms. Jones added that there has been a high success rate with this system. Ms. Jones reported that the Special Projects Committee is also working with Alabama Respite and are seeking grant monies.

Sarah O'Kelley updated the council on the Special Projects Committee *Learn the Signs Act Early* Campaign. She reported that a grant was awarded in the amount of \$15,000 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs, one of only ten in the Nation. Dr. O'Kelley stated that the grant is a collaborative effort among members of the Council and that there are five main goals. She added that one goal is to reconvene stakeholders from across the state, many of whom were involved in the original Act Early summit in October of 2009. Dr. O'Kelley stated that the workgroup will use materials and information that the CDC has developed for *Learn the Signs Act Early* making them specific to the State. She added that the workgroup will also launch an *Act Early Alabama* website, modeled after a website currently used in Wisconsin, to lead families to appropriate resources.

Dr. O'Kelley reported that the workgroup also plans to use grant money (a) for a webinar, providing CMEs or CEUs to encourage participation and, (b) to develop a network of trainers across the state that can disseminate the *Learn the Signs Act Early* message. She added that the workgroup will be recruiting professionals, family members, and others interested in becoming a part of a network to provide presentations in specific geographical areas with the goal of having at least one trainer in each county.

Kim Hill of the Bylaws and Membership Committee reported on Senator Cam Ward's charge from the last Council meeting to develop a formal process for establishment of a Council Executive Committee. The charge also requested an amendment to the Bylaws to include the chair of the Council, or in the chair's absence, the co-chair, on the Executive Committee.

Ms. Hill reported that on January 7, 2011, the By-laws and Membership Committee met and developed a proposal for revision of the existing By-laws for membership to the Executive Committee and nominations procedures. She then turned the matter over to Council for discussion. A motion was made and seconded to adopt the By-laws revision for Executive Committee composition. The nomination procedures were then accepted in support of the By-laws, as part of record.

Presenters, Drs. Jim Carr and Linda LeBlanc of the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Program at Auburn University, then addressed the meeting. They offered information about Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), the science of taking what we know about how people learn and using it to improve their lives. They also detailed missions of the Auburn University program including to provide (a) research labs for Ph.D. graduates who will become leaders in ASD research, and (b) an increased service delivery pool through training future providers.

Drs. Carr and LeBlanc then detailed the national credential for the delivery of an ABA certificate through the Behavioral Analyst Certification Board. They described the three levels of certification available as (a) Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCABA), at the Bachelor's degree level; (b) Board Certified Behavioral Analyst (BCBA), at the Master's degree level, the most common certification; and (c) Board Certified Behavioral Analyst Doctorate (BCBA-D), which includes a Ph.D. in ABA.

Drs. Carr and LeBlanc added that the program was originally established by Dr. Jim Johnston in response to the need for a workforce of credentialed behavioral analysts to meet the needs of individuals with ASD and intellectual disabilities in Alabama. They listed organizations that have partnered with and supported the program including the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Mental Health, Opelika City Schools, and The Learning Tree. They also described their efforts to keep as many of the program graduates in Alabama as possible through a fellowship program with agencies supporting students with stipends. They added that the stipend is paid to the University and in exchange, the University forgives the student's tuition for the program. In return, the student agrees to work for the respective agency for a minimum of

one year. Drs. Carr and LeBlanc stated that this means that the graduate will be employed in Alabama for at least one year with the hope that the he or she will put down roots, become connected with the agency, and remain with the agency after the required commitment has passed.

After a brief question and answer period, the following announcements were made:

Melanie Jones announced Legislative Awareness Day as April 21st and stated that the ASA will be hosting fifteen walks statewide with everyone invited. Ms. Jones added that during Autism Awareness month, the ASA will roll out a license plate campaign with three different designs to be voted on. Ms. Jones then introduced the new ASA Resource Manager, Jane Fuller.

Tracy Crohn then introduced Barbara Calhoun, President of the Community Outreach Special Education Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Ms. Calhoun shared that the PTA was started in May and that they reach across school district boundaries. She added that the PTA has members from twelve different school districts and invited anyone interested to join them. More information is available on-line at www.cosepta.org.

Melanie Jones announced the Autism Conference in Tuscaloosa on February 25, 2011.

Dr. Whetstone announced the Alabama Transition Conference in Auburn, March 7th and 8th and the Mega Conference in Mobile, July 18th – 22nd.

Kathy Welch announced Easter Seals summer beach camp for children with ASD and other developmental delays, ages 2 through 14 years. She added that Easter Seals received a grant and is remodeling their Rotary Hall into a resource center for parents of children with ASD.

Julie Brown shared that she had spoken with a parent of an adult child with ASD, who is retiring and has asked for an opportunity to volunteer with an agency or group. Mrs. Brown added that he is interested in grant writing and public speaking and asked that anyone interested contact her for more information.

Dr. Gomez stated that the next meeting date will be announced soon for a date in May.

Ms. Folsom-Hager adjourned the meeting.

Recording Secretary

_____2/7/2011
C. S. Weldon

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)

Monday, February 7, 2011

Alabama Institute for Training and Development

Minutes submitted and approved *****

Chairman, Senator Cam Ward