

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)

Monday, April 8, 2013

Alabama Industrial Development Training Center

The AIACC met on Monday, April 8, 2013 at the Alabama Industrial Development Training center. The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Bama Hager. Also in attendance were Council members: Linda Bachus, Fred Biasini, Greg Carlson, Jerimie Goike, Doris Hill, Myra Jones, Mitchell Lord, Sarah Ryan, Hanes Swingle, Kathy Welch, and ex-officio member and State Autism Coordinator, Anna McConnell. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Toni Hopgood on behalf of Stephanie Azar, Cindy Robinson on behalf of Thomas Bice, David Savage on behalf of Cary Boswell, Erin Wofford on behalf of Nancy Buckner, Christy Atkinson on behalf of John Mascia, Courtney Tarver on behalf of Jim Reddoch, and Dawn Ellis on behalf of Don Williamson.

Minutes from the January 14th, 2013 meeting were approved and adopted.

Paige McKerchar, of Jacksonville State University who is the current Executive Director of the Alabama Association for Behavior Analysis, shared an update on the BCBA Licensure Bill, Senate Bill 305, which has gone through the Senate Committee and floor and is now on the way to the House. The progress will be followed very closely as the Bill moves through the process.

Another Bill that has been read in the Senate and is being sent to the Senate Judiciary Committee is Senate Bill 373, which allows individuals to request "ASD" to be indicated on their driver's license. This bill is sponsored by Senator Arthur Orr and co-sponsored by Cam Ward. This option will be offered at no charge. Council member Mitchell Lord shared that he recently had a personal experience in which he was involved in an automobile accident, and was somewhat disoriented. He was able to let the officer know that he has ASD, and the officer's response changed appropriately and he became extremely helpful. Mitchell believes that this notation on the driver's license would be of great benefit to individuals on the Spectrum.

An update from the Funding and Finance Committee is in the process of being formed. This is a standing committee responsible for analyzing issues related to fiscal support of a system of care for ASD and will make recommendations to the AIACC for funding strategies and requests. Chairman Ward will appoint a chair at a later date. Those interested in participating in this committee are encouraged to contact Anna McConnell.

Recent Study Findings from HRSA suggest that Autism might affect one in fifty individuals. The study was part of a national survey, and the information is collected via calls to parents listed in a database in which they are asked if they have a child that has been diagnosed with an ASD. This is an increase over the one in eighty-eight statistics that came out last year from the CDC. The Alabama Autism Surveillance Project organizes and collects the data in North Alabama that goes into the CDC findings. The AASP team is led by Martha Wingate who is represented by Eric Lott. The AASP has a process in place in which only confirmed cases are considered in their statistics, which could account for the discrepancy in the results. Fred Biasini noted that in the HRSA project, the percentage of contacts made to individuals listed in the national database dropped significantly in the latter survey. He added that more weight should be put in the one in eighty eight statistic (CDC) than the one in fifty (HRSA).

State Coordinator Anna McConnell shared copies of the 2012 Annual Report. This document provides updates on the progress of committees and serves as a historical review of the Autism Task Force and the progress that has been made to date on those recommendations which have served as a guide to the Council. It also takes a look at a long-term plan. The next steps depend on funding sources and restrictions.

Anna also mentioned the Implementation Grant, one of a number of grants that are being pursued. The Implementation Grant is projected to be coming out in late April. Another program the Anna is participating in is for is the Act Early Ambassador Program, which provides a \$4,000 stipend which would support DSES progress and help to educate healthcare professionals, early educators and parents.

Courtney Tarver of the Department of Mental Health welcomed attendees on behalf of Commissioner Jim Reddoch, and commented on the progress that has been made.

Graham Sisson, the Director of the Governor's Office on Disability was introduced and expressed his appreciation for the work that has been done by the Council.

An update from the Bylaws/Membership Committee was given by Kim Hill. There will be two positions on the Council opening up in October 2013. The seats available will be for a parent, and for an adult with ASD. Applications are being accepted through July 8th for the October 7th meeting. The terms will run from October, 2013 through September 2016.

Applications are still being sought for an Insurance Representative for the Council. Appropriate candidates would be employed in private health insurance at an executive level and be in a position to affect policies.

In addition, there are two seats open on the Executive Committee for one parent and one adult with ASD. Todd Tomerlin was unopposed and accepted the parent seat on the committee. A vote was conducted to fill the Adult with ASD position. Candidates are Mitchell Lord and Jerimie Goike. It was later revealed that the voting results placed Mitchell Lord as the representative on the Executive Committee in the position of adult with ASD.

Fred Biasini Gave an update from the Standards of Practice Committee. Draft three of the Diagnostic Clinics report is complete (review by experts in the field). The next step will be open comment review through the AIACC website. Then a consensus group will review and compile the document, and they hope to have a final document at the Oct 7th AIACC meeting for approval. First drafts have been completed for Professional Preparation & Training, as well as the 6-21 workgroup. They are currently awaiting the first draft for the Transition, Adult and 0-5 workgroups.

Bama Hager gave an update from ASA. April is Autism Awareness Month. Several Autism walks have been held and more are coming up across the state. Brochures were made available to attendees. Also, the Autism Awareness license plates are now available across the state. Proceeds go to the Autism Society of Alabama.

Anna McConnell spoke on behalf of Sarah O'Kelly regarding the Developmental Early Screening & Surveillance Workgroup. They are currently trying to get the regional training set up. They are in hopes to have an intern to help do that. The Community Services and Supports workgroup is working on putting together a business targeted awareness campaign. They are making sure they have all the elements in place prior to implementation. Also, the Alabama Fire College is offering Autism Training for emergency personnel. The program, *A Child is Missing*, also continues.

Myra Jones of the Developmental Disabilities Council gave an update on Project Search and Kathy Welch from Easter Seals shared that their Life Skills classes are on-going. UAB is in the early stages of conducting a study of adolescents and young adults on the Spectrum who are eligible to drive. Using simulators and tracking devices, they will determine which things these

individuals find most distracting and which they are more likely to pay attention to. This information will be useful in effective training of these drivers.

In reference to Project Search, Courtney Tarver shared that it is important for our state to increase the efforts to change the service delivery system so that employment opportunities for persons with Developmental Disabilities is one of the first things we look at. DMH is currently working on this project in conjunction with the Department of Education, Medicaid, Post-Secondary Education, ADRS and ADECA.

Sarah Ryan of the University of Alabama explained the ASD College Transition and Support Program (UA-ACTS). This program provides individualized services to help students develop appropriate skills for self-advocacy, daily living, and social interactions that will contribute to their success as an independent adult. UA-ACTS seeks to provide support for the transition into a large, traditional university campus and to guide students towards achieving their goals for the future. Also, the program seeks to promote awareness and understanding of ASDs throughout the campus community through education, training, and collaborations with University programs, faculty, staff, and students.

Sandra Redden spoke regarding the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM V) and how the changes relate to Autism Spectrum Disorders. Significant changes to the criteria and categories of ASDs include the removal of the formal diagnoses of Asperger's Disorder and PDD-NOS. Instead, these separate diagnostic labels will be replaced by the umbrella term "Autism Spectrum Disorder" made more distinctive by severity levels, 1, 2 or 3. There is also the addition of a new diagnosis of Social Communication Disorder.

There is some concern that due to these changes, children may need to be subjected to diagnostic criteria for re-evaluation. Dr. Redden says this is not the case. However, when re-evaluation does occur on schedule, some persons may receive a different diagnosis. This could prove confusing for those who identify strongly with their diagnosis. This will take a lot of talking through for those who are affected. Dr. Redden still feels that there is a place clinically for the term Asperger's.

The DSM V is due to be released next month, May 2013.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Next meeting: July 8th, 2013

Recording Secretary

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C. S. Weldon