

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)

Monday, January 23, 2012

Alabama Institute for Training and Development

The AIACC met on Monday, January 23, 2012 at the Alabama Institute for Training and Development. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Cam Ward. Also in attendance were Co-Chair, Bama Hager, Council members Fred Biasini, Jim Mercer, Jerimie Goike, Becky Nordgren, Hanes Swingle, and Sandra King Parker. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Ann White-Spunner for Zelia Baugh, David Savage for Cary Boswell, Anna McConnell for Melanie Jones, and Teresa Thomas for R. Bob Mullins. Steve Lafreniere represented Myra Jones and Erika Richburg represented Crystal Richardson.

Minutes from the two previous meetings, from August 2011 and November 2011 were presented and approved by the Council.

Ann White-Spunner gave an update from the DMH regarding the hiring of the new Autism Coordinator. Interviews have been conducted and the top candidates were called in for a second interview. A final decision is forthcoming.

Steve Lafreniere felt that also of interest to this Council, would be the recent creation of the DD Transformation Task Force. This group will look at issues with transitioning from ID to DD as a Division. The group is made up of people from within the division as well as stakeholders from outside DMH. Any recommendations will be made to the Associate Commissioner and to the DD Coordinating Subcommittee.

Anna McConnell from the Autism Society gave an update for the Special Projects Committee on behalf of Melanie Jones. The Awareness committee is currently working with Autism Speaks on the Light it up Blue campaign. The goal is to coordinate with the community to light up buildings in blue for Autism. The Alabama Autism Conference will be March 2nd at the Denney Conference Center. Scholarships are available from the Autism Society website. And, the Autism Society of Alabama is also sponsoring many walks and two 5k runs over the coming months. The Autism awareness license plate effort is on-going. Pre-Commitments are being taken at local DMVs. The response has been good so far.

Senator Ward spoke to the continued efforts on the Autism Insurance Reform Bill. He has met with representatives from the insurance industry on two occasions. The bill will be modeled on what was done in South Carolina. Bama Hager shared that the Autism Society will maintain a presence at the State House all throughout the session in the spirit of advocacy. Volunteers can sign up for this on the Autism Society website.

The speaker on today's program is Mr. Terry Thoren, CEO of TeachTown, Inc. Mr. Thoren has developed and produced a line of educational products for children with autism and special needs.

After a successful 30 year career in entertainment which included creating and producing the television show Rugrats and developing the show The Wild Thornberrys, Mr. Thoren joined the team at TeachTown, resulting in a line of education software and solutions for children with special needs and autism. Serving special education, TeachTown addresses language learning, social skills, communications skills and emotional development.

More specific information on the methodologies, research studies, and products is available at www.teachtown.com.

Announcements: Dr. Swingle shared that Dr. Donna Wooster at the University of South Alabama is conducting a survey and a study of toilet training for children on the Autism spectrum, or children with any developmental issues. There is currently a link on the Autism Society website, and they would appreciate this being passed on to families.

The next Autism Coordinator will announce the date of the next meeting of the Council at a later date.

Co-Chairperson Hager adjourned the meeting.

Recording Secretary

C. S. Weldon

1/23/2012

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Minutes submitted and approved _____

Chairman, Senator Cam Ward