

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)

Thursday, May 26, 2011

Alabama Institute for Training and Development

The AIACC met on Thursday, May 27, 2011 at the Alabama Institute for Training and Development. In Co-chair Senator Cam Ward's absence due to the legislative session, 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, Linda Bachus, Fred Biasini, Julie Brown, Jerimie Goike, Hanes Swingle and Tristan Dunn. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Sue Berry, representing Nancy Buckner; Dawn Ellis representing Don Williamson, Alicia Hodge Myrick representing Joe Morton, Sophia Whitted representing Elmyra Jones, Debbie Lynn representing Kathy Welch, David Savage representing Cary Boswell, Theresa Thomas representing R. Bob Mullins, Alice Widgeon representing Zelia Baugh, and Mimi Williams representing Cam Ward.

Minutes of the last meeting, held February 7, 2011, were presented to the Council for review, by e-mail, prior to the meeting. A motion was made to approve the minutes, it was seconded and the minutes were adopted.

Co-Chairperson Hager spoke on behalf of the Autism Society of Alabama, stating their office in the Cahaba Heights section of Birmingham was affected by April's tornado and are currently still without phones or internet service in that location. The staff is currently working from home while repairs are being made and communications are being restored.

State Coordinator Caroline Gomez announced a new member, Representative Becky Nordgren, who was unable to be at the meeting due to the legislative session. Representative Nordgren was recently appointed by Speaker Hubbard and represents District 29 which includes Etowah and DeKalb counties.

The Legislative Annual Report that was submitted on behalf of the Council in March to the Governor and the Legislature was shared with Council members. The Report includes a brief introduction to autism and background information on the formation of the Council. The remainder of the report is dedicated to the proposed long term plan for a system of care.

On May 9, 2011, the State Implementation Grant for Improving Services for Children with Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities was submitted to the Health Resources & Services Administration: Maternal and Child Health Bureau. If funded, this grant will provide \$300,000 a year for three years and allow for further efforts including implementing a pilot site system of care.

During April, Autism Awareness month, an editorial co-authored by Senator Ward and Dr. Gomez was published in the Huntsville Times, Birmingham News, Montgomery Advertiser, Mobile Press Register and Tuscaloosa News. In addition, Dr. Gomez made an appearance on Alabama Live on WSFA, May 22nd.

Alabama is now one of 18 states included in the *VR Counselor Directory for the VR Service Models and Autism Spectrum Disorders Project*. This directory is intended to help consumers and families initiate contact with the VR System. Carl Nowell, Rehab Specialist with the Department of Rehabilitation Services will be the contact listed.

Chairperson Hager shared the progress of the Strategic Planning Committee. The Strategic Plan was shared with the Council for review and will be voted on at the next meeting or electronically before the next meeting.

Alice Widgeon updated the Council on the work of the Standards of Practice Committee. The Committee consists of six separate workgroups. Those groups have been meeting individually to concentrate on their specific goals with the intent to have a finished project in October. The first focus of their work has been to develop standards of practice for providers that choose to be affiliated with an Alabama Regional Autism Network. These standards will be specific to diagnostic clinic and screening services for birth to five, services for school aged populations ages 6-21, transition services, adult services, and professional preparation/training. The committee will provide guidelines for implementation of the standards in the Networks as well as develop monitoring procedures for the standards.

The Standards: Adult Services workgroup lead by Jade Carter has met over the past quarter and they are currently refining their work in smaller workgroups. Jennifer Sellers leads the Standards: Transition Services workgroup. They have reviewed a number of transition guidelines and best practices for students and families. They are currently awaiting the release of the transition document from the State Department of Education, scheduled to come out later this summer.

Leader of the Standards: 0-5 Services workgroup is Tonya Lee. This group has identified key areas that need to be addressed for further development into standards of practice. Existing minimum standards for this group have not been addressed, except for review and reference. This is specific to Early Intervention and the State Preschool Special Education.

Jerre Brimer, leader of the Standards: 6-21 Services workgroup, shared a PowerPoint presentation as a progress report of that group's work. Dr. Hanes Swingle, leader of the Standards: Diagnostic Clinics workgroup also shared a PowerPoint presentation updating the Council on the group's progress. Sarah O'Kelley, leader of a Special Projects Committee gave the background and overview of the LTSAE State Systems Grant: *Act Early Alabama Awareness and Training Initiative*.

Julie Brown was present with "Bear", the service dog that has been in training to assist her son with autism. Legislation was proposed by Senator Ward protecting the use of Service Dogs in school settings specifically for children with ASD, as well as other disabilities.

New business was introduced by Kim Hill, chair of the Bylaws Committee . At the last meeting, procedures were voted on to elect members of the executive committee. Those procedures were enacted and ballots were provided so members could vote for four members of the executive committee, a parent of a child under 19 years, an adult with ASD, and two other individuals from other categories represented on the Council. Votes were cast and the results were tabulated by Ms. Hill and a parent representative from the By-Laws Committee, Kristen Jacoway.

The program section of the meeting began with a presentation from Triumph Services by Brooke Stephens and Leigh Belcher. Triumph Services, Inc., a nonprofit organization, offers community-based supports to individuals with developmental disabilities leading to greater independence. Approximately 61% of the approximately 60 individuals receiving services have a diagnosis of ASD. Supports include life coaching and supported employment with an 85% employment rate. In addition, social activity coordination includes organized weekly activities.

Ms. Stephens stated they would follow up from their visit to the Council last year providing updates and outcomes of the services they have provided. They are currently serving 134 individuals compared to the 16 individuals they served at the beginning.

Leigh Belcher presented outcomes of the services they provide. They are currently serving 27 individuals under a stimulus grant through ADRS to address the life skills and emotional issues that create a barrier to successful employment for individuals with ASD. Outcomes include a current employment rate of 73% compared to the national rate of 21%. In the years 2010 and 2011 Triumph has had a 90% job retention rate.

Participants have had increased life skills as well as improved emotional health in all areas leading to employment readiness. Triumph has secured community, integrated employment for 10 of the 12 individuals in year one, and 9 of the 15 individuals in year two.

Also on the program was Richard Reynolds of the Huntsville Achievement School. Huntsville Achievement School is a fully accredited school and has served students grades 1-12 for over 40 years. The school serves students who need an educational setting different from the typical public classroom including students with ASD.

After the presentations, Kim Hill informed the Council that the votes were tallied; however, there was a tie, in both the consumer position and the parent position, so at the next meeting, there will be a re-vote. The results included two people who were selected to serve on the Executive Committee from the "other" category Dr. Fred Biasini and Dr. Hanes Swingle.

No date has been set for the next meeting of the Council.

Ms. Folsom-Hager adjourned the meeting.

Recording Secretary

C. S. Weldon

5/27/2011

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Minutes submitted and approved (*Date of next Meeting*)

Chairman, Senator Cam Ward