

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)

Monday, July 11, 2016

Alabama Industrial Development Training Center

The AIACC met on Monday, July 11, 2016, at the Alabama Industrial Development Training Center. The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair, Greg Carlson. Also in attendance were Council members: Brooke Bowles, Sally Davis, Joshua Heard, Doris Hill, Myra Jones, Melanie Jones, Whitney Meade, Sarah Ryan, Todd Tomerlin, Karen Willis, and Anna McConnell, State Autism Coordinator. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Russell Green on behalf of Stephanie Azar, Sarah O'Kelly on behalf of Fred Biasini, Karen Jenkins on behalf of Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Sondra Landers on behalf of Nancy Buckner, Vera Hendrix on behalf of John Mascia, Laurie Eldrige-Auffant on behalf of Thomas Miller, Hanes Swingle on behalf of Myriam Peralta, Courtney Tarver on behalf of Jim Perdue, and Yada Horace on behalf of Jim Ridling.

The minutes from the April 11, 2016 meeting were approved and adopted.

Chairperson Comments: Greg Carlson shared the information that the Insurance Reform Bill did not pass. Additionally, Bama Folsom Hager shared, Alabama is now one of six states that do not have mandated coverage for Autism for health insurance policies. Preparations are being made to introduce the bill again during the next legislative session. Autism Society is a national advocacy and will focus on Alabama insurance reform. That said, Autism Speaks will be coming into the state this summer to do a few information sessions for parents/providers/interested citizens. Some progress is being made, for example, United Health Care is now covering ABA Therapy in all their policies. Hopefully other insurers will follow suit. ASA will also be helping employees advocate to employers that offer self-funded policies. Federal Employees will be covered as of January 1st, 2017, as well.

Mr. Carlson went on to say that Regional Austin Center funding was passed during this past legislative session at \$225,000. They anticipate the funding will be split three ways, between the University of South Alabama, Auburn University and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. More funding will be pursued in the upcoming legislative session.

At this point there is speculation that there may be a Special Session at the end of July to address several issues including the Medicaid issue.

Courtney Tarver, on behalf of Commissioner Perdue, stated that during the last session the Governor appointed a committee to look at insurance reform in Alabama. Commissioner Perdue has been taking the lead on that issue. They will be continuing to meet prior to the upcoming session to address reservations that those who oppose reform may have. Autism speaks and others are represented in this discussion.

State Coordinator Comments: Related to the Regional Austin Centers, Anna has already met with the Department of Education to begin discussing what the centers will look like and their relationship with state agencies. She will be meeting with other state agencies and partners to make sure they are not duplicating efforts and are utilizing resources currently available to help fill gaps in needs that are there. Also, they will brainstorm and find out the most efficient way to handle this.

Committee Announcements & Updates: Sarah Ryan of the Bylaws Committee states they have met and made recommendations to fill the two vacancies on the AIACC for a self-advocate and a parent of a child under 18. They are currently waiting on the Governor's response in regard to those. There has been discussion of adding a seat for the parent of an adult with Autism Spectrum Disorder. A vote is being taken today to see if the Council approves of this addition. The proposed bylaws are also provided to the Council, (page 2, Article VI, Section 1, C.). The announcement was made later in the meeting that the votes resulted in an overwhelming yes, so this position will be added to the Council. Anna will be preparing the application and that will be distributed via e-news and on the website. They hope to have that person on the Council by the January meeting.

Brook Bowles states the Accessibility Committee has the goal of increasing choice and accessibility for services across the lifespan for individuals and their families. The big focus of the group has been a presentation put together by Brooke and Joe Carter on accessing services in Alabama. Specifically what is currently available. Not what "should be available", but what actually is available at the present time. The presentation discusses the needs across the lifespan and also what supports individuals should be planning for at any age. In addition, there is information on the four buckets of funding that families need to consider early on: Department of Education, Department of Mental Health, Rehab Services, and the family's own private funding. The next goal is to have presentation available for sharing.

The Accountability Committee update was given by Whitney Meade. The 2-1-1 service in Alabama now has a person in the office that specializes in the area of development through Help me Grow. The AIACC will continue to share information to support their efforts. A concern that Whitney and others have is an article recently published that claims the Preventive Resources Taskforce found that universal screenings show no significant evidence of a measurable benefit. The potential is that the article will cause families, who might not normally consult with a pediatrician, to be even less likely to contact a doctor, or that insurances will balk at covering those screenings. There is plenty of evidence, however, that early intervention has positive effects on outcomes.

Greg Carlson states the Funding and Finance Committee has not met since the last meeting, but will be meeting soon to look at what would be recommended for the next legislative session and to also look at other potential funders for such things as ABA. They will be working with Fred Biasini on the implementation of the monies that will be available October 1st for Regional Autism Centers.

Melanie Jones with the Public Awareness Committee states that the Autism Society is enhancing libraries in every county in the state of Alabama by sending three autism-related books to them. An employee from Triumph is helping put this together, along with Bama Hager. This is the third time these mailings have been done, over the last five to six years. In addition to that they are also going to provide two First Responder Trainings, one in Athens, July 14th and another one July 24th in Geneva. They have partnered with the Interaction Advisory Group's, Dustin Chandler. In continuing the partnership with Regions, there will be Autism-friendly banking in all 16 states in their territory to be implemented in April 2017. Also, the Roadmap to Transition is now available on the ASA website. It's very user friendly and is listed under resources. Caroline Gomez along with Nancy Anderson at ADAP worked very hard to prepare this information. ASA will also be hosting conferences and have camps and recreational activities in the coming months.

Bama Hager spoke about the Every Student Succeeds Act, which will replace the No Child Left Behind Act. ASA will be working along with the taskforce that will give feedback to the State about ESSA and how it may impact students. State DOE is continuing to look at proposed Administrative Code changes for the DOE. Some of those would have a big impact on students with disabilities, so ASA is involved in the taskforce. Hearings will be this coming fall and winter as those changes are considered.

Sarah O'Kelley spoke to the issue of Regional Centers. A small group met with representatives from Education to discuss how the Regional Centers can team together and coordinate care without a duplication of services. Needs Assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses have begun. Auburn University and University of Alabama at Huntsville have completed their needs assessments. The Needs Assessments for the University of Alabama, University of Alabama at Birmingham and South Alabama are still in progress.

New Business: Greg Carlson stated that the BCBA Licensure Bill was passed. There is a meeting planned on July 15th at 9:30 at Easter Seals' conference room. They will need to gather information before they can do the administrative rules associated with the law. From that point, they will publish the regulations for comment. They have a presentation to make to the Sunset Committee on August 25th, to bring the Committee up to date about the board and the status of the process. They hope to have applications available by January 1, 2017.

Russell Green with Medicaid shared that the RCOs have been delayed due to budgetary/fiscal concerns, and rather than an October 1 date they are looking at possibly January 1, 2017, however, this is unknown at this time. They are encouraging everyone to reach out to legislators to convey to them the importance of funding ASD-related services. Over the last 4-5 weeks they have been explaining to legislators the process of Medicaid funding. At this point, there may be an \$85M shortfall; however, there was an indication of a reduction in payments to physicians that could result in a \$15M savings.

Greg stated he has heard from the American Academy of Pediatrics that some doctors will discontinue seeing kids with Medicaid. Medicaid is currently looking at which services are not mandated by law to provide, and will consider discontinuing coverage for those. Most of those services will not affect children, however, some adults will be affected. Under EPSDT, services considered medically necessary have to be met, so they do not expect cuts in that area.

In regards to Medicaid Expansion, Greg has heard from the advocacy group, Healthy General Fund Partnership. There are several studies which have shown that the match they were worried about would not be as big an issue as the revenues coming in to provide that match. The partnership is spearheaded by Alabama Arise and several disability groups. Even AARP is part of that.

In the absence of an ADAP representative, Russell Green shared that ADAP has been in communication with the State. ADAP has written to the state inquiring about the lack of services that are available to certain groups of children, to include ASD-related diagnoses. They have proposed what they would like to see happen across the board is an integrated health care delivery system of ASD-related services, but they didn't limit it to ASD, they went further and included all mental health. The state is reviewing and will be meeting soon with ADAP officials, then Commissioners of various departments will get together to make decisions in response to ADAP's request.

Anna referred to Yada Horace who stated that the United Health Care Plans will be effective January 1, 2017, and the diagnosis must be performed by a licensed medical professional.

Per Laurie Eldridge Auffant, the State Health Department recently received funding for a five-year grant from the CDC. They will be working to improve the health of people with disabilities. This is their second round of funding, the first was for three years. They work with all disability groups and focus on working with people with limited mobility and intellectual disabilities. They partner with the State Department of Education's Physical Education programs to help with adaptive PE. Training in that area will continue and they are developing a Best Practices Task Force. They will be helping teachers understand how to get involved with the IEP process, and are also going to work with chronic disease programs, as the chronic disease rates for the state are too high.

Karen Jenkins shared that the new Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services is Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw. She has been with ADRS for a very long time and is very knowledgeable about all the different divisions within the department. They are looking forward to her leadership. ADRS is currently partnering with Triumph Services on a "Transition to Success" program in the Tri-County Area, (starting mainly in Montgomery), to provide transition services to students in High School with Autism. This is a pilot project that will be open to students 16-21 years old. The outcomes expected include more success in competitive employment, through social skills training, interest development and community integration. The program ties in with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. They will also be looking at pre-employment transition services.

Brooke Bowles stated that Triumph Services is now officially in Montgomery, as of July 1st. They provide services to adults, 18 and older, such as independent living skills, supported

employment, social skills, social groups and counseling. Their website can be viewed at www.triumphservices.org. Currently, all operations are from their Birmingham headquarters. However, they do have three employees in Montgomery, located at their offices in the Small Business Resource Center, 600 South Court Street. They are already working with about ten families. They partner with ADRS and also have opportunities for scholarships and private-pay funding. Also, through the DD council, Triumph will be having their first certification in Community Based Services August 8-12. This is an opportunity for 7 people to spend a week at Triumph and learn how to provide community-based services in their regions. Four people from Cullman, two from Anniston and one from Sparks Clinic were chosen out of a large number of applications. The hope is to replicate the community-based model in their areas.

Courtney Tarver of the Department of Mental Health DD Division notified the Council that the DD Division of the Department of Mental Health has been selected along with nine other state DD offices to participate in the Supporting Families Across the Lifespan Community of Practice. This is an opportunity offered by the National Association of State Directors of DD in conjunction with the University Center for Excellence in Missouri. The required participation is three years and will continue the work that was started under the grant provided by the Administration of Community Living, which is ending soon.

Presentation: Scott Parks, Project Outreach Gulf Coast. Project Outreach was begun to develop relationships between individuals with disabilities and their non-disabled peers for the betterment of all involved. Their goal is to spread awareness, acceptance and understanding throughout the community.

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

Next meeting: Monday, October 17, 2016.

Recording Secretary

C. S. Weldon