

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)

Tuesday, July 27, 2010

Alabama Institute for Training and Development

The AIACC met on Tuesday, July 27, 2010 at the Alabama Institute for Training and Development. The meeting was called to order by Co-chair, Representative Cam Ward. Council members in attendance were as follows: Representative Cam Ward, Co-chair Bama Hager, ex-officio member and State Autism Coordinator Caroline Gomez, Hanes Swingle, Kathy Welch, Melanie Jones, Evan Krchak, Jim Mercer, Linda Bachus, Fred Biasini, Cary Boswell, Julie Brown, and Jerimie Goike. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Alice Widgeon, representing John Houston; Sue Berry, representing Nancy Buckner; Dawn Ellis, representing Don Williamson; and Teresa Thomas, representing Carol Steckel.

Minutes of the last meeting were presented to the Council for review. A motion was made to adopt and approve the minutes, it was seconded and the minutes were adopted. Representative Ward made the Council members aware of his willingness to provide letters of support for grant opportunities. Representative Ward then took a moment to commend the work being done by all of the committees.

Dr. Bama Hager, echoed Representative Ward's recognition of the work being done by each of the committees and workgroups. She also reported that the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), Autism Society of Alabama, Glenwood, and AIACC recently sponsored a colloquium for Dr. Karthikeyen, a visiting researcher from India. Dr. Karthikeyen presented information on his theory, *The Molecular Denominator to Ameliorate Autism* at UAB.

Dr. Caroline Gomez shared the results of the First Responders and Autism: Training Symposium provided June 16 through 18. The Symposium represented a collaboration between the Alabama Department of Public Health, Alabama Department of Mental Health, Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities, Autism Society of Alabama, and AIACC to provide training from Dennis Debauldt, an internationally recognized expert. Attendees included 118 police officers, fire department officials, social workers, nurses, counselors, paramedics, rehabilitation counselors, sheriff dispatchers, mental health specialists, behavior analysts, clinical and educational providers, parents, and agency officials. Dr. Gomez also reported that she had submitted a grant on behalf of the AIACC to the Department of Health and Human Services. If funded, the proposed grant will provide funding to construct, implement, and coordinate a

state-wide comprehensive inter-agency system of care for individuals with ASD, as well as associated conditions, and their families.

Committee Reports:

Strategic Planning Committee Chair, Dr. Bama Hager, presented points covered in the final AIACC Mission Statement, which had already been adopted by the Council. She recognized members of the Strategic Planning Committee who were present, including Dr. Fred Biasini and Melanie Jones. She also recognized the contributions of Dr. Gomez and Representative Ward. Other committee members present were Alice Widgeon, Jim Mercer, Evan Krchak, David Savage, Tracy Cron, and Greg Carlson. Dr. Hager provided the newly created Value Statement which will be voted on for adoption at the next AIACC meeting. Dr. Hager also presented a draft of Strategic Goals that are still under construction by the Committee.

Standards of Practice Committee Chair, Alice Widgeon, reported on activities of the Committee which is focused on developing standards of practice for regional network providers. The Committee, which is held accountable for requirements of Act 09-295 and Act 09-592 will also focus on the development of a system of care and will make recommendations back to the lead agency in that regard. Future issues for consideration were reported as legislation and fund-raising activities. The Committee will continue to address standards of practice recommendations while also reviewing other state efforts.

Standards of Practice: Diagnostic Clinics Workgroup Leader, Dr. Hanes Swingle, gave an update of the activities of the group. At the first meeting, the group reviewed their primary objectives and developed an Action Plan. At the second meeting, the group heard reports from each of the mini-workgroups. Ingrid Hartman presented a draft report regarding care coordination. Dr. Anderson reviewed the medical evaluation recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Neurology, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the California Network. The audiologists, new to the group, also met and planned their next actions.

At the third meeting, Drs. Holston and Sette reviewed a draft of audiology evaluation. Dr. Klinger reported for the psychologists and reviewed the cognitive, adaptive, and autism-specific instruments that may be recommended. Credentials and training were discussed, but consensus was not reached concerning minimum training required in diagnosing individuals with ASD.

Standards of Practice: School-aged Services Workgroup Leader, Abbie Felder, from the Alabama Department of Education's Office of Special Education presented information from the group's two meetings. Two members of the group were recognized as present at the Council meeting. The group has started developing Standards for any service provider who wants to be part of a Regional Autism Network.

Standards of Practice: Adult Services Workgroup Leader, Dr. Jade Carter, was unable to attend the Council meeting. Dr. Gomez shared on Dr. Carter's behalf that the group has realized that the task before them is tremendous. In an effort to break the task down into more manageable parts, the group has started their efforts by looking at housing and what options exist in the State. The group sent out surveys requesting input from individuals with ASD and their families. They are also looking at employment and other areas which are currently lacking in our State and which left unaddressed may lead to a crisis situation.

Standards of Practice: Transition Services Workgroup Leader, Dr. Jennifer Sellers, was unable to attend the Council meeting. Alice Widgeon reported that the group efforts have been similar to those that have already presented in that they are looking to other state efforts and how we can make the findings meaningful in Alabama.

Standards of Practice: Professional Preparation and Training Workgroup Leader, Dr. Doris Hill, provided a handout outlining the progress of the group. The group made it their first priority to examine current professional preparation of teachers (general and special education) and rehabilitation counselor programs for those serving individuals with ASD in Alabama. Dr. Hill related that the group sees their work as an opportunity to develop a vision for the future, to build a consortium of educators through Alabama Autism Regional Networks and In-Service Centers, and to meet the pre-service and in-service needs of professional educators who serve students with ASD and other developmental disabilities.

Special Projects Committee Chair, Melanie Jones, reported on efforts of her Committee.

Special Projects Committee: Family Supports Workgroup Leader, Jennifer Robertson, was unable to attend the Council meeting. Melanie Jones reported that the group is currently focusing on respite care, realizing that respite is a huge need for families with individuals on the spectrum. The group is currently researching ways for a program that will benefit those individuals. The group is also researching trusts and grants for respite, as well as what other states are providing.

One goal of the group is to have a one page document to help parents access existing respite care in the State without the need to duplicate processes.

Special Projects Committee: Community Services Workgroup Leader, Anna Bloom, was unable to attend the Council meeting. Melanie Jones reported that the group recently supported efforts of the First Responder and Autism: Training and Symposium and will begin new projects in the near future.

*Special Projects Committee: Developmental Surveillance and Early Screening Workgroup Leader, Dr. Sarah O'Kelley, reported that the first focus of the group is to implement and disseminate the program and materials developed by the Center's for Disease Control and Prevention for the *Learn the Signs, Act Early* Campaign. The goal is to educate caregivers, parents, professionals and anyone who interacts with young children to recognize development when it is going according to plan and when it is deviating. They are now working to adapt the *Learn the Signs, Act Early* materials to be used in our State. At the next meeting, the group will focus on a print and media campaign to get the materials out to the public with Alabama specific information.*

Special Projects Committee: Autism Awareness Workgroup Leader, Tuwana McGee, reported that the group consisting of parents and professionals is working to develop an Alabama Lifespan Resource Tree and Directory. The group is using the Washington State Resource Directory as a model to guide efforts. In addition, the group is collecting surveys in order to glean the information needed to develop the documents which will be made available on-line. Following a weak response to their first effort, the survey was revised. The revised survey is now being disseminated in hopes for a stronger second response.

Representative Ward then introduced the guest speaker, Carol Vancil, part owner of Premier Collaborations. The school opened about a year ago in Madison Alabama. They offer educational, social, language and behavioral services. Assessments are continually done to make sure they are meeting each child's needs. Ms. Vancil's business partner is Leslie Davis Buchanan, owner of Premier Schools. Based on Ms. Vancil's background as a behavioral analyst and Ms. Buchanan's preschool model, they decided to open the collaborative effort. Being accredited, they can grow into an educational facility that will allow them to meet the needs of older children as well as preschoolers. The school operates year round with hours of 7:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., enabling them to meet needs of families with flexible schedules. Ms. Vancil reported

that they maintain a low student to teacher ratio to offer behavioral support and intervention. Representative Ward then shared how impressed he and the Autism Task Force members were when they visited the facility some time ago.

Announcements included:

Dr. Hanes Swingle – The Little Tree Preschool has an opportunity to win \$250,000 through the Pepsi Refresh Project. Vote daily online and please use social networking to get the word out. Voting information available on the Little Tree website.

The Birmingham Barons are hosting Autism Awareness Nights on July 30th and 31st. Special autism-themed jerseys will be worn by the players and then auctioned off each night.

Greg Carlson of Glenwood shared information regarding the neighborhood stabilization program. Through this program, Glenwood will help place low-income families in redeveloped, foreclosed homes. Rent is based on family income.

The Arc of Shelby and People First are hosting a picnic in the Alabaster area to boost community awareness.

After announcements, Representative Ward adjourned the meeting.