

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)

Monday, September 10, 2012

Alabama Industrial Development Training Center

The AIACC met on Monday, September 10, 2012 at the Alabama Industrial Development Training center. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Cam Ward. Also in attendance were Co-Chair, Bama Hager, Council members: Linda Bachus, Fred Biasini, Tristan Dunn, Jerimie Goike, Elmyra Jones, Kathy Welch, and ex-officio member and State Autism Coordinator, Anna McConnell. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Courtney Tarver on behalf of Jim Reddoch, Cindy Mullins on behalf of Thomas Bice, David Savage on behalf of Cary Boswell, Erin Wofford on behalf of Nancy Buckner, Angel Loewen on behalf of Melanie Jones, Toni Hopgood on behalf of Stephanie Azar, Amy Mitchell on behalf of Hanes Swingle and Dawn Ellis on behalf of Don Williamson.

Minutes from the previous meeting, May 7th, 2012 were presented and approved by the Council.

Chairperson Ward's comments included the announcement of new Department of Mental Health leadership in the Commissioner, Jim Reddoch, as well as the Associate Commissioner of the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Courtney Tarver. Mr. Tarver was present on the Commissioner's behalf and addressed the Council. Mr. Tarver shared that Commissioner Reddoch will be a presence on the council, and will also serve as the chairperson of the Executive Committee. Due to duties involving recent hospital closings, the Commissioner was unable to attend today's meeting.

Senator Ward took the opportunity to mention the referendum vote of September 18th, and how Autism services could be affected by the outcome. He sees it as imperative for this referendum to pass in order to continue services as they are. Co-chair Bama Folsom Hager added that the Autism Society is also encouraging their supporters to vote in favor of the referendum, through emails created by the Alabama Disabilities Coalition.

As for the status of Insurance Reform, there has been a positive outcome in that some employees throughout the state covered through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama, have received increased coverage for Occupational and Speech therapy, which will take effect October 1, 2012. The hope is to continue to work toward more increased coverage across the board for services to individuals with Autism.

State Coordinator Anna McConnell updated the Council on the Standards of Practice Committee. Fred Biasini has agreed to chair the committee following the retirement of former Chair, Alice Widgeon. Ms. McConnell reminded the group that the work being done now is building an infrastructure to support the goal of building a system of care and regional network that will provide improved resources and services for families through greater collaboration, care coordination, training and technical assistance. Also included in her announcements is that Brenda Beverly, from The University of South Alabama will now be the Birth-5 workgroup leader.

Senator Ward asked for an update on the status of the Autism Awareness License Plate effort. Currently, the Autism Society is only 200 commitments short of the needed 1,000 commitments that are required to make the Autism Awareness Car Tag a permanent tag in the state of Alabama. Co-chair Folsom Hager shared commitment forms for those that were interested.

In New Business, Kim Hill, Chair of the By-laws and Membership Committee announced that Senator Ward has kindly agreed to continue serving as chair of the Council. As this is a position that is appointed by the Governor, Autism Coordinator, Anna McConnell will submit a request to the Governor's office to ask for Senator Ward's reappointment as Chairman of the AIACC. Also up for reappointment is the Co-chair position. Bama Folsom-Hager has also agreed to continue her position, however, under the by-laws, this must be voted on. The motion was made, and seconded, the vote was taken, and by a majority of votes, the re-appointment of Bama Folsom-Hager as the Co-chair of the Council was approved.

The next item of new business discussed was membership. Members who represent agencies must complete a demographics form which will be used to assure the Council represents racial, gender, geographic, urban, rural and economic diversity of the State. This is a requirement of any Council or Commission in the state of Alabama. Appointed members were asked to complete a nomination form if they are willing to continue to serve in their current capacities for another term. These forms will be submitted to the Governor to request reappointments. All documents must be submitted by Friday, September 14, 2012.

Additional business includes the process of changes to the Bylaws which would allow for adding a health insurance representative to the Council, as well as revising the bylaws language to clarify terms of service. A summary of the proposed changes was provided to the council

membership. There were no questions, and a motion to adopt the changes to bylaws was made and seconded. By a majority of the vote, the changes were approved.

The Bylaws/Membership Committee is also charged with developing the process for nomination. Included in member packets is information regarding the process. Announcements of vacant positions will be announced on www.autism.alabama.gov. Applicants will be requested to complete and submit an application for nomination. The Committee will review the applications for completion then send them to the Governor for final appointment. A motion was made, and seconded, and by a majority of vote, the nomination process was adopted. Applications for the insurance representative vacancy will be due on November 30th. Applications to fill all other vacancies will be due October 30th.

Per Associate Commissioner Tarver, the Executive Committee will hold its first meeting October 22, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will be held at the Department of Mental Health in the Commissioner's Conference Room.

Dr. Fred Biasini shared some comments on the progress of the Standards of Practice Committee. The purpose of creating the Standards is to ensure the highest quality services for individuals with ASD. There workgroups that make up this committee are: Diagnostic Clinics; Birth-5; 6-21; Transition; Adults; and Professional Preparation and Training. All the groups are at various stages in developing the standards for the different segments. A vetting process will bring about more consistency among the standards for each group. The steps of the vetting process will be: a draft will be presented to the council; there will be an open period for council comments; the comments will be incorporated into the document; the document will be presented to the Executive Committee to assure the Standards are consistent with various agency standards ; Various experts' opinions will be incorporated followed by an open comment period; the document will then be reviewed by a consensus group made up of select members of the Council to make revisions prior to completion. The Committee would like for this process to be complete and have the formal standards in place by August, 2014.

The Diagnostic Clinics workgroup will be the first group to be vetted. Amy Mitchell presented an overview of the minimum standards the group has come up with. Initially, the group discussed what each person was currently doing in their various practices. They reviewed recommendations that had already been established in their various professional organizations. They also reviewed standards that have been put together by other states. Their first

recommendation is that children who get a comprehensive ASD diagnostic workup should also have a comprehensive medical evaluation, including referral to appropriate specialists as necessary. As a part of the Comprehensive check, hearing and vision evaluations should be performed, as well as a communication evaluation, including cognitive assessment. The group agreed to include an OT Screening as a minimum standard with the goal of having a comprehensive OT evaluation if necessary. Children should have an assessment of ASD specific symptoms, with the recommendation that ADOS be administered as part of the complete evaluation. Also included should be a clinical interview with a caregiver. The group supports the AAP recommendation of developmental screenings and well child checkups at 9, 18 & 30 months, and Autism specific screenings at 18 and 24 months.

The group also feels that it's not enough just to hand a family a handful of test results, but that care coordination should go into the diagnostic process, so the family understands the process and has help in accessing the services available in the community. They hope to standardize their way of going about diagnostics so families and caregivers will know what to expect and will receive the help they need.

Angel Loewen and Tracy Robinson are the new workgroup leaders for the Community Services & Supports group. They have been researching the campaign *A Child is Missing*, and partnering with Alabama Lifespan Respite Network. They've also researched combining a How-To Portfolio online (could be used by a parent, or a care coordinator as part of a regional network). In resource development, they are still working on a resource tree or directory. They will use and expand ASA's resource directory.

Sarah O'Kelley of the Early Screening & Surveillance workgroup was not able to be at the meeting, but provided some information to Anna McConnell to share. They have had a lot going on. They have pallets of the *Learn the Signs, Act Early* materials, which will be disseminated to those interested. They have a website in development, <http://www.uab.edu/civitansparks/act-early-alabama>. In addition, they have hosted a webinar in partnership with the Alabama Department of Public Health for 900 people and received positive feedback on that.

In announcements, the Alabama Autism Conference will be held March 1, 2013. Additional information will be posted at www.autism.ua.edu when website is updated.

On the Guest Program, the speakers are Beth Johns and Alycia Jeong of Help Me Grow Alabama. Help Me Grow is a proven model that connects children and families to resources to ensure all children have access to services they need. Individuals in Alabama can connect with Help Me Grow by accessing the call center at 2-1-1. Help Me Grow will develop ongoing relationships with programs in the community and support the maintenance of an updated resource inventory. One program component is to educate professionals about the importance of developmental surveillance and screening while promoting access to developmental services. They will also collect data and analyze to document and identify needs to more effectively connect families to community resources. Many other states working on the ASD initiative have partnered with Help Me Grow and programs have worked in conjunction with one another. The Help Me Grow program is currently being implemented in Alabama in Blount, Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair, and Walker counties. They can be reached by email at HelpMeGrow@uwca.org for more information.

Additional announcements: reminder from ASA about the need for an additional 200 commitments to the Autism Awareness license plates. They also have an event called Tailgating for Autism coming up in Mobile, Saturday September 29th, 2012 for the USA Jaguars vs. the Troy Trojans game. October 13th is a busy day with a 5K run that morning at Heights Village in Cahaba Heights and the Gridiron Gala for the Autism Society that evening at 6:00 p.m.

Senator Ward took the opportunity to mention the website, www.autism.alabama.gov as a great source of information.

Kathy Welch announced that Easter Seals is presenting Life Skills Classes for young adults and they need a couple more individuals for the class.

Associate Commissioner Tarver spoke to the collaboration between the Department of Mental Health, ADRS and others who have assisted Medicaid with the application for *Money follows the Person*. The hope is that this will create an impetus to further develop the Act II waiver that will target the nursing home population. MH has been asked to administer that waiver.

He also mentioned Project Search, which is a nationally recognized and successful program in which high school seniors with various forms of developmental disabilities are taken to a work-site, where some of their classes are taught, but where they also learn job skills. The Department

of Mental Health has currently partnered with Baptist Health Systems in Montgomery and Shelby County and currently have approximately 22 students enrolled.

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

Next meeting TBA.

Recording Secretary

_____ 9/10/2012
C. S. Weldon

DRAFT

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)
(DATE of Next Meeting)
Alabama Institute for Training and Development

Minutes submitted and approved _____

Chairman, Senator Cam Ward

DRAFT