**Autism Commission Birth to Fourteen Sub Committee Update and Recommendations**

The Birth to Fourteen Subcommittee had one formal Recommendation, and worked on two additional priorities over the past year.

The Recommendation was **to provide Input on the Massachusetts IEP Improvement Plan.**

* Our subcommittee comprised a list of recommendations specific to the needs of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders and sent them to DESE in June. They were discussed with the DESE Dept. Office of Special Education Planning and Policy, and they concluded that our recommendations aligned with established goals for the IEP Improvement Project. Many of the suggestions we made had already been incorporated. Documents to be updated include the IEP itself, A Special Education Guide, A process guide for writing the IEP, an annotated agenda for parents, and a Parent Guide to Special Education.
* We will continue to keep this an ongoing recommendation for the upcoming year, as the IEP project is still in process. DESE will continue to keep the Autism Commission advised about the progress of the project.

The second priority was **to improve recruitment and retention strategies of BCBA’s and related behavior therapists in public education Settings**.

* Our subcommittee created 2 surveys for input, one went to BCBAs and one to District Special Education Directors, which were distributed in June. 250 responses were received. Our subcommittee began a review of the surveys at our July meeting and will be analyzing them further to determine next steps, possibly a quick resource guide for district leaders about helpful recruiting and retention practices. This will be an ongoing priority (but no formal recommendation at this time) for the subcommittee with further work to be done.

The third priority was **to reduce wait times for evaluation and diagnosis of ASD.**

* Our subcommittee was informed about current wait times state wide for evaluation and diagnosis, as well as updates on some pilot programs that are currently in place and expanding. The subcommittee would like to know more about the rate of delay in diagnosis and treatment broken down by demographics to address the issue of under-served populations and racial disparity within the system to assist us on this ongoing priority.
* The sub-committee would like to make a new recommendation to the Autism Commission to develop solutions so that data can be collected and reported on regarding the age of diagnosis broken down by race.

**New Recommendations to the Autism Commission for Birth to Fourteen Sub-Committee**

In the upcoming year, our sub-committee has 3 new priority areas we will be working on, with the following recommendations related to them:

* **Access to Augmentative/Alternative Communication Devices for Children with ASD**

The sub-committee would like to make a recommendation to the Autism Commission to request that MassHealth provide data about children who have received dedicated and non-dedicated AAC devices, broken down by race and language spoken in the home.

* **Inclusion for Students with ASD**

The sub-committee would like to make a recommendation to the Autism Commission to request that DESE provide data broken down by race, language spoken in the home and level of inclusion (full/partial/substantially separate) for students with ASD.

* **Children with ASD in DCF Care**

The sub-committee would like to make a recommendation to the Autism Commission that trainings be developed for DCF staff about ASD.