Massachusetts Autism Commission

Meeting Minutes

November 28, 3:00 p.m.– 4:30 p.m.

Via Zoom

Autism Commission Members Present: Undersecretary Mary McGeown, Michelle Harris (DDS), Carolyn Kain (EHS), Elizabeth Morse (DDS), Rep. Christine Barber (HOU), Sen. Joan Lovely (SEN), Rep. Joseph McKenna (HOU), Mia-Haita James (EHS), Kathy Sanders (DMH), Toni Wolf (MRC), Christine Hubbard, Russell Johnston (DESE), Bronia Clifton (DHCD), Emily White(DPH), Sacha Stadhard, Jo Ann Simons, Michele Brait, Katherine Canada (DCF), Laurie Anastopouos, Julia Landau, Janet Barbieri, Ann Neumeyer, Andrew Rome and Amy Weinstock

**Guests:** Elizabeth Sandblom (DDS) and Chris Peltier (DDS)

Meeting Minutes: Dianne Lescinskas (EHS)

Welcome and Approval of the Minutes from September 18, 2023

Undersecretary Mary McGeown called the meeting to order and introduced herself to members of the Autism Commission. She is looking forward to chairing the Commission and wants to identify a few issues that will have a big impact as we move forward.

Ms. Kain asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the Autism Commission meeting on September 18, 2023. Ms. Simon made a motion to approve the minutes and Dr. Sanders seconded the motion. Ms. Kain asked if there were any questions or comments on the minutes and seeing none, a roll call was done with members approving the minutes, Andrew Rome abstained. The minutes from September 18th, 2023, were approved.

**The Path Forward – DDS**

Liz Sandblom, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Operations joined the meeting to present The Path Forward – Implementing the Supports Intensity Scale – Adults, Second Edition.

The goal of this project is to transition from the current assessment tool to a more contemporary, person-centered assessment system to which is validated and reliable. This tool will enable the Department to improve transparency, consistency and equity when identifying support needs for eligible individuals.

* Identified what was crucial for an assessment tool in Massachusetts: validated and reliable, Person Centered, strength based and in alignment with Best Practices Nation Wide, Available in or for translation in other languages, ability to customize for MA needs, uses a web-based platform.
* The Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) suite of tools shifts the focus from deficiencies to support needs, by evaluating the practical supports a person needs to lead an independent life
* The SIS measures and individuals exceptional medical and behavioral needs
* Documents support needs according to frequency, amount, and type of support needed.
* 7 subsections include: home living activities, community living activities, lifelong learning activities, employment activities, health and safety activities, social activities, protection and advocacy
* Scores from the 7 subsections are aggregated to provide a composite scale score to illustrate the magnitude of individual support need but also this need relative to others.
* The SIS focus’ on supports an individual needs to be successful – does not focus on what the individual cannot do – it is strength based.
* Looks at natural supports, strategies, who is there to help you.
* This is big systems change and will replace the current tool – it will occur in phases – phase 1 will focus on people who are self-directing.
* For ASD only – sometimes not able to capture all of their needs – hoping that this tool will capture all the needs.
* 500 Virtual Assessments administered by AAID (Nov.2023-May 2024) – 100 in-person assessments administered by AAIDD (March 2024)
* As they gather data, they will look at a typical array of services within the levels of need and how it relates to individual budgets and how they access services.
* Exceptions: the supports budgeting process will account for most people, yet some people will have exceptional needs and must be considered one by one – an exceptions process is designed to ensure that these individuals have their needs met.
* The support level framework has 5 levels – level 1-3 ranges from minimal to moderate to extensive general support need – level 4 & 5 are specific levels for people with extensive medical and behavioral needs.

***Questions/comments***

* MRC asked if this could be shared with them – envisioning helping families utilizing PCP tool so they can look at gaps and where they could have community connections to lead to employment.
* Will this tool be used at intake or an identified period of time – it could be used at intake and if and when needs shift.
* This tool is utilized in 17 states.
* As people age, they may require more support – this tool will be helpful.
* This tool can identify support needs for ASD only.
* Addressing a diverse range of people is important to DDS – this tool can do that
* Assessment, currently, can take up to 3 hours – having a large team at the school made it challenge – not thinking about incorporating this tool in the ISP.
* As this assessment is used more often, it should get a little shorter time frame.
* This tool helps to identify needs which will level the playing field – not everyone has the capacity to advocate for needs – this tool will identify the needs.
* DDS is developing a unit that will act like quality assurance.
* The tool is for ages 18-up.
* DDS is willing to present this information for others who are interested.

***Other Business***

ARC Tank will take place on December 5, 2023 – 2:00 – 5:00 p.m. at the Kennedy Library in Dorchester.

The Northeast ARC has a pop-up market at the Liberty Tree Mall on Saturday 10:00 – 12:00 – there will be dozens of vendors from the disability community.

With no further business to discuss, Ms. Kain asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Simons made a motion to adjourn, and Mr. Rome seconded and the motion was approved without objection. The meeting was adjourned.