Autism Commission Sub-Committee for Workforce Development Meeting Minutes

June 20, 2016, 3:00pm-5:00pm

500 Harrison Ave, Boston, MA

Attendees: Co-Chairs: Dr. Patricia Gentile, Dr. Patricia Marshall: Members: Sue Houle, Katherine Johnson, Jeff Keilson, Dr. Carolyn Langer, Liz Martineau, Mike Moloney, Susan Senator, Steve Sullivan; Exec. Director Commission: Carolyn Kain. There were no members participating remotely at this meeting.

Carolyn Kain, Executive Director of the Autism Commission called the meeting to order at 3:10pm and welcomed the members to the first meeting of this Sub-Committee. Ms. Kain stated that the meeting was subject to the Open meeting Law and that the Sub-Committee members present needed to vote to approve the remote participation of some members because of their geographic location.

Ms. Kain introduced herself to the Sub-Committee and asked each of the members to introduce themselves. Each of the Committee members introduced themselves and their current work with the ASD population. Ms. Kain provided a “draft” charge for the Committee to discuss, which she explained was to start the discussion and develop a final charge over the next few meetings.

The group discussed the need for BCBAs (Board Certified Behavior Analyst), BCaBAs (Board Certified assistant Behavior Analyst), ABA (Applied behavior Analyst) therapists, paraprofessionals, direct care staff in adult programs, life coaches, RBT (registered behavior technician) certification and that this was an area of high turnover. The need for respite was also raised, given the daily demands placed on families in raising and caring for individuals with ASD. Mike Moloney shared that HMEA has a program that involved about 54 students currently, Students for Higher, and that his organization had been working with local colleges to recruit students to work with individuals with ASD. Mike talked about expanding this to “Americorp for Autism”, by using college students to provide direct care and respite to families. He mentioned that students at Assumption are generally not local students who live in the area so he has reached out to other colleges to tap into their student population. The group then discussed the types of jobs, low hourly rates, inadequate compensation, salary ranges, and credentials for different positions and the need for bi-lingual staff.

Carolyn Langer mentioned that it would be helpful to do an environmental scan to see what’s actually needed. She talked about RBT training of 40 hours and how this can increase the workforce. Others mentioned that they have not been very successful in having college students apply for this because they do not have 40 hours of time to dedicate to training. Pat Gentile mentioned that we should look at the bundling of certification, as many in the community colleges have returned for more education because they aren’t finding work with their current degrees and this type of approach may be desirable at a community college.

Mike Moloney said that this may be very attractive to young adults if it is presented as a pathway to a career. An individual can start out doing direct services and work towards a certification as a BCBA, which general pays $70k+ and is much more than many individuals can make out of college. The issue of providing credits toward a graduate degree should be explored given the high cost of tuition, and also access to graduate programs.

The group discussed the need for more workers from Early Intervention to Adulthood, and also to support ASD adults in shared living arrangements.

Post-Meeting Responsibilities: Pat Gentile will do a survey of the community colleges, Mike Moloney will share the information they have developed with the Donoghue staff, and Carolyn Langer will work on doing an environmental scan on entry level positions to assess the current need. Sue Houle offered to do a glossary of terms so all members could understand that terms being used at the meeting.

Katherine Johnson offered to host the next meeting. Carolyn Langer offered to send out a doodle survey to get dates that worked for all for the next meeting, with the intent for the group to meet monthly. There being no further business, upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the Chairs Dr. Gentile and Dr. Marshall adjourned the meeting at about 4:45pm.

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