Autism Commission

Employment and 14-22 year old Sub-Committee Meeting

December 20, 2017, 11:00a.m. –1:00p.m.

500 Harrison Avenue

Present: Carolyn Kain, Amy Weinstock, Dianne Lescinskas, Dian Bohannon, Lea Hill, Judith Ursitti, Julia Landau, Greg Rosen, Margaret Van Gelder, Kevin Barrett and Ilyse Levine

Remote access: Elena Aubrey, Amanda Green and Michelle Brait

Carolyn Kain stated that the meeting was subject to the Open Meeting Law and that the Sub-Committee members present would need to vote to approve the remote participation of some members because of their geographic location, whenever any members were utilizing video and/or tele-conferencing. Remote access was approved unanimously by the members present.

The minutes from the 14-22/Employment meeting on November 29th were reviewed and approved unanimously.

**Updates**

Ms. Kain informed this sub-committee that Kasper Goshgarian from MRC will be retiring in January and MRC will look for a representative to replace him on this sub-committee.

Ms. Ursitti gave an update on the ABLE Accounts – it is likely to pass today in the House of Representatives and that will allow an increase of total contributions to the account. Individuals can also roll over a 529 account into ABLE.

**Draft Annual Report**

Ms. Kain updated this sub-committee on the draft Annual Report for the Autism Commission. The report was reviewed by the full commission, and they will complete their review at the next Commission meeting on February 7th. Ms. Ursitti asked if she could review her additional recommendations (the ones pertaining to this sub-committee) that she had sent to Ms. Kain, with this sub-committee. There is a meeting of this sub-committee scheduled prior to the full commission meeting and Ms. Ursitti asked if she could add the review of her recommendations to the agenda.

Ms. Ursitti discussed last months’ meeting of this sub-committee where the discussion revolved around training. She discussed creating a timeline so people know what is being developed and by whom. Ms. Kain said that an overview of trainings that she has learned about is reflected in the minutes from the November 29th meeting. Ms. Ursitti asked that members of this sub-committee be involved with this topic. Ms. Kain asked for clarification about what people would like to participate in with regard to training. Ms. Kain said that the Housing sub-committee is working on presenting training with MassHousing this spring. Ms. Kain said that the Federation is going to be is doing trainings for MRC and PRE-ETS providers. It was asked if they would be open to this sub-committee’s feedback and that the self-advocates prospective is important. Ms. Kain said she didn’t know if this subcommittee could participate but that she would ask. Ms. Landau asked if we could make a recommendation that the expertise in the room is used to help create the trainings and make sure that general principles exist in the trainings – we want to make sure they are addressing the full range of needs. It was stated that challenging behaviors can run across the spectrum and that there is not support for these behaviors as it relates to employment. It was asked that the trainings cover communication, safety, augmentative communication and challenging behavior. Ms. Kain said that we to be more specific with regard to what we wanted to request on these topics/areas. Ms. Ursitti discussed the work that Autism Speaks is doing as they are doing an analysis of what other states are spending on WIOA funding for PRE-ETS – we could use this information to inform our discussions with MRC. Ms. Kain said that if Ms. Ursitti could share this information she would send it out to the group. This sub-committee could 1. Identify current trainings and 2. Inform MRC that we would like to provide input for their future trainings to be developed by the Federation.

Ms. Kain said she has had discussions with DDS and asked them to create 3 basic ASD trainings. This is in the very early stages and people from this sub-committee are welcome to give input to the trainings and be involved. DDS has a training division. Ms. Kain has also met with the Providers Council and discussed their e-academy. They have specific courses on ASD and have some good and very helpful information that they license through another entity. There is a membership fee of about $30-$35 but you gain access to over 600 courses some of which are related to ASD. A lot of Massachusetts providers participate in the e-academy. Ms. Landau asked if we can talk about what we want to make sure is incorporated in the trainings. Ms. Kain said that our opportunity for involvement will likely vary depending on the training (ones already existing and ones being developed) and who is creating it (private versus public entities).

Ms. Kain discussed the ALEC training and Mr. Rosen mentioned that it would be great to have a self-advocate involved with the ALEC training.

Ms. Kain discussed the topic of training and the fact that it comes up very often, and she had been trying to identify what exits currently. She said she was encouraged to learn about the e-Academy for Massachusetts providers.

**Next Steps for training**: We need to be concrete and as specific as possible about what elements/topics should exist in trainings (behavior has a range of presentations with individuals with ASD) and what we consider priorities.

Ms. Weinstock asked about representation from DCF on this sub-committee. JRI reports that 30-40% of children involved with DCF are on the spectrum and are transitioning to DMH with disastrous results. We should look at this and get it on the commissions radar screen – we could be doing a lot more to help.

Ms. Kain said that – she did a very basic webinar for DCF on ASD in young children. Ms. Weinstock suggested that there be an autism division at DCF due to the high numbers of children/teens with ASD and involved with DCF.

Ms. Landau asked that we make a recommendation that the commission focus on the transition needs of youth involved in DCF. She would like to see this as a priority. It was asked if it was a training issue and that we could survey folks across the state to find the needs as they relate to ASD.

Ms. Kain said this is where a library of training around ASD would be helpful, so that it could be accessed by different agencies. Ms. Weinstock believes that it is more than just training that is needed – an Autism Division within DCF would be needed. She said it would be helpful for their commissioner to come to a meeting and we can ask how we can be most helpful to them and how we can be resource.

DDS and DMH have been successful in their collaboration as part of an inter-agency agreement to address the needs of ASD under the Omnibus Law. Currently, there is no formal agreement with DCF and it was said that it may need to be more formalized under legislation. They have a seat on the Autism Commission but in the past have not been active participants. It could be a broad recommendation to have an inter-agency agreement. Ms. Landau had said that we, as a sub-committee, could focus on DCF and the transition needs of individuals with ASD. We should look at short, medium and long term goals with DCF as we move forward.

It was discussed that we should develop a list of questions for DCF. Starting with data on number of individuals with ASD and what protocols are in place when someone is known with ASD? Do they have information on PRE-ETS? Are they aware of additional services?

Ms. Weinstock asked if she should draft a recommendation for the annual report. Ms. Kain said all comments were due on the draft annual report by December 18th. Ms. Kain also said that she didn’t receive any new recommendations for the draft annual report from any of the subcommittees.

A discussion revolved around the merging of two sub-committees. Originally there was a 14-22/employment sub-committee and a second subcommittee for 22+ years of age employment. They have merged as discussions on each sub-committee discussed the importance of starting when individuals are transition aged youth and receive education and training that lead to employment. It was asked that there be time carved out for discussions around employment. Mr. Rosen mentioned HMEA and their work with DELL.

Remarks were made that some individuals that are on the sub-committee were not attending these meetings due to lack of conversation around employment, and a more targeted focus on transition services. Ms. Kain said she did not hear from any of the subcommittee members that they have not attending because employment was not the focus, Ms. Kain said we had discussed employment at a number of meetings and some members had asked to talk about training more recently. Ms. Kain said that attendance was more likely impacted by the holidays and people’s busy schedules. It was said that the statute is specific on recommendations around housing and employment. Ms. Kain talked about the discussions that have been taking place on this sub-committee regarding transition and the focus on WIOA and PRE-ETS. The providers that have been present at these meetings have educated us on what they are doing around employment. There have been critical conversations with MRC and employment providers. MRC has contributed greatly to this sub-committee as the co-chair by bringing additional participants from MRC who know about their employment services.

Ms. Landau commented that we should look at the statute around employment and the specific timelines. It was asked if the next meeting the agenda could include a discussion on employment and was also asked if the sub-committee should go back to the two sub-committees – another idea was to keep the sub-committee as is and create a working group that has a focus on employment. Another opinion was to discuss employment at every other meeting.

Ms. Landau discussed the work being done by B-SET and that they have employers at the table which has proved a critical piece during their discussions. Ms. Kain said that employers have been at the table for these subcommittee meetings and have presented on their specific employment services.

**General Comments/Discussion**

* Specific input for trainings
* Specific questions for DCF and their needs for training and information on ASD
* Employers on the sub-committee (Trade Association?)
* Future commission meeting – employer panel for part of a meeting
* Autism Speaks national employment specialist to speak at one of our meetings
* Separate the sub-committee to 14-22 and employment/carve out time at each meeting to discuss employment/every other meeting discuss employment
* Look at wrap around care (Rosie D case) – a concept similar to CBHI

Ms. Aubrey from DMH announced their new application that is for both child and adult (one application). Ms. Green suggested that as we look at guidelines for training we should look at the Autism Endorsement. Also, she suggested looking at 71 B, the IEP Act. She will email these to the sub-committee members along with the Transition Endorsement. These documents could be helpful as we brainstorm around training for providers.

The next meeting for this sub-committee is scheduled on January 23rd at 11:00 a.m. With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.