Autism Commission

Birth – three Sub Committee Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2017 - 2:30pm-4:00pm

NECC

Present: Ron Benham, Joan Rafferty, Robert Polsinelli and Diana Parry-Cruwys

Remote Participation: Dianne Lescinskas, Cynthia Berkowitz, Carolyn Kain, Nancy Lunden, Dr. Rafael Castro, Shari King, Ann Neumeyer, M.D., and Sarah Richmann

**Welcome and Introductions**

Ron Benham called the meeting to order and welcomed the members to the 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 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. Minutes from last meeting in May were reviewed and were approved unanimously.

**Executive Director Update on the Autism Commission**

* The full commission met on May 31st and will meet again in September
* The work continues and there is work being done on developing materials for families and providers to guide them to additional resources
* Ms. Kain reviewed the work being done by the 8 sub-committees

**Turning Three Brochure**

* The brochure was emailed to the sub-committee prior to the meeting
* Turning Three brochure is in draft form and this committee is welcome to give comments and feedback – please respond by July 28th  and hit “reply all” so committee members can see all responses
* DESE has reviewed and added language to the brochure
* Once completed and approved by EOHHS the brochure will be interpreted in multiple languages

Dr. Castro reported that he has been hearing that school districts are rejecting some ASD diagnoses from clinicians due to the educational definition of ASD. Dr. Castro has been in touch with Mass. Advocates for Children regarding this issue, and he said they are working on a brief. Ms. Kain read the state regulation definition of ASD and then she reviewed the definition in the federal regulations, since the state regulation refers to the federal regulation. Ms. Kain said state law c. 71, sec B3 also talks about ASD. Ms. Kain said that Ms. Landau of MAC is on the Commission and she was surprised that if MAC was aware of school districts denying eligibility to individuals with ASD she would not have informed Ms. Kain about this issue. Dr. Castro said that MAC is writing a brief on this and he will connect Ms. Kain with Julia Landau to continue this discussion.

**Update on DPH and Licensure**

Ron Benham mentioned that there is currently an Early Intervention rate review process. This is a broader system concern, if the current rates are not at the level to sustain these services with providers. Mr. Benham stated that Chapter 257 provides the right to request a rate review every two years. They are seeking a rate increase for fiscal year 2018, but there has not been much involvement from the provider community and they needed to participate so that their experiences were known during this process. Nancy Lunden discussed the need for organizing a group of specialty providers so that they can voice their concerns and advocate for changes. Ms. Kain offered to attend a meeting with providers to hear directly from them about their respective experiences.

**Center Based ABA Programs (CBP)**

* No clear governmental oversight on these programs because the services are primarily being funded by private insurance companies
* Many are popping up over the state
* It can be a struggle for providers to find BCBA’s and some center-based ABA programs are hiring more BCBAs to work at their programs
* Ms. Kain and Ms. Lescinskas visited one CBP in Randolph and they are taking private insurance and looking into having MassHealth cover as well
* This issue has been raised with EOHHS and state agencies are discussing who will take the lead in oversight – Ms. Kain will get more feedback
* Ms. Kain and Ms. Weinstock researched this topic nationally and could not find any models of oversight to replicate or use to build from – seems to be a new issue for most states
* EEC has stopped issuing exemptions to CBP since it was brought to their attention
* Not sure how many CBP are in the state but Ms. Kain has heard of at least 20

**Next Steps for Birth-Three Sub-Committee**

* This sub-committee will move to quarterly meetings with email updates in between
* There will be updates on CBP and once regulations are drafted Ms. Kain will share with this group and will look for feedback
* The brochure will be finalized once this sub-committee sends comments
* Mr. Benham will be retiring in February and suggested that Joan Rafferty replace him on the Commission and as chair of this sub-committee
* A doodle poll will go out to schedule the next 2 meetings.

With no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 3:20pm.