Autism Commission

14-22 years of age/Employment Sub-Committee Meeting

September 5, 2018 - 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

500 Harrison Avenue – Boston, MA

Present: Judith Ursitti (Co-Chair), Carolyn Kain, Dianne Lescinskas, Jennifer Stewart, Janine Solomon, Kathleen Kelly, Maura Sullivan, Marisa McCarthy, Amanda Green, Jeanne Hoerter, Kevin Barrett, Michelle Brait, Gregory Rosen, Terri Farrell and Margaret Van Gelder

Remote access: Amanda Green, Toni Wolf (Co-Chair), Ann Guay, and Lea Hill

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 teleconferencing. Remote access was approved unanimously by the subcommittee members present.

The minutes from the 14-22/Employment meeting on August 13, 2018 were reviewed and were approved unanimously.

**Review of a possible third recommendation**

At the last meeting of this subcommittee two (2) recommendations were finalized. Ms. Kain had asked members to think about a recommendation that is related to school and family and email her with possible recommendations. Maura Sullivan and Michele Brait sent in proposals for possible recommendations which included*: “ESE and DDS will identify best practices for educational and family supports for transition aged youth with autism who are behaviorally challenging or have a complex profile.”*

Ms. Sullivan discussed her work with the ARC and families with individuals with high needs who struggle in school. She discussed the importance of this subcommittee focusing on transition services for students with high needs. She is specifically referring to the DESE/DDS program and how to better support families.

The DESE/DDS program is:

* Funded by DESE but administered by DDS
* Has not had an increase in funding for many years – it was a budget ask but was flat funded
* Individuals age out of the program and it was estimated (by DDS) that about 40 aged out last year
* There is an open interest period and some individuals are prioritized but some are randomly chosen
* There is an assessment process and an annual review
* This works falls on the children’s service coordinator (DDS) and there is one per area office

Ms. Kain discussed that she will be meeting with MassHealth to discuss ACO’s and their desire to support families better. She will update this subcommittee after her meeting but wanted to discuss case management for families to help them better navigate services.

The two recommendations that will be submitted by this subcommittee are focused on agencies and providers. It was noted that it would make sense to have a third recommendation that included education and families. It was said that it would be helpful to have systems working more collaboratively as students start to age out of the school district. Autism and Family Support Centers were discussed but it was noted that schools and many families do not know about the Support Centers.

It would be helpful for schools and agencies to get a better handle on what skills students have already, and possibly mastered, and what skills to they still need to learn. There is no way to capture this currently. Think College has an assessment tool that could address this need and MAICEI is looking at this assessment to possibly adopt it.

The judicial system has not been mentioned in these conversations and it is something that some families and individuals get involved with early on. Challenging behavior can lead to an arrest. It was noted that we should also look at law enforcement and safety as well. The ALEC program works to train emergency workers on ASD and behaviors – this program is in need of expansion. They have expanded to training correction officers.

Sex Education was discussed and the lack of an appropriate curriculum for students. What are best practices for this topic? Some students may have difficulty later in life in employment or in college with the lack of education around sex education. The MAICEI program had a convening on this topic this summer because some of their students are exhibiting inappropriate behavior while on a college campus. They are looking for ways to address this issue. Ms. Green said that sex education is not a requirement under ESE.

There was discussion on the IEP improvement project under ESE that could address ASD and transition needs. Also ESE is collaborating with the Federation for Children with Special Needs on best practices for students with ASD and this is a project that is underway. There was discussion on a transition “checklist” and it was noted that the new IEP would essentially do that task.

 Commissioner Wolf discussed DYS and their work with youth with disabilities and also suggested expanding our work to include DCF.

Ms. Kain discussed her discussions with ESE and creating a guidance document for schools capturing the “newly eligible” prior to leaving their school district. This will provide information to help schools support families and students with possible direct referral to state services. Currently, there are many students with ASD leaving the school system without submitting an application for eligibility for DDS and as a result, are not being captured under the “Turning 22” funding. This new guidance is only one mode of communication as there are other efforts being made to inform schools and families.

Ms. Kain asked the committee to reflect on the ideas expressed and put into writing an achievable recommendation. Prioritizing issues will help to make progress.

The subcommittee will submit the following recommendation to the Autism Commission:

1. ESE and DDS will identify best practices for educational and family supports(with specialized consideration for any cultural, linguistic, and/or socio-economic needs) for transitioned aged youth with autism, including those who are behaviorally challenging and those who have co-occurring diagnoses through;
	* + 1. Expanding the ESE/DDS residential prevention program;
			2. Developing specialized curriculums to address the need for comprehensive sexual education;
			3. Strengthening linkages among state agencies and their community partners; and
			4. Exploring the possibility of implementing a “checklist” for the special education transition planning process to ensure the unique transition needs of the student are addressed.

Ms. Kain will email the three (3) recommendations to this subcommittee and they will be presented at the Autism Commission meeting on September 27, 2018.

A date was not scheduled for the next meeting and the co-chairs will email the subcommittee after the full Commission meeting to follow up with next steps.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.