Autism Commission

14-22 years of age/Employment Subcommittee Meeting

June 17, 2019 - 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

500 Harrison Avenue – Boston, MA

Present: Judith Ursitti (Co-Chair), Carolyn Kain, Dianne Lescinskas, Ilyse Levine, Jeanne Hoerter, Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Chris Supple, Kevin Barrett, Jennifer Stewart and Margaret Van Gelder

Remote access: Michael Plansky, Pamela Ferguson, Michele Brait, Kathleen Kelly, Chris Supple, Russell Johnston and Janine Solomon

Judith Ursitti stated that the meeting was subject to the Open Meeting Law and that the Subcommittee 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.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the 14-22/Employment meeting on April 23, 2019 were reviewed and Chris Supple asked to incorporate additional language that was emailed to Ms. Lescinskas and the chairs regarding longer school days and IEPs. The language was approved and will be added to the minutes. Ms. Kain made a motion to approve the minutes, with the additional language. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Update on MRC Pre-ETS – Jennifer Stewart**

Jennifer Stewart updated this subcommittee on MRC’s Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

*Highlights*

* New logo contains the 5 services being offered through Pre-ETS – Work based learning, job exploration counseling, workplace readiness training, self-advocacy/peer mentoring, counseling on post- secondary education or training
* Pre-ETS has been redefined: Awareness, Exploration and Preparation
* MRC awarded 32 providers with contracts and 27 are re-occurring - the RFR will be open until July 31st
* MRC just completed a two day training for providers
* There is a one page referral for Pre-ETS (see handout)
* Shift in the model – it is not paid internships but preparing students for employment – most of the providers have set aside some funds for paid experiences (not required)
* Pre-ETS was piloted with Triangle and Medford Public School
* The providers will be part of a Learning Community – the first one will be focused on student outcomes
* Each school district will have one provider but larger districts will have up to 5 providers (this information will be available on the website). Each school will receive a letter from the provider, introducing themselves and their work. In Medford, the special education directors sent letters home to families introducing the vendor and describing the purpose of Pre ETS
* Subcommittee members discussed the importance of transportation and asked if that could be a topic for the Learning Community
* This model has more flexibility and will engage with students starting at age 14 – students can go “in and out” of the services

**Employment First Conference Overview**

Ms. Van Gelder discussed the Employment First Conference that took place on June 11th. The conference had 120+ providers in attendance and overall all, 300 attendees that included family members, self-advocates, employers and state agency representatives. Commissioner Ryder provided the opening remarks. There were three breakout sessions with 21 workshops that covered a range of topics, including transportation. Autism Speaks hosted a breakout session.

* The Autism Commission will put the Employment First link on their website
* Ms. Levine attended the conference and will share links with the subcommittee regarding self-advocates and what works for them for successful employment
* Ms. Van Gelder asked the subcommittee members to look at the breakout sessions that were offered and if there were specific sessions that could be used for professional development

**Status Discussion on 2019 Recommendations**

The recommendations from the 2018 Autism Commission Report were reviewed and discussed. Ms. Kain informed the members that any new recommendations would be due by September of 2019 but it is not required to submit new recommendations – the members can update, discuss and continue to work on current recommendations.

*Update on 14-22/employment recommendations*

1. The relevant state agencies from this recommendation agreed to expand their data collection to include retention data of one year for all individuals they serve with ASD. Ms. Kain will follow up with MRC on the data collection effort. It was noted that the language from the recommendation was written broadly. DDS collects data from providers that include wages and individuals who have been in a job for 10 – 12 months (85% - 88% are retained in employment) this data is not specific to ASD and DDS will have to work with their system to pull out more specific data. Ms. Van Gelder will share the employment data report with the members of this subcommittee.
2. The members of this subcommittee worked with DDS to create an ASD training that will be housed in the DDS training library. They are still working to finalize the survey for the development of the training for MRC Pre ETS providers. It was noted that these trainings are geared towards adolescents and the members of this committee should think about additional trainings for the adult population.
3. A.) DDS is planning for the expansion of the DESE/DDS residential prevention program. B.) Ms. Kain and Ms. Lescinskas will follow up with Boston Public Schools and the work being done to implement a sex education curriculum and hire a specialist to teach. This subcommittee has started to compile a list of what type of curriculum is currently being used by school districts. C.) Ms. Kain will follow up with Commissioner Wolf (MRC) regarding strengthening linkages among state agencies and their community partners – written broadly. D.) Checklist for transition planning process – DESE is working on a new IEP and a guidebook for school districts. The subcommittee members will follow up with DESE on this recommendation.

The subcommittee members feel that they are progressing on most of the recommendations and that some will dovetail into something else. One suggestion was to add a new recommendation of extended school day and to look at how to outreach to employers.

**Extended School Day IEPs**

Chris Supple and Russell Johnston (DESE) updated this subcommittee on their discussions around the use of extended school day and the IEP. The IEP has a section titled “schedule modification” that asks the questions “Does the student require a longer school day or a longer school year?” – Not many check the box, yes, for a longer school day. Mr. Supple prepared a memo for Mr. Johnston and he is reviewing and will share with the legal team at DESE.

* Could there be data collection on how many times the “box” is checked
* This is not as well understood as ESY (longer school year)
* There was discussion on the new IEP – could there be a prompt to ask the question if a longer school day is needed
* Mr. Supple will look at case law regarding this issue and consult with other attorneys
* This subcommittee will look further into this and could possibly work this into a recommendation but it may not be ready for September- it is multi-faceted – you cannot impose on school districts beyond the federal and state mandates and there could be push back from districts
* There will be further discussion/updates on this topic at the next meeting

**Next Meeting**

Ms. Ursitti will work with Commissioner Wolf on a meeting date in July. If needed, the subcommittee will also meet in August.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.