Massachusetts Autism Commission

Adult Subcommittee

November 19, 2020

Via WebEx

**Participants**

Carolyn Kain, Christine Hubbard, Kathy Sanders, Janet George, Cynthia Berkowitz, Lea Hill, Dianne Lescinskas, Maria Stefano and Kathy Stern

**Remote Participation**

Ms. Kain stated that the meeting was subject to the Open Meeting Law and that the subcommittee members would need to vote to approve the remote participation of members. Remote access was approved.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes from September 17, 2020**

The meeting minutes were reviewed and approved unanimously.

**Discussion - Draft of Autism Commission Subcommittee on Adults**

**Updated Priorities for 2020-2021**

1. *Continue examining technological innovations to serve autistic adults receiving MassHealth and DDS services. Brainstorm pilots and activities, including discussions of stories from the community about uses of new technologies (here and in other states). Consider apps, use of robots, remote monitoring, and other technological advancements to enhance services; particularly in the context of work force crisis, the need to support aging caregivers in families, and development of independence. Lessons learned from delivery of services during the pandemic should be discussed*.

* Technology was discussed at the last meeting and should be a continued focus. The ARC had put out a survey regarding the use of technology during the pandemic – this committee could take a look at the survey results.
* AANE discussed (last meeting) that they have found success with technology – support groups, recreational groups – they have a greater ability to reach more folks
* Some of the technology discussions focused on the constraints of technology and issues with WiFi access and lack of devices for some. (some group homes having difficulty with many logged on at one time). Also, excess screen time can cause anxiety in some
* This committee should consider the different applications (apps) and the positive uses of technology also, look at utility/infrastructure of technology access. What lessons have been learned during COVID – pros and cons of technology
* DDS is also looking at technology and will continue to update this subcommittee on their work

1. *Discussion of how well the Individual Service Plan (ISP) process currently works for individuals served by DDS who are “autism only”.*

* Discussion around the ISP for ASD only individuals - DDS learned that some of their assessments they use for ID is not germane to ASD only group – the vision doesn’t fully fit to where some individuals are at in their life – a lot of individuals are still living in the family home. ISP has a built-in timeline and might not reflect the type of life these individuals are experiencing
* Northeast Region (DDS) is piloting an alternative to the ISP for ASD only adults. Central West Region will participate starting in December – the pilot will end June 30th and they will be able to update this subcommittee
* Ms. Hubbard will work on the wording of this priority and it will be reviewed at the next meeting

1. *Status of DDS Coaching Services*

* There is a delay of procurements - there are multiple procurements going on currently – 80+ have gone out in the Fall
* The bid will go out in the Spring – current contracts were extended
* Current providers will remain in place
* Committed to running coaching services with 3 elements – pre-coaching, coaching and College Navigation

1. *Presentation of learning from RFI concerning DDS/DMH supports for autistic adults with mental health needs and intensive wraparound services and other clinical support including anxiety issues exacerbated by pandemic*

* Discuss the increase of anxiety in individuals since the start of the pandemic
* The data showed that it came down to case management and wrap around supports
* There are new resources to deal with anxiety and depression – this group could look at some of the supports that have been built in to deal with these issues
* Anxiety is one issue but DDS is also seeing individuals who are clinically depressed
* Seeing more paranoia and reoccurrence of psychosis in the individuals they are serving – individuals need more reality – a need to get out in the real world
* MCPAP for ASD was set up in July and it involves support in urgent situations– the information will be shared with subcommittee members
* MCPAP for ASD involves individuals up to age 22 but they would like to expand the age group
* MCPAP for ASD was included as a presentation at the Autism Commission meeting in September
* ED boarding has dramatically increased from a year ago
* The federal government approved the use of 988 as a mental health 911 number – various hotlines are set up throughout to help individuals access the support needed
* Look at what we have learned through the pandemic and link back to the RFI
* What do we know about resiliency? Historically, DMH has been looking at this issue.
* Prep Program was discussed- individuals came to a youth center to socialize – social contact – various programs have online groups now that are led by clinicians
* Social attachment needs to be built in early on – much more difficult to reengage later
* How to help individuals expand on their natural supports – look at support centers – how to quantify what is working and what isn’t working
* Some individuals do well with remote supports – less intimidating
* Look at the impact of losing a parent during the pandemic

1. *Presentation of follow-up information about the implementation and use of cards/forms in hospital emergency departments, an initiative developed by the subcommittee*

* Will revisit and let folks know that the card is out there and available – including The Autism Resource Centers
* On the bottom part of the form there is an email listed for individuals to give feedback
* The card is in the ASD Resource Guide and the guide is on multiple websites including DDS and the Autism Commission site
* Ms. Hill and Ms. Stefano will check in with providers and ask if they are using the card

**Discussion of draft report of the Subcommittee on Adults to be submitted to the Autism Commission of its December meeting.**

Ms. Kain shared that recommendations for the Autism Commission Annual Report would be due the first week in December and this would allow enough time for them to be included in a presentation of the Autism Commission meeting in mid-December. There is no requirement for new recommendations and the subcommittee could report on the status of the work that is being done currently with prior recommendations.

The co-chairs of this subcommittee, along with Ms. Kain, will get together to look at the recommendations and work on the wording. They will then be sent out to subcommittee members for review.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.