Massachusetts Autism Commission

14-22 years of age/Employment Subcommittee Meeting

Via WebEx

December 10, 2020

1:00 p.m.– 2:30 p.m.

**Remote Participation**

Toni Wolf (Co-Chair), Sacha Stadhard (Co-Chair), Dianne Lescinskas, Carolyn Kain, Amanda Green, Maura Sullivan, Gyasi Burkes-Abbott, Pamela Furgerson, Judith Ursitti, Margaret Van Gelder, Janine Solomon, Ilyse-Levine Kanji, and Kathleen Stern

Ms. Stadhard 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 members because of their geographic location, whenever any members were utilizing video and/or teleconferencing. Remote access was approved unanimously.

**Welcome and Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Stadhard welcomed members of the 14-22/Employment Subcommittee and each member introduced themselves on WebEx. The minutes from the meeting on October 27th were reviewed and approved unanimously.

**Access and Equity -Using data to identify ASD populations that are not accessing services and discussing barriers to service**

Ms. Stadhard provided subcommittee members with 16 spreadsheets of data that was prepared by DESE. The data was put into charts for visual ease and it was asked that members of the subcommittee comment on what they see that stands out in the data.

* Age 14 placement broken down by race – 65% of white students fall under inclusion which is much higher than other races and sub-separate placement is 21% white and 42% black
* Residential and private separate day school are fairly in line with each other
* Questions were asked about placements of students and where they live/reside – are they within their neighborhood or outside of their neighborhood – this information could be helpful when looking at the data
* Looking at data by district could be helpful to see if students within specific districts are getting equal services/placement
* Deeper knowledge of student behavior/IEP /parent choice of setting is important when looking at this data
* Private placements are smaller numbers – about 15% across all races
* Level of ASD data is important as it relates to placement
* Boston Public Schools has an assignment process and students with special needs enter into the public school when they turn 3 – some go to substantially separate settings as a default due to the “inclusion seats” being full
* Questions were asked about the purpose of the data and what would be done with specific district data. It was felt that the data would be used to identify barriers in terms of access and equity. It could also be used to look at student outcomes – promoting better educational outcomes for ASD students. Understand the barriers and come up with strategies and solutions
* The subcommittee discussed looking at 3 urban districts, Boston, Worcester and Springfield
* The data will inform whether further inquiry and exploration on placement based on race and could be used to inform districts
* Data could be used to look at employment outcomes – looking at students in an inclusion setting or substantially separate setting and does it effect employment outcome and independent living
* There is research on students of color not being diagnosed early and are looked at having behavior issues in school

*Next Steps*

* Ms. Green will request data from three districts - Boston, Worcester and Springfield (or 3 largest districts)
* Data will help with a recommendation for the subcommittee on access and equity
* Research question – Does the structure of placement in a school setting by race and/or language effect employment and/or adult outcomes
* Ms. Levine offered to look at the new data that will come from DESE and analyze it. The data set will be sent to subcommittee members prior to the next meeting in January. Ms. Levine asked members of the subcommittee to send any comments regarding the data to her and she will compile the responses and share at the next meeting.

**Access to Remote Services - MRC**

V*irtual Case Management*

Commissioner Wolf updated the subcommittee members on the work that MRC is doing regarding remote access for its consumers.

* An evaluation was done with consumers – phone and online regarding the virtual arena – some of the issues that came out of the survey

1. Many appreciate the phone contact
2. Some do not have video access
3. Biggest issue was being able to afford internet service
4. Western part of the state has sporadic internet service
5. Zoom is more user friendly for consumers

* MRC addressed issues that came from the survey

1. Talked to legislators about the issues with internet access in Western part of the state
2. 5.7 million spent on computers and internet service across the VR arena
3. Hired an agency called UPC – United Cerebral Palsy – to assist with developing a computer (IT) helpline/hotline for consumers. Eventually, they would like to see this being done with other agencies statewide

MRC is thinking about post COVID and continuing some type of remote access. Currently, transportation is not an issue but will continue to look at this post COVID.

MRC has an online application that can be accessed through their website. Individuals are able to go through the application for eligibility on the phone with an MRC employee.

**Continued access for high priority students for in-person education services**

Ms. Green updated subcommittee members on the work that is being done to prioritize in person learning for students and especially those students with high needs. DESE has sent letters to districts regarding in-person learning and they will be conducting an audit of districts that are not providing in-person learning to find out what is going on in those districts.

**Update on information being communicated by DESE Commissioner’s Office**

The subcommittee members were provided with links to keep updated on what is going on with districts and COVID. (provided on the agenda)

**Business Tax Credit FY22**

Commissioner Wolf discussed the Business Tax Credit that would encourage a longer-term retention process. The senate did not approve the credit for FY21 so there is planning underway to push for this tax credit for FY22. Ms. Levine offered to email AFAM and the ARC to help advocate on this issue.

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