Massachusetts Autism Commission

Meeting Minutes

December 17, 2020– 2:00 p.m.– 3:30 p.m.

Via WebEx

Present: Katie Mick, Undersecretary (EHS), Carolyn Kain (EHS), Jane Ryder (DDS), Elizabeth Morse (DDS), Janet George (DDS), Rep. Christine Barber (HOU), Sen. Joan Lovely (SEN), Ann Reale (EOE), Samantha Aigner-Treworgy (EEC), Robert Jones (EHS), Kate Ginnis (EHS) , Terri Anderson for Kathy Sanders (DMH), Christine Hubbard, Russell Johnston (DESE), Amy Weinstock, Bronia Clifton (DHCD), Michele Brait, Joan Butterfield (DPH), Toni Wolf (MRC), Katherine Canada (DCF), Sacha Stadhard (EOL), Dania Jekel, Teresa Touhey Schirmer, Ann Neumeyer, Vinnie Strully, Felix Martinez, Johanna Wakelin, Jo Ann Simmons, Julia Landau, Jevon Okundaye and Dan Burke.

**Welcome - Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes from October**

Undersecretary Mick called the meeting to order and welcomed the Autism Commission members to the meeting.

Commission members were asked to review and give comments or feedback on the meeting minutes from October 28, 2020. Russell Johnston moved the motion and Jo Ann Simmons seconded the motion. The members of the Commission used the “raise hand” caption on WebEx to vote and the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Review Draft Annual Report**

Ms. Kain provided a PowerPoint that highlighted priorities and updates of the draft Annual Report. Many of the recommendations and updates have remained the same due to the pandemic.

**DDS Newly Eligible**

* From November 2014 to October 2020, 2,746 “newly eligible” individuals with ASD only met the DDS criteria for eligibility as a person with autism and functional impairments.
* Of the 2,746 individuals eligible, 1,774 are enrolled in DDS services

**DDS ASD and ID Population**

* Since eligibility was expanded for individuals with ASD, DDS also began separately tracking the number of individuals with co-occurring ASD and ID. The number of new individuals with ID and ASD as of October 2020 is, 1,291

**DDS Turning 22**

There are not a lot of budget highlights in the report – they are still being worked on by the Legislature and the Governor’s office. If budget information becomes available, Ms. Kain will provide it in the report.

* The FY21 “Turning 22” budget was submitted at $25M. There are 336 individuals with ASD only in this year’s T22 class, which is 27% of the FY21 T22 class. There are also 262 individuals with ASD and ID, which is an additional 21% of the FY21 T22 class.

*Discussion*

It was asked if the data provided by DDS could be broken down by race/ethnicity. Commissioner Ryder responded that the demographics of individuals is voluntary information and individuals are not required to share that specific data, but she will ask what DDS may have available.

**MassHealth ABA Services**

* MassHealth implemented statewide ABA services as of 6/2015
* FY20 spending on ABA by codes $121,215,751
* Number of individuals age 0-5 served is 3,162; 2,634 for ages 6-12 and ages 13-20 served 684 individuals

**MassHealth AAC Devices**

* In FY20, MH issued 36 dedicated speech generating devices (SGDs) and 3 non-dedicated devices
* To date, in FY21 MH has issued 21 dedicated SGDs and has 2 pending requests for non-dedicated devices.
* MH plans to conduct a training for all SLPs that are enrolled in MH, and to create a support line for consumers.

*Discussion*

A few members reported that there are barriers preventing individuals from getting a device and some individuals are now looking to get a device through grants due to frustration. Issues raised include the medical necessity criteria that is required, few get through the procurement, issues with ACO. MassHealth started looking at these concerns in Jan./Feb. of 2020 and that work has been delayed due to COVID. MassHealth encouraged continued conversation with the Autism Commission members who have heard of concerns as they move forward to address these issues.

It was also asked if the data on who is receiving these devices could be broken down by race/language and ethnicity. MassHealth will provide that data if they have it available.

**DDS and DMH Fellowships**

* For the 2019-2020 academic year (July – June) combined, the sites recorded 21 evaluations of DDS/DMH clients resulting in diagnostic clarification, service needs and treatment planning suggestions for individuals with ASD and mental health issues.

*Update*

There have been 21 additional evaluations. This work is continuing with clinicians to see if the presentation is a result of ASD or mental health issues.

**MRC VR and Pre-ETS**

* MRC served 372 VR consumers with ASD in FY20 who were enrolled in post-secondary

Education. The data was further broken down by race and ethnicity

* MRC has 35 providers of pre-employment services (Pre-ETS)
* In FY20 MRC referred 790 Vocational Rehabilitation consumers with ASD to its Pre-ETs vendors.

**MRC’s TAP Program**

* FY20, MRC received 63 referrals through the 688 process for individuals with ASD and served 265 individuals with ASD in the Transition to Adulthood Program (TAP)

**MRC and ASD Data**

* FY20 MRC referred 790 VR consumers with ASD to its Pre-ETS vendors which were further broken down by race and ethnicity in the report
* FY20 344 individuals achieved successful employment outcomes during FY19, and 95.6% of individuals retained employment after placement

*Discussion*

MRC recently began to look at the employment rate during COVID – many of their clients work in the food industry and have been impacted by the pandemic. They are still working to engage with their consumers to collect data.

**DDS Integrated Employment**

* DDS reported on data from providers from April 2019 that there were 2,462 individuals working in individual integrated jobs
* The employment retention rate remained at 86% (employed 10 of last 12 months)
* DDS is looking at the COVID impact on employment and based on reports of 83 providers, there were 2,708 individuals employed in integrated jobs as of March 1, 2020.
* DDS is unable to compare retention due to the impact of COVD (individuals furloughed/laid off)
* DDS does not currently differentiate by type of disability

**DDS Pilot Program**

DDS began this pilot program to address the number of individuals who self-isolate at home due to failed employment or higher education. They have a lot of issues with anxiety. The pilot was very successful and there is a plan in place to continue this program.

* Pilot was created for families of 20-30-year-old individuals with ASD (and no ID) who self-isolate in the family home and need assistance and consultation services to help them engage in the community.
* Based on the success of the pilot, DDS is going to procure a more expansive coaching service, consisting of three components: Pre-engagement, coaching and college navigation.
* Due to COVID 19, DDS will reopen the procurement in the winter of 2021 with a start date of FY23.
* DDS has extended the current coaching contracts through 6/30/21

**ABA Center-Based Programs**

The Autism Commission sent out a survey to known ABA service providers on December 10, 2020, regarding ABA Center-Based Programs to inform this work.

* Looking at licensing, health and safety
* Survey went to over 50 providers and 12-13 have responded thus far
* The survey will help to inform the work going forward
* Ms. Weinstock will send out a reminder to providers to complete the survey

Undersecretary Mick asked members of the Autism Commission for comments or edits to the draft annual report. She discussed that at the next meeting there will be a vote to approve the draft report.

*Discussion*

* The Healthcare Subcommittee asked if the Emergency Crisis Response (MCPAP for ASD) could be included in the report. Ms. Kain will add the update and send the language to the co-chairs for their review.
* It was asked if under “new recommendations”, COVID Impact and Recovery on page 14 of the report – add language to address the inequitable impact that COVID has had on Black and LatinX.
* Ms. Kain will edit and adjust the draft report and will send out the revised report for review prior to the next meeting.

**Next Steps**

Ms. Kain will make changes to the draft report to reflect the discussion at this meeting. She will send out the report in advance of the meeting and respond to any further concerns.

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