Autism Commission

14-22 years of age/Employment Subcommittee Meeting

July 22, 2019 - 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

500 Harrison Avenue – Boston, MA

Present: Judith Ursitti (Co-Chair), Carolyn Kain, Dianne Lescinskas, Gyasi Burks-Abbott and Margaret Van Gelder

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

**Remote Participation**

Carolyn Kain 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 June 17, 2019 were reviewed and were approved unanimously.

**Review of recommendations from the 2018 Autism Commission Report and discussion on the development of new recommendations**

1. *MRC, DDS, and their respective employment providers will commit to strengthening their data collection processes to include retention data of one year for all individuals they serve with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)*
* Ms. Kain requested data from MRC
* DDS has the data and it was sent to this subcommittee in a two page snapshot report on employment outcome data. It looked at data from a four week period and results showed 86-87% employment retention. The system is unable to pull out ASD specific data.
* It was asked that the language for this recommendation be further defined; as it was noted that it was written broadly.
* Could the data include part time vs. full time employment, wage earnings, quality of employment?
* Additional thoughts on data collection questions: type of employment and does it match a person’s interest, number of hours per week, employed within the last 12 months.
* MRC develops an IPE - are there questions on the IPE regarding type of employment interested in and the determination of placement?
* What types of jobs are individuals obtaining through MRC?
* It was suggested that we, as a subcommittee, survey DDS and MRC vendors on what types of services are being offered to individuals and narrow it down to just type of employment services. It was also suggested that we survey the employers and find out their needs/their perspective.
* There may be employment data that is currently being collected by the vendors – we need to gather more information and learn what is currently happening.
* Mass General, Aspire, does a lot of employer data collection - reach out regarding their data.
* Ms. Kelly said that MRC collects qualitative data.

Next Steps: the subcommittee would like an update from MRC regarding data collection and how they can obtain additional data that was discussed at this meeting.

1. *Additional and on-going trainings, (with specialized consideration for any cultural, linguistic, and/or socio-economic needs) for MRC, DDS and their providers to support adult individuals with ASD, including those who present with more challenging behaviors, to enable these individuals to work and be in their community with the proper supports.*
* This subcommittee worked on survey questions to develop training for Pre ETS vendors. The survey was approved and Ms. Lescinskas is working with MRC and the Federation (they will develop the training for the vendors) for the implementation of the training.
* DDS would like to look at the training that is being developed for the Pre ETS vendors and possibly adapt it for adults.
* The Autism 101 training that was developed by DDS and then edited by members of this subcommittee has been sent back to DDS for a few minor changes. We will follow up with DDS on its progress.
* DDS has a series of webinars that touch on employment and adults – they can expand what they are offering. There is a struggle to find speakers on how to support individuals with challenging behaviors in employment.
* The goal for training is to start with what we have now and what we are currently developing and to build a library of trainings
1. *DESE 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*;
2. Expanding the DESE/DDS residential prevention program - Update – additional funding has been provided to expand this program
3. Developing specialized curriculums to address the need for comprehensive sexual education Update – this subcommittee will follow up with Amanda Green regarding this recommendation. Ms. Lescinskas developed a list of maaps member schools and what they are using for sex education curricula. Boston Public Schools uses the Circles curricula for younger aged students and some teachers received training in the Elevatus curricula. They are also in the process of hiring a Health Education instructional coach for students with disabilities – this is a new position to the district. Pathlight is using a curriculum that has an ASD focus.
4. Strengthening linkages among state agencies and their community partners - Update – the sharing of information is challenging due to privacy issues. DDS and DMH have been working together.
5. 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 –Update – the subcommittee will follow up with Amanda Green on this topic. There are many examples of transition checklists.

There was a discussion on 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. Why ask the question on the IEP if the answer is always no? DESE is working on implementing a new IEP so this discussion is timely. This subcommittee will look further into this and could possibly work it 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

* Additional research to support a longer school day is required – Paul Shattuck is a good resource
* Expand the recommendation to include inclusive after school opportunities – individual supports to help students have access to after school programs within a school or other setting.
* Judith Ursitti asked Chris Supple to draft a recommendation on this issue

Janine Solomon discussed barriers on travel training for students.

* Plep B on the IEP – talks about vocational training – issues around accessing the travel training to get to vocational opportunities. Could we formulate a recommendation on this topic? It does not have to be a formal recommendation but the subcommittee could identify issues related to lack of travel training – this could be added to the transition checklist.
* Ms. Solomon will draft a recommendation on this topic.

The next meeting of the subcommittee will be in early September. The chairs will send out an email to the members with the date.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.