Massachusetts Autism Commission

14-22 years of age/Employment Subcommittee Meeting

Virtual via zoom

November 9, 2021

11:00 a.m.– 12:30 p.m.

**Remote Participation**

Toni Wolf (Co-Chair), Sacha Stadhard (Co-Chair), Dianne Lescinskas, Carolyn Kain, Amanda Green, Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Pamela Ferguson, Janine Solomon, Ilyse-Levine Kanji, Lea Hill, Kathleen Kelly, Greg Rosen and Kathleen Stern

**Welcome and Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Stadhard welcomed members of the 14-22/Employment Subcommittee. The minutes from the meeting on September 21,2021, were reviewed and Mr. Burks-Abbott motioned to approve the minutes, Ms. Hill seconded the motion and with no objections the minutes were approved unanimously.

**Demographic Data Update and Recommendation Discussion**

MRC’s data team did a review of the data provided by DESE on the three urban districts. The goal was to look at placement rates and disparities for individuals ages 14-22 statewide. The data was looking at placement in partial and full inclusion and well as students in a substantially separate placement. The data looked at placement by race, ethnicity and language spoken at home.

* Too many variables with the data set and could not make an analysis; the numbers are small, and it wouldn’t be statistically valid
* Suggestion was to ask DESE about the work/discussions on diversity, equity, and inclusion – it is important to find out the work they are doing on inclusion and placement of students in particular settings
* Important to remember that some families fought for and want a segregated setting
* Puberty and challenging behavior may prevent some individuals from being in a fully inclusive setting
* This age group (14-22) may be experiencing a variable amount of restraint and more seclusion – national data shows kids of color are restrained more often
* DESE’s data is organized by primary disability
* Students are placed in segregated settings early and will tend to stay in that same setting rather than move to inclusion
* MRC, based on these conversations, will communicate with Pre-employment Service Providers to ensure services are offered in ALL classrooms
* Transitioned aged students, in segregated settings, are not getting out in the community to work on skills
* This subcommittee would be interested in looking at outcomes of students in sub-separate settings
* Schools need more training and additional staff to better support students when out in the community
* This subcommittee is interested in the work being done by the Birth – 14 subcommittee on inclusion – they would like to look at the trajectory of students and if it is preventing them from having more of a full life
* DESE has some outcome data with Indicator 14 and Boston collects this data. It is self-reporting – districts reach out to families/students and ask questions on employment and independent living
* MRC would have data on individuals seeking VR services
* The Road Ahead – BU professor studying the outcome of students with ASD
* Think about the right questions to ask the Birth – 14 subcommittee and what questions to put forth to DESE – it was asked that members of this subcommittee think of questions and send them to the co-chairs
* One recommendation for a question to pose to DESE “*what is DESE doing in terms of looking at segregated classrooms and DEI”*
* Ms. Levine drafted the following question to ask DESE; *What DEI work is DESE doing to ensure students of color and ELLs who have ASD as a primary or secondary diagnosis are being treated similarly to their white, native speaking peers who have ASD, including ensuring equity (1) in the placement of students with ASD in substantially separate classrooms, (2) in the restraint and discipline of students with ASD, and (3) in the outcomes of students with ASD when they graduate or exit the education system*
* Once this subcommittee has a response from DESE, the goal would be to come up with a recommendation or have a better understanding on which direction to go and have further discussions
* Should this issue be discussed at the full commission meeting or start with a combined meeting with birth to 14 subcommittee?
* The Autism Commission annual report was sent to members of the subcommittee for their review of the work being done by other subcommittees

**New Initiatives and Opportunities**

Ms. Stadhard shared information about the DOL and a new grant creating an apprenticeship pipeline that will identify and recruit individuals with disabilities

* Four-year grant and the work has already started - $4 million grant serving 500 individuals over 4 years
* Goal is to connect underrepresented individuals to gainful employment
* This is an opportunity to think about how to connect individuals with disabilities to these opportunities
* Apprenticeship will include working with an individual with on-the-job training and classroom work, hands on training and the individual will eventually move to the job itself
* There is a commitment that the employer will hire the individual at the end of the apprenticeship
* Ms. Stadhard is working with ICI on this grant and will ask someone to join a meeting to further discuss this opportunity – David Hoff is the lead on this grant at ICI

**MRC innovation Grant**

Commissioner Wolf discussed an innovation grant.

* 5-year grant at 16 million which is funded by the Rehab. Services Administration
* The grant will serve individuals ages 18-30 years old with a focus on ASD and other disabilities
* The traditional VR model at MRC is not supportive to the individual of today
* MRC Connect will ask the consumer if they like the traditional VR model or a model with more support
* MRC is working with UMass on the implementation of this grant and young people will be part of the design team for this grant

**Research Knowledge – Dr. Joanne Nicholson**

DDS is working with Dr. Nicholson – she is a researcher from Brandeis College working on an IT platform as well as doing research on the needs from the employer side when hiring individuals with disabilities. It would be helpful to hear about this work and she will be invited to a future meeting.

**Other Updates**

Greg Rosen discussed a new Autism cohort that will be happening at his company, Empower, next year. He is also beginning to work with Senator Moore to push disability bills. The Teamsters Union will hold their annual Autism Gala in January. Greg will put together a list of employers he has reached out to regarding ASD and employment.

Ms. Hill discussed the Working Well app. – she recently saw a demonstration, along with the Autism Service coordinators and they were able to give feedback regarding the application. [www.fortpointdesign.com/projects/working-well](http://www.fortpointdesign.com/projects/working-well).

**State Agencies feedback on the work being done in this subcommittee and its influence on their current work**

This agenda item will be tabled until next meeting. It will be helpful to hear from members of state agencies and how has this subcommittee work influenced work within their agency supporting individuals with ASD.

The subcommittee will meet every other month on the second Tuesday of the month.

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