Massachusetts Autism Commission

14-22 years of age/Employment Subcommittee Meeting

Via WebEx

September 14, 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, Maura Sullivan, Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Pamela Ferguson, Janine Solomon, Ilyse-Levine Kanji, Lea Hill, Kathleen Kelly, Terri Farrell, Nancy Parker, Greg Rosen and Kathleen Stern

Guests from MRC: Bill Noone, Theo Marinakis, Graham Porell, Scott Leung and Amanda Costa

**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 April 12, 2021 were reviewed and Ms. Kain motioned to approve the minutes, Ms. Levine seconded the motion and with no objections the minutes were approved unanimously.

**MRC Individual and Family Engagement Office**

Commissioner Wolf introduced Amanda Costa who is the lead in the new office of Individual and Family Engagement. Ms. Costa gave an overview of the work being done as well as future work as they build this office.

* Goal is to reach more individuals and families and have better engagement
* Hiring individuals and family members, with lived experience, in their office
* Building bridges and partnerships and building a family driven model at MRC
* Created a Disability and Family Forum that will meet quarterly and share stories, provide space for feedback on services, tie each forum to a theme and there will be a lot of peer support
* Quarterly newsletter helping to dispel myths about services and building bridges with the community – newsletter will highlight services – working to get the newsletter translated in other languages
* Looking ahead at doing a survey to collect data
* Goal is to get families connected to MRC and to train staff on how to engage with individuals
* Partnering with the Federation on family driven tools based off the Family Engagement Network
* Trainings on the disability movement and disability etiquette

*Questions/comments*

* How to connect this subcommittee to the work. All members of this subcommittee will be added to the listserv so they will be informed of the work and can share with their networks.
* Ms. Costa will share the newsletter with the Federation for targeted sharing
* Ms. Costa will connect with DESE so information will be shared with school districts
* This subcommittee could be used as a sounding board as the new office gets materials and creates new initiatives – they could provide feedback and insight

**MRC and DESE data**

Mr. Noone and his team from MRC analyzed the data from DESE that was given to MRC. 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.

* This is a beginning point of a conversation on data collection
* Summary of data provided by DESE showed students with disabilities from age 14-17 and a large drop off of students after age 18 due to students graduating or leaving school
* Vast majority of students speak English and that did not vary by age
* Data showed majority of students with ASD were white – younger students’ trend to more diversity
* Data shows fewer white students in sub-separate placement

*Comments/questions*

* There needs to be at least 3 more years of data collection to tell a story
* AANE sees families that are waiting a long time for testing for a ASD diagnosis, and they are worried those families are underrepresented in this data. The Birth – Fourteen subcommittee is focused on age of diagnosis.
* It was asked if there is data on socio-economic status – there was not information in this data set, but they could look at the data in the future
* The focus of looking at this data is to see if people of color are assigned to substantially separate classrooms at higher rate than white students. What can this subcommittee do, as in relation to this data, to make an informed recommendation based off the results.
* DESE has economic data but cannot easily desegregate by location
* Ms. Kain discussed her knowledge of Boston Public Schools and that they do not collect data on socioeconomic and all students receive free and reduced lunch
* How can this committee get to the outcome of students and look at outcomes based off their placement in the classroom in a public school? One suggestion was to track a cohort of students and look at where they go to when they transition out of school
* Reinforce the need for ASD students to be in the LRE
* It was asked if the MRC could look at the data set of students from the three major urban districts, Boston, Worcester and Springfield. Looking to see if the data is consistent across the state compared to the urban districts
* Questions were asked about out-of-district placements and is it counted in this data. Also, parents fight for these placements and want the student to be in a private school which is substantially separate
* How to use this data to then put forth a recommendation
* Think about having a focus group look at the data and compare it to national data

*Next Steps*

Look at the data from the urban districts and assess what we do with this information.

**Covid Impact on MRC Pre-Ets services**

* MRC looked at Pre-ETs referrals and service delivery
* Due to Covid- 22% from pre -Covid rate of 30%
* DESE looked at Indicator 14 – a survey done for students on an IEP and out of school for a year. There was a plunge in data for employment and post-secondary – it is anticipated the data will look worse this year

**Updates**

Greg Rosen gave the subcommittee an update on some of the work he is pursuing. He is currently working with Sen. Fattman on a bill to address disability and employment – the Employer Tax Credit which works across disability groups. He continues to work on how to improve the interview process for individuals and is working with the Teamsters on autism initiatives.

**Next Steps for this Subcommittee**

This subcommittee will continue the conversation on disability, inclusion and equity. Commissioner Wolf wants to hear what people are doing currently and share how this subcommittee has influenced their work. A template will be sent out to help subcommittee members think about the work and will be addressed at the next meeting.

The next meeting of this subcommittee will be on **November 16th at 11:00 am**. Future meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of every other month.

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