Autism Commission

14-22 years of age/Employment Subcommittee Meeting

September 5, 2019 - 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

500 Harrison Avenue – Boston, MA

Present: Judith Ursitti (Co-Chair), Toni Wolf (Co-Chair), Carolyn Kain, Dianne Lescinskas, Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Jeanne Hoerter, Lea Hill, Amanda Green, and Margaret Van Gelder

Remote access: Pamela Ferguson and Michele Brait

**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 July 22, 2019 were reviewed and were approved unanimously.

**Discussion on proposed recommendation –Extended School Day**

Mr. Supple sent a draft recommendation for this subcommittee to review and discuss:

*DESE will continue to assist the state Autism Commission in determining the numbers of ASD students with IEPs calling for an Extended School Day, and the Autism Commission, and in particular its 14-22/Employment subcommittee, will review the data on utilization of the Extended School Day and consider whether recommendations should be made regarding the utilization and value of after-school/evening/weekend programmatic activities in preparing ASD teenagers for life in the workplace/community after their school eligibility ends at 22.*

*Discussion*

* The purpose is to ensure students do not regress
* Discussion on what is a longer school day vs. after-school programs and extracurricular – students should have equal access and have options
* Students need to develop skills and be with their typically developing peers for better long term outcomes
* DESE does not have data on the number of students with extended school days on their IEP
* The new electronic IEP would be able to track ESD but not until fall of 2021 (the earliest) and there are steps that would need to be taken to get to that point
* Lack of opportunities for after school – it is a void and a struggle for many families
* First ask the question – What is the problem? How many people does it affect? To track, we need to look at primary and secondary diagnosis to capture all students
* DDS/DESE program – students are getting services after school
* Parent education is part of the issue – they do not know to ask for support in afterschool setting

**Action Item:** Look at the data from the DDS/DESE program 1). length of waitlist, 2). Who is getting services, 3). new IEP data (later once available). We will need to rework this recommendation and continue to examine the issue and collect data and look at the various ways in which students with ASD might receive services in their school or local community beyond the typical hours of the school day. Additionally, provide information to parents on their rights regarding extended day and supports for afterschool programming and educate the school districts along with the parents. As far as we know, there is not a technical advisory on after school/extra -curricular activities. Other data points to examine, 1.) what type of afterschool services is available to those with ASD, 2.) how are they made available, 3.) how are they accessed?

**Review of recommendations from the 2018 Autism Commission Report**

*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)*

* MRC is collecting retention data and are in the process of gathering the data for the report
* DDS has the data and it was given to this subcommittee

*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.*

* The survey questions that were developed by this subcommittee will be sent to the Pre ETS vendors and once all results are collected, it will be developed into training by the Federation and Simone Dufresne, from Boston Medical, The Autism Program. Simone will facilitate this training.
* 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 and once completed; it will be presented in a webinar format and available to DDS employees on the DDS training platform.
* MRC has had a number of trainings with a focus on ASD – AANE facilitated these trainings. In addition, they hosted a 2 day event that focused on executive functioning – these trainings were for MRC employees. It was noted that AANE does not serve the ID/D population and that it is important to have a training that would include ASD with ID/D.
* Other trainings: Raise the Bar conference in October, geared towards employers and some providers, Transition Conference on November 16, Engaging Diverse Families in Transition webinar through the MPTE grant (Margaret will send information to subcommittee members), the Provider Council offers online training for their membership, DDS has autism specific trainings that are offered to the coordinators.
* Greg Rosen discussed training and that it is important to highlight the strengths of individuals rather than deficits

*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*;

1. Expanding the DESE/DDS residential prevention program – **Achieved** – additional funding has been provided to expand this program
2. Developing specialized curriculums to address the need for comprehensive sexual education Update – Ms. Green emailed an update on the sexuality curriculum. Her

colleague at DESE who is involved in the revision of the health education frameworks tells her:

“As we think about implementation, we can certainly talk about some of the specific resources that might be useful – and explore whether DESE can support the creation of them.  The other content areas (e.g., English Language Arts or History) have created networks of teachers who serve as ‘ambassadors’ to help support implementation of the frameworks – this is something we could consider as well.  In addition, the other content areas (or many of them) have started a [CURATE project](http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/curate/) where educators are ‘vetting’ existing packaged curricula against the MA frameworks and also for their impact on students.  Again, something we might consider down the road to help districts select resources that would work best for their students/communities.”

* 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 has developed a curriculum that has an ASD focus and is using in some schools with transitioned aged youth.
* Children’s Hospital is conducting a study on this topic.
* TRIUMPH curriculum, a safety module to know when to recognize manipulation. They are also addressing the LBGQ issues that are associated with ASD
* Discussion on developing more trainings on how someone can recognize and report abuse

This recommendation is ongoing and we will continue to collect data and work with DESE.

*c.)Strengthening linkages among state agencies and their community partners*

* DDS and MRC have an MOU and ICI is contracted to help facilitate the work. They would like to see it as more as a “living document” and work in partnership to facilitate referrals and support individuals working with both MRC and DDS.
* Commissioner Wolf discussed pulling DMH into the MOU and possibly other agencies. She also discussed a statewide implementation team and thought it might be a good idea to invite DDS as part of this team. They have also hired specialized VR councilors.
* There were discussions to call out the agencies on this recommendation; *DDS, MRC, DMH, DCF*
* It is difficult to coordinate and complement services from multiple agencies – trying to coordinate what is also happening at the school level.
* Add to this recommendation; *coordinating and complimenting services*
* The North East Region coordinators (DDS) have had success working collaboratively with DMH on specific cases.
* DMH sent out an RFI that went on this issue of coordination of state agency services

*d).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*

* There are many examples of transition checklists – we have looked at the Brockton Public School transition checklist and this subcommittee had previously developed a checklist in the brochures for families
* A basic checklist would be helpful – should we endorse one
* The state is working on the new electronic IEP and transition is embedded – is it better to create a suite of resources in the IEP
* Ms. Green has an intern working with her on the IEP Improvement Project and she has done a scan of 50 states and their work on transition services for students – they have found that few states have incorporated transition into the IEP and many use it as an “add on”
* Mass. Advocates has a group that meets and is looking at transition services – they have handed off recommendations to DESE
* *Recommendation should include a checklist for parents* to help them understand the transition process – we will look at what is out there, in terms of transition checklists, and create one for parents
* If transition is not embedded in the IEP it will become a standalone document and could get ignored
* Travel training was discussed – it could be in a checklist
* Guardianship and Rogers – more training is needed – AFAM is doing a side project on this topic- courts are not educated on ASD – it is too late to add into a recommendation but will continue to discuss this issue. Maura Sullivan will send out information on this topic and we will ask the attorneys for DDS what they have encountered

There was discussion on the additional funding for the DDS/DESE program and a fear that families will not be able to utilize the funding due to the workforce issues. The DDS/DESE program pays a higher rate. The information on this program should be shared with paraprofessionals in school districts – families can hire them to work.

Ms. Ursitti announced that she will be stepping down as co-chair of this subcommittee. She will stay in the position until a new co-chair is identified. All members of the Autism Commission are up for reappointment and this will give an opportunity for existing or new members to become chair of a subcommittee.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting of this subcommittee will take place on **November 13, 2019 – 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.** at 500 Harrison Avenue, Boston.

Start looking at transition checklists

Ms. Green will invite her intern to present her findings of her scan of 50 states and transition services for students.