Autism Commission

Housing Sub-Committee meeting Minutes

October 11, 2017, 10:30pm–12:30pm

500 Harrison Avenue

Members present: Dan Burke (Chair), Carolyn Kain, Nan Leonard, Karen Mariscal, Cathy Boyle, Dianne Lescinskas, Janet George, Victor Hernandez, Lea Hill, Michelle Brait, and Judith Ursitti

Members accessing the meeting remotely: Leo Sarkissian and Chris Supple

Dan Burke, the Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed the members to the meeting of this Sub-Committee. Mr. Burke stated that the meeting was subject to the Open Meeting Law and that the Sub-Committee 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 tele-conferencing. Remote access was approved unanimously. Minutes from last meeting in August were reviewed and there was one edit on page 3, paragraph 1 of the minutes. The committee asked to add in the word “mid” before the number 50,000. The edit will be made and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Mr. Burke started the meeting by reviewing the agenda with the sub-committee, and said that prior to leaving this meeting they would review the next steps, all agreed.

**Review and Discussion of Autism Housing Pathways Think Tank and Recommendations**

* Ms. Boyle reviewed the process of how the Think Tank process occurred. There were 50 participants at the Think Tank and that included Individuals with ASD, family members, providers, state agencies, developers, lenders, and architects. They also looked at homelessness and system barriers.
* 8 different housing models and funding sources were reviewed and many barriers to housing were person centric. The groups looked at different housing models and what support services would be needed for the profiles of individuals presented and their needs.
* The group then looked at the 13 recommendations set forth in the housing think tank report. Ms. Kain commented that she participated in the Housing Think Tank but that she did not participate in the development of the recommendations that were before the subcommittee for its review. Ms. Boyle responded that the recommendations were developed by a sub-group of people from the Think Tank Planning Committee, which consisted of about 12 representatives from the ARC, Autism Housing Pathways, and AFAM. Ms. Boyle acknowledged that state agencies did not participate in the creation of the recommendations.
* Ms. Kain commented that given that the recommendations are directing State agencies to do specific things it would be important to get their input and feedback on whether they agreed with the recommendations, what if any barriers they felt existed in them moving forward, and whether or not the agency responsible could support them. Ms. Kain said that working with the state agencies on any recommendations was an important part of the process, and that when she was working on the first annual report and reviewing the recommendations from 2013, some of those recommendations were not implemented because the relevant state agency did participate in their development and did not agree with them.
* Mr. Sarkissian commented that the recommendations are for the housing sub-committee to review and decide what they want to champion. He suggested starting with the most compelling and customize. Ms. Ursitti said we should figure out which ones can we prioritize and tweak the language.
* Mr. Burke said we need to prioritize the recommendations and then go to the state agencies to discuss and see where there is traction before the subcommittee would determine if it wanted to put any of them forward to the Commission.
* Ms. Boyle stated that we are not expecting the state to solve the housing problems for all of the people with autism but there are barriers that we can work on removing and she should start the process.
* Ms. Ursitti asked if Ms. Kain had a full understanding of the need. Ms. Kain said that she didn’t understand the question, but there could of course be more conversations and education around the overall need for affordable supportive housing. Ms. Boyle responded that the White Paper contains an excel spreadsheet that reflects the need.
* Three points were made;

1. *It is a shared responsibility to address housing that does not fall solely on the government.*
2. *It is a person centered approach and this is low hanging fruit.*
3. *There is more to learn from other state agencies across the country and we don’t know what it is that we need to learn.*

* Ms. Boyle added 3 tiers:

1. *Families don’t know what is available, and there needs to be a better sharing of information.*
2. *We have things that work but not for this community due to some of the barriers that exist to accessing housing options, such as technology and environmental factors.*
3. *This is a global task and involves a lot of money and planning from the beginning of development that would prevent individuals with ASD from getting evicted from their home.*

* Janet George pointed out that there was no mention of DMH and MRC in the recommendations and that ILC’s are run by MRC. Also, DTA was mentioned as another agency that should be involved since it works with the homeless population. Ms. Boyle responded that they (the recommendations) are what they are, the recommendations of a set of people and they are not the recommendations of this subcommittee. Ms. Boyle said the purpose of the Think Tank was an educated deep dive.
* It was proposed and agreed that rather than prioritize the recommendations that we break them out by state agency designation and start “Working Groups” and include a representative from the appropriate state agency on each group. Mr. Burke asked that 2-3 people from this sub-committee sit on each of the “working groups” with an identified person from the Autism Commission. (Ms. Kain will assist any subcommittee members in connecting with state agencies for their working group)
* The working groups were organized as follows:

Group 1.   **MassHealth** – **Leo** S.(lead), Cathy B., Chris S. and Karen M.

Group 2.   **DHCD** – **Dan B.** (lead), Cathy B., Ayanna G., Chris S. and David Eng

Group 3.  **DESE** – **Lea H. (lead)**, Carolyn K., Cathy B., Chris S. and Judith U.

Group 4.  **ILC** -  **Nan** **L**.(lead), Judith U. and Janet G.

Group 5.  **DDS** – **Dan B.** (lead) Janet G., Victor H., Cathy B., Nan L. and Michelle B.

Group 6.  **DMH** – **Lea H.** (lead), Joe V., Leo S. and Cathy B.

*(The working groups will meet to discuss the Think Tank Recommendations and report back to this sub-committee at our next meeting in December)*

* Janet George and Victor Hernandez will have a conversation with DDS Acting Commission Jane Ryder about the Working Groups and she may decide on who will sit on the DDS working group
* It was noted that either Ms. Kain or Ms. Lescinskas would participate in each of the working groups.

**TAC Report Review**

Mr. Burke discussed the report and said that after the last sub-committee meeting there was an additional line added to the report on page 31 – Mr. Burke read the paragraph out loud to the sub-committee members to give context. “This is considered to be a conservative estimate. It is important to acknowledge that this figure may not fully reflect the need.”

Ms. Ursitti stated that from the accounting world the use of the word “conservative” (referring to the number of individuals with ASD) can be confusing and misinterpreted and suggested using the term “low estimate” or to take out the word “conservative”. Nan Leonard commented that she stands by the 57,000 number but she agreed with it being taken out of the report but is still reflected in the meeting minutes. Ms. Boyle said she had done the calculations that produced the numbers and will email this sub-committee her work. She said it is an estimate of the number of people in the Commonwealth who need supportive housing – it is a number that ranges from 15,000-50,000+. This number reflects individuals with a diagnosis of ASD who are not getting 24/7 care and cannot pay market rate housing. It is intended to be the raw demand for supportive housing of ASD not met through Community Based Residential Services. Ms. Boyle said that she did vet out the DDS numbers of P1 due to IDD not ASD. There was additional discussion of the word “conservative” and it was agreed that Ms. Kain would ask TAC to remove the word out of the TAC Report on page 31.

Review of Next Steps

* Dan Burke will reach out to Ayanna Gonzalez and ask if Rachel Heller from Chappa should be involved with the sub-committee work
* Victor Hernandez will make a connection with David Eng on Mass Housing Training Center – currently there are no known trainings on ASD and Housing
* There was a discussion on addressing creating more materials on housing for families to help them navigate what is available. Ms. Boyle talked about a grant from the DD council for Housing Training for Families on accessing public supports and the funding includes translation in 6 languages. One of the trainings will take place at English High School on November 9th
* Ms. Kain asked Ms. Boyle if she had created any materials about housing for families as part of the Autism Housing Pathways work, and could she share them with the housing subcommittee.

Victor Hernandez discussed Section 811 Project Rental Assistance and said that he was informed that MassHealth and DHCD had agreed not to include any specific disability as a priority.

Ms. Ursitti asked if the Autism Commission would be able to review the Annual Report that is being drafted by Ms. Kain. Ms. Kain responded that she will distribute a draft annual report to the Commission members for the December 4th meeting for their review and discussion for it to be approved at the Commission meeting in February 2018.

The next meeting of this sub-committee is scheduled for December 13th @ 10:30-12:30. With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 12:15pm.