Autism Commission Subcommittee on Adults

Virtual Meeting July 25, 2023

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

AGENDA

1. Welcome and introductions.

2. Approval of the minutes from May 16 2023 meeting.

3. Continuing discussion of Subcommittee’s recommendation that we work with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) (a) to offer training to staff at senior centers and other agencies that have direct contact with older adults to watch for aging families of adult autistics and to seek permission to identify them to DDS, and to be able to refer them to resources to plan for when the last parent/family member dies and (b) to develop and implement a statewide program of future planning workshops for autism families not previously connected to future planning resources. Discussion to include a presentation by Kerry Mahoney, Director of Outreach and Education of the Arc of Massachusetts, about their work around the issues of elder caregivers for people with developmental disabilities.

4. Discuss scheduling of next meeting.

5. Action Items.

[For information purposes here are the Adult Subcommittee Recommendations as accepted by the Autism Commission in its 2022 Report:

1. The focus of this recommendation is on the impact of the post-pandemic workforce crisis on day and employment services for adults with autism: That data be compiled from appropriate agencies (MassHealth, MRC, DDS) as to how many adults who were receiving day and/or employment services as of 3/1/2020 have not returned to such services as of 3/1/2023 or are not receiving the full complement that they previously received as of 3/1/2023. Pay particular attention to impacts on Black, Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Native American and other individuals of color and any geographic differences. That data be compiled from DESE and DDS as to the status of day, employment, and residential services as of 3/1/2023 for individuals with autism who Turned 22 during the pandemic, with particular attention to the impacts on Black, Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Native American and other individuals of color and any geographical differences. That data be examined to determine the degree to which high needs individuals with ASD are being particularly impacted by the workforce crisis because they require more intensive staffing. Working with the appropriate agencies, investigate measures that might be adopted to address the greater intensive staffing need and enhance salaries and wages to attract workforce for this subset of individuals served. Evaluate additional wage differential for residential cases, as well as alternative settings that provide respite or emergency support to individuals and programs during the crisis. This could include the need for a specialty behavioral health unit for these individuals.

2. That the Adult Subcommittee will work with the Healthcare Subcommittee of the Autism Commission, The Insurance Resource Center for Autism and Behavioral Health, MassHealth, and other appropriate agencies, as well as medical provider organizations to identify the source(s) of barriers to coverage of ancillary therapies encountered by adults with autism as they age and transition into Medicare. Determine if these barriers are unique to the autism community or encountered more generally by aging populations.

3. That the Adult Subcommittee identify steps to address any barriers for aging individuals with ASD who are transitioning into Medicare, including, if appropriate, requesting MassHealth to outreach to CMS and federal policymakers. The Adult Subcommittee will coordinate with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) on how to communicate effectively with aging Autistics.

4. That the Adult Subcommittee will identify and engage with a research group such as the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston to mine Social Security data to generate prevalence estimates for the number of people with autism currently accessing Social Security in Massachusetts.

5. That the Adult Subcommittee will work with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs to offer training to staff at Senior Centers and other agencies that have direct contact with older adults. Train the staff to watch for aging families of adult autistics and seek permission to identify them to DDS, and to be able to refer them to resources to plan for when the last parent/family member dies.

6. That the Adult Subcommittee work with EOEA to develop and roll out a statewide program of future planning workshops for autism families not previously connected to future planning resources. Review currently available models and coordinate with family support centers, autism resource centers and adult day health programs that may be engaged in this work. Offer these workshops in partnership with local Senior Centers to identify and bring in as many aging families as possible.]