Massachusetts Autism Commission

Adult Subcommittee

July 21, 2022

Via Zoom

**Participants**

Carolyn Kain, Christine Hubbard, Janet George, Dianne Lescinskas, Karen Seck, Josh Greenberg, Rita Gardner, AJ Cullen, Danielle Sheehan, and Beth Zwick

Meeting Minutes – Dianne Lescinskas

**Approval of Meeting Minutes from April 21, 2022**

The meeting minutes from April 21 were reviewed and Ms. Kain made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Greenberg seconded the motion. There was no discussion or opposition; the meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

**Subcommittee recommendations/report for 2022**

The subcommittee members were asked for input regarding recommendations to the Autism Commission. There were no new recommendations last year.

* Look back at previous recommendations/priorities and see where they stand
* The issue of aging and autism – individuals not connected to services – was previously discussed
* Thinking about Chapter 257 for staffing. Working with high needs individuals and higher risk settings and think about a tiered salary for those workers to deal with the workforce crisis
* There is an economic development bill in conference now that would include a substantial wage increase but does not address the tiered system of workers
* Discussion on T22 class and individuals still waiting for services from adult agencies – is there a way to collect data
* Ms. Kain could ask for data but the agencies, that would be involved, would need to weigh in as to if they could collect that data – first we would need to reach out to the agencies prior to writing a recommendation regarding data
* Recommendation could be looking for feedback on the cost and ability to collect certain data
* It was asked if other subcommittees are looking for data? Could we make an integrated request with other subcommittees to make a more effective request for data?
* The question is “what is the purpose of the data” Is it for more funding, long term planning?
* Data for individuals who have both medical and behavioral challenges who haven’t returned to the level of service and are at home – families are carrying the burden – data could be to ask MassHealth for additional PCA hours
* Data question example – How many dayhabs are at full capacity, how many CBDS programs are full – this could answer how many individuals are still at home
* Providers would need to weigh in – possible survey?
* “Who you served in 2020, who came back to your program, who didn’t come back to your program and why”
* MassHealth has been collecting data from surveys since the pandemic began and it has been a struggle to capture every program – data is useful but may not answer the question
* Pennsylvania has been collecting data on who is not getting services – they gained information from a provider survey
* Could data be obtained through billing – what are individuals paying for?
* MassHealth cannot filter data by diagnosis but could get data by month to month comparison
* Needs to be a development of more robust data systems to help shape policy
* Biggest crisis is staffing -the dayhabs closed during the pandemic and had to move dayhab staff to residential
* Transportation is having a difficult time filling positions which effects who is going to dayhab
* Ms. Hubbard will work up language on data and workforce issues and then circulate to all subcommittee members
* Ms. Zwick will work on language for a recommendation with a focus on aging
* It is helpful to first get feedback from the state agencies regarding data collection prior to the Autism Commission meeting. “Data in terms of what they have the capacity to do now and then a survey of the providers”
* Ms. Kain will meet with the co-chairs to discuss the recommendations, once developed in advance of the meeting in September and Ms. Kain will also reach out to the state agencies for feed back on the data collection
* In regard to the discussion of the tiered pay scale - you cannot make a recommendation to change Chapter 257. You could ask DDS to do an “add on” in 257 for a 1:1 based on level of need of an individual that would require an employee to have different qualifications which in turn requires a different salary
* Enhancing the qualifications of staff to generate rate - base the increase on skill set
* Mr. Greenberg had sent some recommendations a year ago on the RFP with explicit recommendations – these could help with different ideas

**Update from DDS regarding use of ARPA and other funds to address impacts of the pandemic and the status of the workforce crisis**

Janet George gave updates to this subcommittee on the use of ARPA funds to address the impacts of the pandemic.

* DDS is hiring an Adult Autism Program Manager
* Wrap around program for individuals living independently, provide an array of supports to stabilize – this is in collaboration with DMH, and they will use DMH’s rental assistance program. The current plan is to do 5 of these programs statewide
* Develop specialized adult ASD resident only units – they first need to locate the site, hope the site will have available workforce, and have program design for complex ASD and co-morbid mental health
* Two specialized respite sites for ASD to better meet the needs of the individual and keep them out of the ED (in collaboration with DMH)
* DDS will put out a consultant contract – looking to get assistance to hire someone to help write the contract
* There will be an evaluation process to the above efforts
* There are conversations on other intensive care units but it not part of this initiative
* Children’s Waiver – process of preparing for expansion – hiring two Child Autism Waiver Program Managers and increase case managers
* Changes in Autism Support Centers- increase the number of brokers
* Providers are seeing more staff with COVID – new variant that is highly contagious

**Schedule of September meeting**

The next meeting of the Adult Subcommittee is scheduled for September 7th at 1:30 p.m.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.