**Autism Commission, Birth to Fourteen Years Old Subcommittee Meeting**

December 13, 2018 - 10:00am-12:00 pm

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street - Malden, MA

Present: Co-Chairs Russell Johnston and Michele Brait, Alexis Glikman, Julia Landau, Michele Poulin, Zachary Houston, Carolyn Kain, Dianne Lescinskas.

Members participating by phone: Rob Polsinelli, Diana Perry, Beth Jerskey, and Shari King

Russell Johnston called the meeting to order and welcomed all members of the Birth to Fourteen Years Old subcommittee meeting. Dr. Johnston noted that this meeting was subject to Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, and present members needed to vote to allow non-present members to participate via telephone. Subcommittee members physically present voted unanimously to allow remote participation.

Dr. Johnston read the agenda items and meeting norms. The minutes from the September 27, 2018 meeting were reviewed by participants and with a few minor changes, the substance of the minutes were approved.

**Review and Input of the Development of DESE’s Electronic IEP**

Dr. Johnson presented a power point on the topic of the DESE new IEP project. This PowerPoint was distributed to the subcommittee prior to the meeting. It contained findings from a report by Anlaw, which was focused on two areas. 1.) How to improve the IEP process, and 2.) What IT solutions would be required to support it?

Anlaw gave 3 recommendations based on their findings. First, was to decide the process before exploring an IT solution. Second, that based on feedback, there was a low desire and need for the state to develop and host a new system. Third, to develop a clear stakeholder plan, a clear communication plan, and to establish a core group to ensure representation to assist and guide DESE.

Next steps for process included creating and writing a new IEP writing guide, develop an IEP, update the parents’ guide to special education, and then a planned initial rollout with volunteers for an initial trial in the 2019-2020 school year. Refinement and solutions would follow and then IT solutions would be incorporated. Possible grants would enable software vendors to upgrade to have the needed technology.

Dr. Johnston then asked the subcommittee for feedback and recommendations, both generally and specifically, for ASD for the new IEP document/process.

*GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS*

* A focus on results and compliance
* Parent friendly display with screen visible to them to feel engaged
* Continue with current flow of the process: parent concerns, vision, goals and objectives,
* Promote consistent IEP process
* Prompt dependent process that is specific : “How did you” as opposed to “Did you”
* Prompts for students 14 and older to participate and present accomplishments/strengths
* More self-determination/ student centered planning
* Information sheet for parents before the Team meeting - possibly delivered with IEP invitation that contain prompts to enter information, possibly through the system portal
* Parent and school staﬀ education on the new IEP process
* Plain language understandable by varied literacy abilities
* Statement of purpose and norms as introduction to Team Meeting
* Student participation and self-advocacy/self- determination in the IEP process
* Language access for parents - written and oral interpretation
* Ratios of services displayed on the service grid

*ASD SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS*

* Need assessment plan
* 7 area focus for ASD- addressed not just considered
* #1 is communication: ACC, particularly for those who are low and non-verbal make sure it is front and center of the IEP process, with specific prompts “are you sure that you are agreeing that this area does not need to be addressed?”
* Need to consider social communication, visual supports
* Cultural aspects of accessing services
* consideration of bullying prevention in the prompts for the 7 focus areas

Dr. Johnston suggested that in preparation for the next meeting, members consider what particular valuable pieces of special education that are our highest priority, and come with more ASD specific recommendations for the new IEP. Carolyn Kain will send members documents to assist, which include the Chapter 57 Acts of 2006 addressing special education for student with Autism, and DESE advisories for best practices and bullying prevention and intervention for students with Autism.

Address the Shortage of ABA Providers Across the State

Dr. Johnston then addressed the topic of ABA shortages in Massachusetts. In follow-up to our last meeting, he looked into the certification issue for providers, and advised that it would be unlikely to try to get a change to enable DESE licensure for ABA providers due to the language in the statutes. He suggested instead that the committee consider gathering information statewide to see what practices are resulting in successful recruitment and retention of ABA provider in schools, and putting together a report for the Autism Commission outlining best practices.

*Feedback/ Suggestions*

* Could we inquire about what trainings are available for Para-professionals
* Given the number of registered RBT’s statewide, it is not possible for them to work with all the children in need. What is a middle ground for having staﬀ well trained but not RBT license requirement
* For MassHealth reimbursement, BCBA supervision needs to be in place, which may be an incentive to school systems
* Currently one can be a BCBA in public schools without state licensure, but they would be unable to bill to Medicaid for services
* Could a program be developed in the vocational schools to open up opportunities for staﬀ recruitment and training
* Should there be a tiered system for those doing discrete trial work, generalization or implementation of plans
* If the goal is to move people forward, the bar cannot be set too high
* Can there be a chapter 74 program dedicated to teaching students with ASD and training programs for RBTs
* Could a network for BCBA’s, to allow for collaboration, be created – similar to the learning network of Transition Teachers that meet across the state
* What are incentives that could be provided to get more BCBA’s and RBT’s in the schools

Based on this discussion for next steps it was determined that creating a survey of school districts experiences makes sense. It was also suggested that a survey of the Behavioral community and membership groups would be helpful. A subcommittee working group will create survey questions. Zach Huston of BPS agreed to start to develop the questions and will reach out to others in this regard. Dr. Johnston will identify people geographically doing hiring in schools to give feedback across districts for the survey.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned. Our next subcommittee meeting is set for January 9th, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 2 on the 21st floor of One Ashburton Place.