Massachusetts Autism Commission

14-22 years of age/Employment Subcommittee Meeting

Virtual - via zoom

July 12, 2022

11:00 a.m.– 12:30 p.m.

**Remote Participation**

Toni Wolf (Co-Chair), Sacha Stadhard (Co-Chair), Dianne Lescinskas, Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Ilyse Levine, Greg Rosen, Nancy Parker, Pam Ferguson, Carol Gracia, Melanie (You’re With Us) and AJ Cullen

**Welcome and Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Stadhard welcomed members of the 14-22/Employment Subcommittee and reviewed the agenda. Members of the subcommittee introduced themselves via zoom and the minutes from the meeting on May 10, 2022 were reviewed. Ms. Levine motioned to approve the minutes and Mr. Rosen seconded the motion. The meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

**Tax Credit for Employers**

The Employer Tax Credit was supported by the Governor and the Legislature and has passed effective on July 1st. MRC will validate the disability and there will be more information on the MRC website. There is work being done on strategies to market this tax credit. This is a Massachusetts State tax credit in addition to the federal tax credit.

**Review Revised 2019 Recommendation related to ASD Students and extended day services**

*Questions for the subcommittee*:

* Are there suggested changes to the recommendation?
* Does the subcommittee agree to move this recommendation forward to the Autism Commission?

There has been a lot of discussion on this recommendation and whether or not this committee could make a recommendation for schools to give information to parents regarding extended day services.

* Concern with #2 on the recommendation – how can DESE and the Federation come up with community-based services across the commonwealth
* Suggestion to strike out the language of “Boys & Girls Clubs” and “YMCA”
* Discussion on the critical piece for students – job training while still in school
* Add “potential” before “afterschool programming”
* Discussion around #1 and #3 – they are things that schools are mandated to do – employment is up to each individual team as part of the IEP discussion
* How can more information on this recommendation be shared with families? Making sure that families understand it is part of the IEP process and discussion
* Regarding #2 – strike the language using specific organizations and “along with their non-disabled peers”
* The recommendation is for DESE and the Federation to come up with the language to share with the families
* Suggestion to strike DDS/DESE program from the language – some felt the language should stay

*Recommendation Revised from 2019 – Approved by the 14 -22 Subcommittee on July 12, Final 2022*

The goal of this recommendation is to provideadditional opportunities for individuals with ASD for skill development and generalization of skills to avoid the need for a more restrictive setting, such as a residential school placement.

The 14-22+ Employment subcommittee recommends that parents be provided with information and educational materials regarding (1) their right to request longer day services to be considered as part of their child’s special education IEP services, (2) potential after-school programming to enable students with ASD to participate in extracurricular/non-academic activities and community-based services along with their non-disabled peers, and (3) the DDS/DESE residential prevention program (subject to availability). The subcommittee recommends that this information be developed by DESE and the Federation for Children with Special Needs, with input from this subcommittee, as part of the Federation’s Parent Training programs and materials.

It was recommended that the recommendation move forward to the full Autism Commission- Ilyse moved the motion and Kathy Kelly seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor. The Autism Commission will meet on September 15th.

**Presentation by Greg Rosen – What is working for employment – barriers and methods for overcoming the barriers**

Greg Rosen addressed this subcommittee on what is proving to work to help individuals with ASD get employed.

* There is an 85-95% unemployment rate
* Part of the issue is the interview – they focus on questions that the community struggle with
* The Autism Cohort has eliminated the traditional interview process and look at the skill set
* The individual is then invited to the company for two weeks to trial and show skills
* Empower had 8 individuals in the cohort and they hired 4 from the cohort
* This was supported by MRC and grant funding
* AANE is partnering with companies to train employers around autism
* They are working with Bill Allen to expand the list of companies that work with MRC
* Teamsters 25 has an autism hiring program – Greg is attending the gala in Boston
* The Pile Drivers union is interested in hiring and a few other industries in healthcare – they are working with Herb Cabral
* Greg is suggesting instead of a traditional interview- start with an icebreaker and then a casual conversation – maybe use technology/video for the interview

*Q/A*

* Empower has committed to changing the interview process – they are open to improving it
* They are recruiting, for the cohorts, through MRC and DDS
* How do companies keep employees once hired? Every week the cohort meets to discuss progress, HMEA provides job coaches, and they help with the transition into the new job and stressful situations.
* HMEA is also training employers on how to work with individuals on the spectrum. They will assign mentors to the job candidates
* MRC innovation grant has developed a classification code called “peer mentors” – used for wrap around services for the individuals. Peer support is a MRC position and they are recruiting people with lived experience – reflective of the individual and what their needs are
* Dr. Nicholson is doing work on how employees are successful in a job – the employer emphasis/responsibility in what the employer should be doing
* Greg’s suggestion on the interview to start with an icebreaker and then looking at the technical skills need on the job, is a great way to look at how to change an approach
* Having prior job experience is very helpful for someone to gain employment after high school
* MPTE (DDS grant) has a train the trainer model promoting “high expectations” that would lead to employment

**Presentation by Dr. Joanne Nicholson**

Commissioner Wolf suggested November to hear from Dr. Nicholson and her research on employer culture.

**Representative from DESE**

Ms. Kain has reached out to Russell Johnston regarding a representative from DESE for this subcommittee. Mr. Johnston is working on getting someone on this subcommittee.

The subcommittee meets every other month on the second Tuesday of the month. Zoom invites will be sent to the membership.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.