**Autism Commission**

**Birth to Fourteen Years Old**

**Subcommittee Meeting**

**Via-Zoom**

**February 9, 2024**

Present on Zoom: Co-Chairs Russell Johnston and Michele Brait, Zachary Huston, Emily White, Jen Chebetor, Mary Haswell, Melissa Clark, Stephanie Coburn, Dianne Lescinskas, and Carolyn Kain.

Meeting Minutes: Michele Brait

Dr. Russell Johnston called the meeting to order and welcomed all members of the Birth to Fourteen-Year-Old Subcommittee. The members voted and approved the October meeting minutes, with the exception of Emily White and Melissa Clark who abstained.

The meeting began with a discussion about safety related program for students with Autism. Members provided feedback about established programs.

* BPS contracts with Impact-Ability program that is an online tool for families related to sex education, and self-defense – they also teach, in-person at select BPS schools.
* Meg Stone has a data - she runs program (Impact Ability)
* Ability impact has programs for transition aged individuals
* The Bureau of Community Health and Prevention in the western part of the state has programming
* Autism Centers have done safety programs related to technology that could be shared with the subcommittee
* It would be beneficial to have state agencies share resources
* The Autism Commission and DDS could share this information on their websites
* Consider outcomes later in life related to the development and use of these skills
* Knowing students have training and are prepared leads to more independence as adults
* The ALEC program is training on ASD for EMS providers.

**Next Steps**

* Explore existing resources, work with Carolyn and Dianne in this regard.
* Identify possible guest speakers, specifically around water safety and wandering -collaborate on ways to promote programs across agencies.
* Reach out to families to determine what resources they are aware of and what they are looking for or need to know.
* Create opportunities for parents to connect with each other
* Consider creating a safety brochure for ASD and distribute it through Early Intervention
* Use the IEP to address safety issues, through the 7 ASD related areas, and for transition programming

*The focus of the rest of the meeting was on Time out and Discipline policies*

* There is a 2021 DESE guidance about efforts to reduce or eliminate and create alternatives for time out rooms where the child is physically removed from class in a closed-door room as opposed to a relax room.
* Regulations allow for a child to isolate if an adult is watching, but not seclusion.
* If a child perceived they cannot leave the room whether it is locked or not, it is an issue with office of civil rights.
* Some states have banned Time out rooms
* There are some acuity issues behaviorally in volume in schools
* Current language around time out is causing problems, sign off on support plans are not always required to use seclusion
* Public schools and private special education schools have different regulations
* Students can experience trauma as a result of placement in time out room
* Limits and guidelines should be put in place, and parents should be able to see them and sign off on them
* Some parents are unaware of school practices, how can they become empowered to know and ask questions.
* Lack of training and oversight are issues
* The rooms are used for unintended purposes, there needs to be clarification
* The term Time Out is demeaning to older students
* There are risks of violation to students in the room by staff
* Concern if rooms are banned, would restraint use increase? Would police be Called more often?
* More FBA’s in schools may help with this issue

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