**Autism Commission**

**Birth to Fourteen Years Old**

**Subcommittee Meeting**

October 13, 2023, 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

Via Zoom

Present on Zoom: Co-Chairs Russell Johnston and Michele Brait, Mary Haswell, Beth Jerskey, Erin Sherman, Zachary Houston, Jennifer Chebator, Stephanie Coburn, Erin Sherman, Dianne Lescinskas, and Carolyn Kain.

Dr. Russell Johnston called the meeting to order and welcomed all members of the Birth to Fourteen-Year-Old Subcommittee. Members made introductions, the agenda was reviewed and a motion was made to approve the meeting minutes from August - with all members in favor of approval, the meeting minutes were approved.

**New IEP Update**

Dr. Johnston gave an update on the new IEP project. Next week the train the trainer’s program will begin and new materials will be distributed, including the Technical Guide to the IEP (formerly the IEP guide), which is geared more toward providers detailing how to approach the IEP, engage with the TEAM, address specific issues like the 688 referral etc. The other resource being distributed is the IEP Playbook, which will include good practices related to use of data, family engagement, policy and protocols based on the 17 early adopting districts. A sample IEP for a hypothetical high school student with ASD will also be released and will include a sample transition plan. Dr. Johnston indicated he could share that sample with the subcommittee for feedback. The new IEP is focused on student vision throughout, and how the vision is reflected in all parts of the document. For ASD students, if one of the 7 categories of need are identified, then the document indicates follow up questions as to how the need will be addressed, by whom, and how it will be measured. The IEP document goals and benchmarks should be clearly understood by providers and families, speaking to what is being worked on and how it is being worked on, with consideration for underlying conditions. Jargon and implementation should be easily understood, in the event a child changes schools or settings.

**Subcommittee Recommendations**

The Subcommittee members reviewed the 2023 recommendations made to the Autism Commission. There was a discussion about which ones to focus on first and how to gather desired information to determine next steps for our recommendations. It was decided that the subcommittee will initially focus on the issues of child safety, EI transition, and school discipline for our upcoming meetings. The following feedback and suggestions were provided.

**Child Safety** -

-“Investigating resources that might be available for communities, schools and individual households to improve safety for students with ASD particularly aimed at addressing concerns such as wandering, bolting and accidental drowning.” (Subcommittee recommendation #5)

* Accumulate resource information for families regarding swim programs for children with ASD that are available, as well as the DCF water safety guide to address the drowning.
* Invite speakers from Boston Police, Safety Net or Angel Sense to attend a subcommittee meeting to inform us, so we can collect and share resources about location device programs with families and districts to address wandering.

**Transition from Early Intervention to Special Education**

-“Examine available information related to the transition of children with ASD from EI to special education, with a focus on the timeliness of this transition and the continuity of supports.” (Subcommittee recommendation #3)

* Examine the increase in numbers and the related impact on managing the volume, with the pressure it places on the system, looking for ways to improve it.
* Promote understanding within the system and community that some of the students with ASD transitioning may not require an IEP or special education.

**School Discipline and Behavior Management**

-“Examine the use of discipline and behavior management strategies in schools that particularly impact students with ASD such as the use of directed time out, suspension, etc. focusing on considerations of culture, race, linguistics, gender identity, and socio- economic status.” (Subcommittee recommendation # 6)

* Exploring how the staff and resource shortages impact decisions on what to do in the moment
* Is the staff shortage resulting in more time outs, changes in policies and procedures
* Helping manage frustration and defeatism felt by staff due to reduction in resources
* Examining DESE Guidance on the topic for clarity around use of time out statewide and what is considered seclusion
* In some regards the issues of child safety and school disciple align

Dr. Johnston indicated we will focus our upcoming meetings for the next several months around these 3 topics, allowing the necessary time for in depth discussion on each one.

With no further topics on the agenda, the meeting adjourned at 10:48 am.