**Autism Commission Birth to Fourteen Years Old**

**Subcommittee Meeting**

June 2, 2023 10:00 a.m.- 11:00 a.m.

Via Zoom

Present on Zoom: Co-Chairs Russell Johnston and Michele Brait, Amy Paulin, Amy Krukonis, Mary Haswell, Melissa Clark, Moses Nduati, Seth Coven, Zachary Houston, Emily White, Carolyn Kain and Dianne Lescinskas.

Dr. Russell Johnston called the meeting to order and welcomed all members of the Birth to Fourteen-Year-Old Subcommittee. The members voted to approve the April meeting minutes.

**Inclusion Data**

The Subcommittee members reviewed DESE inclusion data and gave feedback. The data was very concerning, and the subcommittee members had questions about what the

DESE monitor team is doing to address the disparities in placements for students of color.

The Office of Public-School monitoring team has a Program Monitoring Project looking at Racial equity, placement by subgroups, the intersection of race and disability, family engagement, and ASD specific data.

The Vision is equitable outcomes for all students. A tiered focus monitor review is to include records review, on site visits, and observation looking at both special education delivery and civil rights issues to support districts to eliminate bias racism and barriers to equal success.

- ASD student placement by race chart indicated Black, Latino and Native American students had a much higher percentage rate of being in a sub separate setting.

- Level of need is a TEAM decision, but data shows patterns of discrepancies based on race, looking as if race may predispose a student to a particular setting.

* District patterns are not different based on region, it is happening across the board.
* Multilingual ELL student data is similar to the pattern of Black, Brown and Native American students.
* Anti racism training is being done through DESE. The Office of Special Services did 6 training sessions for professional development about the intersection of race and special education, which there are racial inequities in special education, why problems persist, and application of solutions.
* Coaching needs to be done understanding historical and present context.
* Parents are part of the TEAM, but education imbalances and lack of advocacy are factors.
* The office has done interviews, surveys, parent orientations, with translators and interpreters. White families were more likely to respond to them.
* Focus groups for students and parents are being considered.
* Monitor review looks at special ed placement, full inclusion and sub separate by race, graduation rates, attendance, discipline and restraint use. If something racial is noted, it gets elevated within the district, it will be presented, 16 specialists will meet with the leadership with ongoing coaching and support for staff to engage in race based conversations. Action plans with progress steps are put in place to eliminate discrepancies. Ongoing monitoring will stay in place for that district to ensure systemic change. The district will have one year to come into compliance.
* Core issues are to make more data-based findings, do a root core analysis, and follow up to implement corrective action.

***Questions and feedback from the subcommittee members included***:

* There are concerns for EI students who require proper placements, and for students currently in sub separate classrooms that are not being moved out of that setting. This should be revisited annually at the IEP meeting. This will be part of the discussion for the program monitoring project.
* Data is usually reported in the aggregate, but districts should report on progress of moving students back to inclusion.
* Is there a plan to breakdown the data by districts to find patterns of bias and address them?
* Are there situations where the districts seat availability determines placement?
* Are there power differentials and do families know about them?
* Are there biases about students with behaviors?
* Are there systemic factors?
* Do less representation and advocacy among minority populations play a role?
* Does levels of need data breakdown the same way in the aggregate?
* Can disability category, gender, race, EI history and placement be looked at?
* Impacts of medical advice to parents can be an issue, some feel the students should be in full inclusion only. Others say only accept an ABA private placement.
* Some private placement schools are now looking more for lower needs populations, causing challenges for school districts for students with higher needs.
* Does this bias for being more frequently placed in sub separate settings also apply to students involved with DCF? With DDS cost share, how does out of district placement work?
* Does DESE work with inclusion classrooms, are there specialists or professional development programs in place to help support and instruct these classroom teachers and aides?
* The most popular piece of guidance from DESE is the one with practices teachers need to put in place to be more inclusive, but there is more work to do.

Dr. Johnston thanked all members for their input on this topic. It was decided that for future meetings, we could alternate having them on Monday and Friday so more people could attend.

With no further items on the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00am.