**Autism Commission Birth to Fourteen Years Old**

**Subcommittee Meeting**

August 19, 2022 10:00am-11:00am

Via Zoom

Present on Zoom : Co-Chairs Russell Johnston and Michele Brait, Michelle Poulin, Beth Jerskey, Erin Sherman, Emily White, Julia Landau, Zachary Huston, Melissa Clarke, Moses N Duati, Carolyn Kain

Dr. Russell Johnston called the meeting to order and welcomed all members of the Birth to Fourteen Year Old Subcommittee. Introductions were made for the new members to the subcommittee. The members present at todays meeting that were also present at the June meeting voted to approve the June meeting minutes.

**Overview of The Autism Commission and Subcommittee Recommendations**

Carolyn Kain gave a brief history of the Omnibus Law, the establishment of the Autism Commission, it’s purpose and focus areas. These include making recommendations on policies impacting people with ASD, Investigating the range of existing and supports to help people with ASD, examining education, employment, post secondary options, housing, independent living, and adult services to address needs across the lifespan.

The Commission voted to accept bylaws and subcommittees were created which include the Birth to Fourteen Years Old, 14 to 22 years Old, Housing, Adult Services, and Healthcare. The subcommittees look at specific issues and unmet needs, and make recommendations to the Autism Commission for consideration. This is done at the September Autism Commission meeting each year. Any recommendation that will have a financial impact for a state agency should first undergo a due diligence of exploring the cost and checking in with the agency that it impacts. The impacted agency would be made aware of the subcommittee recommendation at the September Autism Commission meeting and have time for discussion and feedback prior to the December Autism Commission meeting, at which time the Autism Commission votes on which recommendations to include in their annual report each March.

Considerations when creating recommendations include prioritizing issues and looking at what is reasonable and achievable. The current pandemic recovery and work force shortage do have an impact. Additional funding and initiatives are available but it will take time to expand and creative new things. Some subcommittees have decided to concentrate on ongoing work from prior recommendations, rather than making new recommendations. There are no requirements for making new recommendations or keeping old ones, the subcommittees can decide what they want to recommend.

Dr. Johnston asked the subcommittee to review the list of recommendations we have made to the Autism Commission from 2018 to 2021, to determine whether we want to keep, modify or remove them from out list for the upcoming year.

1. DESE IEP Project- The subcommittee decided this has ongoing work and should remain an active recommendation.
2. Access to AAC Devices - The subcommittee discussed that there are still barriers to getting and implementing devices and to obtaining data to address inequalities in accessing devices for students of color and English language learners. Also, examining the accessibility of assessments and staff training so the appropriate device is utilized by the student and the TEAM. The subcommittee decided to modify the current recommendation. The Birth to Fourteen subcommittee would like to be able to review available data and information on dedicated and non dedicated AAC devices to improve equitable access, training, implementation and effective use of the devices and examine disparities across the state districts.

3. Inclusion for students with ASD - the subcommittee decided it would still be important to keep this as a recommendation, to get updated data from DESE for the year, and to consider how to go beyond requesting data in our recommendation. Further discussion is needed in this regard.

4. Students with ASD in DCF care- DCF adopted and implemented a policy on handling cases involving a person with disabilities, and hired a specialist to be involved in these cases with trainings to be provided. The Subcommittee decided this remains an important recommendation topic, and consideration for next steps should be given, beyond trainings. Further discussion is needed in this regard.

5. Age of Diagnosis- currently the data we are looking for is not collected. The Subcommittee decided they would like to keep this topic on our list of recommendations, with modifications to our prior recommendation, possibly concentrating on improvements to accessibility of assessments and wait list times. Further discussion is needed in this regard.

6. A potential new area to consider for a recommendation is the transition of services from Early Intervention to DESE.

It was decided that we would require one more meeting to further discuss and finalize our 2022 Subcommittee recommendations prior to the September Autism Commission meeting. Dr. Johnson said he would get a date out as soon as possible.

The meeting ended at 11:06 am.