Autism Commission

Employment and 14-22 year old Sub-Committee Meeting

*Combined with*

22+/ Employment and Higher Education Sub-Committee Meeting

June 14, 2017, 11:30a.m. – 1:30p.m.

500 Harrison Avenue

Present: Carolyn Kain, Dianne Lescinskas, Kasper Goshgarian, Michelle Brait, Tina Fitandides, Maura Sullivan, Dian Bohannon, Amanda Green, Gary Hale, Margaret Van Gelder, Madeline Wenzel, Roberta Lewonis, Vanda Khadem , Amy Weinstock and Dina Cundiff

Remote access: Michael Plansky, Michael Weiner, Lea Hill, Ann Guay and Kathleen Kelly

Carolyn Kain stated that the meeting was subject to the Open Meeting Law and that the Sub-Committee members present would need to vote to approve the remote participation of some members because of their geographic location, whenever any members were utilizing video and/or tele-conferencing. Remote access was approved unanimously.

The minutes from the 14-22/Employment meeting on May 3rd were reviewed and approved by the respective members of this sub-committee. Minutes from the 22+ /Employment and Higher Education meeting on May 3rd were reviewed and approved by the respective members of this sub-committee.

**Overview by DDS of Massachusetts Partnership for Transition to Employment**

* Margaret Van Gelder from DDS presented on this federally funded project
* 5 year project : 9/30/16 - 9/29/21 ($250,000 per year)
* Goal is to enhance collaboration across existing state systems to increase competitive employment outcomes for youth and young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities
* It has an Employment First approach by developing partnerships and collaboration
* Looking at a systems change
* The project has 4 working groups: Cross-systems collaboration; Access to work experiences and employment in integrated settings; Parental support and self-determination/self-advocacy
* The project has a Steering Committee with multiple state agencies represented – including DESE
* The project has a consortium which is comprised of 45 members representing various constituencies that play key roles in transition and employment

*Questions and comments from this sub-committee*

* Was there specific language of ASD included in this federal grant? No, the focus is on ID and developmental disability which includes ASD – there can be a lot of overlap.
* The age range is from 16-24 years old – why? It is age range that has been identified by this grant
* What does the word practice mean in this presentation? Employment experiences while still in school – what practice may make a difference in an individual’s life while still in school and to ensure that these experiences are available to all
* Is there any thought around having a subset that would focus on ASD? It wasn’t part of the application but it could evolve to include ASD. Questions will arise around “What are we seeing”? We could look at specific practices and universal approaches that could be brought to scale and also benefit individuals with ASD
* ASD could be identified as a gap and could lead to better staff training and approaches
* Is transportation being discussed as part of this grant? Yes, Mass. Mobility is on the consortium
* Glenn Gabbard from the MAICEI program is involved with this project – could MAICIE be vocationally driven?
* Evidence based practices and universal design could encompass ASD
* Identify evidence based practices and build into a curriculum
* We should look at what other states have done around this grant in regards to ASD

**Update from MRC**

This sub-committee had submitted a list of questions regarding the RFR for Pre-ET’s. Ms. Kain had previously sent these questions to MRC for updates and she walked this committee through the responses.

* It is not possible to have 2 applications for MRC – Pre-ET’s is the beginning of a process to employ and it is not allowed by RSA and they are the primary funder.
* Not sure how specific schools receive information but there is a counselor at all high schools - MRC is also working on updating their marketing material
* MRC provides training on ASD through AANE. This is one organization that they have a contract with but they have ongoing training on ASD. Their first training was 4-5 years ago in partnership with Northeast ARC
* All new counselors receive training and that includes training around ASD
* Not aware of a specific training for individuals who are more impacted by their disability
* Data collection will be completed by August/September of 2017
* 15% or 7.4 million is allocated for transition aged youth
* It may be possible to collect ASD data – there could be a specific check mark on an application
* MAC’s comments on the RFR were submitted to MRC but MRC cannot target a specific disability – different language should be considered to include best practices, universal design
* There is room to weave issues that are prevalent in ASD into the RFR

*Comments/Questions from this subcommittee*

* There is a list of vendors and MRC will send it to Ms. Kain
* How does MRC assign students to vendors – is it based off of need?
* MRC informed the sub-committee that 17% of referrals are coming from schools
* MRC could look at what competencies vendors need to work with the ASD population
* MRC will review the RFR comments that MAC sent them and will meet with Ms. Kain and a representative from MAC to make necessary changes to the RFR that would include language that would cover specific areas of need
* Who are the providers (vendors) that have an expertise in ASD
* We should consider ensuring that the RFR has language that require vendors have competencies of a universal design – we can identify what the core competencies are that are needed
* The needs of the individuals with ASD are so vastly different – we need vendors that can be flexible and adaptable – it can be challenging for a provider

Amanda Green discussed the 2006 law G.L. C. 71B §3. That lists the characteristics that need to be considered by the IEP team. This is language that this sub-committee could look at and put into the RFR. Mr. Goshgarian said if this sub-committee could come up with the language for the RFR it could be considered. They are open to language in a broader sense that would be universal and cover all disabilities. Ms. Kain will look at the IEP law and incorporate some of the language and then share MRC. Mr. Goshgarian commented that the challenge is the increasing need for ongoing supports – the funding for this is miniscule. MRC is in discussions with DDS on collaborating with the ongoing employment support. Vanda commented that this is the reason why transition services need to start early to ensure that the youth are more prepared as they enter the workforce. It was said that this is a policy issue and even with all of the upfront training it won’t matter without the sustained support for employment. We are talking about short money to have people not reliant on state government.

Next meeting of this sub-committee will be in July and a date will be sent to the sub-committee. The 2013 recommendations will be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30.