Birth to Three Autism Commission Subcommittee

January 18, 2017, Minutes

Participants: Nancy Lunden, May Institute EI SSP; Shari King, Boston Medical Center, Autism Program Director; Diana Parry-Cruwys, NECC; Vincent Strully, CEO/NECC; Cynthia Berkowitz, MD, Area Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Metro Boston DMH; Joan Rafferty, DPH Coordinator for Specialty Services Autism

Phone Participants: Dianne Lescinskas, Autism Commission; Carolyn Kain, Executive Director Autism Commission; Sarah Richmann, DDS Autism Division; Ann Neumeyer, MD, Lurie Center; Rafael Castro, ICCD

Welcome and Introductions

Autism Rates in EI – Joan Rafferty discussed the status of Autism billing rate increase. After several months, all commercial insurers, MassHealth and DPH are billing at new rates. H Codes implemented (4) with all commercial insurers, MH and DPH as of July 1. Retroactive rates back to March 1 through June 30, 2016 required to be paid by MH and DPH. DPH paid in fall, MH just coming into compliance. Commercial insurers not required to pay retro and did not. Blue Cross/Blue Shield using T codes (11) and indicated they would start on October 1, 2016. Systems in place – took some time for all insurance systems and EI billing systems to be set up to accept claims but now all functional. However, any changes, e.g. BC/BS adding a new code for treatment planning starting Jan. 1 and a good thing, requires changes to EI billing systems before programs can submit claims. Still working out credential issues. BCBAs waiting for license – licensure board backed up and some waiting several months for license. Mass ABA group has sent letter to board to request quicker response. Affecting children getting services as requirement for only licensed BCBA supervision. Carolyn has contacted licensure board as well on behalf of the Autism Commission to ask for quicker response to applicants. Reports that they are closing the gap in a more timely fashion.

Self Insured Insurance Plans – Carolyn reporting – meeting with Sec. – looking for confirmation, which self-funded specific employers not covering ABA services. Different plans have different coverage. Need the specific data. More from Insurance Resource Center and Autism Speaks. If anyone has information about self- insured plans and what is covered, please send to Carolyn.

Autism Commission Report October 2016 – Carolyn Reporting – progress on 2013 recommendations – what has been completed, unmet needs, what recommendations have not moved forward, are there new barriers?

Discussion about Recommendation #4 from report – refer to Birth – Three population

Meeting held to discuss Self-Insured plans covering ABA services – a priority of the Sec. – see above

AAC devices – medical necessity – stringent on this – only for communication – in the past would pay for a device costing $8000 that was strictly for communication – ex. Dynavox – but not pay for IPad – costing $500 because it can be used for other activities – Now MH will approve a device (like ipad) – MH had identified a vendor on the state vendor list- there is a process for families to go through – need to identify medical necessity – SLP documentation of trials of various devices and makes recommendations – help for families to access at Autism Support Centers

EI to provide info to families – does annual webinar – Amy Weinstock – on ARICA –

EI needs to expand to info on Omnibus Law – Mass Advocates for children does those trainings

Recommendation #7

How long is the wait for diagnosis?

Western MA – was 9-10 months, now 4 months

Boston Medical Center – prioritizes children under 3 – Under 3 under 3 program (less than 3 month wait for evaluation) Ongoing for a couple of years

Elaine Gabovitch’s report – screenings are better but average age of diagnosis 36 mo.

Reports of pediatricians doing screenings at 12-18-24 mo. Not consistent

Commission asking for a meeting with DPH to look at data – how widespread – how to motivate pediatricians – cultural and linguistic challenges exist

EI – invited to ped staff mtgs – talk about process to refer to EI – bring concerns up to parents and refer. Can we look at large group practices in the state and provide information? Ann – developing online program in summer to train “experts” - one person from each ped practice –

EI to put info in “The Update” newsletter to ask for names of ped practices that make referrals – send to Ann Neumeyer

Other EI Sources for info for Ann – MEIC regional program director meetings, MEIC Conference

Act Early – grant to present early screening and developmental milestones videos in 6 languages being developed for publication

Projects in two regions with EI staff trained in level 2 screener for ASD – ped having expedited slots for diagnosis – half the time as other children referred – looking to train in other regions

Birth to Three Recommendations – Autism Commission meeting March 6 – Carolyn would like 1-3 recommendations to bring to full commission meeting. This can be something left over from previous recommendations or a new recommendation.

* Early Identification/Early Diagnosis/Early Treatment

Workforce Development Subcommittee addressing some of this

Provide more info on wait time – crisis when child has diagnosis and unable to get services

Include culturally sensitive materials and information in this priority

* Need to educate the medical field and parents on “early signs”
* Transition from Early Intervention to Over 3 services

Huge wait list for ABA services for over 3 years old– have to advocate for school services. Develop brochure/fact sheet – what services might a child be eligible for after turning 3 – a one page document

Morgan Crossman – researcher working at Mass General – on Steering for Act Early – developing a guide to help parents of children with ASD transition from EI to Pre-School

Offer helpful info for families

Member Updates:

Shari – BMC Autism Friendly Hospital – self-imposed not a certification or training – info unique to child documented in EMR – have hospital wide steering committee – 30 people – also consider environmental changes in ER – just getting started with this project – great buy in from staff

Ann Neumeyer, M.D. working at Mass Gen for a few years – PT Autism Care Coordinator – trains staff and facilitates visits – Karen Turner, OT

Cynthia Berkowitz, M.D.– DDS and DMH Collaboration – who provides services when symptoms cross – ASD and Psych diagnosis – a lot of discussion – need to develop specialized services for young adults

Next Meetings:

Thursdays or Fridays – Fridays seem better for most –

Location good for some

Phone good for some

Joan will send Doodle poll for dates in March, May, July

Meeting adjourned.