Autism Commission

Employment and 14-22 year old Sub-Committee Meeting

April 5, 2017, 12:30p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

500 Harrison Avenue

Present: Carolyn Kain, Michelle Brait, Julia Landau, Michael Plansky, Maura Sullivan, Ilyse Levine, Vanda Khadem, Lea Hill, Dian Bohannon, Michael Stepansky, Melissa Guyer, Alexis Henry, and Judith Ursitti.

Remote access: Elana Aubrey, Lisa Borges, Marisa McCarthy, Laura Conrad, Carly Sebastian, and Michael Weiner, Ann Guay, Amy Weinstock, 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 meeting on March 1st were reviewed and approved by this sub-committee.

**RFR and MRC**

Ms. Kain stated that she had sent the subcommittee the RFR from MRC for its Pre-ET services and the National Autism Indicator Report for discussion at today’s meeting. She acknowledged that there was a lot of information to review and that all members may not have had the opportunity to review it all for today but she wanted to provide it to start the discussion.

Judith Ursitti mentioned that she had also provided the transition checklist and bill of rights on transition. Ms. Ursitti stated that if there is too much information that is overwhelming for parents, Ms. Kain said they should review the checklist as a guide for potentially creating a checklist that the subcommittee thought would be most useful for families.

Ms. Kain said that part of the issues they had discussed involved parents not understanding what services were available from other agencies and when those services may be available. She said that her office had been working on a one page document with helpful information for families and school personnel about other services for discussion with DESE. Ms. Guay suggested that Ms. Kain mention this at the Autism Awareness and Acceptance Day at the statehouse.

Ms. Khadem said she did not understand why families are not referred to both DDS and MRC. There was a discussion about the 688 referral process. Ms. Landau said that MRC provides both pre-employment and voc. Rehab services and parents did not understand the difference. Mike Plansky noted that he had to request a MRC application but without his request he would not have received any information. Ms. Kain said that the 688 referral process was for two years before existing school either at graduation or at age 22 but that families can and should be connecting with MRC and DDS before that time to determine what services are available, because the research supports that individuals who begin employment and pre-employment services while still in high school are much more likely to obtain employment as adults.

Vanda asked what the criteria are for MRC counselor to determine if a person should receive Pre-Et services. The question was raised if there was a requirement for 20 hours of employability toward gainful employment, and for 90 days of consistent employment. Julia mentioned that the 20 hour standard was for adults receiving MRC services but that requirement did not apply to the Pre-ET’s program. Ms. Kain said she would discuss these issues with MRC before the next meeting. The issue was also brought up about what training MRC counselors receive regarding ASD and what if any training the MRC service providers receive.

RFR and MRC training and competencies were discussed to build expertise in ASD. Service model - sensory and generalization – could be built into the RFR. A question was asked of the knowledge base of the reviewers of the RFR. It was noted that the 90 day employment support does not apply to Pre-ET’s.

MRC referral process can begin at 16 years old through a referral from the family or school district. Next is a 30 day wait period until they are determined eligible. Anyone with an IEP or 504 plan is able to apply for eligibility.

Judith Ursitti mentioned that Texas does ASD certification training. Ms. Kain asked about the level of course work required since it may be too stringent for direct care workers currently working in the field to complete but that competency training is necessary for the provision of appropriate services.

Other topics that were discussed:

* OCALI Training – employers, state agencies
* University of North Texas
* Autism Employment Summit HMEA
* ICI at UMass – technical assistance provided to DDS

**General Recommendations for the RFR**

* Training for MRC councilors
* Training for MRC providers
* What are the gaps in Pre-ET services for individuals with ASD
* DDS/MRC – sustainable support for adults

Review of the services that they have provided – how do we weigh in on the RFR and is MRC getting feedback from employers.

ASD and MRC – 4,000 clients – PETs, TIP, TAP programs, ILC’s – TIP, TAP – number of individuals

Next meeting – review previous Commission’s recommendations around transition.

The next meeting of this sub-committee is scheduled for May 3rd at 11:00-1:00.