

Autism Commission
Sub-Committee for Three Years Old - Fourteen Years Old
Meeting Minutes - October 13, 2016
500 Harrison Avenue, 11am-1pm

Members present were Carolyn Kain, Dianne Lescinskas, Sarah Geldart, and Dr. Beth Jerskey.

Members accessing meeting remotely were Christina Fitanides, Teresita Ramos, Sue McCarthy, and Janice LeBel.

Carolyn Kain, the Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:05 am and welcomed the members to the meeting of this Sub-Committee. Ms. 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. Minutes from last meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously.

Carolyn stated that we would skip over the discussion on the Circuit Breaker because Julie Kelley was not present – we will discuss at the next meeting.

Dianne looked into paraprofessional training in other states and reported that New York offers training to paraprofessionals (general training). Autism Speaks gave a grant to The Autism Project in Rhode Island where they developed trainings on Autism specific to paraprofessionals. This training was implemented into community colleges in Rhode Island. Virginia passed a House Bill in 2014 requiring all paraprofessionals that are assigned to work under a teacher, who has primary oversight over students with ASD, to receive training. Only a few states require general paraprofessional training.

Sarah said she spoke with Marty and Massachusetts may focus on an online training for paraprofessionals and will work to develop the courses either ASD or disability specific. It may not be mandatory.

Carolyn suggested that they need to come up with a standard of training to ensure services are of quality. There should be a level training as a minimum requirement. There are no standards currently and no consistent training for paraprofessionals.

Tere said we should defer to BCBA Board and use their expertise on this – possibly have Carolyn write a letter to the board and ask about training. It is important to note that training is not “one size fits all” and it should be more individualized. Carolyn said it should be based off of BCBA training but more individualized. She said since we do not have the training now, this conversation is a good start. Tina said that this is an issue to bring to the full commission. Carolyn said it is more complex given that they are dealing with school districts, private

providers, and staff approved by insurance companies or MassHealth, and the Commission does not have the ability to issue a standard but it was still important to look at what should be required as a foundational training for anyone providing direct ABA services.

Tina said that this issue is important to MAC and that DESE is already looking into the Autism Endorsement for Regular Education teachers. This could be a recommendation to the Commission and open doors to all the Gen. Ed. Teachers.

Sarah said that DESE received public comment and the board approved the Autism Endorsement only for Special Education teachers. A survey went out recently and the results were strong in favor of allowing Gen. Ed. Teachers to receive the Autism Endorsement training. Results of the survey will be presented to DESE at an internal meeting. We may not have to come up with a recommendation – wait to hear after the DESE meeting.

Laura Conrad was not present and will update us at a later date on Mass. Health and augmentative devices.

Tina discussed the language access with AT devices and the Mass Health process. Legislation is in place to get the coverage for devices – it's a matter of getting it in motion. Implementation is where it is falling apart. Tina also talked about the RFP's with language access. They are not being implemented. Carolyn asked how we can look at where barriers exist and come up with recommendations to overcome any language barriers. Carolyn and Dianne are visiting all of the Autism Support Centers and will discuss this issue with them.

Tina talked about translation and interpretation as being part of Mass Health services and there is reimbursement for this service but Mass Health we are not sure if MassHealth is seeking reimbursement. There is a Federal match for language access services – need to follow up with Mass Health on this issue.

Tere said that PQA has been in touch about English Language Learners and there is a training conference call to create an advisory for Districts. Sarah Nino is in charge of ELL and as a committee it might be helpful for us to review the advisory and provide comments. It was suggested that the sub-committee send a letter to Sarah Nino regarding the advisory and ask if we could review and provide comments.

Tere suggested that we hold listening sessions across the state to ensure we are covering all of the issues. Carolyn said we could explore the idea and possibly think of an electronic survey along with some listening sessions to address logistical issues of getting more families to participate.

Tina asked if we could provide a list of topics of all of the issues that have been raised at the sub-committee meetings. This would help the committee to prioritize. Carolyn said this could be done prior to next meeting.

Sarah gave an update on parental complaints from PQA regarding barriers of AT and autism – Barry Barnett, from Problem Resolution said they do not have the ability to figure out how many complaints they receive specific to autism and AT.

Beth asked if Mass Health requires ADOS evaluations. Carolyn said she raised this issue at Birth-3 sub-committee. Sue McCarthy said smaller insurance companies are pushing back and requiring the scoring sheets (UBH, Cigna and Aetna). They want to see the completed tool and who is doing the testing. BMC has had issues with this because they have nurse practitioners doing this testing and it is being denied by insurance companies.

Mass Health put together a series of FAQ's to Managed Care about some of these issues. We should take a look at the FAQ. Carolyn will email Laura about Mass Health and questions from this sub-committee.

The next two meetings of this sub-committee were scheduled for November 3rd and December 7th at 11:00am-1:00pm. Both meetings will be held at 500 Harrison Avenue.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:40 pm.