

Autism Commission
Sub-Committee for Three Years Old - Fourteen Years Old
Meeting Minutes – November 3, 2016
500 Harrison Avenue

Members present were Carolyn Kain, Dianne Lescinskas, Kathy Stern, Laura Gobeil, Christina Fitanides and Dr. Beth Jerskey.

Members accessing meeting remotely were, Teresita Ramos, Sue McCarthy, Laura Conrad, Sarah Geldart and Janice LeBel.

Carolyn Kain, the Chair, called the meeting to order at 11:05am 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 in October were reviewed and approved unanimously.

Tere said there was a draft Technical Advisory from DESE on ELL and she wanted to know if this group could review? Carolyn contacted DESE and was told that there is already a committee that will review and comment on this advisory and that it is not specific to autism. Tere said she would receive the draft memo and share it with our group for comment.

Carolyn discussed reaching out to the BCBA board regarding their RBT training. She said that it may not be advisable as she expected them to recommend training that school districts may not be willing to do and there could be issues with collective bargaining agreements on the amount of training required for paraprofessionals. Carolyn wanted more information before she reaches out to the board regarding training of paraprofessionals.

Laura discussed that paraprofessionals are not required to be licensed and this is part of the problem. Carolyn discussed that some who have received training and are very good at providing ABA but many others are not and that reflects badly on ABA since those students are not getting ABA in accordance with its principles. How can we look at this issue and come up with a minimum of training. Right now for every 10 hours of direct service there is 2 hours of BCBA supervision recommended and that also varies. Carolyn said we need to proceed in a thoughtful and comprehensive manner. She discussed that paraprofessionals are part of the union in Boston Public Schools – not sure if that is the case in other cities and towns. This could become part of collective bargaining.

Laura said that this happens with a lot of services for students – not just specific to ABA. Paraprofessionals are asked to do a lot with little training. Mass Health has a list of 15 aspects that have required training. What is the baseline training that is required? It is up to the provider to decide how much training is needed. Laura said she will send out the list of trainings to Carolyn and she will share with this sub-committee. It was mentioned that this is a good place to start looking at a minimum of baseline training that should be required for anyone providing direct ABA services.

Carolyn sent out the list of issues identified for follow-up and prioritization from this group, see attached handout. The group reviewed and discussed each issue.

1. AAC devices - Laura said that this is outside of her scope and she is looking at more information to report.
2. Circuit Breaker Statute – Julie Kelly is not at this meeting but Carolyn said she doesn't think it is feasible with the language that was proposed because programs like NECC have not been reviewed by DESE. Also, NECC would not have the ability to serve all schools throughout the state. We will table this issue for next meeting and maybe do a little more research to figure out what it could look like.
3. Autism Endorsement for teachers – There was a survey done to see if general education teachers could also receive this endorsement. A recommendation will be brought forth to the board (DESE) in December and it will be shared with this committee. Tina wanted it known, that from an advocacy point, it is important that the Autism Commission believes it should happen. She feels that having the backing of the Autism Commission is a helpful tool. Carolyn said that it is not ready to be brought to the full commission. Sara said the meeting is on December 20th and when the information is ready to share, she will do so. Also, Sara asked if the results of the survey are available and can be shared with Carolyn and then shared with the Commission. It was asked if Marty would want to bring up these results at the Commission meeting in December. Sara said she will ask Marty.
4. BCBA training and BPS – Zachery Houston was not at this meeting – table until next meeting.
5. Standards of training for paraprofessionals – We have discussed this issue and think that maybe we should reach out to private requirements like the May Institute. Beth will look into the standards. Tere mentioned QABA – Qualified ABA and this may be a place for us to look at their requirements. This training is based out of California. We need to look at the minimum requirements of training as a start – could there be a regulation change next year? Sara discussed Endicott Masters Certificate program (6 classes). Tina mentioned that paras need baseline knowledge. Carolyn also said that the standards need to be developed for Workforce Development. The group said they will look at

QABABoard.com. Sara will also send Carolyn the Technical Advisory on Paraprofessionals and training.

6. Insurance rejections – ADOS and Mass Health – they do not require that test. No specific tests or scores. Laura said she put together a FAQ 3-4 weeks ago that she sent to Carolyn. She will send out to the rest of the group. Laura said that a nurse practitioner cannot provide the test and they are not looking to change that requirement - they have to submit to the Federal Government and it is a national requirement that testing is signed off by a physician. This can be done by a licensed physician and psychologist. Carolyn said that the nurse practitioner issue has come up at BMC, which has developmental nurse practitioners but they do not meet the statutory language. The group discussed that it is the clinical experience that is important and that some doctors and psychologists do not have training in autism.

At this point of the meeting Joanne Quinn, from the Autism Project called in to discuss a grant they received from Autism Speaks around paraprofessional training. (see handout)

They have been around for 20 years and they had a concern as they saw more and more children on the spectrum and with numbers increasing each year. They typically go into classrooms across Rhode Island and work with the entire class around inclusion. Fifteen years ago they did a 9 week parent training called The Starting Point on Autism. They still do parent training and it is called Aspire (3 levels) and focus on social emotional.

They received the grant in 2013 and came up with a curriculum. It lasted 2-3 years in a community college. They charged \$99 for a yearlong course (two 6 week trainings – Level 1&2). They now offer the class at their office. They trained 120 paraprofessionals last year. It includes an overview of autism, emphasis on the individual child, strategies and support throughout the day and getting the student ready to learn.

Tina asked if they had a curriculum that we could look at and Joanne said she would send the details of the Level 1&2 training. Tina also asked if Rhode Island has requirements around training and she responded that they do need a certain amount of PD each year and it can also be written into an IEP that anyone working with a SWD has to be trained.

Joanne said the goal for training is to give them strategies to be successful within their role as a paraprofessional since they spend the majority of time with the students. Joanne mentioned that the paras pay for the training as well as the unions and schools. The parent training is free. They are looking into doing live webinars.

Carolyn reported that DDS is providing training through a web-based program called OCALI. It was asked if Joanne and her team would come to Massachusetts to provide training and she said yes, they can do a train the trainer model.

The group discussed Joanne's program and how we could possibly replicate the training at a low cost.

The remaining issues that were identified for priority were discussed and include:

Developing the Autism Commission's webpage and making it user friendly and providing links for families and caregivers.

It was mentioned that there is translated material online in some agencies. It was also asked about homelessness— what information is available for families during a transition. Carolyn said she is open to having brochures developed on basic information in different languages for families. She also discussed that the Federation for Children with Special Needs has a lot of information available to families and in different languages.

Carolyn asked if Mass Health gives reimbursement for translation – they do not. Providers have to provide translation and it is built into the rate.

Laurie asked Carolyn about the format and expectations of our sub-committee and how we should move forward. Carolyn said that an annual report is required in March under the statute, the first report was filed in October 2016, but there has been no formal discussion with the Commission regarding their expectations on when the subcommittees would submit recommendations.

The next meeting for this sub-committee was marked for December 7th at 11:00am – 1:00pm.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:50pm.