

Autism Commission Sub-Committee for 14-22 year olds Meeting Minutes
July 13, 2016, 3:00pm-5:00pm
500 Harrison Ave, Boston, MA

The Chair of the Sub-Committee, Carolyn Kain, Executive Director of the Autism Commission called the meeting to order at about 3:10pm and welcomed the members of the Sub-Committee. Ms. Kain stated that the meeting was subject to the Open meeting Law and that the Sub-Committee members present needed to vote to approve the remote participation of some members because of their geographic location. The members present; Sarah Geldart (DESE), Teresa Schirmer, Kailin McInnis, Maura Sullivan, Jeff Gentry, Roberta Lewonis (DDS), Melissa Guyer (DDS), Amanda Green (DESE), Louann Larson, Kathleen Kelly (MRC), Christina Fitandes, Sowmya Sundarajan (MRC) and Carolyn Kain. Ms. Kain made a motion to allow others to participate remotely because of their geographic location, the motion was seconded and approved unanimously, and others who participated by phone were; Michael Plansky, and Melanie Chandonnet.

Ms. Kain opened the meeting with brief introductions since there were new individuals attending from DESE and MRC. Ms. Kain asked the state agency representatives to explain their work with individuals with autism spectrum disorder who are 14-22 years old.

Roberta Lewonis explained the 688 referral process with the Department of developmental Services (DDS). She explained that individuals who may have been eligible for services as children would be reviewed for eligibility at age 18. She said that DDS gets their referrals from public school districts. Ms. Kain asked if there are any materials provided to families, she said they are given the paperwork to complete the 688 referral process and that is challenging for some families. She described the Autism Support Centers and the services that they provide the Family support model of services, the DDS/DESE program and the need for updated information for the newly eligible individuals.

Amanda Green from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) provided the members with a 3 page handout of DESE's initiatives resources for transition. Ms. Green then explained each of the initiatives and resources. A very comprehensive overview was provided by Ms. Green to help the sub-committee understand all of the work being done by and with DESE for students ages 14-22. Ms. Green highlighted the fact that the Governor and Secretary Peyer placed an emphasis on college and career readiness for all students. She explained how having students have more authentic work experiences beyond the school building was being pushed with school districts. Ms. Green explained how the transition planning form was a brainstorming tool for the student's Team, including the student, to develop a vision and individual learning plan for the student on the skills they needed to prepare them for further education, future employment and independent living and that the TEAM then needed to develop benchmarks and goals in the IEP to enable the student to build the necessary skills needed.

Ms. Green also explained the Program Coordinated Review Process and that Indicator 13 was specifically focused on transition services. She explained that DESE works with school districts to help them understand and meet the transition needs of its students.

The members discussed the need for a coordinated effort by agencies for transition planning and how regional and/or inter-agency councils including MRC, DDS and the public school districts could be extremely helpful in making sure that families understood the services available and that the agencies worked together to ensure that resources were being utilized appropriately and duplication of effort was avoided.

Maura Sullivan mentioned that for individuals with ASD the employment needs were unique in that many have sensory issues, vocal stims, and scripting issues that required continuous coaching for both the individual and the employer for the person with ASD to be successful in the workplace.

MRC representatives Kathy Kelly and Sowmya Sundarajan presented materials from MRC and explained the services available through their organization. They explained that under WIOA counselors are in all high schools. Each counselor is responsible for 1-3 high schools depending on their size and that they are at each school at least once every two weeks. MRC provides internships, work based learning, soft skills training, and MRC has contracts with a number of vendors to provide employment related services to individuals.

Ms. Kain thanked DDS, DESE and MRC for its presentations. Several members commented on helpful the information provided was to understand the respective roles of the state agencies.

The Sub-Committee then discussed the date of its next meeting, and continued with its plan to meet on the second Wednesday of each month, the next meeting will be Wednesday, August 10th from 1pm-3pm at 500 Harrison Ave. There being no further business, upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, Ms. Kain adjourned the meeting at 4:45pm.