

Autism Commission
Employment and 14-22 year old Sub-Committee Meeting
January 25, 2017, 11:00p.m. –1:00 p.m.
500 Harrison Avenue

Present: Carolyn Kain, Dianne Lescinkas, Michelle Brait, Amy Weinstock, Julia Landau, Judith Ursitti, Michael Plansky, Maura Sullivan, Ilyse Levine, Madeline Wenzel, Vanda Khadem, Diane Bohannon, Michael Stepansky, Brittney Collins, Todd Garvin and Carrie Breaux.

Remote access: Elana Aubrey, Alexis Henry, Melissa Guyer, David Tack, Coleman Nee, Teresa Schirmer, and Laura Gillis.

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.

Carolyn welcomed all to this meeting and asked that everyone introduce themselves. The minutes from the last meeting, on November 17th were reviewed and it was asked that few changes be made to the minutes. The changes will be made and Carolyn made a motion to approve the minutes with the suggested changes. Minutes were approved unanimously.

Carolyn stated that DDS just started tracking ID and Autism a year ago in November so the data is new. Julia asked for the numbers of individuals with ASD and ID at 22+. Carolyn said there are 122 (since DDS started tracking) but it is not broken out by age. Julia asked if the 122 are receiving services under DDS and Carolyn responded that individuals with ASD and ID are receiving services.

Carolyn said there are 344 newly eligible, with funding unavailable, across the four regions. It is estimated that there are 35-45 new individuals per month, with just ASD, that are signing up for services with DDS. Julia asked if the 929 number of newly eligible that are receiving services is correct and Carolyn responded yes. Maura said that currently there are 950 individuals across the state turning 22 this year and the 122 number (DDS number that is being tracked) seems low. Carolyn said that she would gather more information. How can we help these individuals connect to MRC and other state agencies.

Julia said that the number of individuals, that are being found newly eligible, is continuing to increase. Carolyn said that the regional office (DDS) is directed to reallocate unused funds wherever possible to give individuals access to some services. DDS is committed to meeting the needs.

Julia asked if we should pose a recommendation to the commission, in March, that this group recommends we take a position of a supplemental budget to meet the needs of those where funding is unavailable. (Julia said she would send the language in a separate email).

Maura asked if we can tack on that the FY18 budget have enough funding to meet the needs of all individuals. We can estimate 30-45 newly eligible per month.

Carolyn said that we should further discuss this issue but we need to understand all of the unmet needs. Other than making a recommendation for a supplemental budget, we could work with DDS on what is currently available to help meet the unmet needs and find out what services are available.

Julia responded that both are important issues; identifying the unmet needs and the budget but it is important to take a position to address the budget. Mike Plansky asked when the supplemental budget would take effect. It was responded that we haven't formally requested a budget but have good faith that Turning 22 will have a supplemental budget. For FY18 we need appropriate numbers. Carolyn said that there is \$25,000 allocated per person and we need to look at the number of individuals coming in month to month. I feel like it would be helpful to present to the commission, as a whole, the data on these individuals to give a better landscape view of what is going on.

Judith said that we also have the Omnibus Law to fall back on and we could state (the recommendation) as an unmet need and be more specific of the need. Carolyn said we should work with DDS on what are the needs that are being requested currently out in the field. We could get information from the service coordinators and track statewide. They have codes for the services they provide and also have a lot of unique requests. An individual can chose the service and the money is spent on that service – they track individual budgets.

Judith said we should not frame this in a budget way but as a category of services in geographic regions and the newly eligible that have been identified but not receiving services. Can we write the motion?

Amy said we need to address the unmet needs as part of this Commission. 30% are not accessing what was legislated and something needs to be done to make sure needs are met; it is part of what the Commission intended.

Michael Plansky asked if anyone, in this fiscal year between July and August has been allocated \$25,000.

It was mentioned that the 18-22 year old group is in less need of services if they still fall under school districts.

Maura said that the over 22 number shrinks and they are sitting at home and need employment support, even if they have an IQ over 70 they still need the support and Day Habs won't meet the needs.

Julia recommended making a motion to take a vote on information that we have now because we won't have a chance to meet again prior to the full commission meeting in March. Carolyn said that we are in January now and the commission meets on March 6th so we could meet again to discuss. Julia

responded that she wanted to take a vote now. Carolyn said it would have to be done as a roll call and that state employees would need to abstain from any vote regarding the state budget. Julia made a motion that was seconded by Ilyse Levine.

The motion was read by Julia Landau; *“That this subcommittee recommends that the Autism Commission recommend that the state legislature issue a supplemental budget for FY17 to meet the needs for services of eligible adults with autism and provide sufficient funds for FY18, including for individuals with ASD and ID”*

Yes Vote

Julia Landau
Ilyse Levine
Madeline Wenzel
Judith Ursitti
Michael Plansky
Brittney Collins
Carrie Breaux
Michelle Brait
Vanda Khadem
Diane Bohannon
Amy Weinstock
Coleman Nee
Teresa Schirmer
Maura Sullivan

Abstain

Carolyn Kain
David Tack
Laura Gillis
Michael Stepansky
Laura Conrad
Melissa Guyer

Ilyse asked about a supplemental budget for the MICEI Program, Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative) because the budget was cut. There are no new seats for students. She asked if another motion could be made to the commission to ensure that MICEI has seats available to students – to increase the availability of funding for the program. Michael Plansky said, “Isn’t that up to the individual colleges to determine the number of seats.” Julia said that we could have a motion that the Commission recommend FY17 and FY18 budget meets the transition needs of youth with ASD. It could be a formal motion to the Commission to support the transition needs.

It was asked how MICEI is funded and Ilyse said not through DDS but allocation from the state to the colleges in partnership with local towns. Michael Plansky said that the colleges are charging districts and the college receives state money to hire a coordinator. He said they charge up to \$15,000 per student. It was said that MICEI has a separate line item in the budget through a discretionary grant. The goal has been to give five years of funding and then have the colleges absorb the cost. Michael Plansky said that outcomes of the students have not been produced. Julia said that there is national data.

Vanda said that there is not enough hands on skills like culinary and it is not tailored to our young adults. She said the Mass. Bay pulled out of MICEI – the idea of MICEI is important but needs to be refined to make it more accessible for students with ASD.

Carolyn said that Higher Education is a topic of discussion for this sub-committee. She said what supports are provided in between classes at the higher education institutions and are students being travel trained. She said we could invite Glenn Gabbard to a meeting to discuss the program.

Vanda said we should develop a curriculum so our young adults can access in a multifaceted way. It needs to be expanded to meet the needs of a diverse group of students. Julia said the intent of MICEI is in part to meet the transition needs of students – it provides a bridge to college. There are some issues with the program and we can look at ways to improve the program. Michael P. said that maybe there could be a recommendation to create a curriculum. It was mentioned that Lea Hill discussed the need for a special education liaison in higher education. Vanda discussed the possibility of a working group or task force that is comprised with stakeholders. Look at what is working, share ideas and replicate.

Judith said that in Connecticut they have a Transition Bill of Rights and a Transition check list. She will send information about this program to the sub-committee. The task force was mentioned again and it was suggested that an interdisciplinary group of high school and higher education folks work together to start to bridge the gap for better outcomes. Carolyn discussed DESE and the new IEP and their intent to be more specific around transition services– Carolyn said she has not seen the specifics version but wants to look at what they are doing in Connecticut.

Judith said that MRC should be stepping up with pre-employment trainings. We need numbers. Vanda said that parents of children with autism do not know how to apply to MRC. There could be a recommendation for a pilot program to look at autism supports through MRC – we need long term supports for individuals. The MRC current approach will never work for our mid-spectrum individuals. We should look at MRC and their requirements. Judith asked what type of training the case workers from MRC are provided. Carolyn mentioned that MRC had provided a presentation at one of their previous meetings but she could ask that they provide additional information to the subcommittee.

Amy discussed the 688 referral process as being one door. If there was a checklist it could be helpful for staff in districts to know what to do for ASD individuals prior to exiting the school system. Michael P. asked if legislation can get involved – is there a way to set forth legislation – it will make it easier for

school districts to follow the law. Judith asked if we could dig deeper with MRC and gather more details. This would be a great time to put together recommendations to meet the needs of ASD individuals while in school and then post 22.

Maura asked for a confirmation on number of adults with autism and ID that are receiving funding. She has been hearing from parents that it has been difficult to get services for this population. Amy asked for information around individuals that have been deemed eligible under DDS but no funding is available and those that have access to some funding but not fully funded. Carolyn said she had provided the number of individuals with ASD without ID for whom funding is currently unavailable. Carolyn said she would ask about the number of individuals turning 22 with ASD and ID.

There was more discussion around MRC and the 15% that should be allocated from the Federal budget for transition aged youth. Madeline commented that JVS is contracted with MRC and that MRC has a counselor in each high school – it is a big learning curve for some of the counselors and the schools are trying to figure out the system. Julia asked who is MRC contracting with and how are they meeting the needs of the ASD population. Michael P. said MRC has up to \$200k per contract and they follow 5 criteria:

List of the Pre-employment Transition services as required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA):

- (1) **Job Exploration Counseling:** Counseling and guidance provided to students with disabilities designed to assist them in identifying and learning about job opportunities in particular occupations and industry sectors, including career assessment and planning.
- (2) **Workplace Readiness Training:** Workplace readiness services provided to students with disabilities to assist them in preparing for employment through soft-skills training, job search training and other related areas.
- (3) **Work-Based Learning Experience:** Work-based learning experiences provided to students with disabilities in integrated settings designed to assist in obtaining skills and experiences to assist in future permanent employment. These may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting including internships, that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible.
- (4) **Counseling on Enrollment in Comprehensive Transition or Post-Secondary Educational Programs:** Assistance and support provided to students with disabilities regarding various opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education based on their goals, needs, and preferences. May include assistance with identifying educational opportunities and applying for programs and services.
- (5) **Self-Advocacy/Mentoring Instruction:** Assistance provided to students with disabilities to promote self-advocacy and leadership skills, including peer mentoring, to assist them in

successful transition from school to post-secondary education, employment, and independent living.

MRC case workers refer to vendors to fill the spots – they are facilitators. We could give a recommendation to MRC to look at outcomes and invest earlier. We are currently working in silos, DESE, DDS and MRC – 3 efforts and it is not working – why not work together. DESE needs to do a better job with transition services and connecting families with other agencies. Carolyn discussed some of the work of the 3-14 sub-committee – they are pulling together information for families to help them navigate services and the information will be in multiple languages. She said that this subcommittee should also look at what information can and should be provided to families by schools so they better understand the types of services their children may be eligible for.

Ilyse brought up the MICEI program and asked if the committee would vote on a recommendation to the Autism Commission. The recommendation was read by Julia.

“This subcommittee recommends that Autism Commission recommend that the capacity for the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment be increased in order to meet the transition needs of young adults with autism.”

Roll call vote:

Yes Vote

Julia Landau

Ilyse Levine

Judith Ursitti

Michael Plansky

Brittney Collins

Carrie Breaux

Michelle Brait

Vanda Khadem

Diane Bohannon

Amy Weinstock

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Laura Gillis

Madeline Wenzel

Laura Conrad

Melissa Guyer

Michael Stepansky

Carolyn will invite MRC to present at our next meeting. We will ask them about services specific for individuals with autism. Michael P. said they should have data on the first cycle of pre-ets specific to autism. Julia asked if the first part of the meeting with MRC focus on what they are doing specific to autism and the second part could be opened for discussion.

Julia asked if we could invite more self-advocates to join us on the committee. Carolyn mentioned that we did have 2 self-advocates on this committee but they both left for the 22+ committee. Julia and Judith said they would reach out to self-advocates and see if anyone would be interested in joining this committee. At this point Todd Garvin, a self-advocate and Autism Commission member, joined the meeting. He discussed the difficulty that he had navigating employment and the lack of access to supports or services. He said that career counseling was lacking at the time. It was difficult not knowing what to expect when leaving education with no real road map to adult life. Maura said that person centered planning and life coaching could have helped and is part of the Omnibus funding. Todd said that he would join this sub-committee.

The next meeting was scheduled for March 1st at 11:00am-1:00pm.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 12:55pm.