

Autism Commission
Employment and 14-22 year old Sub-Committee Meeting
Combined with
22+/ Employment and Higher Education Sub-Committee Meeting
July 18, 2017, 11:00a.m. – 12:30p.m.
500 Harrison Avenue

Present: Carolyn Kain, Dianne Lescinkas, Kasper Goshgarian, Michelle Brait, Dian Bohannon, Amanda Green, Lea Hill, Amy Weinstock, Jess Genco for Michael Plansky, Todd Garvin and Kathleen Kelly

Remote access: Julia Landau, Roberta Lewonis, Marissa McCarthy, Terry Farrell and Tina Fitandides

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 by the members present.

The minutes from the 14-22/Employment and 22+ Employment meeting on June 14th were reviewed and approved unanimously. Ms. Weinstock asked that we leave time during the meeting to review the 2013 recommendations since we ran out of time during the last meeting. Ms. Kain said she would be sure to leave time to review the recommendations and they had been emailed out to this sub-committee.

Review of MRC's Pre-ET's RFR

- Ms. Kain reviewed the process that occurred for review of MRC's RFR for Pre-Ets vendors by this sub-committee
- During the meeting in June the language from Chapter 71 3B was discussed after MRC stated that it does not use disability specific language and it was agreed that the needs of individuals with ASD in the special education statute could be used by this subcommittee instead of MAC's previous comments on the RFR, which had been shared with the subcommittee. Ms. Kain said that she used the comments that were drafted by MAC and Ms. Ursitti and submitted separately to MRC when she drafted the language submitted on behalf of this subcommittee. Ms. Kain also shared the language that she sent to MRC with MAC.
- Ms. Landau stated that MAC does not agree that legally MRC could not use specific disability language and would like to have a further conversation with MRC.
- Mr. Goshgarian said that MRC has already accepted and incorporated the language provided by Ms. Kain and is always open to other comments. He also said that it has always been MRC's practice not to identify specific disabilities since their services were available to all disabilities.
- Ms. Landau commented that it is possible that a provider could address the needs listed in the RFR but we as the Autism Commission are representing the unique needs of ASD and using the disability specific language may be necessary. Ms. Kain said that Ms. Landau and Ms. Ursitti

were not at the meeting where the subcommittee agreed to use 71B, section 3 to explain the needs of individuals with ASD, and this discussion is reflected in the approved minutes from that meeting. Ms. Kain said that MAC had previously said they felt that time was of the essence on this issue and that she was pleased they were able to get MRC to make changes already to the RFR.

- Ms. Weinstock discussed working on the Autism Insurance Bill and they had similar conversations. The language they settled on said “including but not limited to Autism” it described the characteristics but also referenced it as Autism
- Ms. Kain stated that this is a legal position of MAC with MRC’s practice and is a separate discussion – she asked that they discuss this and update this sub-committee on the outcome.

Additionally, Ms. Weinstock said that the last Commission spent time with providers and families listening to testimony regarding services through DMH and statements made regarding the word autism and not providing services – and felt that if we use the word autism they won’t be able to turn people away. Ms. Landau said that we have a Commission to address the specific and unique needs that have created barriers – Ms. Fitandides agreed. Ms. Kain said that using the Autism IEP Act (71 3B, sec. 3) actually goes into greater detail and uses more language than the word “autism” that would give greater assurance that the providers would understand the specific areas of need of individuals with ASD that may have to be addressed. Ms. Kain said that a disability name does not define the areas of need impacted by the disability and that requiring providers to be able to address the specific areas of need identified in the statute was much more specific than the word “autism”. Ms. Hill said that she is not familiar with the legal aspect but from DDS and the DSM language she felt it is appropriate to use the language that had been proposed by Ms. Kain.

Ms. Kain said she sees this as more of training and staff experience issue for MRC when they evaluate the responses to the RFR by providers. She also said that we need to be respectful that this is not an ASD RFR – it is for all disabilities.

Mr. Goshgarian responded that he will always entertain comments and if appropriate, will include them in the RFR. He said that MRC is an agency that serves all disabilities. After an RFR is issued a self-selection happens and not all providers will be proficient for any specific disability. You get to know which vendors best serve a particular client population. Mr. Goshgarian said MRC always entertains comments – please send them our way and we will take them under advisement. Ms. Green asked if MRC, as part of the RFR, asks the vendors “what is your expertise”. He responded that he was unsure but this is an interesting approach. Ms. Kain said that there are a number of providers on this sub-committee and they each discussed how they address the needs of individuals with ASD at previous subcommittee meetings. She also stated that MAC submitted its language for the RFR, but if others would also like to weigh in and discuss further they should do so as the RFR could be further amended by MRC in the future. Ms. McCarthy agreed with Ms. Kain and said that what the consumer needs is support to get to employment and connected to the right job – it’s the characteristics of the disability that will help them get the services they need. Training the providers is important as well as naming the impacts of the disability are what work best.

Ms. Weinstock asked if the sub-committee could look at the language on the RFR on page 3 that states “all services under this procurement must be provided in an integrated setting”. She asked if every provider is employing people in integrated settings. MRC responded that it means not providing services in a sheltered workshop. Ms. Kain said that integrated setting is subject to interpretation but that would also be something for MRC to inquire about with providers in the RFR process.

Mr. Goshgarian gave some statistics – 16.9% of people being served under Pre-ET’s are people with ASD and most of those individuals are high functioning. It was asked if any of the 16.9% of the individuals that are being served are non-verbal and it was said that the number of individuals that are non-verbal are low. Ms. Kain said that this brings up another issue regarding the 688 process since many individuals with ASD graduate at age 18 with their high school class. She has been speaking to other agencies and said that not all families and providers understand all the opportunities that exist including Pre-Ets beginning at age 16. She said her office is working on material that will be direct and concise as possible and will bring together resources that exist to help best guide providers and families. Once completed, she will send the draft out to this sub-committee for comments and feedback. She also said that MRC shared a list of vendors they have for Pre-ET’s and she will send this list out as well. Ms. Kain also discussed the Regional Meetings that DESE is having and feels they will be helpful for families and will inform the educators and provide an opportunity to talk about issues. Ms. Kain said that by helping families, individuals, and providers-- including school districts understand what opportunities exist will enable individuals with ASD to access all services that are available to them.

Review of 2013 Recommendations

- Ms. Kain went through the report and updated the recommendations relevant to this sub-committee – the full report is on the Autism Commission’s website
- This document was provided to the sub-committee in electronic format in June for review but we were not able to discuss at that meeting
- Mr. Garvin asked why a number of the issues had not been acted upon and Ms. Kain responded that some of the issues are related to a lack of funding.
- Ms. Weinstock asked about page 5 of the document and asked if action could be taken on the DHCD issue (statewide housing policy) – Ms. Kain responded that this issue is better addressed by the Housing subcommittee and they are currently doing a state-wide housing survey being done by TAC.
- Ms. Kain also discussed ongoing meetings between her office and housing agencies. She is exploring with DMH training on autism for staff in its PATH program, she did a webinar (ASD) for DCF workers; and she met with the committee on unaccompanied homeless youth.
- A question was raised regarding page 5 of the document and specialized training around ASD and the medical community – Ms. Kain updated the sub-committee on a visit to Mass General Hospital and a meeting with MGH staff and their ASD coordinator to discuss their hospital wide-training. Ms. George (DDS) and Dr. Kathy Sanders (DMH) met with BMC and recently entered

into a contract to create training videos on how to approach individuals with ASD, and the expectation was that once these videos were finished they could be shared with other hospitals and medical providers.

- Ms. Weinstock asked if we (sub-committee) could develop a survey to administer to hospitals to ask what expertise is needed and identify specific needs – this could possibly be done through DPH
- Some members of the subcommittee share that people have been reporting good experiences in hospital settings, and much more autism friendly practices.
- Ms. Kain said she will be updating the Commission's annual report and said that there may be items in this report that should not be included in the next report. Ms. Landau said that she does not see anything that should not remain in the report and asked if the full commission could work on prioritizing recommendations and possibly focus on a smaller number of priorities at one time. We should identify as short, medium, and long term recommendations and we should prioritize our recommendations.
- Ms. Weinstock asked that the next agenda item for the Autism Commission meeting in September could include how we will move forward with the sub-committees and prioritizing issues.
- Ms. Kain said she recently had a meeting with the sub-committee chairs and the discussion on how they will each move forward and if all 8 sub-committees should still exist. She also said that the issue of the sub-committees is in the by-laws and the issues she discussed with the chairs will be brought forward to the Commission in September.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 12:10pm.