

## **Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)**

**Monday, October 21, 2019**

### **Alabama Industrial Development Training Center**

The AIACC met on Monday, October 21, 2019, at the Alabama Industrial Development Training Center. The meeting was called to order by AIACC Chair Cam Ward. Also in attendance were Council members: Robert Caldwell, Tametria Conner, Suzanne Dowling, Erich Grommet, Myra Jones, Whitney Meade, Justin Schwartz, Chris Stewart, and Karen Willis. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Eliza Belle for Lynn Beshear, Sarah O'Kelley for Fred Biasini, Sonia Cleckler for Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Laurie Eldridge-Auffant on behalf of Scott Harris, Matthew Busick on behalf of Heather Jones, Bama Hager on behalf of Melanie Jones, Vera Hendrix on behalf of John Mascia, Steve Dozier on behalf of Jim Ridling, and Dallas Rabig on behalf of Jeana Ross. Also in attendance was Anna McConnell, State Autism Coordinator.

The minutes from the July 15, 2019 meeting were approved and adopted.

Chairperson Comments: Senator Ward welcomed attendees to the AIACC meeting. He expressed appreciation to the AL Department of Mental Health for their engagement in Autism Spectrum Disorder services. The expansion of coverage of services has been helpful for the Autism Community.

Lead Agency Comments: Dr. Eliza Belle, on behalf of ADMH, noted the department's excitement about partnership on new Autism Services that are rolling out. The department is holding information sessions and is reaching out to potential provider agencies.

#### ***Strategic Planning Updates:***

##### *Standards of Practice: Ages 0-5*

Dr. Sarah O'Kelley noted that this workgroup was looking in to training EI professionals in identified ASD strategies (specifically Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions – NDBI) and making recommendations for how to use screeners and evaluations within the EI system that would also transfer to other future systems the individual with ASD would possibly enter. When asked what screening tools the committee identified that were commonly used, the MCHAT and Ages and Stages Questionnaire were noted. The group is looking at what is appropriate for usage in primary care and Early Intervention, and how to identify who needs autism-specific interventions. Screening tools used in the primary care setting may identify who is at risk and need developmental interventions but may miss

milder presentations of ASD or higher cognitive skills. In Alabama, access to evaluations are difficult due to wait times, so eligibility criteria may not be met. The group found that the MCHAT may also not be used or may be used incorrectly and missing the appropriate next steps. The 0-5 workgroup is focusing on EI specifically right now, but using the opportunity to look at eligibility across systems. For example, eligibility for Early Intervention does not transfer to the school system eligibility. The group is looking at relevant eligibility criteria and documentation to support providers and families as they navigate across systems.

*Standards of Practice: Ages 6-13*

Dr. Matthew Busick reported that there had not been significant changes since the last presentation of the strategic planning updates. The workgroup is working closely with the Diagnostic and Health committee for overlap in needs and recommendations.

*Standards of Practice: Ages 14-20*

Dr. Erich Grommet noted that the workgroup scaled back the number of activities according to the timeline, identifying priority activities to address first. See approved Strategic Plan document for final changes.

*Standards of Practice: Ages 21+*

Dr. Sarah Ryan noted there had not been significant changes since the last presentation of the strategic planning updates. The workgroup would be looking at existing services and pulling together that information, particularly to find the relationship between available services and where gaps exist.

*Standards of Practice: Diagnostics and Health*

Dr. Justin Schwartz noted there had not been significant changes since the last presentation of the strategic planning updates. The deadlines had been adjusted. The workgroup is building upon the system of care medical home model to look across the lifespan and address relevant needs. The work group is also looking to decrease the average age of diagnosis and look at opportunities in primary care to equip with tools and experiences to assist those with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The workgroup is also looking more at what is included in developmental screenings and improve effectiveness and implementation. It was found that the MCHAT was the most commonly used screener, but new literature has recently shown findings that it is not as reliable at predicting ASD. However, the MCHAT can identify ID/DD, but follow up is often needed to make those determinations and it is not done. Education efforts will focus on educating primary care on what steps may be taken whether or not an

ASD diagnosis is present. There is ongoing work on a rapid needs assessment targeting primary care providers so efforts may be tailored to identified needs.

*Standards of Practice: Education and Training*

Sonia Cleckler noted that changes to the strategic plan were primarily compression and combination of goals and extension of timelines. While some activities will have ongoing timelines (website updates, for example), other items could be done quickly. Partnership opportunities with other workgroups will be pursued (for example, *Learn the Signs. Act Early*. Training for therapists, in partnership with the 0-5 workgroup). Other identified activities center around respite, university education programs, and family training. Some of the identified activities might overlap with other workgroups, but the goal will be to work together, not independently.

*Public Awareness*

Bama Hager noted that there were no changes to the Strategic Plan.

*Regional Autism Network*

Elizabeth Griffith noted that the Strategic Plan objectives were based on the RAN's four legislative charges. RAN is focusing on underserved regions and training providers in those areas. Priorities include partnering with existing infrastructures, developing a data system, working on materials for distributions, and hiring Family Navigators.

Presented updates to the Strategic Plan were approved unanimously.

**Committee and Workgroup Updates**

*Regional Autism Network*

Elizabeth Griffith noted that Auburn had hired a Family Navigator, who is also bilingual and can serve the Spanish-speaking population. UA and USA were looking into the possibility of hiring a Family Navigator to expand outreach to the regions they serve. UAB continues with monthly workshops with a good response. AU and USA continued coffee chats. AU is focusing on rural outreach, while USA is partnering on early intervention initiatives. UAB is working toward filming workshops and making them available online, as well as providing translation of materials.

*Public Awareness*

Bama Hager noted that the ACDD funded Autism Friendly project was underway, working to make more inclusive opportunities for individuals with ASD in job settings and customer service settings. ASA has now taken over implementation of the grant.

### **Other Announcements**

Marc Williams noted that there are currently 286 licensees (BCBAs and BCaBAs) in the state. The Alabama Behavior Analyst Licensing Board is coming to the first year of the membership renewal cycle. Two Board members' terms are also coming vacant soon. A question was asked about knowing the geographical locations of licensed behavior analysts, particularly in rural areas. The data was requested and could be used for legislative activities. One Council member noted that many providers are not taking new clients and/or that a limited number of hours per week are available.

Anna McConnell presented on the new ADMH Autism Services, including a synopsis and enrollment procedures for providers and clients.

Justin Schwartz noted that he met with insurance providers to discuss recent and potential changes to requirements for evaluations and referrals for ASD. Bama Hager noted that recertifications of diagnosis are being requested by insurance companies, which further clog access to evaluations. Sarah O'Kelley noted that other institutions have had to create clinics just to meet the demands of recertification to access services. However, in Alabama, there is not the capacity to support this activity.

Karen Willis noted this would be her last meeting to be in attendance – the Council members wished her well on future endeavors and expressed appreciation for her service.

Tametria Conner noted that DATS MOM is offering trainings for families.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Next meeting: Monday, January 27, 2020

Recording Secretary

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A. McConnell