

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)

Monday, October 16, 2017

Alabama Industrial Development Training Center

The AIACC met on Monday, October 16, 2017, at the Alabama Industrial Development Training Center. The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair, Greg Carlson. Also in attendance were Council members: Brooke Bowles, Robert Caldwell, Suzanne Dowling, Megan Everett, Doris Hill, Melanie Jones, Sarah Ryan, Todd Tomerlin, Karen Willis, and Anna McConnell, State Autism Coordinator. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Russell Green on behalf of Stephanie Azar, Courtney Tarver on behalf of Lynn Beshear, Sarah O'Kelley on behalf of Fred Biasini, Sabrina Franks on behalf of Nancy Buckner, Linda Jennings on behalf of Scott Harris, Tina Sanders on behalf of Ed Richardson, and Dallas Rabig in behalf of Jeana Ross.

The minutes from the July 10, 2017 meeting were approved and adopted.

Chairperson Comments: Greg Carlson noted that "ABA Therapy Billing and Insurance Help" was on Facebook and is helpful for those seeking answers to questions about billing and coding for insurance companies. The legislative session begins January 9, 2018. During last legislative session, the autism insurance bill passed. Advocates are interested in the extension of the age cap. Increased funding for the Regional Autism Networks to \$100k per site is requested.

State Coordinator Comments: Anna McConnell noted that the next meeting is scheduled for January 8th, 2018 (UPDATED: the next AIACC meeting is January 29th at AIDT). Vacancy applications for a parent of a child 18 years of age or younger are provided – they are due October 27th, along with a letter of recommendation. The flyer for the Regional Autism Network is provided as well. The new regions will correspond with the Department of Mental Health, Division of Developmental Disabilities map.

Lead Agency Comments: Courtney Tarver brought greetings from Commissioner Lynn Beshear. Comments will be reserved for later in the meeting.

Bylaws and Membership: Sarah Ryan noted that 5 AIACC members completed their first terms. Karen Willis, Lucian Cronkite, Brooke Bowles, and Whitney Meade have chosen to continue into a second term. Sally Davis will not continue a second term and leaves a vacancy for a parent of a child 18 or younger. We hope to have this new seat filled in time for the January meeting.

Funding and Finance: Erin Wofford reported on behalf of Marc Williams that the Licensure Board licensed approximately 60 people at their recent meeting. Greg Carlson added that Glenwood met with Viva and American Behavioral Health about ABA coverage. It was reported that there are about 170 applications to the Board, and about 1/3 of the applicants have been licensed. Greg also noted that licensure is required prior to credentialing with insurance companies, and credentialing deadline for many companies was October 1. Anna McConnell noted that the Board is still working through this with insurance companies, but that New Directions has reported that they will credential providers after the October 1 date. Background checks have been the longest step in the licensure process. Greg Carlson noted that the federal CHIP program still needs to be refunded. The bill was passed out of the House committee. The State Employees Insurance Board has moved up their implementation date to begin December 31, 2017. Public Education Employees will continue to go into effect December 31, 2018.

Regional Autism Networks: Sarah O'Kelley reported that UAB Civitan-Sparks Clinics, home to Alabama's UCEDD and LEND, was approached by AUCD and CDC regarding early identification on developmental disabilities, including Autism, called *Learn the Signs. Act Early*. The CDC has provided a grant to 5 states, including Alabama, that is focused on dissemination of *LTSAE* materials in Early Head Start settings. There is a state Act Early Ambassador, Tish MacInnis, who has been distributing materials, and Alabama has been participating in *LTSAE* for about 8 years. One of the reasons Alabama was chosen for this grant was the existence of the Regional Autism Networks – the structure for dissemination and falls into RAN responsibilities in professional training and public education. The group is still in the project plan development phase.

University of South Alabama RAN report: Amy Mitchell noted that she has been more interested and involved in insurance coverage. Amy worked with a family who worked for a major employer in Mobile. The parent had a self-funded policy (not impacted by the 2017 legislation) rather than a fully-funded policy, which is now required to cover ABA therapy. There are resources available to approach employer to request coverage of ABA services. Amy approached USA, since they are a self-funded program, to ask about ABA coverage. USA is planning to voluntarily fund ABA services. Amy Mitchell was invited to participate on the committee, as a RAN representative, to help navigate and provide information about the therapy and coverage. Amy encouraged everyone to ask their employers if they provide ABA coverage. Greg referenced the [Behavior Analyst Certification Board \(BACB\)'s "Applied Behavior Analysis Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder: Practice Guidelines for Healthcare Funders and Managers"](#) as a good resource tool when developing ABA coverage.

University of Alabama at Birmingham: Lizzie Griffith noted that there are many trainees that come through Civitan-Sparks Clinics. This year, one of the training projects will be working on Regional Assessment state resource updates for the Regional Autism Networks, updating information, combining state data, and helping to make resources across the state into one uniform document available to providers and families. UAB RAN continues to partner with Project ECHO, a telementoring project for pediatric practices. The audience is primary healthcare providers from around the state. Currently, the ECHO meetings are Fridays for 1.5 hours and has CME credits available. Topics have included sleep, nutrition, and special education. Participating primary care providers can offer a case presentation for discussion by the team and provide recommendations. Sarah O'Kelley noted that the ECHO team consists of Dr. Justin Schwartz, leader of the team, Bama Hager and Tracy Cron alternate as parent representatives, Dr. Laura Barefield from CBH as psychiatrist, Lizzie Griffith as RAN contact and social worker, Susie Geerts as nutritionist, and Sarah O'Kelley as psychologist. Help in recruitment is needed – Sarah encouraged parents to share this opportunity with their providers. Lizzie noted that the Families First trainings held in conjunction in Autism Society of Alabama, Children's Behavioral Health (CBH), and Developmental Behavioral Pediatrics were successful. The first training was held in August, led by 2 CBH psychologists, covered autism and sleep with 25 parent attendees. The second training was livestreamed from Vanderbilt's TRIAD program, with 30 parent attendees. Planning for next year's trainings includes lifespan topics. All RAN sites now have email addresses.

Auburn University: Doris Hill noted that it is helpful that all the RAN sites share resources. AU University has recently announced the EAGLES (Education to Accomplish Growth in Life Experiences for Success) program for those students with intellectual disabilities, contacts being Karen Rabren and Courtney Dodson. It is anticipated that the program will start in fall 2018 with six students. Doris noted that there is much need and advocacy at many universities for these types of programs. AU has also been continuing their work with PEERS through a grant from the Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities, and is working on training professionals in the didactics of this method. Doris attended many resource fairs that has expanded the list of available resources to which she can connect families. Doris and Anna will be presenting at ALABA and will have an exhibit space to connect and educate professionals about the RAN.

University of Alabama: Sarah Ryan reported that the RAN at UA has been open for 2 weeks. UA is in the process of hiring a RAN director. Contact information will be available soon.

Anna McConnell noted that UAH is new to the RAN as well, with more information being available at the next AIACC meeting.

Public Awareness: Melanie Jones reported that the committee is continuing to focus on Autism Friendly Alabama. Regions Bank is the largest participating business. ASA modeled Region's sensory bag to use

in smaller businesses in the state to continue to push the initiative forward. The bag includes: sunglasses, sensory ball, and earplugs. Interested businesses may reach out to ASA, or ASA can reach out to the business through referrals. ASA hosted an IEP Advocacy Workshop in September. ASA has started a CARES binder, which offers a place to consolidate all documentation and resources in one place. That binder is offered statewide now, after being piloted in Mobile. Sibshops will be offered statewide now that Michelle McDaniel (in South AL office). This next year there are 5 different locations on the calendar, the first being held in Huntsville. ASA will also host a first responder training in January, being coordinated by Melody Crain. Robert Caldwell is now a board member of the ASA now too.

Bama Hager invited Nancy Anderson to offer an update on the State Board of Education. Parents and self-advocates are very interested in seeing the public school system in Alabama have high expectations for those students with disabilities. Along with those high expectations, stakeholders want the services that go along with those expectations. At the recent board meeting, a variety of family members and self-advocates spoke to the board about the issue of having high expectations. Some of the advocates articulated that they wanted the state and the board to "Do Better". That was the refrain heard from advocates and families as a refrain. In addition, there was a concurrent route being taken to talk with the Department of Education to talk about what it means to "do better". A coalition of advocacy groups, called Disability Advocates for Alabama's Public Schools, consists of 7-8 different groups, including ADAP, Full Life Ahead Foundation, Autism Society of Alabama, Special Education Community Action Group of Hoover, Disability Rights and Resources, People First of Alabama, Alabama Parent Education Center, and Lakeshore Foundation. The coalition is for Alabama's schools and is trying to support them as they seek high expectations and services for those with disabilities. In a special meeting with State Superintendent Ed Richardson and Joe Morton, the groundwork was laid for ongoing dialogue. The goal is to create mechanisms by which the "doing better" can occur. Nancy praised the work of the advocates who spoke at the Board meeting. Bama noted that the ESSA feedback is now open again for feedback. Nancy noted that the nation's primary education law is Title 1, which funds historically high poverty schools. Alabama gets a lot of Title 1 funds. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is now Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This federal law has different requirements than before, but is a continuation of NCLB. A concern from families and advocates was voiced that ESSA was submitted by the state, but that there wasn't enough inclusion of students with disabilities in the plan. The vote to submit the ESSA plan occurred at the Board meeting. Dr. Richardson said that the ESSA plan will be submitted, but that it is multi-faceted, and at the state level, there still needs to be developed certain mechanisms to implement the plan, so there would be opportunities to tweak the plan as submitted. Where the real meat of advocacy could occur is in the state plans. There is opportunity for further advocacy for improving services for students with disabilities. The message from

the Department and Board is that it would welcome those discussions. Bama noted that Nancy was identified by advocates as the key point person for communicating with Department of Education and the State Board of Education.

Bama Hager reported that the state conference for ALABA is this week, and on Thursday morning, there is a keynote presentation by Autism Speaks' Mike Wasmer specific to implementation. Any parent can attend this session free of charge (8:30 am). The talk will be recorded and available through the ASA. Related to the self-insured policies, The link previously provided would be a great resource for parents to provide their companies' HR departments would be helpful. Bama Hager introduced Catey Hall, a parent who advocated for insurance reform, and created an insurance page that allows families to communicate as they seek to gain coverage for autism services. Catey reported that she has been working with Hoover City as they bring coverage to their city employees. Mayor Frank Brocato informed Catey that they were planning to cover ABA for Hoover city employees starting January 2018. The other group Catey has been working with is the Local Government Health Insurance Plan. Some families had reached out saying they were disappointed, thinking their policies would be covered under SEHIP. Municipalities employees reached out to board members. LGHIP is aware of the issue and are considering coverage for January 2019. LGHIP would cover many cities in the state. Some employers considering coverage would benefit from hearing from other employers regarding what coverage they are offering.

Bama talked about the impact Representative Jim Patterson had on those with Autism in Alabama. He was the House sponsor of the autism bill last year, and recently passed away. Donations are being accepted by ASA, to be used in North AL, where Patterson was from. Bama noted that the last things Rep. Patterson wanted to work on were more BCBA's and RBT's being produced by the state of Alabama, and to have PEEHIP move up their implementation date.

Accessibility: Brooke Bowles announced that the group's priority is for individuals and caregivers to receive information in a way that is easy to understand. Families need information in an easy-to-understand format. The Autism 101 presentation is a move toward that goal. In addition, Triumph hosted a long-term planning panel that could be replicated in other locations, and Brooke encouraged other groups to consider hosting a similar panel as well. The panel consisted of Birmingham Volunteer Lawyers (guardianship issues), Joe Carter (housing), Katherine Barr from Sirote and Permutt (ABLE Act and AL Family Trust), Freeman Law Firm (SSI/SSDI benefits), Peachtree Planning (financial planning, ex: wills and estates). With 25-30 family members and advocates in attendance, it was alarming at the lack of information or misinformation that families have. The expert panel format allowed for questions from family members and clarifications. For example, a child does not have to roll off parent's insurance

after age 26 if they have a disability. Brooke offered to help facilitate this kind of program in other areas.

Anna McConnell discussed the need for an updated Strategic Plan. The current Strategic Plan ends this year, and with the changes that are going on statewide regarding autism, this is an even better time to update the Plan. In the past, UAB's School of Public Health (SOPH) has guided the AIACC's Strategic Planning process since the inception of the AIACC. They will guide our work again this year. Handouts were provided to that articulate the AIACC's mission and values (2010). Also recommended was a limited needs assessment (the last full needs assessment was conducted in 2009) and an environmental scan. Standing committees according to legislation are: Executive, Standards of Practice, Bylaws and Membership, Funding and Finance, and Special, Interim or Ad Hoc. Be aware that UAB will be conducting surveys and interviews over the coming months to complete long-term and short-term planning, environmental scan, limited needs assessment, and maybe Standards of Practice update. If all of this cannot be completed this fiscal year, it will be ongoing in coming years. The age ranges determined by the Autism Task Force would be slightly changed for planning purposes to now reflect ages 0-5, 6-13, 14-21 (transition), and 22+ (adult).

Greg Carlson asked about the need for BCBA's in the state. What AIACC group should be looking at that? RANs? Ideas for training more analysts? Is there any movement at other institutions to train more BCBA's? Dr. Meade at UAH is starting a new BCBA program, and Troy has a BCaBA program. Anna noted that BCaBA's might be more needed based on models from the BACB (for every 10 hours of service, 2 hours from a BCBA and the remaining 8 hours provided by a BCaBA or RBT). It was noted that it is important to focus on keeping those we train in-state after graduation, and that the licensing board will help with that as well. If Medicaid comes online soon, there will be more pressure on producing analysts.

Courtney Tarver addressed EPSDT and the settlement negotiations with ADAP. A complaint was submitted by ADAP to the Governor's Office, Medicaid, DMH, and DHR. Over the last 1.5+ years, much time has been spent with these parties. All are seeking an agreement to avoid litigation, but they are in overtime to get it resolved. A resolution is expected soon. Discussion will be limited since the settlement negotiations are ongoing. One of the main concepts is the need of self-advocacy, family advocacy, and medical/clinical/programmatic expertise – these things are not in place for ASD in our state. It is expected that members of this council will help with that building and implementation of ASD services for EPSDT. The AIACC will be kept abreast of how things are going, but the workgroup will be doing the work. Others may be brought in as expertise is needed. We hope that next fiscal year we can begin

implementation of those services. ADAP colleagues and lawyers are present. The final document will speak for itself.

Geron Gadd from ADAP noted that congratulations were due to the state for the work that has been done. There has been tremendous good faith and working together as the settlement negotiations wind down. Leadership from the departments on behalf of people to be served has been shown.

Lee Yount asked Courtney if this program would be administered through the DMH Mental Illness/Mental Health division. The MI division has been known to take the position that they do not serve ASD. Courtney responded that the complaint was made on behalf of different children's groups served by EPSDT – SED, ASD, and IDD. There are mechanisms in which service delivery are being contemplated by the needs of each group. It is possible that Lee is hearing from the SED subgroup. It will not be solely turning ASD services over to MH division. The expertise of the AIACC will be sought in developing EPSDT services for children with ASD. Greg Carlson asked if there is a recognition that behavior analyst service transcend each of the groups. Courtney responded yes, that it is reflected in different ways.

Russell Green noted that Medicaid is on hold waiting to hear how federal government is going to implement the Medicaid program. News will be shared as soon as it is available. The Regional Care Organizations (RCOs) are now going to be modified and focus on a health home managed care model. The state decided that since they didn't have the funding and resources, that it wasn't in the state's best interest to invest in a new system that required extensive funding. We will see more health home and case management from Medicaid. Medicaid continues to move forward with the Integrated Care Networks (ICN). It is a managed care model for long term care recipients. The EPSDT brochures have been revised. Medicaid produced 500,000, and they will be mailed to EPSDT recipient households so they will know what services are available – medical, behavioral, and mental health services. There are also 25,000 EPSDT brochures produced in Spanish. Brochures are available. If our organization would like brochures, email Anna McConnell who will forward to Russell. The second round of ESPDT screening letters are scheduled to go out in November. Medicaid is now sending them out several times a year rather than once per year – to increase the number of children getting EPSDT screenings to allow them to get additional care that if needed.

Member Updates:

Sabrina Franks noted that DHR is hiring BCBA's. They will have a state classification and be merit system positions. There will eventually be three classifications, although there is only one classification now.

Contact Sabrina.Franks@dhr.alabama.gov if interested in applying. It's not on the state register yet, but it will be soon for all three open positions. Anna noted that Sabrina is now the Behavior Manager Program of Behavior Services for DHR. Behavior Services has been around for about 10 years, but this new opportunity developed recently. DHR just hired three new BCBA's as well. Bama Hager asked if that announcement will be made at the ALABA conference. Sabrina said there will be a table on Wednesday and Friday for those interested – hopefully with applications available. Hiring does not require licensure, but promotional opportunities do require licensure.

Courtney Tarver noted that public comment just closed on the ID Waiver. Currently in process of responding to those comments, then will send it on to CMS for approval. There are primarily definition changes. DMH is also working with Medicaid on amendments to the Living at Home Waiver that will be coming out soon for public comment (available on Medicaid and DMH websites). There is discussion of a new waiver that would be focused on employment – it would initially be for people with ID, but once it has been offered to people on the waiting list, we have hopes of expanding that eligibility to DD population, including ASD. It would start, with CMS approval, with about 200 slots, as well as adding another 200 slots to the Living at Home Waiver with the current amendments.

Melanie Jones reminded that this year ASA is offering community grants to help organizations with programs they may be providing. It will be up to \$500. ASA has helped other organizations for many years, but this formalizes the process. The grants start January 1st. Other programs that have been supported have been tennis, swimming lessons, adult programs, etc. It will be statewide and on the website soon.

Brooke Bowles noted that the transition program is in full swing. Transition services are being offered to students 9-12th grades in Chilton, Autauga, Elmore, Montgomery, Jefferson, Shelby, Blount, and St. Clair counties. Transition services reflect the Pre-ETS requirements through ADRS (there are 5 mandated there). It includes anything that a student would need in their home, social, school or employment, continued education, and a plan for adult services – all starting at age 14. The Alabama Autism Providers Network public meeting is immediately following the AIACC meeting – invitations for anyone to stay for that. Melanie Bald will be discussing How to Ensure Quality Services.

Sarah O'Kelley noted that Sparks Clinics was also a PEERS program provider – a social skills intervention – has teen and young adult groups. There is a rolling screening for that regularly. The email address is peers@uab.edu. Phone screenings are available. Auburn and Huntsville also offers PEERS as well. The Alabama Autism Conference in 2018 will be February 23rd. The title is being finalized, but will reflect

something close to "Developing and Supporting Independence Across the Spectrum". There are three confirmed speakers: David Mandell (researcher who looks at implementation of evidence based interventions in ASD, and why and how that works in settings, including schools), Patricia Prelock who will speak on interventions for those with ASD who are minimally verbal), and Amie Duncan (psychologist and former UA graduate in Cincinnati) who will be talking about adaptive skills interventions. Please let teachers and providers know to get this on the calendar. UAB LEND also cosponsors the Simpson Ramsey Lectureship annually. It is usually close to the time of Glenwood's Endowed Lecture in April.

Tina Sanders said Bama Hager and Nancy Anderson did a great job at the ALSDE Board Meeting. The ESSA Plan was submitted last Friday, but individual comments are being sought. It is recommended that you contact your individual board members, as well as Dr. Richardson and Dr. Morton. Anytime ESSA is mentioned on calendars, public comment is welcomed (your name must be on the list to give public comment, so request that ahead of time). Crystal Richardson stands committed to working with students with special needs in the state and welcomes comments as well.

Robert Caldwell noted that he attended the TriState Autism Conference in Chattanooga. He attended the employment track – people with ASD tend to be underemployed. Robert referenced a company he found in his research called Specialisterne that helps place people with autism in competitive employment. He sees the great need for employment

Todd Tomerlin noted that there was going to be first responder training in the North Alabama area in partnership with Dustin Chandler. The police chief wanted the entire force trained. Todd praised Rep. Patterson and was saddened at his passing. Rep. Patterson was from Meridianville and North Alabama. Todd had spoken with the family and they had mentioned the desire to hold a teachers' workshop.

Linda Jennings reported on a sensory project for ADPH Office of Emergency Medical Services focusing on ASD. Sensory boxes are being assembled with flip cards for communication and other sensory items (fidget toys, glow wands, noise cancelling headphones, and a stress ball) that will be in ambulances and used by pre-hospital providers. The flip cards are patterned after similar material at the Minnesota EMS and Children's Hospital of Minnesota, as well as the Kansas EMS program. Pilot sites in Mobile County EMS and Mobile Fire. Twenty-four ambulances will be involved in the pilot program, and it will be for 3 months. Implementation is pending equipment purchases. The plan is for the project to go statewide pending federal funding. If funding received, the grant will begin March 1.

Lee Yount discussed Hope Cottages. She noted that Glenwood has been conducting a capitol campaign. Three new homes in the community have been opened or are currently being updated. Glenwood is undertaking a project to downsize their residential facilities. Hope Cottages is the interim step to downsize residential programs on campus and to move people out into communities. Capstone is the builder, and have donated the construction of the 3 new cottages, each bedroom with a private bath. It is hoped they will be opened no later than March. Some residents will be new clients, and some will be moving from the campus.

Andrea Martin noted that Children's of Alabama in partnership with KultureCity have put sensory kits in the Emergency Department and short intake form for children with sensory issues or ASD. The effort will be going hospital-wide.

Greg Carlson noted that the increase the number of BCBAs is important and will be communicated with Cam.

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

Next meeting: Monday, January 29, 2018

Recording Secretary

A. McConnell