

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

**Monday, January 14, 2013**

**Alabama Industrial Development Training Center**

The AIACC met on Monday, January 14, 2013 at the Alabama Industrial Development Training center. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Cam Ward. Also in attendance were Co-Chair, Bama Hager, Council members: Fred Biasini, Greg Carlson, Tristan Dunn, Jerimie Goike, Doris Hill, Elmyra Jones, Melanie Jones, Mitchell Lord, Becky Nordgren, Jim Reddoch, Sarah Ryan, Hanes Swingle, Todd Tomerlin, and ex-officio member and State Autism Coordinator, Anna McConnell. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Toni Hopgood on behalf of Stephanie Azar, Cindy Robinson on behalf of Thomas Bice, David Savage on behalf of Cary Boswell, Erin Wofford on behalf of Nancy Buckner, Christy Atkinson on behalf of John Mascia, Amy Floyd on behalf of Susan McKim, Robert Turner on behalf of Jim Ridling, Alicia Schneider on behalf of Kathy Welch, and Dawn Ellis on behalf of Don Williamson.

Senator Ward welcomed everyone and the minutes from the previous meeting, September 10, 2012, were presented and approved by the Council.

New Members present, Sarah Ryan, Greg Carlson, Doris Hill, Mitchell Lord, and Todd Tomerlin were recognized as new Governor appointees. DMH Commissioner Reddoch and AIDB President John Mascia were recognized as new agency representatives. Commissioner Reddoch shared a few words regarding the meeting of the Executive Committee, who had their first meeting last October, and expressed his pleasure at being a part of the Council.

Co-chair Bama Hager informed the Council of the intent to introduce a bill that will create a licensing board for Board Certified Behavior Analysts in the State of Alabama. Many other states are going to be moving toward a state licensure for this profession. Our state is going ahead with this process in the hopes that it might help with reimbursement from private and public insurers. This bill should be introduced sometime soon. The legislative session will begin February 5<sup>th</sup>. They are very optimistic about the bill and hope to have an update on the status at the next Council meeting. The plan is for the board to be housed within the Department of Mental Health.

Also present at the meeting was Paige McKerchar, of Jacksonville State University who is the current Executive Director of the Alabama Association for Behavior Analysis, and with whom

they have been working closely. Dr. McKerchar shared that in comparison to other states, Alabama is currently ahead in the process.

Greg Carlson shared a listing of companies, that, as of last year, were self-funding private insurance for autism benefits. Many of these are large corporations that have elected to fund these benefits regardless of state mandates. This is a positive move in the direction of more coverage for autism. There was some discussion as to what could be done in the state of Alabama to educate larger employers as to the benefits they can see in recruitment and retention when these services are added to their benefits packages. Senator Ward suggested they get together some representatives from the Council to meet with the Business Council to get the word out about this issue to businesses in our state.

Tristan Dunn, who is a well-known self-advocate in the Autism community, shared his reaction to the media coverage of the recent tragic event in Newtown Connecticut. Mr. Dunn was particularly offended that the perpetrator was portrayed as an individual with high-functioning Autism. Mr. Dunn states that as an adult with ASD, he is aware that persons with ASD are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violence, and that one of the characteristics of the disorder is to have a very strong moral character. He asked that the Council consider addressing the issue by public statement or by some means. Mr. Lord and Mr. Goike joined the conversation in agreement, and expressed that persons with ASD are compliant to rules, and the acts of the individual who committed this act are not consistent with these characteristics.

Senator Ward agreed and summed up by stating that more education is needed for the general population, so that fact may be separated from fiction. He suggested collaboration with the Autism Society to further this discussion.

Bama Hager shared that the Autism Society did release a statement that day, as well as citing statements from other advocacy organizations such as Autism Speaks. Their goal is to educate the public that there is no link between ASD and violence.

Senator Ward also had a meeting recently with Law Enforcement regarding expanding the Project Lifesaver program for tracking individuals who wander away from home. This has been used primarily with persons with Alzheimer's, but has been used with children with ASD as well. Mr. Tomerlin stated they are currently using the program in Limestone County.

State Coordinator Anna McConnell welcomed and shared information with the new members of the Council regarding upcoming activities, as well as forms for designating proxies. Anna shared the schedule for the year with the Council. Remaining 2013 meetings are scheduled for April 8<sup>th</sup>, July 8<sup>th</sup>, and October 7<sup>th</sup>.

Various state agencies participated in a survey conducted by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to learn about ASD services and delivery structure. A number of state agencies responded to the survey – the draft is in packets for Council members, and available to the public. This is another step in continuing to learn about and partner with state agencies to see how ASD and related services are delivered.

The Annual report will be due March 7, 2013. A draft will be sent via email prior to that date for comment/edit.

The federal grant mentioned at the last meeting hasn't been released yet, but the Council still plans to apply for that. Some smaller grant opportunities have been applied for, for example, the Act Early Ambassador program.

Kim Hill of the Bylaws/Membership Committee gave an update from that Committee. Her Report is attached. A vote was taken on the bylaw changes, to further define the definition of child and adult for the purposes of the council. The changes were approved and adopted into the bylaws.

The deadline for accepting Insurance Representative applications has been extended to March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

The Executive Committee update was presented by Commissioner Reddoch. Recently, many agencies participated in the CMS survey which was an opportunity to gather some basic information regarding Autism from these agencies. During the Executive Committee meeting last October, data sharing among state agencies was voted on and approved. Moving forward, agencies will be working with the Autism Coordinator to determine what data is available and/or appropriate to collect. It was agreed that agencies will give report at future meetings of any ASD activities, data updates, etc. This will help with collaboration opportunities, grant applications, and identifying fragmentation. This can give a better perspective of ASD services

and supports in AL. The Commissioner also shared that the Department of Mental Health fully supports the efforts of licensing Behavior Analysts in Alabama.

The Standards of Practice Committee update was given by Fred Biasini, who shared that the Diagnostic Clinics report was presented to the Executive Committee without changes. The draft will now be sent to experts in the field for further review. The report is in the member's packets and available for the audience to pick up. Also, there are 3 workgroups still pulling together recommendations – those are anticipated to be completed by summer. When they are completed, they will come before the Council for review and proceed to the vetting process.

The Special Projects Committee update was given by Melanie Jones. There were formerly four workgroups under this committee were. They have now been consolidated into three workgroups, as follows: Early Screening and Developmental Surveillance will remain the same, Awareness has been consolidated as Resource Development, and Community Services & Family Supports is now Community Services & Support. Community Services & Support is now picking back up with *A Child is Missing*, a project through local Sheriff's offices, which is a tracking program. They want to have this in place in all jurisdictions within the state. Currently it is in 93 – 97 locations. Also, they would like to provide a How to Portfolio, or "roadmap" which families may refer to when given a diagnosis, to assist them in obtaining the help they need. Finally, they are working on an Autism Friendly campaign, in which businesses in the community would agree to being trained in methods that would make their environments into places that an individual with Autism would find a comfortable atmosphere.

Announcements from Dr. Hager include important dates to remember:

Alabama Autism Conference (Tuscaloosa) – March 1, 2013, [autism.ua.edu](http://autism.ua.edu)  
Alabama Transition Conference (Auburn) – March 4-5, 2013, [auburn.edu/atli](http://auburn.edu/atli)  
Temple Grandin Lecture (Birmingham) – March 23, 2013

On the program first was Kelley Shirley, a Speech Pathologist from Children's Hospital's Medical Autism Spectrum Disorder Clinic. The clinic was started in the Fall of 2009, by a group of physicians who know the medical needs faced by those who work with families and children with Autism. There is a variety of specialists on their staff to provide services to the children they see. Because they are rather new, many people may not know of this as a referral source.

Next on the program was Cheri Driscoll from Autism Training Solutions. Autism Training Solutions is an online education company which provides training to professionals and paraprofessionals within the field of autism and related behavioral disabilities.

Through partnerships with service providers, schools and families, they are able to film children, across the spectrum, receiving evidence-based interventions within their natural environments.

They have combined the interactive videos with online staff assessments and supervision, to provide a dynamic approach for staff training that has improved organizational training operations and created new success stories in the field.

They are currently working with over 200 school districts and more than 20 universities and various clinics across the country.

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

Next meeting: April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Recording Secretary

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C. S. Weldon

01/14/2013