

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council
Tuesday, April 27, 2010
Alabama Institute for Training and Development

The Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council met on Tuesday, April 27, 2010 at the Alabama Institute for Training and Development (AIDT). The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Representative Cam Ward. The Autism Council members in attendance were as follows: Representative Cam Ward, Dr. Bama Hager, Dr. Hanes Swingle, Julie Brown, Dr. Sandra Parker, Tristan Dunn, Kathy Welch, Evan Krchak, Dr. John Langlow, Melanie Jones, Dr. Fred Biasini, Jerimie Goike, and John Houston. The following proxies were in attendance as well: David Savage, representing Dr. Cary Boswell, Abbie Felder representing Dr. Joe Morton, Dawn Ellis representing Dr. Don Williamson, Tonya Lee representing Marquita Davis, Tracy Cron representing Linda Bacchus, Sue Berry representing Nancy Buckner, and Valerie Gamble representing Jim Mercer. State Autism Coordinator, Dr. Caroline Gomez was also in attendance.

Representative Ward introduced himself and Co-chairman Bama Hager, and it was agreed to use the sign-in sheet in lieu of roll call.

Minutes of the last meeting were presented to the Council for review. A motion was made to adopt and approve the minutes, it was seconded and the minutes were adopted.

Representative Ward shared his impressions of the committee meetings that have been held and commented on how pleased he is with the work being done. With the coming elections in November, many changes will come about in our government. Based on this, Representative Ward would like to see the foundations of this council laid firmly in place between now and next year, so when/if membership of the council changes, the system will be up and running and transitions will be smooth.

Commissioner John Houston thanked the council members and committee members for all the work being done.

Dr. Bama Hager pointed out the work done by Dr. Bev Mulvihill of the UAB School of Public Health in facilitating the strategic planning process.

Dr. Hager also mentioned her uncle, Jim Folsom's bid for re-election as Lieutenant Governor and the fact that he has placed Autism Awareness at the center of his platform, giving the issue two statewide campaigns in which it is a prominent issue.

Dr. Hager submitted a proposed revision to the Mission Statement for adoption. Dr. Fred Biasini motioned that the revisions to the Mission Statement be adopted. The motion was seconded and voted on and the revision was adopted. The revised mission statement states, "The Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council guides a collaborative effort to facilitate a lifelong system of care and support for persons and their families living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder or associated conditions, so that they enjoy a meaningful and successful life."

Representative Ward mentioned he would like to pursue another way to refer to the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council by a more succinct name that would be easy for the general public to identify with this body. He asked for everyone to keep that in mind for consideration at a future meeting.

Dr. Gomez thanked everyone for attending the meeting, and mentioned the launch of the website and the postcards that have been distributed. The Alabama Annual Autism Conference in February saw about 500 individuals in attendance. Each of those participants received cards as well. Representative Ward distributed them among the House and Senate members, also. A suggestion had been made by Tracy Cron to have an option on the website for individuals to enroll in a mailing list for e-mail alerts and notifications. That is now on the website with plans to reach more people in that manner.

Autism Awareness month is coming to an end, and there have been many opportunities to promote awareness, including attendance of Dr. Gomez, along with Tracy Cron with her two children, at the proclamation signing by the Governor.

Handouts to Council members include a flyer for First Responder Training, collaboration between the Department of Mental Health, the Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities, the Autism Society of Alabama, and the Alabama Department of Public Health.

Committees are now made up of about 150 people and are moving along nicely. The Strategic Planning Committee which Dr. Hager chairs has 22 members. The Special Projects Committee, chaired by Melanie Jones, consists of four workgroups with 68 members. The Standards of Practice Committee, chaired by Alice Widgeon has 6 workgroups and 62 members. Dr. Gomez encouraged anyone with questions or ideas to submit them to her.

Alice Widgeon recognized those present that serve on the Standards of Practice Committee, Tonya Lee, Abbie Felder, and Dr. Hanes Swingle.

Representative Ward pointed out that if there are any needs in the law-making process, there needs to be a general idea of what is needed before the new Legislators are sworn in next January.

Dr. Hager also recognized those present who serve on the Strategic Planning Committee. Tracy Cron, David Savage, Melanie Jones, Fred Biasini, Kathryn DeCola and Alice Widgeon. Representative Ward, Dr. Gomez, and Evan Krchak have also attended some of these Committee meetings.

At this point, Representative Ward asked for a report from the By-laws Committee. Kim Hill, presented the proposed changes to the By-laws, and a copy was provided to the Council members in their packets. The motion to accept the amendments was made and seconded, a vote was taken and the revised by-laws were adopted. The revision

states the "Lead Agency will hire and maintain the Autism State Coordinator position" and the "Autism State Coordinator will serve as a non-voting, ex-officio member" of the AIACC. At present, the Lead Agency is the Department of Mental Health and the Autism State Coordinator is Dr. Caroline Gomez.

Melanie Jones, chair of the Special Projects Committee shared that the Developmental Surveillance and Early Screening workgroup, headed by Sarah O'Kelly, will be focusing on the CDC Act Early Campaign to focus on early identification. The target audience will be healthcare professionals, parents, early educators and the general public. This project was funded with a grant from the CDC in the amount of \$3,000.

The Awareness workgroup, led by Tuwana McGee will focus on developing a State Autism Lifespan Resource Tree and directory. They will be using the existing resource directory of the Autism Society of Alabama, but will be tweaking that and making it more user friendly.

The Family Supports workgroup led by Jennifer Robertson will focus on Alabama Respite Care for families. They will partner with the Alabama Respite Coalition. There will be an e-mail sent out to point individuals to the Autism website where there is a survey that will further the efforts of this group.

Lastly, is the Community Services workgroup, led by Anna Bloom. Their first project will be First Responders Training.

Representative Ward introduced the first guest speaker, Judy Barclay with Full Life Ahead Foundation of Hope. Ms. Barclay and her associate Doug Bever explained that Full Life Ahead hosts retreats and workshops which provide services to individuals with disabilities and their families by providing participants with an awareness of the support and opportunities available to them in their own communities.

Additionally, the Foundation collaborates with families of individuals with disabilities to bring together a team (H.O.P.E. [helping other people envision] Team) of people willing to create an Action Plan to provide a support system as these individuals face the challenges of adult life. They offer Technical Support for Individuals, Families, Service Providers, Educators and others.

Representative Ward then introduced the second guest speaker, Brooke Stephens, with Triumph Services. Ms. Stephens was accompanied by Matt White of their staff. Triumph Services provides Life Coaching, Social Events and Job Coaching to persons with disabilities to provide a Team of Support for each individual. All supports are community-based.

Triumph focuses on assisting individuals to develop their own goals in the areas of independent living, supported employment and social activity. They then provide or coordinate the essential supports necessary for the individual to implement those goals.

They are a young, non-profit organization that opened its doors in August of 2007. At that time they were serving 17 individuals. Today, they are serving approximately 75 people.

Representative Ward announced the next meeting will be late July. A specific date is to be determined.

There were no announcements and the meeting was adjourned.