

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

**Monday, October 17, 2016**

**Alabama Industrial Development Training Center**

The AIACC met on Monday, October 17, 2016, at the Alabama Industrial Development Training Center. The meeting was called to order by Chair Cam Ward. Also in attendance were Council members: Brooke Bowles, Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Robert Caldwell, Greg Carlson, Lucian Cronkite, Sally Davis, Megan Everett, Doris Hill, Melanie Jones, Jim Perdue, 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, Sarah O'Kelly on behalf of Fred Biasini, Sabrina Franks on behalf of Nancy Buckner, Vera Hendrix on behalf of John Mascia, Laurie Eldrige-Auffant on behalf of Thomas Miller, and Justin Schwartz on behalf of Myriam Peralta.

Chairperson Comments: Senator Ward asked that Anna McConnell make the welcoming comments, and the minutes from the July 11, 2016 meeting were approved and adopted. New members recognized and introduced to the group were, Megan Everett, parent to a child aged 11-17; Robert Caldwell, Adult with ASD; and Commissioner Burdeshaw from ADRS. Comments from Chairperson Ward included the news that the Regional Networks began October 1. Representatives from the Regional Networks briefly presented their programs.

Lead Agency Comments: Commissioner Jim Perdue stated that while there has been a lot of work done, there is still a lot to do. He has heard quite a bit of discussion about Autism in Town Hall meetings, and Commissioner Perdue believes the issue with ASD is not how to treat the diagnosis. We already know that it is treatable and that ABA Therapy at an early age is currently the best method. The question is how do we pay for it? In looking at funding we must consider what would be likely to be approved by the legislature. If the state pays, then Education funds would be utilized. In trying to determine where we stand now, individuals such as Michael Sentance, Jeana Ross, and Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw are on board to discuss how to braid services, determine what is needed and estimate a total bill. The biggest issue to address is why isn't insurance covering the services in Alabama? Currently 44 states have some form of insurance coverage for ASD. By the end of the legislative session, Commissioner Perdue hopes we'll have some answers to this issue. Insurance coverage may initially include some caps, but he feels something is better than nothing, and is encouraged we'll eventually get there.

Senator Ward agrees that the issue always comes back to insurance coverage, and feels that while Education funds have a role to play, it is important for private insurers to cover the services. He also stressed the importance of presenting a unified front.

Commissioner Perdue pointed out that currently there are individuals such as Military Personnel, Federal Employees and some Self-insured persons who have this coverage in our community. He remains committed to the issue; it is one of his top five priorities.

State Coordinator Comments: Anna pointed out that the previously scheduled meeting date of January 16, 2017, has been rescheduled for January 9<sup>th</sup>, as the 16<sup>th</sup> is Martin Luther King Day. Other dates for 2017 aren't available, but Anna will send those out soon. Typically, meetings are the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month, every quarter.

#### New Business:

- Bylaws/Membership Committee Comments: Sarah Ryan states they are reviewing applications for the position of Parent of an Adult on the Council.
- Accessibility Committee Comments: Brook Bowles states the goal of the committee is to improve the ability to access services and also to provide a choice among service providers. Through the committee, they have built accessibility education tools so that people around the state can understand what is available from the departments of Education, Mental Health and Rehab Services, as well as through private pay. In addition, Triumph services has opened an office in Montgomery to provide some services for adults. Collaboratively, Education, Rehab Services & Triumph are working together to pilot a transition program for students who have autism in Autauga, Elmore and Montgomery counties. If the pilot project goes well, they are hoping to provide those transition services to students across the state.
- Accountability Committee: In the absence of Whitney Meade, Anna McConnell shared the committee has distributed Act Early Alabama to the Regional Autism Networks, and to additional pediatric practices.
- Funding and Finance Committee – Greg Carlson stated they have not met since the last meeting, but will meet within the next few weeks. Greg had the opportunity to attend the Autism Speaks Legal Summit, and gathered information on what is going on across the country to share with the group. Beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>, the Office of Personnel Management will no longer allow individual states to determine ABA coverage, but all employees will have coverage for that service. United Health Care

- has also agreed to cover ABA therapy. There has also been progress made on the public side with the EPSDT program.
- Public Awareness Committee – Melanie Jones stated their Respite Program has been well received. It is open to all 67 counties throughout the rest of the year. Families can contact the Autism Society if they need respite help. They have had conferences, the most recent of which was in September in Cullman County, which was well-attended. The next conference is October 26<sup>th</sup> in the Birmingham area. They also held First Responder Trainings, assisted by Dustin Chandler, in Mobile, Opelika, Limestone county and Geneva county. They have also partnered with UAB School of Health Professions and training is now available on-line. Also, the Autism Friendly Alabama Campaign has finally come to be. Today's presenter will speak to that. In addition, the Autism Society has partnered with UAB and United Way Help Me Grow to hold one of the first ever support groups for families affected by Autism who are Spanish speaking. The group met at Children's Harbor and they had an excellent turn out. Since the meeting, there has been a lot of interest and enthusiasm in such future events.
  - There has been a website update in reference to the Regional Networks. There is now a link on the Autism Council homepage, [www.autism.alabama.gov](http://www.autism.alabama.gov) in the form of a new drop down column for Regional Networks. Currently, the information is basic but does include contact information.
  - There are future plans for Legislative events at each of the Regional Networks. Anna has been in discussion with Senator Ward, and the Commissioner's office and they are hoping to get local Legislators, communities, providers, and families together at each of the Universities for the purpose of increasing awareness and to discuss future possibilities. Anna hopes to have more to share about this at the next meeting.
  - In reference to BCBA Licensure, Paige McKercher sends word they are still working on rules and regulations and hope to be able to start accepting applications March 1<sup>st</sup>.
  - Upon being asked if autism coverage will automatically be included in United Health Care Plans of coverage, Yada Horace, Department of Insurance, responded by email that the plan provided was for small group coverage. Therefore, that plan would only be offered through an employer. The employer would have to select the plan by contacting United Healthcare. Anna asked further, if it will be included in all new group policies? Yada's response stated that currently the language is in UHC's small group plan for 2017. If there are specific questions, Anna will be glad to try to find the answers.

Presentation:

The Autism Society of Alabama has been working in conjunction with Regions Bank to establish the first Autism Friendly Business in the state. Kathy Lovell, the Americans with Disabilities Manager for Regions banks outlined the process that led to developing a training video that is used to train their associates in awareness, education, communication, and accommodating sensory and social challenges. The goal of this training is to help employees make all individuals feel welcome, whether on the spectrum or as a caregiver of someone on the spectrum, and to foster those relationships. With the full support of their top Executives, Kathy and staff plan to grow this initiative in the future.

Other Announcements:

Todd Tomerlin shared that his group will go on an outing to a Pumpkin Patch in North Alabama for a Hayride and other group activities, as well as later in the month, they will partner with another group for their 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Trunk or Treat.

Brooke Bowles shared they have completed their first certification in Community Based Services, a one week training provided by Triumph to anyone who is interested in learning how to provide a holistic, community based model of services. Out of that group, two members have already started a program in Cullman called Flourish which is based on Triumph's model.

Robert Caldwell feels that he will be most effective in explaining the need or funding. He would like to see more employers invest in people with autism to help make them more productive. He has often felt underemployed by people who never saw his full potential.

Justin Schwartz, American Academy of Pediatrics, is actively involved in the Alabama Child Health Improvement Alliance and has been focusing on improving developmental screening rates in primary pediatric practices.

Representing DHR, Sabrina Franks introduce herself and made the group aware that DHR employs BCBA's that are state employees, located across the state, to service children in foster care with behavioral needs and those that are on the spectrum.

Karen Willis responded to the presentation from Kathy Lovell with Regions Bank. She is very excited to hear what Regions is doing. Karen shared that an autism friendly environment is very important to her as an adult with autism.

Lucian Cronkite shared that UHC is currently holding federal employee programs meetings, however, details from the Office of Personnel Management are pending.

Laurie Eldridge0Affaunt works with the DPH Disability and Health Project. An area they have been focusing on for a number of years is working with DOE through physical education and health projects by developing materials to adapt the P.E. curriculum to better help kids with disabilities. Their focus over the next five years will be on kids with intellectual disabilities and those children with mobility limitations. They are working with a national disability group to develop evidence based materials and will share those when they are finalized. They have also worked with after school programs and adapted two national evidence based physical education and health curriculums for use there.

Doris Hill states that through the Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities, Doris and Dr. Sacha Pence are able to implement the PEERS program. This is a 14 week evidence based social skills program which will build sustainability by training professionals.

Russell Green shared that Medicaid is continuing to move forward with establishing the RCOs. The new projected effective date is July 1, 2017. They are currently working on technical matters, namely getting CMS to approve the new date, which shouldn't be a problem, as this is just a request to change from the original effective date of October 1, 2016. Once the RCOs are functioning a lot will shift to them in terms of caring for children.

Sarah Ryan of the University of Alabama noted that college students with ASD who would like to attend or those who would like to become college students at the University of Alabama may submit applications for UA's college program until February 1. Additionally, UA is hoping to grow the clinic and has a position available for a Psychologist who specifically wants to work with autism.

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Commissioner of ADRS, is happy at the possibility of opening doors for systems building and creating programs to serve individuals with ASD. Discussions of details are ongoing, and ADRS is collaborating with DOE, ADRS, DHR, DMH and Early childhood Education to discover possibilities for the future. She agrees insurance will ultimately be a consideration, but for now they need to find ways to provide services while that is not an option.

Sarah O'Kelley provided an update on funding for the Civitan Sparks Clinic at UAB. Both of their primary sources of funding, UCED and LEND have both been granted, which helps them to

provide not only clinical services, but also pre-service and in-service training, as well as research. Sarah just recently met with their supervisory committee and discussed strategic planning and proceeding with their emphasis on autism and all things autism-related, to include individual and family services, technical assistance, advocacy, and transition. Not only from education to adulthood, but also healthcare transition, and not just specific to autism, but for all disabilities. They are also looking at employment, not just jobs, but positions that are satisfying and will support the strengths of all individuals with developmental disabilities. Sarah also wanted to share that she is the Chair of the Autism Conference, which will be held February 24<sup>th</sup>. They have finalized most of the speakers, and will focus on things that can improve daily living for individuals with autism and their families. Speakers will be discussing sleep as well as social/emotional support in an education setting, and behaviors on the Ruby Program. Their personal perspective speaker will be Jack Gallagher, a parent of an individual with autism. Also, on behalf of the Alabama Autism Providers Network, (a group of providers from around the state who have been meeting for the last 7-8 years to discuss a coordinated plan to support each other and to support individuals and families), Sarah extended an invitation to those who might want to attend the public component of that meeting, in the current location which will start around 1:00 p.m. They will specifically be talking more about Regional Autism Networks.

Greg Carlson, who represents the service provider, Glenwood, states that they have been very busy with the roll-out of new Medicaid RCO projects, particularly in Region B (the Birmingham area) where Glenwood is located. IPS (Integrated Provider System) is a project associated with the rollout of the RCOs that can provide up to \$287 million statewide for projects that are innovative and sustainable and will save money. Those dollars are coming from the feds for those projects. RCOs are currently in the process of collecting preliminary applications. Glenwood originally submitted five different applications in almost every region, but decided to reduce that effort. One of the big issues the Citizens' Advisory Committee has expressed concern with is Pediatrics. Children's Hospital's pediatric service is having available assessments and also having available acute care types of arrangements. So they put have in an application for that as well. Particularly years 6-12. In the Birmingham area the Mental Health is putting together an urgent care clinic for psychiatric care as opposed to individuals ending up in the emergency rooms. They serve kids that are 12 and up. Glenwood would be complimenting their application for that, by serving younger children. And then lastly, an application to put some of their people in a pediatrics office setting, so it's like a one-stop shop for kids. The final date for applications will probably be in January. Also, Greg went to a health care summit in Birmingham last week where there was a senate panel of legislators who talked about the issue of identifying long term funding. There was a brief description of a joint

committee that will be looking at the \$4.5 billion of credits and deductions that are afforded taxpayers and corporations and other agencies that will be under scrutiny.

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

Next meeting: Monday, January 9, 2017

Recording Secretary

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C. S. Weldon