

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)

Monday, July 18, 2022

Zoom

The AIACC met on Monday, July 18, 2022, via Zoom (due to COVID-19 meeting capacity restrictions). The meeting was called to order by Dr. Erich Grommet. Also in attendance were Council members: Suzanne Dowling, Dr. Erich Grommet, Dr. Heather Jones, Melanie Jones, Dr. Sarah O'Kelley, Dr. Justin Schwartz, and Chris Stewart. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Mattie Jackson for Commissioner Stephanie Azar, Sonia Cleckler for Commissioner Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Dianna Tullier for Secretary Barbara Cooper, Laurie Eldridge-Auffant for State Health Officer Scott Harris, Wendi Glass for John Mascia. Also in attendance was Anna McConnell, State Autism Coordinator.

Dr. Grommet called the Council to order and welcomed participants.

The minutes from April 2022 were unanimously approved.

Lead Agency Comments and State Coordinator Announcements:

Ms. McConnell noted that ADMH is joining 42 other states in working towards the [Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic \(CCBHC\)](#) model. This will include mobile crisis. While it is in development, we are looking at how ASD may fit into this system. Alabama does not recognize ASD as a diagnosis served; however, the often-co-occurring diagnoses individuals with ASD may have should make them eligible for SED/SMI services. It is important for those with ASD to have their other mental health needs addressed in accessible and appropriate ways. Ms. McConnell also noted that 9-8-8 has recently been made available. [9-8-8](#) is a suicide and crisis lifeline that provides easy access to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Lastly, ADMH continues to enroll individuals into the [Community Waiver Program \(CWP\)](#). The CWP Waiver exists in Baldwin, Elmore, Houston, Jefferson, Limestone, Madison, Mobile, Montgomery, Morgan, Tuscaloosa and Walker counties. The same eligibility applies as other ADMH waivers (IQ of 69 or below and functional/adaptive needs) but has different service options. The [Intellectual Disabilities Waiver and the Living at Home Waiver](#) continue in all other counties.

New Business:

0-5 Subcommittee:

Dr. O'Kelley shared a report from Angie Barber and Mary Beth Vick that work has been in the Early Intervention system and started May 1, 2021. There are 4 program sites that perform the MCHAT for children entering the EI system between 18-30 months of age. The most recent expansion of the pilot includes performing the MCHAT on children already in EI. If there is a failed MCHAT, resources and referrals are provided, including priority referral sites. Since beginning of the pilot for the 4 sites, an MCHAT has been completed on 341 children. Based on findings, 118 of those referred to clinics as a priority referral. Of those referred and have received a diagnosis (there are still some one wait lists) 40

children have received results, with 32 having received an ASD diagnosis. To continue to address the need, rates of diagnoses have been reviewed, the use of MCHAT in a high risk referred sample rather than in primary care for which it was developed. There is also an Autism Diagnostic Clinic Pilot at CRS in Tuscaloosa. So far 6 children have been evaluated by CRS. Dr. Justin Schwartz and Dr. Sarah O’Kelley are providing technical assistance to the clinic. They are seeing how CRS is a nice fit into the model of diagnostics and hope to see diagnostic clinics expand to other sites later this year. The CRS model is available for those who are referred from the Early Intervention (EI) pilot. Questions arose about how to access CRS diagnostics if outside of EI – while this is not currently available, Dr. Justin Schwartz shared with the group that the [Autism Diagnostic Tool for Healthcare Providers](#) aides primary care physicians in giving a diagnostic of Autism Spectrum Disorder. This tool can be helpful in getting access to needed therapies and services for children with ASD.

The team is also working on intensive training for 13 providers throughout the state regarding autism intervention strategies. Dr. Barber is planning learning collaboratives throughout the state for EI providers and day care providers. The 5 identified intervention strategies will be shared. Mobile and Montgomery trainings have been completed, but more are pending – Mary Beth Vick is the contact for those interested. So far about 100 participants have been trained. The group is looking outside clinical services for accessing and training for strategies and diagnostic access. While the initiatives are not statewide yet, there is progress being made for making it statewide and sustainable.

6-13 Subcommittee:

Dr. Heather Jones noted that the primary focus of the workgroup has been working with the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) and the Autism Academy that ALSDE has proposed. ALSDE sent a survey and are providing support to teachers based on needs identified in their survey. There will be multiple avenues to receive that needed support.

Dr. Jones asked if New Directions allowed the Autism Diagnostic Tool for Healthcare Providers. There are typically additional requirements through New Directions for further assessments. Would adaptive and observational measures performed by the school system be acceptable to allow for support of diagnosis for New Directions? Dr. Schwartz noted that documentation from school systems is typically not accepted unless it has been reviewed by a diagnosing provider who can say it is consistent with what they see for the diagnosis. The assessments must be performed by a diagnostic clinical provider.

14-20 Subcommittee:

Dr. Erich Grommet noted that public comment had been submitted for the Home and Community Based Waiver Program. The request centered around expanding the eligibility criteria to include those with just an Autism Spectrum Disorder – without co-occurring ID. This is available on the [website](#) for the Transition Subcommittee. A presentation regarding transition resources for the Autism population is being prepared for the Auburn Transition Conference next year.

21+ Subcommittee:

Dr. Sarah Ryan noted a survey for providers to look at barriers to providing services to individuals with ASD has been submitted to the IRB. Once this is approved, the survey will be distributed prior to the next AIACC meeting. Potential trainings for mental health providers are also being pursued.

Diagnostics and Health:

Dr. Justin Schwartz noted that the subcommittee has had the opportunity to interface with insurance regarding barriers to care. Representatives for Medicaid and Department of Insurance are on the subcommittee and have been a strong partner. Technical assistance is being developed regarding the Autism Diagnostic Tool for Healthcare Providers. A partnership with CRS to lend support regarding diagnostics continues. ECHO Autism just wrapped up 12 sessions with primary care providers. The ECHO model may be a component of technical assistance for the Autism Diagnostic Tool for Healthcare Providers. Transition age and adult individuals remain a focus of need. Considerations of a way to evaluate the medical system's receptiveness, availability, and receptiveness for accepting individuals with disabilities is being explored. UAB has a Stage and Transition for Every Patient (STEP) Clinic that is geared towards 18–21-year-olds with the primary goal to tie together medical, vocational, and life needs for those served.

Public Awareness:

Ms. Melanie Jones was noted that the Autism Friendly website should be ready in the Fall. Autism Society of Alabama will continue to pursue this effort. Informational materials are being sent to pediatric offices in partnership with Alabama Department of Mental Health.

Regional Autism Network (RAN):

Ms. Allison Davis, Region II RAN Director provided updates for all RAN locations.

Region 1 – UAH RAN is partnering with AIDB to assist individuals with sensory loss. Collaboration with other agencies continues.

Region 2 – UA RAN has participated in community resource events, a Hispanic outreach health fair, and other training events. Outreach to pediatrician offices continues about giving diagnoses of ASD. Referrals from pediatric offices has also been beneficial.

Region 3 – The 5 RAN sites partnered with the 11 Regional In-Service Centers for educators to complete the first Autism Summer Learning Series. Autism experts from our state provided trainings to 250 educators from around the state. Region 3 participated in resource fairs, in addition to providing training in participation with an EI group and APEC. The USA RAN represented statewide RAN at the MEGA and AAP conferences.

Region 4 – The AU RAN has provided trainings for the statewide Transition Conference and the APEC Raising the Standards Conference. The AU RAN participated in health fairs and regional opportunities. Participation in the Connections and CRS meetings.

Region 5 – The UAB RAN hosted a Community Education Workshop. A survey regarding family needs will inform the topics provided during workshops next year. Increased opportunities for building relationships throughout the served counties continues. RAN Family Navigator Gwen Brown was voted to be a member of the APSE Board of Directors due to her position as the UCEDD/LEND Family Faculty – she spent time training in Colorado for this role.

Funding and Finance Updates:

No updates for the Behavior Analyst Licensure Board due to not have a meeting yet.

Anna McConnell noted that ADMH gets many questions about ABA via Medicaid vs. through ADMH Autism Services. New providers have been established in Alabama. A [Medicaid Provider Resource Directory](#) is also available.

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

Next meeting: Monday, October 17, 2022

Recording Secretary:

Anna McConnell