

PROPOSED MINUTES – NOVEMBER 10, 2009
MARYLAND COMMISSION ON AUTISM

The Maryland Commission on Autism convened its first meeting on Tuesday, November 10, 2009. It was held at the Oakland Mills Meeting House in Center, Columbia, Maryland. The meeting began at 9:40 am.

Commission members in attendance included: Renata J. Henry, Chair; Carol Ann Heath, Vice Chair; Dorinda Adams, Linda Carter-Ferrier, Denise Cedrone, Christine Ceely, Dr. Lisa Crabtree, Kelli Cummings, Dr. Edward A. Feinberg, David A. Geier, Senator Katherine Klausmeier, Ellen Kuhn, Rachel Beth London, Dr. Wendell H McKay, H. Angela Messomo, Delegate Karen Montgomery, Debra Perry, Delegate Kirill Reznik, Dr. Carol Samuels-Botts, Dr. Thelma Thompson, Careen Wallace, Fred Whiton, Jr., and Zosia Zaks.

Commission Members who were absent: Dr. Rebecca Landa and Dr. Scott D, Hagaman

Welcome

Deputy Secretary Henry opened the meeting with a welcome and introduced John M. Colmers, Secretary for the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). Secretary Colmers greeted the members of the Commission, expressed his appreciation for the commitment that the members have made, and stressed that there is much work to be done in the area of autism.

Introduction

Each Commission member introduced themselves, provided a brief background and described their involvement with Autism. The members were also asked to articulate what each sees as a potential successful outcome of the Commission. Members mentioned concerns such as funding, the provision of services in rural parts of Maryland, transitions from the educational to the adult system, work force options, and the needs of adults on the autism spectrum

Old Business

Deputy Secretary Henry discussed the Autism Commission Binder each Commission member received and reviewed the legislation that created the Commission. She and Carol Ann Heath also shared information about the Autism Summit that was held in June for state agency representatives.

Presentations

Bette Ann Mobley, DHMH, provided the Commission with a brief description of the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). The DDA provides services based on a person's needs as opposed to specific diagnosis. Services are provided to people with Autism, however, DDA does not operate segregated services.

Carol Ann Heath, Asst. Superintendent, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), presented the numerous initiatives, activities, and research projects in which MSDE is currently engaged. They include the Autism Waiver, the Pilot Screening program, the professional development grants with Kennedy Krieger Institute, and the research grants with Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. There was discussion regarding the available autism data and what other types of data might be useful. MSDE agreed to provide the Commission with data on how many students with autism attend public schools, how many attend private special education schools at public expense, and how many children have service plans.

Organization

The Commission members discussed next steps and how to get organized. It was agreed that in order for the Commission to address all of the "charges" in the legislation there must be sub-committees or work groups by topic. Topics such as adult issues, resource development/funding, aging out/transitioning youth, workforce development/training, and the coordination of research efforts were mentioned. Renata suggested that DHMH and MSDE would meet prior to the next Commission meeting to start putting a more formal structure in place.

The Commission discussed selecting dates and locations for future meetings. It was agreed that the Commission would meet in different areas of the state on a quarterly basis, with additional work done by the subgroups in between the formal quarterly meetings.

Public Comment

The final item on the Agenda was an opportunity for members of the public to provide public comment. Approximately a dozen individuals addressed the Commission, asking that the commission keep in mind a variety of concerns such as increasing numbers, lack of resources in more rural areas of Maryland, lack of appropriate mental health services, DORS, teacher training, inadequate supports and services for adults, higher education supports, simplifying access to agencies/services, and support for higher functioning individuals on the spectrum.. There will be an opportunity for Public Comment at every Commission meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 pm. The next meeting will be scheduled for early January, prior to the beginning of the legislative session.