

Iowa Autism Council Meeting

Final Meeting Minutes – June 8, 2022

Meeting minutes taken by Beth Buehler-Sapp and Wendy Trotter

Present: Beth Buehler-Sapp, Bill Kallestad, Caleb Primrose, Colin Wixted, Connie Fanselow, Erika Hertel, Evelyn Horton, Michelle Grant, Pam Gronau, Stephanie Boyle, Wendy Andersen, and Wendy Trotter.

Absent: Betsy Lenzmeier, Blake Stephenson, Cheryl Mulligan,

Zoom: Andrea Keith, Angela Burke Boston, Carrie Elser, Matt O'Brien

Caleb Primrose, Co-Chair, brought the meeting to order at 10:03 am. Council members introduced themselves and welcomed new members. Wendy Trotter gave a brief overview of the role of the Council. Council members reviewed the minutes from the March 9, 2022 meeting. Edits were suggested and made. Wendy Andersen made a motion to approve the minutes as edited, and Colin Wixted seconded the motion. A vote was taken by voting Council members to approve the minutes as edited. Minutes approved.

Agency Updates:

Iowa Department of Education (DE):

Wendy Trotter shared the following updates from the DE:

- **Autism Navigator for Early ACCESS providers:**
 - Wendy gave a brief overview of the project for new members. Just finishing our seventh year of the project. Will offer a Cohort 8 in the fall.
 - Held the Spring workshop May 12, 2022. The workshop was led by Iowa Autism Navigator Team Leads and was well received.
- **ACHIEVE:**
 - Iowa is launching a new IEP/IFSP system. Early ACCESS is going live with the new system on April 15, 2022. Then we are adding an initial cohort of districts in May and all districts by fall 2022.
- **Social-Emotional Engagement – Knowledge and Skills (SEE-KS):**
 - Wendy again gave a brief overview of SEE-KS for the benefit of new Council members.
 - We completed our first year with our pilot school, Washington Elementary in Mt. Vernon, IA.
 - Participants continue to rave about the benefits of the project for both the students and teachers/staff.
 - Mississippi Bend has had a change in staffing, so do not have the support to bring SEE-KS to their area this fall.
 - Kreft Primary School in Council Bluffs will be joining the project next school year.
- **Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) K-6 Reading Comprehension Task Team:**
 - Work continues to build out our existing SDI K6 Literacy modules to include a concentrated focus on reading comprehension with considerations for neurodiverse learners (including Autism Spectrum Disorder - ASD).

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS):

Andrea Keith shared the following updates from IVRS:

- Nothing really new to report. As mentioned before, we have had a change in leadership, but there have not been any major changes or shifts as of now. IVRS is hiring, so please spread the word.

Regional Autism Assistance Program (RAP):

Erika Hertel shared the following updates from RAP:

- Rachell Swanson-Holm and I attended the Council for Autism Service Providers conference in Portland, OR in May and attended many wonderful sessions on autism, therapies, and advocacy. One topic that stood out is the approach to controversies within the autism community and the importance of having needs of the entire spectrum considered. If we only focus on strengths, sometimes the challenges get forgotten and that could impact services.
- Plans for this fiscal year include:
 - Autism Basics Webinar Series sessions are scheduled for September/early October (Sept 20, 27, October 4, 11) and late March/early April (March 21, 28, April 4, 11).
 - Quarterly RAP Expert Panel meetings have all been scheduled.
 - We are looking at family navigator coverage areas and where we have the greatest need for additional support. Joy Kim, our Iowa City area family navigator, has left her position and we are considering options for the families she served. Her husband has accepted a new position in Ohio and her family will be moving there. All other family navigator positions have been filled.
- My son wanted the opportunity to get together with people in person during a time when most events were still only virtual due to COVID-19, so he started a social group that meets in the Iowa City-Cedar Rapids area. It is now called the Socially Anxious Hangout Group and he has added several co-organizers. They wanted to keep membership open, so it isn't limited to those on the autism spectrum. The group is Neurodivergent and LGBTQIA+ friendly. They can be found on Meetup where they have 228 members and have recently added a Facebook group. They meet weekly at Fortuna Boardgame Café in Iowa City and have hosted or attended as a group a variety of events including trivia, puzzles, hiking, movies, and more. Please share the information with anyone who may be interested in joining.

Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) / Autism Support Program (ASP):

Connie Fanselow gave a brief overview of ASP for new members and provided the following updates for ASP:

- Still no changes or new language added to rules or eligibility criteria.
- Currently have about 10 kids enrolled (most have ever had at one time is 20). In the last few months have approved 3 new applications and at least one of them has started receiving services.
- ASP does permit telehealth. And we may be adding a few new service codes.

Additional Updates/Topics:

Evelyn Horton shared:

- The bill updating the definition of autism and re-classifying it as a mental health diagnosis passed. The bill defines autism spectrum disorder as “a mental health condition that meets the diagnostic criteria for such disorder as published in the most recent edition of the diagnostic and statistical

manual of mental disorders as published by the American psychiatric association". This bill will allow individuals or families who are covered by Iowa regulated insurance plans to have the protection of federal mental health parity laws. In Iowa that means the age and dollar caps that are in the code will no longer be applied.

- There has been some progress in our attempt to expand our options for workforce by including registered behavior technicians (RBTs) as eligible direct service providers. They decided to address this in rules and the committee should address this at their next meeting which I believe is June 16th. At this time, it looks like they will address the degree requirements, but did not approve a grace period since that would require a change in code rather than rules.
- Since 2010, there has not been a single rate increase for ABA services in Iowa (even though there has been rate increases for ICF and HCBS services). This year the appropriations bill included a rate increase for ICF services, and a rate increase for HCBS that is designated to go to wage increases for staff, and designated excess funds from ASP to be used for a rate increase for ABA services.
- Balance Autism is piloting an integrated preschool program in Clive, IA - just for the summer. Will share outcomes of the pilot in future meetings.

Bill Kallestad provided information and updates regarding the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council:

- He began with an overview of the DD Council for new members. Here is their website: www.iowaddcouncil.org
- He shared information about their weekly newsletter, Iowa Infonet, that comes out during the legislative session; as well as their weekly video. You can sign up to receive these via their website.
- Bill also shared information about the Youth Leadership Academy. It is being held July 25-29, 2022 and applications are due by July 17, 2022. It is open to youth ages 14-21. The idea is to create wonderful leaders who happen to have a disability.
- In September we will have the Make Your Mark! Conference. This year's MYM! Conference theme, *Knowledge is a Superpower: Make it Yours!*, is all about sharing information to strengthen and empower attendees in their advocacy efforts. The conference is targeted toward Iowans with disabilities who want to be more involved in advocacy at a local, state, or federal level. Parents, family members, caregivers, direct support professionals, and other disability advocates are also expected to be in attendance. The conference is being held in person on September 14-15, 2022 at the Meadows Events & Conference Center at Prairie Meadows in Altoona, IA.

Wendy Trotter shared that there may be some conflict impacting attendance for our September meeting which is currently scheduled for September 14, 2022. The Council discussed options, including moving the September meeting to September 7, 2022. Stephanie Boyle motioned to move the meeting to September 7, 2022. Colin Wixted seconded the motion. There were no objections so the new meeting date of September 7 was adopted by consensus.

Guest Presentation – Iowa Medicaid:

Hannah Olson, with Iowa Medicaid, shared information about the various waiver options available for individuals on the autism spectrum. She also shared information regarding current efforts to evaluate and eventually make modifications to the waiver system in Iowa. Council members were able to ask questions and get clarification regarding available programming.

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 7, 2022 from 10:00am – 3:00pm in Room B-100 in the Grimes State Office Building. Wendy will send out a meeting reminder.

Colin Wixted made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Michelle Grant seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 pm.