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Name of Organization: Nevada Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders
Youth and Transition Subcommittee

Date and Time of Meeting: September 23, 2014
12:00 p.m.

Las Vegas: Public and Behavior Health HCQC
4220 S. Maryland Parkway
Building D, Suite 810
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Carson City: Aging and Disability Services Division
3416 Goni Rd. D-132
Carson City, NV 89706

- I. Julie Ostrovosky called the meeting for the Youth and Transition Subcommittee to order at 12:40 p.m.

Members Present: Julie Ostrovsky, Maria Martin, Molly Michelman, Scott Harrington

Members Absent: Erik Lovaas

Guests: Erin Snell, Andrew Devitt, Lisa Watson, Denise Robinson, Dee Raymond, Jacqueline Barr, Jan Crandy

Staff Present: Carol Reitz

A quorum was declared.

- II. Public Comment (No action may be taken upon a matter raised under public comment period unless the matter itself has been specifically included on an agenda as an action item)

There was no public comment.

III. Approval of the Minutes from September 9, 2014
Julie Ostrovsky, Chair

Maria Martin made a motion to pass the minutes as written. Molly Michelman seconded the motion. The motion passed.

IV. Strategic Planning Discussion to Identify the Following:
Lisa Watson, Social Entrepreneurs Incorporated

Ms. Lisa Watson informed the Committee about the process for today's meeting. Ms. Watson introduced herself and told about her professional and personal life. She went on to describe the three phases of the strategic plan.

Ms. Watson asked what the most significant needs or challenges facing children aged 8 to 18 living with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorders) are in Nevada. Mr. Harrington said the children need to be included in the community and not segregated. He also added they need to have competent educational teachers that are person centered. Ms. Ostrovsky said transportation is needed to get kids to school, job sites and other activities. Many teachers do not have the necessary training to implement IEPs (Individualized Education Plan).

Mr. Andrew Devitt commented that children with ASD need help with establishing a life plan. He also said evaluation needs to be an ongoing process. Ms. Denise Robinson said job training skills need to start earlier in schools. Mr. Harrington said there needs to be a seamless flow from one program to another especially when transitioning from the school district to Voc Rehab (Vocational Rehabilitation).

Ms. Robinson said technology needs to be introduced earlier. Ms. Ostrovsky added it is difficult finding medical practitioners for children with ASD.

Ms. Watson asked what is working well or what is not working well in Nevada. Ms. Ostrovsky said that insurance companies do not cover social skills. There are financial barriers. She also said once they are eligible for insurance coverage, it is difficult for families to navigate through the system to find adequate coverage.

Mr. Devitt said that many people don't know about ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) therapy or the funding available for it. Ms. Ostrovsky said that lower-income families get the funding and the higher-income families can afford to pay but the middle-income families have nothing left because they have to pay out of pocket.

Mr. Harrington said there are little pockets of excellence where things are working well and where it's not working well. It is inconsistent. He suggested looking at other states and what they are doing well. Outcomes from ABA are measurable and they are objective which makes them evidence-based. What works is having outcomes that can be measured and explained how the outcomes were produced.

Ms. Watson asked for an example of pockets of excellence. Mr. Harrington said the UCAN (University Center for Autism and Other Neurodevelopment) team are an example of excellence since they are a multidisciplinary team of professionals who offer a more valid diagnosis.

Ms. Ostrovsky said there are partnerships that have formed between nonprofits and for-profits in order to meet the needs that are not currently met. Mr. Devitt said there are some strong connections between services. Ms. Ostrovsky added that UNLV (University of Nevada, Las Vegas) has something similar to UCAN.

Ms. Watson asked about the needs being met in the school district. Ms. Ostrovsky said they are not diagnosing the children so they don't have to provide the services. Mr. Devitt said that new families are satisfied with the school district services because they don't have anything to compare it to. It is the seasoned parents that are dissatisfied. Ms. Robinson said that the school districts are limiting the services being provided in schools.

Ms. Watson asked if the school districts are structured to support families affected with ASD. Ms. Ostrovsky said they are limited in resources and funding. She offered a solution might be public-private partnerships or grant resources.

Ms. Robinson said offering financial incentives for teacher training would be beneficial. They don't have any support in the classrooms. Mr. Harrington seconded the comment and added they need to add professional development. Ms. Maria Martin added that the aides in the classroom need to be properly trained alongside the teachers. Mr. Devitt said the school district does not possess a set of values.

Ms. Robinson said administrators need to support their teachers so they don't school-hop due to being unhappy. Ms. Martin added it is difficult to understand the options available after high school. Ms. Ostrovsky added there is no class for sexual education.

Ms. Watson asked about the gaps in services. Ms. Ostrovsky said there are people that can't get a diagnosis; therefore they can't get treatment without a diagnosis. The educational workforce needs to be trained in ASD. There is also not enough speech, physical, and occupational therapy providers.

Ms. Robinson said the school districts need to look at individual needs for speech therapy. She finds that they do not practice articulation services in the schools. Mr. Devitt said additional trained providers for ABA therapy are needed. There is a gap in the trained workforce because people don't know about the profession.

Ms. Ostrovsky said that ATAP (Autism Treatment Assistance Program) is serving a limited population. There is a fantastic expansion of Medicaid covering ABA therapy soon. There needs to be a lift on the maximum hours covered by insurance. She added there needs to be education for parents on funding for Katie Beckett. Ms. Ostrovsky said there is a limited amount of advocates to support families.

Ms. Watson asked what three gaps are the most significant that create barriers. Mr. Harrington spoke about the north and the south transition conference that is held annually to discuss improvements within the system. Professional development is one of the biggest issues in terms of training and supports for the teachers within the school district. Ms. Jacqueline Barr said we need to focus on the administrators as well.

Ms. Watson talked about access, affordability and availability. Mr. Devitt said professional development should be for all and not just school districts. He added there needs to be more ABA therapists trained. Mr. Harrington expressed his concern with access, affordability and availability unless you define it. Ms. Watson said it is used to define all that has been mentioned in terms of all the gaps underneath the categories.

Ms. Watson asked how familiar the Subcommittee was with the 2008 Task Force report. She said the most significant was the gains made on insurance.

Ms. Watson asked for three to five issues for action for the next five years for the Commission on Autism to focus on. Mr. Harrington added that with relation to employment, the governor and the federal government pushed towards an integrated model of employment. States are being sued for having people with disabilities segregated. They must be paid minimum wage and be in integrated settings.

Ms. Jan Crandy said that within the Task Force report it states that schools have to look and be trained in the "Best Practices" in the evidence-based section as their guidelines. They do not always follow it.

Ms. Crandy said that ATAP has received funding this last legislative cycle to fund 50% of the children that are on the waitlist. ATAP is now part of the Nevada statute. She also added that now they have to watch the waitlist.

Ms. Watson asked what we should focus on for the next five years. There should be a resource manual or navigation system. Mr. Devitt said it should include recommended services that is in the form of a technology-based program. Also having indicators of what has worked for families to help new families coming in. Ms. Crandy added it would be beneficial to have all the providers and interventionists on the navigation system so they can find out who is available in their area. Ms. Ostrovsky said it should have evidence-based therapies so new parents do not have to test the waters on everything available.

Ms. Crandy said that with Medicaid covering services that is medically necessary prescribed by the doctor, private insurance should be covering the same services. She also pointed out that ATAP gives children in different age groups different amounts of treatment. Ms. Robinson asked if there would be a copayment for Katie Beckett for ABA therapy. Ms. Crandy said yes.

Ms. Watson summarized the Subcommittees thoughts as implementation of a navigation program, legislation that supports coverage of what is medically necessary and training and supports in schools and within the community.

Mr. Harrington said he would like to see training and support setup for the educational system that would bring students into the community. Best outcomes are found when students have community-based activities to participate in.

Ms. Watson asked if the Commission would want to establish guidelines for the school districts or establish legislation that mandates them to make the changes. Ms. Crandy reiterated that there's a section in the 2008 report that requires best practices to be followed.

Ms. Robinson said they need a curriculum that is based on life skills in school. Mr. Harrington added that it is difficult for students to generalize life skills that they have learned in the classroom to skills that are out in the community. His goal would be to make the skills community based. Independent living, socialization, and transition to employment should be in the community.

Ms. Watson asked whether the Subcommittee wants programming or curriculum or developing the existing workforce to adequately serve children with ASD. Ms. Ostrovsky suggested developing the appropriate workforce. Ms. Crandy and Mr. Harrington agreed.

Ms. Ostrovsky asked what the partnership is with the Legislators. Ms. Crandy said the Commission has been able to get bill support in the past. They had bill support for counting the number of students that have ASD in the school district. There is collaboration with Legislators.

Mr. Harrington mentioned the collaboration of bringing in federal money through the Rehab Services Administration. They give Voc Rehab a 4 to 1 match that allows people with disabilities to find employment. The WCSD (Washoe County School District) sets aside money for the 18 to 22 years old for transition which is given to Voc Rehab. Voc Reha then gets the 4 to 1 match, which is how they got the VOICE (Vocational Opportunities for Inclusive Career Education) program. This generates federal funds into the state to do something innovative.

Ms. Watson summarized that change is needed within the school system. They include workforce development supporting a qualified educated school system at all levels. She also mentioned establishment of programs or curriculum that supports life skills, community based skills and access to higher education. The Commission's approach can be multifaceted. They can do it from an advocacy perspective, coordination, legislation, and identification of resources. Mr. Harrington added that an Employment First philosophy is beneficial that kids with disabilities are expected to go to work or go to post-secondary education.

Ms. Watson asked everyone to review the vision and mission statement and guiding principles. She asked everyone to rank the principles. She asked everyone to send the rankings to her. She will compile the results from each group and present it to the steering committee.

V. Public Comment

(No action may be taken upon a matter raised under public comment period unless the matter itself has been specifically included on an agenda as an action item. Comments will be limited to three minutes per person. Persons making comment will be asked to begin by stating their name for the record and to spell their last name and provide secretary with written comments.)

There was no public comment.

VI. Adjournment

Ms. Ostrovsky adjourned the meeting at 2:57 p.m.

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