

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Task Force Meeting Minutes
August 19, 2019

Task Force members present: Jennifer Flores, Krista Fremming, Holly Johnson, Teresa Larsen, Vicki Peterson, Kodi Pinks, Gerry Teevens

Task Force members present via polycom/phone: Dawn Hanson, Senator Joan Heckaman, Carol Johnson, Connie Lillejord, Nancy Ulrich-Crotty

Absent: Dr. Thomas Carver, Mary Jaeger, Heather Opland, John Watkins, Catherine Yeager

A quorum of Task Force members was present.

Guests (present and via polycom/phone): Katherine Barchenger, Kirsten Dvorak, Susan Gerenz, Stephanie Nelson, Melanie Phillips, Lorena Poppe, Jeremy Smith, Sandy Smith and Jackie Walsh

Meeting was called to order at 1:12 p.m.

Review of minutes- May 13, 2019 meeting minutes were reviewed.

- Needed to add Jennifer Flores to the list of absent members to the May 13, 2019 meeting minutes.

Teresa Larsen made motion to approve with the noted change. Vicki Peterson seconded the motion. 12 yay/0 nay; motion passed.

Extended Services slots-Jeremy Smith from the Department of Human Services (DHS), Field Services Division

Current Extended Services Program:

- On average, Extended Services is serving 213 individuals per month.
 - 23 individuals have an ASD diagnosis.
 - 16 individuals have a primary diagnosis of ASD.
 - 7 individuals have a secondary diagnosis of ASD.
 - 208 total individuals were served by Extended Services in 2018.

Plans for New Slots Allocated for Adults with ASD:

- There will be 24 slots (3 slots per region on average).
- The new slots will be available January 1, 2020.

ASD waiver administrative code change

- The age is increasing from through the child's 11th birthday to through their 13th birthday.
- The waiver is also being updated to reflect the 2% and 2.5% provider reimbursement increase for service management and respite.
- Requests for public comment will be sent out on August 28, 2019 and comments will be accepted for 30 days, through September 26, 2019. The comments will then be added to the waiver and submitted to CMS for approval.

ASD voucher administrative code changes:

- Legislation authorized DHS to propose changes to ND administrative code to seek additional flexibility for the administration of the ASD voucher program to ensure more families can be served within available appropriations. The proposed administrative code changes should consider changes that include a voucher that is solely for technology support and one that is for in-home supports; adding case management or parent-to-parent support as an allowable service for voucher funds; and reducing the amount of time during which a household may use approved voucher funds.
 - There was a lengthy discussion regarding the proposed administrative code changes. The task force voiced agreement with the proposed changes and no suggestions were made for any additional changes. It was suggested that DHS look into an earlier effective date for the changes, so they could go into effect on April 1, 2020 rather than July 1, 2020.

Current operations updates:

Waiver:

- Enrollment has increased.

Voucher:

- As of June 30, 2019, there were 28 children approved for the autism voucher, 6 applications pending and 6 applications denied (4 applications were over income, 1 wasn't a ND resident for at least 6 months and 1 was already enrolled in the developmental disabilities waiver so did not qualify for the autism voucher) for the new voucher year of July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.
- Average dollar amount spent for voucher year July 2018 to June 2019 was just over \$4,000 per child.

Medicaid State Plan-Applied Behavior Analysis services:

- About 300 children have been approved for services.
- About \$1.8 million was spent on ABA services during the 2017-19 biennium.

Education/training workgroup

- The workgroup would like to start working with the Insurance Commissioner by sending a letter and thanking him for issuing the mandate that health insurance payers must cover ABA for children with ASD and that it is working to increase access to services.
 - There are some barriers they would like to bring up to the Insurance Commissioner, such as third-party liability issues. The workgroup is also concerned with coverage of diagnostics for ASD - some payers are not providing coverage for obtaining a diagnosis.
- The workgroup would also like to start working with the Early Intervention program. The workgroup would like to visit with staff about educating providers and families more about ASD.
 - Discussion about pulling together a “toolbox” of resources for families.

ABA workforce updates:

- Behavior analyst licensing changes are supposed to be effective January 1, 2020. There is concern on if the changes will be finalized by then as the administrative code changes are still being drafted.
 - ND BCBA: 30
 - ND BCBA-Ds: 2
 - ND BCaBAs: 2
 - Moorhead BCBA/BCaBA (working in ND): 7
 - ND RBTs: 63 (Moorhead RBTs not included)

Autism Database Report:

- As of July 23, 2019, there were 645 reported individuals to the database.
 - More males have been reported than females.
- There was lengthy discussion about the report presented by Kodi Pinks.

ASD State Plan

- Children’s workgroup-
 - Summarized the progress notes that were added to the ASD State Plan.
 - Out of State Placement of Children (report from the ND Department of Public Instruction)
 - As of June 30, 2019, there were 21 youth placed at an out of state facility.
 - 52% of children are 13 years or younger.
- Adults workgroup-
 - Summarized the progress notes that were added to the ASD State Plan.
 - Ideas for news releases on how to drive traffic to the autism website - some ideas were: Educating the public and providers about the extended services slot designated for autism; Highlighting an adult with autism and topics such as: autism and housing, autism and employment, etc.; doing interviews with the news and make it on-going,
- State Plan:
 - Lengthy discussion on how to track progress towards the objectives in the state plan.

- Discussion to change the formatting of the ASD State Plan - starting in January 2020, the groups will write 2 paragraphs of the successes and work completed in the previous calendar year, so that progress is memorialized and progress during 2020 can start with a blank slate in the 'progress' column of the state plan. At the end of 2020, progress for that calendar year will be captured in paragraph form and new progress updates can be added to the state plan during 2021, and so forth. Gerry Teevens made a motion to change the formatting/reporting structure. Kodi Pinks seconded the motion. 12 yay/0 nay; motion passed.

Other topics for discussion:

- Mary Anderson who works for ABLE, Inc., recently presented at the Interagency Autism Coordination Committee and she is going to present at the November Task Force meeting as she works with adults, a large portion of whom have ASD.
- Dr. Thomas Carver resigned his role on the task force. The pediatrician role will need to be filled. Krista will be in communication about recruiting a pediatrician with expertise in ASD.
- The parent of child with ASD role will be vacated early next year by Vicki Peterson. This role will need to be filled.

Adjourned at 4:58 pm

Next meeting: November 18, 2019; 1-4:45 pm CDT

Transcribed: 8/29/2019