

Iowa Autism Council Meeting

(Meeting conducted via Zoom)

Final Meeting Minutes – March 12, 2025

Meeting minutes taken by Beth Buehler-Sapp and Wendy Trotter

Present: Wendy Andersen, Angela Burke Boston, Beth Buehler-Sapp, Carrie Elser, Michelle Grant, Erika Hertel, Evelyn Horton, Andrea Keith, Rhonda Kortenkamp, Cheryl Mulligan, Caleb Primrose, Wendy Trotter

Absent: Megan Abramski, Bill Carlson, Colin Wixted, Carlyn Crowe

Wendy Andersen, Co-Chair, called the Zoom meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

Council members reviewed the minutes from the November 13, 2024 meeting. Edits were suggested and made. Cheryl Mulligan made a motion to approve the minutes as edited, and Carrie Elser seconded the motion. Minutes approved.

Agency Updates:

Iowa Department of Education (DE):

Wendy Trotter reported the following updates:

- Nothing specific to autism to report.
- The Department is still working on the new special education board and how to minimize duplication with work of SEAP.

Regional Autism Assistance Program (RAP):

Erika Hertel shared the following updates from RAP:

- RAP had an outreach table at the Day on the Hill event as well as staff in attendance. This gave them an opportunity to speak with legislators regarding needs for Iowans with autism.
- The Autism Basics webinar series starts today at noon. Dr. Reiher is re-working the Spanish version – hope to have this ready in May.
- RAP is not aware of any budget changes for this year.

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS):

Andrea Keith reported the following updates from IVRS:

- IVRS's budget has been impacted by the increased number of folks on Social Security who are receiving services. Consequently, they are currently looking at cutting programs – the adult project SEARCH programs might be on the cutting board.

Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council):

Wendy Andersen shared the following updates from the DD Council:

- HF 330 is a bill that will eliminate age limit for ABA therapies. This bill is going to subcommittee today at 2:30.
 - Caleb shared that he helped write this bill and can share results once he learns of them.
- With potential changes coming from the federal level regarding Medicaid and the US Department of Education, please keep up to date of what is happening and speak with your individual legislators to ensure supports and services remain intact.
- Another group is going to have a Medicaid day on the hill in the near future.

Other Agency/Organization Updates:

Evelyn Horton shared the following updates regarding Balance Autism:

- There is a bill to have ABA covered in the Hawki insurance plan – there is some confusion around using ASP funds for some of this.
- Balance Autism now owns MetroWest – Toni Merfold retired and approached Balance Autism to buy out the business.
- Currently, the majority of children using ASP funds also have Hawki insurance.

Wendy Andersen shared updates regarding the Autism Day at the Capitol. Wendy A and Caleb both spoke at the event. They shared the “one-pager” legislative summary report that the Council put together – handed out around 50 copies.

Wendy A. also shared that a bill related to seizure training in schools is also moving forward. The bill that allowed athletic trainers to replace school nurses died.

Cheryl shared that HF 914 seeks to reverse some of the stipulations in HF 2612. Green Hills AEA staff are meeting with schools to work out a district service plan – like a menu of services and AEA asks the district what they want. There are still a lot of these decisions up in the air. Green Hills AEA is losing more and more staff.

Future Planning Discussion:

Wendy A shared that the DD Council will host some type of autism focused group/task team. Carrie stated that she likes the idea of the DD Council group and the ability that would afford to keep folks up to date on what is happening.

A council member asked, “If the DD Council doesn’t happen, what other opportunities are out there to keep families and stakeholders informed?” The DD Council newsletter and ASI newsletter were mentioned as other resources available.

Erika shared that the Expert Panel through RAP will continue to meet.

A council member suggested that at our next meeting in June we could discuss who might be interested in participating in a subgroup or task team of the DD Council focusing on autism.

Council members discussed a plan for the final meeting in June.

- First, the Council discussed changing the date as several members have a conflict for the June 11th date. Wendy T will send out a Doodle poll to find a date that works for the majority of members.

- Council agreed to meet in person for the last meeting and use that time to discuss the future (especially for the autistic adult voice representation), followed by lunch and a celebration of accomplishments of the Council over the years.

Cheryl motioned to adjourn the meeting. Carrie seconded the motion.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.

Next meetings:

- June (TBD), 2025 – *Grimes Bldg. Room B100*