

# Iowa Autism Council Meeting

## Final Meeting Minutes – March 8, 2023

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Meeting minutes taken by Beth Buehler-Sapp and Wendy Trotter

**Present:** Wendy Andersen, Pam Gronau, Stephanie Boyle, Erika Hertel, Andrea Keith, Wendy Trotter, Evelyn Horton, Caleb Primrose, Beth Buehler-Sapp, Rhonda Kortenkamp, Colin Wixted, Angela Burke Boston.

**Zoom:** Michelle Grant, Betsy Lenzmeier, Carrie Elser

**Absent:** Cheryl Mulligan, Connie Fanselow, Blake Stephenson

Caleb Primrose, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05 am. Council members introduced themselves, including new Council member, Rhonda Kortenkamp. Council members reviewed the minutes from the November 9, 2022 meeting. Edits were suggested and made. Colin Wixted made a motion to approve the minutes as edited, and Pam Gronau seconded the motion. A vote was taken with no abstentions to approve the minutes as edited. Minutes approved.

### **Update on Council Membership:**

Wendy Trotter shared that the Council has 4 members whose terms end April 30, 2023: Stephanie Boyle, Michelle Grant, Betsy Lenzmeier, and Blake Stephenson. The Council also continues to have several vacancies (family member/person with ASD, mental health professional, and perhaps service provider – Matt O'Brien's seat). The Governor's office shared the following new or renewed appointments with Wendy: Stephanie Boyle, Bill Carlson, Michelle Grant, Rhonda Kortenkamp. Betsy Lenzmeier asked about the designated ex-officio members identified in the bylaws.

### **Nominations for Chair and Co-Chair:**

Wendy Andersen and Caleb Primrose were nominated for Chair and Co-Chair. Members agreed to leave the nomination period open until after lunch, and encouraged anyone who may have additional nominations to let Wendy Trotter know before lunch is over.

### **Agency Updates:**

#### **Iowa Department of Education (DE):**

Wendy Trotter shared the following updates from the DE:

- **Autism Navigator for Early ACCESS providers:**
  - Cohort 8 continues.
- **Social-Emotional Engagement – Knowledge and Skills (SEE-KS):**
  - Washington Elementary in Mt. Vernon, IA continues their second cohort of teachers.

#### **Regional Autism Assistance Program (RAP):**

Erika Hertel shared the following updates from RAP:

- Shared copies of the strategic plan and the one-page/at-a-glance summary page.

- RAP attended the Day on the Hill – Shared the strategic plan documents with attendees at the event. Good feedback and discussions.
- Autism Basics webinar series will be held in mid-March. They will be offering the series in both English and Spanish. Registration has been slow for Spanish series. Autism Basics series is offered twice a year for families of newly diagnosed children.
- Rachell Swanson-Holm, RAP Program Coordinator who was also the Learn the Signs. Act Early. (LTASE) ambassador for Iowa, has retired – HHS may take over the LTSAE ambassador role.

### **Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council):**

Carlyn Crowe shared the following updates from the DD Council:

- Updates on HF252 - Giving young adults with intellectual, developmental, and learning disabilities scholarships to attend college-based programs like the University of Iowa's REACH and Northwestern College's NEXT programs – passed out of Senate Education subcommittee today.
- Shared their 2023 legislative agenda – issues this year. This year there is a lot of focus on transportation for adults for medical appointments and to jobs (especially in rural areas). The full legislative agenda can be found on their website, and includes:
  - Fully fund healthcare services and community-based supports to address the workforce crisis in both rural and urban areas.
    - Value and invest in direct support professionals (DSPs).
      1. Wages MATTER. Continue to support living wage increases for direct support professionals.
      2. Financially support evidence-based training for direct support professionals.
      3. Allow guardians and family members to be paid to provide support to both children and adults through Iowa's self-direction options.
      4. Support creative solutions that:
        - Provide state tax cuts for direct support professionals.
        - Provide loan forgiveness/low-interest loan consolidation for direct support professionals.
        - Invest in recruiting incentives that encourage healthcare providers to work in Iowa.
  - Support an inclusive and accessible community for all Iowans.
    1. Invest in addressing barriers to community living such as family restrooms, adult changing tables, accessible sidewalks, parks, and public spaces.
    2. Increase access to affordable, reliable, and convenient transportation that allows people with disabilities to live, work, and play in their community during day, evening, and weekend hours.
    3. Invest in Iowa businesses that hire people with disabilities. Diversify Iowa's workforce.
  - Reduce and eliminate ALL Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) waiting lists.
    - More than 17,000 Iowans are on waiting lists for home and community-based services. Iowans need early access to support so they can continue to grow and thrive in their communities.
      1. Invest in community-based services and eliminate Iowa's institutional bias revealed in the 2021 US Department of Justice report.
      2. Simplify the current waiver system to increase the ability to serve the varied needs of Iowans.
      3. Hold managed care organizations accountable to provide creative and

specialized services that encourage community integration.

- Also shared info about DD Council – who they are and what they do. The DD Council can provide training on advocacy to individuals or groups/organizations. They have an advocacy toolkit that can be found on their website.
- InfoNET – They have a newsletter, as well as a monthly zoom call called Capitol Chat. They will have someone from Medicaid to speak about the new report on the waiver system from the recent study at the March 31<sup>st</sup> Capitol Chat zoom meeting.
- DD Council is watching a couple bills:
  - SF295 and HF650, both related to guardianships and conservatorships – one makes things easier for families (SF), one makes things easier for attorneys (HF). The paperwork is inconsistent for families wanting to file on their own without hiring an attorney. The Bills relate to changing guardianship laws so that everyone uses the same forms whether the guardian is a family member, friend, volunteer, or lawyer. *Note that many disability advocacy organizations are concerned about the House version, but they support the Senate version. The House has said they will be amending their version, but we do not yet know if it will be the same as the Senate.*
  - Snap bills (HF613 and SF494) – asset test (of household) will also apply to Medicaid – could be devastating to many on Medicaid waiver recipients.
- DD Council is going to capitol tomorrow – related to disability month and how to involve people with disabilities in the decision-making process. They are encouraging them to focus on making decisions WITH people with disabilities instead of FOR them.

### **Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS):**

Andrea Keith reported the following updates from IVRS:

- With the new government reorganization, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation will be moving from Iowa Department of Education to Iowa Workforce Development. I'm not sure what that will look like moving forward.
- IVRS has hired someone to oversee the Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Grant. That person is current employee, Brandy McOmber. There are currently no waitlists for this program. However, individuals who need a one on one coach may have a longer wait.
- ID waiver waitlist – currently serving people from 2018 applications. Determining when to complete testing so that the testing is still current once they get off the waitlist is a challenge for families waiting for waiver.

### **Other Agency/Organization Updates:**

Evelyn Horton reported the following updates from Balance Autism:

- Balance Autism received a grant to train families in Safety Care. They can enroll about 50 families.
- All of their staff are trained in Safety Care, and they are now offering a family module.

Colin Wixted reported the following updates from the Insurance Industry:

- Nothing to report at this time.
- Evelyn asked about potential legislation and insurance industry response to bills related to autism services.
  - Current HF 243 passed House, currently in Senate – some hesitation from some insurance companies (Medica and AETNA are against, Wellmark and Optimum are neutral)

### **Additional Updates/Topics:**

Wendy Andersen shared information about agency reports from Nebraska that she found. She asked if agency reps from this Council would be interested in completing such a report ahead of our Council meetings?

- Caleb wondered if that would increase the workload?
- Wendy A thought this would simplify the process and allow us to know updates from agencies if they are not in attendance.
- Evelyn brought up a concern that when Council membership changes, we also lose information from the agencies they represented.
- Council members also wondered about how we might be able to get information from RAP Expert Panel meetings.
- Colin thought the reports could be helpful.
- Wendy T suggested make the reports optional. Council agreed with this idea. Wendy T will create a folder in our Autism Council Folder for update reports, and Wendy will email RAP expert panel meeting minutes when they are available.

Caleb shared HF285 – changed to HF610 – related to services that students with autism attend outside of school, including ABA, being counted as excused absences from school (SF343). This has made it past first funnel.

Caleb also shared that he attended 2023 Autism Advocacy and Acceptance Day on the Hill on March 2, 2023. The event was well attended, and he felt heard. He also attended the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) day on the Hill yesterday, March 7, 2023.

Betsy Lenzmeier shared that the Harkin/Mathematica preliminary report/findings on our waiver system is now available. Based on the findings, waiver redesign will most likely include reducing the number of waivers, and eligibility will be based on client's needs rather than diagnosis. They also intend to eliminate separate waiting lists and move to just one waiting list.

Evelyn Horton shared that the Iowa Association of Community Providers day on the hill is March 14, 2023. Their big push is to close the gap for direct service provider wages.

The Council discussed moving the June 14, 2023 meeting date to an alternate date due to conflicts. June 21, 2023 was proposed as an alternate meeting date. Caleb motioned to approve June 21, 2023 as next meeting date and Colin seconded the motion. Motion approved by vote taken with no abstentions.

### **Vote/Confirm Chair and Co-Chair for 2023-2024 Term:**

Caleb asked if there were any additional nominations for chair or co-chair. No additional nominations. Caleb motioned to approve chair and co-chair nominations; Colin seconded. A vote was taken with no abstentions. Wendy Andersen and Caleb Primrose will be chair and co-chair for 2023-24 term.

### **Subcommittee Work:**

Caleb identified Wendy Trotter as chair of bylaws subcommittee and Wendy Andersen as chair of adult services subcommittee. Subcommittees met and reported the following outcomes of their meeting:

- Adult Services Subcommittee:
  - Wendy A reported the subcommittee identified 7 priority areas for them to research. For each of these areas they will look at: what's available, what's accessible, where are the gaps. They will bring recommendations to Council in September.
- Bylaws Subcommittee:
  - Wendy T reported the bylaws subcommittee made draft edits to update the bylaws. She will send the draft updated bylaws to Council members prior to the June meeting so that Council can discuss the updates and vote on them at the June meeting.

**Final Comments/Public Comment:**

Betsy Lenzmeier suggested that the Council bring in someone to discuss iABLE accounts at next meeting in June. These accounts provide a safe place to put money and to not risk losing their benefits. In Iowa you can't put more than \$17,000 a year. Also, if the covered person dies, that money cannot be left to a beneficiary and the money is reabsorbed back into the iABLE program.

Wendy Andersen mentioned that we should also bring in someone to share updates to the Medicaid waiver system.

Wendy Trotter said we will try to get both of these lined up for the June meeting.

Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 21, 2023 from 10:00am – 3:00pm in Room B-100 in the Grimes State Office Building. Wendy T will send out a meeting reminder.

Colin Wixted made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Stephanie Boyle seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.