

Iowa Autism Council Meeting

Final Meeting Minutes – September 13, 2023

Meeting minutes taken by Beth Buehler-Sapp and Wendy Trotter

Present: Wendy Andersen, Evelyn Horton, Michelle Grant, Andrea Keith, Erika Hertel, Bill Carlson, Rhonda Kortenkamp, Wendy Trotter, Beth Buehler-Sapp, Carlyn Crowe, Carrie Elser, Angela Burke Boston, Cheryl Mulligan, Connie Fanselow, Pam Gronau, Caleb Primrose.

Absent: Colin Wixted, Stephanie Boyle

Wendy Andersen, Co-Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:05 am. Council members introduced themselves. Council members reviewed the minutes from the June 21, 2023 meeting. Edits were suggested and made. Cheryl Mulligan made a motion to approve the minutes as edited, and Bill Carlson seconded the motion. A vote was taken with no abstentions to approve the minutes as edited. Minutes approved.

The Council discussed the recent press release regarding the [findings and recommendations](#) from the Boards and Commissions Review Committee.

Wendy Trotter shared that she has not heard any updates, and does not have any new information to share other than what was included in the press release. She shared that all the board and council facilitators were asked to complete a survey giving input on their respective councils. Wendy Trotter stated that she emphasized over and over that it is imperative that we continue to have intentional representation for autistic/neurodivergent individuals on some council in some way. Not sure what the “reorganize/other changes” may mean, but hopeful that it could lead to positive changes for the mission of this Council; especially if it leads to our voices being heard more. The changes could be as simple as moving all meetings to a virtual format, or it could mean the Council is being combined with another council – we just do not have any information at this time. The press release included opportunity for public input, so Council members were encouraged to give input via email to the address included in the press release – BCRCcomments@iowa.gov.

Erika Hertel shared that Kris Steinmetz reached out to her and said that the Autism Society of Iowa would be willing to write a letter in support of the Council continuing.

Council members discussed that this could be an opportunity to ask for changes that can lead to our voice being heard more and discussed the importance of including wording to indicate this in any public feedback submitted. The goal of the feedback should be to suggest ways to be more impactful and efficient in moving our mission/vision forward. The deadline for public feedback is Sunday, 9/17/23 as the Committee’s final report is due 9/30/23.

Wendy Trotter said she does not know when the proposed changes will take place – she intends to proceed with Council meetings and duties as it is currently structured until she hears otherwise.

Subcommittee Updates:

Bylaw Subcommittee:

Council members reviewed the revised bylaws. Changes to the bylaws included:

- Updated language and reduced duplicative language.
- Updated “written notice” to include paper or electronic written notice
- Added section regarding New Member Orientation
- Changed the person responsible for notifying Governor’s office of vacancies to the Council Facilitator instead of the chairperson.
- Modified the Public Comment section
- Modified the description and responsibilities of the executive committee
- Updated the methods of voting

Caleb Primrose motioned to approve the revised bylaws, Cheryl Mulligan seconded the motion. A vote was taken with no abstentions and the motion was passed.

Adult Services Subcommittee:

Wendy Andersen, Adult Services Subcommittee chair, reported that the subcommittee members are all working on their own behind the scenes to gather information around their assigned areas of focus. Wendy Andersen shared that the subcommittee would like to continue to focus on this priority from the 2023 legislative report, and continue to do more research over the next year to be able to make a recommendation for next year’s legislative report.

Agency Updates:

Iowa Department of Education (DE):

Wendy Trotter reported the following updates:

- Autism Navigator – awaiting contract approval for this year.
- SEE-KS – Washington Elementary at Mt. Vernon school district is continuing this year, adding a third cohort. Two new schools have started this year: RCCBA (Roosevelt) in Cedar Rapids school district; and East Mills Elementary in Hastings, IA.
- The SDI Reading Comprehension modules are continuing to be developed, but we are holding off on piloting them until spring semester at the earliest – perhaps not until next school year.

Regional Autism Assistance Program (RAP):

Erika Hertel shared the following updates from RAP:

- Calls and referrals are picking up.
- Child Health Specialty Clinics received notification from the Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) on Friday that our one year of supplemental funding has been approved. This is for the *Innovations in Care Coordination for Children & Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Developmental Disabilities Program* grant that helps support RAP family navigator hours, the Autism Learning Community webinars aimed at primary care providers, and parent trainings.
- Dr. Tom Scholz will be stepping away from his role as the Director of the Division of Child and Community Health, Child Health Specialty Clinics, on December 31, 2023. Dr. Vanessa Curtis has been appointed as the new Division Director, effective January 1, 2024. Dr. Scholz will help mentor Dr. Curtis over the next several months to help make this a smooth transition.

- Michelle Grant asked if a family navigator has been hired for Storm Lake – Erika responded, we didn't specifically place someone in Storm Lake, but we have someone who covers that area, she works out of the Sioux City center. Her name is Gabby Hernandez and she is also bi-lingual so she is able to work with Spanish speaking families. Erika will send Michelle Gabby's contact information.

Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council):

Carlyn Crowe shared the following updates from the DD Council:

- We are working on our legislative agenda right now – calling them Public Policy Priorities – mostly high-level recommendations, and fairly general. My plan is for every “call to action” we list that we will also have a policy brief that goes with it with much more detail, data, as well as a personal story. We are always looking for stories to assist with promoting our agenda. Our Council meets tomorrow, and as soon as we get them approved I will send them to you.
- Our agenda for this year is broken into the following focus areas/categories: education, employment, and community living. Each focus area/category will have 3 high-level recommendations for action.
- The only thing that is specific to autism on our agenda this year is to educate legislators about the importance of in-school trainings regarding health conditions and behaviors, and to allow for some of those trainings to be mandatory – a focus on inclusive classrooms and keeping kids in the classrooms, learning with their peers.
- Given the funding changes this year, we intend to monitor over the next year to make sure students are getting the services they should be getting - both in public schools and non-public schools (which are serviced by AEAs).
- We tend to focus a lot on community living supports, but this year we are focusing more on education and workforce; we feel that the workforce/employment will get more attention due to the current make-up of the legislators, so we want to do what we can while this is an issue of interest and on everybody's radar.
- We gathered input from a lot of sources and got some different input/perspectives for this year.
- DD Council continues to offer Capitol Chat zoom meetings; next meeting looking to get input from audience on needs.

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS):

Andrea Keith reported the following updates from IVRS:

- A new director has been selected, Dr. James Williams. He starts Oct. 1, 2023.

Iowa Health and Human Services (HHS) / Autism Support Program (ASP):

Connie Fanselow reported the following updates:

- I am now in a new division: Aging and Disability Services.
- We are getting a lot of new applications from families who were on Hawk-I and their MCO had been paying for ABA services, but then stopped paying for it, leaving families with unpaid bills/expenses. We have been trying to enroll those families in ASP as soon as we can so that they can continue services.

Other Agency/Organization Updates:

Evelyn Horton reported the following updates from Balance Autism:

- We rolled out our integrated preschool in Clive for this schoolyear, and also piloted one in the Quad Cities area, which was also very successful so we will probably add one there for next year as well.

Legislative Report:

Council members reviewed the identified priorities for 2023:

- Discussed progress made.
- Discussed and identified priorities for 2024.

Wendy Andersen and Caleb will begin drafting this year's report and try to get an initial draft sent out via email prior to our November meeting so that hopefully we can have a final draft to vote on at our November meeting.

Final Comments:

Wendy Andersen reminded everyone to submit any comments they have for the Board and Commissions Review committee by this Sunday, 9/17/23.

Carlyn mentioned that our March meeting is scheduled during spring break, so we may want to consider rescheduling. Wendy Andersen said we can discuss this at our November meeting.

The Adult Services Subcommittee opted not to meet at this time.
Caleb motioned to adjourn the meeting. Evelyn seconded the motion.
Meeting was adjourned at 1:45 pm.

Next meetings:

- November 8, 2023 – *Grimes Building, Room B100*
- March 13, 2024 – *Grimes Building, Room B100*
- June 12, 2024 – *Grimes Building, Room B100*

Wendy Trotter will send out a meeting reminder.