

**Interagency Committee on Autism
Meeting Minutes
July 6, 2022
12:00-2:00**

ICA Representatives Present:

Autism Delaware: Brian Hall
Parent Information Center of Delaware: Tina Andrews
Kent County Parent Representative: Andrea Hurst-Creed
Sussex County Parent Representative: Crystal Thawley
New Castle County Parent Representative: Dawn Maloney
Center for Disabilities Studies: Beth Mineo
Delaware Department of Education: Dale Matusевич
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: LaShonta Mitchell
Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health: Meredith Tavani
Delaware Office of Statewide Autism Programs: Mary Whitfield
Delaware Division of Public Health: Isabel Rivera-Green

ICA Representatives Absent:

Part C/Birth to 3 System
Nemours Swank Autism Center
Delaware Ability Network Delaware Family Voices (DEFV)
Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH)
Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS)

DNEA Staff Present:

ICA Administrative Chair and DNEA PI: Sarah Mallory
Director, Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism: Alisha Fletcher
Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism Program Coordinator: Karen Oosterhous

Additional Attendees:

Delaware Department of Education: Maria Locuniak
Delaware Department of Education: Susan Veenema
Autism Delaware: Heidi Mizell
Autism Delaware: Tomara Williams
Autism Delaware: Dafne Carnright
Kent County Community School District Capital Autism Program: Kathi Stephan
Kent County Community School District: Ryan Matthews
University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies: Megan Conway
University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies: Brian Freedman
University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies: Ashley Steinbrecher
University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies Lend Trainee: Shannon Dowling

Meredith Tavani called the meeting to order.

- I. Motion to approve agenda.

- a. Motion: Brian Hall
 - b. Second: Dawn Maloney
 - c. Motion carried to approve agenda.

- II. Motion to approve prior meeting's minutes.
 - a. Motion: Crystal Thawley, who noted a misspelling
 - b. Second: Andrea Hurst-Creed
 - c. Motion carried, with the promise of correction to the misspelling.

- III. ICA Housekeeping Discussion – Sarah Mallory
 - a. Sarah Mallory reported the results of a DNEA survey sent to ICA members asking for their feedback about meeting dates and times.
 - b. The majority of ICA members voted in favor of alternating months, meaning meeting for 1.5 hours every other month (rather than two hours, quarterly) allowing for more frequent updates and great collaboration.
 - c. Lack of ICA member participation in working groups is an ongoing issue. It is hoped that this change will also enable greater participation in working groups.
 - d. A request was made for additional publicity around ICA meetings; the DNEA will create a listserv for interested parties to join and push out updates to those who are interested.

- IV. Literacy Discussion - Andrea Hurst-Creed, Kent County Parent Representative
 - a. Lack of literacy instruction for children with complex communication differences and disabilities is a systemic issue statewide; children are not being taught to read.
 - b. Focus of the effort by Ms. Hurst-Creed and her workgroup is addressing education equity through reading instruction for children who are non-speaking, have limited speech or unreliable speech.
 - c. Objective is to ensure that students with disabilities receive evidence-based literacy instruction.
 - d. Barriers noted were local control of school district and budget.
 - e. Special education teachers will get training in the science of reading beginning fall 2022. Ms. Hurst-Creed is asking the ICA to create an accompanying training that shows teachers how to provide this instruction to students with complex communication needs.
 - f. There is a working group looking at improving literacy education working at the state level with teachers/administrators from Kent County; they believe they have the support of legislators who are interested in suggestions.
 - g. Suggestion made to include this topic on the agenda for the next ICA meeting to allow for further discussion.

- V. ICA Member Announcements & Updates
 - a. Autism Delaware: Dafne Carnright reports that the organization continues to get a large number of calls from families looking for information and referral, education, and therapies and treatments. Autism Delaware has added three new family support providers; staff is working to increase identification and evaluation of ASD. They continue to see long waitlists for medical evaluations. Parent to Parent workshop series starting in July, will be offered throughout the year. Brian Hall reports that hiring and

staffing remains a struggle for Autism Delaware. They continue to work toward a return to the large community presence they had prior to the pandemic.

b. Parent Information Center of Delaware: Tina Allen

i. Family Shade program's Family Leadership Network brings together parents of children and teens with critical health care needs. Provides a monthly training and learning community with a focus on different topics, especially how parents can work through and across networks to get resources and support. Summit in September will bring families and community organizations together.

ii. Delaware Public Ombudsman program began in April, getting lots of referrals, working to assist students with critical needs, also deals w/equity issues in terms of discipline.

iv. Normal PIC programming; still receiving lots of calls and request for information, training and workshops even in the summer.

v. Health programs: DE Family Voices (MCO calls every month), Doula program and perinatal health programs ongoing

vi. Working with Department of Education on a parent mentoring program. Also beginning a leadership program in adult education programs, focused on families where English is a second language.

c. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: LaShonta Mitchell

i. Received SOR Grant to help people recovering from opioid addiction return to the workforce.

ii. Pre-ETS transition services; have 11 pre-ETS vendors providing job exploration, workplace readiness, guidance and counseling for post-secondary education, self-advocacy services. If you know of someone transition age who is not in school, they can reach out to Ms. Mitchell to get connected to services.

iii. New division director, Alicia Jenkins.

d. Delaware Department of Education: Maria Locuniak introduced Dale Matusevich who joins the group as the new director, Exceptional Children

VI. DNEA Updates & Discussion - Alisha Fletcher, Director

a. Sarah Mallory, Principal Investigator, budget update: DNEA received an increase in funding; will receive 575K for the coming year.

b. DNEA staff has been growing: added program coordinator Karen Oosterhous for operations, school psychologist Nicole Garrity will support content development and conduct statewide trainings, and retired law enforcement officer Chuck Sawchenko will provide training to first responders.

- c. Currently offering two to four trainings a month. Will be able to increase outreach with the increase in staffing. New statewide trainings: November will bring a collaboration with Trauma Matters Delaware; first responder training; Act Early training.
- d. Training tutorials and resource guides are available for free to the general public through the DNEA website; can order copies of resource guides for distribution.
- e. Continuing to address sustainability by working with PBH Leads, offering technical assistance, office hours, and in-depth training. Final cohort in this system of care grant will be mobile crisis leaders.
- f. Sarah explained the CASE (Consultative Autism Support and Education) Model. One and done training doesn't necessarily lead to change in professional practices; ongoing support drives change. Lead activities provide extensive professional development, case consultation and coaching, and builds internal capacity to better serve individuals with autism. Looking to expand this model to the Office of Early Learning.
- h. DNEA hosted ADOS training for 40 Delaware professionals. Received a good response, will provide two sessions of follow up technical assistance; maintaining waitlist for future training
- i. Communicating Visually in Pediatrics project will provide visually communication guides and training to medical professionals in Delaware. Hoping to work with the Medical Society of Delaware on promotion, distribution and continuing education credits.
- j. First responder training to be provided by retired law enforcement officer Chuck Sawchenko; will be offered by request. This program will be up and running in the fall.
- k. The Organization for Autism Research promotes inclusion via Kits for Kids program. DNEA will be making these kits available to Delaware professionals and programs.
- l. Project ImPACT - coaching program for parents of young children with autism. DNEA is just beginning to look at revitalizing the program statewide.
- m. DNEA statewide trainings will continue to be determined in conjunction with need as assessed by the Office of Statewide Autism programs.

VII. Public Comment

- a. Kent County Community School District - Ryan Matthews: wanted to echo literacy concerns, sees it as a lack of training of teachers. Glad the state is starting to focus on this and providing strategies for teachers.
- b. Center for Disabilities Studies (CDS) - Brian Freedman: Will be moving from the CDS to Swank Autism Center at Nemours September 1 and will represent Nemours to the ICA.
- c. Autism Delaware - Dafne Carnright: So much good work being done. Maybe we should take another look at The Blueprint? Can ICA think about updating that? Let's revisit that and see how far we've come.

d. Sussex County Parent Representative - Crystal Thawley: Will Communicating Visually in Pediatrics be available to parents? Sarah Mallory responded that the initial audience is medical professionals but the DNEA will work to get information to parents, as well.

VIII. Motion to adjourn.

- a. Motion: Mary Whitfield
- b. Second: Tina Andrews
- c. Motion carried; meeting adjourned.