

**Interagency Committee on Autism
Meeting Minutes
September 20, 2022
11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

ICA Representatives Present:

Autism Delaware: Brian Hall
Nemours Swank Autism Center: Brian Freedman
Delaware Department of Education: Maria Locuniak
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: LaShonta Mitchell
Kent County Parent Representative: Andrea Hurst-Creed
Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health: Meredith Tavani (ICA Co-Chair)
Delaware Office of Statewide Autism Programs: Mary Whitfield
Delaware Health and Social Services: Saniquah Salaam-Hardrick
University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies: Beth Mineo
Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS): Cory Nourie
Part C/Birth to 3 System: Kristina Horton

ICA Representatives Absent:

Delaware Division of Public Health
New Castle County parent representative
Sussex County parent representative
Delaware Ability Network Delaware Family Voices (DEFV)
Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH)

DNEA Staff Present:

ICA Administrative Chair and DNEA PI: Sarah Mallory
Director: Alisha Fletcher
Program Coordinator: Karen Oosterhous

Additional Attendees:

Autism Delaware: Heidi Mizell
Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health: Reid Millius
Brandywine Center for Autism: Dilia Henry
Jodi Karabin: JMK Behavior
Megan Tomkinson
Nadine (last name not provided)

Meredith Tavani called the meeting to order.

- I. Motion to approve agenda
 - a. Motion: Cory Nourie
 - a. Second: Brian Freedman
 - b. Motion carried to approve agenda.

- II. Motion to approve prior meeting's minutes, with correction to typo.
 - a. Motion: Brian Hall
 - b. Second: Mary Whitfield

- III. Workgroups
 - a. Explanation of workgroups for subcommittee work. Members and non-members are welcome to join the group of their choice:
 - i. Mental Health and Diagnosis
 - ii. Adult Services
 - iii. Education
 - iv. ABA
 - b. Discussion around workgroups included the suggestion that a good first step for all four groups might be revisiting the [Blueprint](#)
 - c. Workgroup meeting updates:
 - a. Mental health and diagnosis workgroup would like the group to consider whether it is best for those two topics to be combined. Sarah and Meredith will follow up with the groups in advance of the next meeting. Brian Freedman volunteered to lead one of the two groups
 - b. Education workgroup identified Mary Whitfield as lead. Stated need to focus on Blueprint and not providing programmatic updates
 - c. ABA workgroup discussed revisiting our topic of focus. One suggestion was to perform a gap analysis to assist us and then develop solutions. Areas of consideration that were mentioned include access to ABA services, differences between payors (e.g., reimbursement rates, who is approving, the amount of services, etc.), getting services approved, lack of knowledge of state employees (and need for education), and diagnosticians creating goals (outside of their wheelhouse). In addition, the group talked about the possibility of proposing standards of care for ABA which would hopefully lead to amending of policies.
 - d. Adult Services noted that the pandemic altered the landscape dramatically; we need to take stock before moving forward:
 - i. Major area for consideration is support for families, because they're no longer plugged in, and not necessarily aware of what students are entitled to during transition.
 - ii. Provider capacity issues are significant and ongoing; are there new residential models we could consider?
 - iii. Need a new model for employment. Education and training has greatly improved; students are learning more skills, but they still end up transitioning into low-level jobs (bagging, cleaning, etc) when they are capable and trained for higher skilled jobs. What might be done to help employers who may not have these stereotypical ideas about disability employment consider these potential workers?
 - iv. Need a pathway for data from schools to adult services so that adult services has an understanding of and can prepare for those who will be in need of services.
 - e.

- IV. DNEA update – Sarah Mallory, PI & Alisha Fletcher, Director
 - a. First Health Fund Advisory Committee Meeting to be held later in day; DNEA's application for funding was submitted in August 2022.

- b. Partnership with the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health has been extended; DNEA receiving extension of existing subaward
 - c. DNEA continues to offer 2-3 statewide trainings monthly
 - d. Introducing statewide training on social skills instruction in September and a training about parents supporting their children during the holiday season later in the year in partnership with Trauma Matters Delaware
 - e. DNEA will support Learn the Signs Act Early developmental monitoring and screening training for childcare workers
 - f. Launching a training specific to law enforcement officers in November
- V. Autism Delaware update – Brian Hall, Executive Director
- a. Continue to experience staffing issues, seeing increased behaviors
 - b. Lack of resources affecting families’ ability to access services
 - c. Need help from the larger community (ICA) to get resources to people, take ownership and help solve the problem
- VI. Literacy Discussion - Andrea Hurst-Creed, Kent County Parent Representative
- a. Discussion over who “owns” literacy instruction in Delaware, what the Department of Education can and cannot do
 - b. Parents have the option of addressing the issue through the IEP process, up to and including Due Process
 - c. Discussion about lack of literacy instruction for learners with complex communication needs as a systemic issue in Delaware, requiring a system-wide response
 - d. Maria Locuniak will take the concerns back to the special education working group at the Department of Education
 - e. MOTION: Andrea Hurst-Creed made a motion for the ICA to assist with achieving education equity for non-speaking students and begin by ensuring that the science of reading education that Delaware teachers will get this coming school year will include teaching special educators, when training and coaching, how to take this information and apply it to students with complex communication needs.
 - f. Suggestion is made to replace “ensuring” with “advocating;” Andrea amended her motion to reflect this change
 - g. LaShonta seconded the motion; motion is passed unanimously with one abstention
 - h. ICA will keep this item on the agenda for the next meeting to discuss what form the advocacy in this motion will take.
- VII. Public Comment
- a. Mary Carol Beard will replace Cory Nourie as the DDDS representative to the ICA going forward
- VIII. Motion to Adjourn
- a. Brian Hall motioned
 - b. Mary Whitfield second

Meredith Tavani adjourned the meeting.