

ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON AUTISM
MEETING
JUNE 17, 2011

The Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism met Friday, June 17, 2011 at 1:00 p.m. in Room 130 at the State Capitol, Little Rock, Arkansas. Senator Mary Anne Salmon and Representative Uvalde Lindsey, Co-Chairs, presided.

Task Force members present were Senator Mary Anne Salmon, Representative Uvalde Lindsey, Ms. Leslie Henson-Kita, Ms. Sharon Moore-Jochums, Ms. Marjorie Greenberg, Ms. Christy Plunkett, Dr. Michael Martin, Dr. Tyra Reed, Dr. Charles Green, Mr. Dan Honey sitting in for Mr. Jay Bradford, ex officio, Ms. Karan Burnette, Mr. Eric Moxley, Dr. Loretta Cochran, Ms. Karen Massey, Ms. Martha Kay Asti, and Ms. Veronica Myers, ex officio.

Proxy in attendance was Ms. Linda Rogers.

Senator Salmon opened the meeting. The minutes of the November 12, 2010 Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism meeting were approved by acclamation.

Elect Co-Chairs of the 2011-2012 Task Force

Ms. Henson-Kita made a motion to re-elect Senator Mary Anne Salmon and Representative Uvalde Lindsey as co-chairs of the Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism Committee. Karan Burnette second motion. Motion carried.

Senator Salmon and Representative Lindsey welcomed new task force member Ms. Martha Kay Asti and Ms. Veronica Myers, task force ex officio.

Update on Special Education Changes at the Department of Education

Ms. Martha Kay Asti, Interim Associate Director of Special Education, Department of Education, give an overview of the different services provided under the Area Services Grants. She said the Area Services Grants are funding that the Department of Education provides for consultants to provide technical assistance to the schools and work with school students with disabilities. Currently her department is reviewing the Area Services Grants to make certain there's accountability between her department and the individual receiving therapy. The main purpose of reviewing the grants is to make certain the services are being implemented all across the state to students with a disability. There are other grants that will continue to be funded which provide services such as Easter Seals Outreach and Educational Audiology Resource Services through Arkansas Children's Hospital.

Ms. Greenberg is concerned school districts are not notifying families regarding Department of Education's Circuit meetings and Circuit reports. She suggested the Department of Education send the Circuit reports to the families. Ms. Greenberg recommends the Department of Education distribute awards to Special Education teachers to improve morale. She is concerned that grade school children with autism are not receiving the benefits of a structured program. By the time autistic students are in middle school and high school they don't have the appropriate

skills. She feels the formula used by Department of Education is heavily weighed on children with severe disabilities and not evenly distributed to all children diagnosed with autism. The Department of Education has put out a job notice for the BCBA training program for undergraduate students at the University of Arkansas. Program begins January 2012.

Senator Salmon would like the Department of Special Education to encourage teachers to attend professional development classes so that the teacher will know how to properly communicate with an autistic student in the classroom.

Ms. Massey feels at least three required hours of special education classes should be mandated for all general education teachers because every teacher will have a special-needs child in the classroom.

Review of the 2010 Autism Task Force Report to the Arkansas Legislative Council

Representative Lindsey said the task force is required to submit an annual report to the Arkansas Legislative Council for their review on August 31, 2011 listing the task forces priorities and goals.

Discussion of 2011-2012 Autism Task Force Priorities and Goals

Dr. Green gave an overview of plans to eliminate the Home and Community Based (HCB) Medicaid Waiver waiting list in four years. The waiver will cost the state \$25 million each year to provide services to everyone on the four year waiting list. Dr. Green said the Governor's office and the Arkansas General Assembly support the proposal. He feels as the economy improves the funds will be available to distribute to children with developmental disabilities.

Dr. Reid explained UAMS Community-Based Autism Liaison and Treatment Project (CoBALT) partnered with DHS, DDS, and Department of Pediatrics, to train physicians and other pediatric health professionals to triage children with Autism Spectrum Disorder into appropriate developmental, medical, behavioral and mental health services. The comprehensive two-day training covers service provision, resources, science of autism spectrum disorders, management of autism spectrum disorders, hands-on diagnosis using diagnostic tools and instruments. Dr. Reid hopes to see more children referred to these trained physicians. There are Pediatricians around the state who are interested in the training because they see the need in their community for services. Unfortunately some communities around the state such as the delta do not have clinicians.

Representative Lindsey asked Dr. Reid who is in charge of delivering a statewide initiative effort? Is AHEC involved and will the new data transmission center have linking capacity?

Dr. Reid said Department of Pediatrics is in charge of the project and it is spearheaded by Dr. Eldon Schulz, the developmental pediatric section chief in the Department of Pediatrics at UAMS. The children attending the training were younger than three years of age as part of First Connections' requirement. AHECS have not been directly involved in the training. She would like to see an expansion of tele-medicine and consultations.

Ms. Burnette said because there are counties that only have family practice physicians, she feels the family practice physicians should receive CoBALT training along with pediatricians.

Dr. Krammelah Banks, PhD, Licensed Psychologists, explained Medicaid does not reimburse for some diagnostic tools used for autism. Medicaid sends all diagnosis to DDS for reimbursement.

Dr. Laura Bednar, Assistant Commissioner, Learning Services, Department of Education, explained local school districts are responsible to disseminate FERPA information to teachers and parents. Her department is looking at all programs and services that will increase the capability to utilize funding.

Mr. Dusty Maxwell said Pathfinders has started a small academy for middle school age children with autism and has a summer program.

Mr. Eric Treat, State President, Arkansas People First, explained legislation passed allowing law enforcement officers in Arkansas to receive continuing education on disabilities. He collected curriculum from the law enforcement academy, criminal justice institute, and state police. None of which had any one-on-one training. He organized a committee of law enforcement officers and individuals with disability to create a curriculum that will take nine months to develop and cover every aspect of disability. Mr. Treat will travel around the state conducting training emphasizing developmental disabilities.

Mr. Gerald Griffin, grandfather of two children with autism was recognized to list his concerns.

Representative Lindsey would like the Department of Education to look for special grants or awards that can be used for special education services for school districts with the highest incident rate of ASD. He said these grants would require state funding. Representative Lindsey would like the task force to work with Department of Education on using block grants in all categorical areas of special education .

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.