

ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON AUTISM
SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES
NOVEMBER 30, 2011

The Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism Subcommittee met on Wednesday, November 30, 2011, at 10:30 a.m. in Room 130, at the State Capitol, in Little Rock, Arkansas. Members of the Task Force Subcommittee in attendance were Dr. Cheryl May, Chair, Ms. Robin Lockhart, Mr. Steve Varady, Ms. Martha Kay Asti, and Ms. Dawn Itzkowitz.

Dr. May opened the subcommittee meeting. The minutes from the September 27, 2011 subcommittee meeting were approved by acclamation.

Discussion of How to Get Firefighters Involved with the Autism Task Force

Mr. Robert Chastain, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Instructor, Arkansas Fire Training Academy, Southern Arkansas University Tech, Camden, Arkansas, was recognized. Mr. Chastain said he teaches the EMT training for the first responder course at the Academy to approximately 200 firefighters each year. The First Responder course has a two-hour block of instruction on “Patients with Special Needs”, which covers patients who are blind, deaf, mentally handicapped, and patients with medical devices. The EMT course is a five-week program that includes the four-hour block on “Patients with Special Needs”. Although not geared toward autism, the four-hour block covers major disorders such as down syndrome. Rookie training is a nine-week program that includes one-week of first responders training. Rookies can also take a two-week Driver Operator class. The Academy has campuses at Conway, Jonesboro, and Lincoln, as well as Associate Training Centers at Black River Technical College in Pocahontas and Crossatot Community College in De Queen. All basic training programs are in accordance with the national standards. Fire departments can request to have an instructor from the Academy come to the department to teach the First Responder module program. Mr. Chastain will provide any information firefighters may receive on autism, at the next meeting, and rescuing an autistic child from a fire.

Mr. Greg Thompson, Director, MEMS, explained paramedics do not receive training through the Arkansas Fire Academy but they are tested under the same national curriculum as firefighters. When paramedics test for licensure, they receive a state card and a national card. The Arkansas Department of Health has a subcommittee called the State EMS Training Committee, which may mandate extra training along with the yearly standard curriculum. Classes could be offered when the State EMS Training Committee holds its annual conference along with the joint meetings of the Arkansas State Firefighters Association and the Arkansas Association of Fire Chiefs Conference in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Mr. Charles Ellis, Training Supervisor, Law Enforcement Training Academy (ALETA), explained the “Smart 9-1-1” dispatch training has been implemented in the ALETA curriculum. He explained ALETA is a training branch under the Commission of Law Enforcement Standards and Training. He said approximately 350 new law enforcement officers are trained every year at the East Camden and Springdale ALETA academies. Mr. Ellis said ALETA includes a block of

developmental disability training and Dennis Debbaudt's autism training in their basic curriculum training program. He feels hands on training curriculum as it relates to autism is beneficial. He said there is not a lot of information on the website regarding what other academies throughout the country are teaching on developmental disabilities.

Subcommittee Discussion of Goals and Objectives for 2012

- Continue to facilitate and guide the development of statewide training opportunities for first responders
- Continue to search for funding to increase statewide training opportunities for first responders
- Continue to raise awareness of developmental disabilities within the first responder community
- Continue to listen to the first responder community regarding their needs and desires to improve the safety of developmentally disabled citizens

Ms. Itzkowitz suggested the Smart 9-1-1 system be included in the subcommittees goals and objectives.

Dr. May suggested the subcommittee make a recommendation to the Autism Task Force in support of the Smart 9-1-1 system as a voluntary registry tool for families and first responders.

Dr. May suggested the curriculum development group's standardized program should include School Resource Officers training for any law enforcement officer who may have contact with children in a school setting. She suggested the subcommittee determine the amount of developmental disability training each law enforcement training academy provides in their basic law enforcement training program.

Mr. Varady suggested the subcommittee report to the Autism Task Force in support for creating a curriculum development group who are qualified in communication techniques to train all law enforcement officers in the state on developmental disabilities.

Mr. Varady feels the subcommittee should determine how much developmental disability curriculum each law enforcement and first responder training entity offers.

Mr. Varady will poll members of the subcommittee seeking recommendations to the curriculum developing group.

Mr. Varady will notify staff of any additional recommendations he may have.

Review of ASD Training Program developed by CJI and Partners

Dr. May suggested Criminal Justice Institute and Arkansas Department of Education collaborate with Partners for Inclusive Communities to develop a standardized program for School Resource Officers including any law enforcement officer who might be called into a school setting.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.