

**MHC Autism Implementation Team Meeting  
February 16, 2010 at Noon  
Easter Seals of North Texas**

**Attendees:** Kevin Aceves, Kay Barkin, Marianna Bond, Carrie Greer, Jennifer Johnson, Kelly Mays, Carolyn Presnall, Lena Zettler ....

Lena Zettler called the meeting to order.

**Easter Seals Merger**

Carrie Greer reported on the January 1 merger of Easter Seals and the DFW Center for Autism. The Grapevine center will continue to offer the preschool for children with autism, and there are hopes of adding an additional preschool in Fort Worth. Easter Seals is looking to expand and collaborate with other agencies to help children with autism who are age 3 and older. At this point, all referrals go through Carrie.

**CCHAPS**

Lena Zettler gave an in-depth report on results pertaining to autism and mental health from the CCHAPS (Community-wide Children's Health Assessment and Planning Survey). Only 0.9% or 33 children were identified in the survey as having Autism or Asperger's Syndrome. Of those, 32 were between birth and age 14. Lena pointed out that, while the numbers from the survey are not as frightening as expected, it is evident that access to care is a major problem. Jennifer pointed out there was no real difference between those children who did or did not receive vaccinations. Carrie pointed out a large number of those surveyed do not know what services are available to them. Those interested can view the full report at [www.cchaps.org](http://www.cchaps.org). Lena asked the Committee to consider whether there was sufficient data collected by the survey to use as the basis for planning.

**Coding Issues**

Lena reported there had been some issues with coding and tracking the screenings in pediatrician offices. If a child receives more than one service (e.g., a vaccination and a screening), only the first one entered will be coded. However, Dr. Barry Bzostek believes we should continue to gather data. Patsy suggested having Dr. Bzostek attend an upcoming Mental Health Connection meeting so he can answer questions that concern providers.

**Patient Information**

Michelle asked what physicians are telling patients if they fail an MCHAT. Jennifer suggested the Team develop a handout for patients explaining the results of a "failed" MCHAT so parents do not panic. Kay will create wording before the next meeting. Members of the committee will send her the following information by February 1:

Referral Sources – Carrie Greer

Why ask your pediatrician for a screening – Lena Zettler

What is a developmental screening – Michelle Gortney

What does a referral mean, including the next step a parent should take – Marianna Bond

Michelle discussed software for physician's offices called CHADIS that was created by 0-3. Parents sit at a terminal and answer specific questions.

### **Next Steps**

Lena asked where the Team needs to go from here.

### *Tracking Information*

Patsy pointed out the group has made tremendous progress in getting Cook Children's Physician Network to screen. Referrals are coming from the screenings. Now we need to determine how to track information to provide feedback to physicians.

### *Access to Services*

Michelle said ECI provides a diagnostic impression but not an actual diagnosis, which is required for insurance coverage. There are two main obstacles:

1. Getting families to talk about autism. ECI is better than it used to be, but there is still a barrier there.
2. Getting a formal diagnosis from a physician, primarily because the wait time to see a physician is so long.

Michelle also reported that ECI is building an in-house ABA program and needs a 0-3 clinician. Kevin added that parents often begin a grief process when they hear their child might have autism. However, just because a parent does not accept the diagnosis on a specific visit, he or she might accept it later. Denial is part of the grief process, so it's important to work within the framework of that process.

### *Physician Education*

The Team also discussed the possibility of educating physicians on what to do if a child fails the MCHAT. Suggestions included a FAQs for physicians and Grand Rounds. Carolyn said marketing materials may need to be approved by Cook Children's Marketing Department; however, since the material is going to the Cook Children's Physicians Network, that might not be a requirement.

**Adjournment:** With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** Noon on Tuesday, February 16, at Easter Seals, 1424 Hemphill.