

MHC Autism Implementation Team Meeting
April 6, 2010 at Noon
Easter Seals of North Texas

Attendees: Kevin Aceves, Sheril Appel, Kay Barkin, Michele Gortney, Carrie Greer, Jennifer Johnson, Kelly Mays, Matt Robinson, Lena Zettler

Lena Zettler called the meeting to order. Kelly Mays asked that her email be added to the Autism Implementation Team distribution list. Lena led the group in introductions.

Referral Survey

Kay Barkin distributed results to date on referrals being received at participating agencies for an Autism Spectrum Disorder. ECI did not enter its data on the survey due to FERPA restrictions, but Michele shared the information separately. Michele noted that physicians often diagnose delayed development and language rather than Autism Spectrum Disorders. A few changes were requested, and the survey will remain active at least until the next meeting.

Child Study Center

Matt Robison announced that, thanks to a funder, the Child Study Center is looking at hiring someone as a parent trainer. This individual would work with six to seven parents each week who are not yet in treatment to help them begin building a framework in the home for their children. The Center hopes to get the project funded for at least two years. The position could be filled by an intern, who can work with the family on more intensive case management, advocacy and other issues. The trainer would work with each family intensively for about a week, and come back every four weeks to check in and offer additional education. These families will fill treatment slots as they come open, but can start making progress while on the waiting list.

Because four people on staff at the Child Study Center speak Spanish, there is always someone available to help Spanish-speaking families. The agency is working towards an accredited medical translation program.

There is a new pediatrician coming on board who is closing his private practice. That will help the wait list for pediatric services to drop from six months to one month. Right now, there is a two- to three-month waiting period for Autism screenings.

Care Manager

The committee discussed possible responsibilities for a care manager position. They included:

- Helping parents whose children transition out of ECI in entering other services. The window between ages 3 and 5 is very difficult. Someone is needed to help fill the gap with schools and services
- Helping parents immediately after their child receives a diagnosis of Autism
- Helping parents determine the best use of resources for the child's needs
- Helping families navigate the system while coordinating services for them
- Helping families access services
- Advocating for parents with the schools

Anyone hired for this position would need to know the best use of resources and understand both the available resources and the system.

Discussion continued about the position. The amount of time the Care Manager spends with each family would need to be determined, as well as whether the position would be part- or full-time and the pay. The referral process would also need to be developed.

It was suggested that a pilot be implemented in which ECI would hand-pick 12 to 15 children who need services. It would be necessary to determine requirements for children to participate in the pilot. For example, should it be children facing a potential transition crisis, those who entered the system late who do not have a diagnosis, and/or children who enter the system late and have been unable to enter services.

To evaluate the pilot, “success” would need to be defined. The pilot might evaluate the amount of time it takes to get services for families who are assigned to the Care Manager and those who are not. Other evaluation might include surveying providers to determine the usefulness of the resource to them. It was suggested that someone from MHMR Evaluation and Outcomes attend a future meeting to discuss evaluation opportunities.

Networking for Kids West

Networking for Kids West is a monthly meeting for professionals from healthcare, social services and other child-related businesses. Attendees learn about services available for children in the North Texas area. Participation in the group is free. The Medco representative has additional information, and the organization can be found through Google. It typically meets the fourth Wednesday of every month.

Next Steps

Michele Gortney:

- Develop criteria for a pilot
- Invite Joan Curley, an early childhood professional with Fort Worth ISD, to the next meeting
- Look at where children who are identified early live

Kay

- Make requested changes to the survey
- Send the report on the survey to the committee

Adjournment: With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2 p.m.

Next Meeting: 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, May 11, at Easter Seals, 1424 Hemphill