

**Mental Health Connection
Autism Implementation Team Meeting
June 15, 2010, 10 a.m. to Noon
Easter Seals**

Present: Carrie Greer, Matt Robison, Sheril Appel, Victoria Quick, Michele Gortney, Marianna Bond, Lena Zettler

Introductions were made.

Round Table updates

- State of Texas – update given by Marianna Bond;
 - The State is conducting an online survey for a pilot program for adults with autism. Marianna sent it to all AIT members. Members were asked to pass it along to anyone who may be a stakeholder for adult services.
 - The state has also published a comprehensive plan for autism across all age groups, for 2010-2014, which was co-authored by Marianna Bond. The report can be found at: <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/autism/>.
 - TEA has issued 11 rules for autism. These rules, which were generated by parents/stakeholders, are an improvement over the former 7. Currently, the Commissioner of Education is reviewing the entire education code, and stakeholders/parents are not invited to participate. This has resulted in an injunction being filed against the state by parents/stakeholders. The concern is that what was mapped out will be unilaterally removed. The parent group had given more detail and explanation to implementation, diagnoses, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) plans for autism. For example, teacher-student ratios were stated, in addition to guidelines for determining those ratios. Other programs, such as at-home services and language systems (PECs or sign language), were expanded.
 - DADS and DARS, along with all state-funded agencies, are being asked to cut their budgets by 10%. Michele Gortney (ECI) reported that this will likely impact ECI by inhibiting any growth.
 - The Autism Society of America is having its national conference in Dallas July 7-10 at the Hyatt Regency. There are no members of this group planning to attend.
 - The state is still moving to implement/build an Autism Resource Center, although it will not be specific to regions.

- Cook Children’s Medical Center Rehabilitation – update given by Sheril Appel:
 - As a practice, the Rehab Department at Cook Children’s has re-defined its scope of services over the last two years. The need for services (including but not limited to autism) has outstripped the available therapy resources. Cook Children’s serves many diagnostic groups and Rehab has prioritized its focus on medically acute diagnoses to be in line with the Medical Center. This has reduced the wait lists from about one year for an initial evaluation to three months for an initial evaluation. Some rehab locations (like the Northeast location in Hurst) do see more patients with chronic, as opposed to acute, diagnoses/needs. The Rehab group has continued to serve patients with feeding disorders, traumatic brain injuries, and cochlear implants. Fort Worth outpatient services have moved off campus to a South clinic location, where they use “episodes of care” to help with treatment planning and discharge planning. A grid is used, based on frequency and duration of treatment, and four subsequent treatment models are followed, including Intensive, Periodic, and Consultative. (There is an additional level between Intensive and Periodic but the label was not provided). This change in treatment modality has helped educate parents and improve parental participation, as it more clearly defines and elevates the importance of at-home exercises and strategies that improve generalization of skills. It has also been a shift for the therapist to be more in a coaching, empowering

role with the family. Rehab seeks to help families dealing with autism at discharge, finding other resources in the community that are in line with the families' insurance plans. Rehab does not have a social worker designated to outpatient; however, there is a more traditional social worker who helps children transition from inpatient care.

- Child Study Center – update by Matt Robison:
 - Networking For Kids is a networking meeting that is sponsored by Medco (I.V. nutrition) for kids with disabilities. There has been an increase in private providers for pediatric therapy (PT/OT/ST). The meeting rotates among different agencies, and is organized by Jeremy Craig with MedCo. The group's focus is to network and troubleshoot. There has been an existing group in Dallas (East group), and the Child Study Center and ECI have been participating in the newer group (West group). They meet monthly. Many different types of services are included, such as nutrition and nursing, and all services are not exclusively focused on autism spectrum. However, this population is represented. The next meeting of Networking For Kids is Wednesday, June 23. It will be hosted by ECI in the MHMR Conference Room (Hulen Street location).
 - The Child Study Center has applied for two grants to expand parent education/ABA.
 - Dr. Nancy Hitzfelter is retiring, and the Center is recruiting for her position. Dr. Rodriguez, another developmental pediatrician, has been hired and will begin in September. In addition, a pediatric psychiatrist is being hired to treat dually diagnosed patients (psychiatric and developmentally delayed).
 - The DARS program is full but may have five slots open at the end of the summer.
 - The Behavior Disorders clinic is doing well.

- ECI – update by Michele Gortney:
 - BCBA to start in August; therapists coming from FWISD
 - ECI standards, effective 9/1/2020, are now up on DARS website (<http://www.dars.state.tx.us>). Red lined items are the changes/additions being evaluated. Michele sees a lot of positive changes, and DARS is looking for stakeholder (parent and providers) feedback. In regards to autism, there are three areas proposed:
 - Screening guidelines to include use of the MCHAT
 - Therapy guidelines for children who meet criteria for ASD or who failed MCHAT follow up; team based approach for development of a treatment plan.
 - Overseers of treatment plans are defined as possessing “documented training and expertise” in autism. This new guideline will exclude LPC I's and LMSW's. ECI currently utilizes many therapists with these credentials.
 - Michele commented that, overall, the ECI standards that are posted are fraught with vague language, so interpretation of the guidelines may be confusing or difficult.
 - An additional change may be coming to Medicaid families who are evaluated as no cost-share. ECI is currently a free service to these families. With the new standards, these Medicaid families will not automatically be evaluated at a no cost-share.
 - ECI has steadily seen a 7-8% increase in referrals yearly. Tarrant County ECI is the largest ECI group in Texas and one of the largest in the nation.

Survey Monkey Results

- We have collected data for three months and continue to see consistent trends, although Rehab's reporting this past month may be low. (ECI data for the last month is forthcoming and is not included in Survey Monkey).
 - Screening does not seem to be an issue; most ASD referrals (about 75%) that come to AIT agencies, with the exception of ECI, have already been screened. The majority of these screenings are done via “observation by a health care provider” as opposed to the MCHAT.
 - About half of the new referrals have already had some form of treatment as well. Most of the previous treatment (speech therapy and occupational therapy) has been provided by ECI or the school district. Only a small number of referrals have had previous ABA therapy.

ECI Referral Results

- Current month's ECI data to follow. However, Michele reports that the trend is that ECI sees about 100 to 110 new ASD-related cases every month across nine counties. Most of these cases come from Tarrant County.
- Michele sees a greater need for services/education in the southern part of Tarrant County (Burleson, Crowley), south of Tarrant, and southwest of Tarrant due to fewer pediatricians and services.

Autism Coordinator Criteria

- Looking at Survey Monkey data (average about 40/month) and ECI's data (average about 100/month), we would need to narrow in on a smaller service area within Tarrant County.
- Reviewed criteria drafted by Michele:
 - Age of at least 30 months or older (to assist with children who are transitioning out of ECI) AND
 - Suspected diagnosis of PDD /ASD or diagnosis of PDD/ASD with a barrier to effective service
 - Discharge criteria:
 - Diagnosis
 - IEP
 - Financial plan for services
 - Respite
 - Other informal supports
 - Consider referring to private provider if family is interested

Next Steps

- Identify any other possible stakeholders:
 - FWISD – Michele to continue to extend invitation to her connections at FWISD
 - ABA private providers
 - Camp Fire
 - Patsy Thomas/MHC; review funding
 - Dr. Bzostek with CCPN physician network
- Where can we make the biggest impact? Identify service area.
- Lena Zettler will draft a summary of the Autism Coordinator/Care Manger position to review at the next meeting and to include stakeholders, etc.
- Lena Zettler to present data and update larger MHC membership at July meeting; will also highlight the benefits of our group continuing to meet for networking and collaboration of existing services.
- Michele Gortney to submit ECI data for May-June time period.

Adjournment: 12 noon

Next Meeting: We will not meet in July but defer to mid August for next meeting; Location will be Easter Seals, and date will be emailed out.