

OPEN MEETING MINUTES

Name of Governmental Body: Governor's Autism Council			Attending: Vanesa Carmona-Lewis, Margaret Fairbanks, Bob Johnston, Christina Krasovich, Lindsay McCary, Suzanne Juzwik, Jennifer Maskel, Lisa Ridenour, Kim Bruessel
Date: 2/1/2024	Time Started: 10:00 A.M	Time Ended: 12:00 P.M	Absent: Alejandra Apreza-King, Rose Cutting, Daysi Jimenez, Katy Morgan-Davies, Kevin Scholz, Becky Thompson
Location: https://dhs.wi.zoomgov.com/j/1612346448?			DHS Staff: Nicole Miller, Dan Kramarz, Deb Rathermel, Tessa Freedberg, Laura Grulke-Rueter, Pam Lano, Nikki Moore
			Presiding Officer: Deb Rathermel, Bureau of Children's Services, Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Minutes

Welcome and Introductions:

- Individual introductions of Council members and Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) staff.

Public Comments:

Note: Any public comments have a three-minute maximum per presenter/organization.

- No public members present at this meeting. No public comments.

Operational:

- Approval of the meeting minutes from November 2023
- Motion to approve: Christina Krasovich motion to approve. Bob Johnson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Updates from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS):

Bureau of Children's Services:

- **October 2024: Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Innovation Grants Summit:** Laura Grulke-Rueter, Division of Medicaid Services (DMS) Communications Specialist:
 - Laura Grulke-Rueter shared an overview of the [HCBS Innovation Grants](#) funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Two rounds of funding awarded a total of 158 grants and distributed a total of \$29.6 million.
 - The HCBS Innovation Grant Summit will be held on October 7 and 8, 2024, in Madison, Wisconsin. The purpose of the Summit is to celebrate achievements, share successes, and learn how to sustain these efforts through replication and future initiatives. Virtual attendance will be available as well as limited availability for in-person attendance. Pre-registration will be sent via email to fill out a short survey to express interest.

Bureau of Benefits Policy (BBP):

- **Briefing on Behavioral Treatment Stakeholder Meeting:** Pam Lano, BBP
 - Pam Lano provided an overview of DHS-led stakeholder meetings with behavioral treatment providers across Wisconsin for the purposes of information sharing and collaboration to discuss potential opportunities for changes to the benefit. The forums have been held twice a year and the most recent was in November 2023.
 - Pam shared an update that the Office of Inspector General within the US Department of Health and Human Services is currently conducting an audit of Wisconsin Medicaid's behavioral treatment services. The audit involves a review of all records collected from selected providers. A preliminary report is expected in Spring or Summer 2024. Wisconsin DHS will have a chance to provide feedback before the report is finalized.
 - The most recent Provider Forum also included a discussion on coordination of benefits with the Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Program. The discussion focused on clarification on the use of group behavioral treatment codes introduced in 2022. Staff and providers discussed best ways to meet the needs of children through the new benefit.

- **Overview of Current Behavioral Treatment Benefit Efforts:** Nikki Moore, BBP Policy Analyst
 - Nikki Moore provided data on behavioral treatment benefit utilization in 2023.
 - Comprehensive treatment was the most utilized service followed by focused treatment and family treatment guidance.
 - Available demographic data showed that the populations receiving services were predominantly male and white.
 - Geographic data showed members receive services throughout the state with most services in metropolitan areas. Council members discussed the potential factors leading to fewer providers in the western area of the state.
 - Location of service has shifted from primarily in home to primarily clinic-based services. Council members discussed the that factors may have included more companies opening clinics, changes to travel reimbursement, better retention of staff in a clinic setting, and changes in practice to align with public health guidance during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Council members inquired about analyzing the impact of awareness campaigns on service access and the number of people diagnosed with autism who are not accessing services. DHS staff shared that Medicaid data is limited to people enrolled in Medicaid and our analysis relies on claims for Medicaid services.
 - A council member expressed concern that school-based site of service remains consistently low. DHS staff provided the [ForwardHealth Update](#) from 2018 that provides specific information and provisions of school-based treatment.

Council Member Updates and Discussion:

- Margaret Fairbanks shared an update on discussions the Executive Planning Committee has had on goal setting:
 - The two goals of the Council are: 1) empowering caregivers, children, and youth to navigate the system of autism supports and services and, 2) increasing provider capacity to support neurodiverse children and youth.
 - The Executive Planning Committee reminded members that the Council's charge is to advise DHS, and so progress towards those goals should focus on those actions.
- Christina Krasovich shared that she has heard from some families that recent changes related to the method of authorization or reimbursement at the local operational level have led to disruption in CLTS Program service access in a few counties.
- Bob Johnson shared information on the upcoming April Annual Conference for the Autism Society of Great Wisconsin. Conference details are on the [2024 Annual Conference](#) webpage.

Think Ability Wisconsin: Dawn Nuoffer (Down Syndrome Association of Wisconsin), Kris Bobke (Think Ability Wisconsin Online Center Manager), and Shannon Webb (Think Ability Wisconsin project consultant)

- Presentation on [Think Ability Wisconsin](#) funded by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development and Wisconsin Economic Development
- Think Ability Wisconsin is a statewide initiative and partnership network designed to improve transition and employment outcomes for people with disabilities while simultaneously addressing workforce challenges.
- The main components of the project are to serve all people with disabilities in Wisconsin while developing a unified statewide collaborative comprised of government agencies, employers, educators, advocates, disability, and community providers. There will be wide-scale employer outreach, education, training, and engagement.
- Think Ability Wisconsin highlights the positive impact of hiring people with disabilities, including increase profit margins, higher productivity, higher retention rates, and more.
- Think Ability Wisconsin created the [TAW Online Resource Center](#) to connect self-advocates, families, service providers, and educators with valuable resources and tools to improve transition and employment for people with disabilities while addressing workforce challenges experienced by employers.
- A council member inquired the best ways to distribute Think Ability Wisconsin information. Interested individuals should visit the website for contact information and [connection by phone or email to navigators](#). Online chat capability will be coming soon. Requests for presentations at other meetings or conferences should be sent to Dawn Nuoffer dnuoffer@dsaw.org and/or Shannon Webb shannon@incontrolwisconsin.org.
- A council member suggested having an interactive map as part of a mobile app to connect individuals to resources in their area. The [Think Ability Wisconsin Resources page](#) has resources for individuals of all ages. The [Before Age 18](#) website has a transition planning tool developed by Employment Resources, Inc (ERI) and DHS. Families can answer a few questions to generate a customized transition plan and get corresponding resources.

MOTION made by Margaret Fairbanks, seconded by Bob Johnson to adjourn the meeting at 12:00 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Prepared by: Tessa Freedberg on 2/1/2024.

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