

VIRGINIA EARLY INTERVENTION AUTISM INITIATIVE
HENRICO MENTAL HEALTH CENTER

March 24, 2004

Draft Minutes

The Virginia Early Intervention Autism Initiative met March 24, 2004 at the Henrico Mental Health Center. The following individuals attended: Carol Burke; Beverly Crouse; Karen Durst; Debra Holloway; Sharon Jones; Janet Lachowsky; Phyllis Mondak; Donna Rimell; Bruce Schaffer; Carol Schall; Sharon Sikes; and Charlene Wentland.

Karen Durst welcomed the members. Karen announced that Carol Schall had been asked to assist in facilitating this and future meetings of the Autism Initiative and that she had agreed. Carol then assumed that role.

The group turned their attention to review and completion of the fact sheets. They confirmed that the Part C *Family Information* fact sheet and the Part C *Making a Referral* fact sheet had been approved. Those fact sheets that were reviewed at the last meeting were looked at related to suggested changes.

Charlene Wentland discussed the fact sheet *Outcomes in Autism*. She had made the recommended changes from the previous meeting. The members accepted the changes as completing the fact sheet.

The *Autism Resources* fact sheet was then discussed with Phyllis Mondak talking about the changes she had made. Phyllis stated that she had not used any product web sites so that it did not appear as if the Initiative was endorsing specific products. She also checked on the Adapted Physical Education listings and determined that they should be included with the resource listings. Phyllis also checked to be certain that the information listed was current. The group further discussed the fact sheet and suggested that the following revisions be made:

- SECEP and New Horizons should be moved under the heading of Public Schools as they both are under the public school system;
- The following schools should be added:
 - Grafton School
 - Auroras School-Loudoun County
 - Matthews Center-Leesburg;
- Information should be added about the public schools website where information can be accessed on the public schools throughout Virginia;
- The phone number for New Horizon has changed and needs to be updated;
- SECEP's phone number needs to be corrected;
- The group decided to include a listing for diagnostic centers. It was determined that in addition to centers within Virginia, that many families accessed services outside of the state. It was suggested that the following be included:
 - Duke
 - Bethesda

- Kennedy Krieger
- Kentucky listing
- Tennessee listing
- Reginald S. Lourie Center-Rockville, MD
- Change of wording of “exceptional children” to children-first language; and
- Omit the Virginia Treatment Center.

The group decided to wait until Staci Carr was in attendance to further discuss the fact sheet *What is Autism*. Carol pointed out that using the existing *What is Autism?* fact sheet would require obtaining permission from the original author, The Center for Autism & Related Disabilities.

The members further agreed to delete the *What is Behavior?* fact sheet. The consensus was that this topic was adequately addressed as it related to autism in other fact sheets.

Noel Woolard was not present to discuss the *Behavior Interventions* fact sheet. It was, therefore, decided to wait until Noel was in attendance for this review.

Diagnosing Autism in Young Children, authored by Carol Schall, was reviewed. Carol confirmed that the licensed mental health professional was included under the heading “Who should diagnose autism”. Discussion occurred regarding the use of the term “early intervention specialist” under the same area. It was decided to keep the wording. The following revisions were decided upon:

- The fact sheet should be shortened to prevent duplication from other sheets;
- Delete first paragraph under “What are the behaviors that indicate that a young child might have autism”;
- Delete the first two sentences in the second paragraph under the same heading;
- Delete the third paragraph;
- Delete the current information under “Where can a child get such a screening in Virginia”. Carol will develop a paragraph and will include “pediatrician”, “family doctor” and the “Infant & Toddler Connection”.

The revised fact sheets will be brought back for a final review at the next Autism Initiative meeting. Carol reminded the group that Christine Stemhagan, from Children’s Hospital, will edit/format the final fact sheets in order to provide consistency. Content will not be changed.

Carol Schall then presented information related to the Early Intervention Survey. She reported that a total of 36 emails were sent to deliverable email addresses. There were 26 responses constituting a 72% return rate. Twenty-five responses were from Council Coordinators/providers providing a whole system/whole provider view. Six of the responses were from individuals providing a personal view. The following were the themes identified from the survey:

- Children with ASD require specialized treatment;
- Generally, localities report they are doing a good job;
- Majorities of localities report that they need more training;

- Some localities report that their staff do struggle to serve young children with ASD well;
- There are Pockets of Skill;
- Resources are stretched;
- Localities and providers are struggling with Part C Model versus Autism Model;
- There were many comments about working with parents of children with autism. Is more training needed for supporting/understanding parents of children with ASD?; and
- Funding was a big issue.

The members expressed that training is a major priority and that the survey indicates a need for next steps as well as addressing the tough questions.

Sharon Jones reported that 38 names had been provided through the survey as individuals who would be willing to help others through training, mentoring, etc. However, upon contacting individuals, many were not willing to assist. Some administrators expressed concern about who would pay for those individuals to provide training.

The consensus of the group was that the listing of training that individuals have had was impressive. However, concern was expressed that the information doesn't identify the level of training received and that more specific information is needed. Sharon passed around a follow-up survey that will be disseminated and that should address those specifics as well as what training others feel they need.

Discussion continued related to meeting the needs of children with autism and their families through Part C. Carol suggested that possibly a survey was needed to see what localities are doing across the state in providing Part C and in coordination with Part C.

With the near-completion of the fact sheets, Carol pointed out the need to develop an Action Plan for the Initiative. It was decided that the group would develop a plan that was positive and possible and that could be completed within one year. The following areas will be included:

- Policy and Finance
- Staff Training
- Services
 - Screening
 - Diagnosis
 - Intervention

Carol suggested that addressing the areas of the plan might be best met through subcommittees. The subcommittees would meet for specific work and the whole group would meet less frequently. Development of the Action Plan will begin at the next meeting on Wednesday, April 28, 2004, from 1:00-4:00 at the Henrico Mental Health Center.

