

VIRGINIA EARLY INTERVENTION AUTISM INITIATIVE
HENRICO MENTAL HEALTH CENTER
DRAFT MINUTES
APRIL 28, 2004

The Virginia Early Intervention Autism Initiative met April 28, 2004 at the Henrico Mental Health Center. The following members were in attendance: Carole Burke; Karen Durst; Heather Elias; Elizabeth Fletcher; Debra Holloway; Carol Schall; and Sharon Sikes. Carol Schall served as the facilitator for the meeting and Karen Durst served as recorder.

Carol Schall welcomed the members. Topics were then presented as agenda items for the meeting. The following topics were presented:

- Review of the last meeting;
- Completion of the fact sheets;
- Future meeting schedule-Do we need to change the time; and
- The Initiative's vision for the upcoming year.

The Initiative members discussed the openness surrounding the discussion at the March 24, 2004. It was the feeling that this was symbolic of the progress that the group has made. Topics that were discussed at the previous meeting included meeting the needs of children and families; meeting the needs of providers; training; Part C services; and addressing the hard questions.

Discussion then turned to completion of the fact sheets. It was reported that the following fact sheets have been finalized:

- *Part C Family Information*;
- *Part C Making a Referral*;
- *Outcomes in Autism*-Charlene Wentland; and
- *Diagnosing Autism in Young Children*-Carol Schall.

Heather Elias then presented the fact sheets Family Support 101; Impact on Families; and Definition: Parents Version of Autism for the Early Intervention Autism Initiative. Heather shared that she had made a very concerted effort to present the information in the fact sheets in a positive manner. The members recognized the challenges in developing the fact sheet and sharing the personal and emotional aspects of autism spectrum disorders. The group thanked Heather for her willingness to share her feelings and experiences through the fact sheets.

As the members reviewed the three fact sheets, it was determined that it was possible to condense the fact sheets. It was stated that some of the information could be incorporated into the *Behavior Interventions* fact sheet and that other information could be combined into one fact sheet. **Please note that the revised fact sheet will be sent to members upon completion.**

The following fact sheets were identified as needing completed or needing a final review:

- *Autism Resources*;
- *What is Autism*; and
- *Behavior Interventions*.

The authors of those fact sheets were not present and it was decided to wait until they were present to address their sheets.

The potential of rescheduling meeting times was tabled until more members were present for a discussion. **Please note, however, that the next meeting has been scheduled for a Monday afternoon due to schedule conflicts.**

Members then discussed setting a vision for the future work of the Initiative. The following question was asked: “What do we want to work on in the next year?” The following goals were identified:

- Identifying skill sets-What is needed in training for providers within the Part C system and that coincides with the Part C philosophy and regulations;
- Increase physicians’ knowledge, skills and abilities in identifying diagnosing and providing intervention for children with autism spectrum disorders;
- Guidance to the field from the State Part C Office related to providing services for children with autism spectrum disorders and their families;
- Including an advocacy component to the “Initiative”; and
- Including universities (higher education) in the work of the “Initiative”.

Future discussion will determine if subcommittees will be established to address the work of the Initiative for the next year. This will also include a determination as to whether monthly meetings of the entire group will continue or if committee meetings will occur with entire group meetings being held on a less frequent basis.

The meeting then concluded with a discussion on the increasing number of children being identified with autism. Carol Schall shared with the group that the following factors have affected the increase in numbers:

- Increased diagnosis;
- Broadening of the autism spectrum;
- Identification of children with autism rather than the diagnosis of mental retardation; and
- A possible increase in the number of children with autism spectrum disorders.

The meeting then adjourned. The next meeting of the Virginia Early Intervention Autism Initiative will be held **Monday, May 24, 2004 from 1:00-4:00 in Conference Room B at the Henrico Mental Health Center.**

