

**Alabama Autism Full Task Force Meeting**  
**June 17, 2008**  
**10:00 a.m.**  
**Alabama State House, Montgomery, Room 123**

**Call to Order**

Welcome everyone back for 2<sup>nd</sup> round of AATF. Many were here last year with hard work in subcommittees—expect the same efforts and productivity this year.

**House Joint Resolution 12—renewal legislation**

In the last legislative session, House Joint Resolution 12 was signed by the governor, which renewed the work of the AATF for one more year. The Task Force's final report will be given to the Alabama State Legislature at the beginning of the next session, which begins February 2009. That date is fast approaching.

**Work Schedule—time frame for recommendations of the subcommittees**

When this meeting has concluded, we will have sign up sheets for subcommittees. Sign up for any subcommittee you wish to participate in. They are arranged according to topics. Even if you are not officially appointed to Task Force, still participate. It is a collaborative and inclusive process. We want anyone who wants to be involved in Autism policy involved.

Each individual subcommittee is responsible for producing minutes. These minutes are available on the Autism Society of Alabama's website, as well as on Cam Ward's website for open viewing, feedback, and discussion. This opens a healthy dialogue to include other ideas if you can't come to Montgomery for the meetings.

When the subcommittees are formed, the chairpersons will contact you. The subcommittee chair will start scheduling meetings within the next 2 weeks. When scheduling, it is preferable to be in Montgomery. Chairpersons should contact Tracy Battigula at 334-353-0995 so she can help post the open meeting. She can help centralize the meeting schedules. Rep. Ward will try to participate as much as possible in subcommittee meetings, and will try to attend at least the first subcommittee meetings that are held.

At this time we would like to hear from Commissioner John Houston from DMH/MR:

This is a rare opportunity. Gov Riley, Lt. Gov Folsom, Jr., and legislative leadership are ready to help—the time is right. The thing that is not optimal is the budget for this year and next year. Can you remember when the budget was not a struggle? We will do it anyway. Things are tight in 2009, but it will not always be this way. We need to position ourselves and do our homework in order to get plan we are comfortable with when the economy turns around so that we are in a position to make it happen. DMH/MR is very committed to working with those affected by ASD.

Rep. Ward: Thank you to Commissioner Houston and DMH/MR for your support.

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services: Kim Hill—Commissioner Shivers apologizes for not being here. We look forward to the process going on here. We are looking forward to helping this process along in any way we can help. We are committed to this endeavor.

State Department of Education: Mabrey Whetstone—We are committed to trying to improve and make a smooth transition across agencies. We are excited about what this Task Force can do for our state.

Rep. Dunn—It is good to be a part of this Task Force. As far as the legislature, we are all 105 of us are really concerned about autism and will do whatever possible. Everyone is proud of Cam and what has happened so we can appreciate work of service providers. Many legislators did not know what happened with ASD. I was surprised at what was happening. We are looking forward to work from the TF. Please support this cause.

As we made preliminary recommendations from last year, we laid a good foundation for work ahead of us. The creation of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (IACC), which was accomplished in HJR 3 that allows for more collaboration around agencies and policies as a state. One of the biggest issues is that there are a lot of stakeholders, but we often work against each other. With limited resources, we do not have the luxury to fight and argue about the direction of ASD services. Some of us are not natural allies, but that is the purpose of the TF to create common ground and provide better services. The IACC is the first step. When TF has a final report, we want a smooth transition of the responsibility from the TF to the IACC, since it is a permanent fixture and the TF will end February 2009. The IACC is a separate body from the TF and has a 25 member council.

Jennifer Muller: Final report from the Alabama Autism Needs Assessment. There is the full report which includes an executive summary and all the data that was compiled is in the appendices – Task Force and Needs Assessment participants/members received these full reports. Others received the executive summary and key findings. Copies of all documents will be available to anyone who wants them. The Executive Summary pulls together the main points that were brought out in Needs Assessment process. One thing we tried to do was to try to make it user friendly for Task Force subcommittee issues. The Task Force subcommittees were restructured to mirror the Needs Assessment sections—because that is how the research and services are divided. The “slick” documents that are labeled “Key Findings” contain graphs, charts, and key take-home points. This is useful for educating individuals who are not familiar with ASD. Hopefully all pieces of this document will be used by the Task Force and helpful. The final report contains all of the data found in Alabama and a great literature review that discusses national data. The report compares Alabama to national in many areas. All of the groups listed on front cover were organizations that participated. The Needs Assessment was funded by the Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities (ACDD). We are proud of it and hope it will be used.

Questions:

How will the University of South Alabama project data be used?

The USA data is complimentary. It says that the general population does agree with the findings from the Needs Assessment.

### **Committees**

Subcommittees is where bulk of work will be done. Small groups are able to accomplish more goals and create more and better recommendations. If there are different directions that subcommittees feel are important issues, they are free to explore other topics. We do want to keep things separate among subcommittees, however, so we do not duplicate efforts. We want to compartmentalize efforts.

#### *Healthcare, Subcommittee Chair, Bama Hager—medical, insurance, screening*

I believe that the major issue we will be tackling is insurance. The subcommittee will come up with similar goals—such as communicating with public providers and increasing insurance coverage. We will ask MCD be more involved by requesting that a representative be present at each healthcare subcommittee meeting. It may be the toughest and biggest issue.

#### *Diagnosis and Early Screening, Subcommittee Chair, Dr. Hanes Swingle—family services, workforce development*

The Needs Assessment shows that Alabama is behind in diagnosing. We will look at new and better ways to identify children earlier. Early identification has been shown to improve the outcome and we want to do anything we can to get children identified sooner. We want the Alabama Hospital Association involved in this subcommittee. There are many rural service providers who are not equipped to handle issues of ASD. They will fit into this committee

#### *Intervention Services (ages 0-5), Subcommittee Chair, Elizabeth Griffith, early intervention, transition to school, pres-school, work force development*

We will continue to follow up on the work of the diagnosis and screening subcommittee. Once individuals are identified, what will we do? We will look at new and innovative ways to serve these individuals without breaking the system. We will ask SDOE to work in all intervention subcommittees.

#### *Intervention Services (ages 6-21), Subcommittee Chair, Jim Wrye—vocational rehabilitation, school services, secondary education, family services, work force development*

This Task Force will look at pilot programs that are in small isolated areas. Workforce development is one area that may have additional funding that has not existed in the past. Those who are involved in the 2 year school systems will also be involved in this subcommittee.

#### *Intervention Services for Adults, Subcommittee Chair, Joe Carter – work force development, law enforcement education, transition services, residential services*

The first statement that I would like to make is that the first 19 years of life are spent in childhood; the next 50 years are spent as an adult. These individuals want a meaningful life. We are excited about these opportunities.

There are many frustrations by parents. The way we fix that is to bring them to the table. Funding is a major issue. What funding is available, we will build upon, so we need all the players at the table.

*Systems of Care, Subcommittee Chair, Jennifer Sellers*

As a parent I do know that in looking at different services, it is difficult to navigate the system. We looked at services available. Do they mix or not? Last year this subcommittee came up with recommendations like regional centers. We would welcome any and everyone on subcommittee. What is (not) available in your community?

*Financial Impact, Subcommittee Chair Commissioner John Houston,*

Alice Widgeon: Everything we do has a price tag. And that will involve the Alabama legislature. That is the 1<sup>st</sup> question asked: how much will it cost? The Financial Impact subcommittee is made up of the chairpersons. Last year we struggled with the enormity of the task. It was too overwhelming to think about the cost. It will be very helpful for the IACC to have info about what is being recommended. Can we blend streams of money? Commissioner Houston will be the chair of this committee. Ann Evans (Commissioner Houston's Executive Asst.) is very skilled in helping break down issues into simpler parts. She will be assisting him as we put these issues into an understandable format.

Rep. Ward: Alice and I traveled to Philadelphia last year—to see what is happening in other states. Alabama was equal with some other states—we are doing more than others and less than others. Pennsylvania's question was how did you fight certain groups? We came up with not fighting—we worked through problems. That is a big struggle in many states. We are ahead of the curve when it comes to working together and by collaborating, we can make a lot happen. The final Task Force recommendations must be signed, sealed, and delivered by Feb 2009. The Task Force goes away, and we wait to see if it passes. Only a percentage of the recommendations will pass. We will not see all the fruits of our labor—it will be the next generation.

Rep. Ward: Before we start the subcommittee sign-ups, any questions or comments?

Lee Yount—regarding the IACC. Do we know how that will be structured?

That is in the HJR 3, there are several appointing authorities. The governor has 8 appointments. A certain number on the council must be on the ASD spectrum. A lead agency has yet to be identified. The council will make that decisions as one of the first acts of the IACC. Those with appointing authority will get letters. Agencies with representation include AIDB, the Autism Society of Alabama, ADPH, ADRS, MCD, AAP, universities, ACDD, etc. The speaker and Lt. governor also have appointments. A certain number of those on the council are also private citizens, AAP. We want a good broad base of representation. The governor can still make additional appointments for those who may need to be

incorporated later. We don't want to exclude anyone. Appointments are in staggered terms of 4 years. The IACC will come up with a lead agency in the first meeting. There is some money to allow them to get started on the work to get started with the Task Force.

### **Subcommittee Sign-Up**

Sign up sheets will be on middle table. Subcommittee chairs should contact Tracy B. within next 2 weeks to inform her of meeting dates and handle scheduling. Rep. Ward will try to attend at least the first meeting of each subcommittee.

### **Meeting Adjourns**