

**ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON AUTISM
MEETING
MAY 18, 2012**

The Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism met Friday, May 18, 2012, at 1:00 p.m., in Room 130 at the State Capitol, Little Rock, Arkansas. Senator Mary Anne Salmon and Representative Uvalde Lindsey, presided.

Task Force members present were Senator Mary Anne Salmon, Representative Uvalde Lindsey, Marjorie Greenberg, Dr. Tyra Reid, Dr. Charles Green, Alice Jones (sitting in for Jay Bradford), Veronica Myers, Dianna Varady, Karan Burnette, Eric Moxley, Dr. Loretta Cochran, Kay Michael, Amanda Holsted, and Martha Asti.

Representative Lindsey opened the meeting. The minutes of the April 20, 2012, meeting were approved by acclamation.

Discussion of Interactive Network, Elopement and Wandering

Ms. Dawn Itzkowitz, Autism Subcommittee member, stated the Smart 911 system is beneficial for parents with an autistic child who may have a tendency to wander from home. The Interactive Autism Network (IN) launched a questionnaire in which 800 families responded. The survey showed autistic children between 4-10 years of age engage in elopement and wandering which is 40% more than a typical sibling. Another feature of the Smart 911 system is the ability to text a 911 emergency.

Ms. Itzkowitz announced Autism Speaks 2011 walk-a-thon raised approximately \$100,000.

Ms. Itzkowitz said on June 4, 2012, at 10:00 a.m., an announcement will be made on the State Capitol's front steps regarding the Smart 911 system.

Summary of Special Education Program Monitoring

Ms. Martha Kay Asti, Associate Director Special Education Unit, explained Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is currently redefining the monitoring system by looking at how they monitor outcome versus compliance. The IDEA monitoring system uses a number of indicators to determine how well students with disabilities are receiving instruction as well as how the federal funds are disbursed. February 1, of each year states submit an annual performance report to OSEP. There are 20 indicators on the performance report that have to be addressed, some indicators are result indicators and some are compliance indicators. The compliance indicators are transition, discipline, identification of students by disability, and least restrictive environment. There are indicators that look at dispute resolutions, due process timelines and remediation as well. DOE uses information schools put into their ABSCAN program, such as on-sight monitoring and financial records. OSEP has strict criteria of what has to be reported and how it's to be reported. Ms. Asti said the state's annual performance report is on the Special Education website. Once the report has been submitted, DOE generates a district level annual performance report. Data collected from the OSEP report is developed so the schools know what areas they need to target for additional assistance.

Ms. Asti explained indicators that require statistical data must have a calculated formula and approval by OSEP. Ms. Asti said if something looks askew on the school districts annual performance report, DOE will periodically ask school districts to look at the school's policies, procedures and practices. She said DOE pays attention to certain categories when they go on site to make certain schools are addressing the needs of students with disabilities. DOE will advise school districts that need help writing behavior intervention plans and provide recommendations on workshops that are available. Ms. Asti said it is the DOE goal to educate all school personnel on the legal requirements and the compliance requirements when working with students with disabilities.

Ms. Greenberg said parent's are concerned the disciplinary indicator includes a disproportionate representation of students with disabilities. Ms. Greenberg expressed her concern that districts with low expulsion rates show students with disabilities make up the largest expulsion/suspend rate on the report.

Ms. Lisa Haley, Administrator, Monitoring and Program Effectiveness, Special Education Unit, explained when her department goes on-site to monitor, they collect the professional development completed by administrators. They expect to see special education specific items on the professional development and talk with the principals, superintendents, and teachers about how that's been delivered. If there is something disproportionate in terms of discipline or students being suspended or expelled, then that's part of the on-site monitoring. Districts can get a corrective action plan during the monitoring process. The team is very diligent about students with autism and all components addressed should be within the IEP. OSEP is very quick to correct districts. Through the State Personnel Development Grant Program, the leadership academy received information on training for positive behavior supports and behavior interventions. Ms. Haley will check to see how the leadership academy is responding to the training. She explained how the department monitors school district's regulations, procedures and instructions. Schools receive a three week notice before monitors arrive on site. Her department sends the school a check list requesting the schools policies and procedures. Monitors review the policies and procedures before going on-site. The monitor's file review is comprehensive. They monitor referrals to special education and eligibility through IEP placements. They interview regular education teachers regarding accommodations on the IEP to make certain they are being implemented. They interview special education teachers about the instruction and look at the goals on the IEP to see if that's actually occurring in the classroom. They make sure teachers are making progress reports and the student is meeting goals. Finally an exit conference with the superintendent and the special education director is done. If the school is not in compliance, that school has one year to correct any incidence of non-compliance.

Ms. Haley said one of the four goals the State Personnel Development Grant is positive behavior support in the schools. The ADE Professional Development Unit has recognized the need for PBS and leadership teams provide many professional development trainings with principals, literacy specialist and many teachers across the state.

Representative Lindsey requested Ms. Haley discuss with Dr. Kimbrall:

- Are the higher education institutions providing a 2 hour block of autism training every year as it might be mandated by legislation
- Can required professional development be flexible enough to include 3 hours of training in developmental disability interaction
- Provide school districts with a model for implementing Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports to be used for all students

Ms. Burnette said the Department of Education has models for positive behavior support and functional analysis to be used when going through the IEP process. Use of the DOE models during IEP development meeting would provide a better outcome for all students diagnosed with autism or other developmental disabilities.

Ms. Burnette said families are requesting an autism resource center that provides access to computers, autism training, reading materials on autism, and other resources directed toward families with autistic children.

Discussion of Task Force Goals and Objectives

Representative Lindsey asked task force members to study the task force goals and develop ideas on legislation to help the Insurance Department, Department of Education, Developmental Disabilities Services, and UAMS

Children's Hospital and the Dennis Developmental Center in overcoming any obstacles encountered providing insurance coverage and resources to families with autistic children.

Representative Lindsey suggested task force members consider if the Department of Education's positive behavior supports and functional analysis forms should be on the checklist for compliance with children with disabilities.

Other Business

Representative Lindsey announced next task force meeting is tentatively set for June 15, 2012.

Representative Lindsey suggested inviting Mr. Bill Walker with Career Education and Mr. Shane Broadway with Department of Higher Education to the next task force meeting.

Representative Lindsey suggested inviting Mr. Ed Franklin, Director, Arkansas Association of Two Year Colleges, to the August task force meeting.

Dr. Cochran suggested inviting Dean Tom Smith, University of the Ozarks, Clarksville to the next task force meeting. Dr. Cochran also suggested inviting Ms. Julia Frost, Coordinator, University of the Ozarks, Clarksville, to the next task force meeting to discuss the premier program standard of care which is an innovative program designed for youth with autism.

Senator Salmon is proposing legislation to mandate positive behavior support and behavior interventions as part of training requirements for the leadership academy.

The Special Education website to view the state's annual performance report is accessible from the Autism Task Force link on the state senate webpage.

Meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.