

**ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON AUTISM**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**MARCH 18, 2016**

The Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism met Friday, March 18, 2016, at 1:00 p.m., in Room 151, State Capitol, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Task Force members present were: Senator Uvalde Lindsey, Representative Mary Broadaway, Ms. Jennifer Belt, Mr. Seth Blomeley, Ms. Karan Burnette, Ms. Tina Davis, Ms. Lisa Haley, Ms. Diane Holitik, Dr. Randal Hundley (*for Dr. Michael Martin*), Dr. Steve Kahler, Ms. Karen Massey, Mr. Eric Moxley, Ms. Linda Rogers, Ms. Melissa Stone, Ms. Dianna Varady, and Ms. Nancy Wells. Advisory member Dr. Charlie Green also attended.

Senator Lindsey called the meeting to order.

**Adoption of Minutes from January 15, 2106 [Exhibit C]**

The minutes from January 15, 2016, were approved by acclamation.

**Discussion of the Arkansas Health Care Reform Task Force recommendation that the Legislature consider the Governor's Arkansas Works proposal, including the potential implementation of legislation required to reform the management of the Medicaid and Private Option programs**

Dr. Charlie Green, Director, Behavioral Health Services Division, Arkansas Department of Human Services, made opening comments on the importance of supporting Arkansas Works. Dr. Green said he and other stakeholders will meet with Medicaid contract negotiators to discuss a Medicaid state plan. Dr. Green will present his proposal during the discussion requesting the Medicaid contract include independent assessments, care management, and an integrated care plan. Dr. Green suggested the task force Chairs make certain advocacy groups, such as the Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families (AACF), attend the contract negotiation meetings to present their request for proposals.

Ms. Loretta Cochran, parent of a child with Autism, is concerned individuals who receive Medicaid services will lose quality case management care under the Governor's new managed-care proposal.

Ms. Melissa Stone, Director, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), Department of Human Services, said she met with the Governor to discuss ideas on how to eliminate the Medicaid waiting list so more individuals with a developmental disability can receive services. Ms. Stone and several DDS staff met with TennCare, in Tennessee, to talk about their Medicaid demonstration waiver that has three Tier levels, including a support package. DDS is currently drafting a demonstration waiver model with a Tiered system. Ms. Stone said the Governor requested DHS to budget \$232 million for the Medicaid Expansion program.

Mr. Dusty Maxwell, Director, Pathfinders, Inc., explained in his handout options on how the state can save \$193 million on non-HDC developmental disability programs over a five year period (FY2017-2021). This would include limiting occupational, physical, and speech therapy services, increase eligibility criteria for children's day habilitation centers, and implementing cost effective changes to the DD home and community-based waiver.

Ms. Dianna Varady, Director, Arkansas Autism Resource & Outreach Center, said parents and advocacy groups are concerned that managed-care companies lack expertise for providing long term Developmental Disability (DD) services and supports. Managed-care companies use financial incentives that may lower quality of care for individuals with developmental disabilities and exclude skilled nursing facilities and institutions.

Ms. Varady listed DD recommendations made by advocacy groups:

- Allow individuals with disabilities and their families to be involved in the contract negotiation process
- Provide independent assessment and evaluation for level of care
- Provide independent and conflict free care coordination
- Hold entities accountable for poor outcomes
- Provide incentives for programs that increase independence and improve health
- Provide programs with less restrictive environment
- Provide higher level of skilled nursing facilities and institutions
- Provide individuals with an independent Ombudsman for managed care issues
- Provide easy and accessible grievance process for families
- Implement profit controls for managed-care organizations
- Provide funding for home and community based services for individuals who only need limited DD services

Ms. Varady said evidence based treatment and preventive support services are a cost savings to the state. Children with Autism who receive these services make fewer emergency room visits and are less likely to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital or to a human development center.

Mr. Josh Wilson, Director of Operations, Independent Case Management, Inc. (ICM), and member of the Arkansas Waiver Association Board (AWA), was recognized. He said ICM serves over 400 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout the state and currently serves 29 individuals through the autism waiver program. He said the AWA represents individuals with disabilities and their families who live in the state through open advocacy and communication.

Mr. Wilson listed several suggestions AWA would like to see implemented in the Governor's Medicaid Exchange proposal: increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, let the individual choose whether they want to live at home or an institution, and focus on outcomes and competition.

Ms. Cindy Alberding, Executive Director, ICM, gave a brief overview of how ICM's Bridging Recreational and Vocational Opportunities (BRAVO) program offers job skills training for individuals with disabilities through a combination of day programs and workshops, social and recreational outings, and skill-building internships.

Mr. Mark George, member of the Arkansas Waiver Association Board, Disability Rights Arkansas Board, and policy chair of the Arkansas Governor's Developmental Disability Council, suggested the task force start looking at other states' managed-care contracts and find one that meets DD managed care standard. The waiver model should support long term care to each individual with disabilities with a purpose that meets their needs and helps fulfill their life objectives with the least amount of cost.

Ms. Phyllis Bell, Governor's office, stated she will take her meeting notes back to the Governor. She said the Governor supports job placement initiatives for the developmental disabled population and is working on a plan to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities with hopes of eliminating the Medicaid waiting list.

With there being no further business the meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.