

ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON AUTISM
MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 21, 2013

The Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism met Friday, June 21, 2013, at 1:30 p.m., in Room 130 of the State Capitol, Little Rock, Arkansas. Senator Uvalde Lindsey, Senate Co-Chair, presided.

Task Force members present were Senator Uvalde Lindsey, Leslie Henson-Kita, Linda Rogers, Karen Massey, Natalie Ibanez, Dr. Randal Hundley (for Dr. Michael Martin), Dr. Charles Green, Glenda Higgs, Ava Franks (for Jay Bradford), Dianna Varady, Karan Burnette, Eric Moxley, Dr. Loretta Cochran, Dr. Richard Frye, Kay Michael, Amanda Horton, Maureen Bradshaw, and Martha Kay Asti.

Senator Lindsey opened the meeting. Each task force member introduced themselves and gave brief opening remarks.

Senator Lindsey thanked guests for attending the task force meeting. Invited guests were Rachele E. Siverly, parent; Tammy Schwartz, parent; Lauren Parrish, parent; Kimberly Parker, advocate; Representative Randy Alexander, Representative Mary Broadaway, Dawn Itzkowitz, parent, Autism Speaks; Barry Vuletich, parent/advocate, Disability Rights Center of Arkansas; and Rob Chastain, Arkansas Fire Training Academy.

Election of Autism Task Force Officers

Ms. Henson-Kita made a motion to re-elect Senator Uvalde Lindsey as Senate Co-Chair of the Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism. Ms. Massey seconded the motion. The motion carried. Ms. Varady made a motion to elect Representative Henry “Hank” Wilkins, IV, as House Co-Chair of the Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism. Ms. Henson-Kita seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Approval of Minutes from the July 20, 2012 Meeting Exhibit D

The Minutes of the July 20, 2012, meeting were approved by acclamation.

Discussion and Establishment of Task Force Rules and Procedures

Senator Lindsey asked task force members for their thoughts on the Proposed Meeting Rules (Exhibit E).

Dr. Green suggested that item #3 on the Proposed Meeting Rules be changed to read “Minutes of each meeting will be presented for adoption at the next meeting.”

Dr. Green noted item #10 of the Proposed Meeting Rules does not define an ex-officio as voting or non-voting. He asked if ex-officio members are counted when the task force is seeking a quorum or included when the task force is counting legal votes. Dr. Green requested the task force seek legal clarity on these concerns. Senator Lindsey suggested the autism task force seek legal counsel from the Bureau of Legislative Research to help codify task force rules and regulations.

Task Force members discussed each appointment to the task force as outlined in Act 1272 of 2009. Members of the task force discussed whether the appointment of a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) had been filled. Ms. Varady said task force member Dayna Miller is a qualified BCBA.

Senator Lindsey suggested the task force members invite individuals from all ethnic backgrounds who are qualified to serve on the task force as ex-officio members.

Ms. Ibanez explained most pediatricians and professionals who serve Hispanic patients are not fluently bilingual making it difficult to communicate to the Hispanic population services that are available and how to access them.

Dr. Cochran proposed that the task force add an additional meeting rule to include using “people-first” language when addressing ethnic diversity during task force meetings.

Review of Statutory Duties

Senator Lindsey reminded task force members their primary duties and responsibilities as outlined in Act 1272 is to examine how the State of Arkansas responds to autism and autism spectrum disorders (ASD), determine best practices to treat autism and ASD, and recommend more efficient methods for treating autism and ASD. Senator Lindsey asked task force members to continue using the primary duties as guidelines for future task force goal discussions.

Goals of the Task Force

Dr. Green gave an overview of the task force accomplishments during the 89th General Assembly. Dr. Green stated the task force worked hard to pass legislation to implement Medicaid expansion private option that will help many parents with developmental disabled children have access to insurance. Dr. Green also stated the task force help push forward the Community First Choice Option which helps families with developmental disabled children receive the services they need easily and quickly by eliminating the Medicaid Waiver’s long waiting list without eliminating services.

Dr. Cochran said the Arkansas Disability Coalition has a statewide network available that the task force could use to disseminate information, especially in communities where children with disabilities are underserved and unrepresented.

Senator Lindsey asked task force members to work together in creating a statewide campaign using web-based entities to disseminate information regarding developmental disability services to families across the state. He asked the members to find other avenues the task force can use to disperse information to communities where broadband is not easily available to families needing services.

Dr. Hundley said he will check to see if Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield’s network resource is conducive to what the task force can use in disseminating information.

Dr. Frye suggested the task force focus on autism as a lifelong continuum of care rather than dividing the goals into appropriate age groups. He suggested the task force place its focus on diagnosis, treatment, and providing services throughout the life of the individual. Dr. Frye also pointed out parents and caregivers lack resources for respite care.

Ms. Ibanez pointed out most girls and minorities do not receive a diagnosis until they are older than the required age. She suggested the task force look at how to help these individuals receive equitable services.

Meeting Schedule

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, July 19, 2013, 1:00 p.m., Room 130, State Capitol.

Other Business

Ms. Bradshaw explained one of Quick Start's early intervention programs offered at Dawson Cooperative is the Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT). Her handout (#1) explains how PRT changes brain function in autistic kids. Ms. Bradshaw said Dawson Cooperative has been providing free service to families with autistic children for the past four years. Unfortunately, without the financial resources needed, the program will no longer be available after June 30, 2013.

Senator Lindsey asked Ms. Bradshaw to provide at the next meeting the number of children served and the negative impact of losing the service.

Dr. Cochran invited task force members to participate in the Resource Fair that will be provided at the Autism Speaks Walk, Saturday, October 5, 2013, Clinton Presidential Center, Little Rock.

Meeting Communications

Task Force members stated their preference of receiving committee information electronically. Senator Lindsey requested that task force members and staff name attachments in the subject line before dispersing the information.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.