

**ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON AUTISM**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**SEPTEMBER 19, 2014**

The Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism met Friday, September 19, 2014, at 1:00 p.m., in Room 151, State Capitol, Little Rock, Arkansas. Senator Uvalde Lindsey, Senate Co-Chair, presided.

Task Force members present were Senator Uvalde Lindsey, Representative Mary Broadaway, Ms. Karan Burnette, Ms. Tina Davis, Dr. Charlie Green, Ms. Lisa Haley, Ms. Glenda Higgs, Ms. Leslie Henson-Kita, Ms. Karen Massey, Dr. Tyra Reid, Ms. Linda Rogers, and Ms. Dianna Varady.

Advisory members present were Ms. Denise Ennett and Ms. Veronica Myers.

Senator Lindsey called the meeting to order.

**Minutes – June 20, 2014, Meeting [Exhibit C]**

The minutes from the June 20, 2014, Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism meeting were approved by acclamation.

Senator Lindsey welcomed Ms. Lisa Haley, Associate Director of Special Education for the Department of Education. By virtue of her position, Ms. Haley replaces Ms. Martha Kay Asti on the Autism Task Force. Senator Lindsey welcomed Mr. James Brader, Assistant Director for Compliance, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), Arkansas Department of Human Services. Mr. Brader will become Interim Director of DDS on October 16, upon Dr. Green's position change to Behavioral Health Services. At that time, Mr. Brader will serve on the Task Force by virtue of his position. Senator Lindsey welcomed Dr. Green to serve on the Task Force as an advisory member.

**Introduction to the Associates Degree in Occupational Life Skills [Exhibits D-1 & D-2]**

Dr. Steven M. Gates, Senior Vice President and Provost, Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC), was recognized. Dr. Gates gave a PowerPoint presentation outlining the Occupational Life Skills Program (OLS), a potential new partnership program between NWACC and Bellevue College in Seattle, Washington. OLS is a full Associates Degree including approximately 60 credit hours delivered over four years. The program offers adults and students with cognitive disabilities an opportunity to achieve gainful employment and become self-sufficient, contributing citizens. The minimum criteria for student admission is a standard IQ score of 70, high school diploma, or a certificate of completion. Once the program is approved, NWACC anticipates launch date by August 2015. NWACC is working with organizations in generating scholarships and Pell grants for students who qualify for the program. Bellevue College is seeking partnerships with colleges across the nation to expand the program.

Dr. Gates attached a Needs Assessment Survey for task force members to complete and return by mail or they can complete the survey using the online website.

Representative Broadway expressed concern with the program's admission standards and narrowness of serving only students with cognitive disabilities.

### **Inclusion Grant Update**

Ms. Dianna Varady, Director, Arkansas Autism Resource and Outreach Center (AAROC), was recognized. Ms. Varady announced a grant opportunity made possible by the Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District to support mainstream organizations and extracurricular programs that wish to include children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in their program setting. Once additional grants become available, Ms. Varady will send the information to staff for dissemination. She encouraged Task Force members to give her contact information to families of a child who has a developmental disability and wants to participate in a community program such as football, or the child needs afterschool care but the family doesn't have information on services that are available.

Task Force members discussed ideas on how to electronically publicize the grant information to organizations, pre-K and agencies around the state including using DHS website to link information regarding developmental programs to families in need of services.

Ms. Dawn Itzkowitz, parent of an autistic child, suggested an "All Call" system as a communication tool that organizations can use to communicate with parents regarding developmental services that are available. Ms. Ellen Hobgood, parent of two children, stated her concerns with her district's lack of communication regarding developmental services that are available.

Ms. Stephanie Noodleman, Special Educator, stated her concerns with how schools are educating children with disabilities and the long-term effects.

Ms. Janet Lawrence, General Counsel, Department of Higher Education, and mother of an eight year old disabled daughter, was recognized for comments.

Mr. Jim Brader gave an update on the Community First Choice Option. DDS is working through payment methodology, timeframe and promulgation to have in place by the 2015 legislative session.

### **Annual Report of the Autism Task Force [Handout #1]**

Senator Lindsey advised that the Autism Task Force Annual Report was presented during today's meeting of the Arkansas Legislative Council, as required.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.