

**ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON AUTISM**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**OCTOBER 21, 2016**

The Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism met Friday, October 21, 2016, at 1:00 p.m., in Room 171, State Capitol, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Task Force members present were: Senator Uvalde Lindsey, Representative Mary Broadaway, co-chairs, Ms. Karan Burnette, Ms. Lisa Haley, Ms. Teresa Hardin, Dr. Alan Solomon, (*for Dr. Randal Hundley*), Ms. Karen Massey, Dr. Tyra Reid, Ms. Melissa Stone, Ms. Dianna Varady, and Ms. Nancy Wells. Also in attendance was Ms. Carrie Anderson (*for advisory member Dr. Charlie Green*).

Senator Lindsey called the meeting to order.

**Adoption of Minutes from June 17, 2016 [Exhibit C]**

The minutes from June 17, 2016, were approved by acclamation.

**Discussion on Mosaic Templars Cultural Center: Towards A More Inclusive Museum**

Ms. Christina Shutt, Director, Ms. Liz Marg, Education Director, and Mr. Brian Rodgers, Community Relations Liaison, Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, (MTCC) were recognized. Ms. Shutt presented a PowerPoint explaining MTCC's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret and celebrate Arkansas's African American history, culture, and community, and to inform and educate the public about African American's achievements in business, politics, and the arts through temporary and permanent exhibits, educational programming and outreach. MTCC has worked hard to research trends in museum inclusiveness and is striving to make the museum more accessible and supportive for all families especially those affected by autism. MTCC hosted a "Creativity on the Spectrum" night event, for families with children on the autism spectrum. The event consisted of a self-guided tour with an optional scavenger hunt and a classroom art program.

Mr. Rodgers said each year MTCC hosts an event called "Creativity Arkansas", and invites professional adult artists with connections to the state to display their art. MTCC is planning a future Creativity Arkansas art competition for children and youth who are residents or has ties to the state. Winners will have their art showcased at the museum and be invited as guests of honor at the Creativity Arkansas event.

Ms. Varady announced the Arkansas Autism Research and Outreach Center (AAROC) received funding to hire parent liaisons at autism satellite sites in Helena/West Helena and Magnolia, Arkansas. The satellite sites will host Special Development training classes including technical assistance for families, clinicians and educators. Ms. Varady said AAROC will start assembling community advisory committees that include a parent, autistic individual, community business leaders, city and state government officials, county officials, and others who will raise awareness and provide opportunities for talented children and adults with autism.

Ms. Hardin shared about her autistic daughter's musical talents and involvement with the symphony orchestra program. Ms. Hardin said the majority of the symphony performers are on the autism spectrum.

Ms. Wells spoke about her fundraising program called AbleTalks. AbleTalks offers an affordable program to help individuals with autism create unique lesson plans, set goals, and pursue life skills in a safe and supportive environment.

Ms. Haley spoke about a recent education transition summit held in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Approximately 350 teachers and school administrators across the state attended. Ms. Haley shared how Mr. Chris Ulmer, a former Special Education teacher from Florida and is now a motivational speaker traveling around the country speaking about autism, has a blog called Special Books by Special Kids, a program which brings awareness about autism through books and stories written by kids with autism. Ms. Haley explained that through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and federal funding such as the Promise grant helps youths with disabilities who are transitioning from high school, receive pre-employment transition services so they can obtain competitive integrated employment.

Mr. Chris Gains, Malvern Fireman, said his department is interested in receiving autism training classes that are offered at ALETA.

Ms. Stone gave an update regarding a proposed rule change that would set a 90-minute threshold for speech, occupational (OT) and physical therapy (PT) for Medicaid recipients without a prior authorization request. She said parents whose children require longer than 90-minute sessions are concerned the new rule will deny their child's claim for services. DHS is working on an extension of benefits for individuals requesting additional therapy hours of speech, OT, and PT.

Ms. Burnette shared how Joey Travolta, a film maker and former special education teacher, provides training camps and workshops on film making to individuals with intellectual disabilities including autism. She said he was a keynote speaker at a conference held in the state and would like to return to host his workshop.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.