

ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON AUTISM
MEETING
JUNE 15, 2012

The Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism met Friday, June 15, 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, Leslie Henson-Kita, Marjorie Greenberg, Dr. Steve Kahler, Dr. Michael Martin via telephone conference, Dr. Tyra Reid, Tracy Harris (sitting in for Dr. Charles Green), Dan Honey (sitting in for Jay Bradford), Veronica Myers, Dianna Varady, Vickie Tankersly (sitting in for Karan Burnette), Eric Moxley, Dr. Loretta Cochran, Karen Massey, Amanda Holsted, Maureen Bradshaw, and Martha Asti.

Representative Lindsey opened the meeting. Changes to the May 18, 2012 minutes were approved by acclamation.

Discussion of Educational and Job Training Opportunities for Students with a Developmental Disability

Mr. Bob Gunter, Deputy Director, Career Technical Education, Department of Career and Technical Education (CTE), explained CTE prepares youth and adults for a wide range of careers, advanced education, and training opportunities. CTE programs provide specialized training and real-world work experience while reinforcing academic skills and their application in the workplace. CTE prepares students for a variety of occupations from entry through professional levels. He said Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) is divided into four divisions; the Division of Career Education, Career and Technical Education, Adult Education, and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Mr. Gunter said ACTI provides services to high school students in grades 7 through 12. ACTI offers 16 vocational programs with more than 20 specialty areas. Programs are provided to all 293 high schools across the state. There are 24 technical centers in the state that are located on a community college campus or a vocational center located in the community. Mr. Gunter said ACTI is funded by a federal Perkins Grant and state appropriations. ACTI's website is www.ace.arkansas.gov.

Mr. Gunter will check on vocational text books written at a level 15.

Representative Lindsey suggested creating an oversight agency to work with the Disabilities Commission with an appropriation to pull together educational information.

Ms. Martha Asti said students with a developmental disability who are 16 years of age or older and plan to attend a secondary education institute, will have a transition plan outlined in their IEP. The plan outlines the student's personal goals including an individualized curriculum to prepare the student for a secondary education or a specific work program. Rehab counselors are invited to attend the student's IEP conference.

Mr. Jim Moreland, Associate Director, Special Programs, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, explained in his handout the Arkansas Department of Career Education's Rehabilitation Services Division (ARS) provides a broad choice of vocational services to clients with mental, physical and sensory disabilities in

obtaining a career in the workforce. ARS operates 19 field offices across the state and serve individuals from ages 19 to 64. Rehab counselor's are assigned to every high school client who is in the 10th or 11th grade to provide guidance as the client transitions from high school into a vocational setting. The rehab counselor will work with the client to develop an individual employment plan targeting the job the client has chosen to work towards, the specific services needed, and a realistic time frame to accomplish these goals. The client will receive assistance in finding a job after he completes the training and rehabilitation services. ARS works with disability services units at the higher education institutions. ARS and ACTI hope to invite Partners for Inclusive Communities to provide training to direct care staff at ACTI. ARS and ACTI will develop a programmatic flowchart on how the programs work together.

Discussion of Higher Education Opportunities for Students with Autism

Mr. Shane Broadway, Interim Director, Department of Higher Education, explained most higher education institutions provide individualized services to students with autism and other disabilities through their disability service office. The University of Arkansas in Fayetteville will implement Autism Support Program beginning Fall 2012. Services include academic coaching, accessing and supplementing available university services, life coaching, peer mentors, social skills training, and full integration into campus life. Students receive 15-20 hours of direct contact each week with program staff who work closely with university faculty and various administrative offices.

Mr. Broadway stated the Governors Workforce Cabinet meets monthly to discuss education and economic development issues. The cabinet consist of the Governor's Office, the Department of Career Education, the Department of Higher Education, the Department of Workforce Services, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, the Arkansas Science and Technology Authority, and the Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges. Mr. Broadway invited task force chairs to the next cabinet meeting to address concerns relating to autism education.

Dr. Corbet Lamkin, Chancellor, Southern Arkansas University Tech, Camden, stated the University is committed to supporting students with special needs by developing a plan that best fits their career goals.

Mr. Richard Robertson and his wife Vickie Robertson, parents of Pryce Robertson, were recognized to give a brief overview of Pryce's autism diagnosis when he was 3½ years old and the early intervention service that helped overcome the doctor's grim diagnosis. Mr. and Mrs. Robertson are the founders of the Pryce Robertson Autism Awareness Foundation. The Foundation provides funding for autism awareness and education around the Ouachita County area.

Mr. Pryce Robertson said he is a person with autism who can communicate and function in society. He is 21 years old, has his own radio show and is attending Southern Arkansas University Tech in Camden and majoring in Political Science.

Representative Lindsey announced CMS approval of the state's autism waiver.

Meeting adjourned at 2:52 p.m.