

ARKANSAS LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON AUTISM
MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 12, 2015

The Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Autism met Friday, June 12, 2015, at 1:00 p.m., in Room 151, State Capitol, Little Rock, Arkansas. Senator Uvalde Lindsey and Representative Mary Broadaway presided.

Task Force members present were Senator Uvalde Lindsey, Representative Mary Broadaway, Mr. Jim Brader, Ms. Karan Burnette, Ms. Lisa Haley, Ms. Karen Massey, Mr. Eric Moxley, Dr. Tyra Reid, Ms. Linda Rogers, and Ms. Dianna Varady. Advisory members Dr. Charlie Green, Ms. Camille Johnson, and Ms. Veronica Myers also attended.

Representative Broadaway called the meeting to order. The minutes from the June 12, 2015 meeting were approved by acclamation.

Ms. Carol Sherman, parent of an autistic adult child, shared her story about the many challenges she encountered during her child's early years. Ms. Sherman said she is grateful for the developmental disabilities centers across the state that have provided a safe place for adult children with severe disabilities to live and thrive in a secure environment.

Senator Lindsey expressed his concern regarding the Arkansas Department of Education's proposed rules regarding teacher licensure certification for Special Education.

Legislative Task Force on the Best Practices for Special Education: Act 839 [Exhibit D]

The Autism task force members made their suggested recommendations for appointees to the Legislative Task Force on the Best Practices for Special Education:

- Dr. Peggy Schaefer-Whitby, University of Arkansas, College of Education and Health Professions, Chair, SPED Department
- Dianna Varady, parent, Autism Task Force member, AAROC
- Laura Reynolds, parent from Northwest Arkansas
- Vicki Holt, Special Ed Supervisor, Conway School District and President, AASEA
- Denise Ennett, parent, Autism Task Force advisory member

New Law Enforcement Officer Training – Response to Persons with Behavioral Health Issues [Exhibit E]

Ms. Jami Cook, Director, Arkansas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training, Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy (ALETA), was recognized to explain her handout, Arkansas Law Enforcement Disability Awareness Train the Trainer [Exhibit E]. Ms. Cook said ALETA partnered with the Criminal Justice Institute (CJI), and provided free training classes using Train the Trainer program to teach firefighters, emergency medical services, law enforcement, and 911 operators/dispatchers how to accurately respond to individuals with disabilities. She said classes begin August 2015. Ms. Cook said Arkansas law enforcement officers must complete 16 hours of continued education each year including an annual fire arms qualification. Ms. Cook said all basic training academies in Arkansas are

teaching blocks of basic level instruction that are enhanced with scenario training on developmental disabilities, behavioral issues, and physical disabilities.

Dr. Cheryl May, Director, Criminal Justice Institute (CJI), was recognized. Dr. May said CJI provides advanced training classes to law enforcement officers in Arkansas. She said CJI increased training classes by providing convenient and accessible online programs for rural law enforcement officers who cannot leave their community to take necessary classes for recruit training. She said by FY2015, the number of Arkansas law enforcement officers projected to participate in the online training programs will reach 13,000. Dr. May provided a handout that gave an overview of another curriculum CJI offers online titled Autism Spectrum Disorders: Law Enforcement Response Online. Dr. May said many law enforcement officers who completed the program expressed their gratitude and 98% of those officers rated the class as excellent, very good, or good. In conjunction with the Arkansas Association of Chiefs of Police, CJI developed a 7-hour online class entitled Law Enforcement Response to Persons with Behavioral Health Issues. Dr. May said 764 Arkansas law enforcement officers have completed the class and 98% of those officers rated the program very good or good. Dr. May suggested inviting Memphis based CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) to the state. CIT programs are local initiatives designed to improve the way law enforcement and the community respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis. CIT builds a strong partnership between law enforcement, mental health provider agencies and individuals and families affected by mental illness.

Meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m.