

**Regional Autism Assistance Program  
Expert Panel Advisory Committee Meeting  
October 26, 2021, 10:00 a.m. - noon  
Via Zoom**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization/Role Representing</b>	<b>Present</b>
Alyson Beytien	Life Connections/Family Member	X
Josh Cobbs	Family Advisor	
James Curry	Family Advisor	
Connie Fanselow	Iowa Department of Human Services, Iowa Mental Health and Disability Services Commission	X
Candice Fedeler	Metro West Learning Center	X
Brianna Harvey	Tanager Place, BCBA	X
Erika Hertel	Iowa Regional Autism Assistance Program/Family Member	X
Marcus Johnson-Miller (Bridget Konz)	Iowa Department of Public Health	X
Aaron Kauer	UI Stead Family Children's Hospital Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	
Andrea Keith	Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services	X
Lisa Kemmerer	Star Autism Support	X
Vanessa Kimm	Family Advisor	X
Shawn Kolb	ChildServe	X
Todd Kopelman	UI Stead Family Children's Hospital Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	
Toni Fuller Merfeld	Metro West Learning Center	X
Caroline Moniza	Mercy Family Counseling & EAP	X
Steve Muller	Balance Autism	
Michelle Nuehring	Grant Wood AEA	X
Kelly Pelzel	UI Stead Family Children's Hospital Autism Center	X
Mary Roberts	Family Advisor	
Leslie Rogers	ChildServe	X
Thomas Scholz	Division of Child & Community Health	X
Kristine Steinmetz	Autism Society of Iowa/Family Member	X
Rachell Swanson-Holm	Learn the Signs. Act Early., Regional Autism Assistance Program	X
Wendy Trotter	Iowa Department of Education	
Maria Valdovinos	Drake University	X
Brad Zelinger	Stride Autism Centers	X

**Welcome and Introductions**

Facilitator: Erika Hertel

- Roll call was taken, and introductions were made.

**Guest Speaker:**

- Dr. Lane Strathearn provided an overview of the University of Iowa Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center (IDDRC).  
<https://medicine.uiowa.edu/pediatrics/research/pediatric-centers-and-programs/university-iowa-intellectual-and-developmental-disabilities>

Attached are the slides he presented.



IDDRC\_UI  
presentation\_RAP2

Tom Scholz asked: Do you anticipate that there would be specific asks in the next 2-3 years of CHSC and other centers? Dr. Strathearn answered: The study is confined to in person visits in CDD. However, any time you have a family with a suspicion of autism, to talk to the families about autism research and give them the 'bigger picture' could be helpful. The next stage will require a strong collaboration across the state to enroll pregnant women in order to study the pregnancy, delivery, and first year of life to see if any patterns emerge.

Tom then asked if Dr. Strathearn has any brochures with an overview of the research project to give to potential families. Dr. Strathearn said: The short answer is no, but it is an excellent idea.

Lisa Kemmerer: How can the school communicate this study? Dr. Strathearn: The study is targeted towards 2-3 years of age, however, in the future, we hope to expand to school age children. Lisa suggested sharing with Early ACCESS or Area Education Agencies.

Alyson Beytien asked: Is there any need in connecting families with the baby steps app? Dr. Strathearn responded. "Stay Tuned!"  
What connection will IDDRC have with SPARK? Very integrated. IDDRC will be promoting SPARK.

Erika Hertel: What is your prospective how we can talk to families about current controversy towards research? Dr. Strathearn: There is no cure. We don't have control over media coverage. We are seeking to better understand they reasons of why some children develop Autism and some don't.

Please feel free to contact Dr. Strathearn by email with any questions: [lane-strathearn@uiowa.edu](mailto:lane-strathearn@uiowa.edu)

### **Member Updates:**

#### **Andrea Keith, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

VR has a new director, Dan Talon and two new bureau chiefs, Richard Clark and Eric Evans. No further details about the new leadership are available at this time.

#### **Connie Fanselow, Autism Support Program**

Things are going along smoother. One to two applications per month. Wendy still gets inquiries from families that would qualify for ASP, but they have insurance coverage (with a high co-pay). Still trying to get some movement in the legislature to update the language of the law. If anyone wants to advocate for this change, feel free. Wendy is working on the annual ASP report that will come out at the end of the year and will include additional information regarding this topic.

Funding has stayed steady this year at \$573,000 and that is more than enough to run the program.

#### **Wendy Trotter, Iowa Department of Education**

Wendy was not present, but prepared this written update that Erika shared.

**Iowa BEST Summit:** The summit is co-sponsored by the Iowa Department of Education and the University of Iowa College of Education.

The summit is designed to highlight our collective need to bolster support and care across our educational system, and to build our shared capacity to get there. Attend to receive valuable information, resources and practical solutions around social-emotional-behavioral health.

There will be three focus areas:

1. Social-Emotional-Behavioral Health (SEBH): provides strategies and evidence-based practices around SEBH for all learners and stakeholders in a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework.
2. Family and Student Voice: provides rich learning to improve and sustain family and community engagement to benefit all learners birth to 21, and engage student voice within an [Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#) (MTSS) framework
3. Accelerating Learning: provides strategies and evidence-based practices around accelerating learning and closing achievement gaps for all learners in an MTSS framework.

The summit is intended for educators, administrators, building leadership teams, policymakers, university educators who support preservice teachers, counselors, area education agency personnel and community partners.

### **Social-Emotional Engagement – Knowledge and Skills (SEE-KS):**

Excited to share that we were finally able to launch the pilot project of SEE-KS in Washington Elementary in the Mt. Vernon School District, Mt. Vernon, IA.

Began with a workshop on October 4 which provided an overview of Social Emotional Engagement - Knowledge and Skills (SEE-KS) as a framework for fostering social emotional engagement, presenting information in multiple ways, and promoting student participation and relationships at multi-tiers of support. All team member in the pilot project were in attendance, along with many other folks from all around the state (AEAs, DE, other districts, etc.)

Participants learned how the application of research in the social neuroscience of social emotional engagement fosters our ability to create supportive learning environments where social emotional engagement is "fuel" for a child's learning. Participants learned strategies for measuring student engagement, specially designed instruction to address student engagement within everyday classroom lessons and for building capacity through teacher-to-teacher mentorship.

Was then followed by a series of classroom observations in Washington Elementary the morning of October 5 and an afternoon coaching session with those teachers in the pilot project.

### **Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) K-6 Reading Comprehension Task Team Purpose:**

The purpose of this task team is to build out our existing SDI K6 Literacy modules to include a concentrated focus on reading comprehension with considerations for neurodiverse learners (including Autism Spectrum Disorder - ASD). In addition, connections will be made to Iowa's MTSS framework and the future work for IDEA- Differentiated Accountability, including support for Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This work will be focused on students with IEPs who are accurate and automatic at the word/sentence level, but display reading comprehension skill deficits. This work will include DE and AEA collaboration.

We have pulled together a task team and our first meeting is October 28th. We anticipate this work will continue through the 2021-22 school year. Task team members include those with the following expertise:

- Knowledge, experience, or expertise specifically in SDI K6 Literacy
- Knowledge, experience, or expertise specifically in ASD
- Systemic thinkers willing to develop professional products
- Knowledge/skills in instructional technology

### **Autism Navigator for Early ACCESS Providers**

This project continues and we are beginning enrollment for Cohort 7 this year.

### **Rachell Swanson-Holm - Child Health Specialty Clinics (CHSC)**

We did receive a second year of the AUCD/LTSAE response to COVID-19 grant. The first year, we worked with WIC, 1<sup>st</sup> Five, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R). There were some successful activities. This year, we will continue to work with 1<sup>st</sup> Five and CCR&R, but WIC will not be as involved. The ongoing projects with CCR&R is a specific training for caregivers so they can provide services to children on the spectrum. Building resiliency along with emergency preparedness with CCR&R is another training in progress. The 1<sup>st</sup> Five project is not off the ground just yet. The new project is with Meredith Field and EPSDT. It's a training for pre-service professionals via webinar series. We are still

in the planning stages, so if you have any thoughts or ideas, Rachell would love to hear from you.

### **Kris Steinmetz-Autism Society of Iowa**

The ASI Fall Conference is next Friday, November 5 via Zoom. There will be an Autism panel of 6 self-advocates to discuss the pros and cons of autism, how to cope with a diagnosis later in life and the family's reaction to that diagnosis. Break-out sessions. Self-regulations strategies. Twice-exceptional persons and the autism academy at the University of Iowa for autistic college students. The conference will be recorded as well.

2021 Autism Society of Iowa Fall Conference <https://autismia.com/event/2021-autism-society-of-iowa-fall-conference/>

November 5 @ 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

2021 Autism Society of Iowa Fall Educational Conference

Virtual via Zoom

Featuring Keynote Speaker Mikle South, Ph.D

### **Maria Valdovinos—Drake University**

Drake is having a virtual open house for the ABA program on December 1. Anyone interested in the program can join and ask former students and the faculty questions about the program. See attached flyer.



Flier for open house December 1.r

### **Kelly Pelzel- UI Stead Family Children's Hospital Autism Center**

Save the date! Virtual, all-day conference on March 4. Overall discussions will be regarding adults with autism. The morning session is for providers. The afternoon will be more general with a variety of topics.

### **Erika Hertel- Iowa Regional Autism Assistance Program**

The Autism Basics webinar series for caregivers and parents of newly diagnosed Autism. Kelly Pelzel is the presenter. It is open to anyone. It is also approved for foster parent training credit. This week is the 4<sup>th</sup> of 4 webinars. The series gives an overview of what autism is, autism interventions, challenging behavior, and educational programing. The series is offered twice per year and sessions are all recorded.

RAP has is offering Safety Care for Families in three sites so far this fall. Marc Hines is the instructor and family navigators helping. The next training is November 4<sup>th</sup> in Clinton. We are co-sponsoring with Life Connections, so Alyson will be there to help Marc with the training. There is a waiting list for the Clinton training. A Training on December 3rd will be held at the Coralville Public Library. The feedback has been positive so far. It is a 4-session program, but due to COVID, we have delayed the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> sessions as they are more 'hands on' trainings. We hope to be able to offer them in the spring.

We have some family navigator positions open at CHSC in Ottumwa, Spencer, and Dubuque, so if you have someone in mind, please let Erika know.



Safety Care Training Iowa City Flyer.pdf

### **Strategic Plan Update, ASD Services and Supports Survey results overview.**

We asked families to rate their level of agreement that Iowa has improved in each of the strategy areas over the past five years. They were asked to consider their personal or professional experience. They were allowed to skip a question if they did not have any experiences with a particular strategy. There were over 400 responses to the survey and results were shared.

The full version of **Iowa's Strategic Plan 2016-2021: To Improve Services and Supports for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their Families** found at:

<https://chsciowa.org/sites/chsciowa.org/files/resource/files/iowa-strategic-plan-2016.pdf>

**Autism Law Summit takeaways:** Josh Cobbs, Toni Merfeld, Candice Fedeler, Rachell Swanson-Holm, Erika Hertel are invited to share any key points from the Autism Law Summit that took place 10/19 – 10/24 in Columbia, SC.

Rachell: There was a celebration that all of the states have adopted a mandated insurance coverage for ABA therapy. Learning a lot about how to encourage parents to if they have a denial of service, what process to take to overturn the denial. Good information for family navigators.

Candace said the organizers did a phenomenal job with the conference. On the last day, there was a 'speed round' where the speaker was given 22 seconds per slide. Josh was a speaker and did a great job! It was so exciting that all 50 states have an insurance mandate. The networking was great, too.

Erika said the movie screening for, "In a Different Key" was wonderful. They tracked down the man who was the first individual diagnosed with autism in America and highlighted his story. They also shared a video "A Voice for Severe Autism" regarding the lives of those living with severe autism. The video comes with a disclaimer that it could be hard to watch. It is intense and so anyone who is living that life does not need to view this if it would make them uncomfortable. It is educational and helps people understand more about severe autism.

- "In a Different Key" the movie <https://www.inadifferentkeythemovie.com/>
- National Council on Severe Autism: New video by Pennsylvania advocates shows many realities of severe autism. It is meant to be freely used nationwide as an education and advocacy tool. Learn more at Act Now for Severe Autism. <https://youtu.be/xwvKYE5C2Ys>

**Next Meeting:** January 25, 2022, 10:30-noon, ZOOM.