

**Regional Autism Assistance Program
Expert Panel Meeting
January 24, 2023, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM
Via Zoom**

Name	Organization/Role Representing	Attended
Alyson Beytien	Beyond Behavior ABA/Family Member	
Samantha Cermak	ChildServe	X
Josh Cobbs	Family Advisor	X
Megan Christensen	Metro West Learning Center	X
James Curry	Family Advisor	
Connie Fanselow	Iowa Department of Human Services, Iowa Mental Health and Disability Services Commission	X
Kirstin Hanson	AXIS Therapy Centers	X
Erika Hertel	Regional Autism Assistance Program/Family Member	X
Michelle Holst	Iowa Department of Public Health- 1st Five	X
Evelyn Horton	Balance Autism	X
Aaron Kauer	UI Stead Family Children's Hospital Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	X
Andrea Keith	Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services	X
Lisa Kemmerer	Star Autism Support	
Vanessa Kimm	Family Advisor	
Todd Kopelman	UI Stead Family Children's Hospital Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	X
Marcus Johnson-Miller (representative to be determined)	Iowa Department of Public Health	
Monica Kurtz	Grant Wood Area Education Agency	X
Stacie Lane	Tanager Place	
Toni Fuller Merfeld	Metro West Learning Center	X
Caroline Moniza	Mercy Family Counseling & EAP	X
Steve Muller	Balance Autism	X
Kelly Pelzel	UI Stead Family Children's Hospital Autism Center	X
Mary Roberts	Family Advisor	X
Leslie Rogers	ChildServe	X
Thomas Scholz	Division of Child & Community Health	X
Kristine Steinmetz	Autism Society of Iowa/Family Member	
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)

General Updates (Erika Hertel)

- Will send link to [FY 2022 Autism Support Program Report](#) shared by Connie Fanselow.
- [The Autism Acceptance and Advocacy Day on the Hill](#) is on Thursday, March 2nd, sharing on behalf of Kris Steinmetz.
- Other bills that were introduced and were discussed in the Autism Speaks Advocacy call
 - ✓ [IA HF16](#)- provides scholarships to comprehensive and secondary programs like REACH at UI
 - ✓ [IA SSB 1050](#)- Removes age and dollar caps for Autism services
 - ✓ [IA HSB49](#)- the Autism Waiver
 - ✓ [IA SF86](#)- Prohibits non-medical switching of prescription medications
 - ✓ [IA SSB 1045](#)- allows for occupational therapists with additional training or experience to be considered mental health providers. Most people are opposing this bill due to the question of scope and practice. Many believe that this bill is an overreach
 - ✓ [IA HSB76](#)- Definitions of brain health vs mental health

Member Update (Kelly Pelzel, UI Stead Family Children's Hospital Autism Center)

- Regional Autism Assistance Program- working with Dayrin Lovan who is a native Spanish speaker and a parent of an adult child with autism to put together an Autism Basics Webinar, all in Spanish. Although format and materials are slightly different, it is evidence-based with the added benefit of seeing the perspective of a parent. That will be available in late March-early April. Once the Spanish registration format is vetted, Erika will send out the flyer.
- UI is training providers in Project Impact that is available to any master's or PhD level provider or someone who is in a training program in Iowa. Typically, Speech Pathologists, Social Workers, and Psychologists are the primary trainees in this model. This will be a virtual training over 2 days, Thursday, February 9th and Friday, February 10th and requires 6 hours of asynchronous work prior to the training. This is the first of many trainings targeting areas of Iowa that have fewer services for young children and ABA but have community-based therapists who show interest.
- The Autism Center has collaborated with the Autism Society of Iowa and the Hawk-IDDRC on a one-day virtual spring conference on Friday, March 3rd. The focus this year is Profound (Severe) Autism. [Registration is open](#) on the ASI website.

Member Updates (Connie Fanselow, IDHHS and Disability Services Commission)

- Has the rates established for 1 or 2 of the codes that were left off of the rate sheet. Not sure if Iowa Medicaid is using them yet, but Connie does. She will send those out.
- Enrollment and applications are steady, and most are eligible. That information will be in her year-end report that includes data up to June 2022. As of June 30th, we were up to 75 kids who were actively served through the program and added 2-3 since then.
- Just updated the 2023 figures for the federal poverty level which makes a few more people eligible at or under the 500% FPL limit.

Member Update (Brad Zelinger, Stride Autism Centers)

- STRIDE has new openings no later than April 2023:
 - ✓ an additional center in Des Moines
 - ✓ 2nd Davenport center
 - ✓ new centers in Sioux City and Coralville

Member Update (Kristen Hanson, AXIS Therapy Centers)

- Opening 4th center in Fort Dodge in April
- Starting an adult social skills group this spring

Member Update (Leslie Rogers, ChildServe)

- Starting up some autism safety trainings at the Knoxville Hospital and Marion County First Responders. ½ day trainings, possibly via Zoom. Mary Roberts also mentioned seeing an uptick in similar requests from all over the state, so it makes sense to refer training requests to ChildServe and Mosaic and those who are more familiar with it. Logically, regional agencies/programs offering the training could connect with their local law enforcement, etc. She suggested a list be made that lets everyone know who is doing what statewide trainings. Erika reinforced that suggestion, saying that she is getting more calls for speakers on a variety of topics. Josh Cobbs is happy to co-present with VR and to reach out to other groups when it is related to employment initiatives for adults on the autism spectrum. Erika will start a collaboration list and get that out to the group soon. If you have any suggestions for speaking topics, please contact Erika.
- Received a \$5000 Autism Speaks grant last summer for a social enterprise opportunity for the center. Used this to buy a refrigerated, mobile snack cart for their Snack Shack through the Life Skills and Dayhab program. Starting with snacks but hoping to expand to merchandise.

Member Update (Andrea Keith, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services)

- Governor Reynolds is downsizing and merging departments and has slotted Voc Rehab to go under Iowa Workforce Development instead of the Department of Education. Not sure exactly what that will look like yet, but there are concerns about how this will impact the IVRS relationship with high schools and the impact it will have on their service delivery.

Member Update (Toni Fuller Merfeld, Metro West Learning Center)

- Hired 2nd Occupational Therapist and getting ready to expand services.
- Adding more speech therapy and another ABA team this spring.
- Expanding school support for children with challenging behavior.

Member Update (Rachell Swanson-Holm, Program Coordinator, Regional Autism Assistance Program)

- Regarding HSB49, which proposes to create an Autism Waiver under Iowa's Medicaid program. Ann Meyer from the Fort Dodge area introduced the bill. Ann has organized a noon forum with a non-profit group in Fort Dodge called Facing Autism with Liz Matney, the Iowa Medicaid Director to discuss gaps in current waiver services. She especially wants to hear from parents. The meeting is on February 10th. Two family navigators from the Fort Dodge Regional Center will attend and they are working to get the word out to parents who might be able to speak to those gaps. This bill was discussed at the January Autism Speaks call. This is billed as a children's waiver, but many have voiced that it should be a lifespan waiver. Ann is also going to meet with the regional center staff in Fort Dodge to get a professional perspective about the bill in the next few weeks. If you can identify any gaps in the waiver system as it is today, contact Rachell to help develop talking points rachell-swanson-holm@uiowa.edu.
- Josh Cobbs added that Krista Stevens will also be reaching out via email about the same thing.

Meeting adjourned at 11:11am.