

**Regional Autism Assistance Program
Expert Panel Meeting
October 24, 2023, 9 AM – 11 AM
Via Zoom**

Name	Organization/Role Representing	Attended
Alyson Beytien	Beyond Behavior ABA, Family Member	X
Samantha Cermak	ChildServe	
Josh Cobbs	Family Advisor, Autism Speaks	X
Megan Christensen	Metro West Learning Center	X
Allison Drew	Regional Autism Assistance Program, Family Member	X
Connie Fanselow	Iowa Department of Health and 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	
Andrea Keith	Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services	X
Lisa Kemmerer	Star Autism Support	
Vanessa Kimm	Family Advisor, UI Stead Family Children's Hospital	
Todd Kopelman	Meadowlark Psychiatric Services, UI Stead Family Children's Hospital Child & Adolescent Psychiatry	
Amy Chebuhar	Iowa Department of Public Health	X
Monica Kurtz	Grant Wood Area Education Agency	
Stacie Lane	Tanager Place	
Toni Fuller Merfeld	Metro West Learning Center	X
Caroline Moniza	Mercy Family Counseling & EAP	X
Steve Muller	Balance Autism	
Kelly Pelzel	UI Stead Family Children's Hospital Autism Center	X
Mary Roberts	Family Advisor, UI Stead Family Children's Hospital Autism Center	
Leslie Rogers	ChildServe	X
Thomas Scholz	Division of Child & Community Health	X
Kristine Steinmetz	Autism Society of Iowa, Family Member	
Wendy Trotter	Iowa Department of Education	X
Maria Valdovinos	Drake University	X
Brad Zelinger	Stride Autism Centers	X

Welcome and Introductions (Facilitator: Erika Hertel)

Member Update (Allison Drew, Regional Autism Assistance Program)

- Has a free Autism Basics webinar series in Spanish coming up. This is a 3-week series from 12-1pm on Tuesdays starting 11/28/23 – 12/12/23.
- Send any contacts that you feel would benefit from this information to allison-drew@uiowa.edu

Member Update (Alyson Beytien, Beyond Behavior ABA)

- Just opened a temporary space in Burlington until a larger space comes available and also expanded the Dubuque clinic
- Connected with Leonora from Department of Labor and spoke about ABA service denials because of no updated cognitive assessment from Iowa Total Care and a private insurance. Alyson would like you to contact her if you hear about the same issue in your clients.

Member Update (Josh Cobbs, Autism Speaks)

- October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month
- AS has had a course refresh with courses available for businesses. If you are working with a business or are a business, you can take courses free of charge. Includes co-worker and HR Manager training, and training for autistic individuals. Spanish will be available soon.
- Later in winter, other courses will be rolled out for individuals with higher support needs.
- There will also be a parent course to help their children with higher support needs as well.
- Course can be taken as individuals, but you can also sign up an entire company

Member Updates (Kristin Hanson, Axis Therapy Centers)

- Have 4 locations, Ft. Dodge, Ankeny, Ames, and West Des Moines
- Continually looking for behavior technicians, speech therapists with immediate opening for OT, Feeding therapy at the Ames, Ankeny, and WDM locations
- Have social skills group for all ages in the after-school hours
- Reminder- Autism Society of Iowa Conference in the Sheraton Hotel in WDM this Friday (10/27) from 9am-3:15pm. Use this link to register: <https://autismia.com/event/2023-fall-conference-and-resource-fair/>

Member Update (Brad Zelinger, Stride Autism Center)

- Currently have 9 centers open across Iowa, with newer centers in Des Moines, a 2nd Davenport location, Coralville, and Sioux City.
- The Sioux City location has an upcoming open house on Thursday, November 16th from 4:30-7pm at 4280 Sergeant Road, suite 230

Member Update (Megan Christensen, Metro West Learning Center)

- Will have opening ABA openings in Clive
- Social groups starting in 2024 for different age groups
- Having a lot of success with the young adult groups in their area

Member Update (Andrea Keith, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services)

- Realignment with Iowa Works means the Des Moines office will be relocating to 200 E Army Post Road
- New Administrator is James Williams
- Having some staffing issues so if clients are unable to contact their counselor, encourage them to contact their supervisor

Member Update (Kelly Pelzel, UI Stead Family Children's Hospital, Child & Adolescent Psychiatry)

- Been a lot of transition at the University and Kelly will be taking a new position outside of the University in January and will no longer be the psychology technical consultant for RAP.
- There has been a lot of transition with the Autism Center regarding how services are triaged and delivered in terms of initial diagnostic evaluations.
- It sounds as though the vast majority of triage for autism diagnostics will be done through the Center for Disabilities and Development (CDD) and there are questions about how old they will take for referrals. Under age 7 is triaged there but older kids and adolescents are under question and what role psychiatrists/psychiatry will take in the diagnosis process.

Member Updates (Evelyn Horton, Balance Autism)

- Received an ARPA grant used to train their family safety care trainers in the Safety Care module and to provide scholarships for 50 families
- Scholarships are open to the public, only 10 in each slot and accepting up to 2 family members per family so this will fill up fast. There is a possibility that it may be offered to the public later, after the scholarship is exhausted.

<https://www.balanceautism.org/children-services/safety-care>

Nov 10 in Altoona 9-3

Dec 2 in Altoona 9-3

Dec 7 Burlington 9-3

Jan 5 Quad Cities/Davenport 9-3

Jan 12 Cedar Rapids/Iowa City 9-3

Jan 16 & 23 Waterloo Split on two days 4-6:30

- Expanding adult residential services by purchasing more provider-owned homes. Has an expansion in supported employment with a couple new employers onboard.
- The Council Bluffs/Omaha location now has center-based services (on the Iowa side) in addition to their home-based services.

Member Updates (Wendy Trotter, Iowa Department of Education)

- Part of Governor's reorganization/realignment efforts included a committee to review boards and commissions, which includes the Autism Council. Preliminary findings and initial statement shows that that committee has no idea what the AC does or who they serve even though they had been given all of that information. Wendy is concerned that the committee is looking at their services as being in the education space only.
- Although the goal of the committee was to eliminate duplication of services, by the committee suggesting that AC add other disorders, they are basically creating more duplication and have disregarded Wendy's position that ASD needs intentional representation. She has formally voiced her concerns and will keep the group updated on how it all pans out.
- With all of the changes at IDE, there has been a significant slowdown in approval of contracts, so they are currently in a holding pattern.

Member Updates (Connie Fanselow, DHHS, Iowa Mental Health and Disability Services Commission)

- Has pushed her retirement back so Connie will now be with our group through April 2024
- Based on the internal draft of the DHHS budget recommendations for next legislative session, the Autism Support Program is included at a sufficient amount to address our needs.

Member Updates (Erika Hertel, Regional Autism Assistance Program)

- Per Kris Steinmetz from the capitol chat- there are numerous meetings being held around the state on the Medicaid waiver redesign
https://hhs.iowa.gov/ime/HOME/hometown-conversations?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery
- These meetings are an opportunity for people to provide input on how HHS can make community-based services better in Iowa
- The new administrator at Voc Rehab has asked to speak with the Autism Society of Iowa Board of Directors and will happen in the near future.
- Iowa Coalition for Integration and Employment is holding an “Everyone Can Work” summit on November 16, 2023, from 10-3pm. They want to have a state of the State conversation about Iowa’s employment services and identify opportunities in employment for people with disabilities.
- RAP continues to grow in number of referrals
- This is the last meeting for Tom Scholz and Kelly Pelzel.

Meeting adjourned at 9:38 AM.