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| **Regional Autism Assistance Program**  **Expert Panel Meeting**  **August 22, 2023, 9 AM – 11 AM**  **Via Zoom** | | |
| **Name** | **Organization/Role Representing** | **Attended** |
| Alyson Beytien | Beyond Behavior ABA, Family Member | X |
| Samantha Cermak | Child*Serve* | X |
| 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 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 | X |
| Stacie Lane | Tanager Place |  |
| Toni Fuller Merfeld | Metro West Learning Center | X |
| Caroline Moniza | Mercy Family Counseling & EAP |  |
| 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 | Child*Serve* | X |
| Thomas Scholz | Division of Child & Community Health | X |
| Kristine Steinmetz | Autism Society of Iowa, Family Member | X |
| Wendy Trotter | Iowa Department of Education |  |
| Maria Valdovinos | Drake University | X |
| Brad Zelinger | Stride Autism Centers | X |
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### Welcome and Introductions (Facilitator: Erika Hertel)

**Mental Health Parity** (Leondra Dodd and Grace Williams, Health Investigations (Mental Health Parity Compliance))



* Mental health parity is the Department of Labor’s current top enforcement initiative.
  + - Trying to identify barriers in accessing coverage.
    - How can the department take a role in assisting those having trouble to make sure that they are able to reach out to the department for help.
* One of first non-quantitative treatment limitations (NQTL)s highlighted to congress was Autism.
  + Found that multiple, self-funded plans had a blanket exclusion autism and/or all ABA therapy related benefits.
  + Once that was remedied by the department, over a million patients could then access that care
* Because the same policies and procedures go across the books. Therefore, any challenges that you have with the insurance provider should go to the Kansas City Office.
  + Leondra is looking for:
    - information on what types of services are necessary for Autism treatment
    - what types of barriers/hurdles families are facing to have Autism benefits covered

\*if you receive a complaint, know that there are many more out there who have not complained

**Department of Labor’s 800 number manned in-person, Monday-Friday 8-4:15pm (1-866-444-3272)**

**or email at:** [**dodd.leondra@dol.gov**](mailto:dodd.leondra@dol.gov) **and** [**williams.grace@dol.gov**](mailto:williams.grace@dol.gov)

* The department also opens investigations on insurance companies, TVAs, and group health plans if they are not compliant. Every call helps.
* High level red flags to note:
  + If a plan has a blanket exclusion for ABA therapy
  + If there’s an age limit on ABA therapy
  + If the patient is told they need to go to a specific specialist to be diagnosed for ABA therapy
  + If the patient needs to show “significant improvement”
  + If the patient needs to have exhausted all benefits through their school or school district before the group health plan will pay for ABA therapy or Autism care
  + If you see Autism diagnosed as a medical/surgical condition
* Started a list of barriers/hurdles/red flags:
* Not enough in-network providers who provide ABA therapy
* If providers are available for in-patient, there’s a 12-13 month wait
* If something just doesn’t seem right
* Insurance requiring scores or requiring certain assessments prior to approving ABA (Erika)
* There are so few practitioners that the wait times for testing are substantial
* Iowa’s CHIP program, Hawk-I, does not cover ABA (gotten preapproval then found out otherwise)
  + This possibly came from an MCO that confused Medicaid and Medicare (Connie)
* Family says they need a reevaluation of Autism to continue services (Kelly & Megan 2nd that from the providers’ perspectives)
* ABA services cannot be paid the same day as other mental health appointments (Samantha)
* MUE limitation on 97151 assessment code, MUE limitation for Medicaid is one measure but for Medicare it’s another, much lower measure and some of the commercial insurance companies will limit care to that lower measure even though we don’t service people that qualify for Medicare. Don’t generally see this for the Medicaid patients. Appeals don’t often go in the patient’s favor but randomly they do (Brad)
* We should involve the Hawk-I family voices (Evelyn)

**Member Update** (Connie Fanselow, Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS))



* will be retiring at the end of the year so Connie will train someone on the program, but this may not be the person that it stays with
* if you know of a family that has a bill that the MCO is asking for payment on, please contact Connie with specifics such as name, DOB, dates of services, etc.
* looking for ways to cover patients who are still on Hawk-I but have no way to cover the ABA benefits
* working on a new provider list and requests feedback/updates as you have them
* funding appropriation has been down the past few years but they’re still good of funding
* reminder that Medicaid Townhalls are held monthly and are archived
* there are plans to conduct a point-in-time screening on the waiver waiting lists, in part to clear the waitlist of people who don’t qualify
* program is looking to streamline the application process so that the basic information auto-populates and then they can select which waiver instead of having to start over from scratch every time

**Member Updates** (Kris Steinmetz, Autism Society of Iowa)

* Fall Conference on October 27th, 2023, at Sheraton Hotel in West Des Moines 7:30am-3pm
  + Topics include challenging behavior, autism, panel of adults with Autism who will share their stories, ideas for parents and child care providers, panel of parents talking about caring for persons with profound autism that requires 24hour care, developing executive functioning skills for high school and beyond, sensory issues, and ask the doctor- accommodations for the waiting rooms/preparing for appointments
  + Tables for people to meet and a resource fair
  + Networking time in the afternoon
  + Family scholarships are available
  + speech, social work and pathology CEUs available
  + [registration is on the website](http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07ejx5ynube0b2d315&llr=tapetldab)

**Member Update** (Kelly Pelzel, UIHC)

* + Family medicine provider, Meghan Connett who will be in the CDD for two, half-day clinics per month (2nd and 4th Thursdays) caring for the adult medicine patients
  + Dr. Lea Boldt will be leaving child psych. at UIHC and entering private practice in Iowa City
  + Kelly is doing an in-person Impact training at the end of September

**Member Update** (Erika Hertel, Iowa Regional Autism Assistance Program)

* RAP has increased social media presence through the new coordinator, Allison Drew
* Allison will take over the Autism Basics trainings in English and Spanish this fall and spring
* CHSC received an additional year of funding through the HRSA grant
* Erika’s son started a Socially Anxious Hangout Group for ages 18-40 and this is now connected with the Cedar Rapids’ library, so the reach, as of September, is Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, and Davenport for events

**Member Update** (Josh Cobbs)

* + Resource fair for [Autism Speaks at Iowa Cubs stadium](https://www.autismspeaks.org/events/2023-iowa-autism-resource-fair)
  + Looking for great employment stories to share- let Josh know

Meeting adjourned at 10:22 AM.