

State of Vermont
Autism Task Force Meeting
MINUTES
Task Force Meeting 10:00 am –1:00 pm - 4-11-08
4th Floor Conference Room
Courthouse
255 N. Main St.
Barre, Vermont

Mission

The mission of the Vermont Autism Task Force is to coordinate the efforts of interested parties who serve individuals with autism spectrum disorders and their families, and to promote the implementation of best practices throughout the state of Vermont.

Norms:

- We work hard to start the meeting on time, people come as soon as they can & they will inform the group if they need to leave early at the beginning of the meeting
- We allow people to finish speaking
- We are respectful of one another in discussions of children, adolescents & adults with ASD, their families, & the professionals, programs & agencies that work with them
- We actively solicit diverse ways of looking at things
- We use person first language (e.g., child with autism versus, autistic child)
- We recognize when more information is needed before a discussion can proceed
- We clarify actions that need to be taken, by whom and when
- We collaboratively determine agenda items for a meeting and important topics that should be discussed as a group
- We revisit our norms periodically and make changes as needed

MEMBERS SENDING THEIR REGRETS: Linda Mulley, Clare Bruno, Marie Christine Potvin, Doug Smith, Angela Timpone, Clare McFadden

PRESENT: Claudia Pringles, Amy Cohen, Stan Baker, Jessica Levi, Steve Contompasis, Tim Fox, Hilary Melton, Jim Caffry, and Holly Beatty

ESTABLISH ROLES

Facilitator:	Stan Baker
Recorder:	Steve Contompasis (Decipherer of Dr. Steve's Minutes = Stan)
Timekeeper:	Amy Cohen
Rudder Keeper:	Pascal Cheng
Equalizer:	Jessica Levi
Processor:	Claudia Pringles
Wellness:	Claudia Pringles, Steve and Stan
Jargon buster:	Tim Fox at al

Members Updates:

- ❖ Holly Beatty, a parent from Bennington, introduced herself and talked about some of the activities going on in Bennignton including her work with parent-to-parent and contacts with local services.

- ❖ Jessica Levi talked about the Autism Awareness event at the Statehouse Cafeteria, organized in part by Kathy Andrews. The event included guest speakers highlighting the spectrum including a child of one of our Task Force members. The governor was present.
- ❖ Ann Barbano, Claudia Pringles and Angela Timpone were featured on the April 2 ASD radio show. The program is available at www.livingtheautismmaze.com - click on “events”
- ❖ Stan commented on the increasing reach of the Higher Education collaborative and the importance of their course offerings to the ASD community
- ❖ Tim Fox reports hire of Kevin Smith a special educator from Newport with a strong background in autism who will be replacing Susan Ashworth (retiring). His experience includes work at the May institute.
- ❖ Also Susan Yuan, assistant director, is retiring and restructuring of I-team and Center on Disability is ongoing.
- ❖ Claudia updated us on VCDR review of restrictive behaviors intervention RBI project.
 - VPIC has some grant funding to continue this project. There will be a feature at the VPIC website and information will be circulated.
- ❖ **Action Item:** *Task force discussed this and asked that as the study continue we should have a briefing and more formal discussion in future and consider task force endorsement*
- ❖ Amy Cohen updated us that the Autism program at Howard Center is developing and funding five slots for birth to three children with autism. The project has been in place and is now being formalized. There is hope that this will spread to other regions.
- ❖ Stan mentioned that the Developmental Services program at HowardCenter is beginning the SUCCEED Program and has secured a house off campus and serving 6 students initially using UVM classroom space to learn skills and the hope that these students will also be involved in at least one UVM class with support and help from other UVM programs and Continuing Education. Students will eat in dining halls and have access to UVM transportation and other student service can have a student buddy. Jen Mitchell is the senior leader from HowardCenter who is the point person. She can be reached at 488-6500 or email at Jenm@howardcenter.org. The program will serve young adults 18-25 with autism spectrum or with developmental disabilities.
- **Addendum to last month’s minutes:** Last month a Discussion occurred regarding concerns about parent representation – and other representation - on the Statewide Legislative Autism Report Steering Committee and the procedures behind continuing with the same Steering Committee that prepared the report that was submitted to the Governor and the Legislature. Some individuals suggested that the prior steering committee should have been disbanded and a new committee formed.

Membership Update:

- Composition of ATF membership
 - Jim Caffrey reported that since we are not a government based task force or formal our situation is quite vague.
 - We refreshed our memory that discussion has ensued in the past about this and mostly the consensus has been to stay informal. No motion to formalize our informality has been proposed or voted on.
 - Pascal mentioned another team he works on that has a similar degree of organization yet independent structure.
 - We have had activities that have had budgets but those have gone through other agents such as Autism Society of Vermont and or UVM

- We do have policies on membership and polices on decision making and leadership
- Paper work issues for funded project have been an issue
- DOE and AHS have supported the website through ASVT to maintain the website
- We have performed many different functions in the past
- Now there are many groups doing many of these function
- A drawback to our informality that we might continue to discuss is that for financial things it can get messy. When we want to respond more formally we have issues at that time
- Time factor and volunteer status is an issue for future discussion.
- Context of our mission below is quite clear about active support coordination of efforts and implementation of best practices.

Mission

The mission of the Vermont Autism Task Force is to coordinate the efforts of interested parties who serve individuals with autism spectrum disorders and their families, and to promote the implementation of best practices throughout the state of Vermont.

- Pascal also noted that many organizations are having to reorganize and restructure themselves as situation change.
- **Action plan:** *move this item to a retreat to consider above issues of our mission and focus and others issues related to our identity as a group. We need, especially to look at financial issues.*
- Recruitment of Individual with ASD - Possibilities
 - Max Barrows = Washington County
 - David Leon = Chittenden County
 - Claudia updated us that she will continue to contact Ron Marcellus a parent from the southern part of Vermont
 - Claudia reminded us about regional approaches toward the south of the state.
 - Claudia will re-contact Holly Beatty from Bennington
 - Membership committee will re-look at policies and procedures re: inactive status rule and yearly reviewing of membership status

Action plan: *Stan will give Claudia contact information about these two individuals for contacting and Stan will make initial contact with Mr. Leon.*

DISCUSSION OF PROS AND CONS OF CERTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION NEEDS IN AUTISM TOOK PLACE:

- Amy Cohen talked about the behavioral analyst certification process and whether there should be an Autism subspecialty within this. Some have raised concerns about rural areas
- Stan mentioned the licensing of mental health counselors in past and grand fathering/grand mothering and fostering process and that it does create standards and define necessary skills
- What is the term certification licensing, registration credentialing special recognition continuing ed specialized training specialty focus and different fields have different terminology and rules and processes
- Steve mentioned Vermont culture is often against specialization and registration
- There are rules in certain agencies and or work places that have certain requirements as in schools or in medicine.
- There are focuses of study or training that might be desirable but not required

- Should there be specific levels of training for instance in schools etc.
- Districts are hiring and using people as autism specialists but with no clarification about what makes someone a specialist
- Should autism specialty be part of general special education?
- There could be many solutions at many levels of training i.e. across teacher prep or specializes training for people working with children with autism
- Yearly training for special educators as part of [??]
- Anyone can say they are an autism consultant without guidelines
- As an inclusionary state we have many regular ed teachers who have some training in autism or other disabilities. Could this be a requirement for teachers moving to our state from states where there was less training?
- Tim mentioned that for all teachers in Vermont they do need to have some degree or competency in special ed. Could Autism training be included in these curricula?
- Should a best practice or expectation be that all persons working with kids with any disability as professionals be expected to and or be facilitated toward a level of proficiency in that child's disability?
- A focus on positive behavioral supports should cut across many disabilities and on students without disabilities in many environments
- Amy noted that more than half of the Autism course at UVM includes regular ed teachers in recognition that they will have students with autism in the future.
- Some teachers already have lots of experience but no specific credentialing
- School culture can influence the effectiveness of the specialist's recommendations
- Steve mentioned his concerns about mental health professionals and their training and competencies
- Claudia mentioned the prior work in the State Autism. Could direct our task force to offer ourselves to take on work in the area of required training and skills for all areas.
 - Stan felt this idea would be a good thing for the Task Force to take on
- Allied health professionals and physicians need training as well
- Higher ed autism steering committee has developed something about autism specialist and what would-be basic competence for para-professional and what would be higher level consultancy skills. This could be for both educators and mental health professionals
- The Legislative bill does talk about certificate program
- **Action Plan:** *discussion will come after update from Steering Committee –see action item below*

AUTISM STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE

- Jess updated us that there is a work sheet breaking down the different recommendations
 - Resource persons needed time line etc.
 - still in a draft form
- June first deadline is for prioritizing the actions
- Last Steering committee will be longer and open to public comment with adequate space
- Upcoming meetings April 16th , May 1st , May 13th , and May 27th will be the large final open meeting
- And report will be on June 1st

Action Item: *Steve proposed and group consensus was to ask Jess to look at the current report recommendations and update us on any that relate to the certification process or higher ed certification or consultancy training, etc. We will bring this update to our May 9th meeting*

AUTISM SUMMER INSTITUTE UPDATE

- ❖ Stan updated us on the Tuesday and Wednesday workshop. There is only room for two workshops in addition to the Parents Pow-wow and Autism 101 on Sunday, VABA, on Monday, and the Resource Fair on Thursday.
 - Tuesday--Ed Spardilatti = Responding to Challenging Behaviors
 - Wednesday--Self Advocacy presentation by Green Mountain Self Advocates (GMSA). This workshop will focus on increasing numbers of people with ADS in the adult self-advocacy movement. This is to give parents a sense of what is available for their children as they transition into adulthood.
- ❖ **Recommendation:** For this workshop, and any workshop, a member of the Task Force should be present at the workshop to facilitate in the event of any potential needs.
- ❖ Hillary mentioned that funding of parents continues to be a concern and notes that the DD council has some monies and a procedure for reimbursement. Last year's process was not optimal and this year continues to be difficult. Historically parents got \$250 per year
- ❖ **Action Plan:**
 - *Perhaps Task force in future could help to advise on a process across organizations for funding families and individuals with ASD. Hillary will ask for this as agenda item in future.*
 - *Jes could speak with Autism Puzzle foundation about this years funding needs*
 - *Hillary mentioned Asperger's Association of New England has some \$ 500 scholarships*
- ❖ **Vermont Day in the future:**
 - Previous minutes have some of these ideas contained in past conversation
 - Lisa Lawlor's response was that in past institutes people do not come to the days we have local speakers and we lose money. The Institute budget continues to be very tight.
 - Some feel that there is still a rationale for local groups and individuals to share ht they are doing
 - Amy noted that we have been able to get national folks to come to Vermont
 - Could there be a less formal way to celebrate local successes or practices?
 - Resource Fair does this to some degree
 - Tim mentioned that at some conferences the addition of moderated sessions when local experts respond to what was heard from the main speakers works well to feature local talent and provide a local viewpoint and sense of expertise. Some conferences also have tables on topics of local interest
 - Also this might help with the phenomenon of the hit an run consultancy that can occur
 - **Action Item:** *Could there be, in the future, an evening from 7- 9 as a celebration of what is going n in Vermont to discuss new initiatives or practices or things to know about. (Would the ASV like to re-institute their Excellence in Service Award as a way of featuring Vermonters?) Stan offered to work on this concept for next year.*
- ❖ **Autism 101 training:**
 - Not entirely well attended

- Could it be video taped and made available throughout the conference so parents and professional novices can view it throughout the week?

Wellness:

- Stan, Claudia and Steve shared personal stories of wellness related to ASD.

Processing:

- Productive meeting with nice discussion.

Next Meeting:

May 9, 2008:

10am-1pm

Community National Bank's Meeting Room

308 N. Main Street, Barre, VT

Agenda items for next meeting:

- Updates on Autism happenings and information around Vermont since last month
- Membership update
 - Policy review—Jims review of policy
- Adverse effect with Karen Edwards of DOE. (Clare Bruno was to ask if Karen can join us)
- RBI project update
- Autism Task Force Steering Committee update
 - Licenses and certification issues from Steering committee