

State of Vermont
Autism Task Force Meeting
MINUTES

Task Force Meeting 10:00 am – 1:00 pm – 5-9-08
Meeting Room
Community National Bank
308 North Main Street, 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 and 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 and adults with ASD, their families and the professionals, programs and 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: Susan Engels, Doug Smith, Amy Cohen, Lisa Erwin-Davidson

PRESENT: Stan Baker, Tim Fox, Claire Bruno, Claire McFadden, Jim Caffry, Angela Timpone, Hilary Melton, Pascal Cheng, Marie-Christine Potvin, Steve Contompasis, Jessica Levi, Linda Mulley, Karen Edwards

ESTABLISH ROLES

| | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Facilitator: | Stan Baker/Marie-Christine Potvin |
| Recorder: | Jim Caffry |
| Timekeeper: | ? |
| Rudder Keeper: | |
| Equalizer: | Angela Timpone? |
| Processor: | Pascal Cheng |
| Wellness: | Jim Caffry |
| Jargon Buster: | |

Members Update:

- ❖ Stan attended Gould Foundation in Montreal and heard an excellent presentation by Michael Weiss, PhD, on the connection between ASD and movement disorders
- ❖ The TEACCH classroom training list distributed to Special Education Directors. There are 32 spaces for training. North Carolina members are coming to train 32 Vermonters in Level I and Level II. The goal is to put on Vermont TEACCH program without help from North Carolina members. The training is the last week in July in Newport for team members – parents may attend for free.
- ❖ Pascal attended the Statewide Communication Task Force meeting in Killington.
- ❖ Claire Bruno is taking on-line floor time training course. The cost is \$150. Registration for this on-line training is being accepted until May 17 with 25 hours of class time. You can register at www.stanleygreenspan.com
- ❖ Clare and Claire are working with Vocational Rehabilitation to work with people on ASD spectrum to achieve better results. There will be two days of training October 7-8, 2008 in Burlington. North Carolina TEACCH is on supported employment
- ❖ Hilary reported that the Vermont Family Network is the new name of the combined with VPIC and Parent to Parent as of July 1, 2008
- ❖ VATF Membership Update:
 - ✓ Holly Beatty from Bennington who attended the prior VATF meeting will be invited join
 - ✓ Max Barrows from Montpelier (?) will be invited join as a consumer
 - ✓ Ron _____ from Londonderry will be invited to attend
 - ✓ David Leon, a consumer, has also expressed an interest in joining the VATF
 - ✓ Valerie Walden, a parent from Brattleboro, resigned from the VATF due to mileage and daycare conflicts
- ❖ Stan brought up the idea of utilizing phone or video conferencing to encourage participation from all areas of the State
- ❖ Claire talked about possible VATF retreat topics:
 - ✓ Membership
 - ✓ VATF structure formality
- ❖ A discussion was held regarding possible name and purpose changes for the VATF:
 - ✓ Angela thought a name change would help
 - ✓ Linda – this is a retreat topic
 - ✓ Steve suggested repackaging the message and VATF website

AUTISM STEERING COMMITTEE UPDATE

- ❖ The process is moving along.
- ❖ Priorities are being set
- ❖ There were 57 recommendations and 17 templates
- ❖ May 27 is the last Steering Committee meeting.

- ✓ The meeting will be held in Randolph at Gifford Hospital from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm
- ✓ The first hour will be public input with the last three hours used for the Committee to set priorities
- ✓ It will be a facilitated meeting – The plan will be finalized and forwarded to Cindy LaWare, Secretary at AHS and she will set the final priorities of Implementation Plan
- ❖ The Legislature does not have “sign off” authority over the plan but has asked for the plan upon approval by AHS
- ❖ There is currently a draft Memo of Understanding within AHS for all Departments – the draft plan was sent to all Commissioners
- ❖ Once Internal AHS MOU is finalized then there will be a DOE-AHS MOU
- ❖ Angela noted that priorities are not being cut out, they are being prioritized
- ❖ The last Steering Committee meeting held in Rutland was heavily attended by parents
- ❖ Claire talked about this being a multi-year implementation with an annual “check-up”
- ❖ Public input does not end on May 27

LICENSURE, CERTIFICATION, REGISTRATION

- ❖ Stan asked if VATF should take on the issue of setting guidelines for certification, etc.
- ❖ Linda felt the key question is how does the State best help school districts? Linda also questioned whether a license requirement would make it more difficult to obtain people to work with children and adults with ASD
- ❖ Linda noted that the Higher Education Collaborative has discussed this question, and the general sense within that group was that taking on licensure will be difficult
 - ✓ Level A Certification - Intro
 - ✓ Level 1 Certification - Intro
 - ✓ Level 2 Certification
 - ✓ Level 3 Certification
- ❖ We have Higher Ed Collaborative beginning to obtain people
- ❖ We have two “cohorts” – White River and Waterbury
- ❖ Pascal noted that paraprofessionals should have a model for core-competencies that allow latitude on how people are trained
- ❖ Claire felt that the Autism Plan does address minimum requirements for service providers and health specialists
 - ✓ The Steering Committee is set up to have competencies for all professionals
 - ✓ The Higher Ed Collaborative is working on establishing core competencies for service providers working with people on Spectrum
- ❖ Stan noted that VATF is already mentioned in the Autism Plan as an entity to address certain priorities

- ❖ Angela felt that if VATF is already mentioned, then VATF should address those tasks assigned

SUMMER RETREAT AND FALL MEETINGS

- ❖ The retreat will be a day-long retreat held on Thursday July 17, 2008
- ❖ Fall meetings are scheduled for September 12, October 10 and November 14

ADVERSE EFFECT

- ❖ Karin Edwards from the Department of Education joined the group for the discussion
- ❖ Steve felt that the issue is about higher functioning kids, academically on track, social deficits, but being told there is no “Adverse Effect”
- ❖ Karin replied that a recommendation has been made to expand definition of “Adverse Effect” to include social deficits ASD
- ❖ Karin also stated that there is a Vermont statutory requirement (Act 117) no state rules beyond Federal requirements
- ❖ LCAR said anytime DOE opens its rules they will be asked to address all measures in Vermont including rules that go beyond Federal law
- ❖ The DOE thought is then to proceed with guidance on policy rather than re-opening a formal rule making process
- ❖ Steve asked if there was a definition of “basic skills” is from Federal law.
- ❖ Karin replied that it was. Detail is provided in Speech and Language section of rules. The question of Adverse Effect could be addressed through Language Pragmatics and Social Skills provisions of rules.
- ❖ Claire reported that a mother of 2 high functioning children with ASD, who is also a lawyer, was initially told that there was no “Adverse Effect” with her children. She appealed and won (Claire provide copies of the legal argument made by the mother)
- ❖ Marie-Christine said she has used tests that would show deficits but schools do not to those tests often times so kids are determined not to have an “adverse effect.” Marie-Christine stated that pragmatic language skills are legitimate testing areas
- ❖ Karin felt that its entirely possible to show adverse effect with correct test
- ❖ Tim asked about the advantage of IEP vs. 504 Plan
- ❖ Claire said the difference is very great across the State. If school has significant resources a child with a 504 Plan can be getting great services. Other schools with very tight resources might give almost no services to a child under a 504 Plan
- ❖ Steve said there are many high functioning kids who do well academically, but have significant social and pragmatic language deficits that will have a very negative impact on that individuals ability to find and keep a job
- ❖ Karin said it is possible to have an Adverse Effect determination based on social deficits under the Federal definition of “basic skills”

- ❖ Karin noted that the State of Massachusetts has specific legislation regarding the provision of special education services for children on the autism spectrum; Massachusetts also has implementing guidelines
- ❖ Linda asked how the Vermont administrative rules process worked in Vermont, and whether the VATF should become involved any rule making processes that involve the provision of services
- ❖ Karin felt that if the VATF decided to participate in the DOE rule making process and the VATF did make provide written comments or recommendations on proposed rules that it would be beneficial to both the DOE and LCAR.
- ❖ Karin also stated that she is encouraging a group of SLPs to get active regarding any rule making processes addressing speech language issues
- ❖ Linda felt that it should be an issue for the retreat to discuss whether and to what extent the VATF should become more involved in helping parents to: (1) navigate and utilize existing system and functioning tests, and (2) advocate for changes in either State legislation or DOE regulations
- ❖ Steve noted that ASD disorders involve motor skills and speech
- ❖ Stan noted that Developmental Services funding will be available for an adult individual (with ASD or other developmental disability) if that individual leaves school and already has a job, therefore services should be directed to fostering employment skills in individuals before they exit the educational system.
- ❖ Karin noted that no matter what regulatory changes are made, there will likely always be a high functioning group of students that will not qualify for services, but that will still have great difficulties surviving independently in the outside world
- ❖ Karin also felt that “adverse effect” must be included a consideration “basic skills”
- ❖ Tim said that for some kids the focus should not be limited to special education – general education is very important
- ❖ Marie-Christine asked if there are 504 Plan guidelines that can be made available to parents
- ❖ *Stan departed*
- ❖ Steve replied that some parents that he sees feel that receiving a 504 Plan rather than an IEP as a defeat or loss; Steve’s question is then how to use a 504 Plan’s accommodations to be seen as a “win” and gain supports or services under Section 504
- ❖ It was noted that services under a 504 Plan end at age 18, while services provided under an IEP can be extended to age 22
- ❖ It was also noted that Transition Planning can be included in a 504 Plan; but that Transition Planning is required under an IEP.
- ❖ Finally, it was noted that the creation of an IEP results in state/federal dollars being directed into a school district; however, a 504 Plan does not result in the an allocation of state funds
- ❖ Angela felt that it often comes down to the ability of the parents to advocate for a comprehensive 504 Plan (or even a comprehensive IEP)
- ❖ Karin said that DOE is planning to put on some special education 504 training programs

- ❖ Steve said that parents need to be given the knowledge that they can ask for a specialist on their team
- ❖ Karin replied that it would be very helpful to have VATF recommendation letter would come under the speech and language component of “basic skills”. She also said that the letter should identify testing that already exists and that if done this would result in qualifications.

AUTISM INSTITUTE UPDATE

- ❖ Claire mentioned that “Autism 101” is Sunday, June 22, 2008. The schedule is set with VATF facilitators for Tuesday and Wednesday.
- ❖ Claire will facilitate both the (1) Ed Spartalatti and (2) GMSA
- ❖ “Autism 101” will focus on helping parents identify team members
- ❖ Hillary said parents should be given information about VPIC (soon to be the Vermont Family Network) as resource before first meeting

Wellness:

- ❖ Jim noted that he will be attending the Autism Society of America’s annual conference for the first time in Orlando, FL this July. The ASA conference is the week before the VATF meeting.

Processing:

- ❖ Pascal noted that the Adverse Effect discussion and retreat topics were laid out

Next Meeting:

All-Day Retreat
Thursday, July 17, 2008
Location TBA

**Stan’s note: Please not change of retreat date to Friday, July 25.
Place still TBA**