

Minutes

State Advisory Council For the Education of Individuals with Disabilities

The Arkansas Advisory Council for the Education of Individuals with Disabilities met in the Conference Room at the Victory Building, Suite 445, on Thursday, October 30, 2014.

Council Members Present:

Christine Archer
Bobby Ackilin
Kimberly Parker
Sarah Allen
Julie Mayberry
Deborah Swink
Marylene Tate
Jim Moreland
Barry Vuletich
Denise Ennett Jones
Courtney Eubanks

Special Education Staff Present:

Christina Foley
Samantha Duclos
Lisa Haley
Jennifer Gonzales
Courtney Salas-Ford
Rhonda Saunders
Debbie Flemming
Ben Brockert
Jamila Ford
Carrie Anderson

Guest(s) Present: None

The meeting began at 9:18 A.M. with introductions and welcoming of the advisory council members and Special Education Unit (SEU) staff by Chairperson, Ms. Deborah Swink. Ms. Swink noted that the advisory council has a new member and some new SEU staff at the meeting. Ms. Swink asked the Council to look over the April 24, 2014, and July 31, 2014, minutes for consideration of approval by the quorum present. A motion was made by Mr. Jim Moreland, council member and AR Rehabilitation Services named “designee” in place of Mr. Jonathan Bibb, Commissioner, to approve the April 2014 minutes. Mr. Bobby Acklin, Superintendent of the Dollarway School District, seconded the motion to approve the minutes from April 2014 and the motion passed. Julie Mayberry made a motion to approve the July 2014 minutes. Mr. Moreland seconded that motion and it passed.

Courtney Salas-Ford, Attorney for Dispute Resolution, Special Education Unit – introduced Mr. Ben Brockert as the new Compliance Specialist in the Dispute Resolution section. Ms. Salas-Ford explained that Mr. Brockert would be working with parents and school districts to help resolve issues before they escalated into a formal complaint or hearing. She stated that Mr. Brockert would be a great asset to the SEU. Mr. Brockert is a former teacher, is currently in law school, and is a parent of a child with a disability.

Christina “Chris” Foley, Administrator of Funding and Finance, Special Education Unit – introduced Ms. Jamila Ford as the new Fiscal Support Supervisor in the Finance section. Ms. Foley told the council that Ms. Ford has only been with the SEU for three weeks and has already begun approving budgets.

Lisa Haley, Associate Director, Special Education Unit – introduced Ms. Rhonda Saunders as the new Administrator of Special Services. Ms. Saunders has been in Monitoring & Program Effectiveness for ten years and has now moved into Danny Reed’s former position. Ms. Haley noted that Ms. Saunders brings a lot of experience and knowledge, and has great rapport with districts and parents.

Deb Swink, Chairperson for the Advisory Council – introduced the newest council member, Ms. Denise Ennett Jones. Ms. Jones is a parent of a child with a disability.

Ms. Swink asked everyone to introduce themselves and what role they play in regard to the Advisory Council.

Courtney Salas-Ford, Attorney for Dispute Resolution, Special Education Unit – briefly discussed the ADE Restraint Guidelines. Ms. Salas-Ford stated that restraint and seclusion should not be used except in those situations in which the student posed an imminent danger of harm to themselves or others. In Arkansas, there is no state law or regulations addressing restraint. Ms. Salas-Ford informed the Council that in 2009, the Commissioner, Dr. Tom Kimbrell, asked the SEU to form a committee, which met for almost a year to develop the draft guidelines. Those draft guidelines were then submitted to ADE administration. Ms. Salas-Ford stated that the guidelines are advisory only; they are not regulatory or legally required. The guidelines were developed for districts to consider when developing their own policies and procedures.

Kimberly Parker, council member – commented that a lack of programming can lead to teachers physically putting their hands on a child with a disability.

Debbie Flemming, State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) – represented Dr. Howie Knoff, Director of SPDG. Ms. Flemming briefly spoke about some important SPDG three-month accomplishments.

SPDG staff, supported by the Grant Evaluators from Public Sector Consulting, held a bi-annual full-day grant evaluation meeting on October 24, 2014.

Ms. Flemming informed the council that SPDG staff continues to participate in a number of web-based and tele-conferences with other SPDG staff and evaluators across the country.

The SPDG continues to support special education recruitment and retention activities across the state, as well as financially supporting paraprofessionals working toward their highly qualified status, and undergraduate students who are earning licensure in different areas of special education.

Jennifer Gonzales, State Systemic Improvement Plan Coordinator (SSIP) – updated the council on State Program Development.

The Educational Interpreter Standards Committee has completed the final draft of the Educational Interpreter Standards Handbook and it has been sent to ADE administration for approval.

Tuition reimbursement continues to be provided for teachers pursuing Special Education Licensure or degrees in Vision, Teaching, and Speech Therapy. Three paraprofessionals have requested and been provided tuition reimbursement. The SEU continues to investigate the possibility of updating the Paraprofessional Modules for Core-Paraprofessional Training.

The Federal Deaf/Blind Grant, Children and Youth with Sensory Impairments and other disabilities (CAYSI), continues to have productive meetings with the Collaborative Partnership Consortium (CPC). This working group has assisted in identifying appropriate evidence-based resources and the optimal type of delivery systems needed for distributing technical assistance for children and families.

CAYSI is collaborating with the Southeast Regional Deafblind Team, for a Transition Institute in Louisville, Kentucky. The team has also formed a conference call pilot program for families to connect on a monthly basis, which will begin in November or December 2014.

CAYSI continues to work with Easter Seals Outreach in providing one-day trainings throughout the state for teachers who work with children with multiple disabilities. The last training this year will be in El Dorado, AR on Thursday, December 4, 2014.

CAYSI has 148 students on the Arkansas Deafblind Registry and will be working towards updating the census for the 2014 December 1 Child Count. Early identification and referrals continue to be a priority.

The Arkansas Co-Teaching Project completed its yearlong professional development package, and the 2013-2014 evaluation results for implementation planning and classroom applications were reported in a July 2014 report. At that time student outcome results were not available. After compiling the data, student outcome measures in the form of final grades of students from 13 schools indicated that in the 75 co-taught classes which represented 1,828 students (538 students with disabilities and 1,290 students without disabilities), 96% of students with disabilities received passing grades and 87% of students with disabilities received “C” or higher.

Currently, there are 15 schools from eight school districts enrolled in the 2014-2015 co-teaching professional development package; 12 schools are identified by the ADE as “Needs Improvement” and three as “Priority.”

Lisa Haley, Associate Director, Special Education Unit – reported on the current status of monitoring procedures which include phasing in a tiered system of monitoring. In the 2013-2014 school year, a self-monitoring procedure was piloted in which seven school districts used the SEU’s monitoring tools and protocols to monitor their own special

education programs. Ms. Haley stated that the SEU provided technical assistance to the districts participating in the pilot, and received very positive feedback.

Ms. Haley informed the council that the SEU is ready to take the next step in the implementation of a tiered system of monitoring, which includes self-monitoring for all districts on the current cycle. Self-monitoring activities include completion of student folder checklists, online teacher surveys, and an internal review of the general program including policies and procedures. The districts will submit their findings to the SEU. Follow up activities by the SEU will include a review of evidence to be sure that any self-identified noncompliance has been corrected. In addition, some of the items that were self-identified as 'compliant practices' by the school districts will be verified. Eighty three (83) school districts will be involved in this process.

Districts will be able to upload evidence of correction through a secure system, which will mean less time on the road for SEU staff and more time to work on supporting program improvement for student results. Some on-site monitoring will continue depending on the needs of the school district.

A results-driven monitoring process will be piloted in at least one LEA in the spring of 2015. The focus will be on programming and instruction as it relates to literacy. Compliance barriers that are contributing to poor literacy outcomes for students will be identified.

A consultant from the former Southeast Regional Resource Center, which was an OSEP funded Technical Assistance (TA) center, has been assisting the SEU in developing this system as she has with many other states.

Courtney Salas-Ford, Attorney, Special Education Unit – pointed out that complaints are down and that is mostly reflective of the increased use of mediation and IEP facilitation, as well as efforts within the office to resolve any complaints before they get to the next level. The number of hearings has increased with 12 currently pending. Ten new hearing requests have been submitted since the last meeting and 15 hearings have been closed. No new complaints have been submitted since the last advisory council meeting. Four previous complaints have been closed. Two open complaints are still pending.

Chris Foley, Finance Administrator – reported that the SEU Finance Section filled the vacant position in their section. She announced that Ms. Jamila Ford has joined the staff as of Monday, October 6, 2014. The SEU finance section will continue to approve budgets and payments to programs with eligible expenses under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Grants and Data staff will continue to provide technical assistance to districts and educational service cooperative (ESC) personnel. Grants and Data Report Review & Approval season is here. Cycle 9 Financial Reports were due to APSCN by August 31, 2014, and Cycle I Budgets were due September 30, 2014. Signature pages and checklists were due October 1, 2014. So far, 248 of 273 signature pages of all districts, charter schools, and co-ops have been received.

Grants and Data provided finance training on Tuesday, October 21, 2014, for the Special Education Supervisors at the 2014 LEA Academy. The finance section has worked with other special education sections to develop some guidelines for Catastrophic Funding eligible expenditures and revise the Catastrophic Student Registry to provide the much needed information. Few changes will be made for the 2014 - 2015 school year. "How To" Guidelines will be posted to the SEU's website in early November at www.arksped.k12.ar.us.

Deb Swink, Chairperson for the Advisory Council – quickly went over the handout that was provided by Ms. Jeanie Donaldson, Director, MITS, who could not be at the meeting. Ms. Swink reported on the first quarter (July 1, 2014 - September 30, 2015) claim amounts relating to Medicaid. The amount of Direct Services was \$2,090,471.75, which represents the amount billed by School Districts/Coops/ Charter Schools for services provided such as Therapy, Personal Care, Vision/Hearing Screens, Audiology, and School Based Mental Health. The amount of Indirect Services was \$4,086,421.76, which represents the amount generated by the ARMAC program. The 2013-2014 district profiles will be posted on www.armits.org so that districts can review their total Medicaid/ARMAC reimbursements.

Jennifer Gonzales, State Systemic Improvement Plan Coordinator (SSIP) – presented on the SSIP. The SSIP is a piece of the larger results-driven accountability (RDA) initiative from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The SSIP work has focused on sharing general information about the SSIP with multiple stakeholder groups and completing a broad infrastructure and data analysis. Ms. Gonzales presented a broad data analysis on graduation rate, post school outcomes, and literacy and math achievement. She also provided an overview of the infrastructure analysis the SEU completed through a Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threat (SWOT) Assessment. Based on feedback from the Special Education State Advisory Council, the SEU has determined that the SSIP focus will be on literacy.

Lisa Haley, Associate Director, Special Education Unit – briefly spoke to the council members about the members whose terms are now up. She asked these members to let the SEU know if they would like to be re-appointed for another three-year term. Ms. Haley alerted the Council that it is time to elect the Chair and Vice Chairpersons. There was a nomination for Deb Swink to continue to be the Chairperson of the board. A motion was made by Courtney Eubanks and seconded by Bobby Acklin. There was a nomination by Deb Swink for Courtney Eubanks to be the Vice Chair. Julie Mayberry seconded the motion. Both motions carried and the nominations were accepted.

Deb Swink, Chairperson for the Advisory Council – reported that the 2015 meeting dates have been set: January 22, April 23, July 23, and October 22 of 2015.

Julie Mayberry, Council Member - briefly spoke about the Executive Summary from the Public School Health Services Committee (PSHSAC) and provided the council with a

copy of the summary. She asked the council to consider sending a letter of support for the PSHSAC recommendations.

Ms. Swink stated that the next advisory council meeting would be held on Thursday, January 22, 2015. She asked if there were any additional questions or comments from the council or anyone else. There were no other questions or comments made.

Future topic suggestions included Licensure changes, TESS, and PTI.

Mr. Bobby Acklin made a motion to adjourn. Christine Archer, Council member and parent, seconded Mr. Acklin's motion to adjourn.

The State Advisory Council for the Education of Individuals with Disabilities meeting adjourned at 2:05 P.M. on Thursday, October 30, 2014.