



**Autism Services Initiative for Adults
Autism Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes**

**August 28, 2015
10:00 a.m.**

Decatur Recreation Center, 211 Sycamore Street, Decatur, Georgia

- Facilitators:** Scott Bales and April Umstead (Co-Chairs)
- Minutes Secretary:** Katherine Roeder
- Advisory Committee Attendees:** Scott Bales, Deborah Conway, Rena Harris, Stacey Lane, Kim Lucker-Greene, Eren Kyle Niederhoffer, Greta O'Dell, Stacey Ramirez, Michelle Schwartz, Pauline Shaw, April Umstead, Rita Young
- Absent:** Jennifer Briggs, Tim Cartledge, Ray Johnson, Laura Owen, Julie Prescott, Michelle Robison
- DBHDD Staff:** Darlene Meador
- Emory Staff:** Joseph Cubells, Silke Von Esenwein, Katherine Roeder
- Visitors:** Bob Babcock (Independent Consultant), Evelina Sterling (independent consultant)

Agenda

Introduction and Renew Acquaintances

- The meeting began at 10:00 a.m.
- The group introduced and welcomed Deborah Conway, Rita Young, and Greta O'Dell, who were absent from the first meeting, and Pauline Shaw, a new committee member representing southeast Georgia.

Approval/Discussion of Minutes of June Meeting

- Co-chair April Umstead asked for discussion of the minutes. Given no discussion, she then asked for approval.

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- Joseph Cubells moved that the minutes be approved.
- There was no move to second, however the agreement to approve was unanimous.

Topic: Communications

Darlene Meador provided an overview of the plan for development of standard, uniform communications about the project based on a recent meeting with DBHDD's Office of Communications.

The committee decided the following:

- The project staff, with recommendations from the committee, will assemble a list of common questions that the general public might ask about the Autism Initiative and then send it to DBHDD's Office of Communications for review and input. The resulting document will be known as "talking points" for the project. The finalized document of talking points will be made available for use in communications about the project.
- Posting of the committee's meeting minutes on DBHDD's website should be considered.
- The project would benefit from having a purpose and mission statement. An ad hoc committee composed of Eren Niederhoffer, Joe Cubells, Rena Harris, April Umstead, Stacey Ramirez, Darlene Meador, and Silke von Esenwein will handle this and report back with suggestions at our next meeting. Rena and Stacey will lead this effort.

Presentation: Focus Groups

Evelina Sterling, Ph.D., was the guest speaker on the topic of focus groups. She is a special consultant to the initiative, teaches at Kennesaw State University, and is a strategic public health professional with more than 15 years' experience in designing, leading, and evaluating public health projects and health education programs. She shared with the group information about her expertise in planning and conducting focus groups.

Question and Answer Period on Focus Groups

Highlights of the Q & A session are as follows:

- We should consider a combination of focus groups and individual interviews.
- How do we ensure diversity in gender, age, rural v. city, degree of impairment, and geographic location?

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- How do we get input from people who cannot manage participating in a focus group?
- At the outset, some initial interviews will be done with individuals to inform the question development process.
- The community on which we are focusing is those individuals who are receiving intellectual and developmental disability services. The whole purpose of this project is to understand current services so that gaps may be recognized.
- Diversity also means *age*. Most people improve with age, but many individuals with ASD lose abilities as they get older.
- Socio-economic groupings are important in planning the focus groups.
- Focus groups should include questions about challenges to service access.
- A suggestion for future committee meetings is to establish a “parking lot” for good ideas. These ideas may find their way into the agendas of future meetings.

Breakout into Working Groups

The committee broke out into three small groups to discuss focus group questions and identify three priority questions in each area. The groups and facilitators were as follows:

- **Access:** Stacey Ramirez, facilitator
- **Services:** Greta O’Dell, facilitator
- **Quality:** Kim Lucker-Greene, facilitator

Report and Discussion of Top Priority Focus Group Questions

The groups chose the following questions. They were posted, presented, and discussed.

Services

- What type of services do you currently use?
- Why do you not use a service you are currently eligible for?
- What type of services would you like to see that would make you, or your family member, more independent?

Quality

- Are services truly person-centered? If so, how do we measure/evaluate that?
- How do the services fit with what is empirically supported? How do you measure that? How do you monitor and follow up on it?

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- Do providers and consumers know what the quality standards are, and can they access the resources needed to implement them properly?

Access

The Access subgroup looked at two types of access:

1. Application for services: Was the application [literacy-appropriate] linguistically/culturally friendly? Who helped navigate?
2. Accessing services: Did you get actual services needed or did you have to compromise? Were services flexible? How or were you able to access services independently? Was transportation available? Did rate of pay affect whether you were able to access services?

The facilitators for each group agreed to forward their list of questions to Katherine Roeder for use in drafting a focus group interview script.

Next Steps

The committee agreed that given the distance that some of the members travel to be present at the meetings, and also given the work that the committee expects to accomplish, future meetings will last three hours.

The next meeting will be **October 30, 2015 at 10.00 a.m.** The main topic for the October meeting is quality measures.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.