



Michigan Autism Council

Michigan Autism Council Meeting Minutes

April 25, 2025

Attendance	COUNCIL MEMBERS	ORGANIZATION, REPRESENTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Dr. Amy Matthews, LP, BCBA Chair	Grand Valley State University, State-funded Initiatives
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Dr. Jacob Daar, BCBA Vice-Chair	Northern Michigan University, State Universities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Jenny Piatt, MA Secretary	Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Employment Services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Dr. Colleen Allen, Ph.D.	Autism Alliance of Michigan, a Non-Profit Organization serving those with ASD
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Krista Boe, M.A., BCBA	Acorn Health, Certified Behavior Analysts
<input type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Absent	Brian DeBano, MPA	Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
<input type="checkbox"/> In-person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Emily DeLaGarza	Michigan Department of Insurance & Financial Services
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Shannon Hinman	Michigan Department of Education
<input type="checkbox"/> In-person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Dana Lasenby, MBA	Oakland Community Health Network, Pre-Paid Inpatient Health Plans/Community Mental Health Service Programs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Patricia Neitman, MS, LLP	Bureau of Children's Service Coordinated Health Policy & Supports
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Raymie Postema	Michigan Department of Health & Human Services, Recipient Rights
<input type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Absent	Vacant position	MDHHS Children's Services Administration
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Dr. Neelkamal Soares, MD	Health Care Providers
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Dr. Steven Tunnicliff, Ph.D.	Genesee ISD, Intermediate School Districts and Local Schools

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Frank Vaca	Self-Advocate, ASD Community
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Rachelle Vartanian	Self-Advocate, ASD Community
	MDHHS STAFF	MDHHS REPRESENTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Dr. Erika Dianis, PsyD, LP	Bureau of Children’s Service Coordinated Health Policy & Supports
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Heather Glidden, LBSW, QIDP, MS	Bureau of Children’s Service Coordinated Health Policy & Supports
<input type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Absent	Sara Keyes	Bureau of Children’s Service Coordinated Health Policy & Supports
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input type="checkbox"/> Absent	Dr. Mary Luchies, Ph.D., LP, BCBA, LBA	Bureau of Children’s Service Coordinated Health Policy & Supports
<input type="checkbox"/> In-person <input type="checkbox"/> Virtual <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Absent	Marina Wyrzykowski	Legislative Affairs

CALL TO ORDER

The Autism Council meeting was called to order by Amy Matthews at 9:05 am. A quorum was present for the meeting.

ROLL CALL

A roll call of Council members and MDHHS staff was completed.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Raymie Postema called for a **MOTION** to approve the February minutes. Steven Tunncliff **SECONDED** the motion. The **MOTION** carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Eliot Carter: Alarmed by comments made by RFK Jr. and wants the Council to support the following 3 principles at the link [Leading Autism Organizations Release Joint Statement on Upholding Scientific Integrity and Supporting the Autism Community - Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#) which was shared with attendees in the chat.
 - 1) vaccines do not cause autism
 - 2) autistic individuals deserve respect and support
 - 3) evidence-based policy is essential.
- Frank Vaca: Also alarmed by comments made by RFK Jr. and stated “I don’t belong on a farm, I have a part-time job, and I’m a wonderful member of society with autism.”

PREVIOUS ACTION ITEMS


- Jeanette Scheid's council position will need to be filled.
 - Rachel Willis, Bureau Director for out of home services and the Children's Services Administration, is determining the replacement.
 - Replacement person should review Council's Member Representation Guidance document - [Autism Council Member Representation Guidance](#)
- ASD designation for vehicles.
 - Jenny Piatt: no additional designation for vehicles exists to notify law enforcement of someone with ASD in the vehicle. There is only a communication impediment designation.
 - Colleen Allen: legislators are discussing drafting a bill and seeking sponsorship to establish a packet of information that could be kept inside a vehicle for law enforcement that could be helpful during an interaction.
 - Discussion: would this apply to autistic people who drive, or to autistic passengers? What about other individuals being transported in a vehicle? What about getting consent?
- Using a sticker for a license, bumper, or vehicle or some other identification system.
 - Rachele Vartanian: some families are using a sticker on their drivers licence.
 - Neel Soares: some families are not wanting a diagnosis of ASD put into a medical chart given the current political climate.
 - Colleen Allen: families are also not going through with evaluations because of fears of being entered into a registry.
- Patty Nietman
 - Data pulled: Number of children in foster care is 9,123 and 651 have ASD.

STATE AGENCY UPDATES

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) UPDATES

Budget - No update.

Legislative

- Marina Wyrzykowski was absent from the meeting but provided updates on new bills and those signed into law.
 -  Leg update 4 29 25.docx
- Discussion:
 - Colleen Allen, Jacob Daar, and Mary Luchies: bills 4146 & 4145.
 - 4145 essentially seeks to remove ongoing supervision requirements for LLPs.
 - 4146 calls out a limitation on LLPs ability to diagnose autism without ongoing supervision or requiring 3 years of experience diagnosing.
 - sets up this one license for scrutiny down the road to provide such validation when having completed an evaluation.
 - Could cause a bottleneck within the system if not allowed to diagnose after 3 years experience.
 - Why this licence and not any other masters level license?
 - Why just the diagnosis of autism and no other DSM diagnoses?
 - Raymie Postema:
 - It looks like Senate bills 111-114 have been moved out of the Senate.
 - SB 114 allows for a multi-interdisciplinary team to address investigation, prevention and prosecution of abuse and exploitation with vulnerable adult populations. Concerns about what that might look like, confidentiality, who would make up the team, and

reporting it. Originally there was a bill related to doing this for people in adult foster care homes but has morphed into this.

Bureau of Children's Service Coordinated Health Policy & Supports: IDD and ASD Section:

- Continuing to provide statewide training about autism. Many are asking for autism basics.
- Partnering with Sunfield Center who have a training protocol for PCIT for families with children with ASD.
- Providing technical assistance for U of M's 3-bed inpatient program. Impetus was due to recipient rights violations and behavior treatment plans being poorly written, inappropriate and violating rights.
 - Raymie Postema: Wishes the Department were more proactive in watching for ways to help people or to provide assistance before being called in for rights violations.
- Technical Requirements for Behavioral Treatment Plan: The review committee (Raymie Postema, Mary Luchies and Price Pullens) will be providing a webinar training on the technical requirements for behavioral treatment plans, specifically how they should be structured, how they should be utilized, how they differ from behavior support plans, and who is qualified to create one. They cannot be used to restrict and limit people. The technical requirements have been attached to CMH contracts.
- The PIHP autism leads and other stakeholders will attend an all-day workshop on April 29 to develop administrative guidelines for autism treatment and service provision.
- Waiver updates have been made and are open for public comment.
 - There are a total of 669 waiver slots, 100 were newly added.
 - Proposing to revise requirements for assessment tools and eligibility.
 - Proposing to utilize MichiCANS as an assessment.
 - Eligibility would be a first come first serve basis.
 - [W CWP info for Autism Council.docx](#)

DIFS UPDATE

- No update

LEO/MRS UPDATE

- Governor Whitmer joins LEO, MDE, DHHS, and AAoM to proclaim April as Autism Acceptance Month
 - [April 2025: Autism Acceptance Month](#)
- Workplace Rights Week
 - [April 27 May 3, 2025: Workplace Rights Week](#)
- Going PRO Talent Fund-programs for employers to upscale talent across industries, \$16 million available for this cycle
 - [Going PRO Talent Fund](#)
- April is also Career Exploration and Awareness month
 - [Michiganders encouraged to explore pathways during Career Exploration and Awareness Month](#)
- New practice: utilizing ABA therapists with individuals on the job and working with the employer. ABA coaches have been instrumental in helping with anxiety.

MDE UPDATE

- See new business discussion

OLD BUSINESS

- None

NEW BUSINESS

- CDC ASD prevalence rates: now 1 in 31.
 - Neel Soares: be careful how the numbers are discussed because this represents the total number of cases not new cases. It is not an epidemic and data shows the prevalence rates have

been increasing steadily over time, NOT surging with an explosion of new cases like we saw with Covid numbers.

- Colleen Allen: the primary drivers of the increase in prevalence are early identification and how autism is defined.
 - Neel Soares: also associated with environmental exposures, paternal age, or maternal infection but ASD is caused by a variety of things and not just one driver.
- Jacob Daar: what does the diagnosis mean in terms of access to service? Some are not seeking this diagnosis while others are avoiding a genetic diagnosis in favor of ASD because it means a difference in access to service.
- Discussion about changes to the US Department of Education and its impact on states.
 - Michigan Department of Education
 - Shannon Hinman: Trump signed an executive order on March 20th seeking the elimination of the US Department of Education. This order came after the Trump administration initiated a reduction in workforce which impacted half the department. Federal funding continues, federal education laws remain in place, and nothing has changed for the MDE Office of Special Education. Indications are that Part B and C funds will be fully preserved. Part D funds for research and evidence-based practices will likely be reduced or eliminated. It is uncertain if this will impact MTSS Technical Assistance Center. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) under the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, has lost half their staff, they can't fill their vacancies, and the entire office of general counsel has been eliminated. This means a lack of legal support for interpretation of law which will affect guidance or information to the field. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has been significantly reduced and many field offices across the country have been closed. At the state level we have seen an increase in complaints about retaliation, racism, discrimination, and we don't have the authority to investigate. On April 17th, Office of Special Education had a call with OSEP – business is continuing as usual, IDEA grant applications are on the same timelines as previous years so Part B and C funds will likely be preserved at least for this next grant cycle.
 - Vocational Rehabilitation
 - The National Conference occurred last week and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) did not comment on how changes at the Department of Education would impact vocational rehabilitation. Bureau heads for State Vocational Rehabilitation discussed and states weighed in and stated if a move was necessary, it would be moved to the Department of Labor under the Office of Disability and Employment Policy (ODEP) instead of Health and Human Services.
 - Discussion
 - Neel Soares: What are the talking points we can share with families because some parents are afraid to send their child to school and are now homeschooling because they do not trust accommodations will be honored.
 - Check with Michigan Alliance for Families, the state funded parent training and information program for education, for a statement.

- Steven Tunnicliff: We are in the midst of a pilot program with BCBA's in our local districts supporting behaviors, not exclusive to special education and it's been well accepted and working well.
- Focus on School Series
 - School Perspective
 - Steven Tunnicliff:
 - reported on systems (e.g., Early-On, ISDs and K-12)
 - Every district and county is different in terms of programs or how they operate which includes how money flows (e.g., through the county to regional centers, on behalf of a county as center-based programs or as hybrid programs).
 - Initiatives:
 - Continued focus on inclusive and supportive environments.
 - Peer-to-peer expansions.
 - Transition programming.
 - Project Search.
 - Partnerships with CMHSPs and U-cares Program.
 - Reducing/eliminating and finding better practices to seclusion and restraints.
 - The number of students with disabilities across the state is not increasing but what is changing is eligibility criteria. More individuals are being identified under ASD eligibility and less under moderate cognitive impairment (MoCI) or cognitive impairment. A shift in eligibility over the last decade means there is a need for more classrooms, teachers and training, classroom support and programming to align with MoCI requirements and the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE). For example, a classroom can have up to 15 students if its a MoCi classroom whereas if its an ASD classroom MARSE rules are it can only have 5 students and possibly extended to 8 if some have ISD plans.
 - Funding has changed over the last three years. Previously, Michigan was funded under the reimbursement model. Now a special education student is funded with a full FTE.
 - Discussion:
 - Colleen Allen: Is the difference between medical diagnosis and ASD eligibility through the school influencing these numbers? Answer: locally, yes.
 - Neel Soares: how can schools collaborate with medical professionals to address challenging behaviors? Is there a framework of data collection and sharing across silos to make care more efficient? Answer: not at this time, but partnerships and agreements in place, such as U-Cares, that allows for someone within the CMHSP system to come in and de-escalate which supports the family moving forward. It's not about removing the child but instead supporting the child and teaching how to address the behaviors in the classroom.
 - Jacob Daar: are the BCBA's being hired as school employees coming from an education background? Answer: no, mostly coming from the clinical setting.

- Suggestion: we could bolster the supervision of BCBA's in a school setting to help them understand the school as a system which is very different from a hospital or clinical setting.
- Jenny Piatt: On the vocational rehabilitation side we are seeing a decline in counselors desiring to be in those roles and more individuals applying for those roles are coming from clinical backgrounds like OT, PT, speech and BCBA which brings a nice lens to the table and an advantage because they understand both systems and how medical/disability impacts a career.
- Colleen Allen: The number one request by families reported in the statewide special education survey was ABA in school so this has been a great discussion and whether the BCBA is coming into the school from the private sector or being hired directly by the school this progress.
 - Amy Matthews: It's great to hear that BCBA's are working on Tier 1 and not just Tier 3 so we're in a proactive place building the foundation.
- Jacob Daar: going back to the funding mechanism, state policy and the state plan-what are our recommendations as a council? Are we going to suggest funding be created to support internal hiring of BCBA's for Tier 1?
 - Steven Tunnickliff: We have made great gains over the last decade and we are fortunate to have 31N dollars and significant investment for schools in terms of mental health support which includes behaviors and other areas. These need to continue and we need to look at more inclusive support and building capacity at a larger scale.
- Amy Matthews: Graph presented showing in 2023-2024, 27,582 students received special education services for autism in Michigan. This graph shows the prevalence has been increasing steadily, without a huge increase in 2012 when legislation was passed for insurance coverage for ASD.
- Amy Matthews: showed a map of Michigan with peer-to-peer programs (K-12) across the state which is another great way to support students. It helps shape school culture and has a positive impact on those students participating. Preschool versions of peer-to-peer are now being built up.
 - Colleen Allen: Is there any data on these programs? Did the peers go into helping fields or in jobs promoting inclusivity. Answer: Dr. Eric Harder, once at Vanderbilt and now at Baylor, has done this research but it's difficult to get this data.
 - Amy Matthews: The secondary benefits we typically see with at-risk students are improved attendance and grades and a decrease in behaviors. We have a survey out right now looking at how peer-to-peer impacts staff and feedback is that it rejuvenated them and improved the climate for adults.
 - Jenny Piatt: Are these at the college level? Answer: some. We are trying to infiltrate the business schools at the university level and believe we have a professor at MSU that might be interested in bringing peer-to-peer

to their new center within the business school, the Broad College's Center for Ethical and Socially Responsible Leadership.

- Amy Matthews: our website has a Secondary Peer to Peer Program Playbook to help those get started.

MEMBER UPDATES

- No update

Michigan Autistic Adult Advocacy Committee: no update

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Frank Vaca **MOTION** to adjourn, and Jacob Daar **SECONDED** it.

ACTION ITEMS			
Who	What	When	Status
Jenny Piatt, Colleen Allen	Emergency Response Training	August meeting	Open
Jenny Piatt	Will follow up with LARA about LARA led updates	Next meeting	Open
Amy Matthews	State Survey results	Next meeting	Open
Colleen Allen, Jacob Daar, Raymie Postema	Follow up with Senator Webber on LLP requirements for diagnosing, HB 4146	Next meeting	Open
Patty Nietman	Check with waiver staff on the number of people on waitlists	Next meeting	Open
Jacob Daar	Look up resources or people who specialize in doing ABA job coaching	Next meeting	Open
Patty Nietman	Find replacement and provide Member Representation Guidance document to person replacing Jeanette Scheid's council position	Next meeting	Open
Amy Matthews	Check with Michigan Alliance for Families to see how they are communicating with families about changes at the US DOE and protection of the rights of children with IEPs. Arc/MAF response	Next meeting	Open
Sara Keyses	Schedule remaining council meetings	ASAP	Open