

## Final Meeting Minutes March 2024

### **Interagency Committee on Autism**

Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2024

11:00 – 12:30

This meeting will be conducted virtually and in-person

Virtual meeting link: <https://udel.zoom.us/j/97657860612>

In-person location: Lewes Public Library, 111 Adams Ave,  
Lewes, DE 19958

#### **ICA Representatives Present:**

Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services (DPBHS): Meredith Tavani

Parent Representative: Crystal Thawley

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR): LaShonta Mitchell

Center for Disabilities Studies: Beth Mineo

Nemours Swank Autism Center: Brian Freedman

Autism Delaware: Brian Hall

Parent Representative: Andrea Creed

C/Birth to 3 System: Erin Rich

#### **ICA Representatives Absent:**

Division of Public Health

Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDDS)

Delaware Autism Workgroup, Statewide Director

Delaware Department of Education

Parent Information Center of Delaware

Delaware Family Voices (DEFV)

Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH)

Ability Network

#### **DNEA Staff:**

Sarah Mallory: ICA Administrative Chair

Alisha Fletcher: DNEA Director

Ashley Steinbrecher: DNEA Staff

Katie Booz: DNEA Program Coordinator

## Final Meeting Minutes March 2024

### **Additional Attendees:**

Ivanka Carbajal

Mia Wilson?

Heidi Mizell

Tomara Williams

Stacey Bragg

### I. Motion to Approve Agenda

1. Motion: Brian Hall
2. Second: Crystal Thawley
3. Motion carried

### II. Motion to Approve Minutes

1. Motion: Bran Freedman
2. Second: Brian Hall
3. Motion carried

### III. DNEA Funding and Training Update

#### 1. Funding and Staffing

- DDDS presented to JFC about a month ago. Sarah Mallory and Alisha Fletcher attended this meeting.
  - Sarah mentioned that Brian Hall had a great public comment,
  - At the meeting there were no concerns or anything else brought up about DNEA funding,
  - The DNEA remains in the governor's budget.
- During last year's funding cycle about how the DNEA funding is different from that of the Autism Resources workgroup, they were able to clarify the difference to them.
  - At that time, these two groups were asked to produce a report this coming May describing how they are careful in not duplicating their activities.
  - The DNEA has met monthly with Mary Whitfield and are in great shape to meet this requirement.
- Staffing
  - The DNEA's Implementation coach Emily Curtin had her last day on last Friday (3/15/24). She said she missed working with students and she ultimately went back to working in the schools.
  - The DNEA will be launching a search to fill this position.
  - The DNEA did not have to cancel any activities or events that Emily scheduled, they simply shuffled around these activities.
- Reminder on the DNEA training structure:
  - Organize services and supports into 3 tiers
    - Statewide training, technical assistance, and information dissemination
    - Targeted professional development

- Capacity-building initiative
- 2. My Life, My Decisions: A Supported Decision-Making Summit Highlights
  - Ashley Steinbrecher shared some highlights from the Supported Decision-Making Summit that the DNEA hosted on March 7<sup>th</sup>.
  - This activity represents a tier 3 activity and was hosted in partnership with the DNEA, LEND, and DDC.
  - Who was in attendance?
    - 184+ people in attendance; 101+ in-person and 83 virtual
    - Summit identities:
      - 32% people with disabilities/self-advocates
      - 39% families, parents, and caregivers
      - 74% professionals who serve people with disabilities
  - Summit activities
    - Part 1 - Opened with a panel discussion and audience Q&A
    - Part 2 – There were two breakout sessions
      - Breakout session for parents, families, and caregivers and a breakout session for people with disabilities/self-advocates
      - There was also a professional development workshop with Jonathan Martinis
  - Part 1: Panel Discussion Details
    - Some of the topics discussed during panel discussion included:
      - Topic 1: Importance of Making Decisions and Living a Self-Determined Life
      - Topic 2: Navigating Challenges when Making Decisions
      - Topic 3: What Makes a Good Supporter
      - Topic 4: Closing Advice
    - Takeaways from our panel discussion
      - “How do you know someone can’t make decisions if you don’t give them the chance to try” – Arte Mays
      - “The only requirement for working is wanting to work” – Jessica Davenport
  - Mentoring breakout session activities
    - Decision-Making Checklists
      - Prompted attendees to think about different areas of life that they made decisions (for ex: health care, money, personal life)
      - Aimed to help start a conversation around areas of strength and areas where support may be needed
    - Guided Group Discussions Questions:
      - What is a goal you have related to self-determination or decision making that you are working on right now?
      - Are there any decisions you wished you were making with support or on your own?
      - What is a goal or something you hope to be able to do after today’s summit? Have you thought about your first

step(s) for meeting this goal? What are they?

- Resource Guides Developed
    - Supported Decision-Making in Delaware Resource Guide
    - Understanding Supported Decision-Making
    - Digital versions available on the jump drive or our website
  - Online hub of summit-related resources
    - Recordings from this and previous events
    - Materials shared today
    - Resource guides on lots of other topics!
    - <https://www.delawareautismnetwork.org/resources/supported-decision-making/>
  - LaShonta Mitchell shared that she enjoyed the summit. She stated that it was very informative, and it helped her to speak better with parents. She elaborated to say that she was recently able to relate to a parent about the option of Supported Decision-Making because of the information she learned at the summit.
3. Driving Program
- Alisha Fletcher, the DNEA Director, provided an update on the program's progress
  - The purpose of the driving program is for autistic drivers and passengers. It provides driving resources and the opportunity to take part in a practice traffic stop. Resources that will be provided include:
    - Driver Resource Guides
    - Auto Document Envelope
    - Healthcare plan available through CDS will be included
    - Pre-driving webinar
    - Mock driving traffic stops
      - Partnering with various police departments
  - The program will begin this summer
  - Created a video this past fall
    - It is a 3-part video highlighting what to do if you are pulled over, your car breaks down, or you are in a car accident.
    - Alisha shared a sneak peak of what the video will look like
    - The program will encourage drivers to watch this video before they participate in the practice traffic stop.
      - There will be a progression of steps laid out and how to sign up on the DNEA website.
4. Upcoming Spring DNEA Events
- Disaster Preparedness Training on May 13th, Delaware Department of Safety & Homeland Security
  - Autism & Epilepsy on March 20th at 11:00 on Zoom
  - Various Upcoming Organizations & Agency Trainings:
    - Winterthur Museum
    - Pediatric Health Choices at the Children's Secret Garden
    - Claymont Boys Girls Club
    - Delaware Association of School Psychologists Conference

## Final Meeting Minutes March 2024

- Sarah mentioned that there are more discipline specific (tier 2 and 3) now
5. Autism Delaware Update
- Autism Delaware is looking forward to April, Autism Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion Month! They have lots going on to celebrate:
    - The Walks for autism, Delaware City 4/13, Hudson Fields, Sussex 4/20
    - Smart Cookie Day, March 27th, Legislative Hall, Dover
  - Family Services has 2 new FSPs starting to work directly with families. They are also hiring- for an intake coordinator and a program manager. The agency has additional open positions.
    - Coffee hours, our support groups, for parents/guardians and for grandparents are taking place monthly, around the state in-person and virtually.
  - Check their website for the events calendar, job openings, and other helpful information.
  - They hired executive director, Mia Wilson. She was briefly introduced at this meeting.

## IV. ICA Member Announcements & Updates

1. Future Bayhealth Childcare Center
- Andrea Creed provided information on the opening of a new Bayhealth childcare center.
  - She read in Milford's newspaper that Bayhealth is building a day care for their employees and that it is supposed to be onsite.
  - Andrea stated that she thought this was a perfect opportunity to advocate for more inclusive childcare.
  - Andrea said that she reached out to everyone she knows to get more information about the opening.
  - Sarah Mallory and Andrea discussed training opportunities for the staff of this new childcare center. This included the next steps that could be taken. Sarah said that they can reach out to Katie Booz with training requests.
2. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR): LaShonta Mitchell
- DVR is hiring.
  - Project search RFP has gone out to bid for vendors.
  - Transition fairs county wide are taking place this month.
    - Sussex county – March 20<sup>th</sup> from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
    - Kent county - March 19<sup>th</sup> from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.
    - New Castle County – March 21<sup>st</sup> from 530 p.m. to 8 p.m.
3. Nemours Swank Autism Center: Brian Freedman
- Nemours has officially joined the Neurodiversity Employment Network.
    - Nemours is looking at how they can do a better job at hiring neurodiverse people at the hospital.

## Final Meeting Minutes March 2024

- Now hiring another clinical psychologist.
  - They have taken a couple positive steps for wait times for evaluation.
    - Now have a psychologist in almost all 12 clinics across the state.
    - Doing work with pediatricians to better assess the need for evaluation.
  - Project ECHO
    - In very early stages of thinking about it still. Hopefully at the next meeting they can share more.
  - Continue to see an uptick in children who land in the ER who have co-occurring challenges and the recurring issue of not knowing where to place them.
4. Center for Disabilities Studies: Beth Mineo
- Have hired a new fulltime assistive technology specialist in Milford – Anthony (OT)
  - Caregiver taskforce – one recommendation that is to come out is to make websites and resources clearer and more transparent. There is hope to see forward progress.
  - Spectrum Scholars program – An undergraduate student and research manager have finished a study on disclosing autism in higher education space. The results are fascinating, and are gaining traction both locally and nationally.

## V. Public Comment