

Community Alliance of Sarasota County

www.sarasotaalliance.net

Developmental Disabilities Work Group

August 12, 2008

Meeting Summary

Members present:

Anne Barrow	Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Joann Gepfert	Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Ellen Hepner	Children's Medical Services
Peter Howard	The Florida Center for Child and Family Development
Teresa Johnson	Sarasota County School Board parent liaison
Andrea King	Sarasota County Parks and Recreation Department
Susan Magers	Sarasota County School Board parent liaison
Kameron Partridge	Easter Seals of Southwest Florida
Mary Smith	Family Network on Disabilities
Ryan Stoyles	Community Haven
Benny Weaver	Loveland Center

Staff:

Kathleen Marie Hall	Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Chip Taylor	Sarasota County Health and Human Services
Pauline Tracy	Sarasota County Health and Human Services

Welcome and Introductions

Co-chairs Peter Howard and Benny Weaver welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

Priority Reports

Diaper Donations — Peter Howard reported that he is in the process of researching the diaper donation priority (how to request, store, distribute, and replenish the diaper supply). Peter stated that Target donates approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year in goods to many agencies in the community. Mary Smith suggested going directly to the manufacturers to request donations.

Aftercare — Joann Gepfert reported that there was a [report](#) in the members' packets for review. Joann stated that the group discussions included the various aftercare services in the community, fees, transition, transportation, accessing the needs, and the idea of creating a community survey.

A discussion followed on the various programs in place and the current requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Members pointed out that the mentioned programs were not geared for or equipped to accommodate children with special needs. Members concluded that there was a need for further research to identify the actual need, the additional costs involved, and what the training

requirements would be to implement this type of program. It was suggested that once the research has been completed, Sarasota County could implement a pilot program at one of the local schools. Kameron Partridge mentioned that the Easter Seals Adult Day Program facility is vacant after 3:00 p.m. each day and could be used as one of the sites for the pilot program. Joann noted that currently there are no programs in place for children ages 13 and older. Susan Magers mentioned that Toledo Blade Elementary School (in North Port) has a program in place where caretakers are trained to work with the autism cluster.

It was determined that the group should advocate for both before-school care and afterschool care to the Community Alliance. Teresa Johnson and Susan Magers volunteered to handle the short community survey with the assistance of Sarah Hickey. It was suggested that the survey be kept short and that parents be asked to explain their creative ways of securing before and after school care. It was also mentioned that the Boys and Girls Club should be approached to determine whether they would be willing for their staff to receive additional training in order to be able to accept children with developmental disabilities.

Transportation — Benny Weaver reported that SCAT Plus is in the process of charging an additional fee (\$2.50 per trip) to the developmental disabilities agencies by January 2009. In addition, SCAT will also transfer the responsibility of scheduling the individual trips to the agencies as well. Ryan Stoyles pointed out that SCAT would continue to receive the \$1.50 per trip fee from the Medicaid waiver as well as the new additional fee from the agencies. If this process is implemented, the agencies will be hit hard with the additional expenses. Benny stated that the agencies were never consulted about this new process until after the decision was made and that the individual County Commissioners he had contacted were unaware that the agencies were not consulted by SCAT prior to their decision. Benny explained that the impact to the Loveland Center alone would increase their expenses by an estimated \$102,000 per year. The only alternative offered by SCAT would be for the agencies to provide their own transportation, which would also increase their expenses (staff, salaries, additional handicapped vans, and fuel costs).

Pauline Tracy suggested that Peter Howard present this issue to the Community Alliance Executive Committee on August 13 and the Community Alliance Steering Committee on August 18. It was also suggested to invite representatives from the affected agencies and SCAT Plus to both meetings.

Respite — Mary Smith reported that there was a [spreadsheet](#) in the members' packets for review. Mary stated that the group narrowed the list down to the current providers of respite care and the services available. Mary expounded on a faith-based program, *Nathaniel's Hope*, that currently operates in three locations (Orlando, Tampa and Venice). This program originated at a local church in Orlando to provide respite once a month to qualified families through a "pair-up" system for children aged 3-16 (a one-on-one buddy system). The Orlando site will send trainers to interested churches to instruct the potential volunteers at no charge. Mary noted that the group recommends expanding on this type of faith-based program.

A discussion ensued on the potential of utilizing this type of program that is an untapped resource in the community. The only issue with this type of initiative would be whether some families might not be willing to attend a church-based program. It was recommended that local ministerial associations be contacted to request their input on this initiative.

Advocacy – Teresa Johnson reported that one of the issues that their group would like to address is the interaction between “First Responders” (police and fire officials) and autistic children. The major concern is the issue with understanding language commands. Susan Magers pointed out that the *Center for Autism Related Disorders* (CARD) offers training for police officers and resource officers through a grant.

A discussion followed on the current *CIT Training*, the *In Case of Emergency* (ICE) initiative that places emergency numbers on cell phones with the initials ICE, *I Need Help Communication Bracelet* program (<http://www.luvnhugsbooks.com/>), and Governor Crist’s Autism Task Force (<http://www.healthyfloridians.com/autism.html>).

Next Steps

Peter Howard announced that he will be leaving his current position with The Florida Center and all committees as of November 1. Peter recommended that the members formalize the leadership within the work group so there is continuity after his departure. Peter further suggested that the Chair should be a parent who would have more objectivity than an agency representative, while an agency representative could serve as the Vice-Chair. Pauline Tracy suggested putting together an *ad hoc* committee to nominate potential members, and create the bylaws and structure of the work group. Peter asked members to send their comments to Pauline to further this recommendation.

Announcements

Joann Gepfert announced that the Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) has moved to a new location: 4030 - 20th Street West, Bradenton, FL 34205. Their main number is 941-751-8803.

Kameron Partridge announced several important initiatives:

- Governor Crist has formed an Autism Task Force that meets in person four times a year, with additional meetings conducted through conference calls. The next session will be held on September 24 - 25 in Tampa. The Task Force’s preliminary report is due to the Governor by mid-December, with the final report due by March 2009 (<http://www.healthyfloridians.com/autism.html>).
- As of October 1, ACHA’s Medicaid prepaid reimbursement for pediatric therapy will only be handled by two vendors (ATA and TRS). The TANF families will be the first to be affected and then the SSI families. Final implementation will take place within two years.
- The United Way of Sarasota County received a \$95,000 donation to conduct a countywide study on the community’s perceptions of non-profit agencies and to determine whether Sarasota County is a “charitable” community. It was discovered

that trust is the number one issue with donating and that the average age for donors is between the ages of 25 and 49. Further information may be found on <http://www.uwsrq.com>.

Susan Magers reported that the *100 Ideas Foundation* is hosting a summit, *The 100 Ideas Autism and Disabilities Discussion*, at the Portofino Bay Hotel in Orlando on September 15-16. The summit will be structured in an informal format to offer parents, advocates, elected officials, and decision-makers an opportunity to provide input and discuss ideas on how Florida can meet the challenges presented by autism and developmental disabilities. Further information may be found on www.fddnews.com or www.100ideas.org.

Next Meeting

Peter Howard stated that the next meeting would be on Tuesday, September 9, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. at Health and Human Services in Room 2063.