

December 11, 2008
Feasibility Study Group Meeting
9:30-12:30

Attendance: Michael, Ruth, Jill, Jonas, Jacqui, Kathy, Pam

Action Items:

1. Reviewed data from previous week – Jacqui is working on disaggregating by the disability category identified last meeting. Michael suggested breaking down data by location and/or facility code since part of the problems districts may be having is expenditures related to tuition and transportation. Where are children going? Is it due to not having the support in district? We need to recommend a cost-benefit analysis. We should look at out of district placements. Ruth agrees. We need our data broken down differently. Or coded differently. This could be a recommendation that could be met since we have the data collection resources. This might be a low cost recommendation. There was agreement that we should share the data on ASD and carefully explain how to interpret information (ex. Prevalence, cumulative growth, separate classroom, etc.).

2. Statement of need – present the SDE ASD data and explain that we have not been collecting data in an aggregate called developmental disabilities in the state data collection conducted for IDEA. The definition is new to SDE – one of the tasks for this group was bringing clarity to this. Now that we've agreed on a definition and disabilities likely to be included, we can explore how to capture this for future data collection using existing system (SDE, Birth to Three). Opening paragraph might include the increase in state numbers – discussed increase reasons – better identification, testing, use of guidelines, awareness, inclusion of subgroup like Asperger's Syndrome. Jacqui shared the ideadata.org information on cumulative growth rate compared to other disabilities. Explain the guidelines and other reasons there might be an increase. Other Questions: How many children under Section 504 are Asperger's (when in actuality they are supposed to be under an ASD category – cite *Guidelines*)?

3. CEU Approved provider – Jacqui will count number and nature by region using the RESC map. Caution: does not include quality assurance measure. We have CEU approved provider list – SDE approved these vendors/providers. Also there may be a particular focus specific to a particular region (ex. ABA in the CREC area). Can we provide guidance at the state-level (no one methodology)? Evidence of quality and impact within the professional development provided? Do CEU credits in this area make a difference? Can SERC fulfill this role – a centralized area for districts to contact to find out where they can get training on x. This still does not satisfy if those seeking training truly know what it is they need. SERC could warehouse the resources – does not address the need for improvements of IEP or in identification/assessment practices used as foundation for IEP. *Ruth: If you teach to understand the disability, the educator can make better decisions about methodology and the appropriateness given a student's present level of performance.*

4. Training need – district-level training in making eligibility decisions – look at assessment items on survey. Is there a case? Is this a need in higher education? Who gets the training – need is for conducting a thorough evaluation which will/should drive the methodology? Parents and districts have different opinions as evidenced by the survey and themes from public meeting. Referral and identification – is the system in CT appropriate? Discussed New York system.

5. Keep in mind agencies and organizations which are obligated to address areas of concern and uphold federal and state requirements- SDE has the responsibility in partnership with IHE to regulate some of these areas. Should all CEU's awarded in this area be developed and regulated at the university level? This may involve Bureau of Educator Prep in partnership with IHE. The shift may be the role of IHE. The IHE organizations provide a broader view of practices and methodologies as opposed to approach-specific offerings by RESCs and others.

6. Michael's analysis – nothing new with refined analyses...which is good! We've been on the correct course with our interpretations. Michael looked at response patterns and differences among respondents for statistical significance. Professionals responded the same way. Parents responded the same way. Birth to Three/Early Childhood respondents were very different compared to school personnel. The major findings were the differences between parents and professionals – parents rated items as higher in both need and priority compared to other school personnel. Issue with survey that needs to be addressed as a limitation– ASD/DD...ASD is a DD. We can't make a clean comparison between the two due to sample size, but we also agreed there were respondents who may have still been unclear on what we were asking for under DD. Formatting recommendation – beginning with the biggest or most significant issue (pg. 7 - 12) Michael's handout. Then going back to pages 1-6 and addressing other findings. Theme of report – what we know, what we learned, and where we should go.

7. Preliminary higher ed survey findings – IHE has capacity to support in-service trainings in these areas.

8. Recommendations: An autism training and research center is still the major overarching recommendation – a center providing training and support for the implementation of research-based curriculum methods as well as engaging in consultation and evaluation with districts and programs serving children and youth with ASD. This center can be the hub for coordinating District/RESC-based assistance; consulting with teacher prep programs in special education on emphasizing support for students with autism; supporting federal/state compliance efforts with SDE (certification/CEU/special education); disseminating information regarding resources and opportunities to families, districts, programs; partnering with agencies and organizations to develop and/or enhance trainings and programs for broader communities. We need to make sure all needs align with the purpose of this center.

Additional/revised recommendation: Collaborative advisory council – at this level approves proposals for courses and training in this area before writing a letter recommending moving a training forward.

9. Overarching Problem Statements:

- Fastest cumulative growth in numbers of children ages 6-22 with a primary disability category of autism compared to all other disability categories in CT.
- Inequitable access to or awareness of resources across regions (human, physical, fiscal resources).
- Inconsistent understanding of ASD/DD characteristics and assessing needs (academic and functional).
- Inconsistent selection and implementation of appropriate and current practices that reflect student needs (academic and functional).
- Lack of quality assurance for existing training opportunities available to school personnel and families (content, delivery, expertise, federal/state requirements).
- Significant discrepant view between parents and school personnel concerning training needs and priority areas for districts and programs.

10. Task list for December 16, 2008:

Pam will proof and include Michael's data in the data/methods section and send to Jonas.

Kathy will send Jonas the draft recommendations with revisions.

Jacqui will send Kathy "problem statement" table to view for alignment to recommendations.

Jacqui will write the prevalence/*what we know* section for Body/Narrative and send to Jonas which includes:

- code the current trainings by region for approximate number and nature
- child count data from SDE/IDEA data – needs to extract and format frequencies
- shortage areas
- include challenges with prevalence by developmental disability

Jim does summary of IHE survey results (aka higher education section)

Anne Louise will revise the introduction section

Anne Louise will review preliminary recommendation list for possible connections to current and future SDE initiatives

Jonas will pull sections together in one draft format

Jacqui will review data collection and methodology sections to see if there is additional information which should be included.

Jacqui will send list of State plans reviewed to Anne Louise for inclusion in introduction.

Jonas will pull together a Reference page – we will send Jonas any literature or sources reviewed as part of this study.

December 16, 2008 Meeting 12:30 Middletown – At this meeting, we will read and:

1. Check for alignment with Special Act No. 08-5
2. Determine if recommendations are no cost, low cost, or high cost
3. Identify where we should cite federal and state requirements
4. Highlight content for inclusion in executive summary
5. Make revisions before sending to readers