
Special Education Advisory Council
October 1, 2009
Minutes of Meeting

Members Present: Randy Arnold, Tom Danzl, Heather Nichols, Cindy Owen, Rebecca Schlough, Sara Waline

Guest: Donniel Robinson

Facilitated by: Dr. Elisabeth Lodge Rogers

Dr. Rogers welcomed the group, introductions were done and the agenda was reviewed. Attendees were asked to update contact information and give consent to be a volunteer parent contact on the District webpage.

Third Party Billing

Donniel Robinson, distributed a handout of talking points regarding the status of third party billing for special education services. She stated that the District is currently actively billing for 308 students. The revenue amount for 2008-09 was \$414,030.60 and the goal was \$400,000. The goal for 2009-10 is \$500,000. Robinson explained that this past summer, 1,900 consent forms were mailed to families with children on an IEP and year-to-date, we have received over 400 back. The goal is to have a returned signed consent form for every student.

There was a question about what the revenue from third party billing is used for. Robinson responded that, when Districts are figuring out the special education and general education budgets, the State and Federal government assume they are third party billing. Revenue is used to offset special education expenditures that are covered by the general fund, instructional supplies, and to sponsor staff and students attending events and trainings. It can also be used to pay for the cost of doing third party billing including staff salaries and supplies, as well as cost for providing training and assistance to increase the amount of third party billing revenue. Dr. Rogers stated that \$15,000 was allocated to teachers who participate in third party billing to write "mini-grants" for allowable expenses, such as classroom supplies and training.

Robinson explained that districts can now third party bill for assessments and evaluations. Students who take medication may not have a billable service, however, if they need to go to nurses office for medications or treatment, then it is billable by units. Dr. Rogers explained that this is one way that small programs like City Life 742 can recoup the cost of having a health associate on staff.

There are training videos for teachers to learn how to communicate about third party billing to parents. There was a discussion about adding parent testimonials to the next training video. There was also a suggestion to have Donniel Robinson attend an ARC family group meeting to discuss third party billing. It was suggested that we work to provide third party billing information to families new to country if they have children who are on an IEP.

There was a brief discussion about the forms. A member suggested that parents may not sign a consent form, as they may be unsure how it will impact their private insurance. Teachers need to

become more familiar with how to answer these questions. Robinson said she would be happy to take phone calls at the Student Services office to clarify any questions. She also noted that consent forms can be changed at any time. Robinson is also working at making the form more user friendly and is checking with the State department about providing fact sheets in more understandable terms.

2009-2011 Budget

Dr. Rogers reviewed the budget proposal for the 2010-2011 school year. The proposal is located on the District webpage. She also encouraged the committee to submit suggestions for budget reductions. There was a brief discussion about the recent board approval of the OPEB option, which is the right for school districts to sell bonds and levy to pay out post retirement benefits to those who are eligible.

H1N1 Update

Dr. Rogers explained that the District is working with Minnesota Department of Health and Stearns, Benton, and Sherburne county public health officials in sending information to parents of all students in public and non-public schools regarding vaccination for H1N1 influenza. The MDH is currently working on the consent forms and the vaccine information sheet. The Federal government will be providing the vaccines free of charge. There will be two options for vaccination which is the flu mist for children who don't have chronic health conditions and injections. The vaccine must be ordered through county public health and it's anticipated that the mist will arrive first. At-risk and younger students will have priority in getting the H1N1 vaccination. Public health nurses will work collaboratively with school nurses and volunteers to ensure all students with completed consent forms will be vaccinated.

There was also a discussion about how nursing staff in each school is responding when students are suspected of having influenza-like symptoms. In some buildings there isn't space to isolate students. Dr. Rogers said she has been meeting with nursing staff where they have discussed the parameters established by MDH for reporting absences due to influenza-like illness. Reporting to the State threshold is 5% of students and staff in a building or 3 students in a class absent in one day. They have also discussed utilizing masks for students while they wait for parents to pick them up.

City Life 742

Dr. Rogers shared information about a new program that began this school year called City Life 742. The District had been paying Benton-Stearns Education District to provide services to secondary students for Level IV services. These students are disengaged in the educational experience and may experience social skills challenges. In addition, we are providing an 18-21 year old program for students experiencing emotional and behavioral disorder and developmental cognitive delays. Program capacity is 32 and they currently have 19 students. Randy Arnold is the administrator and Jill Murphy is the special education supervisor. There are four licensed teachers, a mental health facilitator, a behavior interventionist and five paraprofessionals.

Staff pursued grants to fund a monthly family night in lieu of parent conferences. A real plus to the start of the year was noted when the first family night had an attendance of 16 out of 19 students in attendance. Randy Arnold stated that some students may come from day treatment

programs and this program can lead to student graduation. There was a question about whether students are transitioned back to their high school. Arnold stated that transition back to high school will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Arnold also shared that there are other leasing agencies and/or spaces in the City Life Center that has been of interest to the students including: a mechanical shop, a kitchen facility with café, parent classes, karate studio, reading program, and an artist with a studio. An open house is being scheduled.

Co-Teaching Model

A member asked for an explanation of co-teaching model. Dr. Rogers stated that the District has been moving to an Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM) in many of the schools, which means looking at students needs and reducing instructional ratios for reading and math. This means co-teaching or teaming between English Language Learner teachers, special education teachers and general education teachers. It has been occurring at Discovery, Lincoln, Kennedy, Talahi, and Madison. The goal is to determine how we can arrange schedules for flexible grouping to meet the needs in an integrated manner that keeps kids grounded in mainstream. Dr. Rogers stated that it has been a challenge for some staff as it is a different approach to service delivery. Arnold reiterated that it changes the instructional ratio to do things in a more targeted way to meet student needs and it takes planning to make it work. A member who works as a paraprofessional at one of the sites participating in co-teaching commented that from her perspective, it is a very well organized system in the classroom.

Other:

Time of Meeting

There was a discussion about the time of meetings. The group felt that the attendance numbers at the meetings didn't indicate a need for evening meetings.

History of Term Paraprofessional

A member had a question about the term paraprofessional and that it may not classify the work done by those individuals adequately. Dr. Rogers explained that there are seven different categories of paraprofessionals within that bargaining unit and it is the broad term used in literature and statutes.

New Refugees

Lutheran Social Services in St. Cloud has been awarded a grant to operate as an agency to place refugees. Dr. Rogers stated that the St. Cloud area will see a number of refugees coming to the area with a considerable amount of children who have special needs. It takes a significant amount of time and effort to be transferred to the United States from refugee camps when family members have disabilities. Many of the refugees are also victims of extreme violence in the refugee camps. In an effort to support families, Dr. Rogers has been working with cultural navigators to improve knowledge and communication about special education services. She asked members if anyone had suggestions on how to cross the barriers of language and provide support. Cindy Owen stated that ARC is working with Catholic Charities and shared that often times initiating help is doable, but the follow-up is difficult with limited funds for interpreters and time.

Handouts from Arc Midstate

- Autism Resource Fair, October 3, 2009
- Fall Fun Sibsdays Event, November 7, 2009
- Potpourri Conference, February 27, 2010

Dr. Rogers thanked the attendees and the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted By: Sharie Narlock

These minutes are not official until reviewed and approved by the Special Education Advisory Council.