

Prince George's SECAC
April 26, 2022

Board Members in Attendance: Troy Sampson, chairman; Janie Payne, treasurer; Jamie Anfenson-Comeau, secretary; Pam Talley, community outreach manager; Ayo Bello, listserv manager.

Others in Attendance: See Attached Screenshot.

Mr. Sampson opened the meeting at 6:34 p.m. online via the Zoom meeting platform, welcoming attendees.

Mr. Sampson noted that April is Autism Awareness Month, and given the spread of autism awareness, the focus is shifting toward April as Autism Acceptance Month.

Mr. Sampson introduced the SECAC executive board members in attendance, then also introduced partners from Prince George's County Public Schools' special education department.

Mr. Sampson also said that the third scheduled guest speaker, Antonio Myers had just contacted him and was unable to attend and sent his regrets.

Jennifer Brown, supervisor of special education programs for PGCPs, introduced other autism specialists in attendance, including Yvonne Alleyne, instructional specialist, behavioral support; James Webb, instructional specialist, autism, and Debbie Perhatch, twice exceptional resource teacher.

Ms. Brown shared information on supports for self-regulation within the autism program, including pictures from sensory calming centers in Autism Program schools.

She said that many students with autism experience anxiety and frustration, and that the calming rooms are places where sensory-based experiences allow students to self-calm in order to be able to learn.

Ms. Brown said that students go to the calming rooms when they show signs of frustration or anxiety or when the student requests them. They are not a replacement for crisis rooms, and not a reward for good behavior.

She said that data is collected every time the calming room is used.

Ms. Brown played videos from school system employees and a student discussing the use of calming rooms.

Ms. Brown said that the Autism Program is expanding the number of Crisis Intervention Resource Teachers (CERTs).

Answering a question from an attendee, Ms. Brown said there are 22 schools with Autism Programs in the county, 17 elementary schools, 2 middle schools and one high school. Of those schools, all of the elementary schools, one middle school and one high school have sensory calming rooms. There are two additional Autism Programs in the extension program schools.

Mr. Sampson asked if there were sensory calming spaces in the Early Childhood Centers. Trinell Bowman, associate superintendent, Department of Special Education, said that every ECC classroom has its own calming corner.

Joseph Shahady, Autism Waiver program manager for PGCPs, spoke about the Autism Waiver process.

He said the Autism Waiver is a medical assistance program in which the only income eligibility is based on the applicant and not their family.

An eligible person receives home and community supports in place of institutionalization.

Eligibility requirements include Maryland residency, ages 1 to 21, a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), n15 hours of special education services per week in the IEP, not enrolled in the Medicaid Waiver program, may only receive one waiver service per month, Medicaid eligibility, activities of daily living, and a Level of Care Determination completed by a certified school psychologist.

Mr. Shahady said the Level of Care Determination must indicate institutional level.

He said that the financial eligibility applies only to the applicant and not their family. The applicants income and assets are reviewed by the state, with a total asset limit of \$2,000.

Mr. Shahady said that Autism Waiver services can include family consultation, intensive individual support, respite care, therapeutic integration, intensive therapeutic integration, environmental assessment adaptation, residential habilitation, adult life planning and service coordination.

Mr. Shahady said there are currently 6,000 individuals on the registry. Services are currently provided for 1,500 applicants. The wait is approximately 8 years. The distribution is approximately 5% ages 6-11, 48% ages 12-17, 47% ages 18-21, and 0% ages 9 and under, which Mr. Shadady said is largely due to the long time.

Mr. Shahady said PGCPs currently has 157 children on the Autism Waiver. The number to get on the registry is 1-866-417-3480.

He said a local school representative will contact the family when their application is started. Parents must attend all application meetings with local school system representatives.

Mr. Shahady said his phone number is 301-918-8780 ext. 74214 and his email is josephshahady@pgcps.org.

In answer to a question from Mr. Sampson, Mr. Shahady said ABLE accounts do not count as resources for the determination process.

Ms. Talley said her son received the Autism Waiver at age 9, and that her son spent 6 years on the waitlist.

Mr. Shahady told attendees not to wait to get on the list but to register as soon as possible, and eligibility can be determined later.

In answer to a question, Mr. Shahady said that individuals can and do age out of the waitlist.

Mr. Sampson said that is why it is important to get on the waitlist as soon as possible, preferably at the ECC level.

Mr. Shahady said that even if the child would likely be too old, get on the waitlist anyway, to help demonstrate to the state the level of need.

An attendee asked in the Autism Waiver is only open to public school students. Mr. Shahady said the student must have an IEP, but if they are funded through the county to attend a nonpublic school, they are still eligible.

An attendee asked if the special education department had any recommendations for dealing with student school refusal.

Ms. Brown said that the return to in-person learning has been challenging for many students. The process has been difficult for students with disabilities re-acclimating, or in the case of young students, acclimating themselves to in-person school.

Ms. Alleyne said it is important to prepare children for the environment they are going into and making sure they see the school environment as fun.

Ms. Brown said parents facing school refusal should contact the school and IEP team to create an assessment. They can build a plan to slowly introduce students to school if necessary. They can also complete an application for Home and Hospital Teaching if there are health needs. CIRTSS can also consult with the school.

Ms. Brown said they can also utilize social stories and arrange pre-visits to the school.

Mr. Sampson said COVID really took students out of school and that getting them back into the classroom is really a transition.

An attendee asked if there might be recommendations and resources available for afterschool programs for children enrolled in half-day programs.

Ms. Brown said she can connect parents with preschool support programs and can help with eligibility with community partners.

Another attendee asked if there was a way to donate supplies to teachers at public and nonpublic schools.

Ms. Brown said that for donations to public school teachers, email partnerships@pgcps.org and for donation to nonpublic school teachers, email anthony.wright@pgcps.org.

Mr. Sampson thanked everyone in attendance, including school partners. He said the next meeting will be held on May 24, and the topic is Prince George's School Mental Health Initiative.

Mr. Sampson closed the meeting.

Find a participant

JA	Jamie Anfenon-Comeau (Me)		
	Marsie Torchon (Host)		
	Jennifer Brown (Co-host)		
YY	Yvette Young (Co-host)		
	Troy Sampson		
YA	Yvonne Alleyne		
JC	Jasmen Chavez- INTERPR... (Interpreter)	ES	
AR	Alexis Russell		
AF	Ana Flores		
AB	Analucy Benavides (Interpreter)	ES	
	Andria Thomas		
	ANITA CORREA		
	Camille Johnson		
C	Christina Parent		
DP	Debra Perhach		
	Frances Carter-Johnson		
HP	Heather Porterfield		
	Irin Wills-Allen		
	James Webb		
JL	Janie Lareece Payne		
JS	Joseph Shahady		

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Participants (40)

Find a participant

JS

Joseph Shahady

JV

JULIE VALLECILLO

KA

Karen Andrews

KT


Kisha Toppin

LW

Larry Wade

L


Louis




Nicole Wade

NW

Nicole Wade




Nicole West



Pamela Boozer-Strother

PT

Pamela Talley



Ronda Bullock

SC

Sandra Chavarria

S

SEWONU

More >

SW


Sharon Williams

ST

Shonte Tulloss

ST

Sylvia Taylor



Tanisha Wooten

TH

Tiffany Hemans

TB

Trinell Bowman

YA

Yvonne Alleyne

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