

Council on Educational Services for EC

June 12, 2019

Summary of Actions

Welcome, Call to Order, Introductions, Review of Agenda, Review of Meeting Minutes – March

Chairperson Leanna George called the meeting to order. Council members provided self-introductions and reviewed the day's agenda.

The March Summary of Actions was reviewed. The Council approved the March Summary of Actions without edits.

Foster Care – Driver's License Issues for Young People

Erin Conner, LINKS Program Coordinator with Division of Social Services, provided an introduction and a handout of the LINKS program. LINKS is the Independent Living Services for Foster Children.

Foster children experience barriers to driving such as access to vehicles, car insurance, support of placement providers, insufficient funding, placement stability, placement type – group / therapeutic, grades. Some legislation has tried to assist with insurance barriers.

Transportation Really Is Possible (TRIP) – provides funding to help young people in foster care obtain their driver's license, learner's permit and with other driving-related costs.

Foster parents can receive reimbursement for TRIP-eligible costs. Drivers education; learners permit and driver's license fees, vehicle insurance and other costs are eligible costs for reimbursement. TRIP reimbursement requests are completed by social workers and submitted to Erin Conner.

TRIP Readiness Assessment considers factors like school attendance and performance, placement stability, etc.

Council wanted to know how many had been served by the program and Ms. Conner advised she would report back with that number.

Annual Report

Leanna briefly reviewed the Annual Report that will be presented at the **October State Board of Education**. Later in the meeting, the Council will review the report and provide any suggestions/edits/wordsmithing.

Nash Rocky Mt Schools has four trainers for mental health first aid training and looking at adding a parent component. Mental Health First Aid is a day-long training to learn about symptoms, resources in community, terminology, disorders and how they may present themselves.

Mental Health First Aid is provided to teachers and parents. It's not "what to do" but it has an emphasis on how to recognize clues and symptoms as a preventive and informational purpose.

Principal and Assistant Principal training is often suggested/requested at ECAC. ECAC is working with a couple of districts for mandatory training next year for Principals and Assistant Principals and is working on what should be included in the training.

"Being a Compliant LEA Rep" was a session at the EC Conference (ppt available on the website) that was very well attended. The session focused on the LEA rep at IEP meetings, attendees were Principals and Assistant Principals. ECAC also provides training to Principals and Assistant Principals. Lisa Philips has provided training on the homeless program for school administrators.

Training for current Principals and Assistant Principals and those waiting/learning to be Principals/Assistant Principals was a working suggestion. Webinar based mode of delivery was encouraged.

NC Center for Safer Schools / Task Force

Kym Martin, Executive Director, NC Center for Safer Schools (CSS), has an extensive special education connection beginning early in her life by being a nanny for a girl with autism and babysitter for child with cerebral palsy. She also has a long career working with EC students. Ms. Martin will review what CSS and the task force has done so far and secure thoughts and feedback from the Council for future areas of focus.

CSS started in March 2013 after the Sandy Hook tragedy and is working with the Sandy Hook Promise Foundation on a student app to report suspicious activities. One of the founders of Sandy Hook Promise is a parent of student killed. The shooter went into the special education classroom. CSS also includes training for “wingman” for EC students.

Mental health is first topic when discussing safer schools. Shooter had diagnosis of Asperger’s. A school shooting tragedy does make mental health a discussible topic instead of forbidden.

CSS takes a new broad look at school safety: physical security and emergency response; mental health and students with special needs; school climate and discipline. Most schools have adopted this approach as well.

CCS is hoping School Resource Officer (SRO) annual training will be mandated in the near future. The curriculum is being developed in collaboration with NC Justice Dept.

There is a mental health first aid program created for schools, which is a training program to recognize signs and/or resources. There is also a mental health first aid program for youth, so teenagers could be educated on warning signs, etc. CSS developed a suicide prevention toolkit.

School climate – bullying and cyberbullying is at the heart of school safety and violence. School administrators need to support teachers when they report bullying. Students utilizing anonymous reporting via phone apps is a huge factor. Peer tutoring has tremendous benefits. SROs are critical to the safety of EC students. However, they need training to work with students with special needs, physical and otherwise, and need to know each student in the school without violating HIPPA/FERPA. SROs should be encouraged to meet the students in EC classes and interact with student body in general in order to develop a positive, friendly relationship. Parents should also be aware there could be an interaction of EC students and SRO personnel. Some LEAs have “day” of fire, police and rescue visit for the day. There are approximately 1300 SROs in the state; most high schools have one, middle school SROs are increasing; and just a few in elementary schools.

MOUs between school and law enforcement should have clear expectations, ie not carpool duty, not there to be called in on all disciplinary actions.

Critical Incident Response Training for school faculty- establishes a uniform response by schools all across the state, primarily in the case of school shooter and/or weather-related emergency. This has zero impact on how law enforcement or first responders respond to critical incidents at the school. Only changes what he may see once they are on-scene. The critical incidence response training focuses more on be aware of what’s going on, not the standard – go to classroom, close the door. If class is on playground, shooter running into building, teacher would not take students into classroom and close door. There is a minimum requirement of once year active shooter drill per school. This training is also available to non-public schools as well.

There are barriers for the evacuation of EC students that need improvement. Not all schools are equipped with buses, at all times, to handle wheelchair evacuations. There needs to be viable alternatives.

The Council has great concerns for emergency planning relative to EC students. The Council should have this topic as committee work in order to produce strong, solid recommendations in this area of need. Re-unification after the event is also a part of the plan.

Each school has an emergency management plan, low incidence population portion does not always state specifics and it changes every year based on student population. Working on classroom specific plans; ie what is specifically outlined for students. Managed care organizations also offer crisis intervention training.

It was suggested that each IEP have a section for emergency planning procedures and possible the formation of a stakeholder group to focus on crisis plans. The stakeholder group should include young people as well.

Training grants are a great way to focus on EC. Not so much to focus on the disabilities but be aware of emotional and/or physical challenging aspects. Parents have advised children that report bullying are not taken seriously a lot of times. Students' ability to report is an important aspect to include in training.

AU Policy Changes

Sherry Thomas, Director of Exceptional Children Division, advised that the Council would receive the same AU presentation as presented to the State Board of Education and questions from the Council would be taken at the end of the presentation. Lynn Makor, School Psychology and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Consultant; and Lauren Holahan, Occupational Therapy (OT) Consultant, were introduced as the presenters. The goal is to help educate and help Council understand what the proposed changes really mean.

The proposed changes do not limit or restrict anything related to the federal regulations or the definition of autism spectrum disorder, does not narrow the identification process, and does not place any unnecessary restrictions on IEP teams. One of the original goals was to improve the alignment with definition and eligibility based upon what we know today about autism and improve alignment of NC policies with effective practices.

Autism is the fourth most prevalent disability category in NC.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is 35.4%

Other Health Impaired is 17.5%

Speech/Language Impairment is 14.1%

Autism is 11.1%

Intellectual Disability is 8.1%

It appears AU may outnumber SLP in the next year or so based on the expectant trend of increasing percentage. Each year there is an increase of approximately 1300 children in the AU category.

The goal of the recommended policy change is better alignment between community providers and school provides to minimize fragmentation of services. Consistency in identification is a major factor in what EC Division set out to accomplish.

The federal definition has three components identified as having autism, student demonstrates a significant impact on communication (verbal and nonverbal) and difficulty with social interaction. Emotional characteristics should not be an automatic ASD classification. Need to do a better job of collecting symptoms that present themselves in the early development period. OT should be included with IEP Team screening/evaluation for ASD.

Current eligibility requires the child to meet three out of four of the following:

Impairment in communication;

Impairment in social interaction;

Unusual responses to sensory experiences; or

Restrictive, repetitive or stereotypical pattern of behavior, interest and/or activities.

The proposed changes just more clearly define what IEP Teams are to look for because NC has a lot of students with autism and we don't want to miss any of them that need services, but also don't want to incorrectly identify students by being too broad. It doesn't change anything in terms of what is being investigated.

There was a public comment period prior to the proposed policy. Public comments, in general, were supportive of the changes. There was also critical feedback around the wording of the changes relating to social developmental history and behavioral assessment. Adjustments were made based on that feedback and are incorporated in the proposed policy.

The purpose of the presentation today was to hopefully provide clarity and understanding around the proposed policy changes. The EC Division will also be scheduling additional parent forums on the proposed changes in every region from June 20 through July 25 with this same presentation. It will be an opportunity to take questions from parents about understanding and clarity of the policy change. It was suggested the presentations be held 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm (instead of 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm).

The State Board of Education asked the Council for a written position statement regarding the policy change for the August State Board of Education meeting.

Annual Report

The Council reviewed the annual report and provided suggestions and edits. The annual report will be presented to the SBE in October.

Public Comments

One emailed public comment was received. It related to contracting of services. The concern is the contracting process/requirements are being a barrier to schools being able to access services.

Universal contracts/contract processing across the state is not realistic. Each district/school has such unique needs and many factors effect the rates of each varied service. For example, the transportation rate in a rural area versus an urban area.

Committee Work

Leanna advised Council she is willing to serve a second term as Chairperson but will open nominations and voting at next meeting.

The Council had a big discussion regarding school safety teams.

Significant Disproportionality Update

Nancy Johnson reminded the Council of previous information allowing a two- year delay for States' implementation of Equity in IDEA/significant disproportionality until July 1, 2020 for determinations in Spring of 2021.

In March 2019 a federal judge ruled that US OSEP violated law in delaying implementation. In May 2019 OSEP issued statement expecting state to implement the new standards from the 2016 regulation.

Changes as a result of new regulations are:

- Cell size – 10 (new for identification & placement) (numerator) NC previously used for discipline only
- “N” size = 30 (based on enrollment for identification) (denominator) NC was using based on number of students with disabilities; now applies to enrollment of LEA not students with disabilities.
- Risk Ratio - => 3.0 (new for discipline)
- Reasonable Progress - <5.0 risk ratio and <.2 up from each of previous two consecutive years.

Under new regulations, less PSUs were identified as SD than the previous year, which was surprising; however, more PSUs are on warning lists in more areas this year.

Five (5) types of disciplinary actions

>10-day OSS

>10-day IIS

<10-day OSS*

<10-day ISS*

Total disciplinary removals* (*new requirements).

No long review < 10-day OSS that accumulate to >10 days in school year

More than 100 LEAs will be on warning lists – meaning they need to begin looking at their data. For CEIS, contributing factors must be addressed; funds can also be spent on students with disabilities, but not exclusively. For Preschool, identification and discipline, becomes effective 7/1/2020 for Spring 2021 determinations.

PSUs with SD will be posted on website.

Announcements

- Teresa Mebane has completed her second-term on the Council.
- ECATS – training this week; scheduled to go live July 15. Tweaks and additional functionality will be an ongoing process. The addition for a 504 add-on is at LEA expense.
- At next Council meeting, EC Division give a demo/drive through of ECATS.