**Autism Statewide Advisory Group Meeting**

MEETING MINUTES - September 12, 2023

**ATTENDEES:**

**Greg Robinson** – *Deputy Director of Public Policy for the Autistic Self Advocacy Network/Self Advocate*

**Emily Arker** – *School Psychologist in Montgomery County Public Schools*

**Dorie Flynn** - *Executive Director of MANSEF*

**Rebecca Rienzi** – *Executive Director of Pathfinders of Autism*

**Lisa Wiederlight** – Parent Advocate

**Ami Taubenfeld** – Executive Director of Itineris

**Nikki Stokes** – Resource Coordinator for Pathfinders for Autism/Parent

**Peggy Pugh** – Chief Academic Officer Montgomery County Public Schools

**Janet Furman** – Director of Childrens Services for the Developmental Disabilities Administration

**June Chung** – Deputy Legislative Office for Governor Moore

**Shannon West** -

**Corey Johns** - Chief of Staff for Delegate Michele Guyton

**Nicole Blanc** – Silver Spring Maryland

**Rachel London**– Executive Director of the Developmental Disabilities Council

**Carol Beatty** – Secretary of the Maryland Department of Disabilities

**Jaylynn R. Prince** – Madison House Autism Foundation/ Parent

**Courtney Thomas**- Winterberg – Director of Allegany Department of Social Services

**Ray Marshall** – The Arc of Maryland

**Melisa Rosenberg** – Director of the Autism Society

**Victoria Rodriguez** – Coordinator of Autism Strategy

**Nancy Forsythe** – Disability Inclusion Specialist - University of Maryland

**Ryan Roddey** – Special Education Teacher/Self Advocate

**Carmen Brown** – Interagency Branch Chief for the Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services – MSDE

**Beth Benevides** – Director of Outreach  
**Diana Wingate** – Parent Advocate

**ROLL CALL**

Participants were asked to introduce themselves to include agency/organization affiliations.

**OPENING REMARKS – SECRETARY BEATTY/LISA**

Secretary Beatty thanked all attendees and the sub-committee chairs for their work. Deputy Secretary Blecastro introduced Victoria Rodriguez as the new Coordinator of State Autism Strategy. **BIO:** Victoria M. Rodríguez-Roldán, J.D. is a nationally known openly trans and autistic self-advocate. She has over a decade of experience in the government and non-profit sector, having started in disability discrimination enforcement at the U.S. Department of Labor. Later, she found the Disability Justice Project at the National LGBTQ Task Force, which is dedicated to LGBTQ people with disabilities, with a special focus on both mental health and IDD - both populations in which LGBTQ people are historically underrepresented. She is a chapter author of the book “Sincerely, Your Autistic Child.” She chaired the board of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network during a multi-year period of dynamic transition for the organization, and sat as a member of the Autistic Women and Non-Binary Network. She holds a law degree from the University of Maine School of Law, and an undergraduate degree in Psychology from the University of Puerto Rico.

**PRESENTATION** (Highlights)

* ASGARN was moved from the Governor’s Office of Community Initiative to the Department of Disabilities in July 2023.
* Membership will be bought back to the statutory baseline (Governor Appointed, Ex-Officio, MGA Appointed. A membership committee will be formed to review applications for membership and additional appointments.
* Currently vacancies for the following*: (Applications are posted on the MDOD website*
  + Governor Appointed (Business Community, Pediatrician, Physical Therapist)
  + Ex-Officio: (MD Occupational Therapy Association)
  + MGA Appointed: (1 House of Delegates, 1 Senate Appointee
* ASGARN priority is implementing new policies and procedures that promote compliance and transparency during the process of developing the autism plan.

**OPEN DISCUSSION**

* **Peggy Pugh:** Suggested that the group refer back to the legislation and gather all the previous work from the subcommittees.
* **Rebecca Rienzi –** Will there be support from MDOD for scheduling, posting, or meeting planning. Victoria will work with the subcommittee chairs to assist.
* **Nicole Blanc**: Suggests looking at data and resources for long Covid in Autism with the neurodiverse populations.
* **Lisa Weiderlight:** Suggests MDOD partner with MDTAP to provide meeting accommodations to non-speaking individuals.
* **Emily Arker:** School psychologists are instrumental in identifying children with autism and should be included in the group.

**NEXT STEPS**

* Within the next 60 days, the membership committee for applications will be formed to review new applications.
* Victoria will begin outreach across the state including listening sessions and meetings with stakeholders and community members.
* completion/Submission for strategic plan is anticipated for July 1, 2024
* Next quarterly meetings are scheduled for December 12, 2023, March 12, 2024, May 21, 2024.

**Closing Remarks/Adjournment– Victoria Rodriguez-Roldan**

Ami motioned to adjourn. Rebecca Rienzi seconded. Meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.