



**Vermont's
Approach to Creating
a State Autism Plan**

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History of Plan Creation

- 2005 – Autism Specialists hired in Department of Education and Agency of Human Services to focus on system's improvement
- 2006 - Interagency report on ASD identified status of state system of support and gaps for VT's interagency children's services advisory board

History

- 2007 – Act 35 passed by legislature requiring Agency of Human Services and Department of Education to develop a plan for providing service across the lifespan for people with ASD. Report due 2/08
- 7/07-2/08 – Two state Autism Specialists organized process for developing the plan

Development of Plan

- Sent out statewide invitation to stakeholders to participate on a committee to develop plan
- Received 75 applications, so we decided to have include everyone
- Had a Steering Committee and 5 sub-committees addressing specific areas of state service

Development of Plan

- Committees met 5-6 times each and each identified what was available, the gaps and made recommendations for improvements
- Each committee had a parent and a professional co-chair who were responsible for organizing the work of their committee
- State provided clear instructions for work of the groups, stipends for parent participation

Development of plan

- State held 5 community forums around the state to gather public input. All attendees given opportunity to provide input regarding medical, education and human services for people with ASD. 195 people attended.
- Written comment solicited as well (57 people provide comments)
- All comments recorded and later analyzed for themes

Development of plan

- Conducted statewide on-line survey regarding state services. 503 respondents, 103 parents, 400 professionals. Responses analyzed according to these 2 groups
- All this information was synthesized into one report with findings and 57 recommendations and sent to Legislature
- Legislature requested that recommendations be prioritized and turned into action plan

Development of Plan

- State sent out another survey regarding priorities. 100 responses.
- Steering Committee came back together for 2 days and came up with 7 priorities
- Priorities with strategies sent to commissioner and AHS secretary for approval
- MOU written assigning responsibilities for plan implementation to state departments

Outcomes

- Started implementing the plan in June, 2008
- Advisory committee formed to oversee implementation of plan. 50% family members/individuals with ASD/ 50% professionals. Meets monthly
- Developmental/ autism screening project in medical homes
- Developing protocols for screening ELL
- Working on referral and follow-up algorithm

Outcomes

- Developed best guidelines for diagnosis
- Trained 45 clinicians in ADOS/ADI diagnostic tools
- Receive 3 year HRSA SIG to implement plan 9/10. Having a plan allowed us to apply
- Provided contract to Family Voices organization to develop section of their website with extensive autism info. Also phone support

Outcomes

- Contract to provide training/coaching to teams in early intervention and early education to implement evidence-based practices
- Developing a youth transition guide
- Conducted a study of implications of mandate for private and Medicaid insurance coverage
- Promoting local autism awareness events

Outcomes

- Committee working on defining appropriate services to be covered in Medicaid under new mandate
- Ongoing training for educators, human services staff and families, including DOE project with the NPDC
- Advisory Committee researching options for adult services and will make recommendations.

Lessons learned

- Power of families to advocate at the legislature
- Plan required by legislative act
- Need to have specific state staff assigned to development and implementation of plan
- Because of the wide stakeholder input, we have not veered off the identified priorities, even when there has been pressure to do so

Lessons learned

- Advisory committee helps to keep state accountable to goals of the plan
- Keep chipping away at achieving goals, even when it's hard to find resources to reach them

Resources

- Info on developing plan
<http://www.ddas.vermont.gov/ddas-boards/autism-boards-committees/vt-autism-planning-committee>
- Link to Interagency study on ASD, diagnosis guidelines, guide to newly diagnosed families
<http://www.ddas.vermont.gov/ddas-programs/programs-autism-default-page>



Thank you!