



TULARE COUNTY COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

MINUTES

The Tulare County Community Advisory Committee for Special Education met October 6, 2011 in the Board Room of the Tulare County Office of Education, 2637 West Burrel at 1:30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tim Perrotta, Amy McMahon, Stephanie Caldera, Filomena Rocha, Randi Kestner, Blanca Florez, Cyndi Ward, Claudia Garcia, Michelle West-Dyer

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dana Collins, Connie Acevedo, Gary Kenny, Tiffany Stark

OTHERS PRESENT: Norma Erwin, Miroslava Esparza, and Lori Collins, Parent Liaisons / Tulare County Office of Education; Christina Joaquin, Victoria Borbon, Sapra Khalil, members of the public.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS: The meeting was called to order by Tim Perrotta, Chair. Self introductions were made by CAC members and members of the public.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: There were no comments made from members of the public present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The motion to approve the September 1, 2011 CAC meeting minutes was made by Filomena Rocha and seconded by Cyndi Ward. The minutes were approved by majority vote. The minutes stand.

REPORTS:

A. **Report of September DOSE Meeting:** Michelle West-Dyer, DOSE Representative informed the members about the following topics:

1. Program Manager, Maxine Epperson reported regarding the criteria for the Severely Handicapped Programs stating that adaptability and cognitive abilities are considered but the process is open ended.
2. A new Severely Handicapped referral form was introduced. It will serve to refer to Deaf and Hard of Hearing programs also. These forms are universally used by Bright Start and preschools.
3. Norma Erwin presented the annual Child Find Campaign. This campaign will be undertaken to identify children needing evaluation or special services who have not been previously identified.
4. Director of Special Education, Jennifer Reimer reported on the SELPA AdHoc Committee meeting regarding better support for students graduating with high school diplomas. The goal is to work with CVRC to improve transition and greater support for students after graduating with a diploma.

B. **Study Topic:** "Disability Resource Center & Annual Disability Awareness"- Sharmeen Lakhani, Support Services Counselor filled in for David Maciel, Director who was called away. She provided CAC with the DRC's Annual Report and a copy of the fall 2011 newsletter. Sharmeen Lakhani reviewed services provided by the COS Disability Resource Center. She announced that a Disability Awareness Day event has not been scheduled the last two years and it is not on the venue for this year. Sharmeen stated that the DRC conducts an assessment to determine what the educational limits are and how that affects a student's ability to succeed

in college. A 504 or IEP often helps to determine this. Generally, they receive similar to what was received in high school. She explained the Student Data in the Annual Report indicates that the majority of the students served fall in the "Other" category while the second largest group served is in the "Learning Disability" category.

The procedure to access DRC services includes filling out an "Intake Packet" to determine verification of a disability. The student is interviewed by a counselor and signs an educational contract which may address any of the following areas of support: testing accommodations, alternate media, Braille, Workability III program, etc. The DRC works in concert with the Department of Rehabilitation to target goals and objectives. Michelle West-Dyer, Director of Special Education for Woodlake School District asked about support a particular student receives and asked if he would receive the type of services he is used to. Sharmeen Lakhani said they would try to keep the same goals as much as possible if the student is referred through the Department of Rehabilitation. The student and the DRC decide on these together.

C. Bright Start Update: Sarah Hamilton, Bright Start Program Manager, presented an update on the current changes at Bright Start covering procedures for accessing program services and how additional services such as therapy, Preschool Academy Groups, Parent Support Groups, Community Events and Skill-Focused Groups will be delivered. For example, the Preschool Academy groups will be phased out as those currently enrolled age out. Natural Links within each community like day care will be identified instead to address certain aspects of this group. CAC was provided with five research-based articles and analysis that address the need to adjust the approach to early intervention. It was stated that bringing this model to the rural community would make the Bright Start services accessible to greater numbers of families. Members offered ideas to consider when selecting a location for community events. Sarah Hamilton thanked the members and explained that the program is still in transition and there are areas still being addressed. CAC member, Randi Kestner thanked Sarah Hamilton for her presentation and recognized her efforts at trying to improve the program. Randi Kestner acknowledged that many children have benefited from services available at the Bright Start program and it was understood that any changes would require fine tuning. The following areas of concern were addressed:

1. Consistency is important.
2. Parents won't miss what they don't have but preschool preparedness may make a difference.
3. They are used to having the center there.
4. What about the social aspect and the number of minutes in a home program?
5. Home parent training is important.
6. Changing locations is hard for parents to deal with because they don't open up very easily and it may take up to six months. Meeting at a center just feels safer. It is helpful if it is scrap booking rather than a support group.
7. Communicating the positives about the new model may be helpful. For example, I would have benefited from the coaching at the grocery store.
8. What about the education levels of staff to deal with the variety of disabilities and levels of functioning?
9. Is this due to budget constraints?
10. Is transportation being offered?

D. TCOVE / EI DHS: Norma Erwin discussed the tour of the Workability programs planned for March 1, 2012. She reported the "cookie making" program at El Diamante High School that CAC wanted to see only operates from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. If CAC chooses to tour the program at 12 noon, they will observe the clean up and cookie delivery part of the process. Norma Erwin pointed out different options; one is changing the meeting to the morning. The flip side is the CAC would not be able to tour the Tulare Workability programs planned for the afternoon. After further discussion CAC members agreed to start the March meeting at 9 a.m. and limit the tour to the TCOVE/ROP program at El Diamante High School. Other tours will be tabled for another time.

E. Approval of CAC Bylaws: Tim Perrotta brought the Bylaws to the attention of the committee. Committee member, Stephanie Caldera made a motion to approve the CAC Bylaws. The motion was

seconded by Blanca Florez and approved by the members.

- F. **CAC Calendar Update:** Norma Erwin provided the committee with the full version of the Calendar photos assembled by Filomena Rocha. The remainder of the photos will be shown at next month's CAC meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- A. Committee members received updated directory, meeting and member reports.
- B. Members received updated staff development opportunities for October.

A motion was made by Cyndi Ward to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Filomena Rocha. Meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.