



Cambridge Human Services Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 12, 2015
5:30 – 7:30pm
Citywide Senior Center
806 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

Commissioners present: Christine Elow, Christopher R. Hall, Kati LaBraico, Khari Milner, Katharine Emilie Thomas, Rev. Lorraine Thornhill

Regrets: Dr. Ayse Atasoylu, Lori Likis, Nan Stone

DHSP staff: Janice Alger, Mike Payack (recorder), Ellen Semonoff

Presenters: Nicole Horton-Stimpson, Manager of Inclusion Services; and Tiffany Lillie, Inclusion Specialist

Ellen introduced Nicole Horton-Stimpson, Manager of Inclusion Services and Tiffany Lille, Inclusion Specialist.

Nicole and Tiffany consider themselves the “point people” for families of children with special needs, providing support and helping these families choose the best programs for their children. Nicole noted that for many of these children, this will be their first inclusive experience.

Inclusion Initiative staff work with thirty programs across DHSP divisions: Childcare, Community Schools, King Open Extended Day, and Youth Centers. Each program receives support and evaluation from Inclusion Initiative staff every 6-8 weeks. There are about 1300 children enrolled in DHSP programs. On average, between 18%-19% of these children have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). However, a child does not need to have an IEP in order to receive Inclusion Initiative support; DHSP program staff or parents can also make referrals.

Nicole and Tiffany stated that reasonable accommodations for program participants might include reasonable modifications to a program’s rules, policies, or practices, the provision of auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats, alteration or removal of physical or transportation barriers.

State licensing guidelines require a 1:13 ratio (one staff member for every 13 children), but the City prefers ratios of 1:8 or 1:9. Inclusion Initiative staff take individual program ratios into consideration when assisting families in choosing the right program for their child. DHSP may also, in some cases, provide additional staffing, up to and including a one-on-one aide to an individual with a disability who would not be able to participate in the program without such assistance (as long as the individual meets the basic eligibility requirements of the program to which he or she applied). These determinations are made on a case-by-case-basis

The Inclusion Initiative is rolling out a new monthly training series beginning next month. The training series is not only for Inclusion Facilitators, but for all program staff. Topics will include: Partnering with Families, Creating Inclusive Classrooms, and Crisis Management & De-escalation Techniques.

Ellen thanked Nicole and Tiff for their presentation, adding that it's been wonderful that DHSP has been able to ensure that as many children as possible can have positive experiences in DHSP programs—and part of the wonderful experience is being in an inclusive environment.

Mike announced that he will be conducting annual CDBG site visits in the coming months. Human Services Commissioners have the option of accompanying Mike on these site visits.

Ellen announced that Kati LaBraico recently received the Diamond Award from her employer, Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates. Ellen congratulated Kati on this well-deserved honor. Ellen also announced that Kati will be stepping down from the Human Services Commission. Ellen thanked Kati for her many years of fine service.

Mike announced that the next Human Services Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 12, 2015, and will feature a presentation on the City's Open Data Initiative, by Lee Gianetti, Director of Communications and Community Relations.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Payack
Planner/Contracts Manager
DHSP/Planning & Development