

**Mission:**

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor

**Scott A. Rivkees, MD**  
State Surgeon General

**Vision:** To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

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**Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Advisory Council  
Meeting Minutes  
January 14, 2021  
Video Conference Via Microsoft Teams**

**I. Welcome and Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 P.M. on January 14, 2021. Teresa George conducted roll call. A quorum was present.

**Council Members Present:**

- Natalie Alden
- Erick Collazo
- Suzanne Doswell
- Joanne Hoertz
- Kevin Mullin
- Daniel Nicholson
- Ricke Zeidman

**Council Members Absent:**

- Patricia Dorrell
- Michael Fada
- Marsha Martino
- Rhonda Ross
- Jeffery Secure
- Larissa Swan

**Call for Approval of Minutes**

- Ricke Zeidman, BSCIAC Chair, made a motion to approved minutes. The motion was seconded and approved.

**Program Update – Kimberly Robinson, BSCIP Section Administrator****• Welcome New Council Members**

Kimberly Robinson welcomed the new Council members:

- Daniel Nicholson – TBI Survivor or Family Member
  - Daniel Nicholson introduced himself and provided a brief synopsis about himself and his experience with being a TBI survivor.
- Michael Fada – Special Needs of Children with TBI or SCI
  - Michael Fada was not present at the time the meeting began to be able to introduce himself.

**• Remaining Vacancies for Council Positions**

- Professional
- SCI Survivor or Family Member
- TBI Survivor or Family Member

- Special Needs of Children with TBI or SCI

- **BSCIP Program Status**

Kimberly Robinson had each regional manager provide an update on their region.

Beau Pfister introduced his regional managers and each gave a report of the statistics and happenings in their region. The statistical reports provided the total number of clients in both Applicant and In-Service statuses for the Adult and Pediatric Programs. The reports were broken down by injury type, status, how many clients were served and how many were closed as community reintegrated. The reports for quarter 1 and quarter 2 of SFY 20/21 were presented.

Justin Stark provided an update on the Florida Spinal Cord Injury Resource Center (FSCIRC), explaining how the resource center is the component of the program that can help fill the gaps for resources. Mr. Stark shared how his team provides information packets to all new injured individuals. Over the last two quarters, 70 packets were provided in the first quarter of SFY 20/21 and 69 packets were provided in the second quarter. In the peer mentoring program, there were 4 cases recently closed and 5 cases are currently open. The website for FSCIRC is currently undergoing a redesign and will soon include brain injury information as an additional resource.

Kimberly Robinson stated that the Program has not seen a loss in referrals or clients during the current COVID-19 pandemic and BSCIP has been able to maintain the continuity of care for its clients.

- **BSCIP Medical Reference Library**

Nancy Lagasse, the health nurse consultant for the Program, was introduced. Ms. Lagasse assists our case managers when they have difficulty determining eligibility on tough cases. Ms. Lagasse presented the Medical Reference Library she created. This resource will keep staff from having to perform time consuming research and will provide valuable information on various types of injuries, diagnoses, complications, pre-existing conditions and medical abbreviations. The document is divided into brain injury and spinal cord injury sections and then subcategories under each.

- **Client Satisfaction Surveys Update**

Robert Pfister provided an update on the client satisfaction surveys. Mr. Pfister discussed how the surveys would be tracked, what platform was going to be used, the way information will be disseminated and tracking the information with the analytics data. BSCIP Leadership decided to utilize Survey Monkey, which is currently in the process for approval to purchase. The surveys are being performed through the FSCIRC, which ensures that there is no bias as there might be if the client's case manager administered the survey.

Justin Stark from the FSCIRC provided an update on the surveys that had been completed. There are four different surveys. For each survey, a random sample of clients was identified and were then contacted. Approximately 25 clients were contacted. 60% of the surveys were completed.

Mr. Pfister expressed that this coming quarter there will be more to show as Survey Monkey will be in place and utilized.

## **Overview of Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program**

- **Budget FY 20-21**

Kimberly Robinson reported on the current budget reports that were attached as a document for this meeting. A review of each category for both expenditures and revenues was discussed.

Kevin Mullen had questions about the Miami Project to Cure Paralysis. Ms. Robinson explained that this is a pass through that was approved on the GAA. There is a contract with specific deliverables that have to be achieved each quarter.

Ricke Zeidman had a question regarding funding for brain injury research. Ms. Robinson explained that University of Florida and the University of Miami are provided limited funds (up to \$500,000.00 each) from the revenues as pass through per the GAA.

Joanne Hoertz had a question regarding the increase in the cost for the contracted services and wanted to know if there is there anything that contributed to a pretty significant increase from quarter to quarter and if the figures were for the same number of people. Ms. Robinson explained that this funding is for the same number of people. Edmund Mills then explained that the increase was due to the first few months of the state fiscal year being the timeframe when the billing period is getting going. For example, the work might be performed in July, August, and September, but that invoice doesn't come in to be paid until October. At the end of the SFY, we have the certified forward period, which is when any remaining invoices for that SFY can be paid, even though we are now in the new SFY. The certified forward period typically lasts for the first 3 months of the new SFY, typically through the end of September.

Erick Collazo had a question regarding the funds that are received from the revenues and whether or not those funds are accruing interest and if there is a delay between the accrual period and the payment period. Ms. Robinson explained that these funds are reported monthly by each county and provided to the Program. There is really no way to forecast fees anticipated to be collected for the next quarter.

- **Impact of COVID 19**

Kimberly Robinson provided an update on the impact of COVID-19 to the Program.

- BSCIP has had one client to date who tested positive for COVID-19. The client has fully recovered.
- The Program has been tracking telehealth visits.
- The types of services provided for telehealth are:
  - physical therapy
  - occupational therapy
  - speech therapy
  - medical follow up
  - Neuropsych
- From July 1st through December 30<sup>th</sup>, BSCIP provided:
  - 921 total services.
  - 160 of those services were provided through telehealth.

- 55 clients received these telehealth services with no disruption of services or continuity of care.

Kevin Mullen asked if SCI or TBI recipients were requesting information with COVID and vaccinations. Per the Regional Managers, staff has not been asked about this by their clients.

- **Community Partners**

Teresa George provided an update on the Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living (FACIL). Ms. George explained that the vendor directory coordinator is currently trying to onboard them as a vendor. FACIL will provide a new service to our clients for a comprehensive assessment eligibility determination for supplemental benefits. Supplemental benefit assessment assistance will be for the application and eligibility determination for:

- Social Security, Disability
- Long Term Care Waiver
- Medicaid
- Medicare
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Low income Home Energy Assistance Program
- Assistance with securing permanent housing and housing vouchers
- JJPAS
- Transportation Services
- Home Modifications

Kimberly Robinson explained the goal in working with FACIL for the supplemental benefits is to determine if the client qualifies for any of these programs. This will ensure that by the time the client is ready for community reintegration, they have all the benefits that they're going to need at the time of discharge from BSCIP.

- **Florida Alliance for Assistive Services (FAAST)**

Kimberly Robinson introduced Miss Whitney Harris, Executive Director for the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technologies (FAAST). Ms. Harris pulled up the website for FAAST and did an overview of the program and services they provide.

## **Legislative Update**

Kimberly Robinson introduced Michael Leffler, who is the delegate for Leah Colston, Bureau Chief.

Mr. Leffler provided a legislative update.

Mr. Leffler notified the Council of Ms. Colston's departure from the Department effective March 18, 2021.

Mr. Leffler discussed that the role of the advisory council is to provide advice and expertise on how BSCIP can best serve brain and spinal cord injury patients. He stated that across our bureau, we look at severely injured patients overall and how can we improve that system. One of the things that we are limited by is our statutory authority. As the Program, we can only focus on areas that the legislature has said to. If we go outside of those parameters, we have to go through a statutory revision. Over time,

things change, rules change, and the way that we interpret our statutes change. Therefore, it is a constant process to continue to look at our programs and see if there are statutory changes that are necessary. Mr. Leffler stated that it is important that our advisory council provide feedback on things that BSCIP needs to look at in our program and if we need to pursue them as a statutory change, then we do that. Mr. Leffler then stressed the importance of understanding that changes to statutes is often a very long process. It's very easy to come up with the concept, but that concept then has to be presented to the Department leadership, and the concept now competes against dozens of other concepts from other offices within the Department. It's important for us to be patient as the changes may not happen during the first few years after being proposed. Mr. Leffler doesn't want to discourage our Council from suggesting recommendations, being able to articulate those recommendations and moving them forward. He just wants everyone to be aware of the process.

- **Charter Committees Updates**

Kimberly Robinson had each Charter Committee provide an update on their activity.

- Education Committee
  - Kimberly Robinson reported that the Education Committee has not been able to meet with the members assigned, therefore she proposed combining the Education Committee with all three other committees as it ties into performance, quality improvement, public awareness and outreach. Ms. Robinson encouraged all members to participate in these committees.
- Performance and Quality Improvement Committee
  - Robert Pfister reported that there has been limited participation in this committee. At the same time, the insights that have been received and what has come from them is very beneficial. Some tasks have been put in motion. Mr. Pfister thanked Kevin Mullin for his time as Committee Lead and the insight and information he provided. He then thanked Natalie Alden who is the only other current committee member. Mr. Pfister stated that a new committee lead is needed now. Mr. Pfister then stated that the committee discussed the need for continuing education for BSCIP staff as it is important for staff to be knowledgeable to provide the best and most efficient services to the population we serve. BSCIP has started this continuing education already by having our community partners provide insight into the various programs and benefits that exist from their organizations. FFAST will perform an in-service for all BSCIP staff statewide on October 20th. Mr. Pfister then mentioned that Ms. Alden will help to educate staff on disability rights for our injured population. Mr. Pfister closed by urging more participation in these committees from the members.
- Public Awareness Committee
  - Ricke Zeidman reported that the Public Awareness Committee started off with a goal of producing a list of trauma centers. The committee members were then going to contact any centers that were not referring people to the program. All but two trauma centers were not reporting and those two were reporting under different names or

facilities. This was an exceptional result due to the hard work and dedication of the regional managers and the case managers. The committee then focused on public service announcements to be played in a place such as a professional sports team stadium. A template was created, which Mr. Zeidman read.

“Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Ricke Zeidman, member of the Florida Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Advisory Council to the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program (BSCIP). BSCIP is a unique program designed and written into law by the Florida Legislature to provide eligible individuals with traumatic brain injury and/or spinal cord injuries the opportunity to obtain necessary services to enable them to return to their homes or other community-based living. The BSCIP is administered by the Florida Department of Health and is funded through traffic-related civil penalties, surcharges for driving/boating under the influence, fees on temporary license tags, and fees from motorcycle specialty tags.

Available services include, but are not limited to, case management, rehabilitation services, assistive technology, home modifications, and providing information and referrals to other community partners. Under this program, services are provided based on eligibility as defined in Florida Statutes, and available funding. Part of the eligibility process is that the applicant must be a Florida resident. I have provided a referral form (application) that can be filled out and submitted to our Central Registry so determination can be made to see if the applicant may qualify for BSCIP services (see attachment). It is only necessary to fill out the questions marked with an asterisk (\*). When the Central Registry Referral form (application) is completed it can be faxed back to us at 850-410-1975.

Once the application is received, it will be entered into our Central Registry and assigned to a Case Manager who will reach out to the applicant or family member to begin the process of eligibility determination. I have attached information for your review regarding our program and the services that are available to eligible applicants. In addition, I have also provided other resources that may be able to assist the applicant as well.

Below is the link to the Brain and Spinal Cord injury Program where you will find additional information:

<http://www.BSCIP.org>

I hope you find this information helpful. Please let me know if you have any further questions.”

Mr. Zeidman stated that this template is twofold. It's a verbal template to be used when members are making initial contact with any facility. It can also be used for an email follow up.

Mr. Zeidman stated that the committee is now focusing on finding people with contacts in the professional sports area that can help get us an in with these teams to work together to put out some type of public service announcements.

The final item Mr. Zeidman discussed was merging the Public Awareness Committee and the Outreach Committee because both are handling very similar topics. It was suggested to look at combining these at some point in the near future.

Kevin Mullen commented that combining the two committees is a phenomenal idea once the committees get more in-depth and moving. It's just basically joining forces and sharing assets to move everything in a good general direction.

Mr. Zeidman agreed that our committee's goals are very similar. He also thanked Erick Collazo for continuing to help, even though his term has expired. He hopes that Mr. Collazo will continue to stay involved as his expertise is invaluable.

- Outreach Committee  
Erick Collazo expressed his appreciation to Suzanne Doswell, Justin Stark, Ed Mills, Kimberly Robinson and Teresa George for their assistance with this committee. There are currently only two council members active with this committee, Erick Collazo and Suzanne Doswell.

One of the objectives identified was to have BSCIP be the public face to the outside world and to facilitate a new website for information. This website would have the ability to be used on iPhones, tablets and on computers, especially if you are out in public.

The second objective identified was to add a resource page to replace what the Brain Injury Association of Florida used to provide. The committee suggested adding these resources to the FSCIRC website.

The third objective was to identify the audiences to serve. The Program has set up BSCIP.org and created a link that goes directly to BSCIP's section on the Department of Health website. FSCIRC.com also links directly to the Florida Spinal Cord Injury Research Center website.

It was also noted that the Program has been working on the first video testimonial with BSCIP's staff member Schuyler Seyfert.

- Discussion to combine committees.
  - Kimberly Robinson made the recommendation to put to a vote to integrate the Education Committee as part of each one of the other committees.
  - The council voted and agreed to dissolve and integrate this committee as recommended.

## II. New Business

- Future Meeting Dates
  - Kimberly Robinson asked the council for recommendations for the next quarterly program report. It was anticipated that the next Council meeting will be in May 2021. A doodle poll will be sent out to determine the next meeting date and time.
- Open Discussion
  - Ricke Zeidman followed up on the suggestion made earlier about participation in the committees by the members. Mr. Zeidman commented that BSCIP is very fortunate that our two new members were on and participated in the Outreach Committee meeting last week. Mr. Zeidman expressed that it is critical that we have more members participate in these committees to share the workload.
  - Erick Collazo asked if the department in general is watching the population increase and are they concerned about budget? Has the Department started thinking about how that could impact the program in the next two or three years with the population increase that we're currently seeing? Kimberly Robinson responded that this has been brought up before in our meetings. The Department has not made any comments or recommendations regarding the population increase.
  - Kevin Mullen expressed concern that no BSCIP clients are asking about the vaccinations. It was discussed that people who are inquiring are referred to the local county health departments, the Department of Health website, and the Brain Injury Association of America.
- Public Comments
  - Robert Melia expressed that he was previously involved with BSCIP and the council and provided a brief history with the Program. This is the first meeting he had joined in a while and anticipates more participation. He had questions regarding vacancies, terms for Council Members and how people apply for a vacant seat.

## III. Meeting Adjourned

- [02:28:56.970] - Ricke Zeidman motioned to close the meeting and expressed this was an excellent meeting. Mr. Zeidman stated that he is looking forward to the committee meetings in the interim before the next quarterly meeting in May.