State of Maine Annual Public Feedback Forum Report

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The Organization

The Maine Developmental Services Oversight and Advisory Board (MDSOAB) is made up of fifteen members who are appointed by the Governor, at least eight being either an individual with an intellectual disability or a family member. The board is responsible for gathering information on current policies and services that affect individuals with intellectual disabilities or autism. This is completed by organizing annual forums in order to talk to citizens with disabilities, service providers, and family members. Surveys are also developed and are made electronically available to the public. Topics include the availability of services, how inclusive these services are, and how policies and practices at the time are affecting adults with a disability.

In summary, the board's focus is to identify the extent in which Maine services emphasize the health and safety of the population, inclusion, and the efficiency of services.

**Maine Developmental Services Oversight & Advisory Board**

2015 Forum Topics

1. Communication with OADS & Maine DHHS
2. Adult Protective Services & Crisis Services
3. Guardianship
4. Case Management
5. Future Planning
   a. Person Centered Planning
   b. Supports Intensity Scale
   c. Transition
6. Working and Vocational Rehabilitation
7. Transportation

The Project

This is the third year that the MDSOAB developed surveys and held forums around the state of Maine. The board focused on three populations, which included individuals with disabilities, their family and friends, and providers such as case managers and direct support professionals. Six towns were selected for the 2015 report: Norway, Biddeford, Houlton, Brunswick, Augusta, and Bangor.

The questions asked at the forums to initiate discussion were to highlight what state services were working well and what areas needed improvement. Information taken from the forums was then combined with the survey responses. A final report of summarized results was developed and copies were submitted to the Office of Aging and Disability Services (OADS), the Maine DHHS, the Maine Department of Labor commissioners, the Maine Governor and Legislature, and the public. The board also uses the report as a guide for future state reports.

★ Norway
★ Biddeford
★ Houlton
★ Brunswick
★ Augusta
★ Bangor
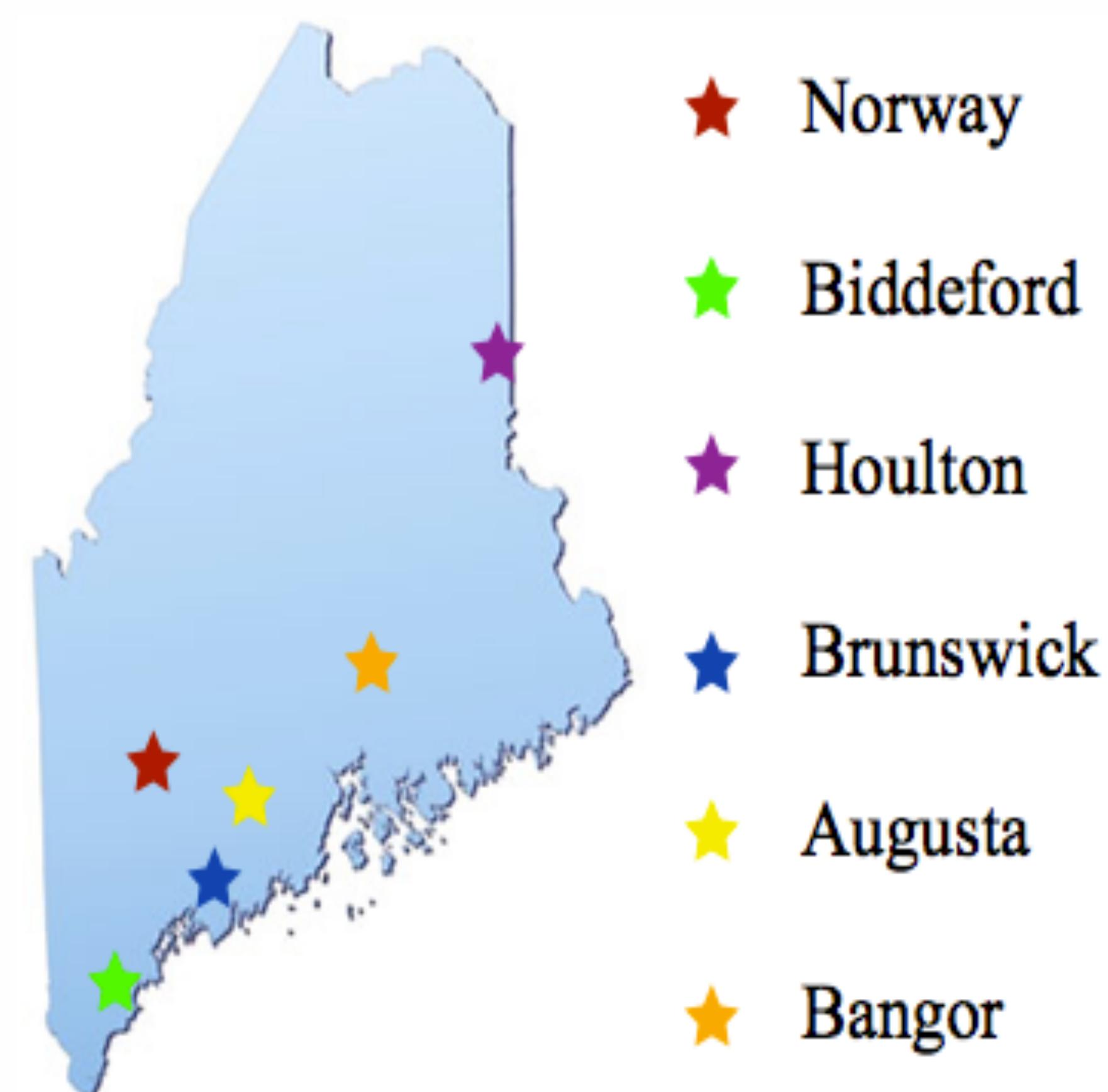
The Outcomes

The report was composed of seven major topics, such as communication with OADS and DHHS, adult protective services, and guardianship. Each topic contained quotes and summaries of data organized by each population. Overall, improvement is needed in each of the seven areas. For instance, comments made by three families, after moving to Maine, included the difficulty of navigating and finding services compared to other states.

Leadership Development

Participating in this project has enlightened me on how the services are made available for individuals with disabilities and their family members. With plans of becoming an audiologist practicing in Maine, I can use this information so that I may be a resource for my patients.

I was responsible for the following…

o Developing survey questions
o Planning and carrying out forums
o Analyzing forum and survey responses according to reoccurring themes and discussions
o Understanding how policies and services are impacting the populations and the dire need for collaboration across disciplines
o Recognizing how critical it is that information about the services is provided in a way that all populations can comprehend
o Understanding the complexity of services and how inefficient communication can further complicate accessing these services

I have met a number of influential people, including an incredibly dedicated and selfless advisor. I hope to keep all of these connections as I develop my career in audiology.