

# Highlights

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## Coordination, collaboration and cooperation State agency leaders dedicated to shared vision of future

In an unprecedented move, the major state agencies that serve individuals with disabilities have united to develop a comprehensive and coordinated network of employment, education, social/leisure and independent living programs in Texas.

Meeting for more than a year now, the Interagency Coordinating Team has created a shared vision for the future. This included preparing the following mission statement and four goals that will be the foundation of a Comprehensive Plan for Community Integrated Employment and Independent Living for Texans with Disabilities:

■ **Mission Statement:** The human service system in Texas will offer all citizens with disabilities choices from among an array of coordinated supportive services to assist them in achieving independence and integration into the community.

■ **Employment Goal:** To empower people with disabilities to obtain and maintain real work for real pay.

■ **Education Goal:** To assure people with disabilities lifelong access to education, training and information which enables them to develop the skills and abilities to be productive, self-governing, contributing members of their communities.

■ **Independent Living Goal:** To assure people with disabilities have an opportunity to choose from among an array of living options which support independence and integration into their communities.

■ **Recreation, Social and Leisure Goal:** To assure people with disabilities have an opportunity to participate

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Interagency Coordinating Team members explain their long-range vision to improve services for people with disabilities. Team members are (from left): Roger Webb, Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities; John Fenoglio, Texas Rehabilitation Commission; Terry Murphy, Texas Commission for the Blind; Jaylon Fincannon, Texas Dept. of Mental Health and Mental Retardation; Don Kelley, Texas Dept. of Human Services; and Tom Anderson, Texas Education Agency.

## Conference explores supported employment and its impact on individuals, integration

*"A job is not the end or goal of supported employment. It's the beginning that can liberate people from a lifetime of dependency on the system and can provide opportunities for meaningful social relationships on and off the job. Through Relationships, we begin to heal wounds of social segregation, isolation and loneliness."*

— Jerry Kiracofe, Maryland Human Services Institute

**"A Working Reality: Community Integrated Employment in the '90s"** explored how supported employment is turning possibilities into realities for people with developmental disabilities and affecting all areas of their lives.

Sponsored by the Texas Planning Council and Texas WorkNet, the

conference was held Nov. 15-17, in San Antonio.

About 670 people took advantage of the opportunity to learn from people involved in the most innovative supported employment programs nationwide as well as panels of consumers, employers, job coaches and vocational rehabilitation counselors.

Topics ranged from marketing supported employment to building co-worker support, the employer's perspective and best practices in community living.

There are three essential ingredients to supported employment: the work must be paid, it must be in an integrated setting, and the employee must

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## Interagency collaboration (Cont'd)

in an array of integrated recreational, social and leisure activities.

Members of Coordinating Team are: Jaylon Fincannon and Buzz Parrish, Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TDMHMR); Don Kelley, Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS); John Fenoglio, Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC); Terry Murphy, Texas Commission for the Blind (TCB); Tom Anderson and Ken Crow, Texas Education Agency (TEA); and Roger Webb, Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities (TPCDD).

"The team and our commissioners are committed to working together to develop this plan, to provide needed services, and to go together hand-in-hand to seek the resources needed to

implement this plan," said Fincannon, TDMHMR.

After creating the interagency mission statement and goals, the team invited people with disabilities, family members, state agency representatives, consumer and advocate organizations, and provider associations to participate in a 60 member task force. The task force spent three days in December developing strategies to reach the goals during the next five to 10 years. The task force will meet again in April to review and incorporate comments of the public on this Comprehensive Plan. Then it will be submitted to the team for review and ultimately to the commissioners/executive directors of the five agencies, for final approval.

The Interagency Team intends to

use the finalized plan to jointly develop budget requests so the goals can be reached in incremental steps over the next few bienniums. Also, the plan is to be coordinated with development of an interagency memorandum of understanding (MOU) regarding school-to-adult transition planning.

"For too long in every state...agency we have had tunnel vision," Kelley, TDHS, told the task force. "We must achieve these goals. ...We will have a more coordinated effort for increases in funding and a broader expanse of services."

The draft plan is available for public review and comment until March 30, 1990. If you would like a copy, please contact the TPCDD at (512) 483-4085.

## From the Executive Director

by Roger Webb

"It's the kind of billboard along the highway that you see sometimes that says, 'Watch this space!' Our commitment isn't something that you can really see yet. So the best we can say right now is 'Give us your support. Give us your advice. And watch us to see if we do that which we say we will do.'"

Commitment. A strong word. We generally think of it as meaning a promise or a pledge to do something.

Members of the Interagency Coordinating Team have each spoken of their commitment individually and as a team to the mission and goal statements they developed for the Comprehensive Plan for Community Integrated Employment and Independent Living for Texans with Disabilities. Representing the five major agencies which provide services to individuals with disabilities in Texas, the team is determined to make a difference.

All members have the support of their commissioners or executive

directors. And they are in positions that enable them to change the way services are provided to Texans with disabilities. Working as a team, they have developed a belief in the need to coordinate services within and across their agencies in a way that has never existed before.

Listening to the team members talk about the future of human services in Texas, I see the potential for a different reality. It started 15 months ago with a two-hour meeting to talk about supported employment issues. As we continued to talk, a shared vision grew during a series of meetings in the following months.

It rapidly became apparent that one cannot easily separate employment efforts, which result in real jobs for people with disabilities in integrated community settings, from independent living activities. So the team agreed to address both areas.

While their vision continues to grow and take shape, it started with a dream of the future...and a desire to improve the lives of those who need support and assistance from the

various agencies.

Now their vision has been entrusted to a task force of nearly 60 individuals including consumers, parents and representatives of various organizations and agencies. At a three-day task force meeting in December, the Comprehensive Plan for the future began to take shape. Now the team is offering you the chance to help refine and clarify this vision, by reviewing and making your comments regarding the draft plan.

Many of you have asked why this process is different. Why should we expect you to believe this plan will really change things? Why won't this become just another plan that sits on shelves collecting dust? None of us can give you an answer that guarantees results. We can only offer you examples which illustrate to us that "This one is different."

For example, the plan is being developed at the request of and with the substantive guidance from key administrative personnel of all five

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## Supported employment (Cont'd)

need on-going support at the work site in order to maintain that employment position.

However, the conference went well beyond the ingredients and strategies for creating and maintaining supported employment. The speakers also looked at how to make supported employment a more natural and integrated work experience for employees and how to use it as a stepping stone to increase community integration. Some of the major themes follow.

Successful supported employment depends on more than the individual, the job coach and the employer each doing their part. It also depends on the natural supports available, the degree of acceptance and inclusion by co-workers, and the employee's job satisfaction.

Don't assume a person needs a job coach, conference participants were told. Someone at the work site may fill the role. Keep your visibility there to a minimum and foster natural, job-site supports.

The sooner the business community assumes equal responsibility for a person in a supported position as for any other employee, the sooner the community at large will accept and include people with disabilities.

"We used to try to make people



*Only by looking at the future will we know what we need to do creatively in the present, explains Tom Powell, Institute for Habilitative Services, Montana. As keynote speaker at the supported employment conference, he challenged parents and professionals to help individuals reach their American Dream.*

with disabilities independent," one practitioner explained. "People are not independent. They are interdependent." The professional's role is to provide the supports necessary, to tell the individual's story, and to help people meet and get to know each other.

It's also time to put control and power into the individuals' own hands—to let them decide what they want instead of having others determine what is good for them.

Parents count too. Families know the person's likes, dislikes and capabilities. They can be the best resource in finding a job and accessing community resources.

But finding a job is no guarantee the individual will want to keep it. Employees may decide that they want different jobs. That's a success because the individuals are taking charge of their own lives and starting to examine employment options and career opportunities.

Obtaining a paying job in an integrated setting is just the first benefit people with severe disabilities get when they secure supported employment. Just as importantly, the individuals can leave behind their dependency on the system and open the door to an integrated life in their community.

## Executive Director (Cont'd)

agencies. The commissioners of these agencies have agreed that their agencies need to implement the plan and jointly present that coordinated strategy to the Legislature. And the team recognizes that this plan, unlike previous efforts, will need to be reviewed and revised frequently as we move into the future. Only then will it have meaning and become real.

Although I have been part of this process since it began and have participated in all of the various meetings and discussions as the team's vision evolved, I still don't

know what to say that will help you see why this plan really is different. Because ultimately, the comment from Terry Murphy, Texas Commission for the Blind, may be the one that makes the most sense. You can either just believe us or you can "watch this space." You'll see in the months ahead if anything changes.

Until then, give us your thoughts and support. And perhaps some of your patience. Just as you can watch a tiny seed sprout and flower, so too can you see the changes as a vision becomes reality. Watch this space.



## New legislation ensures availability of health insurance for people with disabilities on SSDI who return to work

People with disabilities who receive Social Security Disability Insurance will no longer face the threat of losing their health insurance coverage by returning to work. New legislation, effective in July 1990, corrects the "catch-22" dilemma whereby SSDI beneficiaries risked losing their Medicare coverage (which is tied to SSDI eligibility) if they earned more than the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) threshold for cutting off SSDI benefits.

### Work Disincentive Removed

In the past, SSDI recipients have hesitated to return to work because the amount they might earn would not be enough to offset the loss of their Medicare coverage. This work disincentive was especially problematic because of the higher medical costs associated with some disabilities and the sparse availability of private insurance covering "pre-existing conditions."

Under the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, which has been signed by the President, SSDI beneficiaries who earn more than the

SGA will lose their SSDI cash benefits, but will remain eligible for Medicare benefits during a 12-month trial work period plus another 36 months. After this 48-month period, they will have the opportunity to buy-in to Medicare or seek private health coverage.

### Medicare Buy-in

A sliding cost scale will be used for the Medicare buy-in. People earning more than 200 percent of the poverty level (about \$12,000 annually) would pay the full Medicare premium themselves.

### Sliding Cost Scale

For those earning 150 to 200 percent of the poverty level, each state can require the worker with a disability to pay part of the Medicare Part A premium based on a sliding scale, with the remainder paid by the state Medicare program.

Individuals earning less than 150 percent of the poverty level will be eligible to have their entire premium paid by Medicare.

U.S. Representative Steve Bartlett

(Dallas) praised the new law, saying that "American productivity will increase with a larger labor force, the taxpayer will benefit with lower costs, and disabled workers will be able to return to work and improve their individual circumstances."

## Stipends offered to enable more to attend conferences, events

Developmental Disabilities funds, provided on behalf of the Council, are available for stipends to enable consumers, families and direct care providers without organizational support to attend meetings, conferences, workshops and other events.

These funds will be awarded to organizations sponsoring events within Texas in order to promote consumer empowerment and involvement in activities that enhance independence, productivity and community integration for people with developmental disabilities.

"The Council strongly believes that opportunities to hear and learn about best practices for people with developmental disabilities should not be based upon ability to pay," said Lee Veenker, Council chairman. "The more that people with developmental disabilities, families and direct care providers can be actively involved in conferences, workshops and other such events, the more meaningful the programs become."

Organizations sponsoring programs must apply for funding at least six months before an event. If multiple organizations are sponsoring the program, only one need apply.

For more details and an application kit, write to David P. Henderson, Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, 4900 North Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78751-2316 or call (512) 483-4084.

# Connect!

*Working, living and playing together  
creates a better community.  
March is Developmental Disabilities  
Awareness Month.*



## Blueprint for Council activities

# 1990 Report recommends changes in state services

Drawing from the knowledge and experience of those people who have the biggest stake in services for individuals with developmental disabilities in Texas, the Texas Planning Council has made 22 recommendations to improve services within the state. The resulting "1990 Report" is a blueprint for future activities of the Council.

"About 2,000 Texans provided input over the past two years, including people with developmental disabilities, family members, advocates, state agencies and service providers," said Darlene Topp, chairman of the 1990 Report Task Force.

### Moving from Insights to Realities

"We believe the report provides new insights into the quality of life of Texans with developmental disabilities and recommendations which will guide efforts to improve services to them throughout the next decade," she added.

In preparing the report, the Council actively solicited public input about

existing services for people with developmental disabilities; services and supports needed for people to live and work in their own communities; and individuals who are underserved.

"Our next step is to develop advocacy, public information, planning and funding activities based on the report, to ensure that these recommendations become realities," Topp explained.

### Agency Recommendations

As required by Congress, the report includes recommendations concerning which agencies should be responsible for services to people with developmental disabilities who traditionally have been underserved in Texas, as well as other recommendations to reduce or eliminate barriers to services. After an extensive analysis of the existing service system's strengths and weaknesses, the Council recommended the Texas Legislature:

■ designate the Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS) to be responsible for providing residential and home and community-based

services to people with developmental disabilities with the exception that the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TDMHMR) shall continue to be responsible for providing such services to people with mental illness, mental retardation and autism (pervasive developmental disorders).

■ designate the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC) to be responsible for providing all vocational and employment services to people with developmental disabilities and other disabilities with the exception that the Texas Commission for the Blind shall continue to be responsible for providing services to people who are blind or visually impaired. Further, the Texas Planning Council recommends the Texas Legislature amend the TDMHMR Act to remove responsibility for vocational and employment services and transfer funds for these services from TDMHMR to TRC.

■ establish an independent case management system to coordinate services and advocate for the range of assistance needed by all people qualifying for case management services, including people with developmental disabilities.

### Other Recommendations

The remaining recommendations are designed to reduce additional barriers to services. They include establishing a statewide information and referral system, expanding community services and supported employment, creating incentives for child care, improving transportation options and improving guardianship options. The recommendations also address financial eligibility for services, health insurance, architectural accessibility and discrimination, school-to-adult-transition planning, integrated education and other issues.

"The recommendations are ambitious, yet feasible," Topp said. "We

See "1990 Report" page 6



Representatives of the Texas Planning Council present a copy of the 1990 Report to Deborah McFadden, commissioner, Administration on Developmental Disabilities, HSS. Pictured are (from left) Robbie Davis, Council planner; McFadden; Darlene Topp, 1990 Report Task Force chairman; and Lee Veenker, Council chairman.



## TDHS creates office on disabilities

Recognizing the need to coordinate services to individuals with disabilities in the state, the Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS) recently established an Office of Services to Persons with Disabilities. While the office is still developing its priority areas, goals and objectives, it already has identified two major goals:

- \* to develop a comprehensive approach within TDHS to serve people with disabilities and
  - \* to develop interagency strategies for services to people with disabilities.
- This will encourage a continuity of services for people with disabilities, irrespective of the agency serving them.

Meanwhile, TDHS has created an ad hoc Task Force on Disabilities which is helping to develop goals and objectives for the office on disabilities. The Texas Planning Council is represented on that task force, as are various other consumer and advocate representatives. The task force also is considering other ways to improve TDHS services which affect people with disabilities.

## 1990 Report (Cont'd)

thoroughly analyzed each one and believe they reflect major steps that need to be taken to ensure that all people with developmental disabilities and their families will have access to services and supports in Texas which will increase their opportunities for independence, productivity and community integration."

### Presented to Policymakers

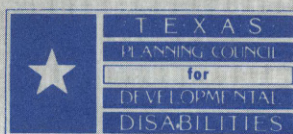
The report was required by 1987 amendments to the Developmental Disabilities Act. It has been distributed to the governor, Texas Legislature, Congressional Delegation, various state agencies and other policymakers. Also, the governor has

sent a copy to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which will summarize 1990 reports prepared by each state in a report to Congress.

Texas recommendations are based on an analysis of state and federal programs, a consumer survey of people's satisfaction with services, input from five focus groups and 14 public forums, and a written survey on the Council's preliminary recommendations.

### Summary to be Distributed

A summary of the 1990 Report will be provided to *Highlights* readers in the near future. If you would like the complete report, call the Council at (512) 483-4093.



# Highlights

*Highlights* is produced by the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities for distribution to Council members, grantees and other interested persons throughout the state. Organizations that serve persons who have developmental disabilities are encouraged to submit news for publication. Inquiries may be addressed to Lucy Walker, editor, Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, 4900 North Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78751-2316, (512) 483-4092 voice or TDD (512) 483-4099. Taped copies are available upon request.

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