



Highlights

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1987 Annual Report A year of progress and possibilities



The Texas DD Council plans and advocates for services and supports for persons with developmental disabilities.

Transition — that's a word that comes up more and more frequently when people talk about services and supports for individuals who have developmental disabilities.

For too long, society didn't think of persons with developmental disabilities as individuals who could grow up to live in their own homes and go to work, much less have their own interests, goals and dreams. We believe that these possibilities can become realities for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Transition planning has become an important means of ensuring that happens. It is the practical and realistic recognition that if persons with developmental disabilities are to have opportunities for independence, productivity and integration into the community, then it is essential that these are planned for and that there is some mechanism in place to make the plan a reality.

While annual reports are traditionally a look at the past, I can think of no better theme for the 1987 Annual Report of the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities than transition —with its emphasis on change, growth and planning for the future.

1987 was a year of very significant change for individuals with developmental disabilities. There were changes in law, policy and perception, that offer us a glimpse of a future in which all persons with developmental disabilities live and work in their communities, have opportunities to express themselves intellectually, creatively, politically.

We look forward to a time when it will be the rule, rather than the exception, that a person with a developmental disability lives at home, goes to work, has a family and friends. We believe in a future when it goes without saying that the "appropriate placement" for a person with a developmental disability is

right beside people who don't have disabilities — at work, in the neighborhood, in school and at church, in parks or at the mall, at the movies and in restaurants, on committees, councils and juries.

It would be naive to say that we are there, but that is the goal we're working toward. As we review the accomplishments and activities of the Council during 1987, it is important to keep in mind that these are works in progress and that this report is as much a look forward as it is a look back.

This is a time of transition. We are confident that the plans and progress of the last year are significant steps toward a reality of full participation in community life for all persons with developmental disabilities.■

Chairman

DD funds support 24 projects in 1987

The Council selected Employment Related Activities and Alternative Community Living Services as its two priority service areas for FY 1987. Texas received a federal allotment of \$3,185,611 for the federal fiscal year, which ended September 30, 1987. Of those funds 15 percent (\$477,842) were obligated to salaries, program operating expense and Council travel. The remaining \$2,707,769 was obligated to the 24 grant projects described in the following articles. ■

■ Employment

Supports expand job opportunities

When it comes to free time, more is not necessarily better. Oh, the prospect of a day away from the routine is usually a pleasant one. And folks generally consider their yearly vacation a well-earned respite. But day after day with nothing on the agenda except passing the time is more a source of frustration than it is relaxation.

For many people with developmental disabilities, that's what fills the day — free time. In addition to not being involved in meaningful activity, these individuals don't earn any income. They don't experience the sense of accomplishment that comes from doing a job well. They don't develop the friendships that grow out of shared associations and work interests. They don't gain the dignity or the respect that this society affords to those who earn their own way.

It's not that individuals with developmental disabilities don't want to work — or even, misconceptions of many employers to the contrary, that they can't; it's that they have not been given the opportunity to do so.

Employment is so potent a mechanism for achieving independence, productivity and integration in the community that federal law mandates DD councils to have employment-related activities as one of their priority services areas.

The Texas Planning Council shares the philosophy that employment can be the catalyst for full participation in society for persons with developmental disabilities. As a result the Council committed over half of its funds during 1987 to employment-related activities and all of its new grant awards in 1987 were to projects in this area.

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Public forums

Panel hears employment needs

The road to employment can be a long and winding one for the most experienced job hunter. For persons with developmental disabilities, it's nothing short of an obstacle course. That's the message representatives from a variety of agencies heard over and over again in a series of public forums.

In the spring of 1987, the Texas Planning Project, conducted 11 public forums around the state in order to learn first-hand about the gaps, barriers and obstacles to employment for persons with developmental disabilities and to make recommendations to the Council regarding their vocational needs.

More than 500 persons attended the forums and completed a questionnaire outlining their employment concerns. In addition, a panel composed of representatives from TDMHMR, TRC, the local school district, local providers and advocacy organizations, and the DD Council received oral and written testimony from 153 people. Those who testified or completed questionnaires frequently expressed more than one employment-related concern. As a result more than 2000 individual concerns were expressed.

The concerns were tallied and grouped major categories. Whether examined from a regional or a statewide perspective, there was little discrepancy between the identified categories of needs and barriers.

Legislative obstacles were considered to be the greatest barrier to employment and were cited 25 percent of the time. Lack of employment activities themselves were second, mentioned 22 percent of the time. Barriers created by inadequate transition services, lack of transportation and training of personnel followed and were mentioned 15, 14 and 13 percent of the time respectively.

Ten percent of those who responded mentioned obstacles other than the top five. While less frequent, they covered a wide range of concerns including: lack of public knowledge; apathy, indifference, or overprotectiveness; stress of competition for employment; lack of leadership and management skills; and architectural barriers.

Following the forums, the project, which has been renamed Project Worknet, hired six regional liaisons. These liaisons will work toward the project's goal of providing technical assistance to providers to develop integrated employment programs for persons with developmental disabilities. ■



Projects support life at home and in the neighborhood

Community life is at times ordered chaos. People go their own ways, handle their own responsibilities, deal with their own crises, follow their own dreams. But even as they tend to their own business, their paths inevitably cross those of others who have different, sometimes conflicting, responsibilities, crises, and dreams. Under these circumstances, it's a wonder that anybody gets anything done at all. And yet it's that delicate balance between individuality and interdependence, that gives life such richness and variety.

The Council is firmly committed to the notion that individuals with developmental disabilities have the same right and the same desire as everyone else to participate fully in the diversity of community life.

For that reason the Council selected Alternative Community Living Services (ACLS) as its second major priority services area in 1987. Like the diversity of community life itself, the ACLS projects reflect the Council's recognition that different individuals need different supports and services in order to live successfully in the community.

Addressing the needs of parents and families of persons with developmental disabilities is the focus of three current projects:

— The Pilot Parent Training Project (Association for Retarded Citizens/Spring Branch) enables parents to help one another deal with their feelings about learning they have a child who has a developmental disability.

— The Texas Parent Professional Information Network (Association for Retarded Citizens) lets parents teach other parents and professionals how to successfully negotiate the complexities of the special education system.

— The Texas Respite Resource Network helps identify existing respite programs and facilitate the development of new ones so the families of persons with developmental disabilities have the opportunity for some relief from the extraordinary demands on their time and energy.



Denton Parks and Recreation offers leisure activities in the community for persons with developmental disabilities.

Four projects are designed to support individuals with developmental disabilities who are having difficulty returning to, or entering or maintaining themselves in the community:

— The University of Texas at Arlington is evaluating the impact of community placement on 66 persons who have returned to the community from state schools.

— Project Amicus (Association for Retarded Citizens/Austin) offers training to law enforcement and criminal justice workers and support to individuals with developmental disabilities who have been pardoned or paroled from prison.

— Transitional Steps Toward Independent Living (Autistic Treatment Center/Richardson) offers training and support to individuals with autism or other developmental disabilities who are having difficulty entering a community-based environment.

— Beaumont State Center assists individuals who have requested admission to a state school or are

returning to the community from a state school in their efforts to find places to live in the community.

DD funds support two projects that attempt to show that not only can individuals with developmental disabilities live successfully in the community, but that it is cost effective for them to do so:

— The Richmond State School is collecting effectiveness and cost data related to the residential placement of individuals with severe maladaptive behavior.

— The University of Texas at Arlington is comparing the impact, process and cost effectiveness of the Intermediate Community Services Program of TDMHMR by comparing program participants with others who have shared similar experiences, such as both having lived in the same institution.

Continued on page 4.

Increases in human service funding and family support bill are major accomplishments

It took one regular session and two special sessions of the 70th Legislature to complete the state's business for the 1988-89 biennium, but when the final gavel finally fell on July 21, 1987, there were some positive results for persons with developmental disabilities.

Despite early fears that the downturn in the Texas economy would lead to massive cuts in spending for health and human services, the budget adopted for the next two years yielded a 14 percent increase in these programs.

The Council advocated for increases in health and human service funding through support of the budget requests of the major agencies that provide services to persons with developmental disabilities and also through Information

Alerts encouraging citizens around the state to urge their legislators to increase state revenues rather than cut already inadequate programming.

Additionally, the Council supported 16 substantive bills during the session aimed at improving the independence, productivity, and integration of persons with developmental disabilities. Ten of these were signed into law.

The most significant legislation of the session for persons with developmental disabilities was the passage of an in-home and family support bill (H.B. 1154), co-sponsored by Rep. Frank Madla in the House and Senator Chet Brooks in the Senate.

The bill allows individuals with disabilities and their families to select from an array of services (including respite care, counseling, attendant care, homemaker and home health care, transportation, and architectural modification among others) that support the goal of home and community life.

The bill has two parallel components: one provides services to persons with mental illness or mental retardation through TDMHMR. The other establishes a pilot project through the Texas Department of Human Services to provide in-home and family support to persons with all other developmental disabilities.

The Council offered testimony in favor of the bill and worked with other advocacy groups to gain support for it. In addition, the Council was instrumental in seeing that the needs of persons with developmental disabilities other than mental illness or mental retardation were addressed in the final version of the bill as a result of its recommendation to fund the pilot project as a two-year DD demonstration grant beginning in FY 88. The Council has worked actively with representatives of TDMHMR and TDHS as well as other advocacy groups since the bill was signed to plan policies and procedures to implement the program in Texas.

Other bills passed during the 70th session and receiving Council support include legislation to:

- require nursing and custodial care homes to comply with the 1985 edition of the Life Safety Code.

- require hotels to install smoke detectors that will alert persons who are deaf or hearing impaired.

- allow the protection and advocacy system to obtain certain confidential records and to have access to public and private facilities housing and providing care for persons with mental illness.

- strengthen and clarify procedures for reporting, investigating and preventing abuse of persons who are elderly or who have disabilities.

- allow up to two 72-hour extensions of emergency orders of protective services for persons who are elderly or who have disabilities.

- direct agencies to develop a written plan and an interagency agreement for a continuum of services for persons with disabilities under managing conservatorship of TDHS after these children reach the age of 18.

- direct the Texas Education Agency to encourage integrated programs for students with disabilities and to report to the Sunset Commission about the impact of funding methods on instructional arrangements.

- establish a Transition Services Task Force to assess the effectiveness of services to young adults with disabilities.

- request the continued cooperation of TDMHMR, TRC, TEA and other cognizant agencies in coordinating transitional services for persons with disabilities.

Finally, the Council reviewed and offered testimony on the sunset legislation authorizing the continuation of TDMHMR, TDHS and the Texas Commission for the Deaf. Legislation on all three agencies passed and they will be continued through 1999.■

Community (cont'd)

Three ACLS projects are expanding opportunities for living, working and playing in the community:

- The Association for Retarded Citizens/Texas is demonstrating how to use innovative and non-traditional methods of funding to create community-based partnerships in order to expand community living options for persons with developmental disabilities.

- Denton Parks and Recreation Center has developed model recreation programs that enable persons with disabilities to learn social and leisure skills in a community setting.

- The University of Texas at Arlington provides training and technical assistance to service providers so that they understand the uses of technology as a means of expanding educational, vocational and community living options of persons with developmental disabilities.

And finally, though actually a planning grant, the Mental Health Association in Texas continues to promote the development of community-based alternatives for persons with long-term mental illness.■

Federal legislation

DD Act signed; Medicaid reform introduced

The goal of full participation in society for all persons with developmental disabilities came several steps closer to becoming a reality as a result of two important federal legislative efforts during 1987.

The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Amendments of 1987 became Public Law 100-146 on Oct. 30th of last year with President Reagan's signature. The DD Act, which authorizes the Texas DD Council and 56 others in the United States and its territories, provides funds that enable state Councils to work toward ensuring adequate planning and provision of services and supports for persons with developmental disabilities. Congressional recognition of the need for these programs resulted in a 10 percent increase in the DD program nationwide. The Texas program has been allotted \$3,338,884 for FY 1988.

The DD Act also serves as the guiding principle by which Congress says that the states shall address the needs of persons with developmental disabilities. The new DD Act recognizes the rights of persons with developmental disabilities to autonomy, dignity and opportunities to contribute to society to a greater degree than ever before.

The second major effort of the federal level would make persons with developmental disabilities who live at home or in the community as eligible for funding or support as those in institutions. Though the Medicaid Home and Community Quality Services Act of 1987, known as Medicaid reform, has only begun to make its way through the legislative process, the bill has gone further and with a broader base of support than previous efforts. A variety of consumer groups, who were unable to agree on previous Medicaid reform legislation, have joined forces in support of S.1673/H.R.3454, which was introduced by Senator John Chafee in September, 1987.

Since the bill was introduced, over 150 senators and representatives have signed on as co-sponsors, including 13 congressmen from Texas.

The bill would make services available to persons living in family homes, foster family homes, and community living facilities. Services would be based on an individual habilitation plan, and would be coordinated by an independent case management system.

The proposed legislation would allow the age of onset of a disability to

increase by one year each fiscal year until it reaches age 50. This would gradually allow coverage of persons who become disabled in adulthood.

The bill would limit the amount of federal funds that could be claimed for services to individuals living in institutions, acknowledging that institutional placements are decreasing.

Finally the legislation requires the state to set forth in its implementation plan a comprehensive integrated quality assurance system.

The Texas DD Council has been actively involved in Medicaid reform throughout 1987. In March, the Council co-sponsored a conference with the Association for Retarded Citizens/Texas on Medicaid reform. The conference, "Vision for the Future," attracted over 100 participants who were briefed on the potential impact on the service delivery system in Texas, issues of quality assurance and cost comparisons of community versus institutional services.

In December, 1987, the Council voted unanimously to support the Medicaid reform bill and has since communicated via its Information Alert system the need for citizens around the state inform their representatives of their support for the bill. ■

Jobs (cont'd)

Currently DD funds support three Multidimensional Support System (MSS) projects -- in Laredo, Dallas and the lower Rio Grande Valley. Each is designed to provide employment opportunities to persons who cannot yet earn 15 percent of the prevailing minimum wage.

In the past these individuals were considered to have disabilities so severe that they would not be able to work -- even in a sheltered setting. The projects are helping participants develop community living and vocational skills so that employment with support in integrated settings becomes a realistic goal.

Three other projects (Goodwill/San Antonio, Vaughn House in Austin, and North Texas State University in Denton) are using a variety of models to enhance the employment opportunities for persons who traditionally might have been served in a sheltered workshop.

Using enclaves, mobile crews and job coaching each of these projects is demonstrating that with appropriate supports the employment opportunities for individuals with developmental

disabilities can be significantly expanded and that for many, competitive employment in the community can be achieved.

In addition to lack of training or experience, the lack of opportunities for employment of persons with developmental disabilities can be the result of the attitudes of employers and discrimination in the hiring process. Thus, the Council also recommended funding this past year to enable the Texas Commission on Human Rights to conduct a series of workshops aimed at educating employers about laws which prohibit discrimination against hiring individuals with disabilities.

Finally two DD projects are concerned with developing the vocational skills of students. The University of Texas at El Paso provides transition services to students with autism and other developmental disabilities, who come to the program at age 21 or 22 from the public schools.

And, the Corpus Christi Independent School District is developing a project to demonstrate vocational skills training of students with developmental disabilities in integrated settings, while they are still in school. ■

The Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities 1987

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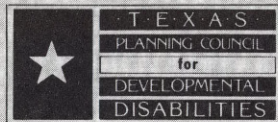
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*New to Council in 1987.



Highlights

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