

# News & Views

★ Texas Rehabilitation Commission ★ A Human Energy Agency ★

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## TRC Regional Organization Changes in 1986

Dale Place, deputy commissioner for programs, announced, in mid-December, a shift in the TRC regional organizational structure.

According to Place, the additional and varied responsibilities given to TRC by the state legislature prompted an in-depth look by Commission leaders at the mission of the regional and field offices. They wanted to determine a structure which would allow these offices to grow with the increasing number of programs that the Commission now administers.

"The overall thought," says Place, "is to decentralize administration and avoid a large build-up of staff in the Central Office."

As of January 1, 1986, the program officers and the administrative officers in the regions became the operations directors of program services and the operations directors of administrative services, respectively. The title changes along with a reassignment of duties were made to more closely parallel the organizational structure at the Central Office.

The operations directors of administrative services acquired new responsibilities in the areas of staff development, computer systems coordination and personnel — they will continue to direct budgetary matters in the regions.

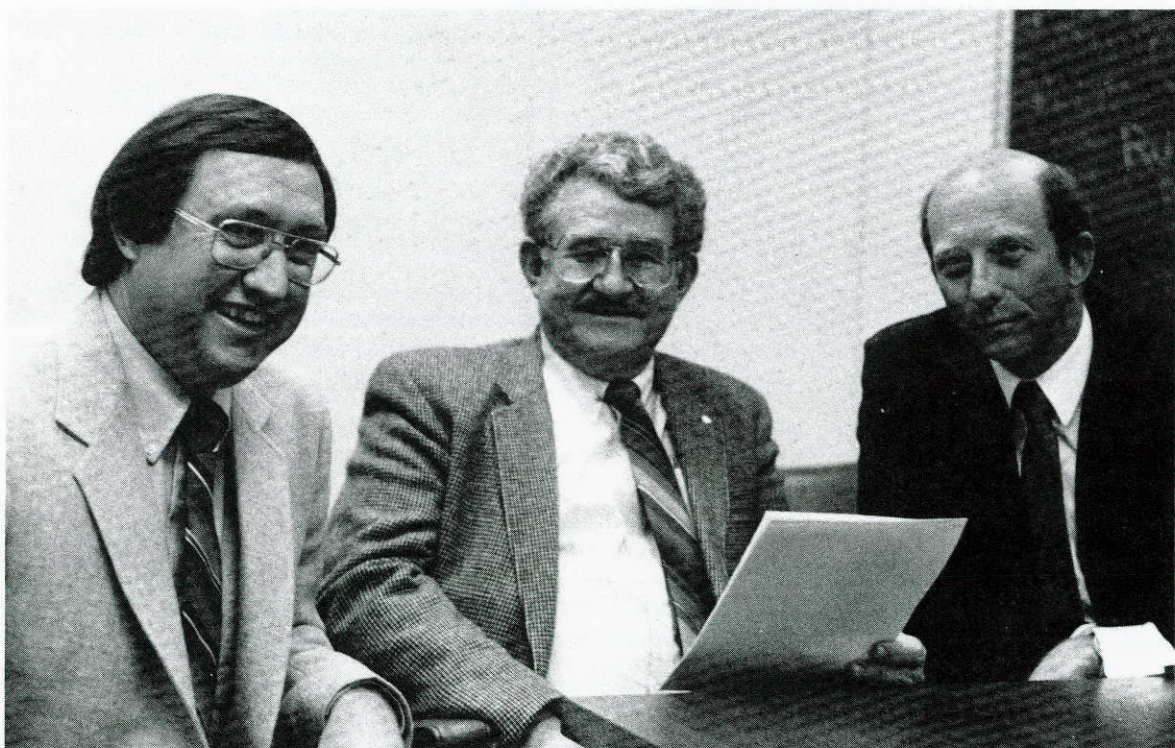
The operations directors for programs are now directly responsible

for the operations of the area offices, program development and medical services coordination, where applicable.

Regional office clerical support staff are supervised by the officer to whom they provide support.

The adjustment of responsibilities in the regions is designed to allow regional directors to participate in a broader range of Commission activities in their regions. "The regional directors will devote more time to planning, community involvement and staff development in their regions — they will be the key official representatives of the Commission in their regions," says Place.

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As a result of the change in regional organization, Jack King, regional director for Region III in Austin (middle), looks forward to working, in more depth, with the Developmental Disabilities grant programs, with local education services centers, with public officials and with the Projects with Industries programs in Region III. Jim Wilson, Region III operations director for administration (left), and Les Doleshal, Region III operations director for programs, have assumed certain day-to-day responsibilities formerly handled by King.



# Task Force to Streamline Support Systems

In December, Commissioner Arrell directed that a task force be formed to modernize TRC's supporting resource system and make it as efficient as possible.

The special task force, headed by Cole Murphy, director of budget and planning, is responsible for designing a support system which will more effectively meet the needs of Commission managers at all levels.

The "support system" refers to Budget and Planning, Fiscal Services, Automated Information Division, Personnel, Administrative Services and any other activity of a support nature in the Central Office.

The term "modernize" has four aspects as it relates to task force activity: 1.) restructure organizationally, 2.) use up-to-date technology, 3.) increase communications flow, and 4.) decentralize control.

TRC's ability to deliver services to clients depends heavily upon the efficiency and speed of this system. According to James L. Jackson, executive deputy commissioner, "We have in the past taken steps to

modernize bits and pieces of the system; the Supply Order System (SOS) and the Human Resources System being developed are examples."

"But," he continues, "because of the continuing reduction of available funds, it is essential that we update the entire support system to increase our efficiency by making the best possible use of available technologies."

"The real key to modernization," says task force Chairman Murphy, "is to provide fast, efficient support services to Commission employees who deliver the services — the faster we can handle their needs, the greater the odds of delivering more and better services to clients."

Although the procedures and processes developed by the task force may be centrally located, for the most part, at the Central Office, the impact will be statewide.

Murphy emphasizes that before a new system design is presented to Commission leaders, TRC managers will have a chance to review it. He



**Bruce Rollman**, former staff development training officer for the Disability Determination Division, has been selected as the new director of staff development.

**Lottie B. Elam**, administrative technician in the Central Office Library, has retired after almost 15 years of service.

Stenographer **Mary E. Dawson** at the Dallas Southwest Field Office has retired after 13 years with the Commission.

**Donna Eager**, former director of staff development at the Central Office, has returned to TRC after six years in Utah. She is now a program specialist.

**Richard Howard** has been appointed branch chief of program evaluation services for the Disability Determination Division.

also points out that the redesigned system should enable those employees involved to further enhance the already excellent work they are currently producing.

## President Signs Appropriations Bill



On December 12, 1985, President Reagan signed into law the FY 1986 Regular Appropriations Bill which contains sizeable increases for rehabilitation programs.

It provides \$1,190 million for basic state grants (Section 110) funding nationwide. About \$5.8 million more in federal funds than was appropriated in FY 1985 will come to vocational rehabilitation programs in Texas. The Texas Rehabilitation Commission's share of this amount is an estimated \$4.6 million.

At this writing, there has still been no further action to extend provisions for the Targeted Jobs Tax Credit for 1986. Although both houses of Congress had approved different versions of a measure to extend TJTC, the lawmakers adjourned December 20, without approving an extension of TJTC, which expired December 31.

TJTC supporters believe that this program will be on the agenda when Congress convenes again on January 22. They indicate that there is support, in both tax committees, for reviving TJTC and making it retroactive.



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... says David MacCabe

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## ***DDD Mental Impairment Cases Backlogged***

Federal regulations created in the Disability Benefits Reform Act of 1984 will greatly alter the way TRC's Disability Determination Division (DDD) handles claims involving people with mental impairments.

DDD experienced significant delays during the Social Security Administration's (SSA) gearing up procedures for handling the new mental impairment regulations which were first published in the Federal Register in late August, 1985.

Before that time, SSA instructed state Disability Determination Services (DDS) around the nation to stop processing all claims involving mental impairments unless they involved a decision to grant benefits to the claimant based on regulations for these cases in effect before the Disability Benefits Act of 1984.

The halt in processing mental impairment claims created an uncomfortable situation for TRC and DDD officials. A pending Texas backlog of 7,594 mental impairment claims had built up from August 21, 1985, to December 27, 1985.

Commissioner Arrell states, "The 'hold' status on mental cases has caused a hardship and anxiety to people who are awaiting decisions on their disability applications."

DDD did get permission, on November 7, 1985, to begin using the new regulations for cases where it was fairly evident that the claim would be allowed and ultimately would result in benefits for the claimant. These cases were developed in an Early Information System test project, and the completed case files were sent to SSA's Regional Office in Dallas, then on to the Central Office in Baltimore for review and analysis.

SSA decided that claims involving decisions to allow benefits could be processed, but only after disability examiners responsible for processing these claims had completed additional training.

Another Early Information System test was conducted for cases which appeared, initially, to be headed for denial decisions.

Based on these test experiences, DDD officials learned that the processing time required to complete a mental impairment case has greatly increased. Additional information, which cannot be found in medical records or psychiatric consultative examinations, is required to complete these cases.

In fact, this kind of information, not included in medical or psychiatric records, is now a significant factor in completing mental impairment cases. Much of this additional information concerns the person's ability to function in activities of daily living and can come from vocational rehabilitation counselors. Counselor input will be invaluable in helping gather information outside the medical field.

"The disability examiners who participated in the Early Information System test," says David MacCabe, deputy commissioner for disability determination, "stated that it takes twice as long to develop a mental case under the new mental regulations." He added that the increased processing time will require a corresponding increase in staff to complete the same number of cases in a given time.

DDD has already received authority from SSA to hire 15 additional disability examiners with more being negotiated in the future. This authority along with other DDD vacancies resulted in a new class of 24 disability examiners that began on January 2.

DDD has begun processing all allowance and denial decisions involving mental impairment cases. But, as a result of the additional information requirements, it has been difficult to reduce the impending backlog of cases.

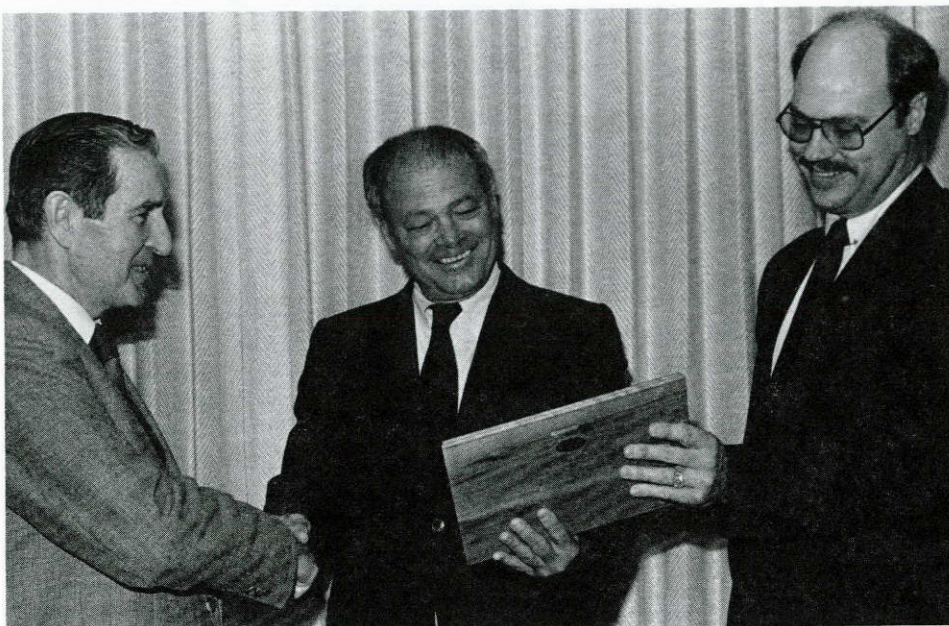
DDD is doing all it can to confront the difficulties presented in complying with the new mental impairment regulations. The workload is further complicated, however, by the impending medical improvement regulations which were published in the Federal Register on December 6, 1985. These regulations will be the foundation for the process of Continuing Disability Reviews (CDR's) which will begin in late January. CDR is a process whereby people already receiving disability benefits have their cases reviewed to determine whether they are eligible to continue receiving them.

Commissioner Arrell, anticipating the increased workload for DDD, says that, "DDD operations around the country must be allowed to process the existing backlog of mental hold cases prior to the resumption of CDR's."

DDD management and staff will continue to cooperate with SSA's Regional Office in Dallas in carrying out the reform legislation. Every effort will be made to ensure accurate, timely and quality decisions for the disabled people of Texas.



## Longtime Medical Consultation Committee Member Leaves



James K. Pope, M.D., administrative medical consultant for TRC, left, and Kenneth Vogel, regional director in the Houston Regional Office, right, present H. Edward Maddox, M.D., with a plaque from the Texas Rehabilitation Commission in appreciation for 17 years of service to TRC as a member of the Medical Consultation Committee.

TRC's Medical Consultation Committee will miss the presence and guidance of H. Edward Maddox, M.D., whose appointment as a member of the committee expired September 30, 1985.

Maddox's membership on the committee dates back to October 17, 1968, when he was first appointed to the Medical Advisory Committee of the Vocational Rehabilitation Division of the Texas Education Agency. When the Texas Rehabilitation Commission was established as it exists today, Maddox became a member of its Medical Consultation Committee.

"For the past eight years," says Commissioner Max Arrell, "Dr. Maddox has served as chairman of the MCC demonstrating much interest in TRC activities along with consistent, effective leadership."

The new chairman of the MCC is Robert W. Wood, Jr., M.D., plastic surgeon from Houston. Lamar Jackson, M.D., anesthesiologist, also from Houston, is vice chairman.

## Texas Volunteer Conference

On April 7-8, the Governor's Office of Community Leadership will sponsor the 1986 Texas Volunteer Conference at the Hyatt Hotel in Austin.

Several new and innovative volunteer programs will be presented, and Texas First Lady Linda Gale White will present awards to outstanding volunteers from across the state.

Conference registration forms, available in February, will be due March 24, 1986. For more information about this conference, please contact Donna Chaffee, administrative technician, Texas Rehabilitation Commission Central Office, 118 E. Riverside, Austin, Texas 78704. Telephone: (512) 445-8308. Forms to nominate volunteers for awards are available from Chaffee. The deadline for submitting nominees is March 1, 1986.

## LETTERS

**The following is a letter received by Jan Skinner, area manager in the Houston Field Office West, from TRC client Lynn Frazier:**

"This is a quick note of thanks to TRC for making available to us members of the Job Club an excellent counselor — Cecile Johnson. Truly and sincerely after talking to others in the Job Club, all of us benefitted in one or more aspects. I feel that Cecile's work with me has been of more help to me than all the professional help I have received in the past."

**Here is a portion of a letter sent to Barbara Hale, disability examiner in DDD, from social security beneficiary Dean E. Harness:**

"I want to personally thank you for your part in the processing of my claim. Your correspondence, phone calls and politeness reflect your concern and dedication to your profession. I feel that you took a personal interest in my claim, and for that reason, on behalf of me and my family, we thank you very much."

**This letter written by David Stock, vice president for planning and development at The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research, to Jan Skinner, area manager at the Houston West Field Office:**

"Thank you for the extra time you have spent in organizing the CMR (Comprehensive Medical Rehabilitation) special program. We truly appreciate your efforts along with Larry Smith. Together you are an exceptional team."

**Charles Osborne, TRC client, sent this letter to TRC Counselor Michael Schepperly in the Houston Field Office Central:**

I want to say thanks to TRC and its Houston staff for your assistance with my finding employment. A special thanks to Donald Liescheidt for his help.



## Regional Changes

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The recent organizational change in the regions will prepare them for future growth and the decentralization of programs administration.

A case in point is the centralization on January 1, 1986, of the Extended Rehabilitation Services administrative responsibilities.

ERS provides sheltered and supported work to those disabled persons too severely disabled to hold competitive jobs. Currently, ERS has 19 workshops in 11 cities statewide, and, according to Place, the decentralization of ERS will allow services to be administered closer to the areas where they are provided.

Although Milton Lege, director of ERS, maintains responsibility for program direction, control and development, TRC area managers have assumed the day-to-day direct supervision of the ERS staff.

Similar administrative changes are being planned for the Independent Living Program, Comprehensive Medical Services and the Deaf/Blind Program — all part of TRC's increasing responsibilities which "... demand the highest degree of coordination possible for the sake of our clients," says Place.

## TRAA/TARS Midwinter Conference

The Texas Rehabilitation Administration Association (TRAA) and the Texas Association of Rehabilitation Secretaries (TARS), a division of the Texas Rehabilitation Association, invite you to the third Midwinter Conference to be held February 13, 1986, at the Austin South Plaza Hotel from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The fee for this conference is \$15. Preregistration forms are available from Mary Valentini, Texas Rehabilitation Administration Association, 14 Briercroft Office Park, Lubbock, Texas 79412. Although conference registration will be accepted at the door, attendance is limited to 150. So, be sure to register now!

# Committee to Study Employee Assistance

In a Texas Rehabilitation Commission effort to respond to the needs of its employees, James L. Jackson, executive deputy commissioner, has formed the Employee Assistance Program Committee to study the possibility for an employee assistance program at the Commission.

Headed up by Bob Marx, regional director, the committee is composed of representatives from the Vocational Rehabilitation Division,

## TRCA Seeks Nominees for Counselor of the Year

The deadline for submitting nominations for the Texas Rehabilitation Counselor Association (TRCA) Counselor of the Year Award is February 15, 1986.

Each year TRCA presents the Counselor of the Year Award to the rehabilitation counselor who has shown superior performance, resourcefulness and imagination in working with disabled persons.

Nominees must have an active caseload and be employed fulltime to counsel or otherwise assist disabled people toward a goal of greater independence. Nominations will be considered without regard to employment setting or professional affiliation. Emphasis is on the quality of services provided rather than the age, background or experience of the rehabilitation counselor nominated.

If you would like to nominate a counselor for this award, please note that there is a specific method and criteria for nominating and documenting the counselor's outstanding performance.

Information about the nominating procedure can be obtained from Jim Howard, awards and scholarship chairman. Telephone (214) 767-4701.

the Disability Determination Division and the Central Office.

According to Marx, the movement toward employee assistance programs across the nation began several years ago primarily to combat alcoholism in industry. Since then, such programs have broadened in scope to include help with such employee problems as family or marital difficulties, smoking, weight control and even back pain — anything that might keep an employee from being productive.

"Before the Commission makes a decision to commit its funds for such a program," says Jackson, "the committee must first determine employee assistance needs within the Commission."

The committee, then, must look at several complicated issues concerning TRC employee needs and feasibility as it develops recommendations for structuring such a program. Should assistance services be given "in-house" or contracted for through private providers? What problems should be treated? Should it provide help with only job related problems or should it include others? Should the help be given on a voluntary or involuntary basis?

And perhaps the biggest question is funding. Marx indicates a possibility that the health-care packages offered through the Commission to its employees may already provide some of these services. Chances are they can be combined with employee assistance services.

Marx expresses excitement about the committee and about his leadership role in exploring a new program to benefit TRC employees. "It says to me that the Commission is interested enough in its employees that it is willing to look at providing this kind of help," he says.



**Applause**

**Kathy Weldon**, teacher of deaf/blind students at the Texas Commission for the Blind/Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center, has been named vice chairperson on the Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons.

These TRC employees recently received press coverage for the Commission: **Stephen C. Schoen**, counselor in the Bryan Field Office; **Arnold Barrera, Jr.**, area manager in the Pasadena Field Office; **Wes Long**, counselor in the Texas Tech University Field Office; **Orine B. Golish**, counselor in the Baytown Field Office; **Harvey Bailey**, counselor in the Pampa Field Office;

**Kaye Beneke**, director of public information in the Central Office; **Trena Hestwood**, counselor in the Pampa Field Office; **Vernon Dement**, information specialist in the Central Office; **Jolly Garcia**, stenographer in the Fort Stockton Field Office; and **Anna Marie Posey**, counselor in the Victoria Field Office.

**Mary Valentini**, program officer at the Lubbock Regional Office, has been appointed to the Governmental/Legislative Committee of the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce/Board of City Development for 1985-86.

The following TRC employee received a letter of commendation from the Commissioner on the quality of his casework: **David Stanley**, counselor in the Angleton Field Office.

The **Texas Division of Disability Determination** was cited by **Patricia M. Owens**, associate commissioner for disability, as having played a "significant role" in helping the National Office of Disability to receive a Commissioner's Citation at the Annual Social Security Administration Awards Ceremony on October 17, 1985. The citation reads, "In recognition of superior achievements in implementing the 1984 Disability Amendments to ensure that disability programs are administered fairly, compassionately, and uniformly."

Commissioner Arrell has appointed **Judy DeDonato**, information specialist at the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, as the TRC liaison to the Governor's Commission for Women.

**Duane Mitchell**, area manager; **Robert Alcalá**, counselor (both in the El Paso East Field Office); and **Terry Layne**, counselor in the El Paso Field Office Central, served as panel members for the 1985 National Employ the Handicapped Week symposium at Fort Bliss, Texas.



TRC News & Views is published by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission for distribution to its employees and retirees throughout the State. Inquiries may be addressed to Kaye Beneke, Public Information Office, Texas Rehabilitation Commission, 118 East Riverside Drive, Austin, Texas 78704; or Telephone (512) 445-8745. (Tex-An-887-8745).

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**MILESTONES**

This segment of News & Views honors TRC employees celebrating 10 years or more with the Commission as of the month previous to publication. Due to the length of the list, we are restricted to publishing these anniversaries in 5 year increments only. Here is a list of employees who have reached these "milestones."

**JANUARY 1986**

**REGION I**

**20 Years:** Edith J. Edwards

**REGION IV**

**15 Years:** Emeterio Pelayo

**CENTRAL OFFICE**

**10 Years:** Robert C. Thomason

**15 Years:** Jane Nichols  
 Randee Terrell

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