

News & Views

★ Texas Rehabilitation Commission ★ A Human Energy Agency ★

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Board Approves Order of Selection for TRC

In a momentous decision last month, the TRC Board voted to discontinue hospitalization services, including surgery, to non-severely disabled clients. Non-severely disabled clients who do not require hospitalization or surgery, however, will continue to receive other vocational rehabilitation services such as diagnostic evaluations, equipment and training, as appropriate.

In asking the Board for this decision, Commissioner Arrell demonstrated that while the non-severely disabled segment of TRC clients who need surgery represents only 20% of the total number of non-severely disabled served, they require 50% of the case service funds spent on non-severely disabled clients.

The consensus among TRC officials is that a great number of more severely disabled clients could be served with these funds in other areas: the school program, the Workers Compensation program and in serving more severe and catastrophically disabled clients, among others.

The Board approved a plan for an order of selection for the disabled clients TRC serves. The plan is in response to Section 101 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This law states that if vocational rehabilitation services cannot be provided to all eligible persons applying for services, then the vocational rehabilitation agency must outline in its state plan the order to be followed in selecting people who will receive services.

The following is a list of the priority groups in their order of selection to receive services:

1. Catastrophically disabled
2. Other severely disabled
3. Public safety officers (special provisions are made in the Rehabilitation Act for officers disabled in the line of duty)
4. Functionally severely disabled (disabilities which require multiple services over an extended period of time)
5. Other non-severely disabled (disabilities which do not require hospitalization or surgery or disabilities for which TRC is not required to provide hospitalization or surgery)

TRC's mandate to serve persons with severe physical or mental disabilities along with tighter state

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funding are given by TRC officials as reasons for establishing an order of selection for persons who will receive services.

The Commissioner emphasizes that all persons who apply for TRC services may continue to receive diagnostic evaluations to determine where they will be placed on the priority list. He also emphasizes that clients already receiving services under the terms of an existing Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program (IWRP) will continue to receive services as stipulated in the plan.

Along with these significant decisions, the Board also approved TRC's plan to reduce the '86 - '87 budget by 13% as directed by the Governor.

Cole Murphy, director of Budget and Planning, commends TRC managers for their help in trying to reach the 13% figure during the regular mid-year budget review process. "But," says Murphy, "we went into fiscal year '86 lean, and there just wasn't much there to cut." When the budget review ended, only \$1.4 million of the necessary \$3.4 million for FY '86 could be cut without identifying case service funds.

"We've identified 5% of the budget cuts needed to meet the Governor's request," says Commissioner Arrell, "but to identify more would put us out of compliance with the executive order." The executive order to reduce spending issued by the Governor instructs agencies not to reduce personnel or essential services.

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Senate Version of Rehab Act Expected Soon

Staff members are currently drawing up a Senate version of a bill to reauthorize the Rehabilitation Act. Experts expect the Senate bill to be presented soon before either the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, chaired by Senator Orin Hatch, or the Subcommittee on the Handicapped, chaired by Senator Lowell Weicker.

On May 7, the House version of the bill to reauthorize the Act, H.B. 4021, the so-called Williams Bill, passed unanimously in a 401 to 0 vote.

It is expected that when the Senate version is finally passed, both versions will end up in a Joint Conference Committee to resolve differences between the two bills.

In a separate action, both the House and Senate have passed budget resolutions which "assume" increases for rehabilitation programs of at least 7.5% (considered "above inflation increases") over current funding levels for basic support funds (Section 110) for FY 1986.

Legislative experts emphasize that at this point any figures discussed are "assumptions," not firm "authorizations." "Assumptions" are only projections as to what the final "appropriations" might be. Final "appropriations" figures must be voted on by both Houses of Congress.

During the coming weeks, House and Senate conferees will meet to try to resolve differences in the two spending plans and will try to come up with a final FY 1987 Congressional Budget Resolution. If both Houses of Congress agree to a comprised resolution, Presidential signature is not required.

TRC Holds First Time Public Forums in August

At the request of disability advocates in Texas, TRC has taken on a new challenge.

For the first time, TRC will sponsor a series of public forums across the state designed to give consumers an opportunity to present TRC officials with questions and suggestions about vocational rehabilitation programs in Texas.

In keeping with the TRC philosophy that the independent living centers around the state should be the focal point of consumer activity, one hearing is scheduled for each city where there is a center. The following dates and locations have been set for the forums:

August 4	.....	Austin
August 5	.....	San Antonio
August 7	.....	El Paso
August 18	.....	Houston
August 21	.....	Dallas

Each hearing will be conducted by a TRC panel comprised of Commissioner Arrell; James Jackson,

executive deputy commissioner; Dale Place, deputy commissioner for programs; and the regional director for the region where the forum is held.

Commissioner Arrell is committed to the usefulness of the forums and sees them as a way to keep in touch with the concerns of disabled people in Texas. "We want to hear from the people who use TRC services," says Commissioner Arrell, "to make sure we're meeting their needs."

Anticipating that many people who would like to have their views known will not be able to travel to any of the cities where the hearings will take place, TRC is making provisions to accept written testimony by mail which will be added, for equal consideration, to the information gathered at the hearings themselves.

In upcoming issues, "News & Views" will give the address for mailing written testimonies along with the exact time and location of each forum.

TRA Conference Set for July 13-16

A growing concern among rehabilitation professionals is how to apply the latest available technologies in their work without sacrificing attention to the human needs of people they serve.

The 1986 Texas Rehabilitation Association Annual Conference in Corpus Christi this July will address this question. The conference theme, "High Touch/High Tech: A Balance," is designed to suggest ways to maintain valuable human contact in delivering services while incorporating the wide array of technologies which apply to the rehabilitation profession today.

Conference seminar topics will include "Impact Through Communication," "Stress Management for the Helping

Professional," "Rehab Facilities—Pathways to Progress," and "Technology from the Inventor's Head to the Consumer's Hands."

The TRA conference will be held at the Holiday Inn—Emerald Beach in Corpus Christi beginning Sunday, July 13, and ending Wednesday, July 16. Reservations at the Holiday Inn can be made by calling (512) 883-5731. For conference registration information, contact Rueben Perez, conference chairman, at (512) 680-2091. For information about special arrangements, contact Ron Lowe at (512) 854-1475, voice or TDD. The pre-conference registration deadline is July 3.

TRC employees may use allotted training days to attend the conference.

Management Audit Streamlines Program Evaluation

Many of us have experienced the tightening of the throat and the sweaty palms which occur when we learn that an auditor from the Central Office will be visiting us. Bob Strickland, recently appointed assistant commissioner for Management Audit, is aware of your fears and wants to change the perception of his division.

Strickland is uncomfortable with his auditors being seen as policeman looking to expose secrets or mistakes. "I would rather the Management Audit Division be viewed," says Strickland, "as a resource for the various TRC units to help insure they have the best chance of meeting their particular goals."

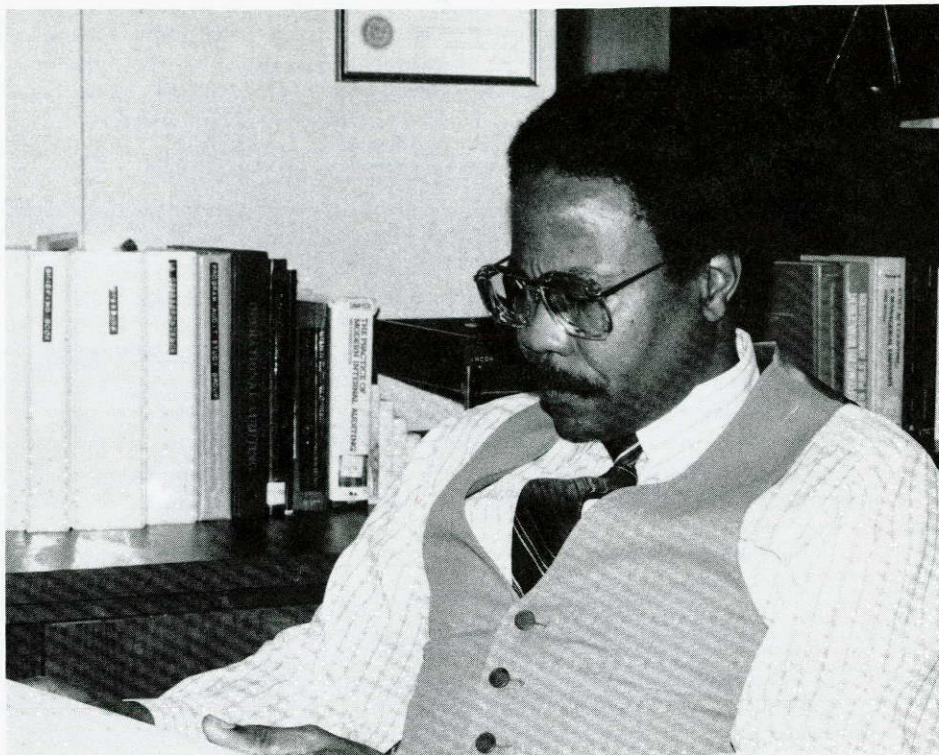
As a result of the August, 1985, TRC organizational changes, the former Program Audit and Internal Audit Divisions were merged to form the new Management Audit Division under Strickland.

The idea behind the merger was to give Commissioner Arrell more effective use of the services the two divisions provide. It brought together the collective talents of the former divisions creating an even better management service able to measure and evaluate a broad range of TRC operations.

Management Audit faces a considerable challenge in providing audit services for both direct operating and external business relationships for the entire Commission.

"Such broad responsibilities," says Strickland, "mean the division must carefully focus its effort." Factors such as cost of operating a unit, past audit reviews and volume of transactions affect how closely Management Audit monitors activity in a given area. Sometimes units are chosen for audits at random.

Strickland sees his division as having responsibilities to managers in both the Central Office and in the field. "Management needs an objective evaluation of each program's effectiveness, on the one hand," he says, "while the units administering the programs need guidance with the best systems and procedures to accomplish their missions."



Bob Strickland, assistant commissioner for Management Audit, worked for 15 years with the Department of Defense in the accounting area, and with the State Attorney General's Office as internal auditor of the Evaluations Division. He came to work for TRC in 1982, as supervising auditor with responsibility for Central Office programs.

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Assistant Commissioner Strickland has several ideas about how to better meet both responsibilities. His staff of auditors are looking at such key questions as "Do the current reviews provide the information and coverage most needed by top management, area managers and counselors? Are there ways we can do more with less?"

With a staff of well-trained professional auditors and support personnel, Strickland believes the people in his division have a full appreciation for the significant responsibilities TRC managers face. "Our job is to be a viable part of assisting those management responsibilities," he says.

Strickland feels he can go about the business of providing effective audit support using a participatory approach with open lines of communication between the auditor and the auditee. "More involvement on the part of the person being audited," says Strickland, "creates a more comfortable atmosphere where he or she feels more in control of the direction of the audit." He believes that increased communications will also help his auditors stay on the right track.

In these times of decreasing funds and increasing demands on vocational rehabilitation programs, Strickland believes that Management Audit is helping TRC bridge the gap to maintain quality service delivery to the disabled population.

Human Services Agencies Cooperate in Service Delivery

TRC is strengthening its efforts to cooperate with two other human services agencies in Texas to share information, develop more streamlined delivery of services to the disabled population and eliminate duplication of services.

Under Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 129, passed during the 69th legislative session last year, the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TDMHMR), the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and TRC are requested to work together to provide an appropriate array of vocational and educational services to persons with mental retardation.

John Wylie, executive assistant commissioner for Program and Facility Services and Joellen Flores Simmons, assistant commissioner for Special Programs are the lead representatives to the committee from TRC with support from Milton Lege, director of Extended Rehabilitation Services; Frank Perdue, operations director for Programs; and Carl Risinger, operations director for Extended Rehabilitation Services.



Disabled drivers throughout Texas will soon have newly designed license plates available to them. The first of these new plates were distributed at ceremonies held at the Travis County Tax Office on April 29. The license plate displays in blue and white the international symbol of access. Norman Warner, a representative of the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation Motor Vehicle Division, says that the enlarged access symbol will allow law enforcement officers to more easily identify when a person has illegally parked in a space reserved for a disabled driver. Warner's mother, Agnes Weide (above), was the first person in Texas to receive these plates.

The committee is working on plans to maintain a continuity of services to persons with mental retardation while eliminating overlaps and inefficiencies in the service delivery systems. Its focus is to develop a better organized transition for people with mental retardation from the educational setting to vocational services at TRC or other services provided by TDMHMR. SCR 129 points out that sharing diagnostic services and information among the agencies will represent a cost savings to the state.

An example of the kind of program this committee aims for is a project in South Texas under development by TRC and TEA. This project involves TRC providing state funds to some South Texas school districts to match, on a 50/50 basis, dollars required to draw federal vocational education funds. The school districts would then use the vocational education funds to provide cooperative services in the area of vocational programming for students in need of transitional services.



The TRC Board passed a resolution honoring Eleanor Mikulin for her work in streamlining services provided by the Texas Education Agency and TRC to school-age children with mental retardation in South Texas. Mikulin is pictured here receiving the award from Board Chairman Jerry Kane at a recent Board meeting.

Settlement Reached in Judgement Against TRC

Last March, Connie Miller, former disability examiner in the Disability Determination Division, won a judgement against TRC and four Commission supervisors for discrimination with regard to promotion and transfer.

In May, Miller and his attorney agreed to a settlement in which terms of the original judgement were dropped and Miller consented not to pursue further litigation in appellate

courts. According to Commissioner Max Arrell, the Commission pursued the settlement which removed all adverse findings and the financial burden imposed on the four supervisors by the original judgement.

Commissioner Testifies on Transitional Services

Commissioner Arrell was among several hundred people to testify recently at a hearing sponsored by the federal Department of Special Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services and the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

The public was invited to speak at the hearing about the quality of special education services in Texas.

The Commissioner outlined for the panel TRC's long history of cooperation with Texas school districts in providing help for young people with disabilities in need of transition from the educational setting to functioning in the community.

He also gave them an update on the purpose and current activities of a special committee, formed under Senate Concurrent Resolution 129 passed in the last session of the Legislature, which encourages cooperation among the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, the Texas Education Agency, and the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation in delivering transitional services to persons with mental retardation (see "Human Services" article in this issue).

The Commissioner's point about the effectiveness of such services was well made when he introduced the group to two TRC clients with mental retardation who participated in transitional programs and who now have jobs in the community.

Ronnie Varela told the group that after being a TRC client, he got a job as houseman at a Holiday Inn in Austin making \$3.95 per hour.

Another former TRC client speaking before the panel, Ilona Peterson, now works at Motorola in Austin. She filed a tax return for 1985 which listed her earnings as \$16,000 per year.

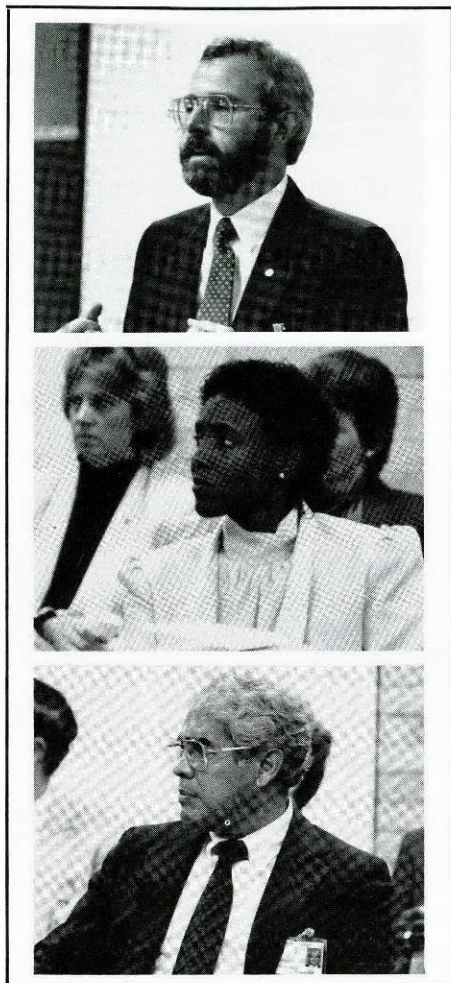
Subsequent public testimony emphasized the need for transitional services such as were provided to Varela and Peterson. Both TRC and the Department of Education expressed their appreciation to the former clients for taking time from their work schedules to share with the panel their successful transitions into the community.

POINTSOf INTEREST

The Sixth National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be held June 24-28 at the University of Texas at Arlington campus. For more information contact Terrance J. Wickman at (214) 372-7012.

KVUE-TV, Channel 24, in Austin has become the first station in Central Texas to "open-caption" its local morning newscasts for the benefit of viewers with hearing disabilities. The captions are visible on any TV set and do not require a decoder.

The Association for Retarded Citizens of Texas (ARC) will hold its annual meeting June 20-21 at the Wichita Falls Hilton in Wichita Falls. Participants will learn about programs and services that span the life cycle for persons with mental retardation. For more information contact Karen Dunn at (512) 454-6694.



The Disability Determination Division (DDD) made a presentation to the TRC board in May covering policies, procedures and services. The presentation, given by DDD managers and staff, outlined the federal laws governing disability determination and followed the path, from start to completion, of cases handled by the division. Among the presentors were (above) Bruce Rollman, director of Staff Development; Jean Martin, supervisor at the San Antonio Office of Disability Hearings; and Carlos Valdez, assistant deputy commissioner for the offices of disability hearings.

Board Approves Selection

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The proposed \$1.4 million cutback in spending by TRC outside case service funds, with a similar amount required for FY '87, would not be easy for the Commission to absorb in light of resources needed to accomplish its projected goals. Much of the budget earmarked to be cut would have been used toward the long-range plan to automate systems and procedures. "The only way to make up the difference is to hire more people later," says the Commissioner, "and that would be more expensive in the long run."

MILESTONES

MAY, 1986

20 years:	REGION II Garry D. Mead	20 years:	REGION VI Paula G. McLerran
10 years:	REGION IV Edna R. Hollingsworth	15 years:	DDD Joyce K. Tiemann
15 years:	REGION V Aris G. Lopez	15 years:	CENTRAL OFFICE J. A. Duarte Donna E. Harris Charles O. Stevens

★ Applause

Roger Webb, executive director of the Texas Planning Council for

Transitions

Longtime TRC employee, **Louis Sterling**, died May 13. His most recent assignment was coordinator for the Volunteer Resources project at the Commission.

After 29 years of service with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), **Fred Sachs**, has retired from his position as Region VI RSA commissioner.

Rudy Martinez, of the Dallas Field Office Southeast, was recently promoted to supervising counselor.

James C. Willard and **Mario Scorza**, both of the Waco Field Office, have been promoted to supervising counselor.

At the Dallas Rehabilitation Institute Field Office, **Bonnie Tyler**, has been promoted to supervising counselor.

Laura Haneman, is the new TRC Librarian. Haneman assumed her new responsibilities May 1, following the retirement of Library Supervisor Lois Cooper.

Sharon Corry, counselor in the Garland Field Office, was recently promoted to senior counselor.

Developmental Disabilities, was named an outstanding alumnus by North Texas State University. Webb was honored at a luncheon at the university in April where he gave a special lecture to graduate and undergraduate students in the field of rehabilitation.

Ilene Gray, program specialist for medical programs, has written a chapter for a book which will be titled *Maximizing Rehabilitation in Chronic Renal Disease*. Her chapter is called "Innovative Vocational Rehabilitation Programs." The book, edited by a group at Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, is now in the publishing stage.

These TRC employees recently received press coverage for the Commission: **Kelly Caudell**, program specialist at the Central Office; **Linda Ragsdale**, counselor in the Midland Field Office; **Cesar Quinones**, counselor at the University of Texas at El Paso Field Office; **Oscar Garcia**, member of the Consumer Advisory Committee; **Russell Bowden**, member of the Consumer Advisory Committee; **David Hooper**, counselor at the Odessa Field Office Central, **Fancher Melton**, counselor at the Athens Field Office.

Ed Harvey, assistant deputy commissioner for Administrative Services in the Disability Determination Division, has arranged for DDD to submit four articles for publication in the *The Forum*, a periodical originating at the Social Security Administration, Office of Disability. The *Forum* provides an exchange of information and news to Disability Determination Service (DDS) offices around the nation.

Hilda Duncan, disability examiner in Unit 14, received a letter of commendation from David MacCabe, deputy commissioner for disability determination, for excellence in documenting the daily living activities of a claimant.



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