

TRC TODAY

TRC TODAY is a newsletter for the employees of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

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the start of a revolution

Martha Paull has been a disability examiner for six years, the last three in Unit 6. Prior to that she was a social worker at the Travis State School for the mentally retarded and a counselor in a private psychiatric facility in Minnesota. She is special.

Nice history, but what is so special about Martha Paull?

She started a revolution, that's what.

In a time when the demands on disability examiners reached an all time high, when the majority of applicant cases had to be placed in storage and a cap placed on new cases to examiners each day to maintain

equilibrium and some semblance of sanity in the awesome numbers needing attention at DDS — she did something unusual.

She asked for — actually volunteered to take — more than the three case cap.

The only one of 317 examiners to do so.

Her actions seem to go with someone who regularly volunteers help for other staff members in her unit, gives some of her own sick leave back into a pool for those who need it more than she, is a member of the DDS Circle of Excellence and serves as a mentor to a new disability examiner.

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The Circle of Excellence grows for 1991

Fifteen vocational rehabilitation counselors have joined the Circle of Excellence top echelon of achievers for 1991.

In the past, recognition was based on production points alone. This year, a new "quality" test component was added. Because of this refinement of just what makes "excellence," the Circle continues to be strengthened. Measures for quality were advocacy, community relations, need fulfillment, quality of VR process, quality of documentation and client satisfaction.

"We are interested in making this process a positive and meaningful event for both the counselor and the client," says Joellen Flores Simmons, assistant commissioner for field operations. In establishing the

criteria for the Circle of Excellence, field input continues to be gathered and incorporated in the system. In addition, input from consumers at the strategic planning meetings indicated consumers want client surveys as an indicator of performance.

"Although this has been a very difficult year for all of us throughout the legislative session, these Circle of Excellence winners have proven that the focus toward quality services for clients is what we are all about," says Simmons.

Simmons also expressed her appreciation for those TRC counselors who achieved over the 72 point minimum. "Every counselor who achieves over 72 points is doing something extra," says Simmons, "And we appreciate the time and effort counselors take in doing this."

The top winners for production were counselors who earned 150 points on their individual caseloads. Winners for quality were the top 15 point achievers.

Incentives given to the counselors who reach this high-water mark of performance include: individualized awards; a one-week, Commission-paid training anywhere in the U.S.; merit raises when appropriate; and calling cards noting their achievement of the Circle of Excellence.

Congratulations to the top winners.

Circle of Excellence for Quantity

Jesus H. Fontenz, Region IV
Robert Gonzales, Region V
Eliseo Smith, Region V
Larry Hughes, Region VI

Circle Of Excellence for Quality

Candace Coleman, Region II	Karen Mitchell, Region IV
Melvin Haisler, Region III	Bill Glenn, Region V
Cliff Hughes, Region III	Gilbert Bermea, Region V
Russell Mahoney, Region III	Joe Rodriguez, Region V
Roa Illena DeJuan, Region IV	Alice Gomez, Region V
Kay Sitton, Region VI	

Clients rate TRC experience as positive

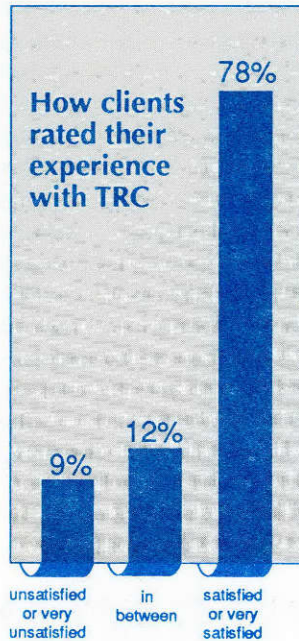
Client satisfaction is an important dimension in determining quality of rehabilitation services. In recent years, disability advocates have proposed to Congress that growing dissatisfaction points to the need for radical changes in how rehabilitation services are provided to clients.

The initial results of a client satisfaction survey, conducted by the University of Texas for TRC, do not support this contention. Of the 2,400 clients responding to a telephone survey, 78 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with TRC services. Only 9 percent rated their experience as unsatisfactory and the remaining 12 percent fell somewhere in between.

"Seeing the numbers and percentages of clients positively responding to this initial survey is very rewarding," says TRC Deputy Commissioner John Fenoglio. "The results not only confirm the successes we have but point to ways to improve our system by analyzing the dissatisfied responses."

According to Dr. Jim Schwab of the University of Texas, the amount of information known about clients in the TRC database in a sample this large is unique in research of this nature.

Results of client response to the survey have been provided to counsel-



ors, including actual comments acquired by the contractor doing the telephone survey. Clients in both status 26 and 28 were included in the sample.

The following are important findings from the research summary:

- 85% felt TRC appointments were promptly scheduled.
- 93% felt they were treated with courtesy and respect.
- 85% felt counselors took time to listen to their needs.
- 80% felt they were involved in making decisions about services that helped them get or keep a job.

Washington Update

Before adjourning for the holidays, Congress acted on the following important issues in rehabilitation:

- The Rehabilitation Act — extended for one year. As of this writing, no legislation has been introduced in either the House or the Senate on reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act. Congress is expected to take action on this important measure when they return in late January 1992.

- Appropriations for Rehabilitation — increases for all programs were authorized by the Rehabilitation Act extension, including a 9.52 percent increase for basic state grants.

- Targeted Jobs Tax Credit — under the new name of "Tax Extension Act of 1991" was sent to the White House. The measure extends TJTC for six months. Congress will take up more permanent action on this credit in the spring.

- Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1991 — signed into law November 21, this new law allows persons with disabilities to collect monetary damages for cases in "intentional discrimination."

Congress begins its second session January 21. Stay tuned for further developments.

December 1991 Service Awards

Region I
15 years
Donald Fulp

Region II
10 years
Patricia Cypert

Region III
25 years
Jeanette Sulak

Region IV
10 years
Sylvia Capetillo
20 years
Shirley Rainey

Region V
15 years
Carmen Gonzales
Sarah Munro
20 years
Aracelly Villarreal
Rosario Chapa
25 years
Lucille Lancaster

Region VI
15 years
Stanley Collins
Buena Henry
20 years
Rudy Martínez

DDS
10 years
Mary McCarley
Candace Yocum
15 years
Dianna Guinn
Ardis Meschke
20 years
Joyce Tiemann

Central Office
15 years
Diana Bailey
Erma Henderson
20 years
Estelle Jones

with disabilities within the priorities of the new Human Services Commission.”
-VMA

As part of forming the new Human Services Commission, the Legislature required that each agency develop a six year strategic plan to be submitted to the new HSC in March 1992.

“I have always been a planning commissioner and TRC has always been a planning agency. I am pleased that the Legislature has come around to a similar orientation. We are not waiting on “guidance and encouragement” from the new commissioner’s office. We are actively drafting a plan with 20 consumer representatives that should drive our appropriation requests in future sessions. You have to get excited about the prospects that this plan will have for Texans with disabilities in the future.”
-VMA

The new human services division

H.B. 7 and H.B. 2009, 72nd Texas Legislature created the new Human Services Commission, consisting of 11 state agencies, 59,000 employees and a new commissioner appointed by the governor with authority to transfer money between agencies.

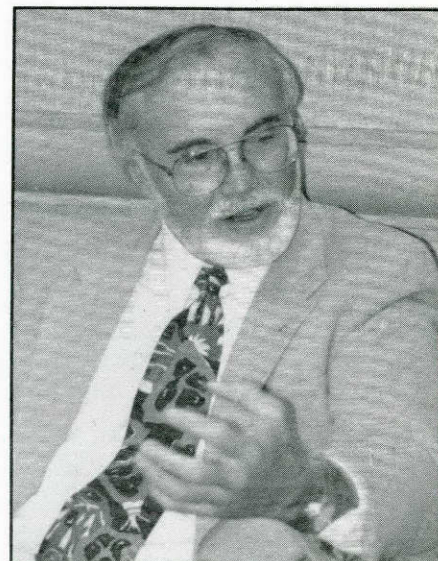
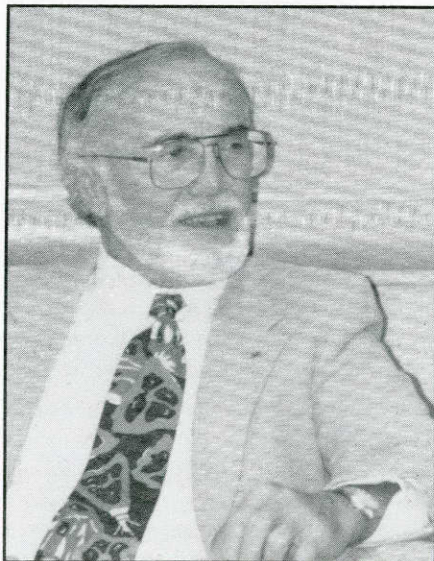
“This is certainly not a new idea. It is the will of the Legislature that the awesome amount of money spent on human services be coordinated in the most efficient way possible. What we need to remember is the reason that individual agencies like ours, and the Commissions for the Blind and Deaf were formed in the first place — because the needs of the people we served were NOT being met. It will be our job to see to it that there is adequate focus on the needs of Texans

It is customary to usher in the new year by reflecting back to find meaning and encouragement for the future. TRC can look way back — over 66 years in rehabilitation programs and more than 35 years of helping Texans get disability benefits they need.

In a year marked by stunning changes in state government structure and sweeping state and federal legislation, TRC is fortunate to have a commissioner in Max Arrell with more than 30 years experience in rehabilitation and 11 years as CEO of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

Here are his reflections on where we have come from as an agency - and where we are going.

A fireside chat with Commissioner



The Americans with Disabilities Act

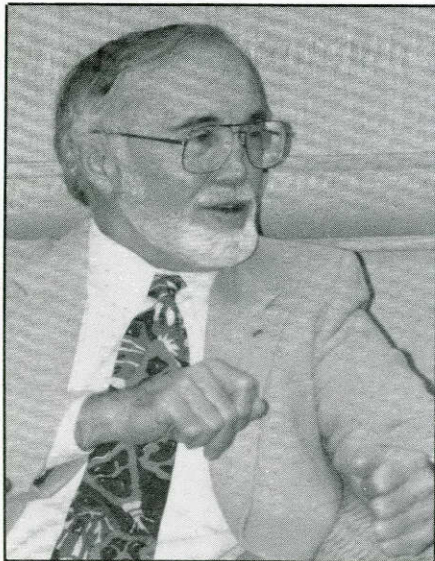
ADA is the single greatest piece of civil rights legislation in the history of our country — maybe the world. But, we are not the ADA commission. We intend to fully comply with ADA, in an exemplary fashion for others to follow. We will promote positive acceptance of ADA among employers in Texas and our clients. We will display the spirit as well as the letter of ADA. All of this will be done within the scope of providing rehabilitation services to Texans with disabilities. Whether or not the ADA realizes the great potential it has to improve the lives of people with disabilities, will depend upon much more than just the singular promotion of TRC.” -VMA

MAJOR GOALS OF TRC STRATEGIC PLAN

- Provide an integrated system of service delivery options
- Involve consumers and advocates in policy development at TRC
- Improve DDS services
- Build a system which supports efficient and effective service delivery by making the best use of staff, time, money and technology
- Encourage the best use of human resources, civil rights and fully support the intent of ADA
- Involve employees through interactive planning
- Maximize federal funds.

This is a broad overview of the major goals of the TRC strategic plan. It is not the final, complete version.

er Arrell



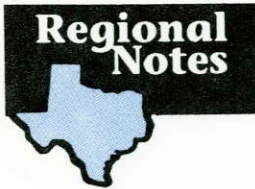
The Rehabilitation Act - reauthorization and beyond

“The Rehabilitation Act is a dynamic document which has been amended numerous times since 1920 — always to attend the changing needs of people with disabilities. In 1973, the mandate to provide priority of service to people with severe disabilities is seen today in the fact that nearly eight of 10 clients of TRC have a severe disability. Without these amendments we would not be serving people with mental disabilities, exploring alternative employment in the community or using the rapid advances in technology to restore function to our clients. The Rehabilitation Act is up for reauthorization when Congress considers the funding levels for rehabilitation programs for the next five years. Special interest groups, as they have for the past several years, are intending to ask Congress to make sweeping changes in the scope of the act. I am confident that cooler heads will prevail in this process and that people with all disabilities will benefit from proper attention from Congress.”

-VMA

DDS - new rays of hope

“The Disability Determination program of TRC has struggled for several years to meet the demands of changing priorities from Congress and the Social Security Administration. Recent congressional hearings seem to imply that programs like DDS are the scapegoat for Social Security Administration and a Congress unwilling to acknowledge the awesome problem of processing applications for Social Security disability benefits. We are going to serve the needs of Texans with disabilities in this process. We are going to put as much humanity as we can into a paper process by streamlining it and making it efficient and responsive to the needs of those it is designed to serve. I am confident that DDS will “rise from the ashes” of this new challenge.” -VMA



Regional Notes

Region II

Ben King, vocational rehabilitation counselor in the Waco Field Office, retired after 25 years of service with the Commission.

Region IV

Eileen Danaher was selected as the regional training officer. Her previous experience included working as a vocational rehabilitation and transition counselor for TRC.

Region VI

Nancy Davis, management support specialist in the Longview Field Office, retired after 29 years of service with TRC.

DDS

Sherry Hunt was selected as assistant director of DDS HRM. Hunt brings to her new position extensive experience in the areas of benefits, employment and other duties related to the position.

Arlene Parks, accountant II in DDS Resource Management Services, retired after 18 years of service with the Commission.

Paull *continued from page 1*

When Jimmy Jackson, administrator for DDS, heard of it, he acknowledged her request by giving her a special citation, the "Extra Mile Award," in front of hundreds of DDS employees.

"Martha Paull's attitude is exactly the remedy for our dilemma at DDS," say Jackson. "Her willingness to pitch in and go the extra mile is contagious. I think others will follow. With more examiners like Martha Paull, we can turn this situation around."

What does Martha think about all this?

"I was extremely surprised by Mr. Jackson's gracious acknowledgment. I'm no heroine. I just need to be busy and thought taking more cases would help. I have gotten calls of congratulation from people at DDS I've never met."

Like I said — it's a revolution.

Her willingness to pitch in and go the extra mile is contagious

UPCOMING EVENTS

On February 12-14, The Government Technology Conference (GTC '92) is returning to Austin for three days of seminar sessions, full-day workshops, government showcases and vendor exhibitions. The conference will feature two keynote speakers, Dr. William Boast, outstanding speaker and motivator and John Sharp, Texas state comptroller.

The event is being held at Palmer Auditorium. For registration information, contact Paul Fairbrother at (512) 477-9797.

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On February 27-28, Resource Networks is hosting a workshop in Dallas presented by psychologist Dr. Ken Moses. Titled "Shattered Dreams and Growth," the two-day workshop is directed to professionals and self-help group facilitators who deal with persons confronting disability, death, chronic illness and other life-changing losses.

For more information contact Maxine Topper at (708) 864-4522.

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On March 15-18, The 1992 Rehabilitation Technology Association (RTA) Training Symposium will be held at the Los Angeles Marriott Hotel in collaboration with the California State University-Northridge (CSUN) conference, "Technology and Persons with Disabilities," which runs March 18-21.

The RTA Symposium provides an opportunity to learn about a variety of rehabilitation technology topics, including job matching software, decision support software, adaptive technology and rehabilitation facility management. The CSUN conference is a comprehensive, international conference on technology where topics covering all ages, disabilities and levels of education and training are covered.

RTA members who also attend the CSUN conference will receive a 50 percent discount on the CSUN registration fee. For more information contact Betty Jo Tyler, RTA coordinator, at (304) 766-7138.

TRC conducts substance abuse study

In a spirit of cooperation, TRC and the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse entered into an agreement where TRC received \$100,000 to perform a research study addressing the impact of undetected substance abuse on rehabilitation outcomes.

"Substance abuse has become a growing concern in our society," says Max Arrell, TRC commissioner. "If TRC wants to remain effective in our mission of returning persons with disabilities back into the workforce, we need to be aware of this problem and how it affects our clients."

With the funds, TRC awarded a contract to the University of Texas to study substance abuse factors that interfere with entry or reentry of persons with disabilities into employment.

The year-long study required involvement of Region III personnel at all levels. Program Director Les Doleshal coordinated the effort with Austin Area Managers Merry Straube, Jose Lawrence, and Dwight Lindsley, who in turn directed the active participation of Austin area counselors and RSTs. J.C. Cardwell, Central Office Programs, coordinated the project and made adjustments as necessary. Over 250

TRC clients agreed to participate in the study.

Initial findings show that there is a substantial amount of undetected alcohol and other drug problems among TRC clients and that there appears to be a correlation between the severity of substance abuse to the employment and legal problems faced by TRC clients.

As compared with other clients, those identified substance abusers are more likely to be public offenders

and are more likely to be disabled before age 22. In addition, successfully rehabilitated substance abusers typically receive more services coordinated by TRC from other agencies than those who are not successful.

For copies of the executive summary and/or more information, contact Program Specialist Jesus Duarte at (512)483-4177 or Ken Honeycutt at (512)483-4134.

Initial findings show that there is a substantial amount of undetected alcohol and other drug problems among TRC clients

FITNESS TIPS



GETTING STARTED

THE FIRST STEP

Most authorities recommend that individuals over age 35 who have previously been inactive, or persons suspecting a medical problem, obtain a physician's clearance before beginning a vigorous exercise program.

THE SHAPE YOU'RE IN

Taking a fitness test is a good way to get an idea of what shape you're in when you start an exercise program, and how to gauge your progress. Standard tests exist which measure cardiorespiratory endurance, flexibility, muscle strength and endurance and body fat.

GIVE YOURSELF GOALS

Studies show that you are more likely to stick with your exercise program if you establish specific and realistic goals and schedule. Set aside a regular time for your workouts and set goals for distance covered, games completed or exercises performed.

From the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

A Special Thanks!

Throughout this holiday season, many TRC employees across the state sponsored families in need of assistance. By donating clothing, presents, food, money and time, these people lent a helping hand to those less fortunate, reminding all of us what the spirit of giving really is.

One recipient of this generosity was TRC's own Donna Chaffee, program technical specialist in the Central Office. In the hospital recovering from a severe stroke, Donna was not going to be able to spend Christmas with her three children. Programs sent out the word requesting cash donations or food to insure a happy holiday for Donna's family. The response was overwhelming. Donna and her family send their appreciation to everyone for their contributions.

It is this spirit that makes us better people and this world a better place to live. Keep up the good work.

Happy New Year!

T*oday*

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Randy Jennings
Editor
Shayla Fleshman
Editorial Assistant
Susan Antoniewicz
Illustrator
Bruce Marshall
Photographer
Kaye Beneke
*Asst. Deputy
Commissioner*

TEXAS REHABILITATION COMMISSION
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78751-2316

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