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NON-CIRCULATING TEXAS STATE DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

Vol. 22 No. 5 October 1999

trc today

An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission



TRC

emphasizes services to people with significant disabilities.

Long-term statistics show that TRC has one of the highest national percentages of placing people with severe disabilities into employment.

And in FY 2000, this commitment will be seen in every counselor and caseload.

TRC Serves Significant Disabilities

On Oct. 1, TRC will enhance initiatives to ensure that the percentage of individuals with significant disabilities on vocational rehabilitation caseloads is 75 percent.

Outreach efforts in the communities are one of the keys to carrying out this goal. The Sunset staff recommendations identified outreach to Texans with significant disabilities as an important initiative in this last legislative session, and TRC fully agreed with the recommendation.

"To assure we meet our goals, we are aggressively reaching out to disability organizations, other health and human service agencies, medical groups, physical and cognitive therapists, churches and ministers, to name a few," says Tony Lawrence, Region III regional director. "There are some individuals out there that don't know what resources are available, and we hope our outreach efforts will better educate the community on our services."

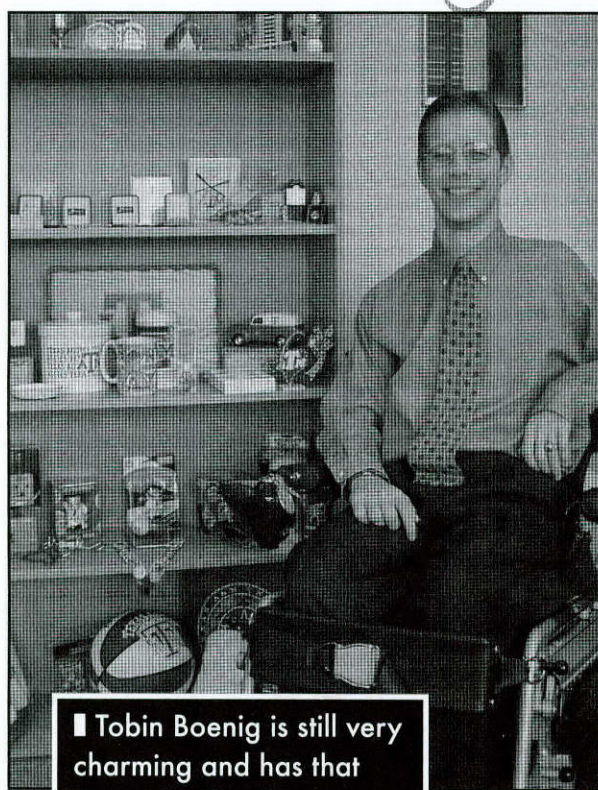
Effective documentation will also be necessary to meet this new requirement. Taking a close look at all the medical documentation is crucial to correct disability coding.

Also, taking a look at secondary disabilities can affect the determination of significance. For instance, a client may come in seeking help for a back injury. But medical documentation may show a history of cardiac problems that also affects ability to work. Taken together, these may be considered significant, depending on the client and situation. "Counselors must look at all the disability-related information," says Lawrence. "What we have seen is that some counselors may, at times, ignore secondary disabilities that may be an impediment to employment."

"Looking at medical documentation in such a way as to see the whole picture is central to effective rehabilitation," says Mary Wolfe, deputy commissioner for Field Operations/External Affairs. "And building effective outreach in the community is crucial to reaching those with significant disabilities who greatly need our services to be independent."

Editor's Note: Our original story on Tobin ran in the March 1997 issue of TRC Today. Read it and see more photos of Tobin in our online edition.

Finding Success ... One Step at a Time



■ Tobin Boenig is still very charming and has that Texas-sized smile. Although many of his goals seemed pretty unrealistic at the time, Tobin has been able to accomplish some. But he is still working on them ... one step at a time.

Two years ago we told you about Tobin Boenig, a charming young man with a grin as big as Texas, who became quadriplegic after a swimming accident at his college graduation party. As president of the student body at Texas A&M University, Tobin had a very promising future. Tobin dealt with his injury by setting some pretty lofty goals; i.e., although he was paralyzed from his neck down, he set a goal to walk out of the Warm Springs Rehab Hospital. He did (with assistance), but not in the timeframe he first established.

Tobin didn't let that time factor stop him from setting new goals. He planned to start working for IBM in Dallas on June 10, 1996, after his graduation. After the accident, he adjusted that goal a little and planned to "walk into his new job" in Dallas in June 1997 - one year later.

Tobin was continuing his physical therapy when we last reported to you, so we decided to look him up and see how he was progressing toward meeting his goals. We found him back at Texas A&M.

"I can't even imagine being back where I was three years ago," recalled Tobin, "laying in that bed in the hospital, getting aggravated when a fly lit on my nose and I couldn't do anything about it."

"I decided that going to Dallas and working for IBM might be a little unrealistic for my first job," continued Tobin. "I always did set unrealistic goals and that is the way I made such progress. But, I've grown a lot, both

emotionally and spiritually, during the last three years. I decided I needed to take things one step at a time and do something else before I took that next big step."

Tobin made a lot of friends during his college days and he always loved TAMU, so he decided to make some contacts and see if there was a position available there. In June 1998, he started working for TAMU in the Office of Disability Services, helping students with disabilities adjust to the college setting.

"At first, I was worried about my physical condition and not having time to do my physical therapy everyday because of work," said Tobin.

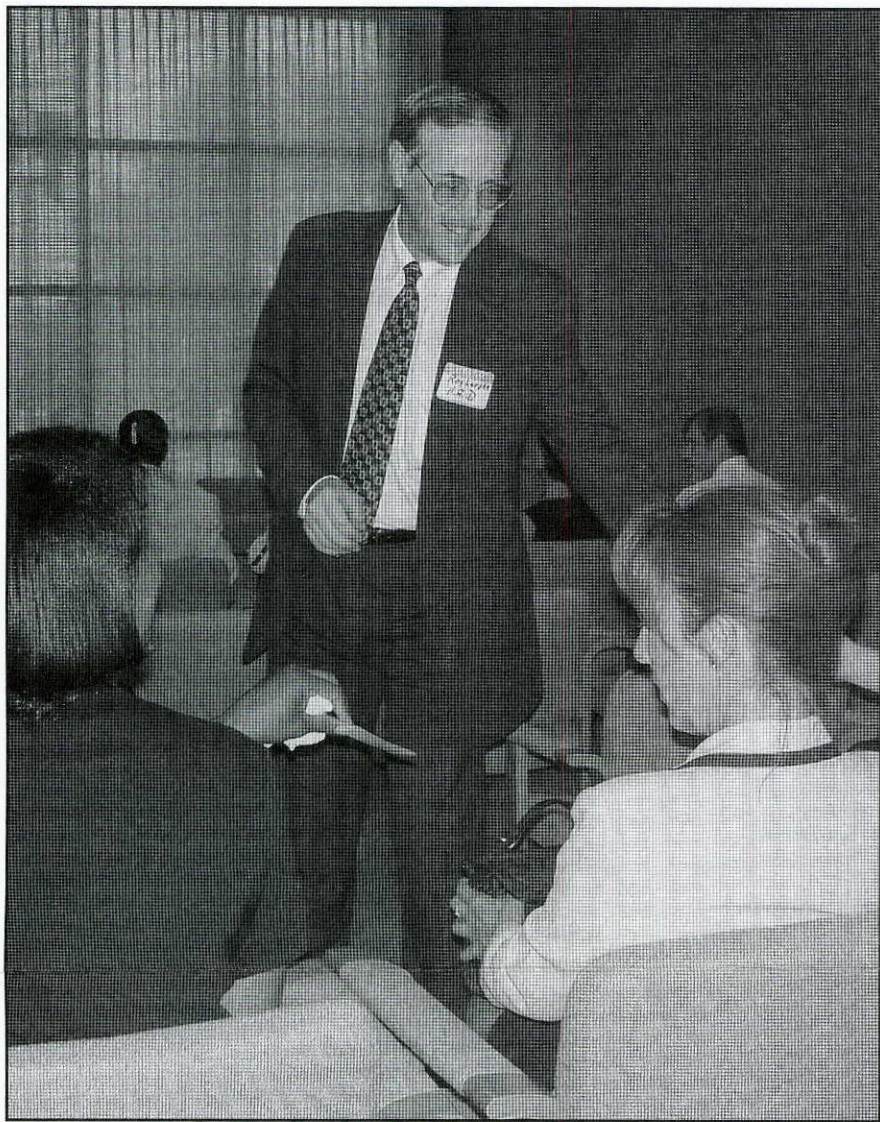
As it turned out, Tobin's habit of goal setting really paid off here. On his own, he continued to work on his physical therapy. And, today, he can walk from 300-500 feet with a walker, he stands on his own, gets in and out of bed, and walks a little without a walker. He says his walking has increased five times to what it was before he started working.

Within the year Tobin landed another position, licensing manager at TAMU. He now polices the market to make sure no one is infringing on the TAMU licensing standards for manufactured products. "I do everything from art work to marketing," smiled Toby. "It is a challenging job with a lot of variety and I enjoy it."

Tobin recently bought a home, and with a little help from TRC, he now owns a wheelchair with a hydraulic lift to stand him up and a minivan complete with all the modifications he needs to drive.

"It's strange looking back on the past three years," recalled Tobin. "God, my family, friends, TRC, the Aggies, and my home town all played an important role in getting me here today. I used to think I needed to have a plan for everything in the future, but now I am only concerned with the immediate future and taking the steps I need to today. I know what I want to do later on, but, how I get there, when I get there, it's all up to God. So, I'm just taking it one step at a time."

CSPD - what is it?



■ HRD Director, Roy Larsen, talks with counselors about the master's degree program being offered.

completing their master's degree in vocational rehabilitation counseling. TRC, through federal training grants, is able to assist identified employees with education and the cost of textbooks.

"As national leaders in the public program, TRC views the CSPD as an important initiative to advance TRC's mission and this is an opportunity to increase the numbers of our qualified rehabilitation professionals," says Mary Wolfe, deputy commissioner for Field Operations/External Affairs.

In response to this regulation, TRC has engaged in dialog with several Texas universities that offer coursework that will meet the need of CSPD. Programs through University of North Texas (UNT), the University of Texas/Austin, University of Texas/Pan American and Stephen F. Austin University offer traditional on-campus training to further meet the CSPD.

Upon entering education agreements, students sign a contract with RSA and are expected to work for a state program for six years after completion. If a student leaves before this time or does not complete the program, they will be expected to pay back tuition costs.

A unique joint project with UNT and San Diego State University (SDSU) is being offered to identified TRC counselors who cannot commit to a traditional coursework program. This project is a web-based degree program in vocational rehabilitation. Through RSA training grants, 25 TRC employees have been identified and accepted for this innovative program.

The SDSU and UNT web-based master's degree program is a four-year commitment, while traditional academic programs are two years. Students in this distance learning program can expect to spend 15 to 20 hours a week in coursework. It will take professional commitment, as counselors will be expected to keep up their caseload and production while in the program. And it will take the ability to balance personal time with the challenges of reading and coursework. As the field of rehabilitation continues to expand, it is expected that more institutions of higher education will offer web-based distance learning programs for students. TRC eagerly awaits the opportunity to pursue additional innovative programs to meet the overwhelming need of qualified rehabilitation professionals.

To date, two groups of current VRCs have been identified by their regions and have been interviewed for both the traditional and distant learning courses. Their management chains, based on criteria established from TRC's State Plan, are identifying additional VRCs.

Many of our staff are excited about the prospect of obtaining a master's degree. True, it's a two- to four-year commitment. But, even with that, this program offers great incentives. This federal grant will help some counselors achieve a master's degree whereas they might not have had the resources to do so otherwise.

If you are not familiar with the term CSPD, you will surely hear a lot about it in future months. So what is it? The CSPD is an RSA regulation requiring vocational rehabilitation agencies to implement a comprehensive system of personnel development (CSPD). As part of the CSPD, states are required to have plans for recruitment and retention of qualified staff to address personnel needs. State units must also establish standards that assure personnel are adequately prepared and trained. TRC has identified through our State Plan a comprehensive and innovative approach to this endeavor.

Since vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs) have the front-line direct service responsibility for clients, they are the first priority in the plan. This means that VRCs will be offered assistance from TRC in

Letters...Letters...Letters...

The following is an excerpt of a letter received by Carol Gomel, counselor in the Plano Field Office, from a client:

"I am writing to you now just to thank you and show my appreciation for all that you have done for me over the last four years. I have now completed a task that we have set out for me to accomplish. There is no possible way I could have done this without your help. ... I would especially thank you for encouraging me throughout those rough times in that period that sometimes felt hopeless. ... My head injury has placed limitation upon me ... Carol then stepped in ... and helped me find a field that I could prosper in."

DDS received this letter regarding the services provided by Disability Examiner, Lucy Petrucelli:

"... I had to contact your agency with various questions and directions. The examiner I spoke with was Lucy Petrucelli. I cannot say enough praise for Ms. Petrucelli as she went way above the call of duty to assist me with my endeavor."

Here is an excerpt of a letter sent to Ilene Gray, DE, from a claimant:

"I want to thank you for the kindness and professionalism you extended to me while I applied for my disability from Social Security."

"... Your reassuring and kindness meant a lot to me when I was down and uncertain of the outcome. I'll always be grateful for your help."

THINK ABILITY

This October is the 50th anniversary of what is now known as National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). It is an excellent opportunity for TRC staff to highlight the benefits of hiring people with disabilities to employers and others in their communities.

TRC publications are available to assist in outreach efforts to employers. "A Profitable Partnership" is an employer packet that contains information on TRC services, tax incentives and other employer resources. Its stock number is #01803.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Jenny Hall, associate commissioner for Civil Rights, was recognized by the Trustees of Austin Travis County MHMR Center for her outstanding volunteer contributions to the Center.

Hall was instrumental in developing a program on diversity for the Center that was given to over 120 managers and videotaped for continued use. Additionally, Hall's advice and perspective have been of particular value to the Center's Human Resources Department staff as they advertise and fill positions.



Across the State

Welcome Aboard

June 1999

James Curd
Cindee Segal
Melody Kyle
Audrey Benson
Michael Villela
Dana Stanislawski
Pamela Southern
Melissa McCracken
Patricia Walker
Sylvia Delacruz
Becky Molina
Lyann Robertson
Bianca Enriquez
Lydia Lawson
Millicent Speed
David Vershaw
Janet Kennedy
Janet Feltman
Elaine MacLaughlin
Dianne Tripp
Lisa Navejas
Jim Gilliam
Jeraldeen Patton
Makesha Curry
William Magri
Anna Chapa
Luz Ledezma
Sandra Miranda
Cynthia Mizell
Mary Murphy-Rodriguez
Martha Hinojosa
Sharen Drews
Thuy Nguyen
Brandon White

July 1999

Zenia Andrews
Twana Atkins
Lilia Ayub
Clint Barnes
Beth Berning
Emma Bloebaum
Jacquelyn Bowen
William Bryant
Brenda Butler
Linda Cameron
Robert Campbell
Shirley Campbell
Sylvia Cantu
J. C. Cardwell
John Casey
Angelique Casmire
Lydia Chavez
Jessica Cutrera
Aurora Degeere
Dana Dominguez
Garry Enox
Martha Estelle
Luciana Farias
Gloria Fowler
Jeannette Fox
Wenzie Garcia
Susan Gezana
Barbara Gholston
Jules Gipson
Blanche Gletzer
Karen Gonzalez
Gilbert Gonzalez
Susanne Grosch
Eufemia Guerra
Kevin Harris
Anne Hoscheit
Debra Johnson
James Jones
Deborah Kucaj
Karen Laney
Lydia Lara

Dena Lauderdale
Lee Lindsley
Andres Lizcano
Carolyn Madere
Patricia Wayne
Jacquelyn McCullough
Gary Mobley
Carolyn Moore
Clifford Ohueri
Marlena Oiveira
Anna Olmos
Ilse Parsons
Richard Phelan
Julia Quick
Jacqueline Richards
Elfreda Sells
Marny Silverman
Brenda Stewart
Laurel Tatum
Randolph Thrash
Tobie Tucker
Rita Vega
Sandora Walker
Debra Wardell
Stacy Weidmann
Kimberly Wesson
Lazard Yanez

Retirements

June, 1999

Mary L. Adair, 7 years
William Suhanin, 10 years
Lynn Gilbert, 13 years
Jeanette Sulak, 32 years
Bruce Sweet, 19 years

July 1999

Sharon A. Corry, 28 years
Woody R. Crouch, 26 years
Muriel Gentry Mattix, 10 years
Lanny D. Rainey, 24 years
Ramiro Ramirez, Jr., 24 years

August 1999

Dennis Awbrey, 27 years
Gilbert S. Bermea, 31 years
Jesus Franco, 30 years
Rogelio Gonzales, 24 years
Mario Martinez, 30 years
Mae Francis M. Goffney, 33 years,
Rogelio Gonzalez, 24 years
Lawrence Gene Tone, 14 years

Deaths

Barbara Pharo, former Arlington Field Office employee, passed away June 23, 1999. Barbara was employed by TRC for 10 years.

Bob Wallace, former DDS employee, died Tuesday, July 13 in Georgetown. Bob was a staff services officer at DDS when he retired in 1987 with 20 years state service.

Former Central Office employee, Margaret Ann Swearingen, passed away on Aug. 5, 1999. Margaret worked as an accounting clerk from Oct. 1974 until she retired in May 1989.

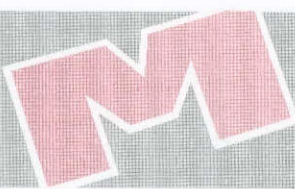
TRC Says Goodbye to Two Programs

On Sept. 1, two TRC programs were moved to the Texas Department of Human Services – the Personal Attendant Services and Deaf/Blind with Multiple Disabilities programs. A result of Sunset legislation, the move grouped all long-term care programs together under one agency.

The Deaf/Blind with Multiple Disabilities program was originally moved from the Deaf Commission to TRC in 1986. Under the management of TRC, services increased from 24 people to more than 100 individuals. The increase was due, in part, because TRC increased program resources by applying for Medicaid funding. A Medicaid waiver was awarded on March 1, 1995 which allowed the program to grow.

The PAS program helps eliminate a big obstacle to employment for people with disabilities, providing financial assistance to pay for personal attendant care as determined by the individual's income.

Employees who have received 12 maximizers



June 1999

REGION II
Gloria Armento
Frances Bowen
Linda Campbell
Michele Campbell
Mary Culberson
Irene Heirman
Zack Hilliard
Ellie Lambert
Joy Lombas
Barbara Parsley
Judy Reynolds
Earl Ridle

Norma Rouchon
Emily Ugarte
Jana Weiss
Loretta Zimbelman

REGION V
Luana Warden

DDS UNIT 22
Susan Barnes
Linda Daniel
Steven Heath
Sue Henize
Margaret Law
Jane Ramsey

Patty Sando
Kathy Silberman
Steve Stump
Helen Taylor
Jan Zindler

July 1999

REGION II
Joyce Burchfield
Millie Madison
Anita Herrera

Texas Rehabilitation Commission
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78751-2399

Address Service Requested

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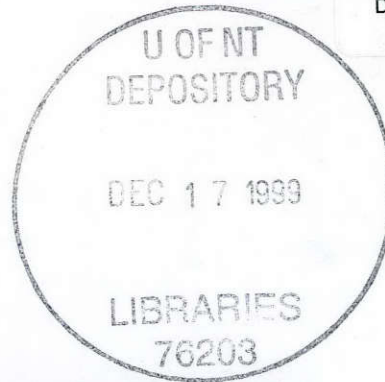
TRC Today is published by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission for distribution to its employees and retirees throughout the state. We welcome submissions for publication, but reserve the right to edit or screen materials according to newsletter policy. Address submissions or inquiries to Prissy Pense, Public Information Office, Texas Rehabilitation Commission, 4900 N. Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78751-2399; or telephone (512) 424-4006.

Shayla Fleshman, Director of Public Information
Prissy Pense, Editor

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State Service Awards - July, August, September 1999

10 Years

Arthur Cain
Nell Crawford
Debra Johnson
Belinda Kirkland
James Knauss
Rita Camarillo
Geneva Davis
Lena Kratzmeyer
Edmund Lee
Jo Morales
Danielle Williams
Wayne Bush
Richard Gardner
Doug Riley
Lee Butler Lenor
Janie Leanhart

15 Years

Tammy Gillespie
Shirley Koehle
Sylvia McDougall
Mary Meave
Connie Neely
Paul Stoever
Cheryl Thomas
Glen Warman
Kay Wolfe
Margarita Carrasco
Rosalinda Egge
Sherry Gutierrez
Lori Lawson
Mona Lopez
Bony Marrero
Laudelina Rodriguez
Trudy Wiley
Maria Zuniga
June Geppert

Sheila Monday
Lajuana Burgess
Lauren Begam-Brannan
M Renee Lopez
Cozette Butler
Joanne Talavera
Victor Moriole
Brenda Lynch
David Pimentel

20 Years

Donna Goodenough
Annie Hooper
Richard Hopkins
Belinda Overton
Monica Bayer
Ruth Briscoe
George Calhoun
Michelle Crocker
Denice Graham
Ilene Gray
Terry Hirsh
Carol Hoppens
Herlinda Lutzenberger
Marion Newsome
Mark Rodriguez
Nelda Sanchez
Judith Hollis
James Reeves
Loraine Gomez
Harry Brevell
Roswitha Maamary
Cynthia Thomas
Vernon Dement
Beverly Gajewski
Leslie Neitzke

25 Years

Charles Bailey

Margaret Goings
Bonnie Tyler
Patricia Bell
Joan Bradbury
Sylvia Flores
Jeffrey Kaufmann
Virginia Sicotte
Maria Solis
David Stephenson
Jeanette Sutherland
Don Oelschlegel
Gilbert Bermea
Albert Lozano
Elliott Boyles
Nancy Hulce
Robert Dann
Esmeralda Cantu-
Gavlik
Sheryl White
Mel Fajkus
Christine Salinas
Mary Sanchez

30 Years

Diana Fuller
Linda Lauterbach
Elia Montelongo
Judith Zwahr
Elmer Blankenship
Jessie Johnson
George Schneider
Aris Lopez
Anna Bounds

We missed this one last
September - Judy
Freeman of Region III,
25 years as of 9/98