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trc today

An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission



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Texas Rehabilitation
Commission
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, Texas 78751-2399
Vol.22 No.4 June/July 1999

To the general public, it was the education session, but there were also some important bills dealing with health and human services. For instance, the Legislature made some changes in the overall organization and delivery of the health and human services system. The HHSC Sunset bill addressed the operational authority of the HHSC Commissioner in specific areas, such as information and technology and federal-funds management.

Another important bill was TRC's Sunset legislation which continues this agency until the year 2011. Under this new legislation, the TRC Board will be more involved in publishing new rules on the VR program and will specifically address the monitoring and oversight of counselor decisions. The agency will also post more information, including performance data, on the TRC Internet web site. The legislation addressed important hiring and purchasing practices.

"TRC will continue to provide the same quality services to people with disabilities," says Commissioner Arrell. "As always, we will approach this new legislation in a spirit of cooperation and keep the needs of our clients the driving force behind everything we do."

Long-term care

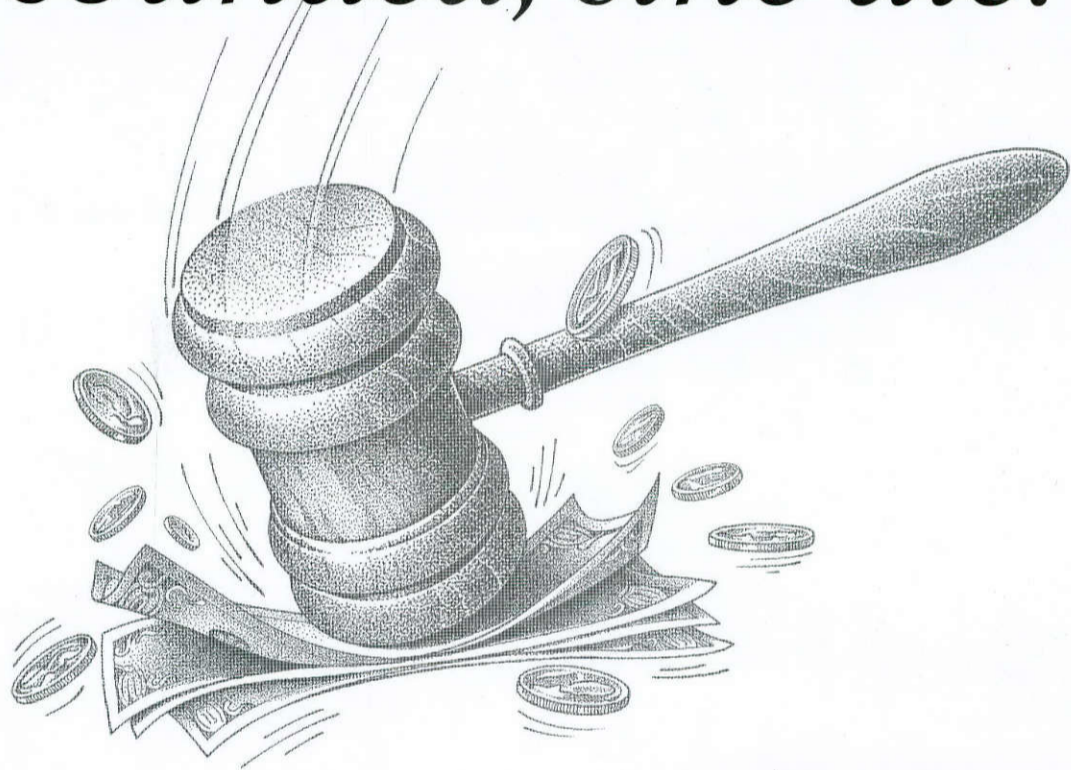
The issue of long-term care in the Sunset legislation captured a lot of attention among consumer groups and the general public. Legislators decided to designate the Department of Human Services as the agency that will focus on long-term care programs. After Sept. 1, two TRC programs will be moving to the Department of Human Services — Personal Attendant Services and the Deaf-Blind with Multiple Disabilities Program.

"The concept of grouping long-term care programs together makes a lot of sense for the state. Again, the important thing is that there will be no disruption in services to our clients," says Arrell.

Appropriations

One of TRC's main goals in each legislative session is to ensure that our programs receive adequate funding to continue and/or expand needed services to people with disabilities. TRC was able to receive increased funding over the base budget submitted to the Legislative Budget Board in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR), Independent Living Services and the Deaf-Blind with Multiple Disabilities Program. As

The gavel has sounded, sine die.



appropriations are tied with performance expectations, the Legislature set VR case closures at 25,127 for FY 2000 and 25,285 for FY 2001.

A Pay Raise!

Many employees will be pleased with the \$100 per month (\$1,200 per year) pay raise that was applied across the board to all state employees. You can expect to see the difference in your September paycheck (which you receive Oct. 1).

Taking vacation?

Before you go, here's a piece of legislation to consider. Now, unused annual leave can be used as credit toward retirement, much the same way unused sick leave has been used the last couple of years. And the really good news is you can take a lump sum payment of unused annual leave upon retirement, as well as it counting for credit.

We'll have more information for you on the legislative session in future issues of the *TRC Today*.

New Rehab Terminology

No, you're not hearing things!
Due to the Rehabilitation Act Amendments, there's some new terminology being used in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Please remember to use these terms in all written and verbal communications.

☆ *IWRP* (the individualized written rehabilitation plan) is being replaced with **IPE (Individualized Plan for Employment)**.

☆ Severe disabilities will now be described as **significant disabilities**.

HHSC Holding Local Planning Forums

In a series of 21 planning forums, customers of the Health and Human Service (HHS) system in Texas will get an opportunity to express their needs and how to improve the delivery of state-funded HHS in Texas. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), in collaboration with United Way of Texas, Regional Councils of Texas and 12 HHS state agencies, plans to hold forums around Texas to involve stakeholders, consumers and local community leaders in developing the next HHSC Coordinated State Plan.

The forums are twofold with a morning session for public input and a facilitated afternoon session with invited participants. Discussion topics will include creating a continuum of care for families and individuals who need health and human services; providing efficient and timely delivery of those services; developing accountability and teamwork among the HHS agencies; and providing incentives that encourage innovation at local levels. Participants will be invited to provide feedback on responsiveness of current HHS services and suggestions on how we can provide those services better.

For a complete list of dates, times, and meetings, call Karl Urban 512-424-6638 or go to the HHSC web site: <http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/meetings/planforumweb.htm>. For additional information or if you wish to attend the hearing and require auxiliary aids or services, please contact D'Anna Stewart by phone at (512) 424-6629, by fax at (512) 424-6641, or by e-mail at d'anna.stewart@hhsc.state.tx.us so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

TADE Big Winners at Regional

Members of Texas Association of Disability Examiners (TADE) attended the 1999 Southwest Association of Disability Examiners (SWADE) Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, April 28-30, 1999. Several members, as well as TADE, were nominated for awards and Texas came away as the big winners.

TADE won the President's Award, which is given to the chapter that has made the most significant contributions to SWADE. Individual awards to TADE members included:

- ★ Dean Crawford - Charles Blalock Award,
- ★ Robert Edwards - SWADE Award,
- ★ Leasa Stephens - Director's Award,
- ★ Lauren Sebel - Rookie of the Year Award.

In addition to walking away with most of the awards, TADE members came out on top in the regional elections for the SWADE 1999-2000 year. Dean Crawford, current president for TADE, won SWADE president elect. Holly Houser will be the SWADE secretary for the second year in a row, and Bob Edwards was elected treasurer while Lisa Martin is the current regional director until October of this year. Congratulations to TADE and these very deserving individuals.

■ Photos: (1) Dean Crawford, is awarded the Charles Blalock award by SWADE President Rebecca Calvert of New Mexico. (2) Crawford honors Robert Edwards (left), QA Specialist, with the SWADE award, recognizing the disability professional of the year.

TRC TRIBUTES

TRC Safety Program has a Silver Lining

TRC recently received the Silver Safety Award to recognize a 30 percent decrease in on-the-job injuries in FY 98. TRC Risk Manager, Wally Balzac accepted the award for TRC presented by the State Office of Risk Management.

"This is the second year in a row TRC received this award," reported Balzac. "We had 35 injuries in the workplace last year as compared to 44 in 1997." Balzac attributes the decrease in injuries to ongoing safety awareness training.

According to Balzac, the most common injuries are slips, falls and repetitive trauma injuries. Some safeguards for these injuries could be as simple as paying attention to your surroundings and practicing good posture at your computer.

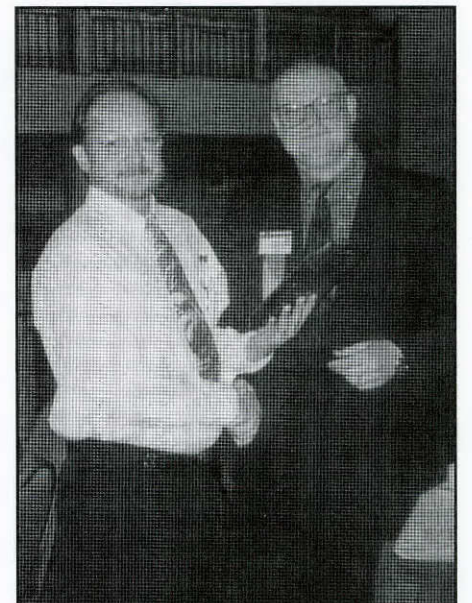
If you experience an injury in the workplace, contact your supervisor immediately. Managers are encouraged to contact Balzac through e-mail or by calling him in the Central Office (telephone number 512-424-4216) for information on handling workplace injuries and safety awareness training packages that are available.

TRC Has Highest Participation in SECC

Some of you may remember one of our fall issues that featured Commissioner Arrell kissing a pig on the cover. Well, that hard work and extra effort paid off in the State Employees Charitable Campaign (SECC) when TRC was awarded the SECC highest participation award for agencies with 1,001-5,000 employees. The kiss-the-pig contest was just one of many that raised participation to a whopping 35.7 percent, raising over \$51,000. The SECC is in its fifth year of outstanding success in Texas. Leadership and volunteer campaign coordinator expertise and enthusiasm are the key factors to its success. Coordinators in TRC were Carolyn Mercer (statewide coordinator); Robin Burt, Central Office; Roy Kjosa, Region 1; Jesus Quiroga, Region 2; Edith Sirles, Region 3; Karen Gaede, Region 4; Ivan Smith, Region 5; Frank Roddey, DDS. Congratulations for doing a great job at TRC.

HR1221 Recognizes TRC and George Schneider

House Resolution Bill 1221, adopted by the House on May 27, recognizes several state agencies and coordinators for providing leadership and expertise to protect Texans from the potential Y2K problem. Among those recognized were TRC and Associate Commissioner for Automated Services, George Schneider. See our online edition for a photo of the recognition program honoring the Year 2000 coordinators at the Texas Legislature.



SILC Focus Groups and Town Meetings

July 12 - Tyler
 Sheraton Tyler Hotel
 5701 S. Broadway
 Tyler, TX 75703
 (903) 561-5800
 (Fax) (903) 561-9916

July 22 - Corpus Christi
 Omni Bayfront
 900 North Shoreline
 Corpus Christi, TX 78401
 (512) 887-1600

July 29 - El Paso
 Marriott Hotel
 1600 Airway Blvd.
 El Paso, TX 79925
 (915) 779-3300

Focus Groups will meet -
 1- 4 p.m.

Town Hall Meetings will be
 held 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Independent Living survey has a new twist

The State Independent Living Council (SILC) wants to know what people with disabilities in Texas really need to live more independently. The SILC is sponsoring a caller-initiated telephone survey and a series of focus groups and public forums in selected cities around the state so effected people can voice their opinion on how federal funds should best be used in Texas.

"The call-in telephone survey is a new twist on survey methods," said Tim Bear, SILC administrative coordinator. "It is sort of like polling versus voting; the people most impacted and interested will respond. Generally, telephone surveys don't work because people resent being called at home and use technology to intercept those calls. But, by using the call-in survey, I believe we will get better input. We expect to hear from providers as well as people with disabilities and their family members and support systems."

The Independent Living (IL) program, a federal program carried out by TRC and the Texas Commission for the Blind (TCB), helps Texans with severe disabilities reach the highest level of independence possible. It also works with independent living centers around the state, concentrating on self-sufficiency and quality of life even though most consumers in the program may have very limited work potential. The SILC works with TRC and TCB to provide leadership and direction on independent living issues in Texas.

"It is important that we get the information out to anyone who has an interest in the future of IL services in Texas, particularly consumers," said Vernon Dement, TRC program specialist for the IL program. "The better the participation in the telephone survey and the forums, the more thorough the final assessment will be of independent-living service needs."

Grants are available for participation in the town meetings. If someone needs financial assistance to participate, forward a request stating that need to:

Synergy Solutions, Inc.

5555 N. Lamar, Suite L-103
 Austin, TX 78751
 FAX 512-467-7450
 Email - synergyi@bga.com

Across the State

Welcome Aboard

April 1999

Erlina Barrera
 Barbara Bearden
 Elwyn Caldwell
 Leonard Castillo
 Yolanda Chacon
 Donna Decross
 Virginia Easterwood
 Fred Epstein
 Kenneth Farrow
 Gerardo Garza
 Debra Godina
 Claudia Gutierrez
 Michele Hammer
 Paula Kolas
 Angela Owens
 Bernice Robles
 Sarita Rodriguez
 Albert Spires
 Senaida Stark
 Selinda Stockley
 Elaine Wagner
 June Walker-Roberts

May 1999

Jeffrey Brandt
 Yolanda Campos
 Mark Doehne
 Laura Gentry
 Isabel Gil
 Gene Gorham
 Holly Harrell
 Jack Linder
 Stacy McFadin
 Demethia McVea
 Linda Miller
 David Norman
 Thomas Owens
 Maria Pena
 Jeri Pulido
 Darren Richards
 Thomas Shettles
 Deborah Vinson
 Tommy Williams

Retirements

April 1999

Alice Gomez, 31 years
 Bonnie Brown, 22 years

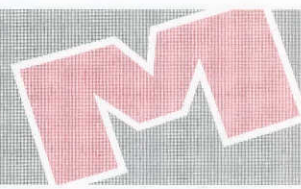
May 1999

Carol Brown, 30 years
 J.C. Cardwell, 27 years
 Gary R. Gill, 32 years
 James P. Jones, 29 years
 Lee Dwight Lindsley, 27 years
 Richard Phelan, 26 years
 Irma Sierra, 26 years
 Linda Steinhagen, 25 years
 Laura L. Strayer, 21 years
 Susie L. Young, 25 years

Deaths

Gary Denson, former area manager in the Lufkin Field Office, passed away on Friday, May 28. Denson began working for TRC as a counselor in January 1966, and had worked for the agency 27 years when he retired in 1993.

Employees who have received 12 Maximizers



March and April 1999

REGION III
 Taseia Armstrong
 Dorothy Bush
 Carolyn Castro
 Peggy Meiners

DDS
 Donna Boyd
 Laverne Caldwell
 Yvette Flores

May 1999

DDS
 Betty Perley
 Cynthia Castro
 Debra Johnson

Lilly Rodriguez
 Margaret Bell
 Melba Alexander
 Mozelle Armand
 Dolores Gomez
 Beverly Rector
 Kay Tiemann
 Jan Zindler

REGION II
 Rosla Hocker

REGION V
 Angelica Gonzalez
 Jim Tom Nichols
 Carolyn Valdez

June 1999

REGION II
 Candace Coleman
 Laura Marquez
 Mary Ann Senn
 Mary Springer
 Larry Stults

If we missed publishing your name although you have received 12 Maximizers, please contact the HR representative in your area to forward that information to Christina Pallarez, Central Office HR.

See our online version for more Employee Kudos —

Texas Rehabilitation Commission
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Austin, Texas 78751-2399

Address Service Requested

trc today

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 - June 1999

10 Years

Socorro Baggerman
Mary Baxter
James Cremona
Naomi Fitzmorris
Debra Harvey
Lawrence Lottman
Jeanne Muller
Gail Nickell
Mary Rackley
Elizabeth Shepherd

15 Years

Linda Deason
David Freemyer
Cecilia Gonzalez
Susan Hemphill
Gena Swett

20 Years

William Cupit
Deborah Foy
Theresa Johnson
Maria Nava
Elinor Stolard

25 Years

David Burks
Maria Norvell
Marlene Owens
Ronona Sellars
Linda Steinhagen

30 Years

Shirley Penninger
Maria Trevino Ortega
Polly Walton