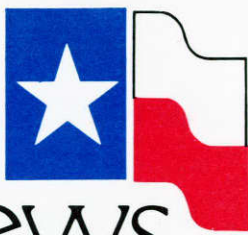


News & Views



★ Texas Rehabilitation Commission ★ A Human Energy Agency ★

Volume 11 Number 3

March 1989

How Well Are We Serving You?



Hardin County Sheltered Workshop clients Laura Dryden (left) and Bobbie Richmond put some last minute touches on the Region III suggestion boxes before they are placed in the field offices.

Region III found a way to get TRC clients more involved in shaping the quality of services the Commission provides.

During a region-wide team building exercise last year, managers brought up the issue of direct client input into TRC services as a way to sharpen the region's responsiveness to client needs.

Several methods were discussed. Finally, the idea of client suggestion boxes seemed to best meet their purposes.

According to Jackson King, regional director, "We wanted to get a feeling from our customers for what they think about our services."

continued on page 2

How Well Are We Serving You?

continued from page 1

Before the meeting ended, they had drawn up a suggestion form to be used in the boxes. The form, titled "How Well Are We Serving You?" asks specific questions about how clients are treated in field offices. There is also room for additional written comments on the back. Client signature is optional.

The next question the Region III managers had to answer: "Where do we get the suggestion boxes?" Jerald Stewart, area manager in the Beaumont Field Office, suggested contracting with the Hardin County Sheltered Workshop in Silsbee, Texas to make the boxes.

Linda Griffin, counselor in the Beaumont Field Office, has several TRC clients working in the workshop doing such things as highway maintenance, woodwork and tearing rags. To have clients building the suggestion boxes to be used by other clients added more interest to the program.

A prototype box was approved, and within a matter of weeks, all 34 Region III field offices had placed the suggestion boxes in their reception areas.

Beaumont was among the first field offices to put its box into use. "It's not a 'gotcha' type operation for the counselors," says Stewart. "It's more an informal way to determine the quality of services clients feel they are receiving in the various offices.

King says that an informal poll of the region shows client responses to be overwhelmingly positive.

“ . . . it's
a step toward
letting our
customers
know
we're
interested
in what
they think.”

Currently, Stewart and other Region III managers collect client suggestions and give feedback to individual counselors.

For now, client comments in the suggestion program will be dealt with in the individual offices.

King plans to follow up on suggestion box results at the next Region III team building exercise. There he will decide whether to modify the program or to formalize the reporting procedures and responses to client suggestions.

"I don't really have any expectations for the program at this point," says King. "We feel it's a step toward letting our customers know we're interested in what they think."

The Hardin County Sheltered Workshop will soon get a boost from some Title VI-C supported employment federal funds going to Region III.

Workshop clients are primarily people with mental retardation who usually have a dual diagnosis such as cerebral palsy, according to Linda Griffin, counselor in the Beaumont Field Office for clients in the workshop.

The supported employment funds will help start a job coach program in the workshop to move clients into jobs in the community. The program will use four job coaches who will work with "sponsors" from the community (two per client) to ensure correct and lasting job placements.

"By using community sponsors, we're taking advantage of the business networks they've already set up," says Griffin.

She believes this business based "team" approach to placing clients will help overcome some real barriers to job placement in Hardin County, namely a 23 percent unemployment rate in a community of 40,000 where the primary industry is timber.

The job coach program is scheduled to run from March to September and will target up to 15 clients for supported work placement in the community.

Ruling to Have Big Impact on Disability Transportation

A federal court in Philadelphia ruled February 15 that the Department of Transportation must require local transit authorities to equip new buses for use by people with disabilities.

The 3rd U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling expands a current DOT regulation allowing communities to offer only alternative service to people with disabilities. Such alternative service includes smaller, accessible vans which must be scheduled as far in advance as six days in some areas.

The court held that the use of alternate transportation hinders spontaneous use of mass transit by people with disabilities.

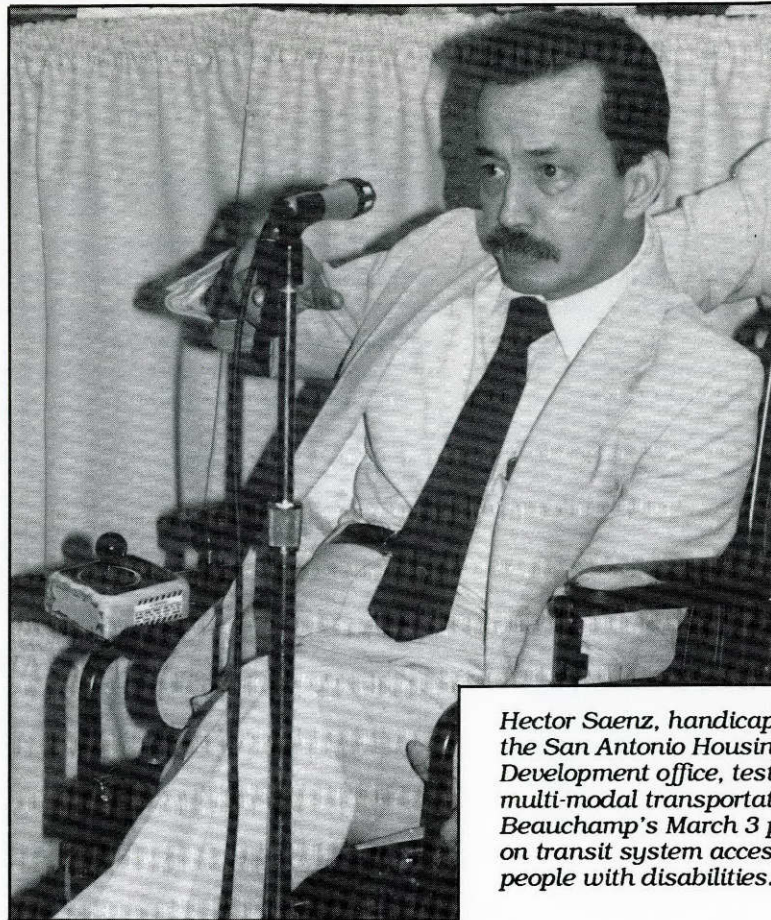
Attorneys who brought the lawsuit called the ruling the most important decision ever handed down for people with disabilities who use public transportation.

Bob Kafka, a member of the American Disabled for Accessible Public Transportation (one of the plaintiffs in the original suit), calls the decision one of the most significant recent court decisions for people with disabilities. He warns that DOT may decide to appeal--a process which could postpone the effect of the decision by as much as two years.

Meanwhile, in Texas, state Rep. Jerry Beauchamp of San Antonio is holding a series of public hearings as support for a bill on accessible transportation he plans to introduce in the 71st Legislature.

Features of Beauchamp's bill include a firm dedication to a multi-modal approach to accessible public transportation which would provide accessible mainline buses as well as continue the smaller para-transit systems.

The bill would also prohibit dismantling existing transportation services for people with disabilities.



Hector Saenz, handicapped liaison in the San Antonio Housing and Urban Development office, testifies in favor of multi-modal transportation at Rep. Beauchamp's March 3 public hearing on transit system accessibility for people with disabilities.

This is important to communities who have been told that if mainline accessibility is provided, then para-transit services will be discontinued.

Beauchamp held his first hearing March 3 in San Antonio. Just last month, San Antonio lost the bid for the 1991 national convention of the President's Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities.

The committee's decision to cancel plans to meet in San Antonio were triggered by the city's lack of commitment to a mainline transportation option for people with disabilities. Wayne Cook, general manager of VIA (the city's mass transit system), says their buses are not equipped with wheelchair lifts because local people with disabilities would rather use VIAtrans, the local para-transit system.

Should the 3rd Circuit Court decision stand, VIA will likely be required to make its mainline service accessible while continuing to offer its para-transit service.

Harold Russell, chairman of the president's committee, said, "This decision was not made lightly. I understand that San Antonio will lose at least \$1.6 million and I'm sorry for that."

Russell went on to announce that the 1991 meeting will be moved to Dallas where transit officials have purchased 100 lift-equipped buses.

WBAL Radio in Baltimore, Md. is producing a daily radio feature focusing on technological advances and information on innovative services for people with disabilities. According to Jeff Beauchamp, station manager for WBAL, the feature is in direct response to recent nationwide polls which indicate that lack of access to information through the general news media is a primary concern for people with disabilities. This pioneering effort will run daily during the WBAL News Journal, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. (drive time). For more information on this project, contact WBAL Radio at (301) 467-3000.



Break out the fishing gear! Get ready for the Fifth Annual National Bass Championship for the Physically Challenged. It's sponsored by Paraplegics on Independent Nature Trips (POINT) and Casa Colina, May 13 - 14 at Caddo Lake in Uncertain, Texas. Prizes up to \$5,000 will be offered for the biggest bass and up to \$200 for other catches. Lake transportation, as well as transportation for out-of-state entrants from both Shreveport and D/FW airports, is available. Entry fee is \$125. For more information, send name, address, phone and disability to POINT, 3200 Mustang Dr., Grapevine, TX 76051. Phone: (817) 481-0119.



The Department of Housing and Urban Development will establish a Committee on Housing for Handicapped Families. Up to nine members will serve on the committee made up of representatives of the disability community and people who provide housing for people with disabilities. The committee, required by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1987, will develop specific standards and procedures for allocating funds and processing loan applications and assistance payments under the Section 202 housing program for people with disabilities. For more information, contact Barbara Capozzola, HUD, (202) 755-5123.



The Developmental Disabilities Center and Pizza Hut, Inc. have been awarded a Project With Industry grant from the Department of Education/Rehabilitation Services Administration to employ 1,604 people with severe disabilities nationwide. Texas has been added to the grant to place 50 persons with severe disabilities into supported employment. Plans to implement this effort will be developed with state vocational rehabilitation agencies, supported and transitional employment providers and regional Pizza Hut, Inc. staff to achieve individualized, targeted services for employees with severe disabilities. The project runs from October 1, 1988 to September 30, 1989.

Pay Hike Could

The climate around the Capitol this legislative session seems right for a state worker pay raise as early as next year.

In spite of a shaky state economy, both Houses of the 71st Legislature are considering bills for state employee pay hikes.

Sen. Barrientos of Austin introduced the Senate version (S.B. 166). It calls for a \$125 across-the-board increase in monthly wages for each state employee, regardless of pay grade, or 12 percent of an employee's monthly compensation rate, whichever is greater. This legislation would be retroactive to March 1, 1989.

The House version (H.B. 1782), sponsored by Rep. Perez of El Paso, would also grant employees a monthly, across-the-board increase of \$125 but would not be retroactive.

S.B. 166 awaits action in the Senate Finance Committee, chaired by Sen. Caperton of Bryan. The House bill must be read on the House floor before it is assigned to committee.

Should both bills pass, they would have to be reconciled in a conference committee made up of members from both Houses and appointed by the lieutenant governor.

"One of my highest priorities for this legislative session is an employee pay raise," says Commissioner Max Arrell. "My goal is to be able to compensate TRC employees for the fine job they continue to do."

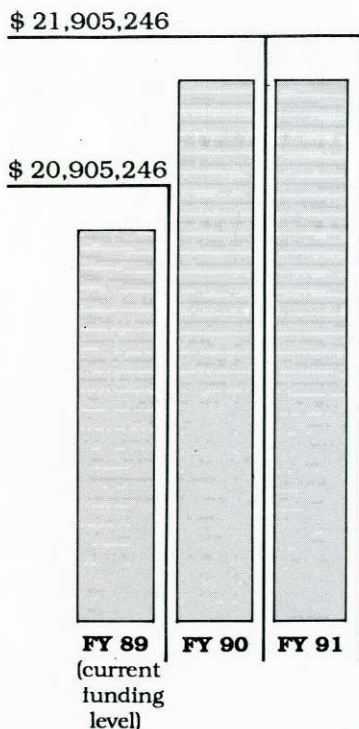
Meanwhile, the House Human Services Committee recommended an increase in general revenue funding for some TRC programs above the level funding

Come in 71st Legislature

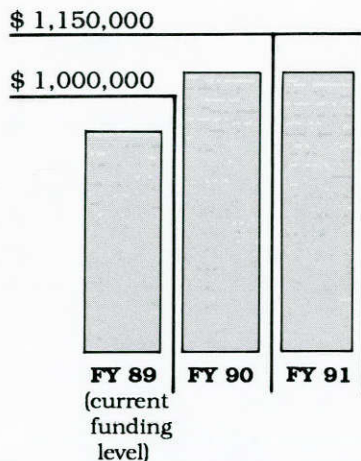
(FY 1989) amounts recommended in the original Appropriations Bill (H.B. 20). HSC added \$1 million in each year of the FY 1990-91 biennium for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program; \$150,000 in each year of the biennium for Comprehensive Medical Rehabilitation Services; and \$15,000 and \$30,000, respectively, in each year of the biennium for Interagency Transitional Services.

House Human Services Committee Recommended Increases

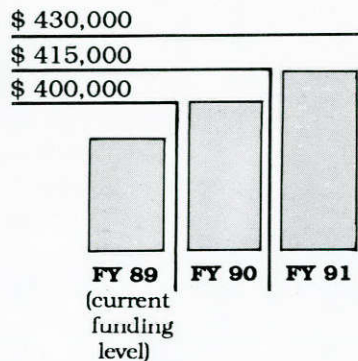
Vocational Rehabilitation



Comprehensive Medical Rehabilitation Services



Interagency Transitional Services



All other existing TRC programs adopted by the Human Services Committee track the same level (FY 1989) funding figures included in H.B. 20.

Some programs representing new TRC service initiatives were put on a "wish list" by Human Services Committee members. This means they might be added to H.B. 20 should additional revenue become available. These programs are Personal Attendant Services, Transportation Services and Literacy and Communication Development for Deaf Adults.

Two TRC requests for state funding (Adaptive Housing Modification and Traumatic Brain Injury) were not included in either the Human Services Committee recommendations for the Appropriations Bill.

The committee further passed a series of riders to use comprehensive medical funds for cognitive retraining services to

people with traumatic brain injury, to encourage TRC to increase the number of ERS client positions in integrated work settings, to allow the GCDP to accept gifts and to allow the Texas Advisory Board of Occupational Therapy to access the established occupational therapy fund to cover administrative hearings costs.

At present, the House Appropriations Committee is hearing the Human Services Committee budget recommendations and TRC testimony on the funding.

In the Senate, S.B. 222 (the Senate version of the Appropriations Bill) sponsored by Sen. Caperton, awaits mark-up, at this writing, in the Health and Human Services Subcommittee which will refer it back to the Senate Finance Committee for review. S.B. 222 reflects essentially the same FY 1989 general revenue funding levels found in the original version of the House bill.

When final versions of the Appropriations Bill are agreed upon in each House, any remaining differences must be hammered out in conference committee before the bill becomes law.

Commissioner Arrell is encouraged with how TRC programs have fared in the legislative process so far. "I'm pleased with the progress we have made this far," he says. "I'm particularly pleased with the consumer involvement . . . we couldn't do it without them!"

Incentive Program Sends Two TRC Ideas to SEIC

The TRC Employee Incentive Program is up and running.

Two employee suggestions have already cleared the TRC approval process and have been sent to the State Employee Incentive Commission for evaluation.

You'll remember that TRC/EIP offers cash awards for employee suggestions leading to more efficient and cost-effective procedures within the organization (see January 1989 "News & Views").

Two months after the program's kick-off, the Commissioner's Special Services Office has logged a total of 38 suggestions.

Eighteen were submitted from the field, 13 from Disability Determination Services and five from the Central Office. Two were suggestions from other agencies on issues which would affect TRC procedures.

Beth Palmer, counselor in the Irving Field Office, made a suggestion which would streamline the way disability examiners get medical records on vocational rehabilitation clients.

Dru Edrington, disability examiner in Unit 07, submitted a way to lessen time required to assemble cases from Social Security offices into disability claim file folders.

Both these suggestions are being reviewed by SEIC staff, and, according to David J. MacCabe, director of special services and agency EIP coordinator, have an excellent chance of being adopted.

Meanwhile, Rep. Bob Richardson of Austin, has introduced legislation which provides

that a portion of the cash award be given when the SEIC recommends a suggestion for adoption. Currently, the suggestion must go through a one-year trial to determine an exact dollar savings before any cash is awarded.

For more information on the TRC Employee Incentive Program, contact the Commissioner's Special Services Office.



**Your
SUGGESTION
can
lead
to
TRC's
Growth!**



DDS Boasts "No Returns" in January

TRC's Disability Determination Services posted "no errors" in a federal quality assurance sample for initial and continuing disability review cases in January.

The federal quality assurance check is done monthly on computer-picked random samples of disability determination cases in each state. Texas samples are sent to the Social Security Administration Regional Office in Dallas for evaluation.

In January, the Texas DDS experienced no documentation or decision errors out of 53 initial and 45 continuing disability review cases sampled.

"I can't recall a month when we've had such a high federal accuracy rating in both categories," says Les Albrecht, deputy commissioner for disability determination.

"It affirms again that TRC/DDS employees continue to put the claimant first, in spite of the demands of their work," he says.

Desperately Seeking Workers

The decline in birth rates between 1965-1979 is already creating labor shortages, especially among small businesses, according to *Nation's Business*.

Arthur D. Little, Inc., which assessed the situation for the National Restaurant Association, projects that the food service industry alone could find itself a million workers short by 1995. Meantime, they say, employers are turning to retirees, minorities and **workers with disabilities** to fill their needs.

TRC Up-grades Service Award Program

The TRC service award program is being changed.

In the past, service awards have been based solely on TRC service, starting at the completion of five years of Commission service, and in five-year increments thereafter.

To mark these anniversaries, employees have received framed certificates, and at the tenth and succeeding anniversaries, a TRC pin.

While TRC service will continue to be the sole basis for five-year service awards, subsequent anniversaries will include other state service that employees may have accrued.

When a TRC employee reaches eight years service at TRC, any additional state service will then be added.

For example, if in 1989, an employee with two years previous state service, reaches five years service at TRC, a five-year award will be presented.

In 1992, however, when the employee reaches the eight-year mark with TRC, the previous two years of state service will be added and a ten-year award will be presented.

TRC employees will continue receiving framed certificates. The jewelry award given at the various service award increments is being expanded to include pre-selected choices from a list of four or five items. While the bid process has not yet been completed, these jewelry choices will probably be a lapel pin, a tie tack, a tie bar, a charm or a stick pin.

For those still interested in length of TRC service, the "News

& Views" monthly "Milestones" column, which has traditionally tracked TRC employee service at increments of ten years and above, will continue to reflect only TRC service for a given employee.

The new TRC service award program is designed to recognize the entire spectrum of an employee's state service career.



Dave Ward, director of information management services in Disability Determination, was recently selected for the position of assistant deputy commissioner for administrative management services in Disability Determination Services.

Peggy Stewart, administrative clerk in the Houston Regional Office, has become the new administrative technician for the Conroe Administrative Office.

Gail King, stenographer in the Houston North Field Office, was selected as USSS for the Conroe Administrative Office.

William Goree is the new Extended Rehabilitation Services counselor in the Odessa Field Office.

Ella B. Kennedy, secretary/interpreter in the Conroe Field Office was named clerical supervisor for the Conroe Administrative Office.

Jeremy Martin of the Texas Commission for the Blind was recently selected to be counselor in the Victoria Field Office.

Marilyn G. Zinsmeyer has become the Independent Living Services counselor for the McAllen Field Office. **Maria Rangel** was chosen to be her secretary.

Linda Scott and **Sandra Navarro** both became secretaries for TRC in the Amarillo Field Office.

MILESTONES

FEBRUARY 1989

Region II
10 years: Melinda L. Cohagan
15 years: Gracie L. Roberts
20 years: J. F. Jacobsen
 Diana Hejl

Region III
20 years: Les Doleshal

Region V
15 years: Aaron Wallace, III

Region VI
10 years: Michelle Nielson
15 years: Larry V. Hughes
 Christi K. Dabbs
20 years: Doris Spangler

DDD
10 years: Suzette J. Gregg
 Diane Elizabeth Amhaz
15 years: Paula K. Connell
 Sandra G. Ross
 Deborah L. Wilks
 Mary Esther Bailey
 Mary Atnip
 Becky J. Kingsbury
 Evelyn K. McKee

Central Office
10 years: Betty L. Eli
 Sylvia M. Macias
 Jyoti Ash Someshwar
15 years: Marnette C. Walker
 Wanda Jo Moreno
 Carl B. Risinger

 **Applause**

The following TRC employees recently received press coverage for the Commission: **Gladys Diggs**, counselor in the Amarillo Field Office; **Becky K. Frausto**, counselor in the Bay City Field Office; **David Cohen**, counselor in the Baytown Field Office; **Robert Alcala**, counselor in the El Paso East Field Office; **Bobby Grant**, counselor, Kathy Lynn Berkobien, counselor, **Perry Allen**, rehabilitation technician, and **Ann Buck**, receptionist, all from the Fort Worth Field Office Southeast; **Carolyn Dougherty**, counselor in the Kerrville Field Office; **John Wieser** and **Terry Carlton**, both counselors in the Sherman Field Office; **Ken**

Bowen, area manager in the Victoria Field Office; **Cindy Counts**, information specialist for the Governor's Committee for Disabled Persons; **Bob Marx**, regional director in Dallas; **Roger Levy**, program specialist in the Central Office; and **Commissioner Arrell**.

Mary Valentini, regional director in the Lubbock Regional Office, received two awards in January. One was from the State Agencies Roundtable in Lubbock for her devoted and invaluable services to the group. The second award, presented by Goodwill Industries of El Paso, recognized Valentini and the Commission for their help in developing Goodwill rehabilitation programs.



TRC News & Views is published by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission for distribution to its employees and retirees throughout the state. Inquires may be addressed to Vernon Dement, Public Information Office, Texas Rehabilitation Commission, 118 E. Riverside Drive, Austin, Texas 78704; or telephone (515) 445-8249.

Vernon Dement Editor
Susan Antoniewicz Illustrator
Becky Nieto Illustrator
Sue Durban Illustrator
Reproduction Services Printing
Randy Jennings Director
Kaye Beneke .. Assistant Deputy Commissioner

TEXAS REHABILITATION COMMISSION
118 E. Riverside Drive
Austin, Texas 78704

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

BULKRATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Austin, Texas
Permit No. 1605