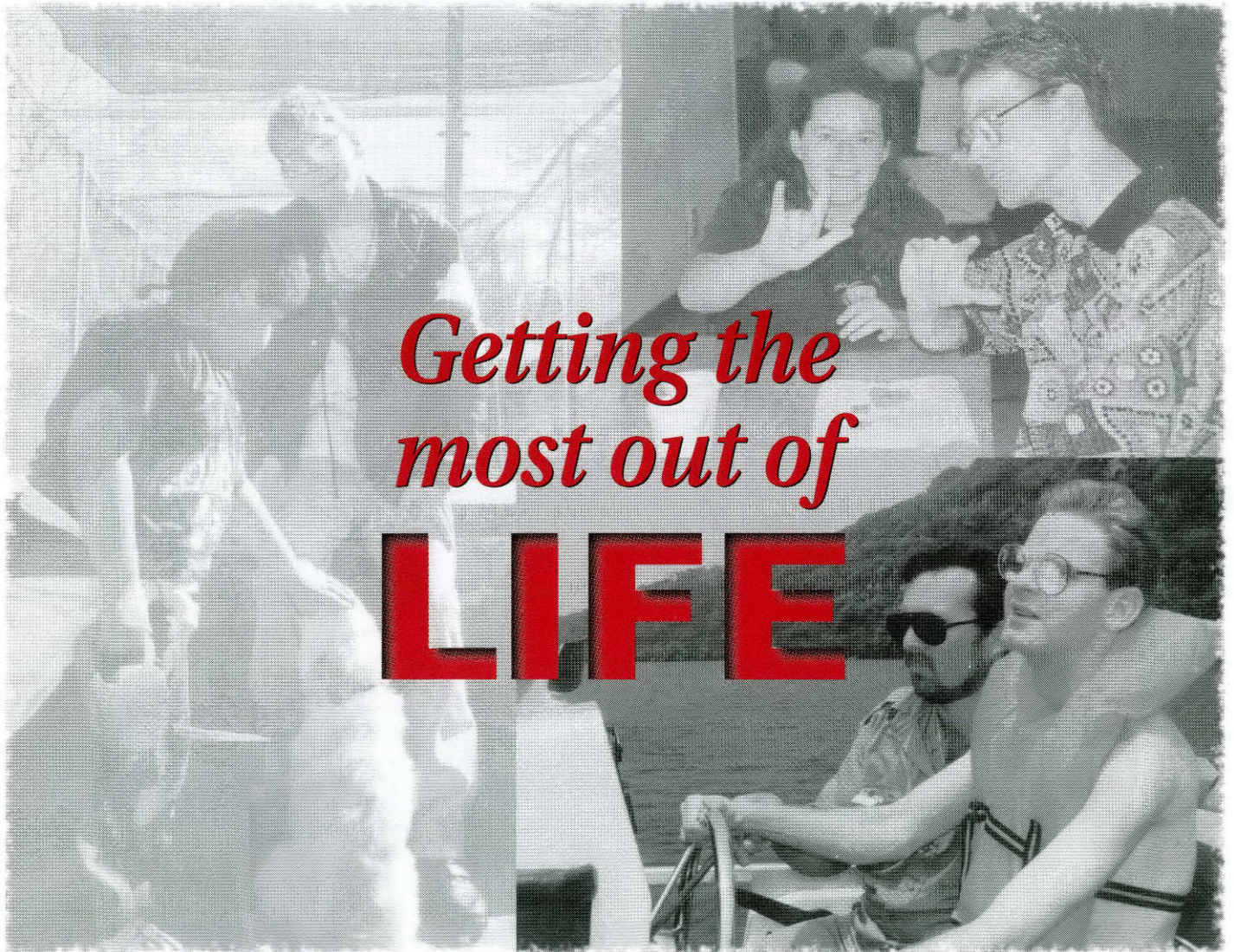


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trc today

An Employee Newsletter for Texas Rehabilitation Commission



*Getting the
most out of*

LIFE

TRC helps Brian Day through a unique Deaf/Blind with Multiple Disabilities Program. Now, Brian has the opportunity to experience a higher quality of life through more specialized services and regular outings. In the photos: left- Brian visiting a farm, top right- Traci Patterson, American Habilitation Services program manager, communicating with Brian through sign; and lower left- AHS activity director Mike Hoelscher showing Brian how to steer during a boat ride.

Texas a leader in Deaf/Blind program services

How can people with multiple disabilities, including deafness and blindness, be best supported to live in the community? Steve Schoen, TRC program specialist in the Deaf-Blind Multiple Disabilities program, and David Wiley, Program Specialist with Deaf-Blind Outreach Program at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI), answered that question at the National Conference on Deafblindness in Washington, D.C., last summer.

"In Texas, we found that a disability specific Medicaid waiver for deafblindness was essential for providing high quality services," said Schoen in his report. "Texas is the first state to develop a Medicaid waiver program specifically for this population."

According to Schoen and Wiley's report, advocates support two opposing philosophical views on how to best serve people who are deaf-blind with multiple disabilities:

- *A non-disability specific view stresses that services be provided based on a person's functional needs. Proponents of this view argue that a large generic program offers a menu of possible services. A good functional assessment combined with effective case management will result in efficient and effective services.*
- *Another view is disability specific and stresses that this low-incidence disability presents unique needs that are not generally known by generic service providers.*

To give you a brief history on this program, the Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT), a group of parents of deaf-blind children organized in the 60s, advocated for specific services to help their children. The Legislature agreed to provide specialized programs and appointed the Texas Commission for the Deaf to operate it. Starting with a combined funding base of \$315,000, the Commission for the Deaf contracted with two group homes to support 18 individuals. In 1986, the Texas Legislative Budget Board (LBB) moved the program to TRC where it grew to serve 24 people in three major cities. The program funding remained at that level until 1992. With no increase in funding, new client applicants were referred to

generic services as the only alternative.

In 1993, the LBB recommended that TRC increase program resources by applying for Medicaid funding. A Medicaid waiver was awarded on March 1, 1995 with TRC the "operating agency," allowing the program to grow to serve 100 individuals. This increase brought new challenges to TRC to find clients who had been referred to generic services as well as qualified providers of services.

TRC is able to provide services to a larger population allowing consumers more choices. With assistance from their families and program providers, clients can now choose to reside either in apartments or homes, with their parents or guardians, or in group homes. In addition to residential support, TRC's Deaf-Blind Multiple Disabilities program offers family training and a summer camp to individuals with these disabilities.

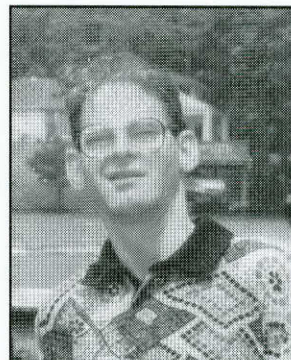
Applying and getting approval for a Medicaid waiver required a lot of coordination between TRC and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. TRC then worked closely with Texas School for the Blind Outreach Program to develop a training program for direct care workers. This program allows a consistent approach of service delivery to be provided statewide. Building a system that provides appropriate services, trains and monitors workers appropriately, and values expertise in all areas of deaf-blind takes a lot of work and coordination, but is well worth the effort.

For more information on TRC's Deaf/Blind Multiple Disabilities Program, contact Steve Schoen at telephone 512-424-4185 or e-mail: steve.schoen@rehab.state.tx.us.

Brian Day comes out of his shell

"Don't expect much from Brian," – that's what one caregiver told Traci Patterson, American Habilitation Services (AHS) program manager, about her new resident. But Patterson had other ideas for Brian Day, who is deaf, has little sight and other disabilities.

"When Brian came to our program, I was told he's never going to let you touch him,



he's not affectionate and he doesn't communicate," Patterson added. Now, he does all those things and more. He's learned some sign language and will even give staff a hug. The changes didn't happen overnight. It took a lot of patience and hard work to bring Brian out of his shell.

And they did it by individualizing communication for him and others in the program. Calendars with pictures or symbols tell them what activities they can look forward to or even what food they can choose for dinner. Mike Hoelscher, AHS activity director, says he puts special efforts into planning unique daily activities such as walks on Town Lake, cooking lessons, trips to a farm and boating at local parks. A photo album full of pictures from holiday parties and outings shows you the level of care and involvement Brian and others are receiving in the program. Brian's mother is also pleased with his progress. "I'm very satisfied, he's more interactive and self-sufficient," said Sally Day.

Without these services, Brian would be either in a group home or living with his parents. Instead, he lives in an apartment with two other deaf/blind roommates. He's become more independent and volunteers in the community.

"It's not easy," says Patterson. "There are good and bad days, and we still have a lot of work to do. But when you look at Brian you see how far we have come."

Reauthorization Passes Senate

On May 5, by large majority, the U.S. Senate passed S. 1186 -The Workforce Investment Partnership Act - which contains a seven-year Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act. As you may recall, the U.S. House of Representatives passed its version nearly a year ago.

The two bills greatly differ in areas such as length of Reauthorization, presumptive VR eligibility for SSI/SSDI recipients, and other policy issues. Now it's on to Senate/House Conference Committee, where differences in H.R. 1385 (as it is now called) will be worked out before final vote.

No Whaling Managers Learn to Fish With the All-New MIS

By Juliet Condor

There was a day not long ago when managers found copies of the supervisor's composite report comfortably set on their desks each month. It wasn't so very current and it didn't flex to meet special or sudden needs. Managers had to peer through spectacles at the dim figures reduced from a giant tractor-fed printout to standard sheets of paper. But it was comfortable to find it there. And to feel the sense of control that comes with knowing what's going on. Comfortable years droned by, and then . . .

Last night, overnight, what counselors and a host of others keyed in as late as yesterday, appeared on the TRC intranet cast into useful reports of all kinds. With morning coffee and a clicking mouse, data all the way down to the caseload level appeared on monitors all over the state. That is, for the managers who jumped on it this morning. "We can't afford to print those green bar reports anymore," says George Schneider, Information Management director. "There's just too much information now, and too much managers can do with it. Our world is electronic, and we've got to learn to use it."

If the intranet reports can't

answer a pressing question, managers, newly trained in ad hoc inquiry, can select from great masses of information in the data warehouse. They can toss it and turn it until a course of action is clear.

A manager may regularly need information that isn't on the intranet reports. But the new MIS unit can design an application that he or she can use, anytime, easily, quickly. Managers may well also encounter unusual or broad questions. The issues may be conceptually complex. They may require looking at data that crosses several years or the entire state. Or, managers may need to release data outside of TRC. They know it has to be exactly right. And it has to agree exactly with any other releases that other managers may have made, regardless of how they defined their terms or did their calculations.

Managers can still feel comfort, though, knowing help is still just a phone call away. Jan. 1, a team of analysts was pulled together to help answer multiyear, statewide or complex questions, and to ensure consistency. They are the new MIS team (Management Information Services) housed in Automated Services.

"MIS analysts don't just run

reports," says MIS Director Ellen Schroeder. In addition to analytical and technical skills, the team has background in rehabilitation, accounting, communications, and design. They refine the question, locate the answer and make sure it makes sense to the staff person who asked. "And sometimes we're asked to take it a step further," she added. "We direct the information, in print or some other medium, to an internal or external audience."

MIS coordinates external releases with the deputy commissioner for Field/External Operations. So when managers call Schroeder for help, the process that follows will get their figures officially approved for release. And ensure that they are not even a rounding error away from figures released last month.

So business has changed. But it's not without drama. Managers can do more, better, and faster, and there's training and support. But they also have to struggle with new technology and new demands for independent action and, conversely, for coordination. Schroeder adds some ballast. "We want managers to learn to fish," she says, "but we don't expect them to reel in Moby Dick."

Sunset Review

TRC is currently undergoing Sunset Review. We have been asked to post the following information:

The staff of the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission is currently conducting a review of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission. Under the terms of the Texas Sunset Act (Chapter 325, Government Code), the agency must be reauthorized by the Texas Legislature or will be abolished on Sept. 1, 1999. As part of the review the Sunset Commission staff is seeking suggestions for improvements to this state agency.

The Legislature applies standard review criteria to Texas government agencies under Sunset review. These criteria include: efficiency, achievement of statutory objectives; use of advisory committees; duplication and overlap with other agencies; handling of complaints; compliance with equal employment opportunity and individual privacy requirements; rules for conflicts of interest; and compliance with open records and open meetings statutes.

Following the staff review and publication of staff recommendations, the Sunset Commission will hold a public hearing on the Texas Rehabilitation Commission. Based on this process, the Sunset Commission will recommend changes to the agency for consideration during the next legislative session.

If you have any comments or suggestions for improving state policy related to Texas Rehabilitation Commission, or if you would like more information on the Sunset process, please contact Larry Graham of the Sunset Commission staff at:

Sunset Advisory Commission
P.O. Box 13066
Austin, Texas 78711

Telephone: 512/463-1300
FAX: 512/463-0705

e-mail:
larry.graham@sunset.state.tx.us



Team Spirit!

■ As part of a region-wide effort to recognize employees, the Region II Recognition Committee gave new awards, called the "Robert M. Marx" awards, to one team in each Region II office that best demonstrated spirit, extra effort, positive attitude and teamwork. Above is a group picture of the winners with Mr. Marx. Keep up the good work!



HUB Conference

In the photo is Roy L. Hogan, deputy commissioner for the Texas Department of Health, and TRC Commissioner Max Arrell at the HUB Vendor Conference held at the Brown-Heatly Building on March 30. Speaking to nearly 300 attendees of the conference, Arrell and Hogan emphasized the importance of the HUB program and how it affects vendors doing business with state agencies.

This joint agency conference drew in close to 15 HUB vendor displays and almost 300 businessmen and women to the event, including breakout sessions. The conference was coordinated by Al Beavers and Lateefa Neal from the Texas Department of Health, and Debbie Pendley, TRC's HUB coordinator.

TRC wins SECC Award

TRC has received an award from the Governor's Office for the highest level of employee participation in the 1997 State Employee Charitable Campaign (SECC) for agencies of comparable size. During the 1997 campaign, TRC employees increased their gifts more than 45 percent over the previous year – to a total of over \$43,000.

"I want to thank employees who participated in fund raising activities and those who donated," says Commissioner Max Arrell. "Contributions go to United Way

agencies who do much to help Texans in need."

This is the second year in a row that TRC has won this award. Fund-raising activities included a chili-cook-off, bake sales and a book fair. Carolyn Mercer, statewide SECC coordinator, credits the first year for automatic payroll deduction for donations as making it easy and convenient for employees to contribute – thus dramatically increasing donations.

Remote Access all the way to California

In April, TRC was able to give the Division of Rehabilitation in California and other RSA Region X agencies demonstrations of RehabSys - TRC's automated rehabilitation system. "During both demonstrations, we accessed the system quickly, had quick response, and never lost connection," says Jackie Feinberg. "I was thrilled to see remote access work from such a distance."

It was also an opportunity for TRC to see other automated systems for rehabilitation service delivery. TRC participants noted both

similarities and differences between systems. "Other systems we saw were very similar in the area of collecting data for federal reporting purposes but very different in how they go about it," says George Schneider, Information Management director. "Ours is a Windows based application designed to look like other automation tools where as others have a data entry look to it. Case files were similar but the biggest difference is that TRC has the client services budget at the counselor level."

Across the State

Welcome Aboard - April 1998

Roy Threadgill, program specialist
Sean Finlay, RST
Selma Swearengin, RST
Evone Wimberly, RST
Kathleen Clements, RST
Vianne King, RST
Gail Pickard, RST
Martha Garza, RST
Robert Alexander, counselor
Tina Hockaday, counselor
Mark Colson, RST
Melody Compton, counselor
Evelyn Holt, counselor
Bennetta Burke, RST
Elsa Rodriguez, RST
De'Liah Varner, RST
Rosanna Vielma, RST
Cheryl Guido, counselor
James Bell, Jr., counselor
Deborah Appelt, RST
Ruby Zepeda, RST
Juan Castor, RST
Dolores Gomez, DST

Retirements - April 30, 1998

Program Administrator Roger Alan Ward, Central Office, retired after 24 years of state service.

Simon Y. Rodriguez, associate commissioner Office of the General Counsel, retired with 17 years of state service.

Doris Denton, counselor at the Pasadena Field Office retired with 10 years of service.

Randall Scott, program specialist in the BSS/Specifications and Providers Unit at Central Office, retired after 27 years service.

James Weston, Jr., retired with 22 years of service. Weston was a systems programmer in Information Services Management at Central Office.

After 29 years of service, Barbara Sue Swift, counselor in the Temple Field Office, retired.

Congratulations

Sylvia Hardman will assume the role of General Counsel on May 4. Ms. Hardman is a graduate of the University of Texas Law School.

Congratulations go to DDS employees Laurie Winnette, Ron Erwin, Jeff Gigliotti and his wife Stacie, who rode a tandem bike, for participating in the Multiple Sclerosis (MS 150) fundraising bicycle ride from Houston to Austin. Deana Poulter served on the emergency medical team that provided care for the 6,000 riders. Approximately \$1,000 was raised for MS by the TRC Cycling Club. Marcie Young, a former DE, returned from Carson City, Nevada, to complete in her seventh straight MS 150. A special thanks go to all TRC employees who helped with contributions.

Deaths

Howard L. Evans, medical consultant at DDS since June 1981, died on Monday, April 13, 1998, as a result of a head injury caused by a fall.

Dora S. Huston passed away at her home on Monday, April 6, 1998. Huston served as the state coordinator of Statewide Planning for Vocational Rehabilitation which resulted in the creation of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission. She also served as executive director of the Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped.

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trc today

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Shayla Flesbman, Editor
Prissy Pense, Writing & Photography

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State Service Awards - May 1998	
10 Years	Norma Escobedo
Jeanne Stephey	Trudy Holland
Debra Welch	Bruce Marshall
Abel Loreda	Eleece McIntosh
Barbara Richardson	Amelia Rodriguez
Diana Calderon	Phyllis Spoor
Jennifer Hill	Ann Green
Timothy Miertschin	
15 Years	25 Years
Nancy Arms	Frances Ramirez
Kathy Hoke	Jacquelyn Callicoatte
Ufot Umana	Marilyn MacDougall
Donald Collier	Irma Sierra
Reba Walts	Shirley Hargrave
Tommy Simpson	Kathleen Jones
	Major Jones
	Connie Miller
20 Years	Donna Nicholson
Frank Coggins	Jerome Schubert
Boyce Sevier	
Cesar Quinones	30 Years
Adela Brick	Judy May
Dolores Flores	

