



TRC news & views

TEXAS REHABILITATION COMMISSION

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Rehabilitation amendments set increased services through '82

A landmark piece of federal legislation promises a significant increase in services to the handicapped over the next four years.

Approved by Congress and signed by President Carter, amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 became law on November 6.

Passage of "The Rehabilitation, Comprehensive Services and Developmental Disabilities Amendments of 1978" is only the first step in a rather long process. Still to be accomplished are appropriations pursuant to this authority (probably in the Spring) and regulations for implementation of the law.

But provisions of the bill point to some dramatic changes in TRC's planning for the years immediately ahead. Our budget request for the next biennium is being revised for the Legislature which convenes in January.

The following synopsis of major features in the complex law may provide you with more questions than answers, but closer study in the next few weeks will bring into better focus the new and greater opportunities we will have to assist vocational rehabilitation clients.

Funding of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is extended through fiscal year 1982. Authorization levels in the new bill are as follows:

	FY 1979	FY 1980	FY 1981	FY 1982
Basic State Services	\$808 M*	\$880 M	\$945 M	\$972 M
Innovation & Expansion	45 M	50 M	55 M	60 M
Research	50 M	75 M	90 M	100 M
Training	34 M + S	40 M + S	45 M + S	50 M + S
Community Service Employment Programs (Title VI)	35 M	50 M	75 M	100 M
Comprehensive Services for Independent Living (Title VII)	80 M	150 M	200 M	S**

* M — Million

** S — Such Sums as Needed

National Institute for Handicapped Research

The National Institute for Handicapped Research is established to "promote and coordinate research with respect to handicapped individuals." Its director is responsible to the Secretary of HEW or to the same undersecretary as the RSA Commissioner. The Director is a presidential appointee. The basic task of NIHR is to carry out rehabilitation research and research utilization.

Research and Training Centers fall under the NIHR's aegis. Private-for-profit organizations, as well as public agencies, may conduct research within the law.

Training

More authority relative to rehabilitation training is given to the RSA Commissioner rather than to the HEW Secretary. More emphasis is on deaf interpreter training. Twelve grant programs are authorized for training interpreters (five years each).

Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centers

Grants may be awarded on an 80-20 match basis to operate Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centers to provide a broad range of services (vocational, recreational, social and information and referral services).

National Council on the Handicapped

The new law creates a National Council on the Handicapped whose 15 members are presidential appointees. Five of its members are to be either disabled or parents of disabled people. Others are to be chosen from among providers, national organizations, researchers, labor and business. The National Council on the Handicapped will make policy for the National Institute for Handicapped Research. It will advise the RSA Commissioner with respect to RSA policies and it will review policy within the federal government vis-a-vis the handicapped. The staff of the National Council on the Handicapped will number seven people.

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THE commissioner's CORNER

This agency's newly designed newsletter to all employees is presented as another step in a continuing effort to improve our communications. It will become an essential vehicle, I believe, that can help us reach primary objectives of the Commission.



The Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services Amendments of 1978 are complex, but the synopsis here provides an early, if not complete, look at their implications.

The legislation gives no instant boost to our program. We will be on continuing resolution at the same fiscal level as 1978 until a supplemental appropriation bill is approved during the 96th Congress. Then, of course, the Texas Legislature will be fixing our actual appropriation for the upcoming biennium.

Still, just preliminary projections offer some exciting prospects. Applying our talents to providing a host of additional services to the handicapped and disabled citizens of Texas will be a challenge to all.



The responsibility of providing administrative support to the Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped gives TRC an excellent opportunity to offer help at community levels across the state. Dora Huston will be working with Chairman Sam Millsap and the state committee to establish as many as 20 Mayor's Committees in the coming year. It is obvious what the benefits of such an effort will mean to the people our Commission serves. I urge you to get involved, whenever you are asked, wherever you may be.



Major items in this issue crowded out a personnel column on statewide promotions, retirements and such. We expect to have guest articles from regional directors and others in the months ahead, plus photos and charts and maybe even 'letters to the editor' space for sharing suggestions and whatever. Hopefully, you will find information in this letter important and readable, come to look forward to its delivery, and one day ask what did we ever do without it?



AMENDMENTS

(Continued from page 1)

Employment Opportunities for Handicapped Individuals

The law provides for a community service employment program for the handicapped only. State agencies will be able to refer clients to the program which will be administered by the Department of Labor

Comprehensive Services for Independent Living

This new program is especially designed to meet the needs of the handicapped individual who cannot qualify for the basic VR program. The section is defined to meet the current and future needs of individuals whose disabilities are so severe that they do not presently have the potential for employment but may benefit from vocational rehabilitation services which will enable them to live and function independently.

People eligible for this program are those who are unable to keep employment and/or to function independently within the family or the community. State agencies may offer eligible clients vocational rehabilitation services and other services toward the goal of independence.

This is a formula grant program and will require a three-year state plan as will the basic state service program. Each independent living rehabilitation client will be provided with an Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program. Twenty percent of each state's funds can be used for grants to local public and private non-profit agencies or organizations for independent living services.

Also provided for are centers for independent living. These centers must have disabled people setting policy and assisting in their administration.

Developmental Disabilities Amendments

The Developmental Disabilities Law has been extended for three years. The law continues to provide for university affiliated facilities and provides state allotments through fiscal year 1981

The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board

has been extended within the law and shored up with improved remedies (now includes communications barriers) and increased funding.

Rehabilitation facilities can apply for loans at two percent off the public interest rate guaranteed by the federal government with no more than \$100 million cumulative loan money at any given time.

Projects with industry and business opportunities for the handicapped are provided for prominently in the new law.

Protection and advocacy on individual rights of the disabled is provided for with a fiscal year of 1979 ceiling of \$6 million.

Also, the law commissions **special studies** in at least two important areas: rural rehabilitation and disincentives to employment.

Millsap heads Governor's committee

An executive order issued by Governor Dolph Briscoe on September 29 establishes a new Governor's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped and gives the responsibility for its administrative support to the Texas Rehabilitation Commission.

The previous Governor's Committee received administrative assistance from the Texas Employment Commission and functioned under the leadership of Laurence Melton from 1949 until his death last March.

Governor Briscoe appointed Sam D. Millsap, Sr as chairman of the Committee for a two-year period. Millsap is a blind businessman in San Antonio who also serves as chairman of TRC's Vocational Rehabilitation Consultation Committee and as a board member of the Texas Commission for the Blind.

The Committee will be composed of a minimum of six members appointed by the Governor who also biennially designates the chairman and vice chairman.

The Commissioner of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, the Chairman of the Texas Employment Commission and the Executive Director of the Texas Commission for the Blind shall serve as ex officio members of the Committee.

Dora Huston, director of TRC's Employment Resources Section, has been named as Executive Secretary of the Governor's Committee to effect coordination between its chairman and the Commission in providing administrative support. This agency's aid to the Committee should complement our statewide employment resources program.

The Governor's Committee shall make such rules and designate such subcommittees as it determines advisable for the conduct of its business. All state agencies with responsibilities relating to employment and to the handicapped are encouraged to assist and support the Committee.

The Committee's one purpose is to carry on a continuing program to promote employment of handicapped persons in Texas. Working with the President's Committee (national), one of its immediate objectives will be to establish Mayor's Committees (local) throughout the state. Other functions listed in Governor Briscoe's executive order are:

- (1) to cooperate with the Texas Legislature and the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped;
- (2) encourage coordination between local, state and federal agencies in their activities to promote the employment of the handicapped;
- (3) inform handicapped persons of programs of rehabilitation, vocational training and job placement available to them;
- (4) inform the public of the vocational abilities and accomplishments of the handicapped;
- (5) inform the public of the benefits to the community when handicapped workers become self-sufficient and self-supporting;
- (6) encourage employer acceptance and placement of handicapped workers;
- (7) conduct conferences and forums for discussion of problems relating to the employment of the handicapped; and
- (8) promote a favorable climate in the business community for employment of the handicapped.

The Committee is expected to meet at least once every six months at the call of the chairman to conduct its business. It shall annually report to the Governor on Committee activities and on the state of employment of the handicapped. The report may include any recommendations believed necessary or desirable to promote the employment of the handicapped.

Legal Services Division

The Board of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, after study of the Commission's legal obligations under federal and state laws and regulations, directed the establishment of the Legal Services Division to be under the direction of Edward W. Austin, J.D. Assistant Commissioner and composed of Office of General Counsel and an Office for Civil Rights.

Vernon Newman, J.D. is the new General Counsel and George Clark is Director of the Office for Civil Rights.

Position vacancies have been advertised for additional staffing for the positions of Civil Rights Specialist, Secretary, and Clerk. When staffed, the new Office for Civil Rights will provide a needed focal point for civil rights activities to meet legal obligations and be of value in defense of the present EEO lawsuits against the Commission.

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DDD expands professional relations

Significant steps have been taken recently toward full implementation of a Professional Relations Program for TRC's Disability Determination Division.

The program emerged from a long recognized need to develop and maintain the best relationship possible with the medical community of Texas as well as other federal, state and private sources that interface with DDD in connection with the Social Security Disability Program.

The general purpose of the Professional Relations Program is to promote professional awareness of the Disability Program with the medical community, allied health groups and other program related sources to enable timely and qualitative service to disability claimants.

Considering this basic objective, it was early recognized that field operations were warranted with sites in various geographical areas of the state. A plan was developed and actions initiated to establish regional offices in Austin, Dallas/Fort Worth, Houston, Lubbock and San Antonio.

At present, the Professional Relations Department of DDD consists of a Director, five regionally assigned Professional Relations Officers and their respective secretaries (when each position is filled), and 12 medical records technicians located in various hospitals throughout the state.

William E. Crosby has been named as Program Director for Professional Relations, with administrative responsibility also for the DDD Staff Medical Consultant Unit consisting of 22 part-time physicians.

Officers have been placed in Austin, Dallas and Houston and two newly-appointed officers are in training for assignments at Lubbock and San Antonio.

TRC employees selected to serve as Professional Relations officers are: John F. Wright, Austin/Central Texas Region; Myrton L. McDonald, Dallas/North Texas Region; Mary June Kendrick, Houston/Gulf Coast Region; Jack L. Thurman, Lubbock/High Plains/West Texas Region; and Larry C. Cummings, San Antonio/South Texas Region.

The main thrust of Professional Relations activities will be directed toward the vital interface with medical sources. This is indicated by hundreds of requests made daily from the Division for medical reports from treating physicians and medical facilities. DDD also secures current consultative examinations on more than one-third of the claims processed from a panel of more than 1,800 consultant physicians.

Some endeavors include attendance and manning of booths at medical conventions (Texas Medical Association annual convention and, last month, a statewide convention of Family Practitioners at San Antonio), appearing before various medical and allied health gatherings, and actively assisting and working with appropriate sources in the recruiting of new physicians for the Consultation Examination panel.

Also, making liaison contacts and staff visits to various medical sources, Social Security district offices, rehabilitation and other field sources in relation to program needs or problem situations.

Consultation group plans policy input

Members of TRC's statewide Vocational Rehabilitation Consultation Committee listened and looked to special ways they can help the handicapped during an organizational meeting on October 18-19 at the Villa Capri in Austin.

Commissioner W. K. Harvey, Jr. discussed his philosophies regarding the agency's operations and the role of the Consultation Committee. In outlining his charges to the advisory group, Harvey said:

(1) The Committee should address all problems and issues that are of interest and concern to the Commission and to the handicapped people of Texas;

(2) The Committee must establish its capability to be of service and develop methods for interchange of information;

(3) The Committee should be a forum for communicating the position and policy of the Commission on all matters of public interest; and

(4) The Committee will always have the freedom to tackle any issues it wishes and make recommendations to the Commissioner

Steve Lane of the RSA regional office in Dallas presented the federal viewpoint on consumer involvement in policy development consultation.

The committee adopted bylaws at the session and developed procedures for making input to the central office.

Bill Blase of San Antonio served as acting chairman in the absence of Sam Millsap. Other members attending were: Bob Boudreaux, Dallas; Don Culwell, San Antonio; Bob Dickson, Midland; Betty Ellis, Wyatt Hall and Michael Moore, Austin; Lex Frieden and Dr. Shelly Liss, Houston; Jim Grey, Fort Worth; and Jack Northrup, Olney.

Northrup, outstanding 'one-arm Jack' humorist, presented the meeting's after dinner program.

TRC representatives at the two-day gathering included Commissioner Harvey, Helen Goodman, administrative assistant to the Commissioner and coordinator for the Consultation Committee; Max Arrell, Doyle Wheeler, Dr. Marvin Schlecte, Dale Place, John Fenoglio, Jimmy Jackson, Milton Werner, Dr. Carol Whitcraft and Lois Cooper.