



Highlights

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Summit explores ways to expand integrated employment

"What we can't afford to do is let even one of our human resources slip through the cracks and not be utilized because of some outdated thoughts about disability."

— John Sharp, Texas
Comptroller of Public Accounts

More than a decade has passed since supported employment was first developed. In Texas and across the nation, thousands of individuals with disabilities now have the opportunity to work in regular jobs in the community with competitive pay.

This has provided individuals with higher wages, increased choice and control, career development and opportunities to interact with persons who do not have disabilities.

But these opportunities have been limited. Supported employment has expanded slowly, and Texas is still putting most of its funding into segregated or sheltered services. While some 90,000 people are benefiting from supported employment nationwide, about one million more individuals are in day activity centers and sheltered workshops.

In order to address this issue, State Comptroller John Sharp convened a supported employment summit in Austin as requested by Ann Utley, chair of the Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TXMHMR) Board.

On July 21-22, 1994, some 60 individuals from across Texas gathered and discussed ways to expand community integrated

employment services. Summit participants represented consumers, state agencies providing vocational training and services to people with disabilities, direct service providers, advocacy groups and others.

ized, competitive employment in the community and have choices about their work and careers."

Summit participants also developed a variety of recommendations regarding: consumer choice; public policy; funding; downsizing/re-



In July, the State Comptroller's Office convened a supported employment summit to discuss vocational opportunities for individuals with disabilities in Texas. Pictured are Comptroller John Sharp; Ann Utley, Chair of the TXMHMR Board; and Nancy LaMance (left) and Linda Yarbrough (right) with the Comptroller's Office.

Three national experts on employment spoke at the summit and served as facilitators: David Mank, Ph.D., University of Oregon; Paul Wehman, Ph.D., Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (RRTC) at Virginia Commonwealth University; and Daniel Raudenbush, Ph.D., MRI/University of Pennsylvania RRTC.

Working together, summit participants agreed on the concepts in the following vision: *"The State of Texas shall assure that all Texans with disabilities have the opportunity and supports necessary to work in individual-*

direction of resources from segregated to integrated options; transition issues; and employer-related issues.

Their recommendations are being compiled in a final report which will be distributed statewide. The recommendations also were presented at the end of the summit to the commissioners (or their representatives) of TXMHMR, the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, Texas Commission for the Blind and Texas Education Agency.

"For too long, some Texans

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Employment summit *Continued from page 1*

have been denied the control of their own life that only a job and wages can provide," Utley told summit participants.

"We as a state, we have to go a lot further...in our efforts to define, develop and support expansion of meaningful employment for people across the state — real jobs for real wages.

"For the vast majority of the people, choice, dignity and independence result largely from a person's ability to get a job and earn a living and spend their money like they want to spend their money," Utley added.

"We must be open to new ways of thinking," she stressed. "We must be prepared to take some risks. We must do our utmost to use scarce dollars wisely...We've got to find new ways to use existing resources through more creative means to promote the expansion of employment options for people with disabilities."

"It's hard to change our system from within," acknowledged Dennis Jones, outgoing commissioner of TXMHMR. But it all comes down to a single issue, he said. "Are we willing to let people decide for themselves and support them in those decisions? Until we cross that bridge, all of the other bridges don't really matter. Once you have though, there is no turning back."

This idea of increasing consumer control over services and their own lives was a key component of the summit.

What it all comes down to, explained Mike Bright, director of governmental affairs with The Arc of Texas, is that consumers want "real work with real pay and real benefits in real situations because that brings forth dignity, control and a real life for folks."

"I can tell you that gaining your independence after the better part

of eight years in a psychiatric hospital is a gift you never want to return," consumer Melanie Green remarked. "At one point, many people said I would never leave. One doctor said my discharge plan was to be transferred to the geriatric unit.

"...Yet there was a great group of people who did not give up on

While consumers focused on the personal benefits of supported employment, the comptroller focused on the benefits to the state of Texas.

What we are talking about here, Sharp said, is pure economic development. If you are a state, a business, a nation or a corporation, you have only three things to sell:

"For the vast majority of the people, choice, dignity and independence result largely from a person's ability to get a job and earn a living and spend their money like they want to spend their money." Ann Utley

me — voc rehab at Austin State Hospital," Green revealed. "Because of an accurate diagnosis, new meds and most importantly, supported employment, I was able to leave the hospital on Dec. 7, 1992. I am now the resource development specialist for Texas Mental Health Consumers.

Consumer Beth Holt, a DD Council member from Marshall and past president of Texas Advocates, also shared her experiences. "I work for a sheltered workshop — It will be 12 years in September."

When asked what she likes least about the workshop, Holt responded, "That's easy. Not enough money." She makes a little under \$100 a month there doing piece work.

Holt recently has had the opportunity to work periodically at a pottery factory, preparing goods for shipping.

"At the factory, I get minimum wage," she said proudly, "and when I'm not down in Austin (on advocacy work), I take home about \$600 a month. That means I can pay my own airplane ticket, my own hotel bill, my taxis in town... This makes me feel good.

"I'd like to see more people... out in the community working in regular jobs," Holt added.

human resources, natural resources or capital resources, he observed. "All we have been doing in Texas for the last century or so is selling natural resources."

Texas has built three empires by selling cattle, cotton, and oil and gas, Sharp pointed out. "But we are done with producing empires on natural resources. Capital resources are dependent on the other two.

"There is only one thing left to sell, and that is human resources. It just so happens...Texas has six of the 10 fastest growing regions that exist on the North American continent. Period."

Looking at it purely as a tax collector, Sharp said, he would guarantee to the Legislature that if Texas makes investments and "maximizes the potential of every human being that lives in this state, including job training and a lot of other things, we will create the fourth empire in the state of Texas" which will make oil and gas look insignificant.

The action plan developed at the supported employment summit is realistic and workable, Utley said. "At the same time, it really pushes the boundaries for all of us and I

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From the Executive Director: *Employment brings empowerment*

By Roger Webb

The Americans with Disabilities Act and supported employment are two key elements to making inclusion a reality for people with disabilities. The ADA promises equality and civil rights, including equality in the work place. Supported employment provides a method for entering and maintaining employment in the competitive job market.

But we, as a state and nation, still have a long way to go to achieve the potential of the ADA and supported employment. Millions of Americans who can work, who want to work, sit at home or in sheltered workshops and day activity centers.

Professionals used to think that individuals with disabilities couldn't work in regular jobs without intensive vocational training and without moving through a continuum of programs. But supported employment has proven the fallacy of this theory.

People don't need to be fixed or trained more in order to get regular jobs. We just need to figure out the appropriate supports to help them be successful.

While we talk a lot about em-

powering people with disabilities, there is no power that matches the power of the checkbook when it comes to creating choice and control.

Therefore the service system needs to change its focus. It needs to work on removing barriers that prevent people from taking control of their own lives and determining their own future. These include:

- physical barriers,
- barriers of discrimination, and
- funding barriers.

Competitive employment provides the income that can contribute to increased independence, opportunities for social interactions with others, increased skills and a greater satisfaction with life.

Our communities benefit too. Individuals become consumers of goods and services. They also become more active in the community. And ultimately, the individuals become taxpayers, resulting in a long-term reduction in public support and increased productivity of the work force.

As part of our commitment to creating a system that helps people with disabilities become more independent and productive members of their communities, the Council has funded a variety of projects over the years which

demonstrated that supported employment works. We also were involved in planning the supported employment summit in July.

But we are just one of numerous organizations throughout Texas and nationwide that support competitive, integrated employment.

It's time to apply lessons learned over the past decade, since supported employment was introduced. It's time for Texas to make needed policy decisions that promote opportunities for individuals with disabilities to work in regular jobs.

Too many people with disabilities are having to wait for happiness. They are waiting to obtain more independence and more control over their own lives. Waiting to be respected. To have friends. To choose where and with whom to live. To have a regular job. To earn a living. And to decide how to live.

We must concentrate on creating a service system that gets results for people with disabilities — a system that provides opportunities, choice and control. We must recognize and respond to the urgency of people's lives. And competitive, integrated employment is a big part of this. ❖

Summit

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think that is real important...I think these strategies are only a beginning and a challenge.

"The best part about it is it's going to make a difference in the lives of lots of Texans," she concluded. "Whether we are state agencies, advocacy groups, whether we are consumers or family members, I just think this is probably one of the most exciting things that has happened to Texans in a long time." ❖

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Relay Texas crosses sound barrier



Operating around the clock, Relay Texas allows people in this state who are deaf, hearing impaired or speech impaired to communicate with other people via telephone.

There are no charges for local calls. For in-state, long distance relay calls, the rates are half of the usual charge. Interstate calls are discounted 10 to 35 percent,

depending on when they are made.

People who use a Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) or compatible equipment can dial 1-800-735-2989 (1-800-RELAY TX) to contact people who do not have speech or hearing disabilities.

People without speech or hearing disabilities can dial 1-800-735-2988 (1-800-RELAY VV) to contact people who use TDDs or similar devices. ❖

Studies show accessibility & equality slowly improving:

A variety of research has looked at disability issues recently, including employment, educational levels, insurance and accessibility. These include: a study by the U.S. Census Bureau "Americans with Disabilities: 1991-92;" a poll by Louis Harris & Associates of 1,000 adults with disabilities; and the report "Americans with Disabilities Act: Effects of the Law on Access to Goods and Services," by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO).

While these reports indicate that conditions are improving for Amer-

Latest figures from the Census Bureau show there are now 49 million Americans with disabilities, about one out of every five people. Of these, 24 million have "severe disabilities."*

The Census Bureau also found that only about half of all persons aged 15-64 with a severe disability had health insurance in 1991-92, compared to 80% of persons without a disability. They found that only 23% of adults with a severe disability, 21-64, were employed.

The Harris poll found that a slightly higher proportion of adults

number of respondents with a high school diploma rose from 60% to 75%. Individuals with at least some college education rose from 29% to 44%.

"If the improved educational attainment of people with disabilities is the most positive finding of this research, the failure of this to translate into improvements in employment and, therefore, financial advantage is the most disappointing finding," said the CEO of Louis Harris & Associates.

The new survey found that 40% of Americans with disabilities live in households with incomes of \$15,000 or less, compared with 18% of Americans without disabilities.

In other results, 60% of the respondents said that, in general, things have gotten somewhat or much better for them and their peers in the past 10 years. They noted access to public facilities such as restaurants, theaters, stores and museums and to public transportation has improved, as has public attitudes and the portrayal of persons with disabilities in the media.

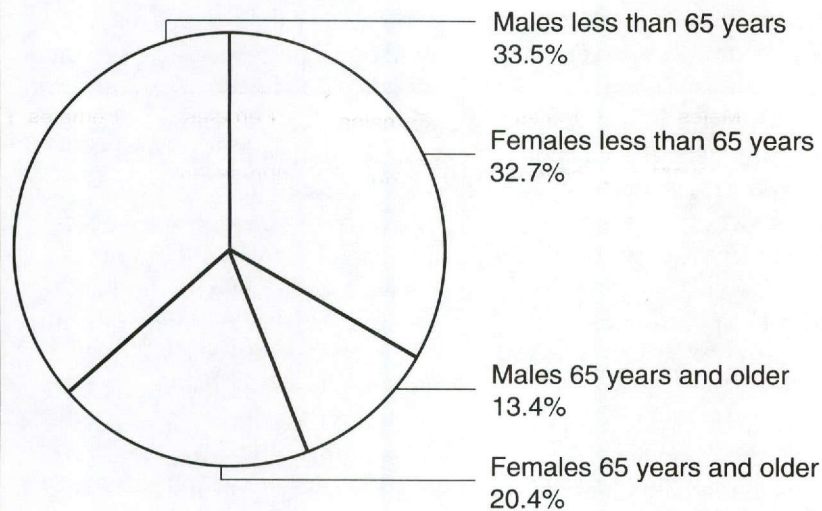
Accessibility Increasing

The GAO report also found signs that businesses have begun to increase access to goods and services. They surveyed some 300 different businesses at three points in time, starting when the ADA went into effect. The number of facilities that have removed an architectural barrier increased from 29% to 55% during the 15 months studied. However only one establishment, out of 276 examined in April 1993, was found to be completely free of barriers. The report speculated that many businesses may be waiting until someone complains to take action.

In addition to inspecting facilities, the GAO surveyed about 1,000 individuals with disabilities

Continued on next page

**Sex and Age Composition
of Persons with a Disability: 1991-92**



icans with disabilities, all three suggest that — four years after passage of the ADA — much remains to be done to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

* *Editor's note: A disability is defined by the Census Bureau as difficulty in performing one or more functional or daily living activities, or one or more socially defined roles or tasks. Persons who are completely unable to perform an activity or task, or who must have personal assistance are considered to have severe disabilities. This is not the same definition used in the ADA.*

with disabilities were employed — 31%. Although the majority (79%) indicated they want to work, many noted that they would lose income, health care and other benefits if they worked full time.

The Harris poll was commissioned by the National Organization on Disability. The polling firm also did a survey on disability issues eight years ago.

While the new poll indicates that employment and income levels have remained low, educational levels have risen. Since the first poll, the

Employment, education, insurance, accessibility examined

regarding accessibility. Generally, they found that the respondents are having an easier time getting into buildings because of new ramps or wider doorways. But once inside, individuals still encounter problems.

Among the most common barriers are a lack of signs with raised print or Braille, inaccessible restrooms and not enough assistive devices for people who are hearing impaired. The latter include TDDs, pay phones with audio amplification, and devices to let hotel guests know if an alarm is going off or if someone is at the door or calling on the phone.

The GAO concluded that while steady progress is being made in implementing the ADA, "enough areas of concern remain to suggest a need for continuing outreach and technical assistance to businesses and government agencies."

The current report focused on public services and accommodations because these sections of the ADA went into effect first. The GAO plans to focus on employment provisions of the ADA later.

Employment and the ADA

On July 26, 1994, the ADA celebrated its fourth anniversary and coverage was expanded to include employers with 15 to 25 employees. Companies with 25 or more employees had already been covered for two years.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) estimates that coverage now affects about 86% of the nation's work force — about 86 million people. Covered employers increased from 264,000 to 666,000.

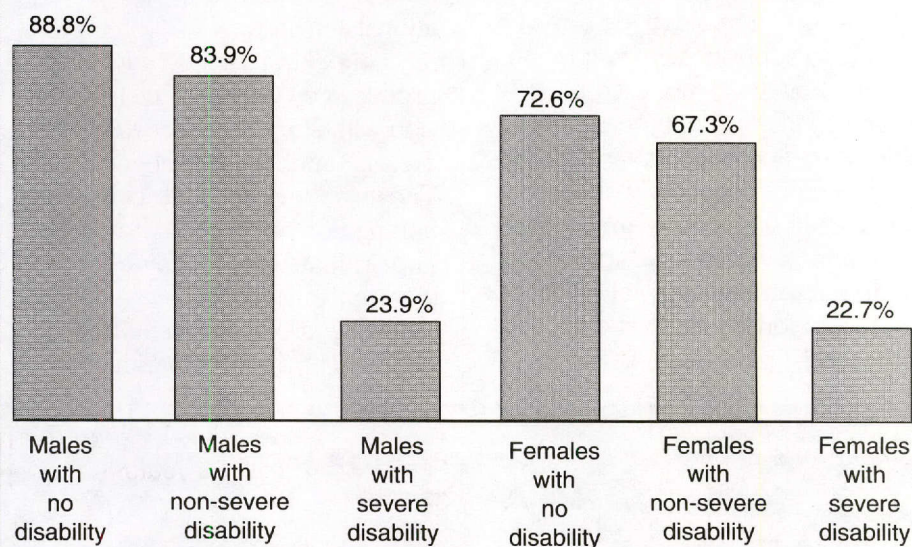
Title I of the ADA, Employment, protects qualified individuals with disabilities from discrimination in the job application process; in hiring, firing, advancement, compensation and job training; and in other terms, conditions and privi-

leges of employment. The law also requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities, provided that the accommodation does not impose an "undue hardship" on the business.

For More Information

For general information about the ADA or employment discrimination, call the EEOC at 1-800-669-EEOC (TDD 1-800-800-3302) or call 1-800-669-4000 to

Percentage of Persons 21 - 64 Years Old with a Job or Business, by Sex and Disability Status: 1991-92



The federally-funded Job Accommodation Network (JAN) reports that 62% of accommodations cost from \$0 to \$500. JAN also found that for every dollar spent in making an accommodation for individuals with disabilities, employers received an average return of \$15 in 1993.

Of the employers surveyed, 97% thought they received positive financial benefits from making accommodations. Furthermore, 37% felt they had received more than \$10,000 in value from the accommodations they had made. The law also allows small businesses to get tax credits for their expenditures.

As of June 30, 1994, the EEOC reported that 29,720 ADA charges had been received since July 26, 1992. The largest number of charges, 2,926, were filed by Texas residents.

be connected to the EEOC in your district. You also can contact the Texas Commission on Human Rights at 512-837-8534.

Another contact for information and referral is the ADA specialist at the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities at 512-463-5741.

For a copy of "Americans with Disabilities: 1991-92," contact the Census Bureau's Customer Services Office at 301-763-4100. For details on ordering the Harris poll or a 32-page summary, contact the National Organization on Disability at 1-800-240-4520. For the GAO report, *Americans with Disabilities Act: Effects of the Law on Access to Goods and Services*, call 202-512-6000 and request document GAO/PEMD-94-14 ADA: Effects of the Law on Access. ♦

'Unlocking Tomorrow' available

Video demonstrates how assistive technology improves lives

The world is changing for people with disabilities, and technology is making some of these changes possible. "Unlocking Tomorrow," 56-minute documentary, introduces a variety of individuals who use assistive technology to improve the quality of their lives.

The video shows the full range of assistive technology — from very simple to sophisticated adaptations — and how these are used in everyday life including recreation, education and employment.

Scenarios include a woman in a wheelchair who drives an adapted van, a man who uses a sip-and-puff system for environmental controls and telephoning, and various individuals using touch talkers,

computers, adapted toys and other items.

The video also discusses how assistive technology is impacting individuals' lives. For example, it explores how technology has made it possible for individuals to hold regular jobs, live at home instead of in a nursing home, attend regular classes at school and enjoy recreational activities.

"Unlocking Tomorrow," was produced by Georgia Public Television with support provided by the Texas Planning Council and others. The video features both closed captioning (for people with hearing impairments) and audio description (descriptive video service — DVS — which describes the scene for people with visual impairments).

For a free copy of the video, write to Erma Henderson at the Texas Planning Council or call her at 1-800-262-0334 (in Texas), 512-483-4093, or TDD 512-483-4099. ♦

Help with AT...

Do you need help with assistive technology (AT)? The following may be able to provide assistance.

■ **Texas Assistive Technology Project:** The University Affiliated Program at The University of Texas at Austin has a federal grant to develop an assistive technology training program in Texas and a regional system of assistive technology services and programs. They also operate a statewide information and referral service and sell a guide to assistive technology in Texas. For assistance, call 1-800-828-7839 or 512-471-7621.

■ **Technology-Learning-Collaboration National Outreach Project:** TLC conducts training for parents and practitioners in accessing and using technology in early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities. It is a project of United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Texas, the U.S. Department of Education, Texas Planning Council and the Texas Early Childhood Intervention Council. For details, contact Elizabeth Tucker at UCP-Texas at 1-800-798-1492 or 512-472-8696.

■ **Able Kids:** Training Professionals in the Use of Assistive Technology, a Council grant to the South Texas Children's Habilitation Center. Able Kids is integrating the use of assistive technology into early intervention programs in Bexar and surrounding counties.

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Guadalupe Pineda (left), Maria Esther Lee, Cherish McCallum (sitting) and her son David Hunter experiment with using technology as part of an early intervention program. They received training in El Paso this summer under the Technology-Learning-Collaboration National Outreach Project. So far, 16 teams of practitioners and parents in Texas have received the training. Training usually lasts four to five days, with on-going technical assistance. (Photo courtesy UCP-Texas.)

News you can use... Ways to make a difference...

❑ **ICF/MR Surrogate Consent Volunteers Needed:**

The Texas Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation is recruiting volunteers to assist individuals in their community who live in group homes. Qualified volunteers will serve on Surrogate Consent Committees which provide consent for decisions regarding medical, dental and other treatments. If you are interested in serving on a local consent committee, write to the: Surrogate Decision-making Program, c/o ICF/MR Section, Texas Department of MHMR, P.O. Box 12668, Austin, TX 78711-2668.

❑ **Foster & Adoptive Parents Needed:**

There is a critical shortage of foster and adoptive homes for children with disabilities in our state, according to Child Protective Services (CPS), a division of the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. They report that 418 kids with disabilities were awaiting adoption as of May 31, 1994.

CPS also reports that 10,880 children are in paid foster care, with 3,696 of them being children with disabilities. The majority will be reunited with their families.

Individuals interested in becoming

an adoptive or foster parent must be at least 21 years old. They can be single, married or divorced. For more information, contact the nearest office of Child Protective Services or call the toll-free Foster Care and Adoption Inquiry Line at 1-800-233-3405.

❑ **Texas Accessibility Standards:**

Bringing Texas in compliance with federal regulations, the Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS) apply to buildings and facilities constructed after April 1, 1994. Adopted by the Texas Commission on Licensing and Regulation, the TAS is based on the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). Since the TAS combines state and federal regulations, the commission also is pursuing ADAAG equivalency certification. Copies of the TAS are available for \$10 from the Office of the Secretary of State, Texas Register Division, P.O. Box 13824, Austin, TX 78711-3824; 512-463-5561.

❑ **If It Sounds Like Greek...**

The disability field has enough big words, technical terms and acronyms to make you feel like you are drowning in alphabet soup. However, there is help. Many disability terms are explained in three free fact sheets which are available from the National Information Clearing House for infants with disabilities and life-threatening conditions (NIC). They are: the "Primer of Disabilities, Health Conditions and Medical Terminology," "Primer of Disability-Related Terms" and "Disability-Related Acronyms and Abbreviations." NIC is a project of the Center for Developmental Disabilities at the University of South Carolina and Association for the Care of Children's Health. The fact sheets were designed to help families communicate with medical providers. Copies are available by calling 1-800-922-9234, Ext. 201.

❑ **Register And Vote -- Elections**

Near: The results of the next Legislative Session, which begins in just a few short months, will be greatly influenced by who is in office. You have the opportunity now to affect who will represent you. This, in turn, will affect what bills get passed and what programs get funded -- or not funded.

On Nov. 8, Texas voters will select the state's governor, as well as various legislators, congressmen, and other public officials.

If you haven't registered to vote yet or if you have moved, you need to register or transfer your registration by Oct. 11 to be able to vote in the General Elections on Nov. 8.

Registration cards are available at the post office, public libraries and some stores. Mail it to your county clerk's office or the voter registrar's office, whichever is printed on the card.

If you have questions concerning voting and elections, you can call the Secretary of State at 1-800-252-VOTE (8683).

❑ **Is Your Polling Site Accessible?:**

Advocacy, Inc., filed lawsuits in four regions of Texas on Sept. 8, 1994, claiming that many polling sites are not accessible. Barriers range from using voting booths that are too high to not providing designated parking for people with disabilities, ramps, Braille ballots or accessible signage.

Advocacy, Inc., also is developing a checklist that will allow individuals to evaluate accessibility of their polling place when they vote. Checklists which are returned to Advocacy, Inc., will be used in their ongoing efforts to end discrimination.

For a copy(ies) of the checklist, call Advocacy's Central Office at 1-800-223-4206 or 1-800-252-9108 from 12:30 to 5 p.m. (M,T,W,F) or 12:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday. In Austin, call 454-4816. ♦

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They also are working on curriculum for occupational and speech therapists at one university. For more information, call 210-614-1910 or write them at 2219 Babcock Road, San Antonio, TX 78229.

■ **Educational Service Centers:** Each of the Texas Education Agency's service centers has a specialist who helps school districts with training on assistive technology and short-term loan of equipment. For details, contact the director of special education at your regional service center. ♦

Stipends increase consumer attendance at conferences, events

All too often, personal budgets are stretched to the limit and prevent individuals from attending conferences, workshops and other events. Therefore, the Council continues to provide stipends to organizations sponsoring events within Texas, so that more people with developmental disabilities and family members can participate.

Since the program began in 1989, stipends have been awarded for 66 events, enabling about 900 individuals to obtain education, training and technical assistance.

Organizations which are interested in requesting the stipends must submit their application at least 120 days before the event. If multiple organizations are sponsoring the program, only one may apply. Applicants are encouraged to apply early enough to ensure there is plenty of time to publicize the stipends, if approved.

For more details on the stipends program and an application kit, write to Lester Sanders, Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, 4900 North Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78751-2399, or fax your request to 512-483-4097. ❖

Head Start offers integrated option

Just as a child with a disability becomes eligible for services from the public school on his/her third birthday, that same child also is eligible for services from any Head Start program that serves three year olds.

Head Start programs in Texas historically have used the same age eligibility as public schools. In the past, both have required children who turned three after Sept. 1 to wait until the next fall for services.

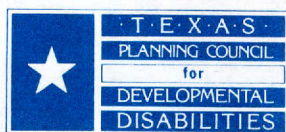
However, now that Texas Education Agency policies make children with disabilities eligible for services on their third birthday, Head Start programs also have had to change their requirements. This was done to prevent a gap in

services for children who leave an Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program on their third birthday.

Some Head Start programs, however, have continued to use the old eligibility requirements, making families wait until the following fall for services. Families, ECI or Head Start programs with questions can contact Earl Richardson at the Head Start regional office in Dallas at 214-767-2981 for clarification.

An increasing number of parents of young children are finding Head Start to be an integrated option to a school district's segregated early childhood program. ❖

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Highlights

Highlights is produced by the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities for distribution to Council members, grantees and other interested persons throughout the state. Organizations that serve persons who have developmental disabilities are encouraged to submit news for publication. Inquiries may be sent to Lucy Walker, editor, Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, 4900 North Lamar Blvd., Austin, Texas 78751-2399, 1-800-262-0334 or 512-483-4092 voice or TDD 512-483-4099. Taped copies, Braille and other formats available on request.

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