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PLANNING COUNCIL
for
DEVELOPMENTAL
DISABILITIES

HIGHLIGHTS

Vol. 3, No. 4

Austin, Texas

August 1985

Families do make a difference at the Dallas Autism Program

Dallas Autism Program staff members spent their first year of Developmental Disabilities Program funding to their project in 1983 just listening. Listening to parents identify the unique needs of their autistic children. Listening through surveys, questionnaires and personal interviews.

Under the direction of Ruth Turner, special education director for the Dallas Independent School District, the project's first year involved learning more about the needs of parents with autistic children, ages 3 to 22, throughout Texas. Marilyn Monteiro, family specialist, interviewed and videotaped 20 families concerning the needs and expectations they had in rearing their children. The issues raised by this core group of parents were then categorized by staff members into a questionnaire checklist.

Through the cooperation of the Texas Society for Autistic Citizens, the questionnaire checklist was sent to 350 parents across the state. It listed needs in three categories — school, home and community support. Two hundred families responded.

The group began its second year of funding by addressing the needs, according to rank of importance on the questionnaire checklists, in a direct service program within the school district. The result is a series of activities aimed at parents, their autistic child and siblings.

Monthly parent group meetings, conducted by Monteiro, give participants a chance to discuss suggestions for leisure time, home teaching techniques, sign language, respite care, behavior management, and other common concerns. Additional expertise is provided by other staff members and consultants. A group for parents of adolescents with autism has also been formed to address issues that face children upon reaching adulthood, such as community living and em-

ployment. In-home counseling and training are also provided to parents upon request.

To get the whole family involved, a sibling group has also been formed. Brothers and sisters meet to learn more about autism and to discuss their feelings through problem solving and role playing.

As part of the overall program, more than 100 students with autism are served in total communication/autism classrooms scattered across the district or through specialized consultation services. Parents are encouraged to learn more about what their child learns in the classroom and are welcome to observe student activities.

The Dallas Autism Program was designed by the Dallas Independent School District as a model parent involvement program for other school districts to follow in implementing their own individual programs. It was initiated as a result of the increased emphasis by the Texas State Board of Education and the Texas Education Agency on parent training in dealing with autistic students.

Materials available for dissemination to other groups include the following:

- An audiovisual presentation describing the Dallas Autism Program.
- Needs assessment dissemination packets with an interview survey form, diagnostic checklists and a sociological assessment to help parents and school personnel set goals and plan activities to meet individual family needs.
- Sibling support group packets with tests and surveys on autism and a videotape with siblings discussing their feelings and attitudes toward their autistic family member.
- Parent packets with information on autism and services that are available to persons with autism and their families in the community.

- A listing of library books, films and videotapes organized by the project for parents.
- Training packets for sitters, including a survey and overview of autism, questions sitters should ask parents, and suggestions for behavior management with autistic children.
- Summaries of all parent and sibling support groups meetings.

Materials, technical assistance and more information on the Dallas Autism Program can be obtained by contacting Marilyn Monteiro, Ph.D., Dallas Independent School District, 3801 Herschel, Dallas, Texas 75219, telephone (214) 526-0990.

Autism is . . .

. . . a severely incapacitating life-long developmental disability that typically appears during the first three years of life. It occurs in approximately 15 out of every 10,000 births and is four times more common in boys than girls.

An estimated 21,000 people in Texas have autism. In the past, 95 percent of them would have been placed in custodial institutions due to the lack of better alternatives.

The symptoms are caused by physical disorders of the brain. They include:

- Disturbances in the rate of appearance of physical, social and language skills.
- Abnormal responses to sensations. (Any one or a combination of sight, hearing, touch, pain, balance, smell, tastes, and the way a child holds his body are affected.)
- Speech and language are absent or delayed while specific thinking capabilities may be present.
- Abnormal ways of relating to people, objects and events.

— from the Texas Society for
Autistic Citizens

Meet the Council

The Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities welcomed the following eight new consumer members during its quarterly meeting last March. Appointed by Texas Governor Mark White, consumer members include persons with developmental disabilities and their parents and advocates.

Mary Jane Clark moved to Pharr five years ago, following her retirement from a career as social work administrator at a large state institution for persons with developmental disabilities in Wisconsin. In addition to her work with the Council, Clark is also a member of the Texas Chapter of the American Association on Mental Deficiency and the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities.

Tom Deliganis serves as superintendent of San Antonio State School. Deliganis is a member of the American Association on Mental Deficiency, Texas Association on Mental Deficiency, Parent's Association of the Retarded of Texas, and the National Association of Superintendents of Public Residential Facilities for the Mentally Retarded.

Gloria Drass owns and operates her own graphic arts agency, Empire Communications, in Fort Worth. In addition to her work with the Council, she serves on the Fort Worth Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and the Fort Worth Nature Center Board. She is a former member of the executive board of Fort Worth Executive Women and the Fort Worth Mayor's Committee on the Status of Women.

As executive director of the Texas Education Agency's Education Service Center, Region One, in Edinburg, Lauro Guerra is responsible for the overall administration of school districts in Cameron, Hidalgo, Willacy, Starr, Webb, Jim Hogg, and Zapata Counties. He is a member and past president of the Rio Grande Valley Association of School Administrators, a charter member and director of the Pan American University Alumni Association, and a member and past president of the Edinburg Lions Club.

Mary Carolyn Knott serves as chief of speech pathology at William Beaumont Army Medical Center in El Paso. She is also a board member of the West Texas Association of the Handicapped, an advisory board member of the El Paso Opportunity Center for the Handicapped and the El Paso Multipurpose Center for the

Handicapped, and a member of the the American Business Women's Association and the Mayor's Task Force for Accessibility.



New Council member Lauro Guerra.

Angela Lamb works for the Texas Department of Agriculture as district supervisor in Amarillo. In addition to her work on the Council, she is involved with the Volunteer Services Council and the Public Responsibility Committee of Amarillo State Center.

James McBryde is director of properties for the West Texas Rehabilitation Center in Abilene. He also serves on the Transportation of the Elderly and the Handicapped Advisory Committee for the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation, the Special Education Advisory Committee for the Abilene Independent School District, the West Texas Council of Governments' Health Planning Committee, and is involved with the Coalition of Texans with Disabilities.

Jann Steed is a special education teacher with the Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City Independent School District. In addition to serving on the Council, Steed is also a member of the Texas Rehabilitation Commission's Consumer Consultation Committee, the Texas Rehabilitation Association and the Texas State Teacher's Association.

In compliance with recently revised federal legislation, the governor also appointed Dayle Bebee, executive director of Advocacy, Inc., in Austin to serve as the protection and advocacy system representative to the Council. Advocacy, Inc., is a nonprofit corporation under contract to the State Bar of Texas to protect the legal rights of persons with developmental disabilities in Texas. Bebee, a member of the State Bar, has served as executive director of Advocacy, Inc., since 1976.



New members Gloria Drass (left) and Mary Jane Clark.

DD Public Forum Report ---- *Sheds some light on the needs of Texans with disabilities*

Service and advocacy needs of 250 Texans with developmental disabilities are detailed in the Council's recently released *1985 Developmental Disabilities Public Forum Report*. The report lists opinions expressed through public testimony and on needs assessment questionnaires during the Council's statewide Forum last spring. Twenty-two persons gave testimony at the forum in Austin and 229 individuals from across the state completed needs assessment questionnaires.

The testimonies identified more than 94 recommendations from an extremely broad range of needs crossing all age and disability groups. Some of the recommendations are consistent with current

grant projects and advocacy activities, others are new and will require further examination by the Council.

Questionnaire responses were more direct and easier to categorize since they followed a two-page form that was mailed to all **Highlights** readers. The majority of respondents identified themselves as service providers, followed by parents and family members, and persons with disabilities. Respondents ranked services and activities needed by persons with developmental disabilities according to the Council's two priority service areas — alternative community living arrangement services and employment-related activities.

Under alternative community living, individualized residential arrangements, such as group homes and apartments, were identified as the area of greatest need. Residential and family support services were also identified as top priorities.

In the area of employment-related activities, respondents identified employment preparation and vocational training leading to supported employment as the greatest need. Incentive programs for employers to hire persons with developmental disabilities were ranked as a second priority and prevocational skills training was ranked as a third priority among all respondents.

The *1985 Developmental Disabilities Public Forum Report* is available upon request.

Legislation in review

New laws, resolutions for Texans with disabilities

... by Roger Webb, Council Specialist

A variety of legislation, ranging from a statewide zoning ordinance to the elimination of derogatory terminology in state statutes, benefitting persons with disabilities was passed by the 69th Texas Legislature. In total, 4,021 bills were introduced this session of which 1,040 were passed. About 330 of those bills passed affected health and human services, of which about 50 were monitored closely by the Texas Planning Council.

Bills that were of particular interest to the Texas Planning Council include the reauthorization of the Council and its administering agency, the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (SB 118). The major change for the Council will be that the Council chairman will be appointed by the Governor, as recommended by the Sunset Commission.

The Community Homes for Disabled Persons Location Act, SB 940, initially drafted by the Association for Retarded Citizens — Texas, is also of particular interest to the Council. SB 940 received wide support from disability-rights groups statewide, including the Council. It will disallow using local zoning ordinances to prohibit small group homes for persons with disabilities from residential communities. With the passage of this bill, Texas joins 31 other states and the

District of Columbia in protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in the community.

Following is an abbreviated summary of bills passed by the Legislature that could have an impact on persons with developmental disabilities in Texas. For more information on legislation, contact the Texas Planning Council office.

(Legislation is listed by assigned number and sponsoring legislator. Bills that were advocated for by the Texas Planning Council are noted as such.)

House Bills

HB 157 by Hammond. Requires screening and treatment for dyslexia in public schools in Texas for the first time.

HB 387 by Price. Requires the Texas State Library to place reading devices (i.e.; optical scanners with speech synthesizers) in public libraries and in libraries of institutions of higher education.

HB 653 by Finnell. Establishes a task force to study licensing standards for personal care homes, including such factors as types of facilities, types of residents, types of services and personnel requirements.

HB 832 by McKinney. Requires children in grades 6 through 10 in public or private schools to be screened for scoliosis.

HB 1731 by Blanton. (Council support approved). Amends the Education Code to provide that students who are handicapped shall be suspended from participating in extracurricular activities based on the student's failure to meet the requirements of the student's IEP.

HB 1843 by Oliver and SB 452 by Traeger and Brooks (SB II in Special Session). Establishes an indigent health care system.

HB 2004 by Colbert. Amends current statute related to qualifications of professionals who conduct certain screening tests and examinations or provide remedial services for young children with special senses and communication disorders.

HB 2086 by Harris. Updates current statute allowing support dogs for persons with handicaps on public transportation. (Amended *guide dog* for a *blind person* to *support dog* for a *handicapped person*.)

HB 2168 by Haley. Requires TEA to develop an inservice program to train teachers to recognize

From the Executive Director

... by Joellen Simmons

Advocating for persons with developmental disabilities is one of the Texas Planning Council's most important functions. As we embark on a campaign to enhance the statewide service delivery system for persons with developmental disabilities, the Council will be relying more and more on individual advocates across the state.

Individual advocates have shown that they can make a difference in changing opinions and influencing policies and procedures. The recent passage of several bills to enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities, such as the Community Homes for Disabled Persons Location Act, demonstrates the power and

influence a grassroots effort can have. Council members joined the Association of Retarded Citizens — Texas and consumers, parents, service providers, and advocates from across the state to let the 69th Texas Legislature know that a zoning bill to protect the rights of persons with disabilities in the community was needed — now. Even proponents of the bill were surprised by its quick passage through the Legislature.

The Council is working to form its own network of persons interested in the developmental disabilities movement. Through our Information Alert network, we want to give others the opportunity to assist the Council in advocating for programs that will help the estimated 270,000 persons in Texas with develop-

mental disabilities live fuller, more productive lives.

In the next several weeks, **Highlights** readers will receive a mail-back letter inviting them to sign up to be a part of this advocacy network. Respondents will periodically receive Information Alerts on policies, programs or legislation that is being advocated for by the Council. Members of this network will also receive recommendations on decision makers to contact regarding these issues.

Our Information Alert program is open to everyone. All that we ask is that you make constructive use of our Information Alert items and encourage others to do so. It's a good opportunity to positively influence the Texas service delivery system!

dyslexia and related disorders in public school students and to distribute those materials to school districts and education service centers.

Senate Bills

- SB 118 by Edwards. (Council testimony provided.) Reauthorizes the TRC and the Texas Planning Council.
- SB 195 by Sharp. Reauthorizes the State Commission for the Blind and renames it the Texas Commission for the Blind.
- SB 351 by Traeger. Renames the Texas Department of Human Resources the Texas Department of Human Services.
- SB 384 by Sharp. Reauthorizes the Texas Commission for the Deaf.
- SB 633 by Brooks. Relating to the mental health and mental retardation services system in Texas. Directs TDMHMR to initiate a six-year, long-range plan; details the minimum array of community services to be available in each service area statewide, including 24-hour "crisis stabilization services" and case management for each individual needing after-care services after discharge from a state facility; directs TDMHMR to contract with a community center or other local agencies or private providers for those services in

each source area; and directs TDMHMR to develop standards of care and performance-based contracts for such services.

- SB 940 by Washington. (Council support provided.) Stipulates that residential facilities with six residents or fewer and two staff or fewer are allowable as family homes in all areas of Texas.
- SB 1084 by Parmer. Eliminates derogatory terminology used in connection with persons with mental disabilities in state statutes. Substitutes *mentally disabled* for *lunatics* and *feeble-minded* and *mentally ill* for *insane*.

Resolutions

- HCR 99 by Smith (of Harris). Directs TEA to study the educational needs of high-functioning students with autism and develop appropriate rules to ensure that the needs of those students are met adequately.
- HCR 100 by Smith (of Harris). Directs TEA to assess the possible causes of high teacher turnover in special education to promote policies that reduce teacher turnover rates.
- HCR 125 by Smith (of Harris). Reestablishes the Autism Task Force as an advisory committee to the Council on Disabilities.

- HCR 126 by Smith (of Harris). Expresses appreciation to the Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities for the outstanding staff support and assistance provided to the Autism Task Force.
- SCR 63 by Vowell. (Council support approved.) Requests TDMHMR to continue to develop incentives for community residential services and to establish a goal of 60 community beds per 100,000 population for persons with mental health needs.
- SCR 127 by Brooks. Requires TDMHMR and TDHR to collaboratively plan for redirecting Medicaid funds to encourage additional development of community-based residential services, and requests TDMHMR to make a significant effort to identify non-Medicaid funding services for residential services.
- SCR 129 by Brooks. (Council support approved.) Requests TRC, TEA, and TDMHMR to improve coordination of their services to persons with mental retardation and to work collaboratively to initiate joint agreements concerning the provision of educational, vocational, and other services to persons with mental retardation to facilitate the transition from educational to vocational rehabilitation services.

Texas DD Program continues federal funding to 26 grant projects across the state

Continuation grants to projects in their second, third and fourth year of Developmental Disabilities Program funding were awarded this spring by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission, on behalf of the Texas Planning Council.

Grant awards were made or are under negotiation to 26 continuation projects in the areas of alternative community living arrangement services, nonvocational social development services and child development services. Fourteen first-year grants, awarded earlier this year to projects in the areas of alternative community living arrangements and nonvocational social development services, were listed in the April edition of **Highlights**.

In accordance with the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 1984, this is the last year that grants will be awarded in the area of nonvocational social development services. Employment-related activities, a new, mandated priority service area will replace nonvocational social development services as a funded activity during the next fiscal year. Alternative community living arrangement services will continue as a priority service area.

This is also the last year that child development services will be funded by the Texas Developmental Disabilities Program. The Council decided to redirect its efforts to nonvocational social development services in 1983, with the onset of the state-funded Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program. Council efforts in the area of early childhood intervention services have often been credited with helping to initiate support for the ECI program.

More information on grant projects is detailed in the *1985 Developmental Disabilities Program Grant Awards* notebook, available from the Texas Planning Council upon request.

Alternative Community Living Arrangement Grantees

Project Title	Agency	Grant Award
Project PASSAGE	Klein ISD, Spring	\$ 98,830
Self-Injurious Behavior: A Community-Based Treatment Network	Richmond State School	\$ 74,371
(Barriers to) Community Utilization of Services Study	Texas Research Institute of Mental Sciences	\$ 62,782
Individualized Transitional Living Program	Richmond State School	\$ 42,920
Cameron County Alternate Residential Program	Tropical Texas Center for MHMR, Edinburg	\$ 38,900
Herndon House	Austin Resource Center for Independent Living	\$ 13,000
Alternative Community Living	Beaumont State Center	\$ 9,617
Community Living Center for Deaf/Blind Adults	Deaf Action Center, Dallas	(under negotiation)
Community Living for Deaf/Blind Adults	Lighthouse of Houston	(under negotiation)
Open the Door: Community Residential Alternatives for the Long-Term Mentally Ill	Mental Health Association in Texas	(under negotiation)

Nonvocational Social Development Services Grantees

Project Title	Agency	Grant Award
Jasper Day Treatment/ Clubhouse Program	Deep East Texas Regional MHMR Services	\$ 49,591
Self-Help for Emotionally-Disturbed Deaf and their Families	National Self-Help Center for the Deaf/Hearing Impaired, Inc.	\$ 40,450
Teaching Interpersonal and Community Living Skills	Region XIX ESC, El Paso	\$ 36,770
Clinic Services for Autistic Populations to Develop Independent Living, Social and Leisure Services	University of Texas at El Paso	\$ 36,450
Family Education Services	Beaumont State Center	\$ 28,288
Promoting Social Developmental Experiences through Peer Leadership: A Model System	El Paso Center of the Deaf, Inc.	\$ 19,800
In-Home Training Program	Austin-Travis County MHMR Center	\$ 13,720
Austin Spina Bifida Center	Brackenridge Hospital, Austin	\$ 11,139
Integrated Recreational Services	Heart of Texas Region MHMR Center, Waco	\$ 10,687
Project Amicus	Association for Retarded Citizens - Austin	(under negotiation)
Integrated Leisure Time/ Social Development	Association for Retarded Citizens - Texas	(under negotiation)

Child Development Services Grantees

Project Title	Agency	Grant Award
Special Needs Childcare	YWCA of Fort Worth and Tarrant County	\$ 46,542
Parent Intervention and Training Project	Heart of Texas MHMR Center, Waco	\$ 22,489
Model Training Program to Teach Parenting Skills to Parents with Developmentally Delayed Children	Epilepsy Center South Texas, San Antonio	\$ 12,500
A Better Chance for Developmentally Delayed Infants	Montgomery County Center for the Retarded, Conroe	\$ 8,750
Expanded Services to Spanish Speaking Parents	Children's Center for Developmental Therapy, Houston	\$ 5,658

News You Can Use

Telephone equipment

AT&T has opened a Special Needs Center as a central information source on telephone equipment for persons with hearing, speech, vision, or motion disabilities. For more information call 1-800-233-1222 or TDD 1-800-833-3232.

Veterans vocational rehabilitation

The Veterans Administration (VA) has announced two pilot projects directed at vocational training and rehabilitation. Under the vocational training program veterans may participate in an individual-designed vocational training and employment services program, while continuing health care eligibility for three years. The rehabilitation program requires certain veterans who were awarded total disability compensation on the basis of individual unemployability on or after February 1, 1985, to take part in a VA vocational rehabilitation program. For more specific guidelines, contact the Texas VA Benefits and Information and Assistance office at 1-800-792-3271.

Employment guides

The President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped (PCEH) has produced guides for supervisors and coworkers of employees with disabilities. *Supervising Handicapped Employees* and *Working with Handicapped Employees* deal with concerns expressed by employers and coworkers. Single copies are available at no charge from the PCEH at 1111 20th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Recreation

Interpretation for Disabled Visitors in the National Park System, a guide developed by the National Park Service, provides park personnel with methods and techniques to make park programs accessible to persons with disabilities. A program access checklist is also included. Copies of this 107-page publication are available at \$4, stock number 024-005-00871-3, from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402.

Social Security

Public Law 98-400 extends Sections 1619(a) and (b) of the Social Security Act. Section 1619(a) provides special supplemental security income cash benefits to individuals who engage in substantial gainful activity and Section 1619(b) extends Medicaid eligibility for qualified individuals who might otherwise lose their cash benefits because they work. For more information on these programs, contact the Texas Planning Council or your local Social Security Administrative office.

Calendar

August 10-11, annual statewide conference, Texas Head Injury Foundation, Galveston. For additional information call 1-800-392-0040.

August 17, Special Needs Childcare: A Mainstream Approach. Call Stephanie Rorie, YWCA of Fort Worth and Tarrant County, at (817) 332-6191 for more information.

September 5-6, quarterly meeting, Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities.

September 27-29, annual convention, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, Amarillo. Call Jean Langendorf at (512) 443-8252.



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 items for publication. Inquiries may be addressed to Judy DeDonato, editor, Texas Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, 118 E. Riverside Dr., Austin, Texas 78704; or telephone (512) 445-8867, TDD 445-8004. Taped copies are available upon request. Typesetting and printing by Texas Rehabilitation Commission Printing Services.

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for Developmental Disabilities
118 E. Riverside Dr.
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