

Attachment 3



TCDD 2013 Public Policy Priorities

Draft

The mission of the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities is to create change so that all people with disabilities are fully included in their communities and exercise control over their own lives. The appropriations process provides the greatest opportunity for positive change in the lives of people with disabilities.

Texas weathered the national recession better than most states but nonetheless was forced to make difficult decisions to drastically reduce spending with the worthy goals of protecting tax payers and staying within available resources. Those decisions resulted in significantly underfunding various programs in the State's budget for fiscal years 2012-2013. Although the state's financial picture is now much improved, the Legislature will be faced once again with reducing or underfunding existing services and programs to balance budgets, finding alternative ways of providing services more efficiently, or considering additional sources of revenue to meet the state's growing population and needs. Fulfilling the state's prior obligations should be among the 83rd Texas Legislature's first priorities.

TCDD encourages the Legislature to exercise considerable caution when exploring alternative ways of providing services recognizing that some options also may have serious negative consequences to those most needing assistance. State funded services are a necessary and vital component of full participation for Texans with disabilities. Targeting services and supports for individuals with significant disabilities for further funding reductions should be a last resort.

Appropriations

TCDD recommends that publicly-funded services and supports for people with disabilities be maintained and funded in a manner that ensures critical services and supports for children and families are not reduced or limited in order to balance the state's budget including education, employment, housing, long-term services and supports, behavioral and mental health services and transportation.

- **Long Term Services and Supports** - Improve the system of long-term services and supports to ensure the availability, timeliness and quality of community-based services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities throughout the lifespan with an emphasis on providing services in integrated, community settings thereby reducing reliance on the need for institutional services.
- **Education** - Protect the right of students with disabilities to an appropriate, inclusive, publicly-funded education that provides preparation for life's transitions, supports opportunities for full participation and eliminates the use of inappropriate disciplinary alternatives throughout the educational spectrum - from early education programs to post-secondary schooling.
- **Employment** - Improve the system of employment services and income supports for individuals with developmental disabilities, including programs that help individuals develop assets and resources and help students with disabilities transition from school to work, by maximizing federal opportunities.

Working for independence, productivity and community inclusion.

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