

**Background:**

Minutes of the February 6, 2015, Public Policy Committee meeting are included for your review.

**Public Policy Committee**

**Agenda Item 3.**

**Expected Action:**

The Committee will review, revise as appropriate, and approve.

**PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING  
DRAFT MINUTES  
FEBRUARY 6, 2015**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

Kristen Cox, Chair	Mary Faithfull, DRTx	Amy Sharp, TAMU-UCEDD
Hunter Adkins	Stephen Gersuk	Lora Taylor
Kristine Clark	Sara Kendall, DARS	April Young, HHSC
Mateo Delgado	Penny Larkin, DADS	
Elaine Eisenbaum, TCDS	Ruth Mason	

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT**

Barbara Kaatz, TEA

**STAFF PRESENT**

Belinda Carlton	Jessica Ramos	Roger A. Webb
Linda Logan	Joshua Ryf	

**GUESTS PRESENT**

Shiloh Gonzalez, DARS

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Public Policy Committee convened on Friday, February 6, 2015, in the Maples/Mesquite Room at the Holiday Inn Austin Midtown, Austin, Texas 78752. Committee Chair Kristen Cox called those present to order at 9:01 AM.

**1. INTRODUCTIONS**

Committee Chair Kristen Cox asked the Committee members and staff to introduce themselves, and share where they planned – or hoped – to vacation in 2015. Elaine Eisenbaum was present as the designated alternate from the Center for Disability Studies, however, as she has not been through orientation, Eisenbaum is not eligible to vote on Committee actions.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Michael Peace, TCDD Council member, spoke about his concerns regarding the potential adoption of a position in support of the use of cannabidiol to treat symptoms experienced by people with disabilities. Mr. Peace cited a number of concerns, including that cannabidiol is untested and could have unknown negative effects, including damage to the brain. He advocated for other ways to treat and cure seizure disorders, such as natural remedies. He also stated that he supports further testing to determine its safety.

**3. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES**

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the November 6, 2014, Public Policy Committee meeting.

**MOTION:** To approve the minutes of the November 6, 2014, Public Policy Committee meeting, as presented.

**MADE BY:** Lora Taylor

**SECOND:** Kristine Clark

The motion **passed** unanimously.

**5. MEMBER UPDATES**

There were no Committee member updates.

**6. PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES**

Public Policy Director Jessica Ramos referenced her Committee of the Whole presentation and the bill list in the binder and stated that public policy staff will continue to track bills during the legislative session. Ramos indicated that an updated list of tracked bills would be available to members. Ramos reported to the Committee that the State Supported Living Centers Long Term Plan had been published. Ramos expects a Texas ABLE Act enabling legislation to be introduced, but could not share details.

**7. TCDD EDUCATION POSITION STATEMENT REVISIONS**

The Committee reviewed revisions to the Council's position statement on Education. Stephen Gersuk asked about the Council's opposition to school vouchers, stating that vouchers are analogous to the "money follows the person" model. Barbara Kaatz, TEA, stated that, with vouchers, money does not follow the person – school districts lose funds when a student uses a voucher to attend a private school; private schools do not have to follow federal (IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act) and state laws; and students cannot file a complaint if there is an issue at the private school. Kaatz further stated that charter schools are required to abide by state laws and that children who have significant needs frequently are not included in charter schools. The Committee made additional edits to the position statement.

**MOTION:** To recommend Council approval of the Education Position Statement, with the following revisions:

- Paragraph 1, line 5: Replace 'related' with 'appropriate'
- Paragraph 2, line 1: Insert 'with disabilities' after 'all students'
- Paragraph 3, line 5:
  - Insert 'and/or' between 'employment' and 'enrollment'
  - Insert 'as well as' between 'education' and 'engaged'
- Paragraph 3, line 6: Strike 'or both all'
- Paragraph 5, Line 4: Replace 'in' with 'providing'

**MADE BY:** Lora Taylor

**SECOND:** Kristine Clark

The motion **passed** with Stephen Gersuk opposed.

**8. PUBLIC INFORMATION REPORT**

Communications Coordinator Joshua Ryf reported on the Council's communications activities for the previous quarter, including TCDD's monthly e-newsletter, *TCDD Connection*, and the completion of TCDD's 2014 Annual Report. Ryf encouraged Committee members to invite their friends to like

TCDD on Facebook and referenced the “how-to” sheet in the Council binder. Ryf also briefed the Committee on a public awareness campaign that the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities is coordinating for Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

**9. ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT OPTIONS**

Ms. Ramos stated that during the current session legislation was introduced that would permit the use of alternative treatment options including cannabidiol, or medical marijuana, for people with intractable seizures. The bill – which is more narrowly focused than bills in prior sessions – would only allow a limited list of prescribers and would require the Department of Public Safety to maintain a compassionate use registry. Ramos encouraged Committee members to be aware of the risks associated with advocating for the use of alternative treatment options, citing an incident in which evidence of a parent’s advocacy was submitted into evidence during an appeals hearing regarding the denial of re-enrollment into a waiver program.

Chair Cox stated that if the Council took a position on this issue, it could affect the Council’s credibility with the current legislature. Amy Sharp stated that the Council traditionally takes positions on issues that are more broad in nature and that the issue of medical marijuana is too specific. Lora Taylor stated that she appreciated the discussion, is comfortable with the Council’s current position on access to health care, and indicated that she did not intend to move adoption of a position on a specific treatment. April Young, HHSC, stated that she would look into the issue regarding the use of a parent’s advocacy as evidence in a hearing relating to a child’s waiver eligibility. Cox stated that the Committee would continue to monitor medical marijuana.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business, Committee Chair Cox adjourned the meeting at 10:01 AM.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Roger A. Webb  
Secretary to the Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date