

**Background:**

Staff have prepared executive summaries for two proposed projects: *Higher Education Collaborative* and *Promotion of Supported Decision-Making and Alternatives to Guardianship*.

Please review the Executive Summaries closely and, if you have any questions, please contact Joanna Cordry, Planning Coordinator, at (512) 437-5410 or [Joanna.Cordry@tcdd.texas.gov](mailto:Joanna.Cordry@tcdd.texas.gov).

**Project Development Committee**

**Agenda Item 7.**

**Expected Action:**

The Committee will consider the Executive Summary and may recommend Council approval for funding.

**Council**

**Agenda Item 9. A-B.**

**Expected Action:**

The Council will consider recommendations from the Committee.

# Executive Summary

## Higher Education Collaborative

### Project Goal

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD) will fund a project to create a statewide expansion of best practices that support students with developmental disabilities to succeed in post-secondary programs that were originally designed for students without disabilities. The project will develop a sustainable Higher Education Collaborative that will include TCDD's "Higher Education for Employment" grantees and other post-secondary programs that have demonstrated success in fully including students with developmental disabilities. The collaborative would provide technical assistance and disseminate resources to develop similar programs at other institutions.

### Relationship to TCDD State Plan Goals

TCDD's FY 2012 - 2016 State Plan includes Objective 2.1 to "implement a program that provides supports and on-the-job learning opportunities to students with developmental disabilities in a post-secondary program that results in at least 80 percent of students who participate for two or more years in the program gaining jobs related to their desired careers within six months of completing their education."

The TCDD FY 2017 – 2021 Draft State Plan includes a proposed objective to support students with developmental disabilities to be more fully included in educational programs.

This project will assist TCDD to reach its goal that students with developmental disabilities have access to and benefit from post-secondary education.

### Funding and Duration

One project will be funded for up to five years.

Each organization proposing a project will include the funding amount needed to achieve the expected outcomes. TCDD will ensure the proposed funding is appropriate for the staffing, consulting, travel, materials development, evaluation, and other activities or resources needed to meet the expected outcomes and achieve sustainability. Grantees will be expected to provide match per TCDD guidelines.

### Background

*"Education is not a problem. Education is an opportunity" –Lyndon B. Johnson 36<sup>th</sup> U.S. President*

Education provides an individual with an opportunity to increase their understanding about themselves, their families, friends, peers, and their community. Additionally, post-secondary education opens the door to expected and unexpected opportunities, such as increased employment opportunities and development of personal connections and relationships that allow one's world to grow.

TCDD currently funds three highly-successful higher education projects to develop, demonstrate, and evaluate inclusive models of post-secondary education through which students with developmental disabilities receive needed supports to succeed in post-secondary education programs designed for students without disabilities. Examples of the support services provided include, but are not limited to: implementing a summer program to prepare enrolled students for school before the school year starts; providing individualized supports to assist and encourage the student to remain in the program and/or to be able to attend classes; collaborating with other schools and the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services; and partnering with businesses to provide internships. Texas Tech University, Texas A&M University, and the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services received grants to implement these projects. Below are short summaries of the programs funded by TCDD.

### **Texas Tech University Project CASE (Connections for Academic Success and Employment)**

Project CASE served students attending institutions of higher education, including both a university and a local community college. As of December 2015, Project CASE had served a total of 48 students and graduated 14 students. Ten have been competitively employed since their graduation, and five students are in non-paid internships. Two students completed their Associate's Degree, transferred to Texas Tech University, and are now working towards their Bachelor's degree. Four students who completed a Bachelor's Degree at Texas Tech have been accepted into graduate programs in psychology, architecture, computer programming systems, and mass communications.

### **Texas A&M University Bridge to Career in Human Service**

Texas A&M's (TAMU) Bridge to Career in Human Services created a summer program that provides training and support for students to learn the skills needed to be successful in TAMU's PATH program, which is a two semester certificate program that prepares graduates to be *Direct Support Professionals*. The summer program also teaches students what they need to know and do in order to be successful in their practicums. In the summer of 2014, 42 students were admitted to a 5-week summer program; 26 of these students continued in the fall program. For the 2015 academic year, the project received 74 applications, and 31 students were admitted. In May 2015, 18 of the students from 2014 graduated from the program. All 18 students are either employed, enrolled in other post-secondary education programs, in the process of being interviewed for employment, and/or are volunteering. Another institution of higher education, Blinn College, reviewed the course modules and selected the modules for the PATHS curriculum that will transfer as college credit at Blinn College.

### **TX Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services Project HIRE (Helping Individuals Reach Employment)**

The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services' (DARS) Higher Education Project HIRE (Helping Individuals Reach Employment) project supports individuals with developmental disabilities to complete post-secondary education at South Texas College (STC). Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) supports are supplemented with wrap-around services. At the end of the fall semester, the GPA for all Project HIRE participants remained at a 2.7 cumulative GPA. Four students graduated in December 2014 with STC Certificates in office management, culinary arts, mechanics, and multi-media specialist. Business mentoring continued for 15 Project HIRE participants.

With the support of DARS, Project HIRE's replication efforts successfully resulted in the launch of Project HIGHER at the El Paso Community College (EPCC) in the summer of 2015. Project HIGHER partners include DARS, EPCC, Region 19, University of Texas El Paso (UTEP), and Volar Center for Independent Living. UTEP Master-Level Educational Coaches provide the one-on-one support for six EPCC students with disabilities to help the students meet their post-secondary educational goals. DARS assists with the funding to pay for the coaches.

## Project Description

The Higher Education Collaborative will provide educational resources, technical assistance and infrastructure development allowing for universities, colleges, and technical schools to recruit, retain, graduate, and transition students with disabilities into employment and/or meaningful day activity. The selected entity will support at least ten other campuses across the state to replicate the best practice models (models that have evidence they achieve the intended outcomes) and evaluate their success.

The collaborative will be expected to ensure that new programs recruit and support students from diverse cultures.

TCDD expects the grantees to meet the goals and outputs identified above and also to:

- Develop a Higher Education Collaborative to expand post-secondary options for students with developmental disabilities. The grantee should partner with TCDD's Higher Education for Employment grantees and other programs that support students with developmental disabilities to take classes at post-secondary institutions.
- Gather information about gaps and system changes that are needed to support successful transitions of people with disabilities to post-secondary programs.
- Provide technical assistance to and support at least ten institutions to implement innovative approaches and program models that provide post-secondary education for people with disabilities. (Texas has 101 four-year universities/colleges; 32 of these belong to one of the six university systems. This does not include technical institutes or two-year community colleges in Texas community colleges.)
- Plan and implement approaches to increase public awareness about post-secondary education options. This may involve developing "How To" manuals, a website, or other materials that assist students with disabilities complete enrollment process such as entrance exams, financial assistance applications and continuations.
- Develop and implement an evaluation plan to measure the outcomes of students after leaving the post-secondary programs developed.
- Ensure the sustainability for the collaborative and make recommendations for the sustainability of the programs developed.

There are other programs in a few areas of the state that support students to participate in classes at post-secondary institutions. Some of these programs have created partnerships, such as the "Texas Consortium for Post-Secondary Opportunities for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities." Although they have had a positive impact on many students, have developed legislative support, and are promoting increased higher education options for students with developmental disabilities, they do not have sufficient funding and resources to be able to conduct the activities needed to achieve the outcomes noted above. They would be eligible to apply for this grant and, if selected, could build on what they have already established.

## Other Considerations

The Federal Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 included provisions to assure equal college opportunities for students with disabilities. Specifically, the Act:

- Establishes a national center to provide support services and best practices for colleges, students with disabilities, and their families.
- Helps colleges recruit, retain, and graduate students with disabilities and improves education materials and facilities
- Expands eligibility for Pell Grant scholarships and other need-based aid for students with intellectual disabilities.

While the Act does not appear to have resulted in a significant increase in programs in Texas, the national center and the expanded eligibility for Pell Grant scholarships might provide resources that could significantly benefit the programs developed. The grantee should be (or become) familiar with the Act.

# **Executive Summary**

## **Promotion of Supported Decision-making and Alternatives to Guardianship**

### **Project Goal**

The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD) will collaborate with others to develop and implement in-depth training across the state for individuals with developmental disabilities, their family members, providers of services and support, educators, and other community members who are likely to be involved in guardianship processes or in promoting supported decision-making and other alternatives to guardianship.

### **Relationship to TCDD State Plan Goals**

TCDD's FY 2012 - 2016 State Plan includes Objective 5.5 to "develop opportunities to partner with people who have developmental disabilities, families, providers, medical schools, licensing and certification boards, agencies, and/or community-based organizations to provide or develop training and/or practice guidelines that include knowledge related to disability and incorporate components of successful TCDD projects."

The TCDD FY 2017 – 2021 Draft State Plan includes a proposed objective to collaborate with others to expand the appropriate use of alternatives to guardianship.

This project will assist TCDD to reach the objectives included in both state plans.

### **Proposed Funding Contribution**

This will be determined when collaborators and their respective roles have been identified. TCDD would be significantly involved in this project.

### **Proposed Duration**

Five years.

### **Background**

The vast majority of people with disabilities, including those with developmental disabilities are able to make important decisions, independently or with support, without the need for a guardian. Decision-making is a learned skill – people with developmental disabilities, need the opportunity, experience and support to learn to make well informed decisions. Supported decision-making services, long term services and supports and other alternatives to guardianship can be essential legal ways to assist people with decision-making that do not restrict, limit or remove individual rights.

The Guardianship Reform and Supported Decision-Making (GRSDM) workgroup is an ad hoc collaboration of organizations; individuals with physical, mental, intellectual and other developmental disabilities; seniors; social workers; and representatives from the legal community. GRSDM was a driving force behind the significant changes adopted by the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature that became law in September 2015. TCDD and the other Texas DD Network Partners - Disability Rights Texas (DRTx), the

University of Texas Center for Disability Studies (CDS), and the Texas A&M Center on Disability and Development (CDD) - have been actively engaged with the GRSDM.

GRSDM developed seven policy proposals related to advancing alternatives to guardianship, enacting supported decision-making, providing rights and protections for people under guardianship and implementing person first language in guardianship.

The 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature enacted five of the proposals advancing alternatives to guardianship and supported decision-making. These changes significantly advance the rights and protections for individuals with disabilities. To achieve the goals of guardianship reform there must be statewide monitoring, accessible and useable information, training and technical assistance provided to individuals with disabilities, families, courts, attorneys, guardians, educators, medical providers and state and local providers of services and supports.

TCDD recently awarded a grant to DRTx for \$40,000 per year for up to three years to provide training to target audiences, including, but not limited to: probate and county court judges, and probate attorneys. DRTx will develop outreach plans and training materials tailored to each audience. The materials will include information about alternatives to guardianship, such as: limited guardianships, Medical Power of Attorney, Durable Power of Attorney, HIPPA releases, and supported decision-making agreements. DRTx will also provide training to the groups noted above and to individuals with disabilities and family/supporters as they are able. However, the small funding amount does not allow for the in-depth training that individuals with developmental disabilities and family members may need to be able to understand and enter into supported decision-making agreements, nor does it allow for training across the state, particularly in rural areas.

## **Project Description**

This project would provide:

- Statewide training that is relevant and easily accessible to individuals with developmental disabilities and family members. This may require training in small groups, provided over a period of time and/or reinforced through repetition.
- Statewide training for educational personnel, service providers including those providing medical services, social workers, and other pertinent audiences.
- Statewide training to enable individuals around the state to continue to train and support self-advocates and family members on a one-on-one basis, if needed, so that they can fully understand and implement supported decision-making and other alternatives to guardianship.

The project would develop the curricula and necessary materials to support training, which could include videos or interactive web-based instruction, and conduct evaluation activities to ensure that the training successfully imparts the understanding and skills expected.

## **Other Considerations**

The Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities requires DD Network Partners to collaborate on planned, meaningful activities. The Texas DD Partner Network have a strong history of successfully collaborating, as is evidenced by the success of their work on this issue. TCDD believes that this project would be well-suited to be implemented by the DD Partner Network, and staff have approached the Network to discuss the possibility. Should the DD Network Partners collaboratively implement this project, specific roles for each Partner would be identified. Each Partner will contribute their organization's expertise and resources to the whole.