

About TCDD: The Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD) draws from the principles identified in the Federal Developmental Disabilities Act (Public Law 106–402) in evaluating and responding to current and future policy issues that impact the developmental disabilities (DD) community. **TCDD invests its funds on promising practices that advance the inclusion of people with DD in all facets of community life by eliminating barriers, creating opportunities, and promoting innovation.**

2019 Public Policy Priority:
Employment First

Expand competitive integrated employment opportunities for Texans with disabilities to fully realize the state’s Employment First policy and to help people with disabilities develop assets and resources. People with disabilities who depend on public benefits for health care and long-term services and supports should be able to participate in employment without losing these supports.

TCDD Investments & Impact: Employment

TCDD's recent project investments to build capacity to improve the system in Texas:

Enabling Technology

- Educational Programs Inspiring Communities (H.E.A.R.T. Technology Project) created an interactive mobile application to promote competitive employment opportunities through workplace readiness training in inventory, requisitions, shipping and receiving (and similar jobs) for adults with DD.
- Strategic Education Solutions developed the Virtual Job Coach application for job exploration counseling. The web-based application delivers instructional modules that address job search, applying for a job, and workforce skills processes and strategies. An online community and mobile application helps users with specific questions and concerns about becoming employed and succeeding in the workplace.

Project SEARCH®: Texas Tech University’s Project SEARCH® is a business-led, school-to-work transition model that has demonstrated success in developing internships for students with DD that lead to integrated employment at the prevailing wage. This statewide model requires partnership between multiple state agencies that represent education, vocational rehabilitation, long-term supports for individuals with disabilities, as well as businesses and families.

Understanding Employment Options and Supports: The National Disability Institute developed Texas-specific educational tools to support high-level expectations that individuals with DD should be working and when coupled with financial literacy, can reduce dependence on public systems. This program addressed the myths about working and losing needed services and supports.

Field Initiated Employment

- Knowbility, Inc.: Access Works established a program that employs individuals with disabilities to help businesses evaluate and improve their services, including how easily people with disabilities can access their products. The project makes shopping easier for all people with disabilities by helping businesses improve their services.
- Texas A&M University: Texas A&M created work-based learning and employment opportunities for high school students by providing technical assistance and training to six schools in the Brazos Valley. The project helped to create relationships with community employers; matched students and jobs to provide meaningful work experiences; and provided students with employment support that promotes self-determination, job satisfaction, and job retention.

- Lower Rio Grande Valley Workforce Development Board: Project RISE developed partnerships between the workforce development board, local school districts and adult service agencies responsible for transition from school to adulthood for youth with DD in their last year of high school in Hidalgo, Starr, and Willacy counties.

Self-Employment

- VSA Arts of Texas: Established micro-enterprises in the arts to increase competitive employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Business, arts and disability service providers work together to train artists with disabilities in a variety of skill areas such as applied and fine arts; marketing and financial management; and social skills/career readiness to take the steps needed to become self-employed.
- Community Healthcore: Individuals with disabilities, families and local collaborating agencies were trained to develop and implement an individualized self-employment program. Training included assistance in obtaining natural supports and funding for the self-employment enterprise.

Higher Education for People with DD

- The Bridge to Career in Human Service Program by the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University provided an inclusive post-secondary certificate program for students with disabilities who choose a career path in a human service area. The program provides a full-year of training and a supervised field-based practicum leading to a certificate and job placement.
- Texas Tech University's Project Connections for Academic Success and Employment (CASE) is a college transition program that supports students with autism spectrum disorders and other DD to be successfully integrated into college and graduate with an academic degree or certification in a field of their choice. The program provides mentorships, internships, and possible paid employment for students attending Texas Tech and South Plains College.
- Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) Higher Education Project HIRE (Helping Individuals Reach Employment) supported individuals with DD to complete post-secondary education at South Texas College. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) supports were supplemented with wrap-around services. Project HIRE participants earned certificates such as welding, office management, construction supervision, business, marketing, computer maintenance, childcare development, mechanics, and drafting.
- El Paso Community College, with the support of TWC, replicated Project HIRE resulting in the launch of Project HIGHER to provide one-on-one support for students with DD to meet their post-secondary educational goals. Throughout their participation in the project, students learned valuable skills such as how to use computers and online technologies, and organization, planning and time management skills.

Other 2019 Public Policy Priorities:

- Community Attendant Rates and Wages
- Accessible Transportation
- Most Integrated, Person-Centered Setting
- Accessible Parking
- Home and Community-Based Services
- Health Care

More Information: To learn more about TCDD's public policy priorities for the 86th Texas Legislature, contact Scott Daigle, Public Policy Director, at scott.daigle@tcdd.texas.gov or (512) 437-5417.