

Background:

The Public Policy Committee is responsible for recommending Public Policy Priorities to the Council before the beginning of each legislative session. TCDD's Public Policy Priorities provide guidance to staff regarding legislative advocacy activities. Staff will review preliminary recommendations for 2013 Public Policy Priorities with the Council. Additional information is provided in meeting materials.

Public Policy Committee**Agenda Item 11.****Expected Action:**

The Committee will receive an update regarding preliminary recommendations for 2013 Public Policy Priorities and provide guidance as needed. No action is anticipated.

Council**Agenda Item 15. D.****Expected Action:**

The Committee will receive a report of the Committee's discussions and may provide additional guidance. No action is anticipated.



TCDD 2013 Public Policy Priorities

Draft

Appropriations - *Maintain publicly-funded services and supports for people with disabilities and ensure that critical services and supports for Children and Families, Education, Employment, Housing, Long Term Care, Mental Health, and Transportation are not reduced or limited in order to balance the state's budget.*

The state of Texas expects a budget shortfall for the upcoming 2014-2015 biennium. Due to the budgetary outlook, the state could reduce existing services or programs to balance budgets, look for alternative ways of providing services in order to reduce spending, or consider additional sources of revenue. The Legislature is encouraged to exercise considerable caution when exploring alternative ways of providing services recognizing that some options may also have serious negative consequences to those most needing assistance.

Children and Families – *Improve the availability of family and community supports so all children with developmental disabilities grow up in their homes and communities.*

All children belong in families that provide love, caring, nurturing, bonding and a sense of belonging and permanence that best enables them to grow, develop and thrive. Many Texas children with significant disabilities are unnecessarily removed from their families and placed in facilities such as residential treatment centers, foster care settings, nursing facilities, hospitals, juvenile detention, state supported living centers, HCS homes and state hospitals due to the absence of affordable and appropriate services and supports in their home communities. Families should have access to individualized health, mental health, rehabilitation, habilitation, supports and services, and assistance with those expenses necessary to help a child thrive, foster family unity and prevent institutionalization.

Education - *Protect the right of students with disabilities to appropriate, inclusive, publicly-funded education that 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.*

Students with disabilities require individualized supports tailored to meet their needs in order to be educated along side their peers without disabilities. An appropriate public education for students with disabilities should include the necessary array and intensity of services for children with all levels of need, beginning in early education programs and should lead to employment, enrollment in postsecondary education, or both within one year of leaving high school. Education supports for students with disabilities must also address the behavioral health needs of students in order to prevent inappropriate disciplinary referrals in lieu of proper behavior management.

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.*

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People with disabilities want the same opportunities to have meaningful jobs and careers as do all other working age individuals. In 2011, 17.8 percent of working age people with disabilities were in the labor force compared to 63.6 percent of working age people with no disability. Employment services and preparation for work should begin in public education. A sound foundation from school will help students transition to post secondary education and a career path after graduation.

Housing - *Increase the opportunity for people with disabilities to obtain affordable, accessible housing.*

Failure to provide housing affordable to people with disabilities impedes the success of state health and human services programs to serve individuals in their communities rather than nursing homes and institutions that consume a disproportionate share of limited public resources. Setting affordable housing standards for persons earning 0 and 110% of the level of Supplemental Security Income (\$698 per month), will allow Texas to monitor, plan for, and allocate resources to groups identified by state affordable housing programs as special needs priorities who are currently priced out. Affordable housing should be located accessible to health and community services.

Long Term Services and Supports - *Improve the system of long-term services and supports to ensure the availability of quality community-based services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and emphasize providing services in integrated, community settings thereby reducing reliance on institutional services.*

People with disabilities continue to wait years for the community-based long term services and supports they need. Services for both adults and children are not adequate to meet the growing demand. Simultaneously, programs struggle to provide quality services to individuals with complex medical and behavioral health needs. As a result, people with disabilities are forced to either forego care or receive it in a more restrictive, institutional setting. The state has struggled to expand community based services while continuing to fund costly institutional services and their needed improvements.

Transportation - *Expand cost-effective accessible urban and rural transportation options for people with disabilities and elderly.*

State funding for public transportation is less than \$2 per person in Texas compared to the national average of \$37 per person. Increased state funding for transportation services, including urban and rural bus systems, paratransit services, and connector services is supported by a growing demand fueled by gas prices, congestion, an aging population and continuing population growth. For people with disabilities public transportation is the difference between isolation and the ability to be part of the community – to be employed, go to school, see the doctor, shop, and socialize.

Every person in America has the right to live in their own home, work at a regular job, seek an education and interact socially. This includes the 475,265 people with developmental disabilities in the state of Texas.