TO: Sunset Commission Members

Jane Nelson, Chair
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Dawn Buckingham, M.D.

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Harold V. Dutton, Jr.
Larry Gonzales
Richard Peña Raymond
Tom Luce

FROM: Laurie Glaze, LMSW
Executive Director

RE: Response to Sunset Staff Report with Hearing Materials – Health and Human Services Commission and System Issues, November 2014

DATE: 21 November 2014

One Voice Texas and its individual members have actively participated in the Sunset Review process throughout 2014 including hosting information forums between stakeholders and Sunset Staff, responding to surveys, submitting written recommendations to Sunset staff, and meeting individually with Sunset staff. We are very appreciative to the Sunset staff and members of the Sunset Commission for their diligence and efforts to better understand and make recommendations on a very complex system.

In its report on the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), Sunset staff recommend consolidation and centralization of some services that, under House Bill 2292 (2003), were intended to eliminate redundancy in an effort to save money and increase overall efficiency. While some of this has been accomplished, much is still incomplete.

In its response to the Sunset staff report on HHSC, One Voice Texas supports the following actions:

- Creation of electronic records systems that enables community providers to accurately relay services provided to clients and includes specific data needed for reporting provider outcomes;
- Data collection among all agencies that is coordinated and regularly reviewed to determine purpose, internal utilization, coordination with contract providers, value of data, and continued need;
- Improved sharing of relevant information regarding clients who receive services from multiple public systems;
- Creation of standardized contracting, regulatory, reporting, and billing systems. Community providers report numerous difficulties including multiple points of contact, delayed announcements of applications, limited feedback on deliverables, cumbersome renewal processes, contradictory information from contracting and regulatory sides, modification of contract terms, and lapses in funding. All of these challenges create inefficiencies for community providers and limit the ability of both providers and the state agencies to identify consumers who may be involved with multiple systems;


5120 WOODWAY DRIVE, SUITE 6000 HOUSTON, TEXAS 77056 Office: 713.333.2232 or 713.333.2204 Fax: 713.333.2220

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Strengthening the ability of the public to report concerns about policy and practice by increasing the authority and detailing the function of the ombudsman office in HHSC through consolidation of ombudsman offices;

The 1998 Sunset Commission recommendation to consolidate all prevention functions within one department has never been realized and prevention services across state agencies remain fragmented in ways that lead to inefficient funding structures and fragmented services and gaps caused by agencies not communicating about joint issues. Prevention should be seen as an issue of child and family well-being versus an effort that can be divided into categories of child abuse prevention, juvenile delinquency prevention, etc. However, it is concerning that more prevention functions would be moved into an existing Prevention and Early Intervention Division that has struggled to maintain adequate funding and expertise to meet its objectives;

Continuation of advisory councils that are intended to be the local voices to the state agencies and are extremely beneficial to consumers, community stakeholders, etc. As with other efforts to bring efficiencies and eliminate redundancy, these advisory councils need to coordinate and undergo regular reviews to determine purpose, utilization, coordination with community stakeholders, value of council information, and continued need.

Lastly, we ask that the Sunset Commission and the 84th Texas Legislature continue to always be mindful of the critical need for strategic planning that includes expertise from inside the agencies but also independent organizational expertise that can guide the process and serve to ensure Texas invests its money wisely.

Again, on behalf of the 100+ member organizations and Board of Directors of One Voice Texas, we thank you for all that you are doing to strengthen the health and human services delivery system.

Contact Information:
Laurie Glaze
713.333.2232
lglaze@onevoicetexas.org