



Dear Sunset Commission members,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities. The Sunset report, released on October 3, 2014, addressed many important issues for the people of the State of Texas on the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. The Sunset staff noted the agency's reactionary nature which has made little progress in the prevention of various problems facing Texans. It is obvious that most of the budget drivers of HHSC are linked to issues that are indeed preventable including substance abuse; poor nutrition and health practices of pregnant women; and child maltreatment and associated mental illness. As an Office that is exclusively focused on prevention, their work encompasses preventing disabilities before they occur and the prevention of secondary disabilities through early intervention. Their goals clearly align with the Sunset Committee's recommendations of improving efficiency, collaboration, and efficacy.

A recent survey conducted by the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute indicated that early intervention and prevention was the top policy issue related to children. To achieve this goal, TOPDD believes that all state agencies must make prevention the centerpiece of their efforts. Prevention touches all aspects of HHSC and beyond, including criminal justice, education, and economic development. When people think of prevention, they often think of a "program". However, prevention is far more than a program. An intentional paradigm shift towards prevention and health promotion will result in a more efficient and effective HHSC.

Throughout the years, TOPDD has mobilized thousands of Texans to become active in the prevention of developmental disabilities. Considering the size of TOPDD's staff, it is amazing that it has been the catalyst for rule making for the state; system wide training for CPS caseworkers; the development of a statewide training network; and the application of model prevention programs at treatment centers. Its growing work in the area of mental health of children with developmental disabilities is extremely important for the state. They seek to build on these successes and share the Sunset staff's passion for developing more proactive systems of care that work upstream, save taxpayer money, are effective, and improve the health and well-being of all Texans.

The Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities is established as a public-private partnership that requires the Office to raise funds--a highly innovative model. This model has allowed TOPDD to secure resources to work across systems and mobilize professionals to advance the state's knowledge of prevention and intervention.

Currently, TOPDD is involved in prevalence research that will be groundbreaking for Texas and the nation. The success of this research has the potential to pave the way to bring millions of federal dollars to Texas. TOPDD has been largely self-sustaining and has funded important prevention work in partnership with non-profits in Texas. Through the newly formed HHSC, TOPDD seeks to embrace new opportunities to deepen its penetration across systems. The time is now.

Thank you for considering my plea to support the TOPDD office. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Linda Kagey
Owner/Manager