

Sunset Review Committee

June 25, 2014

This is my written testimony as it pertains to the Supported Employment and Employment Assistance services provided by DARS and DADS.

Employment Assistance is provided to those with disabilities to obtain a job and Supported Employment is provided to maintain a job, such as with job supports/job coaches. DADS is supposed to provide both of these services in the waivers. DARS also is supposed to provide these services. These services are not being provided according to my personal experience as well as the experience of other families.

Please consider this my personal written testimony that includes my story as well as the stories and concerns of others. I also have included a list of recommendations for DARS and DADS as they pertain to all the stories I am submitting. These recommendations are following the stories. These concerns and recommendations have also been shared with DARS and DADS staff.

Please contact me if you would like any more details or information on these issues. Thank you so much for your attention to these concerns.

Linda Levine

.I asked families to share their stories as they relate to DARS. Those stories follow. These stories can now also be related to DADS since now they are now providing Employment Assistance and Supported Employment services in all the waivers and I am sure these same concerns will need to be addressed with DADS.

This first story is ours: Our son is 24 years old and has severe autism. Despite all his obstacles to employment, he has been competitively employed at the Hilton Austin for over seven years with the supports of a job coach. He did not get this job with any help of any school or state agency. We did it all ourselves. He would have been turned away from DARS as “unemployable.” We share our story as an example of how someone with a significant disability can lead a happy, productive and purposeful life and how state agencies need to be aware that people with disabilities should not be perceived as “unemployable.” Our son is proof of this.

After my son had been working at a hotel for sometime, we decided to contact DARS for job coaching funding. We had not contacted them prior to employment since other families did not have success with their children getting services. At intake we met with the Transition Counselor that would have been ours if our son attended school. She seemed very uncomfortable being around our son, someone who does not talk and could not respond to her. Also she was not knowledgeable about his disability or limitations. At this first meeting and several times later she told us that it is good our son has a job and a job coach because not only would DARS not have been able to find him a job, but even if they did, they would not be able to find him a job coach. She had a checklist of items to complete and seemed driven to complete them whether they related to our son or not. She insisted he have a psych eval which we told her could not be completed in the usual fashion since our son was nonverbal. Also, we did not see the value this would have on his services. Since she insisted, we had a psych eval over the phone which was of no benefit to our son and DARS paid for this.

She also became very anxious when she wanted our son to sign forms and he was unable to do so. She even wanted him to scribble on the forms. We informed her that he was only 17 so his signature was not valid anyway. It was not until she asked a supervisor that she calmed down and realized that we could sign the forms.

IPE- After our son was approved for job coaching services, we completed the IPE with the counselor. As I look back on this document I see that the goal was for him to reach employment and he already was employed so this makes no sense and serves no purpose. Also the steps include; job leads, which are not appropriate since he was already working. I also am confused why he is not in the supported employment program since he meets those criteria of 1).significant disability 2). needs considerable assistance and 3).needs ongoing supports. That is an issue I will address with our counselor. But it does show that there is some break down in terms of employment plans. Again, this may need to be monitored and more training administered to the counselors.

Job Coaches I was given the list of job coaching agencies. I called everyone on the list. About half of them were no longer in business. The others did not have a job coach with any training in autism or behavior supports. I was told by them that it is good we already have a job coach because they would not be able to provide a qualified person. So we had our present job coach apply to be a provider through DARS and our son has kept the same job coach. This consistency has made the job much more stable for our son. As I have been looking at the qualifications for Job coaches, I am shocked to see that all you need is a HS diploma or GED and just any sort of employment history. You do not need any experience with disabilities at all. A job coach for someone with autism is going to have to be a professional person who can task analyze, make and follow a BIP, take data, etc. This person needs to have experience with this population.

Long Term Supports Needed

Our son is going to require long term, possibly life long supports in order to continue to be gainfully

employed. As mentioned above, these supports include:

Safety

Keeping him focused (ex: decrease stim behavior)

Transitions- what to do next/after one job skill completed, where to go next

Follow BIP

Task analyze to teach new job skills:

Reinforce as needed

Not just job coaching to teach skills but behavioral supports

Limit distractions or routine changes to avoid confusion which could lead to unwanted behaviors

And again you can see where these cannot be natural supports.

Where to get long term supports? THIS IS MY MAIN AREA OF CONCERN

With supported employment Benchmark 5 Job Stability it states this is completed when transition to extended services is possible and everyone is satisfied. Benchmark 6 VR Closure states this is complete when goals are met and extended services are in place to maintain employment. WHERE ARE THESE EXTENDED SERVICES? I have been told there are none. My son is not receiving supported employment services, but even if he was, I have asked about long term supports and have been told there are none. I have been told that DARS provides short term supports and there is no carryover to extend these supports to keep people employed.

When [my son] was in school, the school brought DARS in just before he turned 18 (about 6 years ago). The DARS rep came in and spent 10 minutes with him. She came to his ARD shortly after and told me that there was nothing DARS could do for him. The teacher and I went out at the start of the next school year and found 1 paying job and 2 volunteer jobs for him. He had those jobs for several years (until we moved). I spent at least an hour on the phone with the assistant DARS director telling him what had happened about 4-5 years ago. He told me things were changing but it was a slow process. We have never been back to DARS. UT and my daughter through her work with UT has helped find [my son] volunteer jobs since we have moved.

Here's my story from 2006-2007. [My son] was in his final year at ***** High School and was on the caseload of a very busy DARS counselor. I think she served 3-4 high schools. She referred [my son] for psychological testing over spring break which involved going to a private office where he was supposed to sit in a classroom and take a multiple choice test along with a couple dozen other people, none of whom appeared to be severely disabled by my standards. I tried to modify the test for [my son] but it became clear that his vocalizations were disturbing the other applicants. I told the proctor I didn't think this would be very productive and we left. I don't remember the specifics of the rest of that day and the next day but the gist was that the psychologist did an individual assessment of [my son] and determined that a sheltered workshop was the suitable vocational setting for him. I asked her why we didn't just start with the individual assessment for a guy with moderate to severe autism and she said it was simply too expensive to evaluate everyone that way. Subsequently, I met with the DARS counselor again. She asked that we meet at a Starbucks so that we could speak off the record. She said that we could go ahead and follow through with the DARS application but that she really didn't think that the agency could offer [my son] any real assistance. I deeply appreciated her honesty and found absolutely no fault with her work. Within the parameters of her workload, she was doing a very good job. At that point, I gave up on DARS. I know that it has been a number of years and that things could have improved by now, but I haven't been willing to subject our family to any more of this sort of hassle. Until I hear more success stories about individuals who need lifelong one-on-one support, it doesn't seem worth the trouble. Sorry to be negative. I know DARS is providing great services for people with mild to moderate disabilities.

The biggest challenge I have faced is that DARS nor the school district have assisted me in preparing for my sons transition. Once my son became of age DARS discontinued paying for many of the services my son was receiving in the past such as hippotherapy. I asked our DARS rep if they would provide assisted employment services and her reply was that it would only be temporary. She stated that assisted employment is meant to train and prepare the client for employment. Because my son is low functioning this was not an option for him. I feel that DARS should provide ongoing supported employment for adults such as my son that will need ongoing support in the workplace. Now our only option would more than likely be a sheltered workshop where I feel would only contribute to my sons low drive.

We've met with DARS in San Marcos (they have been supporting my daughter through school.) We talked with them about employment and were told immediately that DARS would not be able to find her a good job. I thought that was kind of disconcerting because I thought that they were supposed to help in that area? I mean I didn't expect them to be an employment agency, but it was almost like, "don't bother with trying to get us to help you unless it's academic."

My son was referred to a DARS representative by his school district at age 18. The DARS representative met with me and my son for about 15 minutes. She asked questions of my son which he answered. She observed my son in his volunteer jobs at his high school off campus. She called and asked to meet with me. She came to my house and said my son is on the borderline and at his time she did not think he was capable of competitive employment. She said that over the years DARS funding had been cut and they don't provide services to kids with significant disabilities. I didn't want my son to hear this to discourage him moving forward with a quest for a job. I worked carefully with his school and he found a paid job and several job trials including work at UT and working at Seton filing medical records. My son is about to age out of school and I contacted DARS again to ask for employment assistance. I found my son a great job close to his house but need a job coach to work with him to make this job trial turn into a paid job. DARS said they could not provide services for my son because he already had a job. I explained to DARS that this was not yet a paid job and he could not move this to a paid job without a job coach and employment assistance. DARS said to go to DADS. I am paying privately for a job coach because I could not wait on DARS or DADS.

I think my biggest concern is that within our district DARS does not follow through with what they say they will do and they tend to work with our "higher" level kiddos and really don't help the others. This has been a constant for many years.

I have been very frustrated with DARS and employment. Here are some of the things that have happened to us: 1) Upon graduation from high school in 2007, our son attended ACC as he wasn't emotionally mature enough to handle a 4 year college and didn't have the skills to live in a dorm. As he was finishing at ACC (after 3 years) with an Associates degree, he announced that he was tired of school and wanted a break. We said "Okay". Through all of his counseling sessions with DARS they had repeatedly talked to him about 'getting a job when you graduate'. So we went to DARS in the Spring to say 'how do we get him a job when school finishes in May'. They said they would have to do an evaluation of him to see what his skills were and where they could place him. Despite repeated calls from me, the evaluation didn't occur until August/September! Almost 8 months from when we first asked for help. Of course, he didn't have a job all summer. When the evaluation was done, we were told we would have to wait for the results (till October), then they said they would start to see where they could help him find a job. By February they still had not found him a job. He ended up enrolling at Texas State the following August. So, he was unemployed and not in school for 15 months!!!! (I did manage to find him some volunteer jobs to keep him from being totally bored) 2) Remember, DARS had done an eval on him for job placement. So in the middle of the spring semester after he started at TSU we approached DARS about getting a summer job. They told us that they couldn't help him get a summer job because they were helping him get a college education. They could only help him with one goal at a time! So how ridiculous is this - my son is high

functioning and is attending college. (Theoretically to be able to get a job). However, while they are assisting him with college (paying for tuition etc) they can't help him get a summer job. So he sat at home each of the last 3 summers, bored. We ask each year and get the same answer.....choose one goal, we can't help you with both. Despite his intelligence (his degree will be in Physics) he will not be successful in a job without a job coach to start with. Someone to help him understand office culture and the socially correct things to do. Just for a short time..... But we cannot get DARS to either a) help him find a job or b) commit to providing a job coach. So much for helping him lead a productive, useful life and be self supporting.

I'm writing to share my family's experience with DARS. My son has received services from DARS (formerly TRC) since 2000. Everyone we have dealt with there has been respectful and helpful, first in getting him some educational assistance and later in helping him find jobs. My son is a good and reliable worker and he enjoys work; he was selected as employee of the month various times at his last job, but at Christmastime 2013, the place he was working closed its doors.

At the beginning of January 2014 he contacted DARS for assistance finding something else. It took almost 4 months for the actual job search to begin, and he didn't get a job until May. His understanding is that there is quite a long waiting period before you can be approved and the job search can begin. If that's the case, I don't understand it since he has SSI, is clearly disabled, and has received assistance from DARS before. If there is in fact a long waiting period, I would suggest that it be shortened in the case of repeat clients. My son and I imagine many others like him, need the structure, satisfaction, and human contact that work provides, in addition to the income. Months of unemployment creates a lot of stress--emotional and financial--not only on the disabled person but for their support net. I would like to see whatever needs to change change so that disabled people can get jobs more quickly. If that means policy changes, I think they should be made. If it means more staff and more budget, I would support that, too. As I said, we have found the calibre of people working there to be consistently high, and if the main thing standing in the way of more efficient job placement services is lack of personnel, I would encourage the legislature to appropriate more funds so the department can be adequately staffed with people of equally high calibre.

Our DARS experience was short and frustrating. First, when we went to orientation, we weren't informed that we were going to be in a large group. We assumed it would be a one on one interview. My son was not mentally prepared to deal with functioning in a large group. Then we kept having the same circular discussions, we would ask IF a service was available (not if we could get that service) merely what services they did offer, then we would be told that didn't have an exact list of what they could do. (They did seem to have a large list of things that they couldn't do.) They would ask what my son wanted to do, expecting him to advocate for himself, which he couldn't do. When he would answer yes or no to questions about his goals and aspirations and together we would explain what help he would need to accomplish those goals, they would inform us that THEY get to decide what goals are good for him and that THEY would decide what he needs to achieve the goals that THEY determine. But some how that is supposed to be his plan for the future? The final straw that broke us....we were 10 minutes late for an intake appointment. I got lost. Totally my fault. It was supposed to be 2 hour long interview. My son would have totally shut down after 1 hour, anyway. They refused to even start the intake interview because there would not be time enough to complete it, and it had to be done in one sitting. There was no point in rescheduling when I knew my son would be unable to advocate for himself and participate enough to even complete the intake appointment. I wrote them a detailed letter explaining that they were NOT ready for the Autism epidemic and that they needed to make major changes to their processes, because ready or NOT the first wave of the Autism epidemic were becoming adults. People with autism benefit and thrive in an environment where the rules and expectations are clear and adaptable to meet their needs.

I represent myself as the mother and support to my 29 year old son who has high functioning autism and is a current client of DARS. I offer these comments to describe my son's experience thus far through the DARS system in hope that it will help lead to improved service delivery to people with autism and mental health challenges. My son's first contact with DARS was on September 12, 2012 beginning with an orientation at DARS field office. He was told to return when the fall semester at ACC was completed. The next contact was on January 17, 2013 at the application meeting with DARS Field Office. He was told that DARS has up to 60 days to determine eligibility. He was not contacted until he received a letter the end of May 2013 saying that case would be closed because no contact was made. My son e-mailed and called DARS Field Office to say that my son wished to have services, but he was moving back to my home further away from the field office. The request was made to transfer the case. The Counselor never returned phone call. Upon applying at the South field office, it was determined that the other field office had used an incorrect e-mail address. I never saw any evidence of a phone call being made to my son in the months my son had been living on his own. Upon calling the South Field Office, my son was advised to start with an orientation session. He attended on August 27, 2013 and completed new application for services. The first appointment with Counselor scheduled September 4, 2013, had to be rescheduled because the appointment time had been double booked.

The actual first appointment occurred September 10, 2013. The Counselor made it clear that the services should be requested by the applicant without a parent involvement. She was quick to make an accommodation when I advised her that severe anxiety is part of the disability and that my presence may be essential to success. The counselor noted that not all people are able to work and that my son would go through an extended evaluation with an Individualized Plan for Employment. It is discouraging for an individual who has struggled through years of mental health challenges as severe anxiety, social anxiety, depression, as well as other autism related physical problems, to hear the immediate pronouncement: "You may not be able to achieve the goal of employment." The counselor authorized psychological evaluation. The testing with the psychologist was done September 30, 2013 and October 2, 2013. An appointment with DARS Counselor Establishing Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for Trial Work Experience/Extended Evaluation was held November 21, 2013. The counselor purchased an interview with the psychologist to review the results of the psychological evaluation with my son and me. The actual appointment did not occur until January 20, 2014 at which time my son met with psychologist to get the report on the psychological testing and the results of the testing to help him understand the type of work, workplace and work situation in which he could be successful. The Vocational Evaluation done January 8 and January 9, 2014 by a Counseling and Evaluation contractor done January 8 and January 9, 2014. My son does not have a report of the findings but was sent the piece of paper which shows occupations that he is best suited.

Perhaps you should start with "barriers to education".

A couple of years ago, DARS case workers were telling my friend & her daughter, who has CP, that they don't pay for college. Then DARS changed their story to "we only pay for community college", then to "community college is all you need". They put the girl through days & hours of IQ & mental health tests, when there was no history to indicate a need for such. The girl was in all AP classes in high school, in the top 20 or 15%, & already had 30+ hours of college credits when she graduated from high school. Yet they put her through all this testing & humiliated her every chance they got. We finally got it all straightened out & they paid for her college at a 4yr university, but it was not done with a "supportive" attitude, but with a demeaning attitude.

Then, just a few weeks ago, when calling DARS to get some info for my son, a local DARS worker made a point of telling me that "DARS does not pay for college".

Really.

I am responding concerning the work that DARS has not done for my son. This is NOT going to be Brief because he has gone through 3 jobs since last year, and still don't know why he is having all of the problems. At every turn He is the only one blamed for the outcomes, and yet he is the ONLY one with a disability.

I am the mother of my son. He has High Functioning Aspergers Syndrome, Central Auditory Processing Disorder and other illness, Yet he is very intelligent. I would tell the schools that he attended that he had a problem with his ears (heard too much, everything in a room, or area), and his sensory perception insufficient (he had to extend his hands to touch who or whatever was next to him to find his place in that room, desk or seat. He is a tactile, visual, and auditory learner. If he touches it, sees it, hears about it, he can understand, and usually master it. That being said was the problem, he is an African American male, and was told that he should not be that smart. With all of his smartness, he was very clumsy, he has dropped and broken 3 lap tops, and 3 tablet screens. He is constantly dropping things, and it frustrates him.

I have researched many places, and found what he needed, and I asked DARS to allow him to acquire special head phones that muffle the sounds, ILS (Integrated Listening Systems Therapy to help with his hearing, and sensory difficulties, and Interactive Metronome Therapy, which will help him understand timing how to come into a conversation, and how to exit it. How to respond according to the flow of the conversation even though sometimes he may miss a word or two from the conversation. If DARS would have allowed him to have these three Therapies my son would not have appeared as if he was retarded, and become victimized by bullying to the point that took ill. He would have understood verbal and non-verbal conversations. He would have been ready to work at the three jobs that he was fired from. He was ways denied requested, needful services by DARS. My son was the target of very severe bullying from Administrators, Teachers, and Students. I homeschooled him online since he was 15-years old. He is now a High School Graduate (in November 2013) with his GED). His first Two Jobs was through the CIS (Communities In Schools). I feel that they used my son and many of the other Special Needs students to receive a big Governmental Grant. They had no trained personnel working with these children. This was many of these children alone with my son first time ever trying to work, maintain, and stay on a Job.

DARS had given my son a Job Coach for a very brief time (because I had wrote to Austin, and complained that they would not give him any Job Training, or Transition Program Training. He wants to become a Airplane Flyer, designer, and Mechanic. My son started working with East Texas Services here in Waco, Texas. This was the first and last time he ever worked with a Job Coach. He was soon taken out of the program because DARS would not pay for it. Their reason being that he needed his GED, or High School Diploma first. His first two jobs through CIS was a nightmare. No job coach was given but he had a young woman who was working for CIS, and she was not trained to work with Special Needs students. She would dash in ask the employer a couple questions, and dash out. My son was never trained for any of the jobs that he took. When we arrived at the local Radio station where he started working at his first job, no one knew who he was, or why he was there. We waited until about 10:00 am, before someone came and took him to the back. The man behind the glass petition just beeped him inside, and told me bye. I left but I called his CIS representative and she came up there and figured out what he was suppose to do that day. He worked on this for the next few days.

One of the DJ's told my son that he could make some extra money if he sold some of his tickets for a Concert. When he came home with the tickets, not knowing what he should do with them, I immediately called his CIS Representative again and asked about my son soliciting tickets for the DJ. Of course the DJ denied everything, and said that my son went into the drawer and took the tickets. My son said he didn't even know what to do with them. He worked for a couple of days after that, and was sent home, with the excuse, that he just wasn't suited for the job. This almost crushed him, and when the CIS Representative presented him with another opportunity he was hesitant. CIS placed him on another job, still denying my request for a Job Coach even after the terrible failure of the first. By this time my son was skeptical and so was I. He worked in NAMI (National Alliance of Mental Health) office with three women. When we talked to the owner she said that they had just gotten their office, and everything was really slow and boring but together they would get through it. My son's job was mostly filing, copying etc. He made some mistakes

like listening to his headphones before break, or using the computer to surf the web during break. They explained to him why he should not do this. I explained when he came home, he understood, and did not make that mistake again. His Supervisor told me this when I called the next day.

My son thought that everything was going fine until one day the untrained supervisor from CIS came in and talked to the employer, and then to my son. She did not take him in another room, and ask him any questions she asked him in front of the employer how did he like the job. Please note that my son has Aspergers Syndrome, therefore, he will be blunt, truthful to a fault. There is no filter there that was going to make this a smooth landing. A trained person who understood Aspergers would never have put him on the spot like that in front of his employer. That is what people with Aspergers do they state the truth come what may, not with the intent to hurt anyone, but with straight forward honesty. He said, "I think that the ladies that I work with are very smart, but the work is boring, but my mother told me that there are going to be days when your job is boring, and you can't quit, you just have to do the work if you want to get paid, so I will do the work." The reason I know exactly what he said is because just before the CIS representative fired him she called me and told me what took place. She said that my son embarrassed her in front of the employer. My first question to her was didn't you see that he had Aspergers Syndrome it was on his application? Do you know what that means? Why did you not take him out of the room and ask him a question like that? To this she replied that she did this to all of her students, and didn't have any problems before.

All things are not equal when it comes to disabilities. There are blind children, mental, and physically ill children, and there are children like my son. He is smart, articulate, can tell you every planet, it's function, and how long it will take to travel there (in Miles), because he loves Science and Math, but when he is in a conversation with his peers, they do not know what he is talking about, and he do not understand them. This really floored my son, and totally confused him. He didn't understand what he said that would have embarrassed the CIS Supervisor. He didn't want to work anymore because he felt that no matter what he said or did it would be wrong, and he would get fired for it. I waited, allowed him to go to MCC, and study for his GED. He took the tests and passed in November 2013. Then I asked DARS to allow my son to take Job Adjustment Training this too was a nightmare waiting to happen. he worked for the Goodwill Industries Hanging Clothes. Even though his DARS Representative at the time was aware of all of the skills that my son possessed the ONLY job that DARS have in the Metropolis of Waco Texas for disabled students, Adults men and women is at the local Goodwill Industry. My son volunteers with me for Meals on Wheels. He used to help make the plates, and seal them, and then go out on runs and deliver them with me. Yet the only job that DARS have for people with Disabilities is Good Will Industries Hanging Clothes all day long.

He was trained by a woman at Goodwill. She taught him how to hang the clothes, how to take those that were torn to the special department, and how not to drop the hangers. She also informed him that it didn't matter how he worked just so he completed his task daily just as she had taught him. There were two Racks, one for the clothes, and one for the hangers. Special Needs personnel kept those racks full of hangers. My son said that they would be jam packed. He worked with a girl with special needs who would get tired and sit on the floor, which was dangerous because the heisters were always zooming by with boxes of clothes and other items. She was warned about this but still sit there and hung clothes daily. One day my son tripped over her on the floor. Nothing was told to her about this. There was a older woman that had something wrong with her legs, and knees and she had a stool. Then there was her husband who had a disability who worked alongside her. My son's job was to hang clothes for 6 hours from 9:00-2:00 with two 15 minute breaks, and a 30-minute lunch break. When he brought up the fact that he almost stepped on the girl seated on the floor, he was told that he shouldn't worry about other employers just worry about himself from his Supervisor named D. She was a Tyrant and a Bully, but I told my son to hang in there, and everything was going to work out. I was wrong.

Everyday she would find something wrong with his work. She would call him in the office scold him for about 15 minutes, and then come back and bother him again. The first day he used his cell phone to get a call from his Autism Group Instructor. He was reprimanded and didn't do it again, this is what D told me. Then it became more and more small things. One day when he was on his lunch break he was approached by D's assistant, and asked why didn't he eat his Taco? Really, what was that about? He was getting to the point that he did not want to go to work. Everyday D was either coming out of her office

arguing with him or calling him into her office to scold him about something that was insignificant. My son and her had a argument about the way he was hanging clothes. He had been trained by N, and he was doing a good job because she said that he was, and the store said that they were filling up quickly as a result. However, she came out of her office, asked my son what was he doing? He said he replied, "hanging clothes". To this she responded that she could see that but why wasn't he using the hanger rack filled with hangers. My son said that when he used the rack his fingers were too big to fit into all of those hangers, and he spent most of his time picking them off the floor, so he would take a handful of hangers to the clothes rack place them on the end, and space them out and hand up the clothes like that. She wanted him to CHANGE, and do it HER way.

Again untrained Supervisors, who do not have the best interest of the person with the disability at heart. Aspergers People have a problem with rapid changes. She would have known that if she was trained. They have a problem expressing themselves, understanding verbal, and non-verbal cues. My son said that he tried to do it her way but could not. The hangers kept falling, and it was time to go home and he just walked out, and clocked out and came home. I called for a meeting with the D and my son's new DARS Case manager T. She came we all went into a conference room. D, and my son was upset. D had told my son that Aspergers was not a real disability, and I asked D was she a Psychiatrist, and the DARS Rep. said that it appeared to have been miscommunication between the way N Trained him initially, and the way D wanted him to start doing it. D hesitantly said that my son was doing a good job with hanging the clothes but.....The very next day my son said that he had to go to the restroom. He said that he had held it for as long as he could. He is very time conscious, and said that it was 11:50 am. My son has a problem with his rectal area, since he was abused as a child by his daycare provider while I worked. He will hold his body, and not go for days and then it just erupts, that is another part of his disability, and she would have known that if she was trained. My son said that she was waiting outside of the bathroom, took him into her office to scold him again for about 15-minutes, and then he went to lunch. When he came back she called him back into the office to scold him and this time he told her to leave him alone, and stop bullying him. She told him to clock out, and he did. Who stands by the door of the bathroom and wait for a person to come out? It sounds like she has special needs, and does not need to work with these kinds of people. Why is Goodwill Industries the ONLY place that people with Special Needs can work for in this city that is the size of Waco, Texas? My son has more skills, and can do many other tasks. Why wasn't he allowed to work with the gentlemen in the computer room? In the store? I received a call from Mr. S at DARS after I wrote to Austin, Texas. He had read my information, and thought that P maybe has more Special Needs Problems then they thought, and maybe he needs testing. In the letter I requested special head phones that muffle the sounds, ILS (Integrated Listening Systems Therapy to help with his hearing, and sensory difficulties, and Interactive Metronome Therapy, which will help him understand timing how to come into a conversation, and how to exit it. How to respond according to the flow of the conversation even though sometimes he may miss a word or two from the conversation. He wants to attend College, and move into his own apartment, but does not have independent living skills. Yet with all that I only would get to have my son re-tested and given another false diagnosis as he was given in the past. He was diagnosed with ADD, ADHD, Bipolar, and what ever other diagnosis that they could pull out of the DSM 4 and 5. Below are the God-Given skills that my son possesses. Please note that his race does not determine his intelligence. He needs to be able to learn how to work, how to socialize, how to transition from an adolescent to an adulthood. He needs help with these skills, and DARS can help him but will not. How can a disabled African American Male even apply for a job unless they are trained to fill out the Application first? The system is broke, and needs fixing right now!! All children are loved by their parents regardless of their race. Please see my son by the Content of his Character, and not the color of his skin. He earned his GED in November 2014. He has been flying Airplanes since he was 15. He builds computers, Robots, Legos, Bionicles, welds, does wood work, Plays Chess, and Video Games. All Disabilities are not Equal, but those with them should be treated with the same respect as those without.

During summertime (high school/college), we can't provide employment & supports because 3 months is not long enough.

We can't provide DARS job supports for a job you find yourself; only for jobs that DARS finds you.

You must have more use of your hands to be employable.

You are not employable if you are dependent on attendants to get you ready and drive you (this was a receptionist who schedules people for appointments, so my child asked for the appointment anyway).

You can only have one goal at a time, so during your spring semester of college, we can't help you find employment for the summer because two goals would overlap. [education and work goals]

You are too-high functioning to require DARS assistance with finding employment.

You already/previously found temporary employment so you don't need DARS' employment assistance.

You only received transition assistance from high school to college, so you are limited to educational assistance only.

You don't have enough employment history for DARS to reasonably assist you.

Because you turned down the one and only job you were offered during your 2 years as our client you must not want to work. Never mind that out of the 6 places you wanted to work, this was the one place you said you didn't want to work at, over and over again, it was the only interview we could get for you. We understand your first choice was Kroger but they weren't hiring (for 2 whole years they weren't hiring?!)

This shows how they do not use the DISCOVERY PROCESS to assist someone to obtain a job. A job is not a job. They need to do a very specific job interest assessment and not the one that was just created. It needs to be specific to job interests. There are many great ones to use. The one by Callahan for example. Then there is a process that matches the person's interests and limitations to specific jobs. Then those jobs are found and "tried out" for a few weeks to see if it is a good fit. You don't just place the person in whatever job DARS finds. That won't ever work. The job search is to be based solely on the person who is seeking employment.

I suggest someone from DARS be required to attend the annual APSE (Asso of People Supporting Employment First) conference where the "state of the art" employment specialists share their successes. Representatives from all over the country attend but TEXAS had no one from DARS that I was aware of. DARS not only needs to know how to help someone obtain and maintain employment but they need to DO IT.

You are unemployable.

You have too many limitations

You will need long term job supports and DARS just provides short term supports

You need to complete psych testing, etc

You will not be able to transition to natural supports on the job site

We will not be able to find you a job coach

We will not be able to find you a job

One of the problems with vocational assessments (based on interest) is that there are many types of jobs that are not referenced. My son wanted to go into culinary arts, and even after 3 or 4 interest inventories this never came up. The school coordinator wondered why and looked -- there wasn't a single reference made to restaurant or hospitality.

Or just send home lengthy interest tests that were really hard to understand repeatedly all through the last two years of high school with no until we just gave up.

I'm experiencing frustration with DRS because now they won't take an application on my 17 year old son - they used to serve jr's and seniors but now they won't pick him up until the spring of his senior year. All he needs is some basic job coaching and he'd come out of HS with work experience. So I've given up on them at this time. Will have him apply when he can but I'm already expecting a battle on them paying for college. And if I-a person that works for DARS- have problems it breaks my heart to think about those parents have no clue what they should be doing. Especially if they've never been exposed to disability other than their child.

Yes, I think DARS took one look at my daughter in a power chair and thought of their mental list of physical jobs, and because they hadn't developed relationships with folks who offer call-center positions, for example, they found reasons to say 'no'.

My son is 27 with a mentality of a 4 year old. He is not fully trained with bowel movements so they said they could not assist him. They say they do not provide toilet training so that he could become employable. He loved working at HEB as a bagger when he was in high school with the job coach.

The school during the transition planning time heard my daughter say "I want to work in Target" -- school said great! Let's see how to make that happen. End result, no one in the district knew who's job it was to go and work on the job placement. DARS on campus -- for our area the assigned person had not been on campus very long prior to our daughter aging out. We did attempt to work with her but like others have said -- they just couldn't provide the services that my daughter would need. Including a job coach -- finding the right job for her -- having pay for the job. Our particular office has minimal time with the clients as they seemed to be gone more to Austin for training rather than being in and working with clients. The counselor that we had -- didn't actually work with my daughter and in fact, when they did meet -- she talked down to her -- wasn't very happy about that. In other instances from this area -- southern Brazoria County -- the office does not seem nor want to be helpful with those that have disabilities. I know of another young lady 26 with PDD-NOS/Autism -- higher functioning but with behavioral issues -- and the office just flat turned them away.

I agree this is largely attitudinal. Our DARS counselor in Clear Lake was wonderful and very supportive. The one in our current location - not so much. Talked down to me, to my daughter and was more interested in paperwork than providing services or assistance.

My child is in the 19+ program and gets Supported Employment (SE) services from the ISD. She also gets academic support from DARS to take continuing ed (CE) classes at the community college. In the past year, DARS has done a good job with funding for CE classes, but the ISD job coach has done a poor job of developing jobs for her or teaching her how to find job openings and apply for them. They say that they can't find any jobs in her areas of interest. They also haven't given her info about easy-to-get jobs that they have already developed or employers that they have already formed relationships with. My daughter set up 4 job interviews on her own before SE started, but the ISD job coach only set up 1 application-interview in the last year. All they can say is that "they're working on it". My child wants a summer job and wants to continue working part-time in the fall, but she will probably have to find the job

on her own and then ask the SE job coach to provide the supports she needs at the next step. Are there any employer incentives to hire people with disabilities? Can potential employers get an incentive for hiring people referred by the ISD SE program or by DARS? If so, what is the employer incentive program called? How does it work?

You need to take a full time courseload at college. this was a student who graduated in the top 10% of her high school class, and then with a B.B.A cum laud; but needed extra time as a modification. You don't seem interested in working because the interest inventory doesn't include things you would find interesting. The jobs you are interested in are now commonly done by volunteers: library work or museum work or work in local theaters. Then, You don't know what kind of work you want to do. You need psych testing, then, you need specific kind of treatment for anxiety but we can't pay for it. Finally, if you figure out what you want to do call us.

I have a 24 yo son with diagnosis of mild-to-moderate autism. He has no physical limitations, & possesses a number of skills that are sought after in some jobs, but would need some training and acclimation to an environment. We have been connected with the counselor for DARS in Denton since he was in middle school, but with the exception of a 3 month job in a store requiring customer service [not able to talk to customers] & a bad experience with a Goodwill Job Training experience, where management failed to do their part, DARS has not been effective in providing any work. My son's best job came after 2 years of working during high school with a large auto dealership, stocking their car parts with the help of a school district job coach. When he graduated at 22, the dealership made him a job offer and created a position, and said he did not need a job coach. They enjoyed and praised his work, but deleted his position 6 months later, as he mis-stocked a few parts with 8 digit number system, and couldn't afford any parts mis-stocked, even at minimum wage. Yet, it was a good experience, not provided by DARS. We were matched up with a supported employer (individual) in the area after I kept pleading with the DARS counselor for some assistance with even part time job identification. That was at the end of November, 2013. We have filled out paperwork, and she has visited the house, and taken my son to a quick lunch 3x [2-3 months ago], but there seems to be a constant postponement of job pursuit. I spoke yesterday with a 25 yo female with mild cognitive disabilities, who is very engaging, and she has been on the DARS "waiting" list for over 6 months. A big concern of mine is whether these supported employers [correct term?] have the motivation to find jobs for individuals if they can receive payment for doing "something", such as taking an individual to lunch to get to know them, or filling out paperwork. They may get money from the government, but our adults that need job assistance are still waiting at home. • Do we need to hire more job coaches at a reasonable/ lower salary to get more of our adults out in the work force? • Do we need to create more "apprenticeship" type of positions where we have our adults with disabilities train without pay for a given period, to bring them up to job function level? • Do we need to re-design the system to create more reward for getting an individual employed? • Do we need to replace some counselors who seem to sit in their secure positions and just draw on government funds? DARS in Denton has failed our folks miserably; the excuse: "there are 3 colleges in the area, so we simply can't find them jobs because of the competition. "

I would like to share our DARS story as I have 2 adults who are suppose to be receiving services from DARS. We have had wonderful counselors in the past so our experience with our new counselor has been disappointing . She was one of my son's counselor for almost 2 years before she actually met him. Letters would come in the mail and we would call for requests, but that was the only communication with DARS. Our previously counselors went out of their way to assist our son with his needs. Our most recent request was a year ago, DARS recommended and paid for the assistive technology evaluation, well the technology that was recommended was never approved, I guess. I called many times to our counselor to inquire about the status and was told, haven't heard anything as of yet. Unfortunately, we have just gotten tired of no support.

This event was quite entertaining, we met our counselor for a meeting and as we were leaving her office, there was an employee in the cubicle right outside her office..... sleeping with her head down. I commented that "it must be nap time". She did not say a word. I would be fired, if I slept on the job!

Our other son had tried to get assistance with job opportunities, This same counselor, needless to say, was of no help! I could go on and on, but both our sons have no support from their counselor. It is about time to request a new one.

SUNSET REVIEW:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DARS and DADS EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

These concerns and recommendations now include DADS and DARS now that DADS is also providing employment assistance and supported employment in all the waivers.

Update eligibility requirements and criteria to follow more closely to federal requirements and complying with employment first policies. Assure that these changes are applied consistently across the agency and local DARS/DADS offices. Ensure the changes provide services to all persons on SSI, those persons with a significant disability and those high functioning but requiring extra assistance.

Require DARS/DADS to undergo an agency wide culture training implementing employment first policies where all persons with disabilities are assumed employable. Provide culture sensitivity training, intensive training concerning how to help persons with significant disabilities, including autism, persons who are non-verbal and those with significant behavioral health challenges.

Set agency timelines for responses to persons applying for services, including providing written determinations, approval and denials of services, responses to applications within 10 days of receipt and providing VR services within 30 days of application. The DARS counselor shall contact the person seeking VR services every 30 days.

Require a persons centered planning process where the person applying for services may include significant others in the development of a plan in cases of individuals with mental health issues, various forms of autism, and other disabilities so they may be an integral part of a team to ensure employment success and will be welcomed throughout the process.

Require use of the DISCOVERY PROCESS to assist someone to obtain a job which requires the need to do a very specific job interest assessment and not the one that was just created by DARS and DADS. It needs to be specific to job interests. There are many great ones to use. The one by Michael Callahan for example. This would promote a process that matches the person's interests and limitations to specific jobs. Then those jobs are found and "tried out" for a few weeks to see if it is a good fit. The job search is to be based solely on the person who is seeking employment.

Require DARS/DADS to send agency reps to the annual APSE (Asso of People Supporting Employment First) conference where the "state of the art" and best practices employment specialists share their successes. Share this information agency wide after returning to their agencies. Representatives from all over the country attend but TEXAS has minimal involvement.

Require DARS/DADS to provide employment plans that are useful and measurable and specific to the person's needs, and foremost, LONG TERM SUPPORTS.

Require that DARS/DADS develop additional contractors to provide VR services and assure they are appropriately trained to handle all persons with disabilities applying for VR services.

Develop a special section within DARS/DADS to provide education and training concerning persons with significant disabilities, including those with autism, those who are non-verbal and those with significant behavioral health challenges. As part of the special unit develop appropriate testing based on the person's disability, develop job trials and discovery and develop a plan for employment unique to the skills of the person and focused on an integrated setting. Assure this new unit follows employment first policies.

Require DARS/DADS to present comprehensive explanation of services offered, who provides VR services, criteria used for services and all restrictions based on federal policies to each applicant.

Require DARS to provide the person applying for services the results of all testing which will assist in making future plans.

Require DARS to extend services as long as they are needed which may be through another agency if needed.

Require clear guidelines to persons applying for VR services concerning coordination with other agencies to extend services, such as DADS.

Require DARS modify requirements to allow employment services if the person applying for services finds a job trial or a paid job on their own, while a person receiving VR services is on break from school, and even if the person applying for services is not toilet trained.

Provide ongoing training and supervision to job coaches to include task analysis and behavioral supports.

Require job coaches/ supported employment providers to pass a job coach certification test such as the one APSE promotes and complete the UNT employment program prior to employment and require a certain number of CEUs annually.

Have a pool of trained and qualified job coaches to work with those with all levels of disabilities.

Require a "seamless transition" of employment services and supports between DARS and DADS including training new job coaches at the work site while working with the employee/consumer.

The employment assistance provider to be required to provide on the job site training to the new job coach in the presence of the consumer.

For someone with waiver services who will need long term employment supports, allow the current job coach to continue with the consumer when the funding agency moves from DARS to DADS or the reverse.

Supported Self Employment

When business ownership is an identified employment outcome, require DARS VR Counselor participation to assist the person and their CRP to proceed through the DARS supported self-employment process, and provide input / feedback into the business development process.

Employer and Business Relations

Ensure that DARS Counselors develop those employer relationships and contacts to assist in the individualized job placement process for people with significant support needs, and when appropriate, provide recommendations for job placements with the CRP.