

Chairman Nelson, thank you for this opportunity to speak today. I have a point to make about each agency...and I am speaking for myself and no non-profit or advisory board that I am associated with.

- DARS should serve a broader range of people for employment supports and turn fewer people away. Also they should standardize their vocational supports. Some offices pay for things that other offices don't. An example is that this year, two people from the same university earned an associate's degree in speech pathology and DARS is paying for one of their licenses and not the other. Likewise, tuition support also differs across Texas.
- DADS and DFPS are not protecting adults with disability from the new industry of guardianship. Guardians for hire are looking for more people they can be guardians for, to gain use of their funds. Guardians visit nursing homes to locate people with no family and to suggest to social workers that they need a hired guardian. Rights are taken away with no investigation. It costs \$10K for a person under guardianship to file to fight this, yet they can't because they have been separated from their money, and robbed of their livelihood. DADS and DFPS need to do a thorough investigation of this industry and protect each person referred, so that their life is not dismantled without a thorough investigation.
- The suggestion to close half of the SSLCs is a good one. My daughter had to wait until high school for CLASS services in the community and tens of thousands are still waiting for waiver services.
- DFPS is not realizing a trend. When a public school has abused a child in special education, they are advised to call CPS to report the parents in order to point the finger away from themselves. This trend needs to be recognized and dealt with.

For the safety of these students with special needs, safety cameras should be placed in special education areas of the school. If staff is out on illness, at training or on vacation, a sub-finder computer sends people who are often strangers to the school, and this is quite concerning because there are many areas of classrooms, therapy rooms, and closets that are one-one ratios. These students are helpless in defending themselves and later describing the abuse. Cameras in special education could help deter some of the abuse.

Thank you, many I answer any questions?

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** Cecelia Hartley  
**Subject:** FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Monday, June 30, 2014 4:43:17 PM

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-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [mailto:[sundrupal@capitol.local](mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local)]  
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2014 4:41 PM  
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Agency: DEPARTMENT ASSISTIVE AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES DARS

First Name: Linda

Last Name: Litzinger

Title:

Organization you are affiliated with:

Email:

City: Austin

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or  
Opposed:

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 employment support personnel to offer physical assistance with transfers in the restroom, so that the employee is not dependent on an attendant to come to the office, who is only paid by DADS for the few minutes in the office and not for the drive to and from the office. Thus it is a net loss because of the gas involved.

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.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: ,

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** Cecelia Hartley  
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From: sundrupal@capitol.local [mailto:[sundrupal@capitol.local](mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local)]  
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Agency: DEPARTMENT ASSISTIVE AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES DARS

First Name: Linda

Last Name: Litzinger

Title:

Organization you are affiliated with:

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Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

Below are parent stories which support how DARS frustrates and turns away consumers, and doesn't come through for people who wish to be gainfully employed. We have collected two dozen more, in much greater detail, but parents don't want them published online. If you wish for them, please contact me.

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'.

DARS did work assessments that focused on tasks that ignored a CP diagnosis.

They refused his education assistance (we escalated one manager up - had I known more I would have escalated much higher). Then when I found a great job on my own at SMU University (with the football program), DARS told me they couldn't work with SMU as part of SARS employment program because SMU wasn't on their provider list. At that point I ignored that they even exist from a sanity standpoint. He still has his job at SMU.

My son (now 18) had been turned down because his skill level is so low that he would not be training to "keep" a job. In his case he would need a job coach or attendant for any task, even volunteer part time jobs, and they could not fade away. If he did not have support for a small volunteer part time job, the only thing he could do as an adult is hang around all day at a day hab. Quality day habs are few.

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

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/previosuly 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.

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.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: .

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree