

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Cecelia Hartley](#)  
**Subject:** FW: support for retaining an independent Texas office for the prevention of developmental disabilities (TOPDD)  
**Date:** Friday, October 17, 2014 9:58:58 AM

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**From:**  
**Sent:** Friday, October 17, 2014 8:44 AM  
**To:** Sunset Advisory Commission  
**Subject:** re: support for retaining an independent Texas office for the prevention of developmental disabilities (TOPDD)

Dear Sunset Advisory Commission,

In my capacity as a biomedical researcher on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) and medical educator, I am writing to support the need for maintaining an independent Texas Office for the Prevention of Developmental Disabilities (TOPDD).

FASD is a significant public health problem. The best epidemiological studies estimate that approximately 2 to 5% of all school-aged children in the US are affected by FASD. This means that a state like Texas may have between 8,000 and 20,000 new FASD births every year. If Canadian studies are to guide us, FASD children are likely to be overrepresented in Texas foster care and juvenile justice systems and later on, in Texas prison systems. The economic costs are predicted to be in the millions of dollars for each and every FASD child. The social and public health costs are also enormous. FASD blights the futures of children, families and societies.

TOPDD is the only state agency with the specific charge of preventing developmental disabilities and preventing disability due to FASD is not only important, but also feasible. TOPDD, through its very successful 'train the trainer' programs is actively engaged in training healthcare professionals, members of the legal profession and women of childbearing age about FASD prevention. But this is not TOPDD's only activity. As a unique state agency that must build public-private partnerships to succeed, TOPDD has been collaborating with universities in Texas as well as with the New Mexico Alcohol Research Center at the University of New Mexico to implement trial newborn screening programs in Texas, for the early identification of potential FASD infants. Early identification of 'at-risk' infants and children' is an important step in preventing developmental disabilities. An agile public-private partnership like TOPDD is well positioned to look for the best and newest biomedical research data and reach out the research community in other states to help with Texas Problems.

The reality is that if the functions of TOPDD were to be merged with the portfolio of the HHSC, FASD will not receive the attention that it deserves. Infants and children with

developmental disorders simply do not have the same capacity to demand attention from the HHSC as other disease constituencies like cancer, Alzheimer's disease and infectious diseases, even though the effects of FASD on Texas are enormous. HHSC is also a large organization that is not positioned to respond rapidly to new research information and quickly develop new programs and Texas specific approaches. Because TOPDD is required to secure a large part of its operating expenses by applying for grants from private organizations, it is nimble and responsive to the needs of Texas. We need a voice in Texas that uniquely focuses on the needs of infants and children with developmental problems. FASD is the single biggest and preventable cause of developmental disability. We need to support the continued existence and work of TOPDD.

Sincerely,

Rajesh C. Miranda, PhD