



June 6th, 2014

Ken Levine
Director
Sunset Advisory Commission
PO Box 13066
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Mr. Levine,

The Texas e-Health Alliance would like to thank the Sunset Advisory Commission for the opportunity to comment on the staff report for the Department of State Health Services. As Texas' leading advocate, from local communities to the national level, for the use of information technology to improve the health care system for patients, we appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback. Below are our responses to each issue and set of recommendations in the report that relates directly to our organization's work, along with comments for your consideration.

Issue: Resolving the Current Crisis in the State Mental Health Hospital System Requires Action, Starting Now.
Response: We agree with the proposed recommendations. DSHS should systematically evaluate how implementing HIT components can enhance care in these settings, including an assessment of how care is coordinated with external entities such as telemedicine providers and health information exchanges.

Issue: DSHS Has Struggled to Deliver Integrated, Outcomes-Focused Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.
Response: We agree with all three proposed recommendations. Developing the capacity to share electronic medical records with all the providers involved in client treatment would also help to provide more efficient care.

Issue: The Unmanageable Scope of DSHS' Regulatory Functions Reduces Needed Focus on Protecting Public Health.
Response: We agree with the proposed recommendations.

Issue: DSHS Has Not Provided the Leadership Needed to Best Manage the State's Public Health System.
Response: We strongly agree with the proposed recommendations. As local public health departments adopt electronic medical record systems, DSHS should continue to build capacity that utilizes the data from those systems to better support public health functions.

Issue: DSHS Has Not Taken Needed Steps to Strengthen the Security of Vital Statistics.
Response: We strongly agree with the proposed recommendations.





Issue: The State Has a Continuing Need for the Texas Health Care Information Collection Program.

Response: We agree with the proposed recommendations. Consumer need for this information will increase in the future. As the data becomes more available in electronic format, it should be produced with less lag time so it is more relevant to the consumer in the moment.

Issue: DSHS' Numerous Advisory Committees Lack Strategic Purpose, Limiting Their Effectiveness and Wasting Resources.

Response: We agree with the proposed recommendations.

Issue: The State Should Continue Protecting Public Health and Providing Basic Health Services, but Decisions on DSHS' Structure Await Further Review.

Response: We agree with this proposed recommendation.

Please contact Nora Belcher, TeHA Executive Director, at 512/536-1340 or by email at nora@txeha.org if you have any questions or need additional information. We look forward to supporting the work of the Sunset Advisory Commission and Sunset staff throughout the Sunset process.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cindy D. Hielscher".

Cindy Hielscher
President
Texas e-Health Alliance

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Pool, MD".

Ken Pool, MD
Vice-President
Texas e-Health Alliance

