

NOV 04 2014



## DALLAS COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH LEADERSHIP TEAM

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October 28, 2014

Ken Levine  
Sunset Advisory Commission  
P.O. Box 13066  
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Ken Levine,

On behalf of the Dallas County Behavioral Health Leadership Team, we welcome the opportunity to respond to the October 2014 Texas Sunset Advisory Commission Staff Report on the Health and Human Services Commission and System Issues, Issue 9. We understand the significant time and effort contributed by the staff to help address the issue of behavioral health service delivery in the seven-county NorthSTAR region of Collin, Dallas, Ellis, Hunt, Kaufman, Navarro, and Rockwall counties.

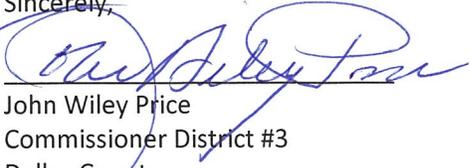
Contrary to the findings and recommendations contained in the report, NorthSTAR is an effective, strength-based, recovery-oriented, integrated mental health and substance use disorder treatment and services delivery system that has operated successfully in North Texas for fifteen years. NorthSTAR is a public/private partnership that provides healthy competition among an extensive network of providers enabling consumer choice that does not have a waiting list for services, divides the managing authority function from the provider function, and provides services to individuals at approximately \$1,587 per year which is less than half the average cost per person in the rest of the state.

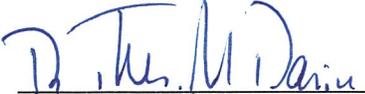
The Dallas County Behavioral Health Leadership Team joins the North Texas Behavioral Health Authority Board, the Dallas affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and Mental Health America of Greater Dallas in support of the work of the NorthSTAR system as a successful and productive system of delivery of mental health and substance abuse disorder care in Dallas County. We believe NorthSTAR works, and that it is an effective, efficient, and economical system of care for our County and region.

We respectfully support the enclosed resolution signed by the Dallas County Commissioner Court. We request that the Sunset Advisory Commission reject the staff recommendations to discontinue NorthSTAR and fully support the evolution of NorthSTAR, backed by evidence-based data that allows for local control and design built on the inherent strengths of the current system.

Thank you for your time and consideration regarding this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
John Wiley Price  
Commissioner District #3  
Dallas County

  
Dr. Theresa M. Daniel  
Commissioner District #1  
Dallas County

# Resolution

ORDER NO. 2014-1441

DATE: **October 21, 2014**

STATE OF TEXAS §

COUNTY OF DALLAS §



**BE IT REMEMBERED**, at a regular meeting of the Commissioners Court of Dallas County, Texas, held on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of October, 2014 on a motion made by John Wiley Price, Commissioner of District No. 3 and seconded by Dr. Theresa M. Daniel, Commissioner of District No. 1, the following Resolution was adopted:

- WHEREAS**, the October 2014 Texas Sunset Commission Staff Report on the Texas Health and Human Services Commission recommended that Texas discontinue the NorthSTAR mental health system model; and
- WHEREAS**, the North Texas Behavioral Health Authority Board, the Dallas affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and Mental Health America of Greater Dallas are supportive of the NorthSTAR system and its continuous efforts to enhance the model through the integration of primary care, specialty care, and behavioral health services for consumers and its desire to refine its ability to draw additional state and federal funding; and
- WHEREAS**, NorthSTAR is an effective, strength-based, recovery-oriented, integrated mental health and substance use disorder treatment and services delivery system that has operated successfully in North Texas for 15 years. It was designed with input from consumers and providers of behavioral health services in the seven-county area of Collin, Dallas, Ellis, Hunt, Kaufman, Navarro and Rockwall Counties; and
- WHEREAS**, since 1999, NorthSTAR is the only mental health or substance abuse region in Texas that, by design, does not have a waiting list for services. Previously, the seven-county region served about 10,000 individuals and now, over 73,000 individuals receive services; and
- WHEREAS**, NorthSTAR divides the managing authority function from the provider function—a feature that has been acknowledged as good public policy, and one that is supported by mental health advocates. It is a public/private partnership where there is healthy competition among an extensive network of over 300 providers, resulting in better choices for consumers and a lower cost for the state, with treatment outcomes among the highest in the state; and
- WHEREAS**, the annual cost of providing mental health care in NorthSTAR in 2014 was approximately \$1587 per person, less than half the annual average cost of \$3684 per person in the rest of the state; and
- WHEREAS**, NorthSTAR serves people who are indigent or on Medicaid through a no-wrong-door, open-access, integrated provider system on a single management platform that supports coordination, planning and a continuation of benefits, without interruption if an individual has a change in Medicaid benefit status; and
- WHEREAS**, NorthSTAR has led the state in the employment of peer-to-peer specialists in psychiatric hospitals, hospital-to-hospital transportation services, residential substance use disorder treatment and community-based clinics, and in the number of members receiving Accelerated Community Treatment (ACT) services; and
- WHEREAS**, NorthSTAR has facilitated the behavioral health response in community disasters, especially in Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav and Ike, and is currently working with state and local authorities regarding the Ebola crisis, to ensure that the needs of people with mental illness and substance use disorders are met regardless of the challenges; and
- WHEREAS**, NorthSTAR has been a consistent innovator in jail diversion, pre-release planning, outpatient competency restoration, and crisis stabilization access, allowing police, fire, and other first responders to spend less time waiting in emergency rooms and more time

services for Medicaid recipients, the New Life Opportunities/Prostitution Diversion Initiative and other new ideas have led to public policy changes statewide; and

**WHEREAS,** Dallas County supports local choice and design; and

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Dallas County Commissioners Court does hereby recognize and support NorthSTAR as a successful and productive system of delivery of mental health and substance use disorder care in Dallas County and conveys to the Sunset Commission and the Legislature the message that NorthSTAR works, that it is an effective, efficient and economical system of care for the County and region; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the Dallas County Commissioners Court asks the Dallas County legislative delegation and the Legislature to reject the Sunset Staff recommendations to discontinue NorthSTAR and instead, fully support the evolution of NorthSTAR, with evidence-based data, that allows for local control and design built on the inherent strengths of the current system.

**DONE IN OPEN COURT,** this 21<sup>st</sup> day of October, 2014.



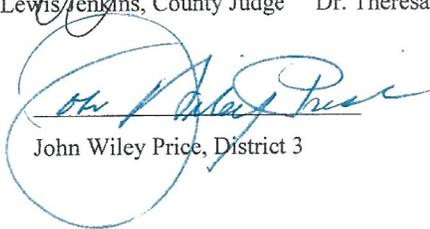
Clay Lewis Jenkins, County Judge



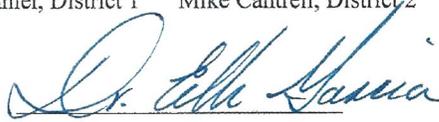
Dr. Theresa M. Daniel, District 1



Mike Cantrell, District 2



John Wiley Price, District 3



Dr. Elba Garcia, District 4