

Texas Collaborative for Prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders  
Mary S. Tijerina, Co-Chair  
Linda Kagey, Co-Chair

October 17, 2014

Members of the Sunset Commission,

On behalf of the Texas Collaborative for Prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD Collaborative), which operates under the auspices of the Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities (TOPDD), we extend our appreciation for your work. The HHSC Sunset Staff Report, released on October 3, 2014, addressed many important issues for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments in response.

The Report notes that HHSC has made little progress in the prevention of various problems facing Texans. Indeed, it was in this context that TOPDD was first established by the legislature. Mandated to focus on prevention, the organization was created to fill a critical gap, namely to prevent disabilities before they occur and prevent the development of secondary disabilities through early intervention. Most of the budget drivers of HHSC derive from issues that are preventable, including substance abuse; poor nutrition and health practices of pregnant women, child maltreatment, and mental illnesses associated with all of these conditions. Given limited resources, it is understandable that policy and governmental responses to such social problems typically emphasize interventions that seek to treat or ameliorate problems experienced by those individuals already affected. As the state moves toward a more efficient and effective organization of its human services programs, we propose that an intentional shift toward enhanced prevention and health promotion has the potential to produce better health outcomes and major cost savings.

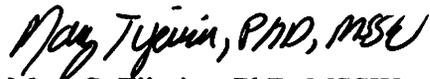
The FASD Collaborative is one example of TOPDD's proven ability to mobilize individuals representing a broad cross-section of professional disciplines, geographic regions, service systems and governmental levels around a shared goal of preventing problems resulting from alcohol exposed pregnancies. TOPDD's FASD prevention achievements include implementation of system wide training for caseworkers, development of a network of trained volunteers and the application of model prevention programs at treatment centers. The agency's current administrative status as a public-private entity have made such prevention efforts possible; TOPDD has been largely self-sustaining and has funded important prevention work in partnership with non-profits in Texas (even during financially strapped times), leveraging its limited general revenue to garner federal and private funding for prevention efforts that would otherwise not have benefitted the people of Texas.

The Texas Collaborative for FASD Prevention and TOPDD share the Sunset staff's passion for developing more proactive systems of care that are effective, work upstream, save tax payer money, and improve the health and well-being of all Texans. We believe that coordinated prevention efforts integrated throughout every health and

human services initiative can deliver improved health outcomes and costs savings. We believe TOPDD will be an important partner in developing the new, revitalized HHSC.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this response to the staff report. Please contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



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