

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Cecelia Hartley](#)
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Tuesday, July 01, 2014 7:50:02 AM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2014 8:14 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Submitted on Monday, June 30, 2014 - 20:14

Agency: DEPARTMENT ASSISTIVE AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES DARS

First Name: Mary J

Last Name: Williams

Title:

Organization you are affiliated with:

Email:

City: Katy

State: Texas

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

Issue 1 - I have never quite understood the separation between the two organizations. I agree with consolidation of DARS-DBS and DAR- Rehab. services to eliminate agency duplications.

Issue 2 – There needs to be some consistency between DARS representatives in our communities that work with individuals with disabilities. Individuals receive different information based on what they DARS counselor decides to do that day. I am concerned by the wording in the report that people with disabilities will be declared “unemployable” if they revise timelines....From our own experience, my son got a job through school work based learning program. DARS helped expand that to 8 hours per week. Now 4 years later we worked with a DARS contractor for over a year to try and find another job = she came biweekly to work on applications, etc. It took all year, before he got two interviews. Then his yearly contract ended. We have not heard from DARS or seen the contractor again. Is our case closed? Is there a procedure we need to do to continue? The contractor has not received a reply from the DARS counselor either. If we had clear guidelines – maybe all parties would know where we are in the process and maybe for those individuals who are making an effort – we wouldn’t be in the limbo we find ourselves in.

ALSO – If there is a way to create guidelines – wouldn’t it be smarter to give same guidelines and contract abilities to TWC? Do we need two separate agencies to work on employment separately?

Issue 3 – It is a rare occurrence that DARS provides independent living skills at least in our area. No one talks about it; it is not readily offered if you do not know to ask. Will these skills be provided through the newer Medicaid managed care system (attendant care, etc.)? Do the independent living centers provide these services? Our CIL does provide training on Assistive Tech and some other issues. They may be the place where persons with

disabilities help others with disabilities, as long as the funding follows to those centers to provide that care. If we are just moving responsibility to another agency without the necessary funding – persons with disabilities will not be better off.

Issue 4 - There doesn't seem to be any interaction with DARS counselors and companies in the community unless the person with disability is having difficulty on the job. Maybe they need to join local chambers and make connections to small businesses and explain what they do and how they can help. I did not see any interaction with DARS with TWC for my son...I just happened upon the TWC site and registered my son for email notification about possible jobs. The DARS Counselor or contractor didn't suggest I go there.

Regarding TEA interaction - DARS should not target schools with the highest need, but rather target schools that have successful transition programs like my son's high school. Right now there are many school districts that just tell families that it is DARS responsibility to get the student a job so the schools don't implement transition programs.

By collaborating with the schools and possibly making the school the DARS contractor (ie they get paid for creating plan and working with students they know and for what they are already attempting to do) – there may be more students leaving high school with jobs like my son did. I always have said – if we were dependent on DARS after high school – my son would not have the 8 hour per week job that he has maintained for 4 years because of the school system.

Issue 5 – I agree with the fact that they need to develop systems to review employees and outcomes because that is how they will know who are good employees and who are worthless. They also need to ensure long time employees are current on best practices and how to work with persons with disabilities. Sometimes I have found that some feel it is their job to not provide any support.

I think they also need to ensure that DARS contractors are under the same review system. We have had two DARS contractors who came to the house and did the “employment plan” with my son and then we didn't hear from again. Subcontractors for TWC are under contract and there are sanctions and they lose their contracts if they do not perform. Shouldn't the contractors under DARS be held to the same standards?

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

Has anyone ever thought about:

- 1) Making high schools subcontractors of DARS to provide supported employment/job training? High schools already provide transition services...let's pay them for that.
 - 2) Making DARS part of TWC? Wouldn't it be great if the state Unemployment/Workforce agency was inclusive and DARS counselors or contractors could be part of the same work system that everyone else is in?
- Just a thought....By perpetuating the "special" system - employers don't want to employ because "special means more work"....when that might be the initial case (supported employment) but longevity of employees and staff turnover will be reduced once that employee is trained. There are too many people with disabilities that the workforce is missing out on with our separate system.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree