

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Cecelia Hartley](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Form submission from: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Monday, June 30, 2014 4:45:17 PM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]  
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2014 4:44 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 - 16:44

Agency: DEPARTMENT ASSISTIVE AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES DARS

First Name: Arlene

Last Name: Wohlgemuth

Title: Director, Center for Health Care Policy

Organization you are affiliated with: Texas Public Policy Foundation

Email: arlene@texaspolicy.com

City: Austin

State: Texas

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

The Sunset staff have done commendable work in the analysis of the issues pertaining to the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services.

Issue 1

It is very disappointing that after 11 years, the Department has not merged like services, instead maintaining the structure of the legacy agencies through separate divisions. Not only are the services duplicative in many cases, but there is no justification for having separate offices in the same cities in several locations around the state. Many efficiencies have resulted from the consolidations of HB 2292 not only in cost savings but more importantly in better service delivery, especially for those with multiple disabilities. The fact that the vocational rehabilitation services are provided through a single federal grant further validates the need to combine the functions.

Regarding the recommendation to align regions and consolidate field offices, given the past history of the legacy agencies and the current agency's reluctance to change, each action recommended should be accompanied by a date certain for its completion. This includes realignment of the regions and the consolidation of the field offices. Further, where DADS offices also exist in the same city, consideration should be given to co-location.

Texas Public Policy Foundation supports the Sunset staff recommendations on Issue 1 with slight modification.

Issue 6

Although the Sunset staff have deferred discussion of the restructuring of agencies until their recommendations on health and human services system overall, it is apparent that significant change in this agency will not occur under the current structure.

- In Issue 2, the agency again has demonstrated poor management, including allowing the Division for Blind Services to continue to operate as a stand-alone agency. Vocational rehabilitation services, for example, could be better performed as a division of the state's agency that focuses on employment, the Texas Workforce Commission. While the Sunset staff recommendations are valid, the expectation that they will be implemented by this agency is not supported by its 15 year track record of non-compliance.
- In Issue 4, the agency has not sought opportunities to maximize resources by providing support to other programs rather than attempting to provide direct services. An excellent example is Transition Services. The Division for Rehabilitation Services and the Division for Blind Services together have 119 counselors attempting to cover 1600 high schools with 87,000 disabled students. Transition services are not only provided by the Texas Education Agency and education service centers, but HB 617 mandated that each school district have on staff a disability transition coordinator. A better use of the expertise of the agency would be to support these efforts. Again, employment-centric services could be better coordinated through a division of the Texas Workforce Commission. That agency already has relationships with community colleges, schools, and businesses that could be leveraged for the benefit of the clients being served.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

1. All services should be examined for opportunities to incorporate a financial requirement of the recipient based on a sliding scale and a realistic evaluation of the ability to pay, and
2. All programs that do not have statutory authority should be eliminated until such time as the legislature passes the appropriate legislation.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree