

84th Legislature Results Highlights Health and Human Services Sunset Reviews

The health and human services system comprises five separate agencies that administer more than 200 programs, including Medicaid, as well as health and safety regulations, protective services, and operation of state institutions. The Sunset Advisory Commission reviews of the health and human services agencies resulted in both management directives and changes in law enacted by the 84th Texas Legislature. The following highlights the results of the Sunset reviews of the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS), the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), and the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS).

Consolidates health and human services in Texas. This reorganization aims to improve services to clients and make the state's already big and complex system work better through a measured approach to consolidation that promotes accountability, reduces fragmentation, and streamlines operations across the system.

- Consolidates the functions of DARS and DADS at HHSC in a phased, two-year approach to be completed by 2017. Transfers certain functions from DSHS and DFPS to keep them focused on their primary public health and protective services missions. (S.B. 200)
- Transfers vocational rehabilitation programs from DARS to the Texas Workforce Commission in 2016 to better align those programs with the workforce system and improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities. (S.B. 208)

Improves oversight of system administrative functions.

- Achieves greater overall sophistication and strengthens management of contracts by requiring more high-level oversight throughout the system, formalizing a reporting structure for penalties, and escalating attention on large, problematic contracts. Requires more scrutiny on foster care redesign and DSHS' behavioral health contracts in particular. (S.B. 20 / S.B. 206 / H.B. 1)
- Consolidates IT authority and personnel to improve planning and interoperability of systems and elevates oversight of data to better manage, use, and share system data for improved service delivery. (S.B. 200)

Improves regulation of various health and human services entities.

- Streamlines DSHS' unmanageable regulatory responsibilities to allow it to focus on its core public health mission. Eliminates unneeded state regulation of eight low-risk regulatory programs and transfers 13 occupational licensing programs to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation and four to the Texas Medical Board. (S.B. 202)
- Requires license revocation for nursing homes found to have three or more serious violations in a two-year period. (S.B. 304)
- Strengthens child care licensing enforcement efforts, gives more flexibility in setting child care licensing and administrative fees, and establishes a child care license and registration renewal process. (S.B. 206)

Integrates services for clients.

- Transitions NorthSTAR behavioral health services to an updated approach by creating a new model that integrates physical and behavioral health and allows access to federal funds. (S.B. 200 / H.B. 1)
- Consolidates two women's health programs to reduce burdens to clients, providers, and the state. (H.B. 1)

- Requires long-overdue consolidation of basic front-door assessment, screening, and referral for mental health and substance abuse services and a review of regulations for community-based treatment facilities to eliminate unnecessary barriers to integration. (S.B. 1507 / H.B. 1)

Makes health and human services processes more effective and efficient.

- Streamlines prescriptive statutory requirements to give Child Protective Services caseworkers more time with children and families and makes efforts to improve caseworker retention. (S.B. 206)
- Adapts Medicaid processes to managed care while making efforts to improve quality of care and streamlining the lengthy and cumbersome process for providers to enroll in Medicaid. (S.B. 200)
- Requires an updated, locally-driven methodology for allocating scarce state mental health hospital beds. (S.B. 1507)
- Strengthens the security of the state's vital statistics, such as birth and death records. (S.B. 200)
- Streamlines burdensome processes related to Medicaid provider payment holds for fraud and improves the Office of Inspector General's effectiveness through process improvements to achieve better results. (S.B. 207)
- Strengthens oversight of rehabilitative services caseworkers to control spending and ensure effective delivery of services. (H.B. 2463)
- Outsources independent living services to improve local access to rehabilitative services. (H.B. 2463)

Simplifies public interactions with the health and human services system.

- Streamlines advisory committees by repealing 40 duplicative or unnecessary advisory committees and adding separate requirements for a more manageable approach to obtaining valuable public input. (S.B. 200 / S.B. 277)
- Coordinates and consolidates HHSC ombudsman services and system websites and hotlines and adds requirements for websites to include clearer overall ratings on long-term care providers and a calendar of all advisory committee meetings. (S.B. 200)