



**Texas Sunset Commission, June 25, 2014
Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS)
Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)**

I am Consuelo Castillo, President of Texas Advocates. Texas Advocates is a statewide non-profit self advocate run organization. We support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to speak out for ourselves.

Our mission is to be recognized as the leader in self-advocacy in Texas. We will fight to stop unfair treatment and advocate for more and better services and supports for people with disabilities to be included in their communities.

We believe people with disabilities can embrace life and advocate for their own rights and interests by making their own decisions and choosing services and supports that allow them to live the way they want to live.

**This is what Texas Advocates Says:
We want to live in the community:**

The best way to protect our health and safety is to continue to move people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) off Medicaid waiver waiting lists and to provide funding for quality, consumer directed supports and services.

All people with intellectual and developmental disabilities should have a chance to live full and happy lives with the rest of us in our communities rather than in State Supported Living Centers (SSLC).

All people with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the right and should be given the chance to live in their own home communities and neighborhoods with the proper supports.

Texas Advocates supports the following Sunset Commission Recommendations for DADS:

- Provide more Medicaid long-term services and supports (LTSS) in the community and less LTSS in institutions.
- Move services and spending from State Supported Living Centers (SSLC) to home and community-based supports including:
 - ❖ Require DADS to close the Austin SSLC by August 31, 2017.
 - ❖ An SSLC Closure Commission will decide to close an additional five SSLCs.
 - ❖ Require DADS to close the five SSLCs by August 31, 2022.
- Improve community services for persons who are medically fragile or require intensive behavioral supports to keep the person from going to a state institution or to help them leave a state institution.
- Improve quality and ensure safety of people with I/DD who go to day habilitation facilities.
- Ensure a state agency continues to provide oversight of LTSS programs to help individuals with I/DD be independent.

This is what Texas Advocates Says:

We want real jobs for real pay:

We want to work in the real world! No one deserves to be paid less than minimum wage. We want equal pay for our work! Sheltered workshops are not real jobs and the wages don't pay our bills. We can work alongside everyone else. We want to find jobs that highlight our strengths and talents. We need qualified job coaches that understand self advocacy and self determination. We can decide what kind of jobs we want to apply for. We know what jobs we will be good at and like doing. We need help with finding reliable transportation to get to our jobs. Investing in supported employment services is good for Texas. It will help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities get and keep jobs in the community and be contributing members of society. Texas should implement Employment First policies. Real employment in the community should be the first and preferred outcome for everyone.

**Texas Advocates supports the following Sunset Commission
Recommendations for DARS:**

- Require DARS to work with Texas Workforce (TWC) and Employers to increase jobs for people with disabilities.
- Require DARS to work with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to provide effective transition services to students with disabilities for paid, competitive, and integrated employment.
- Require DARS and other Health and Human Services (HHSC) agencies to adopt an Employment First Policy that requires:
 - ❖ Services and supports to ensure integrated, competitive employment or self-employment and meaningful employment outcomes.
- Lower the use of subminimum wage certificates and increase opportunities for competitive, integrated employment.
- Require state agencies to provide employment supports and services that:
 - ❖ Determine what the person's skills and interests are;
 - ❖ Match jobs to the person's skills and employer needs;
 - ❖ Provide individualized and ongoing job supports;
 - ❖ Provide job accommodations;
 - ❖ Integrate people into the workforce; and
 - ❖ Provide other necessary services such as transportation.

For more information about Texas Advocates go to our website
www.txadvocates.org or contact:

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