

**TEXAS HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION**



Exofficio Report to Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities  
(GCPD)

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<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Navigate Life Texas .....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Braille Literacy Month.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Brain Injury Awareness Month.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Home and Community Based Services Quality Measure Set .....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Independent Living Services Media Campaign.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Family Support Services .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Cross-Agency Employment Services Virtual Conference .....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Partners in Prevention Conference.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Prevocational Services in Medicaid Waiver Programs.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>Follow-Up from Previous Governor’s Committee on People with Disabilities Meeting.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Utilization Review Determinations for Intervenor Services in the Deaf Blind with Multiple Disabilities Waiver Program .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>Health and Human Services Commission Program Level Updates.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Chief Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program Services Office .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care Centers.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Chief Program and Services Office .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Access and Eligibility Services .....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Community Services.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Family Health Services .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Health Specialty Care System.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Program Updates on People Served .....</i>	<i>20</i>
<b>HHSC System Level Updates .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Substantial Policy, Key Personnel, or Organizational Changes .....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Health and Human Services Commission Strategic Plan.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Publications, Meetings and Proposed Rules .....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Advisory Committee Meetings.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Reports &amp; Presentations .....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Proposed Rules.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Americans with Disabilities Act Information and contacts .....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Electronic and Information Resources (EIR) Accessibility Coordinator for HHSC .....</i>	<i>27</i>

Title II Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator HHSC.....	27
<i>Ombudsman Office information and Contacts .....</i>	<i>28</i>

## Executive Summary

### Navigate Life Texas

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Navigate Life Texas (NLT), a Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) project, is an online resource for families raising children with disabilities. Parents and caregivers contribute creative website content to share their insights, challenges, and triumphs, helping families and caregivers navigate systems and overcome challenges.

The NLT monthly newsletter, the Navigator, features new content such as blog articles, videos, and events. In October, a survey gathered feedback from subscribers revealing a preference for expert-led content and answers to frequently asked questions, with main interests in Financial Help and Insurance, Transitioning to Adulthood, and Laws & Rights. This feedback will guide future content planning.

In the first quarter of fiscal year 2025, NLT's child-care provider outreach campaign sent a total of 1,015 promotional emails and service publications. Providers responded with requests for website presentations and printed materials.

In October, NLT exhibited resources at the Statewide Parent and Family Engagement Conference, which attracted over 900 participants, including educators and family liaisons. Additionally, NLT exhibited in coordination with other programs at the Partners in Prevention Conference, as well as the Winter Bleeding Disorder Foundation event.

In November, NLT implemented a website update designed to enhance user experience. The redesigned homepage allows for easier navigation and highlights important awareness months and topics. A table of contents was added to improve accessibility on longer pages. This feature enables users to jump to key content and quickly return to the top of the page. Additionally, the November content focused on National Family Caregivers Month, while December emphasized holiday preparations.

To learn more about Navigate Life Texas, visit [Resources & Services for Families & Parents of Children with Disabilities or Special Health-Care Needs in Texas | Navigate Life Texas](#).

### Braille Literacy Month

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In honor of National Braille Literacy Month in January, the HHSC Blind Children's Program (BCP) will host Braille Discovery Day on January 25th in Austin to highlight the importance of Braille literacy.

Braille Discovery Day supports families using BCP services who are braille readers or interested in learning more about braille. The event includes interactive braille literacy games, a family braille scavenger hunt, a braille read-a-long, and braille material giveaways.

During the event, families are provided the opportunity to sign up for the Texas Talking Book Program, which provides free library services for Texans who are blind or have a visual, physical, or reading disability.

For questions about Braille Discovery Day, email BCP at [BlindChildrensProgram@hhs.texas.gov](mailto:BlindChildrensProgram@hhs.texas.gov).

## **Brain Injury Awareness Month**

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The annual Texas Brain Injury Conference and Annual Brain Injury Awareness Month Celebration events will take place in March 2025. The events will recognize Brain Injury Awareness Month, celebrate the achievements of people living with a brain injury, and provide awareness and education on brain injury occurrence and treatment.

Activities will take place over the entire month of March and include:

- Weekly webinars.
- A conference to be held over two half-days.
- Highlight videos of success stories of people with a brain injury and providers utilizing treatment techniques.
- Social media posts providing reminders and tips related to brain injuries.

To learn more about events related to brain injury awareness, visit [About the Office of Acquired Brain Injury | Texas Health and Human Services](#).

## **Home and Community Based Services Quality Measure Set**

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HHSC is working collaboratively with an external quality review organization to gather data and calculate the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) Home and Community Based Quality Measure Set measures. HHSC will use consumer experience surveys to report on the HCBS quality measure set and modify forms to capture the required elements for reporting. HHSC has notified managed care organizations (MCOs) and Medicare-Medicaid Plans about all

new reporting requirements. HHSC has also amended the STAR+PLUS contract to include the new HCBS reporting requirements.

### **Independent Living Services Media Campaign**

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The Independent Living Services (ILS) program received the final numbers from its media campaign, which ran from July through September of 2024, to bring awareness to program services. Across all the media platforms utilized (radio, television, Meta, and doctors' offices), there were over 50 million impressions. The Centers for Independent Living (CILs) received 1,727 referrals in fiscal year 2024, representing an eight percent increase from 2023. Additionally, the ILS website saw a 135 percent increase in traffic throughout the campaign's duration.

### **Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program**

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Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program (STAP) is finalizing policy revisions to outline the process by which applicants can request a replacement voucher for STAP equipment lost or damaged because of a state or federally declared disaster.

STAP is also working on policy revisions to simplify the financial independence aspect of the program. These revisions will allow applicants to attest to their financial independence at the time of application rather than requiring a separate form and signature. The revisions also clarify that financial independence does not apply to applicants under the age of 18 years.

### **Family Support Services**

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Formerly known as Prevention and Early Intervention, Family Support Services migrated from the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to the Family Health Services division within HHSC on September 1, 2024, through Senate Bill 24, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023. Family Support Services promotes healthy families and communities through:

- Parent education.
- Home visiting programs for parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- Family caregiver support.
- Assistance for families in finding resources.
- Youth and family counseling.

- Positive youth development.

## **Cross-Agency Employment Services Virtual Conference**

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HHSC hosted its first multi-agency, collaborative two-day conference about employment services on November 13-14, 2024, in collaboration with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and Texas Education Agency (TEA). This conference was attended by approximately 400 agency staff and stakeholders and provided an overview of each agency's role in assisting with employment services for people with disabilities. Several of the topics covered throughout the conference included:

- 1915 (c) / 1115 Waiver Overview.
- Employment First Discovery Tool.
- HHSC and TWC Coordination for Mutual Customers.
- Overview of Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Services.
- Transition Planning in the Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Role of the Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee (ARD) in Making Connections to Agencies.

To learn more about employment first initiatives, visit [Employment First | Texas Health and Human Services](#).

## **Partners in Prevention Conference**

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The Children with Special Healthcare Needs program exhibited information, education, and health resources at the Partners in Prevention conference in Denton, TX, in November 2024. Over 900 participants attended the conference bringing child health providers, partners, and family members together to engage with preventive health education and information.

The Children with Special Healthcare Needs Services Program exhibited in coordination with the Hemophilia Assistance Program, providing information at two Bleeding Disorder Foundation events in November 2024, reaching over 500 total community members. Both events aimed to raise awareness, provide education, and offer support for people diagnosed with bleeding disorders.

## **Prevocational Services in Medicaid Waiver Programs**

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The new service, employment readiness, has been implemented as of January 1, 2025, in the Home and Community Based Services (HCS), Texas Home Living (TxHmL), and Deaf Blind with Multiple Disabilities (DBMD) waiver programs. HHSC received CMS approval of its waiver amendments on November 26, 2024. The Texas Administrative Code (TAC) changes were made effective on January 1, 2025. Amendments to the HCS and TxHmL billing requirements reflecting the new service were published for public comment between December 3, 2024, through December 16, 2024. Provider forms were published on January 2, 2025. An information letter summarizing the actions HHSC has taken over the last 18 months and where to find additional information was distributed the first week of January and can be found here [Information Letter 2025-01](#)

## **Follow-Up from Previous Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities Meeting**

### **Utilization Review Determinations for Intervenor Services in the Deaf Blind with Multiple Disabilities Waiver Program**

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HHSC representatives met with members of the Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities (GCPD) on Friday, December 13, 2024, to discuss public comments provided in the October 2024 GCPD meeting.

HHSC representatives reiterated EVV is a federally required program, provided confirmation that the policy and utilization review process has remained consistent, and discussed the quality processes currently in place to ensure accurate utilization review decisions were reached. HHSC confirmed that they are working in collaboration between Policy, Utilization Review, Contract Administration, and Provider Monitoring to address issues as they arise and to strategize future solutions.

If support is needed for a specific case concern or question:

For HCS and TxHmL - Contact Utilization Review by emailing your question or concern to: [deskURLONIPC@hhs.texas.gov](mailto:deskURLONIPC@hhs.texas.gov)

For Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS) and DBMD - Call and leave a message describing your question or concern at: [\(512\) 438-4896](tel:5124384896).



## Health and Human Services Commission Program Level Updates

### Chief Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program Services Office

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#### Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care Centers

The State Plan Amendment (SPA) was approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on May 14, 2024, and was effective on September 1, 2024. The proposed draft rules were presented at the HHSC Executive Council meeting on August 15, 2024, and no comments were received. The draft rules were posted for formal public comment to the Texas Register from October 25, 2024, through November 11, 2024, and no comments were received. The rules are on target to meet the targeted implementation date of April 29, 2025. The updates to rules, SPA, and policy streamline the prior authorization process and reinforce collaboration between the Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care Center (PPECC), member, and responsible adult. The updates include:

- Establish minimum standards for transportation services when transporting participants to a PPECC by requiring a center to coordinate the schedule of transportation services with the participant's responsible adult.
- Update what type of provider must be present during transportation.
- Allow the participant's responsible adult to decline a center's transportation services entirely or on a specific date.
- Remove the requirement that the plan of care and physician's order document a participant's need for transportation services as nursing services in a participant's plan of care.
- Establish and outline documentation requirements for admission to a PPECC and non-transportation PPECC services for reimbursement eligibility.
- Update responsible adult signature requirements by removing the signature requirement from the plan of care and allowing a single responsible adult signature on the nursing addendum.
- Clarify when the initial comprehensive nursing assessment must be completed.

- Allow a physician visit to be waived as a prerequisite for prior authorization of PPECC services when the criteria outlined in the rules are met.

## **Chief Program and Services Office**

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### **Access and Eligibility Services**

#### **2-1-1 Texas Updates**

- The Texas Information and Referral Network (TIRN) will be focusing on the consolidation of access points and refinement of referrals to improve 2-1-1 navigation and support. Virtual Agent Interactive Voice Response: TIRN implemented a Google Cloud Virtual Agent on the TIRN option, option 1 of the main 211 menu. Now, callers can experience a type-less navigation system within the 211 interactive voice response, facilitating seamless TIRN queue navigation and reducing caller confusion.

#### **1902(e)(14) Waivers Extension**

CMS indicated that they are giving states blanket extensions on the 1902 waivers as part of one of their strategies to ensure all eligible Medicaid recipients receive benefits. Texas currently has four 1902(e)(14) Medicaid waivers that were approved during the Public Health Emergency that are still active. These extensions are aimed to accomplish the following:

- To accept updated contact information from managed care organizations without verifying information with the recipient first.
- To accept a change of address from the United States Postal Service (USPS) and the National Change of Address (NCOA) database without first verifying the new address with the recipient.
- To allow MCOs to assist with the application process.
- For the agency to utilize Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) verified income during the Medicaid renewal process.

#### **Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities Case Review Extension**

HHSC extended Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities (MEPD) case review due dates by one year (or 12-months) for people with recertifications that were due in October, November, and December of 2024 to improve timeliness and reduce workload. This initiative deployed on July 13, 2024, and extended coverage

for over 120,000 people across 18 different assistance programs. Affected people were mailed Form H1809, Coverage Extension notices. Additionally, case documentation identifying these coverage extensions was added in the eligibility determination system, Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS). The gain in workload capacity resulting from the extensions will be focused on MEPD application processing. HHSC expects that this additional capacity will enable the processing of an estimated 100,000 MEPD applications over the same three-month period.

### **Texas 2-1-1 Helps North Carolina with Hurricane Helene Calls**

The 2-1-1 TIRN provided North Carolinians hit by Hurricane Helene crucial information on state and local resources available after a natural disaster.

2-1-1 TIRN helped field calls to assist United Way of North Carolina, which administers 2-1-1 in the state. Since the beginning of October, 2-1-1 staff volunteered to relieve North Carolina 2-1-1 operators by handling overnight calls from residents affected by the hurricane.

From October 3 through November 19, the 211 TIRN network answered 869 disaster calls and provided over 77 hours of support to United Way of North Carolina.

HHSC has memorandums of understanding with United Way organizations in North Carolina, Connecticut, and Wisconsin to offer assistance when needed and if the agencies are able to help.

"We have the opportunity to help these other states," said Summer Stringer, Associate Commissioner of Community Access within Access and Eligibility Services. "Building that rapport gives us the opportunity to act as peers and mentors to other states, especially in times of disaster. It opens doors to enhance and grow the model we have in Texas."

## **Community Services**

### **Office of Aging Services Coordination**

#### **No Wrong Door Governance Grant Project**

HHSC was awarded a grant from the Administration for Community Living (ACL) to assess and strengthen the state's No Wrong Door System. The Office of Aging Services Coordination (OASC), in collaboration with ODSC and the Office of Veterans Services Coordination, is leading this agency-wide effort. HHSC

established the NWD Governing Structure with a tiered structure. This structure includes a NWD Executive Team with representation from Deputy Executive Commissioners, the NWD Project Team (mentioned above), the NWD Stakeholder Workgroup comprised of internal and external subject matter experts, and three subgroups with representatives from the NWD Stakeholder Workgroup. This structure allows for bi-directional flow of information, representatives from the primary access points to use their expertise and knowledge to identify problems and solutions, as well as maintain executive level decision-making. During Fiscal Year 2025, the NWD project will move into the implementation phase and begin implementing recommendations for improvements identified during the research phase.

### ***Statewide Interagency Aging Services Coordinating Council***

The [Statewide Interagency Aging Services Coordinating Council](#) (SIASCC) was established by House Bill (H.B.) 728, 88<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Regular Session. H.B. 728 charges SIASCC with developing a five-year strategic plan, biennial expenditure proposal and annual inventory of state-funded interagency aging programs and services. During Fiscal Year 2024, the council submitted the [SIASCC FY2024 Expenditure Proposal](#), to the legislature and published the [Fiscal Year 2024 inventory of state-funded aging services and programs](#). During Fiscal Year 2025, the council will submit the Fiscal Year 2025-30 SIASCC Strategic Plan to the executive commissioner or agency head of each member agency as required by H.B. 728. The next SIASCC meeting will be held on March 5, 2025.

### ***Know Your Neighbor Campaign***

The Know Your Neighbor (KYN) campaign encourages Texans to form and maintain connections with older neighbors to help reduce the risks of isolation and loneliness. Since January of 2024 KYN resources have been downloaded 134 times through the [Aging Well Resources Order Form](#). An article highlighting KYN was shared with over 180 media partners across the state. An additional article about KYN was shared on the Connection and on the external HHS site. The HHSC [Be Connected page](#), which highlights KYN, receives about 100-130 web interactions monthly. KYN was also highlighted in the OASC newsletter during February, April, July, and August and was distributed via GovDelivery to about 2,000 people. Direct email outreach to neighborhood associations across the state is ongoing. About 513 associations have received outreach emails so far. Presentations highlighting KYN were provided at the Meals on Wheels conference and via webinar (58 people attended the webinar). Social media posts are sent out monthly via HHSC social media to promote the campaign.

### ***Caregiver Awareness Campaign***

The [Strengthen The Care You Give caregiving campaign](#), launched in 2023, helps Texans learn about the role of the family caregiver, highlights issues associated with caregiving and builds awareness of available services and supports. The campaign includes a range of media options and marketing materials, including editable templates and social media graphics for organizations and communities. Caregivers and organizations that serve caregivers can visit [www.texascaregivers.org](http://www.texascaregivers.org) to learn about self-care, training, planning ahead, and supportive resources. The webpage receives over 3,000 visits monthly.

A caregiver workgroup, made up of internal and external partners, is developing a Texas Roadmap to Support Family Caregivers that will align with and address goals in the [National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers](#) and [actions for states](#). The roadmap will have actionable efforts that HHSC, the workgroup member agencies, state leadership, community stakeholders and the business sector can implement. The workgroup is reviewing each action and assessing them for feasibility. The group is over halfway through this assessment process. The roadmap drafting is expected to begin in March 2025.

### ***Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program***

#### ***Braille Letters to Santa***

During the holidays, BCP piloted a new event, Braille Letters to Santa, for emerging Braille readers.

All BCP participants ages seven and younger had the opportunity to participate with the assistance of their parents or guardians. Every child who wrote a letter to Santa — whether in Braille or print — received a response in Braille and print from Santa by December 16<sup>th</sup>.

### ***Blindness Education, Screening and Treatment Program***

The Blindness Education, Screening and Treatment (BEST) program launched a campaign in June 2024 to engage ophthalmologists and promote the program to raise awareness about the blindness prevention needs of Texans. This promotion has generated interest from various regions across the state in providing necessary services. With referrals from ophthalmologists, uninsured Texans can benefit from the program's financial assistance.

The BEST program attended the Central Texas United Way Community Connection meeting in October, providing a platform for the program to collaborate with

partners in Central Texas communities to transform lives and create a positive change. Additionally, in November 2024, the program joined several other Community Services programs in exhibiting resources for vision screening and treatment at the Partners in Prevention conference in Denton, TX to reach over 900 attendees.

### **Hemophilia Assistance Program**

Throughout the year, the Hemophilia Assistance Program actively engages with participants to stay informed about how the state can best serve the hemophilia and bleeding disorder community.

On November 2, the program exhibited at the Texas Central Bleeding Disorders' Unite for Bleeding Disorders Fundraiser Walk in Grapevine. On November 23, the Lone Star Bleeding Disorders Foundation (LSBD) invited the program to participate in their Winter Event at SeaWorld. Both events welcomed families and supporters, providing an opportunity to visit vendor exhibits, gather information, and participate in family fun activities. The organizers celebrated their year-long activities and honored program stakeholders.

At the winter event at SeaWorld, the Bleeding Disorder Foundations recognized and honored HHSC with the "Advocates of the Year" award. The Executive Director for LSBD stated, "For all the work you have done to get involved, learn about, and improve access for our community, we honored HHSC as our Advocates of the Year!"

In December 2024, program team members visited the University of Texas Health Houston Gulf States Hemophilia and Thrombophilia Center, where they received a tour from the Center's director and lead social worker. The program learned about specialized treatments for rare bleeding disorders, patient experience, the importance of family involvement, and gained insights for program improvement.

### **Independent Living Services Program**

#### ***Quarterly Meetings with Centers for Independent Living Executive Leadership***

The quarterly HHSC/CIL Leadership meeting in November was productive and successful. CILs reported positive feedback on standards changes implemented at the beginning of the fiscal year to streamline their processes. Plans are underway for the next meeting in January 2025.

## **Special Projects Unit**

### ***Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Informed Care Virtual Conference***

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) conference was held on December 5, 2024. This conference covered best practices for person-centered care around ACEs, traumatic stress, and TIC interventions for adults and children with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The conference focused on equipping participants with an enhanced understanding of the unique behaviors and needs of people with IDD or behavioral health challenges who have or are experiencing traumatic situations. The following topics were presented on: Recognizing and Responding to Adversity: Embracing Trauma-Informed Care in IDD Services; The Road to Recovery: Supporting Children with IDD Who Have Experienced Trauma; Trauma and Healing in the Lives of People with IDD; and Addressing the Impact of ACEs in Children with IDD. The conference was attended by 677 people.

## **Family Health Services**

### **Early Childhood Intervention Services**

#### ***Early Childhood Intervention Services Training Series***

The Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Request for Applications (RFA) was posted on November 21, 2024, and closed on January 17, 2025. The RFA is an opportunity for eligible organizations to apply to become part of the statewide ECI program, which is dedicated to empowering families and supporting young children's development. HHSC is screening and evaluating the applications submitted in response to this RFA. Once the evaluation process is complete, successful applicants will be notified. The anticipated notice of award is scheduled for May 2025.

### **Office of Disability Prevention for Children**

The Office of Disability Prevention for Children (ODPC) works to prevent developmental disabilities and seeks to minimize negative outcomes in infants and young children. The program's mission is to promote respect, foster understanding, and highlight the importance of person-centered prevention and early intervention initiatives in the lives of Texas children and families.

ODPC supports the Pediatric Acute-Onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome Advisory (PANS) Council. In honor of PANS Awareness Day in October, ODPC partnered with

the council's chairs on October 3, 2024, to host a webinar titled, "Developing a Differential Diagnosis for PANS and Looking at the Underlying Causation". On December 5, 2024, ODCP staff presented, "Shaping Futures: The Impact of Aces on Children with Disabilities" at the HHS Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma-Informed Care Conference.

## **Health Specialty Care System**

### **State Supported Living Centers**

#### ***Center Vocational Training and On-Campus Employment Opportunities***

The State Supported Living Centers (SSLCs) have undertaken multiple center initiatives to grow their training and on-campus vocational programs, allowing for increased employment opportunities for campus residents. New opportunities at the centers include jobs at an on-campus t-shirt making shop, jobs at new wood-working shops, and employment at several centers who have on-campus cafes. Many of these opportunities have also included selling the centers' goods in community-based settings. Additionally, many have allowed residents to gain skills transferable to jobs in the community such as learning how to operate a cash register, how to engage and communicate with people, and how to process payments for goods by credit card, cash, and cash applications. The success of these initiatives along with the increased scheduling opportunities for residents employed on campus has resulted in an additional 6,000 work hours being performed by residents between the months of January through July 2024.

In the past year, the number of SSLC residents participating in off-campus employment rose by 37 percent, with additional opportunities to work at local businesses including Texas Roadhouse, Sonic, Whataburger, and AMC theaters. The SSLCs seek to continue this momentum and expand collaboration with TWC through pilot projects with Texas Beacons of Excellence. This project enhances on-campus coaching and preparation for community job programs. It strengthens connections with TWC Vocational Rehabilitation to support residents in competitive community employment. Additional collaboration entails ongoing trainings with SSLCs and TWC, raising awareness of current and new programs as HHSC expands collaboration to all 13 SSLC facilities.

### **State Hospitals**

#### ***Enhancing Transition Support***

Texas' 88th Legislature appropriated funds in response to H.B. 26, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, for state hospitals to establish transition teams to support



people statewide who are at risk of state hospital readmission by providing coordination and support to address mental health needs in the community. With this funding, HHSC has redefined transition support across the state hospital system. Each facility, including the Waco Center for Youth, has onboarded a discharge specialist who focuses primarily on complex inpatient cases, with a strong emphasis on post-discharge placement and support. The discharge specialists, who are licensed social workers, engage in ongoing collaboration with the full treatment team to support a person's transition goals and address barriers. As an additional resource, the Transition Review Panel is a collaborative approach to reviewing, researching, and discussing patients with specific barriers to discharge. Transition Review Panels are person specific and will include the person's treatment team, state hospital clinical leadership, family and other supports, community providers, members of the LMHA or LIDDA, and other entities involved in the person's care.

- As of August 2024, a total of 53 discharges were facilitated across various state hospital facilities by discharge specialists since January 2024. Of those discharges, 43 were adults and 10 were youth.

The following are other noteworthy discharge statistics which supported the successful discharge of people with a lengthier stay:

- North Texas State Hospital-Wichita Falls had two people discharged with lengths of stay over 1,000 days, and one person discharged with a length of stay of 5,473 days.
- San Antonio State Hospital had one discharge after a length of stay of 3,649 days.
- Rusk State Hospital facilitated five discharges of people who had a length of stay of 1,000 days or more, and one person discharged with a length of stay of 5,020 days.
- El Paso Psychiatric Center and Big Spring State Hospital each facilitated two discharges that were following Transition Review Panels.

### ***Promoting Health, Independence, and Cultural Connections at Kerrville State Hospital***

Kerrville State Hospital's (KSH) *Nutrition for Life* is a five-month educational program where patients become culinary students by engaging in a combination of nutrition lessons and hands-on cooking. Facilitated by a KSH registered dietitian, and supported by the Summit Unit Rehabilitation Department, this unique program

offers patients transitioning to independent living the chance to explore global cuisines, develop practical culinary skills, and experience the joy of cooking from scratch.

Each month, students learn to prepare dishes such as Indian, Italian, Creole, and Asian, expanding their palates and culinary knowledge. It teaches the students how to create meals from scratch including foundational staples like bread, sauces, and spice blends. Whether kneading dough or crafting a flavorful curry, students discover the satisfaction and benefits of homemade meals.

While classroom sessions provide essential lessons on nutrition, meal planning, and healthy eating, the program offers students immersive cooking experiences where they engage all of their senses. These experiences build practical cooking skills, foster confidence, and promote creativity.

*Nutrition for Life* is about more than preparing meals, it's about equipping students with lifelong skills for healthier living. From mastering the art of breadmaking to crafting flavorful gumbo, participants leave the program with tools to support their physical and emotional well-being. For those ready to embark on a journey of independence, cultural exploration, and better nutrition, *Nutrition for Life* offers the perfect recipe for success.

### ***Waco Center for Youth's Choir and Dance Teams Continue to Inspire and Uplift***

With the increasingly popular choir and newly formed dance team, the Chaplaincy Department at Waco Center for Youth (WCY) provides those served with opportunities for safe expression and spiritual growth. Since its launch 18 months ago, the WCY's girls' worship choir has quickly become a beacon of joy and connection. Performing at weekly chapel services and hosting concerts for staff and clients, the choir has fostered an environment where participants feel valued and inspired. Their dedication paid off when they won an award at the *47th Annual Follow Your Dreams Music Festival*, further demonstrating their talent. The choir has also been invited to perform at local congregations, giving them the opportunity to share their gifts with the broader community.

Programming was expanded in July 2024 by introducing a girls' liturgical dance team, which has added a dynamic element to the center's spiritual services. The dance team encourages creativity and self-expression, allowing the youth to engage with their faith in a physical and impactful way.

Participation in both the choir and dance team promotes personal accountability and teamwork. Youth build confidence as they hone their skills and perform together, fostering camaraderie that extends far beyond rehearsals. The support they offer one another is a testament to the strong bonds formed through these programs. Through the chapel choir and dance team, WCY youth are finding their voices and making a lasting impact on the community. These programs demonstrate the transformative power of the arts in chaplaincy, creating a nurturing environment for spiritual and social growth.

## Program Updates on People Served

The below table provides a brief overview of programs and services, a webpage to find more information, and an update on people served since the last GCPD quarterly report. Data is quarterly, unless otherwise noted. This list is not fully inclusive of all HHSC programs and services and only represents a few programs which provide this type of data in GCPD reports.

Program/Service	Description	Webpage	Program Impact
<b>Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)</b>	ADRCs support the Texas “No Wrong Door” system by serving as a key access point to person-centered, long-term services and supports needed to live independently in the community. The 28 ADRCs collaborate with AAAs, affordable housing coalitions, local service providers, food pantries, and other community-based organizations to provide information and referral services. In addition to information and referral services, ADRCs often subcontract with faith- and community-based organizations to provide respite care to family caregivers. ADRCs also ensure that faith- and community-based organizations are represented in their local advisory groups.	<a href="#">Find an ADRC   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 34,859 client interactions were conducted.

<b>Program/Service</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Webpage</b>	<b>Program Impact</b>
<b>Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)</b>	AAAs contract with HHSC to provide services to help older adults remain in their homes and communities. AAAs are designated by statute and are housed within community-based non-profit organizations and local governments. While AAAs contract with for-profit vendors for certain services, such as congregate and home-delivered meals and transportation, they provide most services through partnerships with non-profit and faith-based organizations.	<a href="#">Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 81,077 people received 3,475,586 meals through the congregate and home-delivered meals programs and 4,978 people received 162,873 trips.
<b>Blindness Education, Screening, and Treatment (BEST)</b>	The BEST program provides blindness prevention education and resources, vision screenings and eye medical treatment to prevent blindness. BEST contracts with Prevent Blindness Texas to provide free vision screenings across the state.	<a href="#">Blindness Education, Screening &amp; Treatment (BEST) Program   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	For fiscal year 2024, 3,079 people were served.
<b>Children's Autism Program</b>	The Children's Autism Program provides focused Applied Behavior Analysis services through local community agencies and organizations to children ages 3 to 15 with a diagnosis on the autism spectrum.	<a href="#">Autism   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	For fiscal year 2024, 307 people were served.
<b>Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) Services Program</b>	CSHCN helps children ages 20 and younger who have special health care needs and people with cystic fibrosis of any age improve their health, well-being, and quality of life.	<a href="#">Children with Special Health Care Needs Program   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, an average of 585 people were served.

<b>Program/Service</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Webpage</b>	<b>Program Impact</b>
<b>Community Attendant Services (CAS)</b>	Community Attendant Services (CAS) offers non-technical, non-skilled, in-home attendant services to people with an approved medical need for assistance with personal care tasks.	<a href="#">Community Attendant Services (CAS)   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 69,036 people were served.
<b>Consumer Managed Personal Attendant Services (CMPAS) Title XX</b>	A CMPAS licensed agency offers personal assistance services to people with physical disabilities who are mentally and emotionally competent and able to supervise their attendant, or who have someone who can supervise the attendant for them. Participants interview, select, train, supervise, and release their personal assistants.	<a href="#">Consumer Managed Personal Attendant Services (CMPAS)   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 325 people were served.
<b>Deaf and Hard of Hearing Training and Education Program</b>	Training activities are provided throughout the year for people who are deaf or hard of hearing as well as for their families, service providers, schools and institutions, employers, and government agencies. Topics presented include mental health in the deaf and hard of hearing community, deaf self-advocacy training, interview skills training, ethical healthcare interpreting, and communication strategies.	<a href="#">Deaf &amp; Hard of Hearing   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 444 people were served.
<b>Family Care (FC) Title XX</b>	FC offers a non-skilled, nontechnical attendant care service to eligible adults who are functionally limited in performing activities of daily living.	<a href="#">Family Care (FC)   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 4,043 people were served.

<b>Program/Service</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Webpage</b>	<b>Program Impact</b>
<b>Foster Grandparent Program (FGP)</b>	FGP serves a dual purpose. It provides income-eligible adults, age 55 and older, with meaningful volunteer opportunities while also meeting critical community needs by serving children with developmental delays or disabilities; visual hearing, or speech impairments; physical challenges; and children with other exceptional needs. Primarily funded by the AmeriCorps, FGP has been operating nationwide since 1965. There are 17 service areas in Texas, eight of which are administered by HHSC.	<a href="#">Foster Grandparent Volunteer Program   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	From July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024, 278 Foster Grandparent volunteers mentored and tutored 21,697 exceptional needs children and youth throughout the ten HHSC administered service areas.
<b>Home Delivered Meals (HDM) Title XX</b>	HHSC contracts with community-based provider agencies to deliver a nutritious meal through the HDM program to the eligible person's home to ensure they get at least one healthy meal per day.	<a href="#">Home-Delivered Meals (HDM)   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 19,965 people were served.
<b>Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Crisis Intervention and Crisis Respite Services</b>	During the 2020-2021 biennium, HHSC provided \$4 million to local intellectual and developmental disability authorities (LIDDAs) to provide crisis intervention and crisis respite support to people who have intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who may have behavioral health or mental health support needs. This funding gives a total of \$28.6 million towards crisis intervention and crisis respite services. Currently, all 39 LIDDAs statewide provide crisis intervention and crisis respite services to support people to maintain independent lives in the community, free of institutionalization.	n/a	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 1,066 people were served.

<b>Program/Service</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Webpage</b>	<b>Program Impact</b>
<b>LIDDA Enhanced Community Coordination (ECC)</b>	The LIDDA ECC service coordinators provide intense monitoring and flexible support to ensure participant's success in the community. The ECC service coordinator links individuals to critical services and monitors the success of those services for one year following a transition or diversion from an institution.	n/a	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 914 people were served.
<b>IDD Outpatient Mental Health Clinics</b>	The 86th Legislature allocated \$3.0 million for IDD Outpatient Mental Health clinics to enhance the services available for people with IDD and mental health needs. This funding established IDD community outpatient mental health services. On November 1, 2020, a pilot was implemented to provide the outpatient mental health services identified in the exceptional item.	n/a	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 150 people were served.
<b>Primary Home Care (PHC)</b>	PHC offers nontechnical, non-skilled, in-home attendant services to people with an approved medical need for assistance with personal care tasks. PHC is available to eligible adults with a practitioner's statement of medical need, whose health problems cause them to be functionally limited in performing activities of daily living.	<a href="#">Primary Home Care (PHC)   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 1,193 people were served.



Program/Service	Description	Webpage	Program Impact
<b>Texas 2-1-1/Texas Information and Referral Network (2-1-1 TIRN)</b>	Helps Texans connect with the services they need. A participant may access this program by phone or the internet. This resource strives to present accurate, well-organized, and easy-to-find information from state and local health and human services programs. 2-1-1 TIRN is a free, anonymous social service hotline, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.	<a href="https://211texas.org/">2-1-1 Texas   Texas Health and Human Services Commission (211texas.org)</a>	For the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2024, 602,732 callers were served, and 9,550 online chats were answered.
<b>IDD Transition Support Teams (TSTs)</b>	TSTs provide support to people transitioning from institutional settings into the community who may have significant medical, behavioral, and psychiatric support needs. The support teams provide educational opportunities and materials, offer technical assistance, and consultative case reviews to aid community waiver program providers and LIDDAs to successfully assist people with coordinating their transition from institutional settings, or remaining in the community when at risk for institutionalization.	<a href="#">LIDDA Transition Support Teams   Texas Health and Human Services</a>	From June 1, 2024 – August 31, 2024, the TSTs provided:  133 educational opportunities with 1,905 people in attendance.  643 opportunities for technical assistance were provided to 763 recipients.  558 peer reviews/case consultations were provided to 1,743 recipients.

## **HHSC System Level Updates**

### **Substantial Policy, Key Personnel, or Organizational Changes**

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- Joy Borjes is the new Associate Commissioner of Specialty and Family Services Management
- Hannah Vardy is the new Associate Commissioner of Family Health Services Policy

### **Health and Human Services Commission Strategic Plan**

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Every 2 years, the Texas Health and Human Services system updates its Strategic Plans, which describe its work to address multifaceted and evolving factors affecting health and human services. Each of the system's divisions contributes to the development of the Strategic Plans. The plans define the system's mission, goals, objectives, and action items to address specific issues over a 5-year period.

[HHSC Strategic Plan for 2025-2029-Part I](#)

[HHSC Strategic Plan for 2025-2029-Part II](#)

### **Publications, Meetings and Proposed Rules**

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#### **Advisory Committee Meetings**

All Health and Human Services (HHS) advisory committee meetings continue to be held in virtual or hybrid formats. For a full list of archived and upcoming committee hearings visit the [HHS Communications & Events page](#).

#### **Reports & Presentations**

Visit the [HHS Reports and Presentations](#) page for the latest list.

#### **Proposed Rules**

Prior to HHS rules becoming final, stakeholders have an opportunity to review and comment. The proposed rules are published in the Texas Register and open for public comment until the end of the stated comment period. Information about HHS rules is found at [Health-Human-Services-Rulemaking and HHS Rulemaking Public Comment](#).

## **Americans with Disabilities Act Information and contacts**

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### **Electronic and Information Resources (EIR) Accessibility Coordinator for HHSC**

Michael Moore is the Accessibility Coordinator for HHS and can be reached at: [accessibility@hhsc.state.tx.us](mailto:accessibility@hhsc.state.tx.us).

### **Title II Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator HHSC**

The Director of the HHSC Civil Rights Office, Dana Hess, is the ADA Coordinator and can be reached at: [HHSCivilRightsOffice@hhsc.state.tx.us](mailto:HHSCivilRightsOffice@hhsc.state.tx.us)

The HHSC Civil Rights Office processes reasonable accommodation requests (RAR's) and investigates discrimination complaints on behalf of HHS. Information about contacting the HHSC Civil Rights Office and filing a discrimination complaint or requesting an accommodation are available at the following link: [Your Rights | Texas Health and Human Services](#)

## Ombudsman Office information and Contacts

Ombudsman offices and contact information					
Foster Care Ombudsman	Ombudsman for Behavioral Health	Ombudsman Managed Care Assistance Team	IDD Ombudsman	Ombudsman Complaint Services (OCS) & Specialized Ombudsman Services (SOS)	Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
<p>We help foster youth (up to their 18th birthday) with inquiries and complaints about Department of Family and Protective Services and HHS programs such as Child Protective Services, Community-Based Care, and Residential Child Care Regulation.</p> <p><b>Toll Free: 844-286-0769</b></p> <p><a href="https://hhs.texas.gov/foster-care-help">hhs.texas.gov/foster-care-help</a></p>	<p>We help patients at state hospitals and those receiving services from a local mental health authority (LMHA). We also work with anyone needing access to behavioral health care through a health plan.</p> <p><b>Toll Free: 800-252-8154</b></p> <p><a href="https://hhs.texas.gov/behavioral-health-help">hhs.texas.gov/behavioral-health-help</a></p>	<p>We help Medicaid health plan members access care by investigating complaints, helping them navigate the managed care system, understand their coverage and appeal rights, and teaching them how to advocate for themselves.</p> <p><b>Toll Free: 866-566-8989</b></p> <p><a href="https://hhs.texas.gov/managed-care-help">hhs.texas.gov/managed-care-help</a></p>	<p>We help people with intellectual or developmental disabilities with services under the Home and Community based Services (HCS) program, the Texas Home Living (TxHmL) program or a local IDD authority (LIDDA).</p> <p><b>Toll Free: 800-252-8154</b></p> <p><a href="https://hhs.texas.gov/idd-help">hhs.texas.gov/idd-help</a></p>	<p>We work with anyone with questions or concerns about a Texas HHS program. We help address complaints after a consumer has tried to work with program staff but still have concerns.</p> <p><b>Toll Free: 877-787-8999</b></p> <p><a href="https://hhs.texas.gov/ombudsman">hhs.texas.gov/ombudsman</a></p>	<p>We visit assisted living and nursing facilities to advocate for residents' rights and protect their quality of care. When you call us, you will be asked to enter your zip code so you can be routed to staff in your local area.</p> <p><b>Toll Free: 800-252-2412</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:lrc.ombudsman@hhsc.texas.gov">mailto:lrc.ombudsman@hhsc.texas.gov</a></p>

Examples of when to contact each office					
Foster Care Ombudsman	Ombudsman for Behavioral Health	Ombudsman Managed Care Assistance Team	IDD Ombudsman	Ombudsman Complaint Services (OCS) & Specialized Ombudsman Services (SOS)	Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not able to reach caseworker by phone</li> <li>• Not allowed to visit or contact persons outside of the foster care system</li> <li>• Not receiving personal documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rights violations, such as unable to get an appointment at the clinic or treated unfairly</li> <li>• Health insurance parity for mental health or substance use disorders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to an in-network provider (non-PCP)</li> <li>• Case information error</li> <li>• Difficulty filling or refilling a prescription</li> <li>• Access to durable medical equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violation of a person's rights</li> <li>• Difficulty receiving services</li> <li>• Financial issues</li> <li>• Wanting to exercise the same rights as other Texans</li> </ul>	<p>Eligibility application not processed on time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denial of eligibility application</li> </ul> <p>Case error</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefits not issued or incorrect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns about resident rights</li> <li>• Concerns about physical and other therapies</li> <li>• Problems with food and inadequate facility staffing</li> </ul>
Referrals to Other Areas					
<p>Adults concerned about children or youth in foster care are directed to the DFPS Office of Consumer Affairs at <b>800-720-7777</b>.</p> <p>Reports about abuse or neglect are directed to the Texas Abuse Hotline at <b>800-252-5400</b>.</p>	<p>Concerns about a substance use disorder, chemical dependency or a narcotic or opioid treatment facility, are referred to Regulatory Services at <b>800-973-0022</b>, Option 8.</p>	<p>Providers' complaints are referred to Managed Care Compliance and Operations (MCCO) or TMHP. Email: <a href="mailto:HPM.Complaints@hhsc.state.tx.us">HPM.Complaints@hhsc.state.tx.us</a>.</p>	<p>Complaints about ICFIIDs (Intermediate Care Facilities for people with Developmental Disabilities) are referred to Regulatory Complaint and Incident Intake at <b>800-458-9858</b>, Option 1, and Option 3 to complain about an ICF-IDD facility or state supported living center.</p>	<p>Concerns about discrimination are referred to Civil Rights at <b>888-388-6332</b>. Employee calls regarding questions about personnel issues are referred to Human Resources at <b>737-867-8691</b>.</p>	<p>Allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation, are also referred to the Complaint and Incident Intake at <b>800-458-9858</b> or <a href="mailto:ciicomplaints@hhsc.state.tx.us">ciicomplaints@hhsc.state.tx.us</a>.</p>