TEXAS HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

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

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Executive Summary

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities (GCPD) Report Structure Additions

At the bottom of the report, HHSC included contact information for the Ombudsman offices as well as the contact info for the coordinators of Electronic and Information Resources (EIR) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) This information will remain in the HHSC quarterly report.

Prevocational Services in Waiver Programs

House Bill (H.B.) 4169, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, 2023, amended Human Resources Code, Subchapter B, Chapter 32, by adding Section 32.0755, which directs HHSC to add prevocational services or a service similar to prevocational services to the Home and Community-based Services (HCS), Texas Home Living (TxHmL), and Deaf Blind with Multiple Disabilities (DBMD) 1915(c) Medicaid waiver programs. The proposed name of the new service is "Work Readiness." The service will serve as a stepping-stone towards individuals' future competitive employment goals.

The Intellectual and Developmental Disability System Redesign Advisory Committee (IDD SRAC) Meaningful Skills Development and Employment Services Subcommittee requested a small workgroup be developed to provide feedback on the implementation of HB 4169. This workgroup met five times during December 2023 and January 2024 to provide input to HHSC on the development of the rule implementing HB 4169. HHSC also held a public hearing on February 15 to receive public comment on the rule project. The presentation shared at the hearing can be found on the HHSC website. Members of the public had the option of providing oral comments virtually during the public hearing, oral comments in-person during the public hearing, or written public comments submitted to HHSC. HHSC is currently reviewing and considering all comments received during the public hearing for development of the proposed rules. The proposed rules are currently on track to be published for public comment in the summer of 2024 and implemented in January 2025.

Public Health Emergency – End of Continuous Medicaid Coverage

On December 29, 2022, Congress passed the 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act, which separated the continuous Medicaid coverage requirement from the Public Health Emergency declaration. The requirement for states to maintain continuous Medicaid coverage ended as of March 31, 2023. States could begin disenrolling members effective April 1, 2023.

HHSC initiated the unwinding period in April 2023 by beginning a phased eligibility review of Texans receiving Medicaid, focusing first on people least likely to still be eligible for Medicaid. The review of Medicaid eligibility during this unwinding period will be completed by May 31, 2024. In anticipation of the increase in workload for the unwinding effort, HHSC strengthened recruitment and retention efforts to reduce the vacancy rate for frontline eligibility staff.

HHSC also employed a proactive, multi-pronged communications campaign to inform recipients, health care providers, advocates and other stakeholders about its plan to unwind continuous Medicaid coverage. Meetings are held biweekly with stakeholders to inform them of the current unwinding activities. In addition to normal renewal communications, HHSC implemented a robust public education outreach effort across social media platforms and a digital advertising campaign. HHSC also has hosted in-person renewal events around the state.

In September 2023, HHSC implemented a new federally approved waiver to allow managed care organizations (MCOs) to help recipients with their renewal applications. This waiver approval is active through December 31, 2024.

Texas residents can visit the Your Texas Benefits website to learn about programs and services and connect with HHSC on social media. More information about the end of the continuous Medicaid coverage requirement is available at hhs.texas.gov/update.

Managed Care Organization Transition Specialist Pilot

People with serious mental illness develop chronic physical health issues earlier in life and are at increased risk of entering nursing facilities. The Managed Care Organization Transition Specialist Pilot (MCO TS Pilot) helps adult Medicaid members with serious mental illness move from nursing facilities to the community. Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) in the Travis and Bexar service delivery areas employ trained transition specialists who provide intensive mental health rehabilitative supports to individuals up to six months before they leave the nursing facility and up to one year after their transition to the community. These supports include helping people with building skills to become and remain independent, obtaining healthcare and other benefits, and finding community housing.

The MCO TS Pilot builds on the success of the original Money Follows the Person Behavioral Health Pilot (BHP), which provided evidence-based behavioral health interventions to individuals transitioning from living in nursing facilities to the community. Almost 70% of pilot participants remained in the community with sustained improvements in functioning, social-engagement, quality of life, and success in achieving their personal recovery goals.

DeafBlind Family Camp

A DeafBlind Family Camp was held April 19-21, 2024, at CAMP Camp in Centerpoint, Texas. This camp allows the children and families in the Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program (BCP) to be successful with various hands-on and sensory activities, make new friends and participate in traditional camp activities that are designed just for them. A parent session and a sibling session was offered to allow families to engage in supportive discussions.

Stroke Awareness Month Webinar

The HHSC Office of Acquired Brain Injury is hosting a webinar series in May 2024 to promote awareness and provide education to the public in recognition of Stroke Awareness Month.

Across the United States an average of 800,000 people experience a stroke each year. The impact of a stroke can cause long-term disability and each injury is unique to the person. A stroke's effect on the person and their care partners can be significant and require unique interventions.

Join us for a free online webinar series of one-hour webinars that will focus on providing education about strokes, best practices for treatments, and how working together can help everyone affected by a stroke. The presentations will also discuss the signs and symptoms of strokes and how identifying a stroke early can reduce the medical and social impacts on individuals and their impacts on our healthcare systems.

To join the online webinar series, complete registration for each event.

Thursday, May 2 from 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m
Stroke Update 2024
Presented by Suzanne Hildebrand and Tommye Austin

Wednesday, May 8 from 10:00 a.m – 11:00 a.m.
Physical, Psychological and Social Presentation Associated with Stroke
Presented by Dr. John Alfonso and Dr. Erica Middleton

Thursday, May 16 from 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Hope in healing – The utilization of creativity and imagination in pediatric post stroke neuro-rehabilitation
Presented by Marial Biard and Jenson Maydew

Wednesday, May 22 from 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Recovery: A Three-Legged Race
Presented by Karen Williams

For more information, please contact the Office of Acquired Brain Injury at oabi@hhsc.state.tx.us.

Children With Special Health Care Needs

The Cystic Fibrosis (CF) Foundation will provide a one-hour webinar on May 21 to educate and inform HHS staff and stakeholders about the condition, progress made in healthcare advances that have improved the quality of life for those affected by CF, and how the foundation continues to support advances in care and advocacy on a national and state level.

Presenter: Scott Sherwood, Senior Specialist for Advocacy & Government Affairs

Webinar registration link:
https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/6822261181148019806

Board for Evaluation of Interpreters

The Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) Advisory Committee consists of seven members appointed to assist in administering the interpreter certification program, and to help develop the qualifications for each level of certification based on proficiency. The committee held a hybrid meeting on February 2, 2024. Updates were provided regarding testing updates, future training opportunities, interpreter referral agency practices, and disciplinary action procedures regarding certified interpreters. The committee also began planning for the Texas Society of Interpreters for the Deaf biennial conference forum. The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, May 31, 2024, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Independent Living Services Program

Media Campaign

The Independent Living Services Program (ILS) program is in the process of procuring a media campaign which will help to raise awareness among people in the disability community across Texas about services available through the Centers for Independent Living (CIL). Many individuals who could benefit from services are either unaware CILs exist or do not realize the full scope of the services available to them. It will be a statewide campaign using varieties of different media to maximize the number of people who can be reached. This campaign is estimated to roll out in late April to early May.

Mid-Year Service Data for Independent Living Services Program

The HHSC purchased services grant supports people with disabilities increase their independence by purchasing items that help them remain in their home and community. Purchase categories include hearing aids, home and vehicle modifications, power wheelchairs and scooters, prosthetics, durable medical equipment, and more. As of fiscal year to date, 2,030 people have been served

through this grant and of those, 103 had a primary visual disability. Over the last few years, the number of people with a primary visual disability that ILS has served has grown. Last fiscal year Centers for Independent Living (CILs) served 130 people with a primary visual disability. Based on the current rate of this population being served, the program anticipates exceeding the previous fiscal year in service numbers. The CILs have achieved 351 successful closures, which means a person has met all their goals on their Independent Living Plan (ILP).

Through the base/operational grant, CILs have served 3,478 people, met 728 goals, and provided 34,151 instances of information and referral (I & R). This grant primarily focuses on the five core services required in the Rehab Act (information and referral, independent living skills training, peer counseling, advocacy, and transition services). We look forward to seeing how many more people will achieve independence in the second half of the year!

The HHSC ILS program also hosted quarterly webinars through the base/operational grant to provide additional technical assistance to CILs. The first webinar focused on independent living plans and took place in January. Over 50 individuals were in attendance. The program received positive feedback, with the CILs stating the training was very helpful. The webinar series will continue in April with information on helping people transition out of nursing homes into their community.

Promoting Independence Plan

The Office of Disability Services Coordination (ODSC) is leading the development for the 2024 Revised Texas Promoting Independence Plan, as required by Senate Bill 367, 77th Legislature, (R) 2011 and Executive Order RP-13. The vision for the Promoting Independence Plan (PIP) is to develop a two-year strategic plan that capitalizes on the momentum from previous plans and focuses on a path that supports successful community living for people with disabilities through targeted goals and prioritized strategies.

ODSC will be hosting a Stakeholder Summit in early June with an in-person and virtual option on separate days. This is an opportunity for a cross-disability group to provide input on what targeted goals and prioritized strategies are important for HHSC to consider for inclusion in the 2024 Texas Promoting Independence Plan. A GovDelivery notification will be sent out soon with registration details.

In addition to the Stakeholder Summit, ODSC is accepting public comment for the PIP until June 28, 2024. Public comments and questions regarding the PIP can be submitted to HHSCOfficeofDisabilityServicesCoordination@hhs.texas.gov

Early Childhood Intervention Services

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), in coordination with the Texas Early Learning Council (TELC), is pleased to announce the release of the Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan 2024-2026.

The TELC is Texas' State Advisory Council on early childhood education and care and consists of various early learning representatives, including HHSC ECI. To improve early childhood outcomes in Texas and strengthen the early childhood system, the TELC developed a birth through five strategic plan that includes a clear vision and comprehensive goals, strategies, and actions for the years 2024 through 2026. The strategic plan includes measurable strategies related to families, workforce, local systems and partnership building, and data coordination, informed by the 2023 Early Childhood System Needs Assessment in Texas.

State Supported Living Center Programming Redesign for the Aging Population

All state supported living center (SSLC) programming involves supports and services based on an individual's needs, likes, preferences, and strengths. For some residents this individualized approach includes incorporating interventions related to the aging process. All SSLCs celebrate Older Americans Month each May, an observance reinforcing how communities are strengthened when they embrace and encourage contributions made by older adults. Although center activities and events are open to all residents, many specifically target providing physical activity and socialization opportunities to those who are older. For instance, the Abilene SSLC organizes "Golden Oldies" karaoke, classic movie day, and dances with music from the 40s, 50s, and 60s.

The Austin SSLC has day program options available to individuals who prefer less-demanding routines in a relaxed, smaller group setting. For increased socialization and maintaining their connection to the community, older residents at the Denton SSLC can participate in visits to the American Legion Senior Center followed by a lunch outing. To support residents transitioning to retirement and those showing signs of early onset dementia, Lufkin SSLC's recreation department implemented "Super Senior" events which include outings to the local senior center and other community locations.

The Rio Grande State Center's "Pasos de Encanto" retirement services program provides older adults the opportunity to participate in leisure activities such as gardening, arts and crafts, adaptive exercise, scrapbooking, watching movies, and listening to music.

These are just a few of the many programming options available to older adults served within the SSLCs. In addition to the specialized programming, SSLC staff are required to take training that focuses on strategies for adapting care to meet an aging individual's needs and reinforces adapting care as an expectation of caregivers working with the aging population. Staff trained to support individualized needs paired with programming ensures aging residents continue to thrive and grow as they move through their next phase of life.

Follow-Up from Previous GCPD Meeting

Medicaid Rates & Network Adequacy

The following inquiry was made during the previous January 2024 meeting: *GCPD would like to better understand Medicaid rates to be able to advocate and recommend changes to the appropriate area to 'increase' rates or 'increase network adequacy'*.

The reimbursement rates for Medicaid acute care services (i.e. services provided in a community setting such as a primary care physician, speech language pathologist, dentist, audiologist, etc.) are based on legislative appropriations and a standard methodology based on the service. Reimbursement rates for acute care services are reviewed every biennium to ensure that reimbursement stays in alignment with pricing methodologies and keeps up with market-driven pricing fluctuations. Previous legislative sessions have resulted in appropriations specifically earmarked for rate changes. For example, Rider 31, 88th Legislature, Regular Session, included rate increases for Pediatric Services and Women's Health Related Surgeries, and Rider 33 included increases for Ground Ambulance Reimbursement Rates. Additionally, stakeholders (including providers) can help inform rates by participation in rate hearings and personal advocacy with their legislative representatives. HHSC carefully considers stakeholder feedback gathered at rate hearings and will modify proposed rates for implementation where appropriate. For more information on rates proposed for hearings please visit: https://pfd.hhs.texas.gov/rate-packets. To ensure you have the most updated news from the Provider Finance Department, including when rate proposals are published for public commentary, sign up for GovDelivery here: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/TXHHSC/subscriber/new

HHSC contracts with MCOs to coordinate services for 97 percent of Medicaid clients and all (100 percent) of CHIP clients. Managed care is an integrated service delivery system where HHSC contracts with MCOs to provide all covered, medically necessary services to people receiving Medicaid or CHIP benefits. HHSC pays each MCO a monthly capitation rate for every member enrolled in their plan, and MCOs reimburse providers for services provided to their members. The goal of transitioning from fee for service (FFS) to managed care is to provide value-based care. This is achieved through the care coordination provided by the MCOs—a function that serves to establish a medical home for members; improve access to care; and ensure quality, cost-effective services are delivered.

MCOs are not governed by the HHSC fee schedule and pay via contracted rates or alternative payment arrangements which may be higher or lower than the Medicaid FFS schedules. MCOs are contractually required to build adequate networks of providers so their members can access care when needed and near where they live. In Texas and across the U.S., network adequacy for commercial health plans and Medicaid and CHIP MCOs is influenced by many factors, including provider

availability, administrative complexity and payment rates. HHSC's oversight of managed care seeks to ensure that Medicaid and CHIP are improving health outcomes and MCOs are delivering quality, cost-effective services. Because of the size, scope and complexity of managed care contracts and the types of services MCOs provide, there is no single oversight strategy. HHSC measures compliance through a variety of methods including (but not limited to) utilization reviews, time and distance standards, provider directory sampling, and a complaint process. For more information, review the Medicaid & Chip Reference Guide HERE.

Partnership: Early Childhood Intervention Program & Blind Children's Program

The following inquiry was made during the previous January 2024 meeting: *members would like to know more about how ECI and BCP collaborate, in specific to program referrals.*

The Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program (BCP) provides opportunities for Texas children between the ages of birth to 22 years old who are blind or severely visually impaired to learn the skills required for personal independence, potential employment, and integration into their community. The comprehensive habilitative services provided directly by BCP staff enhance children's ability to develop skills comparable to those of their sighted peers and help children achieve financial self-sufficiency as adults. Importantly, BCP is uniquely tasked to fill gaps in services for children with visual impairments to avoid duplication of services.

BCP collaborates with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Early Childhood Intervention, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) at the state level and the local level to ensure that children with visual impairments have access to the services needed. BCP also works closely with regional education service centers on creating and supporting direct skills training opportunities for children across the state. TSBVI and BCP partner on various committee projects (braille literacy awareness and eligibility for services), supporting the DeafBlind taskforce and direct skills training events for children. Early Childhood Intervention program (ECI) and BCP collaborate to share resources on education intervener training and information on deaf-blindness, including strategies to support needs for families and participate in the annual HHSC Deaf-Blindness Awareness week. Additionally, ECI and BCP both regularly participate in several interagency workgroups such as the HHSC and TEA workgroup and the 'child find' subcommittee of the Education Action Committee for Visual Impairment students. Furthermore, ECI and BCP staff worked to create a training for ECI and BCP staff which focuses on ECI services, developmental milestones and collaborating with ECI service providers. Lastly, BCP staff presented a webinar to ECI staff as part of ECI's Series for Meaningful Interagency Learning and Education (SMILE) in February 2023 to help educate ECI staff about services offered by the BCP, eligibility, and how they can collaborate to

provide services based on individualized family services plans tailored to meet the unique needs of their children.

At the local level, BCP staff coordinate services with teachers who provide instruction to children, ECI providers and TWC staff to ensure that there is no duplication of services. Staff meet routinely with these program providers to refine referral processes, share their expertise on visual impairment to assist families in community settings and to collaborate on needed services.

Right to Appeal – End of Continuous Medicaid Coverage

The following inquiry was made during the previous meeting in January 2024: *Do individuals lose benefits if they are appealing a coverage denial?*

If you are currently receiving benefits and receive a denial, you have a right to appeal that decision. If an appeal is requested within 13 days from when the TF0001 (denial determination) is sent, you continue to receive the benefits at current levels until the appeal is decided (or until the end of your current certification period, if that comes before your appeal is decided), except in extenuating circumstances, such as suspected fraud. If you lose the appeal, you may have to pay back benefits you received during that appeal.

How do I request an appeal to my denial determination?
Medicaid recipients can object to any determination of coverage by filing an appeal by mail, calling 2-1-1 and selecting Option 2, or visiting a local office. Additionally, there are details within the tf0001, Notice of Eligibility Determination.

HHSC Program Level Updates

Chief Medicaid and CHIP Services Office (CMCSO)

Home and Community Based Services Settings Rule

On March 17, 2014, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) Settings Rule at 42 Code of Federal Regulations §441.301(c), §441.710(a), and §441.530. To comply with the HCBS Settings Rule requirements, settings must be integrated in and support full access to the greater community for individuals receiving Medicaid HCBS. The deadline for compliance was March 17, 2023. CMS allows states to request a corrective action plan (CAP) for certain requirements of the HCBS settings rule for which the state is not fully compliant as result of the federal COVID-19 public health emergency. HHSC received HCBS Settings CAP approval from CMS on October 6, 2023. The CAP includes milestones for compliance related to individualized skills and socialization, employment services, and STAR+PLUS assisted living facility services. Specifically, the CAP included a delayed implementation of off-site individualized skills and socialization until March 17,

2024. The implementation of offsite individualized skills and socialization requirements went into effect as required.

Chief Program and Services Office

Community Services

Office of Aging Services Coordination (OASC)

Caregiver Awareness Campaign

The Strengthen The Care You Give caregiving campaign was launched with the goal helping Texans learn about the role of the family caregiver, highlighting issues associated with caregiving and building awareness of available services and supports. The campaign includes a range of media options, including television and radio platforms, social media, print and community engagement activities. Marketing materials, including editable templates and social media graphics for organizations and communities, have been added to the campaign website.
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 HHS, the workgroup member agencies, state leadership, community stakeholders and the business sector can implement to address the National Strategy to Support Family Caregivers goals. The workgroup is reviewing each action for states and assessing them for feasibility. The group is almost halfway through this assessment process.

No Wrong Door Governance Grant Project

HHSC was awarded a grant from the Administration for Community Living to assess and strengthen the state's No Wrong Door (NWD) System. OASC, in collaboration with the Office of Disability Services Coordination and the Office of Veterans Services Coordination, is leading this agency-wide effort. Client and provider feedback was obtained through regional listening sessions and a statewide survey. The two-year grant will culminate in a strategic working plan that will address the identified barriers and concerns and establish stronger oversight of the HHSC "doors". The University of North Texas Health Science Center is performing the analysis from the listening sessions and surveys to inform the NWD strategic working plan and sustainability efforts. Data and input gathered during the research and discovery phases will also be used to inform other HHSC strategic plans, including the Aging Texas Well Strategic Plan and the Promoting Independence Plan. The project team and the NWD Stakeholder Workgroup are developing year-two deliverables due by the project end date of August 31, 2024.

Texercise SNAP-Ed

As part of the Texercise SNAP-Ed grant funding, Texercise develops an annual State Plan and expenditure proposal to outline planned project activities and budget for the next federal fiscal year. Texercise staff developed and submitted the fiscal year

2025 State Plan and expenditure proposal to HHSC SNAP-Ed at the end of March 2024.

Statewide Interagency Aging Services Coordinating Council

The Statewide Interagency Aging Services Coordinating Council (SIASCC) was established by H.B. 728. 88th 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. SIASCC inaugural meeting convened on March 20, 2024.

Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program (BCP)

Family Camp

The first Family Camp for BCP children with medically complex conditions was held on December 1-3, 2023, at CAMP Camp in Center Point, Texas. The Camp was a success and included a parent session which allowed families to engage in supportive discussion. Families participated in canoeing, fishing, campfire cooking, adaptive archery and paintball, art activities and an evening with Santa making gingerbread houses.

Blindness Education, Screening and Treatment

On March 20, 2024, Blindness Education, Screening and Treatment Program participated in the United Way of Central Texas Community Connection event to promote awareness of the program and connect with other agencies. The event was held at the Salvation Army to discuss services offered to veterans. Each month, United Way Central Texas spotlights an organization to help promote awareness of their services. Other programs in attendance were Temple ISD, STAR program, True Heart Hospice, Children's Advocacy Center, Ralph Wilson Youth Center, DSHS, Families in Crisis and Family Promise.

Brain Injury Programs

Governor Greg Abbott issued a Proclamation for Brain Injury Awareness Month - March 2024.

March commemorates Brain Injury Awareness Month, and the Health and Human Services Brain Injury Programs hosted a free, public webinar series on a weekly basis and a day conference themed "Adapting Together."

The weekly online webinar series focused on education and increasing awareness within support systems and the various ways survivors, care partners, and healthcare professionals can support each other through the process. Working and adapting together after a brain injury can help each person through their unique journey while emphasizing they are not alone. The all-day conference provided information about connecting to a diverse group of people, resources, and the importance of these connections along the pathway to life after a brain injury.

Children's Autism Program

HHSC Children's Autism Program hosted a free public webinar in observance of National Autism Acceptance Awareness Month, on April 10, 2024.

In this presentation, speaker, Gilda Gil, Chief Operating Officer of Paso del Norte, PDN Children's Development Center El Paso, discussed the impact of early recognition, intervention and inclusion for children with autism and the significance of creating environments that foster positive growth and allow children to thrive.

For questions about this webinar, email Neicee Roy at SH.Communications@hhs.texas.gov.

Hemophilia Assistance Program

Bleeding Disorders Awareness Month is observed in March. On March 21, 2024, the Hemophilia Assistance Program hosted a presentation by the Gulf States Hemophilia and Thrombophilia Center at UT Health Science Center in Houston. The audience learned a brief history of the disorder's origins, various bleeding disorders, patient challenges, and available resources.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program (STAP)

During the January 2024 GCPD quarterly meeting, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) director and STAP manager provided an overview of the STAP program and the application and voucher processes. The update included a review of the program's intent which, per Texas statute, Utilities Code Chapter 56, Telecommunications Assistance and Universal Service Fund, is to provide vouchers to qualified applicants with a disability to purchase basic specialized telephone equipment to access the telephone networks.

GCPD received stakeholder feedback about the current application processing time. A backlog of STAP applications occurred during fiscal year 2023. DHHS has implemented a plan to resolve the backlog by October 31, 2024. A status update will be provided in the next report.

Family Health Services

Office of Disability Prevention for Children (ODPC)

ODPC works to prevent developmental disabilities and seeks to minimize the losses developmental disabilities cause, especially 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.

During the reporting period, ODPC hosted a statewide webinar: "Autism Awareness and How to Obtain a Diagnostic Evaluation." The webinar reached 346 attendees, including providers, educators, health care professionals, parents, and caregivers.

Health Specialty Care System

State Supported Living Centers

Addressing Behavioral Needs at Austin State Supported Living Center

Residents served within SSLCs receive care tailored to their individual needs. This includes programming to strengthen socialization and independent living skills, as well as innovative approaches towards supporting reoccurring or emerging behavioral health needs. Austin SSLC's Behavioral Health Services Department (BHSD) is comprised of staff with expertise in behavior analysis. The focus of their work is to implement interventions targeting any behavioral needs of SSLC residents.

Weekly behavior therapy sessions, facilitated by a behavior analyst, may be an approach taken by the BHSD team for certain residents. These sessions involve Clinical Behavior Analysis, a specialty of applied behavior analysis, to address psychological and personality disorders using evidence-based therapies and behavior-analytic tools. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, a process-based approach to functional analysis and treatment of maladaptive behavior, is one example of a therapy used during a weekly behavior therapy session. Although a newer intervention implemented by the BHSD team, the positive impact on residents is noticeable among staff. The BHSD team plans to continue implementing their weekly behavior therapy sessions and hope this specific intervention will expand statewide.

State Hospitals

New Patient Library at Rusk State Hospital

In addition to receiving high-quality psychiatric in-patient care at the new Rusk State Hospital (RSH), patients can also take full advantage of the new patient library. The hospital's new patient care building includes a library where patients can access books, magazines, textbooks, and other periodicals. Patients can check out up to three books per visit, as well as access computers to explore digital resources. RSH's community relations team, Volunteer Services Council, the Jacksonville Public Library, and several other donors are credited with ensuring the new library is filled with resources for patients. Through the generosity and support of others, RSH's patient library provides patients with an opportunity to expand their knowledge, fulfill their curiosity, and experience a new level of patient care.

Drama Therapy Sessions at North Texas State Hospital's Vernon Campus

Drama therapy sessions at North Texas State Hospital's Vernon Campus, allow patients to experience uncomfortable emotions in a safe space. Facilitated by the hospital's rehabilitation therapy department, sessions provide patients with an opportunity to process complicated emotions using a variety of theatre techniques such as creating and acting out plays, puppet shows, and charades.

Another technique that may be used during a session involves patients creating a character using art and a mask. Patients write a story about the character represented with the mask and then act out the story or read it. Staff within the rehabilitation therapy department acknowledge drama therapy as a complex intervention but have also recognized the contribution it has made to patient success stories. For instance, there was previous patient with significant challenges who was able to move to a lower level of care after developing a passion for drama and music therapy. Evidence of success is also visible on the engaged faces of both the patients and rehabilitation therapy staff during each drama therapy session.

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. 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	People Served
Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs)	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.	Find an ADRC | Texas Health and Human Services	Dec 2023 - Feb 2024, ADRCs assisted 27,414 callers.

Program/Service	Description	Webpage	People Served
Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)	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.	Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) | Texas Health and Human Services	During the period of Jan 2024 - March 2024: 76,047 people received 2,220,865 meals through the congregate and home-delivered meals programs. The transportation service provided 99,345 trips to 4,006 people.
Blindness Education, Screening, and Treatment (BEST)	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.	Blindness Education, Screening & Treatment (BEST) Program | Texas Health and Human Services	As of Feb 2024, BEST has provided beneficial treatment services to 99 individuals and screened the vision of 2,203 people through its contract with Prevent Blindness Texas. This reflects a total number of people served in fiscal year 2024 to 2,302.
Children's Autism Program	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.	Autism | Texas Health and Human Services	During the second FY quarter the Children's Autism has provided services to a monthly average of 354 children.
Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) Services Program	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.	Children with Special Health Care Needs Program | Texas Health and Human Services	During the second FY quarter the CSHCN Services Program has provided services to 904 clients. Additionally, as of this same date, there are 868 clients on the waiting list.

Program/Service	Description	Webpage	People Served
Community Attendant Services (CAS)	Community Attendant Services (CAS) offers non-technical, non-skilled, in-home attendant services to individuals with an approved medical need for assistance with personal care tasks.	Community Attendant Services (CAS) | Texas Health and Human Services	In the month of Feb 2024, 67,199 individuals were served.
Consumer Managed Personal Attendant Services (CMPAS) Title XX	A CMPAS licensed agency offers personal assistance services to individuals 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. Individuals interview, select, train, supervise, and release their personal assistants.	Consumer Managed Personal Attendant Services (CMPAS) | Texas Health and Human Services	In the month of Feb 2024, 300 individuals were served.
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Training and Education Program	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.	Deaf & Hard of Hearing | Texas Health and Human Services	As of the end of the second quarter of FY24, approximately 17 training events were offered with more than 800 attendees. In addition, staff are preparing for the first in-person Camp Sign event since 2019. Camp Sign is expected to occur in July of 2024.
Family Care (FC) Title XX	FC offers a non-skilled, nontechnical attendant care service to eligible adults who are functionally limited in performing activities of daily living.	Family Care (FC) | Texas Health and Human Services	In the month of Feb 2024, 3,706 individuals were served.

Program/Service	Description	Webpage	People Served
Foster Grandparent Program (FGP)	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.	Foster Grandparent Volunteer Program | Texas Health and Human Services	From Oct 1, 2022 - Sept 30, 2023, 270 Foster Grandparent volunteers mentored and tutored 15,895 exceptional needs children and youth throughout the eight HHSC administered service areas. *this data is available biannually and will be updated in next report.
Home Delivered Meals (HDM) Title XX	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.	Home-Delivered Meals (HDM) | Texas Health and Human Services	In the month of Feb 2024, 19,209 individuals were served.

Program/Service	Description	Webpage	People Served
Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (IDD) Crisis Intervention and Crisis Respite Services	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 individuals 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 individuals to maintain independent lives in the community, free of institutionalization.	n/a	From Dec 1, 2023 - Feb 29, 2024: 916 individuals received crisis intervention services and 52 individuals received crisis respite services.
LIDDA Enhanced Community Coordination (ECC)	The LIDDA ECC service coordinators provide intense monitoring and flexible support to ensure individuals' 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	From Dec 1, 2023, - Feb 29, 2024, 940 individuals were served.
IDD Outpatient Mental Health Clinics	The 86th Legislature allocated $3.0 million for IDD Outpatient Mental Health clinics to enhance the services available for individuals 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	As of Feb 29, 2024, a total of 189 individuals were enrolled and served in the IDD community outpatient mental health services program. Since the inception of the program, a total of 428 individuals have been served.

Program/Service	Description	Webpage	People Served
Primary Home Care (PHC)	PHC offers nontechnical, non-skilled, in-home attendant services to individuals 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.	Primary Home Care (PHC) | Texas Health and Human Services	In the month of Feb 2024, 1,122 individuals were served.
Texas 2-1-1/Texas Information and Referral Network (2-1-1 TIRN)	Helps Texans connect with the services they need. An individual 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.	2-1-1 Texas | Texas Health And Human Services Commission (211texas.org)	From Jan 1, 2024 - March 29, 2024: 440,121 callers were served and 7,032 online chats were answered.
IDD Transition Support Teams (TSTs)	TSTs provide support to individuals 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 individuals with coordinating their transition from institutional settings, or remaining in the community when at risk for institutionalization.	LIDDA Transition Support Teams | Texas Health and Human Services	From Dec 1, 2023 - Feb 29, 2024, the TSTs provided: 119 educational opportunities with 1,670 people in attendance. 786 opportunities for technical assistance provided to 819 recipients. 618 peer review/case consultations provided to 3,968 recipients.

HHSC System Level Updates

Substantial Policy, Key Personnel, or Organizational Changes

- Interim Deputy Executive Commissioner (DEC) for Behavioral Health Division is Trina Ita.
- Ricky Garcia is the new Deputy Executive Commissioner (DEC) for Policy and Quality under the Access and Eligibility Services (AES) Division.

HHSC Strategic Plan

Every two 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 five-year period.

HHSC Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 Part I
HHSC Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 Part II

Long-range Plans for People with Disabilities

Maximizing Resources and Long-Range Planning for State Supported Living Centers
Proposed Long-Term Care Plan for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and Related Conditions Fiscal Years 2022-2023
2022-2023 Aging Texas Well Plan
Rider 157 – Community Attendant Workforce Development Strategic Plan
Promoting Independence Plan 2022-2024

Publications, Meetings and Proposed Rules

Advisory Committee Meetings

All Health and Human Services (HHS) advisory committee meetings resumed using virtual or hybrid formats until further notice. 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.

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**
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. **Toll Free: 844-286-0769** hhs.texas.gov/foster-care-help	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. **Toll Free: 800-252-8154** hhs.texas.gov/behavioral-health-help	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. **Toll Free: 866-566-8989** hhs.texas.gov/managed-care-help	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). **Toll Free: 800-252-8154** hhs.texas.gov/idd-help	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. **Toll Free: 877-787-8999** hhs.texas.gov/ombudsman	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. **Toll Free: 800-252-2412** mailto:ltc.ombudsman@hhsc.texas.gov

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**
• Not able to reach caseworker by phone • Not allowed to visit or contact persons outside of the foster care system • Not receiving personal documents	• Rights violations, such as unable to get an appointment at the clinic or treated unfairly • Health insurance parity for mental health or substance use disorders	• Access to an in-network provider (non-PCP) • Case information error • Difficulty filling or refilling a prescription • Access to durable medical equipment	• Violation of individual rights • Difficulty receiving services • Financial issues • Wanting to exercise the same rights as other Texans	Eligibility application not processed on time • Denial of eligibility application Case error • Benefits not issued or incorrect	• Concerns about resident rights • Concerns about physical and other therapies • Problems with food and inadequate facility staffing
Referrals to Other Areas					
Adults concerned about children or youth in foster care are directed to the DFPS Office of Consumer Affairs at **800-720-7777**. Reports about abuse or neglect are directed to the Texas Abuse Hotline at **800-252-5400**.	Concerns about a substance use disorder, chemical dependency or a narcotic or opioid treatment facility, are referred to Regulatory Services at **800-973-0022**, Option 8.	Providers' complaints are referred to Managed Care Compliance and Operations (MCCO) or TMHP. Email: HPM_Complaints@hhsc.state.tx.us.	Complaints about ICFIIDs (Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities) are referred to Regulatory Complaint and Incident Intake at **800-458-9858**, Option 1, and Option 3 to complain about an ICF-IDD facility or state supported living center.	Concerns about discrimination are referred to Civil Rights at **888-388-6332**. Employee calls regarding questions about personnel issues are referred to Human Resources at **737-867-8691**.	Allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation, are also referred to the Complaint and Incident Intake at **800-458-9858** or ciicomplaints@hhsc.state.tx.us.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information and contacts

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

Title II Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 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

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