

TCDD Summary of Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services Legislative Appropriations Request Exceptional Items – FY 2016 - 2017

Exceptional Items

1. Current Early Childhood Intervention Caseload

DARS is requesting \$17 million in General Revenue (GR)¹ and \$25.1 million in All Funds (AF)² to maintain Early Childhood Intervention caseloads at Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 level. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C federal regulations require that all children determined eligible for the program must be served. IDEA Part C funding available to fund the ECI system in Texas has remained flat in recent history. However, ECI program costs associated with federal requirements and not reimbursed by Medicaid has resulted in the agency using more federal IDEA Part C funding for allowable program expenses than projected.

In attempt to remain within appropriated funds, DARS narrowed ECI eligibility criteria in FY 2012. **Federal regulations require that all children determined eligible for ECI must be served. If additional funding is not appropriated, DARS would need to narrow eligibility criteria again in order to serve all eligible children in FY 2017.**

2. ECI Caseload Growth

DARS is requesting \$17.5 million in GR and \$25.9 million in AF for ECI caseload growth. As a result of increased referrals, along with population growth in Texas, Health and Human Services Commission forecasting indicates growth by approximately 28,600 in FY 2016 and 30,100 in FY 2017 in the average monthly number of children served in the ECI program at a time ECI is serving a larger number of children with multiple and complex needs.

Like the previous item, if additional funding is not appropriated for ECI caseload growth, DARS would need to narrow eligibility criteria in order to serve all eligible children in FYs 2016 and 2017.

Program Impact	FY 2016	FY 2017
Avg. Monthly No. Children Served	1,472	3,025
Avg. Monthly Cost Per Child	\$479.82	\$479.82
Avg. Monthly Hours	2.89	2.93

¹ General Revenue Funds are state funds. The general revenue fund receives money from the sales tax, the motor vehicle sales and rental taxes, the franchise tax, insurance premium taxes, and various other taxes and fees.

² All Funds are the combination of state general revenue funds, federal funds and other revenue.

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3. Autism

This \$7.8 million AF request is to address the increasing prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) by promoting community assessments to identify resources and gaps in services and supports for Texans with ASD, supporting efforts for universal developmental screenings, providing education and training to parents, and providing training to professionals to increase the capacity of diagnostic intervention providers.

- Fund the Office of Autism Services (\$1.8M AF)
- Expand lower intensity focused Applied Behavior Analysis treatment services targeted to address only one or two developmental delays by all contractors and expand ASD treatment into unserved areas of the state. Would serve 645 children in FY '16 and 790 children in FY '17 (\$3.8M AF)
- Pilot cost-effective innovative treatment models (\$1.8M AF)
- Enhance program accountability and oversight (\$0.4M AF)

4. Invest in Independence and Blindness Prevention

Population growth and an increase in the incidence of conditions that result in the loss of vision are key drivers for this \$5.5 million AF exceptional item request. Despite increases in staff, the Children's Blindness Services Program caseloads have increased by 25% since 2009. Funds would:

- Serve projected increase in children needing blindness services (\$1.8M AF)
- Increase the number of Blind persons served in Independent Living (\$1.3M AF)
- Expand the Blindness Education Screening and Treatment (BEST) Program (\$2.2M AF)
- Develop a web-based eligibility application in the BEST program (\$0.2M AF)

Program Impact	FY 2016	FY 2017
No. Children Receiving Blindness Services	310	621
No. Consumers Served: IL-Blind	750	750
No. Individuals Receiving BEST	4,164	5,551

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5. Ensure Communication Access for People

Many organizations that serve the public do not provide the necessary equipment or services to ensure effective communication for people who are deaf. Approximately 59% of interpreters in Texas are certified at entry level, but most interpreting situations require advanced skills. Only approximately 136 interpreters certified by DARS are certified for court proceedings. Enhancing the skills of certified interpreters is vital to ensure availability of certified interpreters and certified court interpreters. This \$2.1 million AF request would:

- Increase access to deafness resource specialists (\$1.0M All Funds)
- Enhance oversight of the Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program (STAP) and Board for Evaluation of Interpreters Registry (\$1.1M All Funds)

6. Reduce the Independent Living – General Waiting

Independent Living Services provide services to eligible Texans with significant physical or mental disabilities, including veterans, with support to improve their ability to function independently in their home and the community. Most requests involve the purchase of assistive technologies and devices. This \$900K AF request would provide independent living services and/or needed assistive technologies to 234 additional people.

7. Reduce the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Waiting list

Comprehensive Rehabilitative Services provide intensive rehabilitation services to people who have experienced a traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury so they may regain functionality and independence. This \$2.6 million AF request would fund Comprehensive Rehabilitative Services for 44 additional people.

Reduction Options³

Agencies were instructed to provide options for an up to 10% budget reduction. DARS FY 2016-2017 target: \$25.9 million of General Revenue

1. DARS proposes an \$11 million reduction to Comprehensive Rehabilitation Program. This would result in **an estimated 207 fewer people receiving services over the biennia** for traumatic brain or spinal cord injuries and more people placed on a waiting list for longer periods of time.
2. DARS proposes a \$6.8 million GR reduction to the Vocational Rehabilitation program (general) that would result in an additional \$27.1 million of federal funds lost. **An estimated 4,951 fewer people would receive services over the biennia.**
3. DARS proposes a \$1.6 million GR reduction to the in Vocational Rehabilitation program (blind) that would result in an additional \$7.3 million of federal funds lost. **846 fewer people would receive services over the biennia.**
4. DARS proposes a \$6 million GR reduction to the Early Childhood Intervention Program that would result in an additional \$1.8 million of federal funds lost. 670 fewer children would receive ECI services during the biennia. With the decreased funding, it is possible that eligibility criteria would have to be narrowed to ensure all eligible children could be served as required by federal law.
5. DARS proposes a \$.5 million GR reduction to the Autism Program. This will reduce the average monthly number of children served by three.

http://www.dars.state.tx.us/reports/lar2016_2017.pdf

http://www.dars.state.tx.us/legislative/LBB_GOBPP_Pres_A_9-30-2014.pdf

³

Because DARS relies on federal funds to a greater extent than any other health and human services agency, most general revenue reductions would also impact the agency's ability to draw federal funds and earn indirect cost recoveries which will result in the need to eliminate indirect FTEs. GR reductions would also impact the agency's ability to meet federal Maintenance of Effort requirements.