

Actionline

A bi-monthly newsletter of The Arc of Texas Governmental Affairs Department

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79th Legislative Session: Looking Back

In July, we highlighted the tremendous impact you—The Arc of Texas advocates and volunteers—made during the 79th Regular Legislative Session. In addition to our biannual Capitol Day events, The Arc of Texas initiated weekly “Advocacy Days” which proved to be very successful! With a core of approximately 50 volunteers, The Arc of Texas was able to develop new relationships and strengthen existing relationships with countless legislators and their staff. Our presence at the Capitol was priceless, with many legislative staff praising our organized and resilient grassroots efforts!

The Texas media was especially responsive to The Arc's efforts during the Regular Session. Media outlets highlighted our Capitol Day efforts in February, produced Capitol Day follow-up segments in March and April, and several outlets underscored the support and service needs of individuals with intellectual (mental retardation) and developmental disabilities with special reports.

During the legislative session, The Arc of Texas advocates and volunteers were focused on the tasks at hand, including maintaining good law, changing bad law, creating and shaping new law, and expanding community based supports and services. (See the July Actionline Legislative Highlights for detailed information on long term care, budget, and education legislative outcomes)

The Legislative Interim, the time immediately following every legislative session, is when the “real” work begins. *Why?* Because it is our job to ensure that every successful legislative initiative is implemented appropriately and in the best interest of individuals with intellectual (mental retardation) and developmental disabilities. It is also our job to resurrect the good legislative initiatives that failed AND monitor the bad legislative initiatives that failed for possible regeneration.

Our work does not stop at the close of a legislative session! Instead, our efforts must gain strength and momentum as we monitor and participate in the implementation of legislative outcomes. Your insight, expertise, and passion is needed at local board and council meetings, local Arc chapter meetings and

events, state agency council meetings, and state agency stakeholder meetings. There are many opportunities for involvement at the local and state levels. The Arc of Texas can help you identify important state level meetings through the Actionline and other general postings to listserv. For information on local meetings, talk to your local Arc chapter, visit your local Mental Retardation Authority office or website, and/or call other advocacy organizations in your community.

The Interim: Moving Forward

With the end of the regular session in May, and with the close of the second Special Session (on School Finance) in August, our advocacy efforts must continue through the 79th Legislative Interim. It is crucial that we maintain strong relationships with legislators and their staff. Remember that while your legislators may not be in Austin, they are spending more time in their home district offices. Take advantage of the Interim. Here are some suggestions:

1. Meet with your state legislators on a regular basis. Call and introduce yourself if you haven't met them. If you will receive Medicaid Waiver Program supports and services as a result of the past legislative session, thank them and let them know how much this means to you. If you are still on the waiting list, tell them how long you have been waiting and why you need services. It is important for legislators to be aware of your ongoing needs and concerns. If you have friends or colleagues that are interested, make an appointment to go as a group.
2. Host a tea or coffee for your State Senator and State Representative at the home of an individual/family that is currently on the Waiting List for home and community based services and supports or at the home of an individual that is receiving Medicaid Waiver supports and services.
3. Invite your state legislators to address your local Arc membership at the next monthly meeting or ask them to participate in your events.
4. Get connected with your local media. Write thank you letters to local reporters, editors, and/or news stations for reporting issues that are of interest to our cause. Like with your legislators, consider hosting a tea or coffee for a local reporter at the home of an individual/family that is currently on the Waiting List for home and community based services and supports OR at the home of an individual that is receiving Medicaid Waiver supports and services. You can also invite your local reporters or newspaper editors to educate the members of your local Arc chapter

about building relationships with media outlets and/or the most effective ways to get your story in the paper or on television.

We will have upcoming opportunities for you to participate in to keep the momentum going in our advocacy efforts. As always, thank you for your participation and dedication.

Medicaid Waiver Program Expansion

The 79th Legislature expanded Medicaid Waiver Program supports and services to over 9000 individuals on Medicaid Waiver Waiting Lists [****See note below**]. Approximately 4524 individuals on HCS, TxHML, and CLASS Waiver Program Waiting Lists will receive the supports and services they need and have been waiting for. People at the top of the waiting lists, those who will receive supports and services first, have been waiting since 1993—TWELVE YEARS!

While we have been working closely with DADS staff on ensuring the effective roll-out of the newly appropriated funds, The Arc of Texas has been working closely with DADS staff, the Texas Council of Community MHMR Centers, and the Private Providers Association in Texas to ensure that the dollars allocated to provide HCS and TxHML Waiver Program supports and services to needy individuals are appropriated in a timely manner. An “efficient roll-out” of the newly appropriated dollars means that the estimated number of individuals to be served per quarter over the next two years must be met in order to ensure that every cent is spent effectively.

Recently, DADS has provided stakeholders with a document containing the estimated net new HCS, CBA, CLASS, and MDCP Program enrollments per quarter for FY 2006. Remember, if the system uses the newly appropriated funds effectively and efficiently, then we can proudly take our pleas for further expansion of Waiver supports and services AND for the adoption of a long term plan to eliminate the waiting lists before the 80th Legislature. To that end, The Arc of Texas will continue its efforts to ensure that every cent of the newly appropriated funds is put to good use—to provide needed waiver program supports and services!

What Number Am I?

It is important to keep in mind that while your Mental Retardation Authority keeps a local HCS Waiting List, the numbers are a part of a DADS Statewide HCS Waiting List. To get further information about your current place on the Stateside HCS Waiting List, call your local Mental Retardation Authority.

**** Note:** The 79th Texas Legislature appropriated \$97.9 million in General Revenue to provide supports and services to individuals on the Department on Aging and Disability Services (DADS) Waiting Lists (both Medicaid and Non-Medicaid supports and services). In total, it is estimated that an additional 9360

individuals will be provided the services they need by the end of the FY 2006-2007 biennium. The following chart provides information about each of the DADS Medicaid Waiver Programs, the populations they serve, the number of Texans on the Waiting Lists, and the estimated number of individuals that will receive Medicaid Waiver Program supports and services in the next two years.

Medicaid Waiver Program	Population	Texans Waiting	Approximate Number of Individuals to be Served in FY 06-07 (Rollout begins 9/1/06)
<i>Home and Community Services, HCS</i>	Intellectual Disability (Mental Retardation), primary diagnosis	28,868 <i>(As of 5/31/2005)</i>	2,815
<i>Texas Home Living Waiver, TxHML</i>	Intellectual Disability (Mental Retardation), primary diagnosis—no residential supports	<i>Not applicable</i>	58
<i>Community Living and Support Services, CLASS</i>	Developmental Disability, Intellectual Disability (Mental Retardation) is not the primary diagnosis	13,453 <i>(As of 11/30/2004)</i>	1,645
<i>Deaf/Blind-Multiple Disabilities, DB-MD</i>	Persons over age 18 who are deaf, blind, and have a third developmental disability	18 <i>(As of 11/30/2004)</i>	18
<i>Medically Dependent Children Program, MDCP</i>	Children who are medically dependent	8,604 <i>(As of 11/30/2004)</i>	1,450
<i>Consolidated Waiver Pilot Program, CWP</i>	Pilot was supposed to consolidate all waivers. At this time, the CBA and DB-MD Waiver programs are excluded	<i>Not applicable</i>	9
<i>Community Based Alternatives Program, CBA</i>	Persons age 21 and over who qualify for nursing facility care	66,728 <i>(As of 11/30/2004)</i>	3,068

Advocacy Trainings

As we continue to advocate through the interim, we want to be sure advocates have the tools they need to be effective in their efforts. Advocacy trainings

continue to be scheduled across the state. If you would like more information on a certain date/location, or would like to help organize a training in one of the locations yet to be scheduled, please contact Dee Dee Eberle at (800) 252-9729, ext. 110, or at deberle@thearcoftexas.org .

September 7th
Round Rock, TX

October 13th (tentative date)
El Paso, TX

October 21st
Brownsville, TX

October 22nd
McAllen, TX

October 25th & 26th
Lubbock, TX

November 9th & 10th
Corpus Christi, TX

Late January
Victoria, TX

Training Sites Not Yet Scheduled:

Houston
Tarrant County
Plano
Waxahachie
Laredo
Waco
Temple
Killeen
Bryan/College Station

Advocate Survey

We are in the process of planning future advocacy efforts in Texas. However, we want to be sure that we are providing you with the advocacy training, tools and information that you need. Please take a moment to take our short advocacy survey. Your input is critical as we tailor our assistance to advocates like you here in Texas!

If you have already taken the survey, thank you for your input! If you have not had the opportunity yet, now is your chance! Follow this link to take the survey:

<http://www.zoomerang.com/survey.zgi?p=WEB224CPVKBZZX>

(If you are unable to click on this link, please cut and paste this URL into your web browser)

Thank you in advance for your help!

Meeting Notices & Information Sites

September 14, 2005

DADS Council Meeting, Austin, Texas (http://www.dads.state.tx.us/news_info/council/index.html)

September 16, 2005

HHSC Council Meeting, Austin, Texas

(http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/about_hhsc/hhsc_council.html)

October 18-20, 2005

Private Providers Association in Texas Annual Conference, Austin, Texas

Contact: PPAT (512-452-8188)

October 20, 2005

Promoting Independence Advisory Committee Meeting, HHSC, Austin, Texas

Contact: Marc Gold (marc.gold@dads.state.tx.us)

October 26, 2005

Texas Self Determination Policy Team, Austin, Texas

Contact: Amy Mizcles (amizcles@thearcoftexas.org)

November 18, 2005

HHSC Council Meeting, Austin, Texas

(http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/about_hhsc/hhsc_council.html)

December 2, 2005

DADS Council Meeting, Austin, Texas

(http://www.dads.state.tx.us/news_info/council/index.html)

December 7, 2005

HHSC Council Meeting, Austin, Texas

(http://www.hhsc.state.tx.us/about_hhsc/hhsc_council.html)

For up to date information from the Texas Education Agency on Special Education, go to

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/whatsnew.html>.