

The Legislative Session is adjourned!

June 4, 2009

The regular session of the 81st Texas Legislature adjourned on Monday, June 1st. It was a long 140 day rollercoaster ride and we are all recuperating at this time! Many bills died, while others made it through the process. The best news is that legislators in both chambers supported a state budget for FY 2010-2011 that invests \$207.9 million GR in the service delivery system for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities!

As we've noted previously, Governor Perry has twenty days to review all legislation passed by the Texas House of Representatives and Senate. During this period, the Governor will sign or veto legislation. Measures that are not vetoed or signed on or before Sunday, June 21st, become law on September 1, 2009 (or an earlier date, if noted in the legislation).

Today, Governor Perry signed SCR-77 by Senator Nelson. The resolution approves the Department of Justice State School settlement agreement.

As noted in a previous Weekly Update:

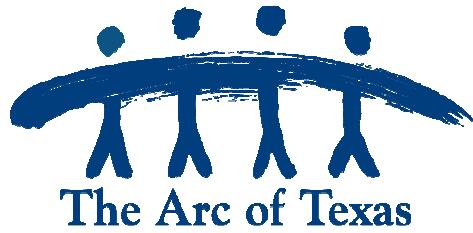
The settlement agreement, released to the public on May 22nd, focuses on improving conditions at state schools in order to ensure the health and safety of residents, adds 1,160 new staff and will cost the state \$112 million over five years. Commissioner Addie Horn says, in a DADS website statement: "This negotiated settlement agreement allows DADS to continue with a clear action plan for ensuring the safety and well-being of the vulnerable Texans in our care...it is important to know that we have not been waiting of an agreement to start making changes. We initiated improvements to our state schools before the Department of Justice's first visit to our state, and we continue to make additional significant improvements." To read the entire statement, go to <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/homepage/index.cfm?storyid=54>. The settlement agreement is posted on that page.

The Arc of Texas is glad the state is making a greater commitment to protect the health and safety of the 4,600 state school residents. Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have a right to be safe and free from abuse and neglect wherever they chose to receive services. While we are disappointed that the DOJ agreement does not take advantage of this historic opportunity to promote significant reform in how and where Texas provides services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, we continue to underscore the importance of Senator Ogden's commitment to reshape the entire service

Creating opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to be included in their communities and make the choices that affect their lives.

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delivery system for this population. Ogden's Rider 48 is a monumental and comprehensive initiative that responsibly reforms the entire IDD service delivery system.

Please note that The Arc of Texas is developing a formal, more comprehensive statement on this matter. We will share this information with you in the very near future.

The Arc of Texas Governmental Affairs Team will continue to analyze the results of the session in the coming weeks. Our Legislative Wrap-Up will be posted after June 21st. Again, thank you for your support and involvement this legislative session!! Our devoted and hardworking volunteers made a great impact this session!!

For more information, contact Amy Mizcles (amizcles@thearcoftexas.org).