



Providing support and information for families of children with disabilities, chronic illness and other special health care needs

An Opportunity for Input and You Don't Have to Be In Austin!

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And you thought that the next legislative session wasn't scheduled to begin until January, 2009. Guess again! It's actually starting this month!

Well, the session itself isn't starting, but the process certainly is. It takes the full year before the session for the agencies and the Legislative Budget Board to formulate the budget proposals that they will offer to the legislature next January. *Right now* is YOUR first chance to have a say in how that money will be allocated.

The Department on Aging and Disability Services (DADS) has requested that stakeholders (that means you!), submit ideas on how they should spend their money to best serve the needs of Texans with disabilities and their families. DADS has made it quite easy to provide input - you can fill out an on-line form or send an email with a Word document. All the information you need to submit ideas can be found at <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/feedback/LAR/index.cfm>

Now, multi-billion dollar agency budgets can be intimidating and you might be thinking that this will be far too complex. It's really not. You don't have to figure out the dollar amounts that may be needed. DADS is simply asking you to:

1. Identify critical needs that you feel should be addressed (e.g. community services for youth transitioning to adult programs, increased wages for direct care workers, improved supported employment opportunities for people with disabilities, money-follows-the-person for individuals wanting to leave ICFsMR and state schools, consolidating waivers or standardizing the services across the different waivers, and the list goes on...)
2. State your recommended course of action (what do you think needs to happen)!

DADS will then look at your recommendation, estimate the cost, and consider it for inclusion in their funding requests. The more people that suggest the same or similar recommendations, the more likely the chances of having those recommendations included.

Remember, DADS is part of the health and human services system which is separate and apart from the Texas Education Agency. So don't send recommendations to improve special education services to DADS . . . they can't help with that. Also, while the waiver programs are administered through DADS, the funding to reduce the waiting lists is requested in the Health and Human Service Commission legislative appropriations requests, not in the DADS requests. Keep an eye out for email notices announcing additional opportunities to provide suggestions to the Commission and the other agencies. Get on the TxP2P Advocacy Listserv to stay informed and take the time to respond!

Remember, if you're not part of the solution, then stop the complaining. If you have questions or need some help, please feel free to contact me at colleen.horton@mail.utexas.edu

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