

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1230
By: Rodriguez
Human Services
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Currently The Department of Assistance and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) has an established team of 100 Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (TVRCs) to provide transitional services designed to help youth with disabilities transition from school-oriented living to post-secondary educational or vocational opportunities. While these transition counselors are trained and skilled in providing those supports, they often have little knowledge of the community services and supports available through other health and human service agencies. Under Current Law, TVRCs are not required to participate in specialized training programs focusing on these supports and services. Navigating this maze of service agencies can be challenging for these young people and can result in them not receiving needed assistance.

While pockets of state and national data exist, little is known about youth outcomes in Texas with respect to employment, community integration, and quality of life specifically, which if studied, could yield public policy priorities for youth with disabilities. Youth with disabilities leaving the school system frequently find there is no coordinated system of services and support to help them find work, post schooling activities, and other adult disability services. In order to establish a coordinated system of services a work group is needed to improve collaboration between agencies with respect to choices individuals have for employment, post secondary education, and disability services.

HB 1230 requires the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to create a system of monitoring programs and services to study trends and promote positive outcomes for transitional youth with disabilities. The bill requires an intra-agency collaborative effort to ensure DARS transition specialists receive training on long term supports and services from other health and human service agencies to provide these transition specialists with knowledge of a broad spectrum of state programs and community resources. This training will ensure that transition specialists have the information students need to obtain community-based services. The bill also requires the HHSC to establish a work group with the goal of creating and implementing a plan ensuring the efficiency and availability of post-schooling activities, HHSC state and local services for adults, and supported employment opportunities.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Executive Commissioner of the Health and Humans Services Commission in SECTION 3 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

HB 1230 amends the Government Code by adding a section that requires the executive commissioner of the HHSC to monitor programs and services offered through health and human services agencies designed to provide post-schooling transitional services to youth with disabilities. In monitoring the programs and services, the executive commissioner is required to consider whether the programs or services result in positive outcomes and to collect information regarding the outcomes of the transition process as necessary to assess the programs and services.

The bill requires the department, (DARS), to establish and require specialized training for certain employees whose duties involve assisting youth with disabilities to transition to post-schooling activities, services for adults, or community living. The training must provide employees with information regarding transitional support services from other Health and Human Services

agencies, community resources available to improve quality of life, and any other resources that may remove transitional barriers for youth with disabilities. In developing the training, the department is required to collaborate with other health and human services agencies as necessary.

The bill requires the Executive Commissioner of the HHSC to establish a work group to create and implement a plan ensuring that an individual with a disability who is transitioning into post-schooling activities, services for adults, or community living has choices about the individual's work and career and has the opportunity and support necessary to seek individualized, competitive employment in the community. The bill requires improved collaboration between health and human services agencies, other state agencies, and community and local service providers to maximize supported employment resources. The bill requires the executive commissioner to determine the number of members to serve on the work group as well as to appoint experts and representatives from related state agencies or organizations. The focus of the work group will be on increasing quality of services, outcomes, and increased cooperation among agencies and community providers in the development of their plan. The bill provides a time line schedule for the filing and implementation of the plan.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2007.