



Request for Information – Response
September 25, 2020

TO: Texas House Human Services Committee
Courtney DeBower, Assistant Committee Clerk
Courtney.DeBower_HC@house.texas.gov

FROM: Lee Johnson, MPA
Deputy Director, Texas Council of Community Centers



8140 N Mopac
Westpark Building 3, Ste. 240
Austin, Texas 78759

RE: Request for Information (RFI) Response for Interim Charge 4 – Due September 25th

Interim Charge 4: *Examine the long-term services and support system of care in Texas. Study workforce challenges for both institutional and community services, with a focus on home- and community-based services in the state's STAR+PLUS program. Review what impact funding provided by the 86th Legislature to increase the base wage for community attendant services and the increased funding for rate enhancements have on workforce retention and quality. Consider options to both stabilize and expand the workforce. Review the long-term care programs and services available to Texas' seniors, including community alternatives to institutional care available through programs like the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly. Examine the adequacy of current funding mechanisms, including Medicaid reimbursement rates and supplemental or add-on payments, to incentivize high-quality care. Consider mechanisms to promote a stable, sustainable and quality-based long-term care system to address current and future needs of the state.*

Texas Council of Community Centers represents the 39 Community Mental Health and Intellectual Disability Centers (Centers) throughout Texas statutorily authorized to coordinate, provide, and manage community-based services, as alternatives for institutional care, for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, serious mental illness, and substance addictions.

Created by the Texas Mental Health and Mental Retardation Act – now known as the Texas Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities Act – of 1965, Community Centers are authorized to conduct certain functions for Texans with mental illness and IDD. For individuals with IDD, Community Centers function as the Local IDD Authority for their respective local services areas. Many Community Centers serve as public providers of IDD service providers for the Home and Community-based Services (HCS), Texas

Home Living (TxHmL), and/or Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IID) programs.

Thank you for the opportunity provide information regarding the impacts of funding provided by the 86th Legislature to increase wage enhancements for direct care providers serving persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and rate increases for IDD providers.

We are extremely grateful to the Texas Legislature for appropriating funds and including in the 2020-2021 General Appropriations Act Riders 44 and 45, directing HHSC to provide a rate increase to benefit direct care staff for HCS and ICF/IID providers and funding to the Attendant Compensation Rate Enhancement program, respectively. The Texas Council and the two private provider associations worked closely with HHSC as the state agency implemented both directives.

As such, the Texas Council was pleased to support these efforts that strengthen community-based services by ensuring providers are paid rates that support quality services. Investments in community-based IDD programs, are some of the most cost-effective investments the Legislature can make, in large part due to the development of alternatives to institutional care. The new funding for rate increases began in January 2020 and wage enhancements are just now making their way to providers, these investments increase the ability of providers to retain an experienced, high-quality workforce. A stable workforce for IDD services, including direct care staff s, is vital to a provider's ability to safely and successfully support a person with intellectual disability in community, in large measure because a stable direct service workforce results in improved health outcomes, quality services, and continuity of care—reducing the risk of abuse and neglect, skill regression, and poor health outcomes.

The increased funding is particularly helpful with the added challenges IDD providers face during the pandemic, and we greatly appreciate the Legislature's investment in supporting direct care workers, all of whom play a vital, distinct role in the lives of people with IDD. As we prepare to start the 87th Legislative Session, the Texas Council recognizes the challenge the Legislature will have when making budget decisions next session. We urge the Legislature ensure the funding for community-based IDD services, including HCS, TxHmL, and community-based ICF/IID is not negatively impacted by budget decisions.

