

DARRS

DEPARTMENT *of* ASSISTIVE
and
REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

PARTNERSHIPS FOR INDEPENDENCE

OUR PEOPLE, OUR SERVICES, OUR MISSION

2006 ANNUAL REPORT



DEPARTMENT OF ASSISTIVE AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES



VISION

A Texas where people with disabilities and families with children who have developmental delays enjoy the same opportunities as other Texans to pursue independent and productive lives.

MISSION

To work in partnership with Texans with disabilities and families with children who have developmental delays to improve the quality of their lives and to enable their full participation in society.

DRS DBS EC CI DDS

PARTNERSHIPS FOR INDEPENDENCE

DARS



DRS DBS ECI DDS

Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services

Commissioner's Comments Terrell I. Murphy, Commissioner

Welcome to the 2006 Annual Report for the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS).

This year's report provides a glimpse of the many accomplishments of the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Divisions for Rehabilitation Services, Early Childhood Intervention Services, Blind Services, and Disability Determination Services. Each division's activities, relevant statistics, and mission statement are featured.

More importantly, the Annual Report introduces you to some of our consumers and describes how DARS employees have helped enrich their lives. To begin, meet Virginia Kelley, a single mother who suffered from hearing loss. Thanks to assistance from the Division for Rehabilitation Services, Ms. Kelley not only kept her job, but also advanced in her career. Next you'll meet Vanessa Mobley Johnson, who lost 90 percent of her vision as the result of an inoperable brain tumor. The DARS Division for Blind Services provided training that helped her learn daily living skills and introduced her to adaptive equipment that made it possible for her to return to full-time employment. In the report's section on the Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services, you'll learn how young Bella Craft, who was not expected to live, has progressed to the point where she now attends her public school's Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities. Services provided through ECI contractors helped the Craft family thrive while providing a nurturing and safe environment for Bella. These inspiring stories are representative of thousands of other successes that are unfolding every day at DARS.

Our Department also is especially proud of the many accomplishments of the Division for Disability Determination, which continues to receive accolades from the Social Security Administration for its efficiency and accuracy in determining the disability status of applicants for federal benefits. The Annual Report's section on DDS brings you up-to-date on the Division's transition from a paper disability folder to one that is entirely electronic.

As these stories demonstrate, 2006 had many moments to celebrate.

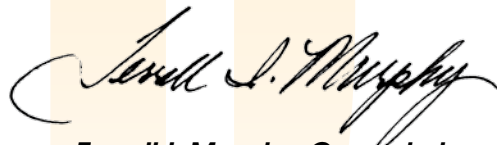
Looking ahead to 2007, DARS is beginning the year with a new, comprehensive approach to planning and tracking our progress. This approach is embodied in the DARS Roadmap, which will guide us through the next five years. As we pass each mile marker on this journey, employees, stakeholders, and consumers will benefit from our commitment to set priorities that are compatible with the Roadmap and make the best, most efficient use of time and resources.

The Roadmap will lead DARS to four key destinations, where:

- 1) World class services and business practices are the DARS standard,
- 2) Constructive collaboration is the theme of DARS' interactions with all internal and external entities,
- 3) DARS executives are the models of leadership and commitment to a united DARS, and
- 4) Employees are DARS' most valuable resource and are empowered to develop competency to achieve world class services.

As you can see, 2006 was a good year and 2007 is off to a great start. Together, our accomplishments and aspirations bring to life our belief that disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to live independently.

We're in a good place as we continue our journey, with the added advantage of a great guide and exciting destinations.



Terrell I. Murphy, Commissioner, Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services

JANUARY

2007

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TERRELL I. MURPHY PROFILE

Terry Murphy was appointed commissioner of the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) in December, 2003. Before his appointment, Commissioner Murphy served more than three decades at the Texas Commission for the Blind. In addition to his distinguished career in public service, Commissioner Murphy is a proud veteran who was awarded three Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart during his service in Vietnam. He is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin.

DARS



DRS DBS ECI DDS

Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services

OVERVIEW

**ADMINISTERS PROGRAMS
THAT HELP TEXANS
WITH DISABILITIES**

The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, or DARS, administers programs that ensure Texas is a state where people with disabilities, and children who have developmental delays, enjoy the same opportunities as other Texans to live independent and productive lives.

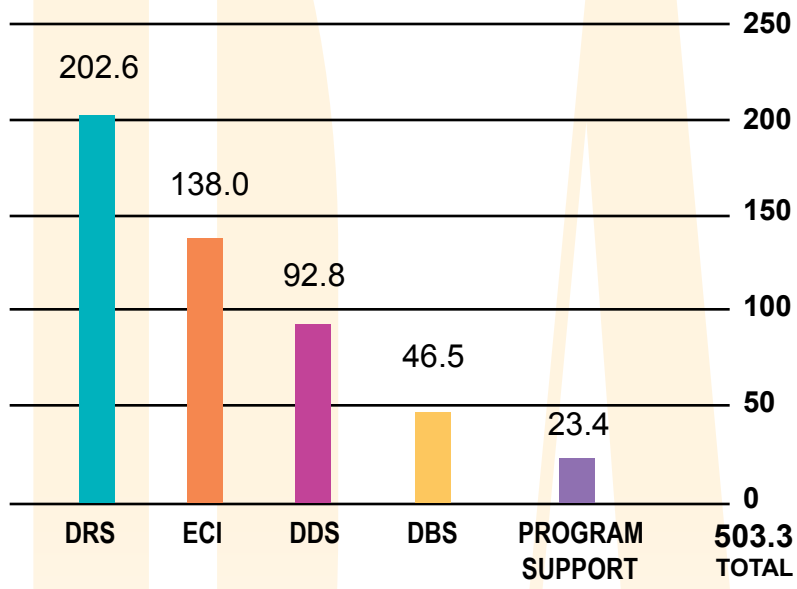
The department has four divisions:

- Rehabilitation Services
- Blind Services
- Early Childhood Intervention Services
- Disability Determination Services

Through these divisions, DARS administers programs that help Texans with disabilities find jobs through vocational rehabilitation, ensure that Texans with disabilities live independently in their communities, and prepare children with disabilities and developmental delays to meet education goals.

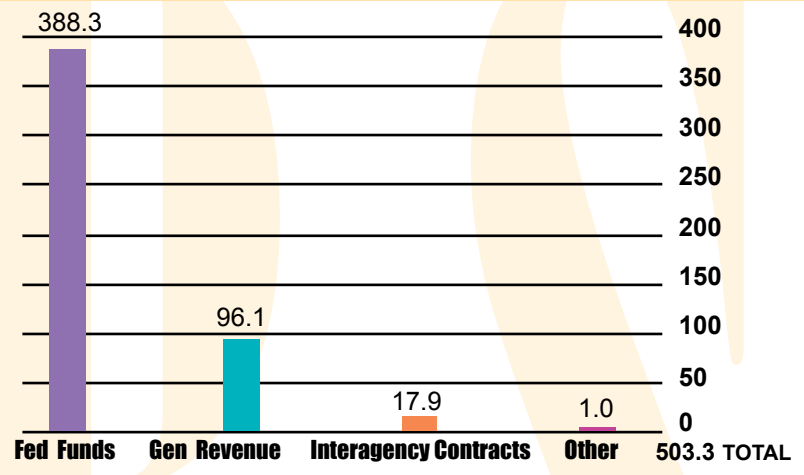
It is a fundamental value of DARS to listen, to learn, and to be responsive to our stakeholders and our consumers in an ongoing effort to make programs and services even better. If you have suggestions or comments, please call the **DARS Inquiries Unit** at **1-800-628-5115**, or email **DARS.Inquiries@dars.state.tx.us**.

BUDGET BY DIVISION SFY 2006 MILLION \$

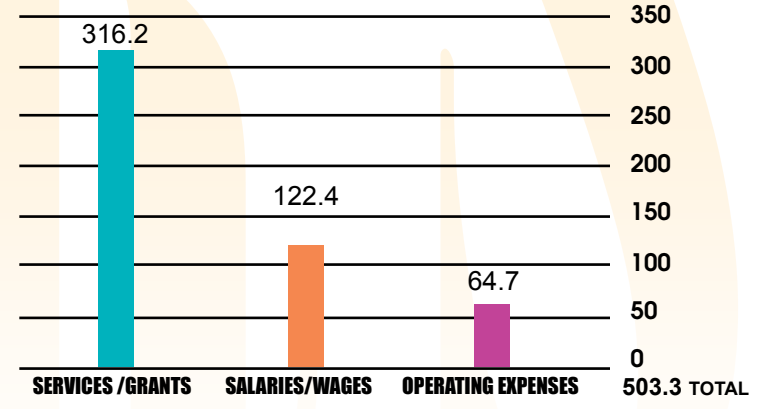


Source: LAR for 2008 - 2009

METHOD OF FINANCE SFY 2006 MILLION \$



EXPENDITURES BY CATEGORY SFY 2006 MILLION \$



FEBRUARY 2007

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DARS AT A GLANCE

DARS is composed of four divisions focused on people with disabilities and children with developmental delays. The department includes the Division for Rehabilitation Services (DRS), the Division for Blind Services (DBS), the Division for Disability Determination Services (DDS) and the Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI).

DARS



Division for Rehabilitation Services

OVERVIEW

DRS HELPS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES PARTICIPATE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

The DARS Division for Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is designated as the state's principal authority on the vocational rehabilitation of Texans with disabilities, except persons with visual impairments and the legally blind. DRS helps people with disabilities participate in their communities by achieving employment of choice, living as independently as possible, and gaining access to high quality services through the following programs:

- Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR)
- Independent Living Centers (ILCs)
- Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services (CRS)
- Office for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services
- Independent Living Services (ILS)

DRS has the following personnel available to meet the needs of the division's consumers:

- 483 VR Counselors
- 10 Independent Living Services Counselors
- 100 Transition VR Counselors
- 452 Rehabilitation Services Technicians
- 253 other DRS Managers, Program Specialists, and Support Staff

DRS staff is located in a central office in Austin, five regional offices, and 119 field offices located throughout Texas. The Rehabilitation Council of Texas (RCT), which is federally mandated by the Rehabilitation Act, joins in a partnership with DRS to review, analyze, and advise DRS on policy and the effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services and eligibility requirements. The RCT also contributes to the preparation of the DRS State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation.

For more information about DRS programs and services, call the **DARS Inquiries Unit** at **1-800-628-5115**, or visit the DARS website at www.dars.state.tx.us and select Division for Rehabilitation Services.

PROGRAMS

- **The Vocational Rehabilitation Program** helps people with disabilities prepare for, find, and keep jobs. Services are individualized and may include counseling, training, medical treatment, assistive devices, job placement assistance, and other services. Supported Employment serves consumers who need ongoing support to maintain competitive employment.
- **The Office for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS)** works in partnership with people who are deaf or hard of hearing to

eliminate barriers and improve equal access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. DHHS advocates for people of all ages who are deaf or hard of hearing to enable them to express their freedoms, participate in society to their individual potential, and reduce their isolation regardless of location, socioeconomic status, or degree of disability.

- **Independent Living Services and Independent Living Centers** concentrate on self-sufficiency and quality of life, even if work potential is limited. ILCs and ILS promote

self-sufficiency despite significant disability by providing people with improved mobility, communication, personal adjustment and self-direction. ILCs are operated throughout the state to provide assistance through peer counseling, information and referral, advocacy support, and other services.

- **The Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services Program** assists persons with spinal cord and brain injuries by providing intensive therapies to increase independence.

MARCH

2007

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DRS MISSION STATEMENT

To work in partnership with Texans with disabilities to assist them in achieving their employment goals, living independently, and eliminating barriers to communication and community access.

DARS



Division for Rehabilitation Services

CONSUMER STORY

FROM THE BRINK OF UNEMPLOYMENT TO A HOPEFUL PLACE

Virginia Kelley is a single mother of two who experienced hearing loss. The problem had become so severe that it was beginning to threaten her job as assistant to Bexar County's Economic Development Chief David Marquez. Phone calls were the worst as she had to routinely ask people to repeat themselves.

In April of 2006, Ms. Kelley was diagnosed with otosclerosis, a disease that damages the tiny bones in the middle ear, which transmit sound wave vibrations to the fluid of the inner ear. Of those who get otosclerosis, 10 percent will suffer progressive hearing loss.

As with Ms. Kelley, the loss is often so gradual that people do not realize it's happening until others point it out. Although the 40-year-old Beaumont native had insurance, Ms. Kelley still considered a trip to the doctor's office an extravagance. Upon the advice of her boss, Mr. Marquez, she contacted the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, which runs the state's vocational rehabilitation

program through its Division for Rehabilitation Services. The program helps those with disabilities who want to work: to prepare for, to train for, or, as in Ms. Kelley's case, to keep a job.

"This program is so important," Ms. Kelley says. "There are so many people who are forced to be on public assistance because of a disability. I was almost one of those people. My boss is a very understanding man, but my hearing was so bad that I couldn't answer the phone or communicate with colleagues. Everyone was quite frustrated, including me!"

The first step toward restoring Ms. Kelley's hearing was to have her go through several tests to determine her eligibility. Upon receiving the results, Ms. Kelley's vocational rehabilitation counselor Patricia Crutthirds was surprised by the magnitude of her hearing loss.

A hearing aid was an option, but it was only a temporary solution. Ms. Crutthirds told Ms. Kelley that an innovative surgery could pos-

sibly fully restore her hearing. After evaluating the risks, Ms. Kelley decided to have the procedure.

Counselor Crutthirds coordinated the medical appointments, surgery schedule, and payment information for Ms. Kelley; and in July of 2006, hearing was restored to one ear, with surgery scheduled for the second ear in early 2007. Since returning to work, Ms. Kelley has received a promotion and the offer for additional training.

Her journey with DARS has taken Ms. Kelley from the brink of unemployment to a hopeful place. "Before my surgery, I was about to lose my job. Today, I am attending management trainings and preparing to go to college," Ms. Kelley says. "The possibilities for me are endless, and I have DARS to thank. If you really want to help people with disabilities, tell them about DARS!"

VR ELIGIBLE SERVED BY PRIMARY DISABILITY SFY 2006

Disability Group (Primary Disability Only)	Percent
Musculo-Skeletal	28%
Mental/Emotional	18%
Cognitive	17%
Other Impairments	13%
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	9%
Substance Abuse	5%
Neurological	5%
Traumatic Brain Injury/Spinal Cord Injury	3%
Cardiac/Respiratory/Circulatory	2%
TOTAL	100%

VR EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES SFY 2006

Employment Type	Percent
Competitive Employment	98.7%
Self Employment	1.3%
TOTAL	100%

Total number of eligibles served is 70,238.

Total number of successful closures is 12,944.

VR SUCCESSFUL CLOSURES BY OCCUPATION SFY 2006

Occupation	Percent
Service	30%
Clerical and Sales	24%
Professional, Technical, and Managerial	21%
Miscellaneous	9%
Structural Work	6%
Machine Tools	4%
Agricultural Related	2%
Processing	2%
Benchwork	2%
TOTAL	100%

SERVICES PURCHASED FOR VR CONSUMERS SERVED

Based on Total Encumbered for Program VR and Budget Year 2006

	Percent
Restoration Services*	47%
Training	28%
Other	12%
Diagnostic and Evaluation	10%
Maintenance and Transportation	3%
TOTAL	100%

* surgery & hospitalization, prosthesis, appliances & devices, and other services

APRIL 2007

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DRS AT A GLANCE

For every dollar spent on vocational rehabilitation, consumers generate more than \$11 in personal taxable income through the remainder of their work lives. By retirement, the average rehabilitated consumer will have repaid the cost of services at least five times through taxes paid.

DARS DBS



Division for Blind Services

OVERVIEW

DBS STRIVES TO ENSURE THAT EACH PROGRAM IS TAILORED TO FIT THE NEEDS OF THE CONSUMER

The DARS Division for Blind Services (DBS) assists individuals of all ages who are blind or visually impaired and their families. Depending upon their goals and needs, DBS offers services to help Texans live independently and participate fully in community life, find a high quality job, or receive the training needed to be successful in school and beyond.

In a society designed by sighted people for sighted people, barriers are inadvertently created for people who are without sight. To overcome these barriers, a person who is blind or severely visually impaired must have specialized adaptive skills and a high level of personal confidence. An extensive continuum of services and an effective partnership between the consumer and DBS are the keys to successfully acquiring these skills and bolstering personal confidence.

No person's rehabilitation plan is the same as another's, and DBS strives to ensure that each rehabilitation program is tailored to fit the needs of the consumer. Services must be matched to the consumer's choices, skills, aptitudes, and capabilities to assure better success.

The Division for Blind Services envisions a Texas where people who are blind or visually impaired enjoy the same opportunities as other Texans to pursue independence and employment.

For more information about DBS programs and services, call the [DARS Inquiries Unit](tel:1-800-628-5115) at 1-800-628-5115 or visit the DARS website at www.dars.state.tx.us and select Division for Blind Services.

PROGRAMS

- The Vocational Rehabilitation Program** is designed for adults whose visual condition limits their ability to begin or continue work. Program services may include counseling and guidance, physical or mental restoration, vocational diagnostics, vocational and adaptive skills training, adjustment to blindness services, orientation and mobility training, braille skills, services to individuals who are deaf-blind, Transition Program services to provide educational and career guidance to youths and young adults, assistive technology and employment assistance services, supported employment services, and assistance in obtaining employment.
- The Business Enterprises of Texas (BET)** program is a federally sponsored, state-administered program that provides food management opportunities for Texans who are blind or visually impaired.
- The Independent Living Program** assists adults who are blind or visually impaired to learn adaptive skills to continue to live independently and confidently with vision loss.
- The Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center (CCRC)**, located in Austin, is a residential program that offers intensive training in basic blindness skills for Texans.
- The Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program** assists children who are blind or visually impaired to develop their individual potential. Specialized services reduce the impact of vision impairment on the child's social, emotional, physical, educational, and vocational development.
- The Blindness Education, Screening, and Treatment Program (BEST)** works to help Texans keep their vision healthy. The intent of the BEST program is to prevent blindness. This program is funded with voluntary donations when Texans renew their drivers' licenses.

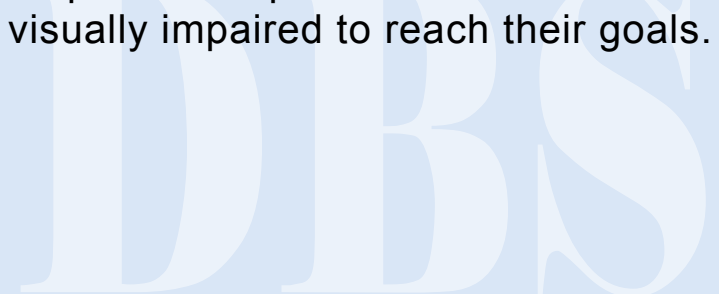
MAY

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DBS MISSION STATEMENT

To work in partnership with Texans who are blind or visually impaired to reach their goals.



DARS DBS



Division for Blind Services

CONSUMER STORY

A LIFE-CHANGING VISIT TO THE INTERNET

In August 2005, Vanessa Mobley Johnson was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor that resulted in her losing 90 percent of her vision. Over the next five months, she underwent three major surgeries in an attempt to restore her vision, but none were successful. As a wife, a mother with two children under the age of ten, a full-time employee, and a full-time college student, Ms. Johnson was shocked and devastated by the changes in her life resulting from her loss of sight.

"I had to quit my job. I was not sure what to do with myself, and I felt that I no longer had any value in life. I became depressed because I could do nothing without the assistance of my husband or one of my children," she said.

In desperation, Ms. Johnson turned to the internet to identify potential services available to assist her. "I googled the keywords 'blind assistance,' and the first match that appeared was the DARS Division for Blind Services. I clicked on this entry, and my life hasn't been the same since."

Ms. Johnson contacted the local DBS office by phone and was connected with a vocational rehabilitation counselor. "Within days, he was at my house gathering all sorts of information and explaining different services that DBS could provide. He even arranged for the DBS vocational rehabilitation teacher to come to my home and teach me how to cook, get around independently, count money, color coordinate my clothes, and sew - all without vision. And, honestly, I didn't sew well when I was fully sighted! Once he began to show me that I was still worth something, my confidence returned and I felt there was no stopping me."

Ms. Johnson soon began working with the DBS Employment Assistance Specialist, talking about types of jobs she might want to do and the various types of adaptive equipment available to help her perform those jobs. "He introduced me to software that restored my love of life again. I was so confident that I could return to the workforce, I applied for a vacant position with the DARS Division for Blind Services. And I got the job!"

Ms. Johnson is now a team member of the DBS Assistive Technology Unit in Austin. This unit evaluates consumer needs related to assistive technologies and trains consumers to use the adaptive equipment. Her responsibilities include meeting consumers when they arrive for an assessment and helping them feel comfortable and relaxed in what can be a stressful situation. She can relate to the consumers' needs because of her own personal experience and has a way of imparting a "can do" attitude to every consumer she meets. Ms. Johnson says this is the perfect job for her.

"If it weren't for DARS and DBS, I think I would still be at home crying over my lost vision and my lost job. Instead, I have a new job that lets me help other people who are blind. Thank you, DBS, for making me feel whole again."

VR EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES SFY 2006

Professional, Technical, and Managerial Service	25%
Clerical and Sales	22%
Miscellaneous	19%
Benchwork	15%
Structural work	6%
Machine Tools	5%
Agricultural Related Processing	3%
TOTAL	100%

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SERVED SFY 2006

Vocational Rehabilitation Program	58%
Independent Living Program	23%
Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program	19%
TOTAL	100%

BLIND SERVICES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL SFY 2006

Consumers Receiving Planned Services*

Texas	6,093
North Carolina	2,898
New York	2,686
Florida	1,563

Consumers Closed Successfully Employed*

Texas	1,383
New York	948
North Carolina	700
Florida	632

Number of Closures at/above Federal Minimum Wage*

Texas	1,185
North Carolina	681
Florida	606
New York	352

**Based on FFY 2005 reports. May not match state fiscal year numbers.*

JUNE 2007

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DBS AT A GLANCE

The State Legislature established specialized services for blind Texans more than 75 years ago. DBS works with others in the community to provide quality rehabilitation services for consumers.

“We have quite a team in Texas, assuring that blind persons will have every opportunity to succeed. Basic to that team is DBS.” **Dr. Phil Hatlen, Superintendent, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

“Texas was instrumental in identifying needs, establishing programs and services, and setting examples and benchmarks that people today are still trying to reach.” **Judy Scott, Director American Foundation for the Blind, Center on Vision Loss**

DARS



Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services

OVERVIEW

COORDINATES A SYSTEM OF SERVICES FOR FAMILIES OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS WITH DISABILITIES OR DELAYS

DARS Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services coordinates a statewide system of early childhood intervention (ECI) services for families of infants and toddlers, birth to age three, with disabilities or delays. ECI provides services through contracts with local community agencies and organizations. These include mental health/mental retardation community centers, school districts, education service centers, and private non-profit organizations.

Eligibility is determined by a team of professionals and the family. Children are eligible for ECI services if they meet one of the following criteria:

- **Developmental delay:** Children with delays in one or more areas of development (cognitive, motor, communication, social-emotional, or self-help skills).
- **Atypical development:** Children who demonstrate age-appropriate skills but whose patterns of development are different from their peers, such as a child with problematic social patterns.
- **Medically diagnosed conditions:** Children who have medically diagnosed conditions such as Down syndrome or spina bifida.

ECI services are funded through federal, state, and local funds, Medicaid, private insurance, and a family cost share system.

To make a referral or for more information, call the **DARS Inquiry Unit** at **1-800-628-5115**, or visit the DARS website at www.dars.state.tx.us and select Early Childhood Intervention Services.

ECI SERVICES

- **Referral**

Most ECI referrals come from the medical community or directly from families. Other referral sources are Child Protective Services, child care centers, and social service agencies.

- **Individualized Planning Process**

In the family's home, an interdisciplinary team conducts comprehensive evaluations and assessments to determine eligibility and plan services.

- **Comprehensive Services**

Services may include: family education and support; audiology and vision services; nursing and nutrition

services; and physical, occupational and speech-language therapies.

ECI teams help families and caregivers learn how to promote development in daily lives and routines.

- **Service Coordination**

ECI service coordinators seek community services for the child and family; coordinate services received from other agencies; and monitor service provision.

- **Home and Community Settings**

Services are provided where babies and toddlers learn best, in their homes and other familiar places.

- **Licensed or Credentialed Professionals Provide Services**

Licensed speech language pathologists; physical and occupational therapists; psychologists; registered nurses; registered dietitians; social workers and counselors; and early intervention specialists (EISs) are part of ECI teams.

- **Beyond ECI**

As children near age three, when ECI stops providing services, the team (including the family) reviews options and decides on the next step, which may include public school services, preschool services, Head Start, child care centers, or others.

JULY

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ECI MISSION STATEMENT

ECI assures that families with young children with developmental delays have the resources and supports they need to reach their goals.

DARS



Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services

CONSUMER STORY

YOUNG DARS CONSUMER SURPASSES DOCTORS' EXPECTATIONS

After Isabella (Bella) Craft was born with minimal brain development and extreme hydrocephaly, her doctors sent her home to die. But her mother knew in her heart that their grim prognosis was wrong.

While Bella was still in neonatal intensive care, a contract provider from the DARS Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI) contacted the Craft family, and with assistance from ECI and the DARS Division for Blind Services (DBS), Bella's future took a turn for the better.

"ECI didn't just look at her diagnosis. They looked at her and at us and saw what was possible," says Bella's mother Elizabeth Craft.

In keeping with ECI's focus on working with the child and family in their natural environment, Bella's family was receiving home visits from DARS employees and contractors by the time she was 1 month old. DARS helped the Craft family with a wide range of services: counseling, monitoring Bella's eye condition, parent training, information on a support

group, assistance in finding child care and purchasing glasses, and providing developmental equipment. Her brother and sisters were included in visits with DARS counselors, and therapists helped with Bella's physical and visual therapy.

When Bella turned 3, her ECI service coordinator and DBS children's specialist helped make the transition from ECI to DBS services and public school. The transition process included meetings with the school and a comprehensive individual assessment by a DBS children's specialist to assure that Bella continues to receive appropriate services without interruption.

Although her doctors predicted the worst three years ago, Mrs. Craft says the family is hopeful and also determined to give Bella every opportunity. "We can't say what lies ahead because she's surpassed her doctors' predictions," she says.

The ABC television program *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* recently surprised the

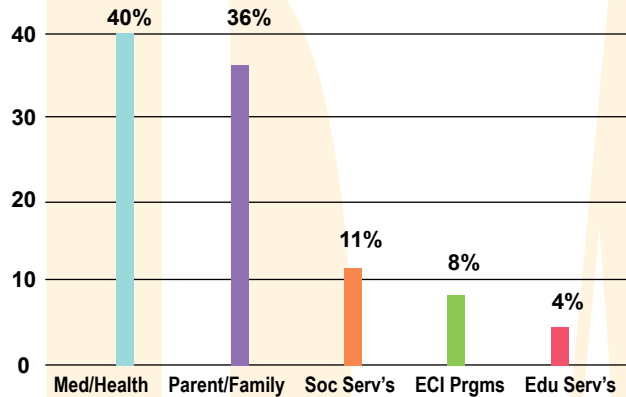
Craft family with a complete renovation of their home to make it more accessible. The Crafts were nominated for the prize by students at the high school where Bella's father is a coach. Mrs. Craft describes their turn in the spotlight as "crazy surreal."

The Craft family was sent on vacation while their new and larger home was constructed and equipped with all the technology needed to help the family care for Bella. As a bonus, Kermit the Frog presented the family with a Ford Escape Hybrid.

While discussing the *Extreme Makeover* experience, Mrs. Craft reflected on the fact that the family lost a child before Bella was born. When Bella's doctors offered no hope for her survival, Mrs. Craft considered the staggering odds against one family suffering such a severe loss more than once.

Noting that her family was selected for the *Extreme Makeover* from thousands of applicants, she added, "Finally, the statistics are in our favor."

SOURCES OF REFERRALS TO ECI SERVICES - SFY 2006



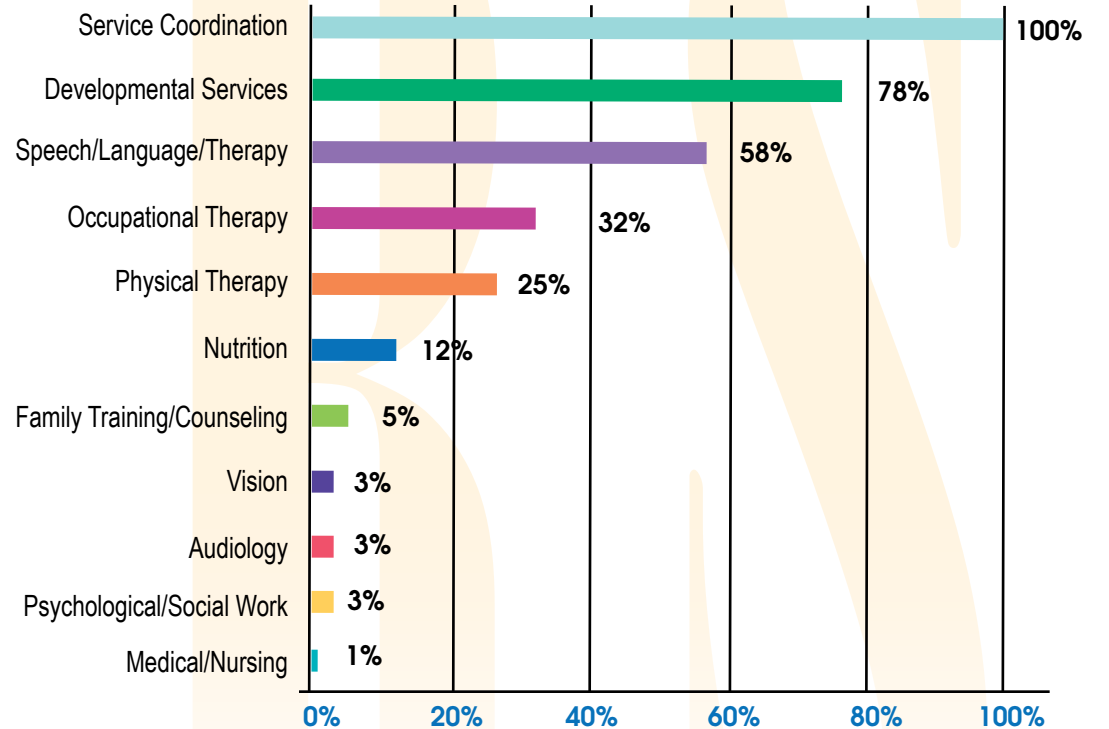
REASONS FOR ELIGIBILITY FOR CHILDREN ENROLLED IN ECI

SFY 2006

BASIS FOR ELIGIBILITY	Percent
Developmental Delay	71
<i>Of those with delay or atypical development:</i>	
Speech/communication	67
Physical/Motor	43
Cognitive	26
Adaptive/Self-help	21
Social-Emotional	16
Vision	2
Hearing	2
Atypical Development	18
Medical Diagnosis	11

37% of children have delays in more than one area.

PERCENT OF CHILDREN WITH PLANNED SERVICE TYPE - SFY 2006



AUGUST

2007

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ECI AT A GLANCE

ECI has 58 contractors with 140 offices.

There are more than 2200 service providers who are part of the statewide service system.

DARS



Division for Disability Determination Services

OVERVIEW

MAKING TIMELY AND ACCURATE DISABILITY DETERMINATIONS

The DARS Division for Disability Determination Services (DDS), funded entirely through the Social Security Administration (SSA), makes disability determinations for Texans with severe disabilities who apply for Social Security Disability Insurance and/or Supplemental Security Income. Texans with physical and/or mental impairments apply for benefits at their local Social Security Administration (SSA) field office and their applications are forwarded to the division for a disability determination. SSA, however, is responsible for making final decisions as to whether or not a person is eligible to receive benefits.

This DARS division is responsible for developing medical evidence and making the determination on whether or not a claimant is disabled under the law. Usually, the division first tries to obtain evidence from the claimant's own medical sources. If that evidence is unavailable or insufficient to make a determination, arrangements will be made for a consultative examination (CE) to obtain the additional information needed. After completing its development of the evidence, trained staff makes the disability determination and returns the case to the field office for appropriate action. If the staff determine that the claimant is disabled, SSA completes an eligibility determination, computes the benefit amount, and begins paying benefits. If the claimant was found not disabled, the file is kept in the field office in case the claimant decides to appeal the determination.

To apply for disability benefits, call the Social Security Administration at **1-800-772-1213** or visit their website at www.ssa.gov to learn more about the application process for disability benefits. If you already have filed a disability claim with Social Security, you may contact the DARS Division for Disability Determination Services at **(512) 437-8000** or **1-800-252-7009** for information or questions concerning your claim.

PROGRAMS

The Social Security Administration (SSA) administers two disability programs that pay cash benefits and provide medical coverage to people who are unable to work because of severe physical or mental impairments. They are designed to replace part of the income lost if a person becomes disabled. Many people are qualified to apply for both of these programs. Regardless of the program, DDS will make the disability determination for SSA, but only SSA can determine who is eligible to receive benefits.

- **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)** is related to *work*. A person earns coverage for themselves and family members by paying Social Security tax.

The program covers workers age 18 – 65 who are disabled, disabled widows/widowers, and disabled adult children of workers.

- **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) continued:** Claimants must wait five months from onset of disability before getting their first check; they must wait 24 months after first check before Medicare starts.

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** is related to *means* - what a person has or owns. A person who does not own much or have much income may be able to qualify for this program. SSI covers adults 18 – 65 years of age and children new born to age 18. There is no waiting period for benefits to start; Medicaid begins with the first check.

SEPTEMBER

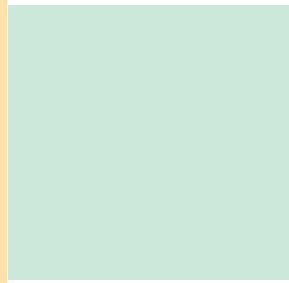
2007

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DDS MISSION STATEMENT

To improve the quality of life for Texans with disabilities who apply for or receive SSA disability benefits, by making timely and accurate disability determinations.

DARS



Division for Disability Determination Services

GOING PAPERLESS

ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS ... THE LAST CHALLENGE

Last year the Division for Disability Determination Services (DDS) began and completed the transition from paper to electronic Social Security disability claims. Currently almost all initial and reconsideration claims are received electronically.

However, there is still one more challenge to be met.

The vast majority of medical records obtained by DDS are on paper. These records (Medical Evidence of Record and Consultative Examination Reports) must be sent to the Social Security Administration (SSA) national contractor to be scanned into an electronic format. They then become part of the electronic folder and can be viewed on a computer screen. The volume of paper being sent from Texas for scanning is enormous. During federal fiscal year 2006 more than 20 million paper images were scanned. This process is an added step that many view as unnecessary if the medical provider already stores records in an electronic format and could send them to the DDS electronically.

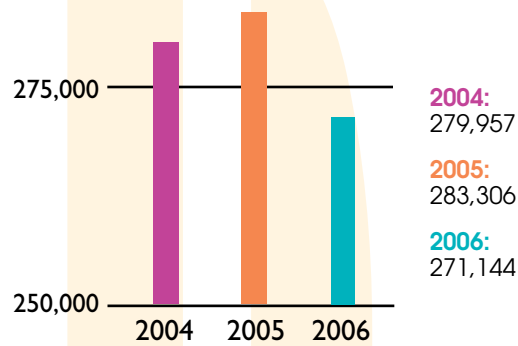
In response to this concern, SSA has a national initiative underway to increase the portion of Medical Evidence of Record (MER) documents received electronically to 40 percent and the portion of Consultative Examination (CE) reports to 85 percent by September 30, 2007. As of September 30, 2006, 17.21 percent of MER and 54.27 percent of CE reports were received electronically.

During fiscal year 2006, DDS encouraged high-volume MER vendors and CE providers to either fax medical information to a fax server or upload the information to the SSA Electronic Records Express secure website. As a result, all of DDS' key providers of medical services return reports by one of these means. To make other providers aware of these options, DDS Professional Relations Officers (PRO) attended nine conventions or conferences, staffing exhibit booths and/or presenting information regarding electronic records.

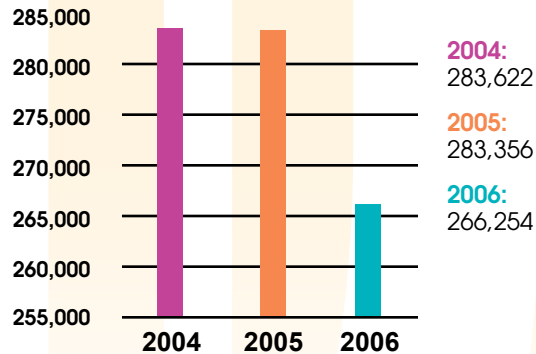
Texas PROs also met with several large hospital systems and contacted local representatives of large copy services, laying the groundwork to obtain more electronic reports in FY 2007. County hospital systems, where records are still in paper format, present an ongoing challenge. While they may be moving toward electronic records, it will be years before this transition is fully realized. Many of DDS' highest volume MER sources are county facilities where funds are limited and purchasing systems and software for converting to electronic records are a lower priority than in private hospitals.

DDS is actively seeking alternative solutions to meet this last challenge as we continue the transition to an entirely electronic disability folder.

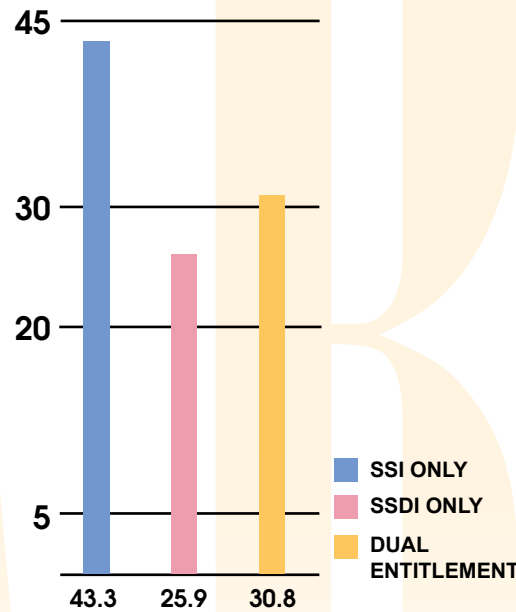
TOTAL CASES PROCESSED



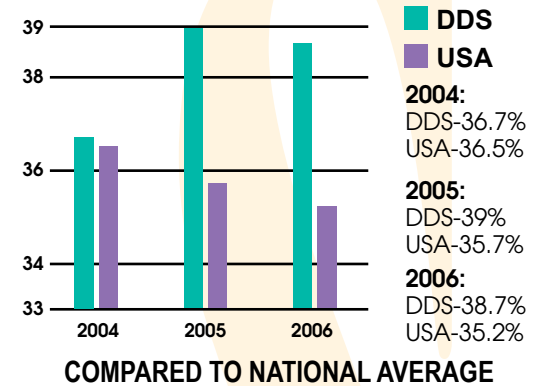
TOTAL CASES RECEIVED FROM SSA



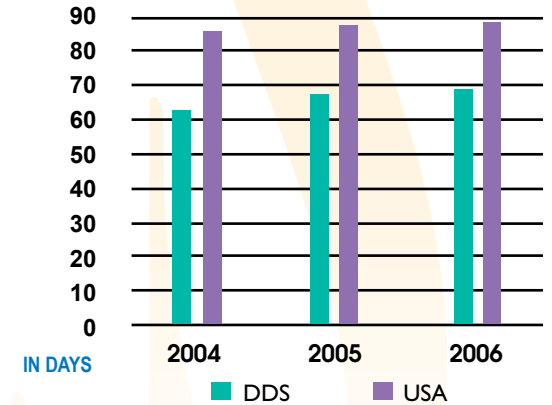
DDS - TYPES OF DISABILITY CASES RECEIVED - 2006



PERCENT OF INITIAL DISABILITY CASES ALLOWED



AVERAGE INITIAL CASE PROCESSING TIME



OCTOBER

2007

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DDS AT A GLANCE

Texans receive \$451 million each month in Social Security disability benefits.

This year the DDS again received the Social Security Commissioner's Citation for outstanding performance.

The Texas DDS is the largest centralized DDS in the United States.

During fiscal year 2006 the DDS began processing initial disability cases in an electronic format.

DARS

DRS

DBS

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DDS

Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services

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Robert Packard Director, Center for
Program Coordination
(512) 377-0615 Bob.Packard@dars.state.tx.us

EXECUTIVE SUPPORT

Center for Consumer and External Affairs:

Glenn Neal, Director

- Maintains proactive stakeholder relations.
- Evaluates and analyzes consumer input and makes recommendations to improve customer satisfaction.
- Serves as the DARS liaison for governmental affairs and federal oversight entities.
- Tracks and coordinates analysis of legislation.
- Responds to media inquiries.

Center for Program Coordination:

Robert Packard, Director

- Manages the DARS business improvement process and supports the management of the DARS project portfolio.
- Provides business improvement services that help DARS divisions find better ways to do their work.
- Provides program reporting and analysis (PRA) services that help DARS managers make informed decisions.
- Provides standard and routine reports, like federal and state performance reporting and DARS employee attrition and retirement reports.

Center for Policy and Innovation:

Lynn Blackmore, Director

- Manages the DARS publication systems that ensures accessibility and usability for all electronic information.
- Administers the DARS policy/procedure and rule development and approval process to ensure efficiency and coordination for program and administrative policy and rules.
- Pursues innovative service delivery methods and the use of grant funds to provide opportunities for improvements in all agency activities.

NOVEMBER

2007

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DARS EXECUTIVE SUPPORT

The Centers help departments improve client services by providing additional points of input for stakeholders, consumers, and legislative offices.

The Centers develop strategies to integrate and improve administrative functions, strengthen accountability, and generally ensure tax dollars are spent more effectively.

DARS



Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services

Address:

4800 N. Lamar Blvd.
Austin, TX 78756

Phone:

1-800-628-5115

Email:

DARS.Inquiries@dars.state.tx.us

Inquire toll free about DARS programs and services:

1-800-628-5115 TTY

Additional Information about DARS

Additional information about each of the DARS service divisions is available at www.dars.state.tx.us.

Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Mailing Address:

Texas Health and Human Services Commission
Office of the Ombudsman, MC H-700
P O Box 13247
Austin, TX 78711-3247

Physical Address/Headquarters:

HHSC Headquarters
Brown-Heatly Building
4900 N. Lamar Blvd., 7th Floor
Austin, TX 78751-2316

Additional Information about Health and Human Services

Call 2-1-1 for access to information about health and human services in your community.

Interesting Facts About DARS

Fifty-one percent of DARS employees work in Austin in eight locations (1559 employees, approximately 900 of whom work for DDS). Forty-nine percent of DARS employees (1524) work in 156 other locations throughout Texas.

Statistics from the State Auditor's Office and the DARS Center for Program Coordination offer the following demographic profile of DARS employees. The statistics are based on FY 2005, first quarter data.

- Most DARS employees are female (75 percent), white (56 percent), 40+ years of age (75 percent), and working in social services positions (55 percent).
- Most of the employees (71 percent) have 5 or more years of state service, and 52 percent have 10 or more years of state service.
- Turnover at DARS is lower than the average for state agencies.
- Twenty-four percent are Hispanic.
- Nineteen percent are Black.
- Seventeen percent are in program management.

DECEMBER

2007

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SPECIAL THANKS

Thanks to the Following People for their Contribution to this Year's DARS Annual Report:

Charlie Clikeman, Division for Rehabilitation Services, Kathleen Wolfington and Mel Fajkus, Division for Blind Services, MaryJo Miller, Division for Early Childhood Intervention Services, Bruce Rollman, Division for Disability Determination Services, Michael Peal, Ted Candler, and Steve Grimes, DARS Media Services, Donna Jones and Beth Bryant, DARS CCEA, and Eileen Llorente, DADS.

DARS

Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services

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This report is published annually by the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services.

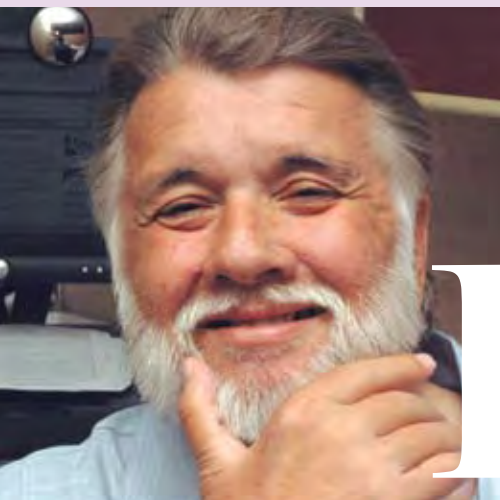
Inquiries may be made to: Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services
4800 N. Lamar Blvd. Austin, TX 78756

Phone: (800) 628-5115 Email: DARS.Inquiries@dars.state.tx.us

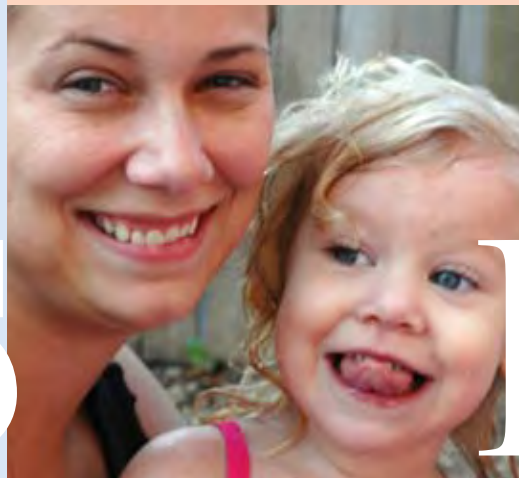
You may also view this annual report on the Internet at: <http://www.dars.state.tx.us/>

The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services is an equal opportunity employer and services provider.

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DBS



DDS