



# An Overview of the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services

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Terrell I. Murphy, Commissioner

House Human Services Committee

February 26, 2009

# DARS Vision and Mission

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## 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.

# DARS Overview

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- Assist Texans who have disabilities with finding or retaining employment
- Prepare families with babies who have disabilities and developmental delays age 0 to 3 to meet educational and developmental goals
- Help Texans with disabilities to live independently in their communities
- Help survivors of traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries to regain functionality and independence
- Make disability determinations for Texans who apply for Social Security Disability Insurance and/or Supplemental Security Income

# DARS Overview

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- 4 Program Divisions
  - Blind Services
  - Disability Determination Services
  - Early Childhood Intervention Services
  - Rehabilitation Services
- Over 3,100 staff
- 148 Field Offices
- Over \$600 million Budget (All funds)

# Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

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- Assists people with disabilities and whose disability creates an impediment to employment.
- Counselors and rehabilitation teachers provide services to eligible people to enable them to prepare for, find, and keep employment.
- Total served: 94,121 (FY 08)
- Employed: 12,937

# Independent Living Services

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- Assists people with significant disabilities for whom employment is not appropriate.
- Community-based services concentrate on self sufficiency, quality of life, and independence.
- Total served: 5,499 (FY 08)

# Independent Living Centers

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- Centers are non-profit entities that are operated by persons with disabilities. The Centers are:
  - Consumer-controlled
  - Community-based
  - Cross-disability
  - Non-residential
- The Centers provide 4 core independent living services:
  - Peer Counseling
  - Independent living skills training
  - Systems advocacy
  - Information and referral
- DARS provides funding for 12 of the 23 centers statewide.

# Services to Children

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## Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI)

- ECI is a coordinated system of services for children, birth to age 3, with disabilities or delays in development.
- ECI services are available in every Texas county and are provided by a network of 58 local ECI programs.
- Total served: 52,848 (FY 08)



# Services to Children

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## Blind Children's Vocational Discovery and Development Program

- Provides opportunities for children who are blind or severely visually impaired to learn the skills required for personal independence, potential employment, and other life pursuits.
- Total served: 3,250 (FY 08)

# Services to Children

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## Autism Program

- Pilot program for children with autism ages 3 to 8.
- Program designed to:
  - Provide positive behavior support strategies, including Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)
  - Compliment services included in a child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), if such a plan exists
  - Bill Medicaid, CHIP, private insurance and any other available third party source before using DARS funding
- Total Served: Approximately 275 through FY 09

# Disability Determination Services

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- The Disability Determination Services Division determines medical and vocational eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits.
- The program is 100 percent federally funded and is governed by the Social Security Administration.
- Disability cases determined: 287,252 (FY 08)

# Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services

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- Helps survivors of traumatic brain and/or spinal cord injuries to regain functionality and independence.
- Three basic services are provided:
  - Inpatient comprehensive medical rehabilitation
  - Outpatient services
  - Post-acute traumatic brain injury rehabilitation services
- Total served: 629 (FY 08)

# Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

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## Regional Resource Specialists

- Contractors advocate or provide communication access services for people who are deaf and hard of hearing including information and referral and interpreter services.

## Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program (STAP)

- Provides vouchers to qualified persons to purchase specialized telecommunication equipment for services.

## Interpreter Certification

- The program provides testing, certification, and ethics monitoring of sign language and oral interpreters.

## Blindness Education, Screening, and Treatment (BEST) Program

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- Assists uninsured adults with payment for urgently needed eye-medical treatment to prevent blindness.
- Total Served: 8,404 (FY 08)

## Business Enterprises of Texas (BET) Program

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- Gives priority to blind persons licensed by DARS to operate vending and food service facilities on federal, state, and other properties.
- Individuals employed by BET businesses: 1,355 (FY 08)

# Legislative Priorities

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- VR Grant Growth
- Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECI)
- Maintain Services in IL-Blind & STAP
- Growth to Serve More Consumers
- Meet state and federal accessibility standards for electronic information resources