



**VOLUNTEER-SUPPORTED
DECISION-MAKING
ADVOCATE PILOT PROGRAM**

**As Required by
H.B. 1454, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009**



**by the
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
in coordination with the
Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services**

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Executive Summary

H.B. 1454, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009, directed the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to create a volunteer-supported decision-making advocate pilot program for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and for persons with other cognitive disabilities who live in the community. The goal of the pilot is to offer an alternative to guardianship without impeding self-determination and to maintain person-directed lives.

HHSC delegated responsibility for implementation of the pilot program to the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS). DADS subsequently developed a formal agreement with the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD) through whom the pilot will be managed.

In accordance with H.B. 1454, the purpose of this report is to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot and to make recommendations to continue, expand or eliminate the pilot program.

Background

H.B. 1454, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009, directed the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to:

- create a volunteer-supported decision-making advocate pilot program for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and persons with other cognitive disabilities who live in the community;
- convene a work group to develop the rules and structure of the pilot program;
- contract with one or more entities to administer the pilot program and to recruit and train volunteer advocates to provide supported decision-making services; and
- before each regular session of the legislature, publish a report that includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of the pilot program and recommendations for changes to improve the operation of the pilot program and a recommendation to continue, expand, or eliminate the pilot program.

HHSC delegated responsibility for implementation of the pilot program to DADS. However, DADS received no additional funds to implement the bill and received approval by the bill's author and HHSC to collaborate with the TCDD to implement the pilot program.

DADS and TCDD signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in May 2010, whereby TCDD agreed to provide funding to implement the pilot program. TCDD approved up to \$75,000 per site over three years, pending annual review and approval by the TCDD Executive Committee.

DADS convened a workgroup comprised of individuals and family members of persons with IDD and cognitive disabilities, and advocate organizations to develop the rules and structure of the pilot program. The workgroup provided guidance and input to TCDD on the development of a Request for Proposal (RFP). The workgroup also suggested potential locations for pilot sites

across the state and made recommendations on the types of training that volunteers should be required to receive in order to increase their understanding of the individuals who participate in the pilot.

TCDD released the RFP in July 2010, and received two applications which were reviewed by a designated panel and the TCDD Executive Council. In addition, DADS offered comments to TCDD per the MOU agreement.

The RFP requires the organization implementing the pilot project to:

- recruit, train, supervise, provide personal assistance to, and monitor the volunteer advocates;
- ensure that volunteers knowingly commit to partner with an individual for at least one year and to meet with that individual at least once per month;
- ensure that no conflicts of interest exist between project staff, individuals served, and volunteers;
- conduct appropriate investigations of the background of each volunteer prior to that volunteer working directly with any individual; and
- maintain records that document these four requirements are in compliance.

Volunteers should receive, *at minimum*, training in the following areas:

- supported decision-making;
- self-determination;
- self-advocacy;
- maintaining confidentiality;
- active listening;
- person-centered thinking; and
- other information needed to successfully support individuals with IDD or other cognitive disabilities to make decisions based on their own goals, preferences, and values.

Expected Outcomes

Each pilot program will:

- demonstrate the use of supported decision-making services as one possible alternative to guardianship for individuals with IDD or other cognitive disabilities who live in the community;
- serve at least ten individuals with IDD or other cognitive disabilities each year, with a majority of those individuals also meeting the federal definition of developmental disabilities; and
- cooperate fully with TCDD and DADS to provide information about and/or access to project activities as needed for evaluation purposes.

Current Status

In November 2010, the TCDD Executive Committee tentatively approved an award to an organization. TCDD currently is negotiating with the organization to revise its work plan for the pilot project. The pilot will be implemented 45-60 days after an agreed upon work plan has been developed. At that time, TCDD will officially announce the grantee. The tentative target date for implementation is February 2011. DADS will continue working with TCDD in accordance with the MOU.