



INTERIM COMMISSIONER  
Jon Weizenbaum

December 15, 2009

To: Community Living Assistance and Support Services (CLASS) Providers,  
Case Management Agencies (CMAs)  
Community Mental Retardation Authorities (MRA) providers  
Consolidated Waiver Program (CWP) providers  
Deaf Blind Multiple Disabilities (DBMD) providers  
Home and Community Based Services (HCS) providers  
Direct Service Agencies (DSAs)  
State Supported Living Centers  
Texas Home Living (TxHmL) providers

Subject: Information Letter 09-175  
Employment Services Training and Technical Assistance Initiative

The Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) is pleased to announce its Employment Services Training and Technical Assistance Initiative. The purpose of this initiative is to improve employment outcomes for individuals to whom you provide services. DADS has collected input from providers, individuals, parents, and other stakeholders who have identified the need for information and training to successfully support individuals to find and maintain competitive employment. The initiative will include the following components:

- A webpage within the DADS website dedicated to employment:  
<http://www.dads.state.tx.us/providers/supportedemployment/index.html>;
- Computer-based training. DADS will host regular webinars on topics of interest related to employment for people with disabilities (e.g., maintaining benefits while working) and provide notice of or make available web-based courses on employment services. Webinars will be held most months from September 2009 through May 2010 on the first Thursday of the month from 10:00 – 11:00 am;
- An Employment First HCS and state supported living center (SSLC) pilot. Employment First is a philosophy in which competitive employment is always considered during individual service planning. Employment First enhances choice by highlighting employment instead of other types of day activities. DADS will assist a voluntary group of HCS providers and SSLCs to implement an Employment First approach to service planning and may expand this pilot to other programs in the future;
- Presentations at provider and other stakeholder conferences. DADS will use these opportunities to further describe the initiative, seek partners in the initiative, solicit volunteers to embrace the Employment First philosophy, dialogue about program changes, training, and methods of communication that you would find most useful, and present practical information designed to help you help individuals engage more fully in work;

- Regional employment conferences. DADS will host one-day conferences around the state. These will serve the dual purposes of beginning or continuing an on-going partnership with providers interested in improving employment outcomes for individuals they serve and providing training for direct care and management staff in employment and related services.
- Expansion of the SSLC Employment Model. Over the past two years, the Corpus Christi and Lubbock SSLC have engaged in a facilitated referral process to Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). DARS, the primary provider of employment services for people with disabilities, is helping residents to locate jobs outside of the SSLC. While all SSLC residents are currently free to receive DARS services, the facilitated referral encourages this interaction. DADS will be expanding this process to the other SSLCs.

Pending the availability of funding, other items being considered for the initiative include a technical assistance grant for providers who demonstrate a willingness and ability to actively focus on integrated, competitive employment.

Throughout this initiative, DADS will be reinforcing with providers, individuals/LARs and their families current program requirements as they relate to employment such as person-centered planning, discussing all program services with an individual, and transportation requirements.

DADS looks forward to working with providers to enhance employment supports for the individuals we serve. We hope our efforts will result in more individuals being employed.

We will be asking for your input at several points in the initiative. Please take a moment now to provide input by responding to a short survey at [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=WYd80NWWjUMG2s1AT0vygg\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=WYd80NWWjUMG2s1AT0vygg_3d_3d).

For questions, please contact Adrienne Nevola at (512) 438-3641 or [adrienne.nevola@dads.state.tx.us](mailto:adrienne.nevola@dads.state.tx.us).

Sincerely,

*[signature on file]*

Tommy Ford, Director  
Community Services

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