

SUBJECT: Autism spectrum disorder services for children age three to eight

COMMITTEE: Human Services — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Rose, Herrero, Darby, Elkins, Hernandez, Hughes, Legler, Naishtat, Walle
0 nays

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 21 — 30-0

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Dawn Choate, The ARC of Texas; Jeff Miller, Advocacy Incorporated)
Against — None

BACKGROUND: In August 2007, the Legislative Budget Board, in conjunction with the Office of the Governor, instructed the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to transfer \$5 million in general revenue to the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services to fund services for children ages three through eight with an autism spectrum disorder. Following a competitive process, DARS awarded to four service providers grants to provide services between April 2008 and August 2009. DARS expects about 300 children to be served through those four grants. DARS has reported positive results thus far.

DIGEST: SB 1217 would require the HHSC commissioner to develop an autism program no later than January 1, 2010. To the extent appropriated money was available, the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services would provide services to children between the ages of three and eight who were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder to enhance communication, social, and independent living skills so that the children could participate fully in society. The services would include applied behavioral analysis and would be required to complement services outlined in a child's individualized education plan developed by a school district.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2009.