

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 1230
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Health & Human Services
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) has an established team of transition vocational rehabilitation counselors to provide transitional services designed to help youth with disabilities transition from school-oriented living to post-secondary educational or vocational opportunities. While these transition counselors are trained and skilled in providing those supports, they often have little knowledge of the community services and supports available through other health and human service agencies, and are not required to participate in specialized training programs focusing on those supports and services. As a result, communication between service agencies is disjointed, and youth with disabilities who seek meaningful employment are often left frustrated and without assistance due to the lack of a coordinated system to aid the youth in determining which agency may provide support. Training those counselors to have the information students need to obtain community-base services may solve this problem.

Additionally, while pockets of state and national data exist, little is known about youth outcomes in Texas with respect to employment, community integration, and quality of life. The study of these by a work group topics might yield public policy priorities for youth with disabilities and may improve collaboration between agencies with respect to choices individuals have for employment post-secondary education, and disability services.

H.B. 1230 requires the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission (executive commissioner) to monitor programs and services to study trends and to promote positive outcomes for transitional youth with disabilities. This bill requires transition counselors to receive training on long-term supports and services from other health and human services agencies. This bill also requires the executive commissioner to establish a work group with the goal of creating and implementing a plan to ensure the efficiency and availability of post-schooling opportunities, state and local services for adults, and supported employment opportunities.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTION 3 of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 531, Government Code, by adding Section 531.02445, as follows:

Sec. 531.02445. TRANSITION SERVICES FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (a) Requires the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission (executive commissioner) to monitor programs and services offered through health and human services agencies designed to assist youth with disabilities to transition from school-oriented living to post-schooling activities, services for adults, or community living (transitioning youth with disabilities).

(b) Requires the executive commissioner, in monitoring the programs and services, to consider whether the programs and services result in certain positive outcomes for individuals with disabilities and to collect information regarding the

outcomes of the transition process as necessary to assess the programs and services.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 117, Human Resources Code, by adding Section 117.058, as follows:

Sec. 117.058. SPECIALIZED TRAINING FOR CERTAIN EMPLOYEES. (a) Requires the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) to establish and require employee participation in a specialized training program for certain employees whose duties involve assisting transitioning youth with disabilities.

(b) Requires the training program to provide employees with information regarding supports and services available from other health and human services agencies for, and community resources available to improve the quality of life of, transitioning youth with disabilities or adults with disabilities, and other available resources that may remove transitional barriers for transitioning youth with disabilities.

(c) Requires DARS to collaborate with other health and human services agencies as necessary in developing the training program.

SECTION 3. (a) Defines "executive commissioner" and "health and human services agency."

(b) Requires the executive commissioner to establish a work group to create and implement a plan to ensure that a transitioning individual with a disability has choices about work and career and has the opportunity and support necessary to seek individualized, competitive employment; to improve the collaboration between certain agencies to maximize existing supported employment resources; and to increase the quality and quantity of available supported employment opportunities.

(c) Requires the executive commissioner to determine the number of members to serve on the work group and to appoint certain persons as members of the work group.

(d) Requires the work group, in developing the plan, to focus on increasing the quality of services and resulting employment outcomes across disabilities and increasing the cooperation among agencies and community providers in the development and provision of seamless supported employment services.

(e) Requires the work group to file its recommended plan with the executive commissioner not later than April 1, 2008.

(f) Requires the executive commissioner to establish the work group not later than November 1, 2007, to adopt rules necessary to implement the plan recommended by the work group not later than October 1, 2008, and to present a report that describes the actions taken by the health and human services agencies to implement the plan recommended by the work group, and any actions the agencies intend to take during the next biennium in accordance with the plan, to certain appropriate committees not later than January 1, 2009.

(g) Expiration date, this section: September 1, 2009.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2007.