

# TRC news & views

TEXAS REHABILITATION COMMISSION

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## Funding, Future, Topics of Supervisors' Meeting

Last month, for the first time in nearly three years, all of TRC's supervisors were in the same place at the same time. They met in Kerrville, June 16 and 17. Meeting with them was a nearly equal number of Central Office personnel, from department heads to Commissioner Arrell. For a day and a half, the meeting focused on where TRC is, and where it's going.

Commissioner Max Arrell kicked off the meeting with what could be called a "State of the Commission" address. Arrell commented on the legislative and financial circumstances that will impact the future of vocational rehabilitation in Texas. "I would like to tell you we'll have more resources,

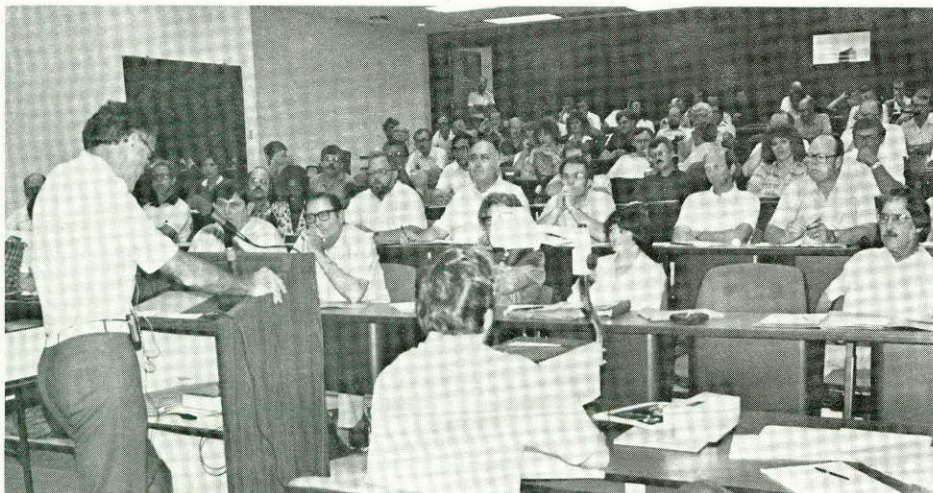
expanded programs and expanded services to new disabilities," he said, "but we won't." "We will maintain the vocational rehabilitation philosophy," he added, "but the future calls for emphasis on the vocational aspect of that philosophy. We have to concentrate on clients we genuinely feel have the potential to work." Arrell said Commission officials are presently working on guidelines that will help counselors and supervisors determine when a client has good potential for work. The new guidelines will be placed in the Rehabilitation Services Manual on Sept. 1.

The Commissioner said the Commission will be more assertive in telling its story to state and federal law-

makers who determine TRC's funding level. "We have been low key in the past...because funding was pretty much a sure thing," he said. "In the future, we will contact every legislator and will call on our employees to contact lawmakers in their areas."

Finally, Commissioner Arrell said he expects TRC supervisors to be good managers, "not only program managers, but financial and personnel managers." "For the money they spend on our salaries," he said, "the people of Texas deserve good management."

Deputy Commissioner Doyle Wheeler echoed the Commissioner's concerns about funding in his address to the supervisors. Wheeler stressed that TRC will have less money for client services in the future though, at this point, no one knows how much less. Whatever the amount, Wheeler emphasized, employees will have to pay special attention to conservation of client service funds. He detailed the work of several committees which are setting definitive guidelines to determine who is eligible for TRC services and when a counselor should say "no" to a person seeking services. (Cont. on p.2)



Commissioner Max Arrell addresses the supervisors' meeting in Kerrville.

(Supervisors' Meeting cont. from p. 1)

To cope with the challenges reduced funding presents, TRC is putting a great deal of emphasis on planning. Deputy Commissioner James L. Jackson spelled out the Commission's efforts on the planning front. "The planning effort will involve the field and the Central Office," he said. "Our efforts are designed to meet the needs of the future." Jackson noted that a Planning Committee has been established. Committee members, who come from many departments in the Commission, are working now to set the Commission's course for the future.

Deputy Commissioner Dale Place, who supervises the Disability Determination Division, told the supervisors about the so-called "Pickle Bill," the 1980 amendments to the Social Security Act. The bill, he said, has created a real problem. Under the amendments, DDD has to stop serving certain people. These same people can't receive vocational rehabilitation services because they are too severely disabled. "That creates a real dilemma," he said.

The supervisors heard from almost all of the department heads during the first day of the meeting. Topics ranged from new state laws affecting state employees to the proper way to submit travel vouchers, and from computers to the new state employee payroll schedule. On the second day, however, it was the supervisors who took the floor to ask questions of the department heads.

Most of the supervisors' questions concerned the funding issue and its impact on staff and services. In an-

swering the group's questions, Commission leaders said it will be late August or mid-September before the final legislation passes. Though officials are working on several contingency plans, at this point, it is impossible to tell where we will have to cut back. It is not known if TRC will have to reduce staff as a result of a funding cutback. If there is a reduction in staff, it probably won't be as bad as in times past, and Commission officials are doing everything they can to keep a reduction from happening. Part of this effort came when Commissioner Arrell put a freeze

on hiring, which took place on the theory that it is better to keep our work force down than to hire people who might get caught in a reduction of staff later. TRC will back up counselors and supervisors who are confronted by consumer advocacy groups and legal aid societies who are angry over the tighter eligibility for people seeking TRC services.

(Editors Note: The funding situation has changed since the supervisors' meeting in June. For more information, see the related article on page 3.)

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## Internal Audit is "Ghost" Hunting

With Halloween still months away, the Internal Audit staff is already looking for ghosts. Now we're not talking your basic chain-rattling, door-slamming kind of ghost. By Internal Audit definition, a "ghost" is a non-existent employee who receives a paycheck.

The "ghost hunt" is actually part of a routine payroll audit. Last month, Central Office employees could not receive their paychecks until they presented a driver's license or some other form of identification. In cases where the paychecks were deposited directly into an employee's bank account, the employee had to furnish identification in order to receive his or her payroll statement.

According to Dave MacCabe, the Director of Internal Audit, one of the purposes of the audit is to verify that employees named on payroll checks do exist. Auditors are also checking

out other controls on the payroll/budget process including how supervisors handle leave without pay (LWOP). MacCabe says the Central Office payroll is in good shape. Auditors did not find any "ghosts."

MacCabe says DDD and field employees can expect to be audited sometime in the future. He assures employees that they will receive notice in advance of the audit. Employees who have questions should contact Bob Strickland in the Internal Audit Division.

This is the first time in Commission history that such an audit has been conducted. MacCabe describes it as part of a comprehensive audit program that includes reviews of accounting, budget, purchasing, personnel, data processing, and staff services activities. Internal Audit is also responsible for reviewing financial records for Commission grantees throughout the state.

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# Legislation, Reorganization Change DDD

Over the past several weeks, a number of changes have taken place within the Disability Determination Division. Some of these changes are the result of the recent reorganization of TRC. Others were brought about by recent amendments to the Social Security Act.

On June 1, several DDD employees were promoted to allow Deputy Commissioner Dale Place to devote more time to his new responsibilities. On the manager level, Floyd Warren was promoted to Operations Manager, Jim Mallicote to Administrative and Support Services Manager and William Crosby to Professional Relations Manager. Junious Smith and Les Albrecht were promoted to Director of separate Initial/Reconsideration Sections. Victor Pecorino was promoted to Chief of Program Evaluation Services. In his new position, Pecorino is responsible for quality assurance. Promoted to supervisory positions were Kaye Costin, Ralph Cearley, Fred Draper and Tom Henderson.

Says Deputy Commissioner Place, "These people are long time employees and outstanding leaders. Their promotions will free me to work more closely with Commissioner Arrell and concentrate on policy and long range planning issues."

Meanwhile, the entire Disability Determination Division is expanding. The 1980 amendments to the Social Security Act gave DDD more work to do. In order to meet the demands of the increased work load, DDD was authorized to increase its work force. Within the next few weeks, the

DDD payroll will expand to 646 full time employees, 146 more people than were employed by DDD in Oct., 1980.

Of course, more employees means that more office space is required. To meet the demand, a number of DDD employees have moved into office space made available on the first floor of the Central Office. In September, more employees will move into new office space in the Texas Education Agency building across the

parking lot from the Central Office.

The increased office space will not completely resolve the over-crowded conditions in DDD. To help make things more comfortable, DDD, TRC and Social Security Administration officials are working out plans to buy modular furniture which, in many cases, would increase most employee's individual work space while reducing the overall space required for such a large number of employees.

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## Congress Reconciles Differences

On July 6, members of Congress started the long and tedious reconciliation process. This is the time when members of a Joint House-Senate Conference try to come to an agreement on federal spending. As of late June, each body of Congress had passed its own Reconciliation Bill. The Senate's version is more favorable to vocational rehabilitation than the bill approved by the House.

Under the Senate plan, vocational rehabilitation would remain a categorical program instead of being included in a Social Services or Rehabilitation Block Grant. The Senate version proposes funding increases in the Section 110 Program (basic rehabilitation program) of approximately 5.2% in FY 1982, and 10.4% in FY 1983 over the FY 1981 level of \$854.2 million. An amendment which would have continued the Social Security/Rehabilitation Program failed in the Senate

by two votes. If this version should be accepted by Congress, TRC would lose approximately \$6-million in Social Security/Rehabilitation Program funds.

The House, meanwhile, continues to lean toward severe funding cuts for vocational rehabilitation. Representatives last week passed an alternate reconciliation package, Gramm-Latta II, which would reduce TRC's allocation of Section 110 funds by 16.5% in FY 1982, 9.3% in FY 1983 and 11.6% in FY 1984 as compared to the FY 1981 level. An amendment which would have created a Rehabilitation Block Grant was withdrawn from the Gramm-Latta II package at the last minute. TRC would not lose as much Social Security funding under the House proposal. It calls for the continuation of the SSI/Rehabilitation Program, but does place the SSDI/Rehabilitation Program under new restrictions.

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The brick on the back of Program Specialist Don May's home was knocked off by a car that was slammed into the wall by swirling flood waters. The May family received part of the Austin TRC Flood Victim Fund.

## Flood Fund Brings Relief

TRC employees and retirees around the state opened their hearts and their checkbooks to Austin co-workers who were victims of the Memorial Day flooding. As of the last week in June, the Austin/TRC Flood Victim Fund had collected \$3,624 from 146 caring people. Thanks to these people, four flood victims and their families were able to start putting their homes and lives back together.

Not long after establishment of the fund, contributions started pouring in from all parts of Texas and from several other states as well. The Texas Association of Disability Examiners donated \$300. Members of the Employee Fund Committee voted to donate \$1,000 to the flood fund. That money comes from proceeds from the vending machines in the Central Office. Other groups and individuals gave what they could to help their fellow workers through this bleak time. "All donations, large or small, were greatly appreciated," says Herbert Underwood, coordinator of the fund drive.

## For Your Information:

...by Kaye Beneke  
Information Specialist  
Public Information

I am proud to announce that two of our public information/public awareness projects have been selected as winners in the National Association of Mental Health Information Officers' (NAMHIO) 1980 Media Awards Contest. The "1980 Annual Report to the Governor" won second place in the annual report category. The TRC poster, depicting a client repairing a saddle, placed first in the poster division.

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TRC Display Takes Honors  
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TRC did not return from the 114th Annual Session of the Texas Medical Association empty handed. Representatives of the Disability Determination and Vocational Rehabilitation Divisions brought back a second place award for the TRC display the Commission sponsored at the conference in Dallas.

## Retirements

William Edwards, VR Counselor II (Marshall), employed July 16, 1973, retired May 31, 1981. Gerald B. Seright, VR Counselor II (Plainview), employed August 15, 1973, retired June 30, 1981.

TRC News & Views is printed by the Texas Rehabilitation Commission for distribution to its employees and retirees throughout the state. Letters to the Editor may be addressed to Kaye Beneke, Public Information Office, Texas Rehabilitation Commission, 118 E. Riverside Drive, Austin, Texas 78704; or telephone (512) 447-0745, (Tex-An) 823-4745.

## Calendar of Events

JULY 1981

7- 8	Ad. Tech. Training in Plumbing and Upholstery Tools	TSTI, Waco
8	EDP Basic for Non-EDP Managers	Austin
14-15	Ad. Tech. Training in Plumbing and Upholstery Tools	TSTI, Waco
19-22	Texas Rehabilitation Association, Annual Meeting	Dallas
19-24	Supervisor Management Training	TSMDC, Lakeway
21-22	Ad. Tech. Training in Plumbing and Upholstery Tools	TSTI, Waco
26-30	24th Annual Institute of Alcohol Studies	Austin
28-30	Medical Training for Counselors (Phase II)	San Antonio