



THE KEYS TO THE COMMUNITY: OPPORTUNITY, EQUALITY, AND PRODUCTIVITY FOR TEXANS WITH DISABILITIES

Goal: Enrich the quality of life for all Texans—regardless of their abilities - to be included and integrated into in our schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

Problem: However, for many Texans with disabilities, the doors to our communities are locked. They are locked by inadequate teacher training, a biased Special Education due process system, and uneven enforcement of federal laws in our schools. They are locked by inadequate public funding—in programs ranging from community-based services to rental assistance. They are locked by state laws that limit families' ability to act as caregivers for relatives needing long-term care. In myriad ways, in schools, neighborhoods, and communities across our state, the doors are closed to Texans with disabilities.

Recommendation: We—as citizens and managers of our government—hold the keys, and now is the time to unlock the doors to equality, opportunity and productivity for all Texans. The Disability Policy Consortium (DPC), urges Legislators to consider and act on a variety of important measures that represent the keys to the community for Texans with disabilities.

We join in a cross-disability effort to advance the rights and interests of Texans of all ages with diverse disabilities. We support:

- **Timely Access to Services:** Fund Medicaid and non-Medicaid services to eliminate waiting lists and accommodate anticipated population growth to support people with disabilities in their communities—not in institutions.
- **Community Services Quality and Capacity:** Further develop and expand community services and supports needed by people with disabilities, develop a plan to transition individuals from residential institutions to community programs, and reallocate resources to those community programs.
- **Livable Wages and Benefits:** Appropriate sufficient funds to improve salaries and benefits for qualified personal attendants to meet the growing need for community-based services. Ensure that the primary focus of state employment and rehabilitation agencies is assisting Texans with disabilities in achieving self-determined employment in integrated community settings.
- **Accessible, Affordable Housing:** Increase availability of affordable, accessible and integrated housing to meet the needs of low-income Texans with disabilities.

Updated January 2013

The Texas Disability Policy Consortium is a group of advocacy organizations working for fair and equitable public policy for Texans with disabilities. The Consortium strives to achieve the development and full implementation of public policy that promotes and supports the rights, inclusion, integration, and independence of Texans with disabilities. The Consortium is unique in that it provides an ongoing forum for discussion and opportunity to unite voices on important disabilities issues in Texas. Consortium members may take independent positions as appropriate on specific policies as they develop.



- Quality Public Educational Services: Ensure that children with disabilities have the educational services and supports they need to be successful, including access to qualified teachers, individualized transition planning, and protection of their civil and due process rights within the education system.

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