



# Health and Human Services

## Texas Respite Advisory Committee

September 19, 2025

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*This summary contains supplemental information from reliable sources where that information provides clarity to the issues being discussed. Power Point tables used in the presentations may also be used in this summary. Names of individuals may be misspelled but every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy. Tables and Text have been used from executive and legislative agencies and departments' presentations and publications.*

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[Texas Respite Advisory Committee](#) helps develop strategies to reduce barriers to access respite services, improves the quality of respite services, and provides training, education and support to family caregivers. Members:

- Dr. Opeoluwa Badaru
- Diane Bass
- David Cunningham
- Cortney Dozier
- Dr. Jada Jackson
- Laura Marquez
- Dr. Fredrick McCurdy
- Mary Moody
- Danielle Mullins
- Bianca Ramirez
- Tracy Read
- Dr. Russell Reddel
- Dr. Melisa Rosario
- Marci Tarvin
- Renee Vigorito

**1. Welcome, introduction, and roll call.** The meeting was convened by Cortney Dozier. A quorum was present.

**2. Consideration of July 1, 2025, draft meeting minutes.** The minutes were approved as drafted.

### **3. TRAC subcommittee updates**

**Reports Subcommittee** - present to the members the finalized Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 report.

***A copy of the draft report was discussed by the committee but was not made available to the public.***

The report has been finalized so far, and no changes are proposed. There was no discussion

**MOTION:** Approve the mysterious and secretive report prevailed.

**4. Program overview: Easter Seals of Greater Houston:** A look into Respite Services with Easter Seals of Greater Houston. Founded in 1946, Easter Seals Greater Houston serves Military/Veterans and individuals with ALL types of disabilities, as well as their families through multiple life-changing services and programs.



Through a staff of over 240+ professionals, we serve more than 14,500 families annually through direct service in Houston and thirteen surrounding counties and reach over 35,000 monthly through our program websites. ESGH is one of the oldest and most efficient charities in Texas with over \$.91 of every dollar going to direct client services.

ECI/Infant Program Provides Comprehensive Early Childhood Intervention Services for children birth to age 36 months, including physical, occupational, speech and vision therapy as well as case management services, community resource referral services, and counseling in Harris, Fort Bend, Montgomery & Liberty Counties as well as the Brazos Valley.

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**Children's Therapy Services** Physical, occupational and speech therapy for babies and children including intensive therapy for potentially life changing results.

**Camps and Case Management** Day and sleepover camps and Family Day Out options, which provide recreation and socialization for the child, respite for the caregiver, case management and THRIVE to provide community connection, information and referral to resources and emotional support for people with disabilities, caregivers and siblings.

**Toy/Tech and Play Therapy** Lending library of specially adapted toys, lab, dance, art therapy, yoga, assistive technology, Gymboree, karate, pet-therapy, play-groups, and educational experiences to help with the development and integration of children with disabilities into their families, school and community.

**Bridging Apps** is a bridge for parents, teachers, therapists and caregivers between available technology and the individuals they are helping. The program includes support, evaluation, and a website including app reviews and how-to's to help make technology usable.

Consider BridgingApps.org a shortcut for finding apps for special needs: We provide teachers, health care professionals and people with disabilities and their families and caregivers with the training and resources to effectively use mobile devices and apps to enhance everyday life. Our focus is on independence, reaching therapeutic and educational goals, and supporting the responsibilities of caregiving.

**The information in TY2A is organized into 7 main categories of transition:**



Technology such as mobile devices can empower families to:

- Begin planning early
- Ask the right questions
- Access resources to make this transition easier.

**RESPITE SERVICES** Relief options to parents or caregivers who provide ongoing care to their family member who has a disability, through vouchers for in-home respite, Respitality, and Parents Night Out to reduce stress, abuse, family breakdown and institutionalization of individuals with disabilities.



Our Respite program works with funding from several partners in the community; the City of Houston, the United Way, our Veteran's program and the Harris Center. Each contract has different requirements and guidelines for approval. We work with caregivers throughout the Houston area to assist them with their respite needs. We believe that caregivers must take care of themselves so they can better take care of their loved ones.

The Life Span Respite program is only for Harris County residents. This is a one-time award of 100 hours total. If you have ever received Life Span hours in the past, you will not be eligible a second time. If you are interested in this program, we will forward your contact information to our Life Span partner who will contact you and assess your eligibility. If you are approved, they will then send us your referral, and we will contact you in order to complete the process.

The Emergency Respite program is provided if funding is available for families needing immediate relief due to an emergency.

The Veterans Respite program is a program designed to assist Veteran's and their families. If you are a Veteran, or an immediate family member of a Veteran, then we will refer you to our Veteran's program to get you enrolled. After they complete the intake, they will then send us the request of respite, and we will contact you with more information. The Harris Center also has programs for respite. To begin working with them you must call the Harris Center at 713-970-7000.

The Harris Center will assign you a service coordinator who will assist you through the process.

**THE CAROLINE SCHOOL** An option for parents of children with significant disabilities who are seeking availability of a private alternative to existing public school special education programs. The focus is on meeting the physical, cognitive and social needs of the child, including available physical, occupational, and speech therapy on site.

**HIGH SCHOOL HIGHTEC HANDRAMP** Community-based partnership of parents and educators and business representatives working together to encourage high school students with disabilities to explore the fields of science, engineering and technology and more.



**TRANSITION SERVICES** Offering a full range of services for youth with disabilities; Supported employment and vocational training through Texas Workforce Commission for people with all disabilities.

**HOUSING INITIATIVE** Assists families with a child with disabilities and/or low-income adults with disabilities to realize the dream of owning their first home, financial education/coaching and assistance with rental properties.

**VETERANS SERVICES** A program offering service and companion dogs for veterans with disabilities; case management, mental health services and referral to other needed services for active service, veterans and their families including the Texas Veterans + Family Collaborative.



Announcing the TV+FA Collaboration for veterans services including mental health. **Do you need veteran's services for you or your family members?**

For more information visit  
[WWW.TVFAHOU.ORG](http://WWW.TVFAHOU.ORG)  
Call 1-877-595-5016 or email  
[Veterans@EasterSealsHouston.org](mailto:Veterans@EasterSealsHouston.org)  
#TVFAHou

**ADULT SERVICES** Offers recreational opportunities to adults with disabilities. Both programs offer many of their clients their only opportunity for socializing and provide respite for the adult client's caregivers and Recreation Therapy.

**EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE & RECOVERY** services are also offered

#### **Discussion.**

How are referrals made? The zip code determines the appropriate ECI program.



Who receives the respite information? Anyone who inquires about respite will receive pamphlets and information. It is mostly on an inquiry basis. We don't want to duplicate other respite access agencies' services.

Reimbursement rates of \$10 per hour. How is that determined. The speaker stated that it is a supplement to what the caregiver is paying. That has been the amount for quite some time. We pay the caregiver directly and they pay the provider. There are two funding streams: City of Houston and Harris County.

**5. Strategy planning and priority setting overview:** TRAC members  
Confirm dates for remaining meetings in CY 2025; Review committee goals for the year;  
Identify priority focus areas for the remainder of the year

Meeting dates for the rest of this year is December 3. There are also meetings March 3, 2026 and May 21, 2026.

**Suggestions for the rest of this year:**

It is difficult to navigate what people qualify for. There are many buckets of opportunity, and we have to do a better job navigating families through these opportunities.

It would be meaningful to hear more from the public that utilize respite funds (Issue will carry into 2026)

The issues around funding always come up. WE need to hear from consumers about the financing challenges.

A lot of times people do not know that services even exist. Are doctors well informed on respite and other services? Many doctors do not know.

Compiling a list of all the camps in Texas would be helpful for physicians.

Language barriers often interfere with knowledge of services. A clearinghouse of information for respite would be very beneficial.

Rural areas have transportation issues related to respite.



A goal for next year should be related to identify institutions with certification /training for working with people with IDD. This is one of our recommendations.

In Canada best practices for respite care include.

- Upon diagnosis you get the services available
- There is a Respite Services.com in Canada. All the background work is done for the families. [respiteservices.com/index.html](http://respiteservices.com/index.html)

Texas has a website [Take Time Texas | HHS](#). The committee just voted out a recommendation related to this... (but it was kept a secret)

Two issues are being discussed : Money and Fragmentation. Dr. Rahel Berhane would be a good resource.

**6. Policy and program overview:** TRAC members. Determine if additional meeting is needed for the Bylaws Subcommittee; Identify committee questions for the Medicaid presentation.

**Does the Bylaws subcommittee need an additional meeting? *this was never addressed***

The next year there will be changes to Medicaid.

November 3 there will be a court hearing about whether some MCOs survive. This issue is procurement.

**7. Member engagement discussion:** TRAC members to conduct roundtable discussion to skill share and exchange best practices/tools used in current work

There is a group called Ability Intersect which brings people together to discuss best practices in respite care.

**8. Public Comments.** No public comment was offered.



## **9. Review of action items and future agenda topics.**

Next meeting is December the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

No items were proposed.

## **10. Adjourn.** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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