



Health and Human Services

Texas Brain Injury Advisory Council

October 27, 2025

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.





[Texas Brain Injury Advisory Council](#) addresses strategic planning, policy, rules and services related to brain injury prevention, rehabilitation and the provision of long-term services and supports for persons who have survived brain injuries to improve their quality of life and ability to function independently in the home and community.

Members.

Michael Avari

HHS Region 3

Elijah Basnett

HHS Region 3

Jim Batchelor

HHS Region 4

Lori Brandes

HHS Region 8

Heather J. Cook

HHS Region 7

Angela Cupp

HHS Region 3

Andro Herrera-Mendoza

HHS Region 8

Donna Kunz

HHS Region 6

Austin Morgan

HHS Region 7

Dr. Benjamin Nguyen

HHS Region 3

Dr. Rachita Sharma

HHS Region 3

Ryan Stork

HHS Region 6

Johnny Taylor

HHS Region 6

Dr. John Thottakara

HHS Region 3

John Wood

HHS region 6

Resources

- [Office of Acquired Brain Injury](#)
- [Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services](#)

1. Welcome and roll call. The meeting was convened by Andro Herrera-Mendoza.

A quorum was present

2. Consideration of July 28, 2025, draft meeting minutes. The minutes were approved as drafted.

3. Consideration of TBIAC draft bylaws. *The bylaws were not made available to the public*



The By-laws are a culmination of multi-committee (legislative, executive) input and updated to reflect current structure, format, and government code. Key change addressed: flexibility in maintaining member representation for individuals aged 18-26, with the executive commissioner given authority to adjust due to recruitment challenges in that age range.

MOTION: Approve bylaws prevailed.

4. Consideration of the draft fiscal year (FY) 2025 Executive Commissioner's report, as required Texas Government Code §523.0205, and 1 Texas Administrative Code Part 15, §351.825(d)(1)

The DRAFT Executive Commissioner's Report was not made available to the public. As such it is hard to understand how the public can comment on it.

The FY2025 Executive Commissioner's draft report was reviewed, incorporating feedback from various committees.

Dr. Ryan Stork gave an in-depth update on the Database Review Committee's work:

- Issue 2A: Continued emphasis on the lack of a mandate for reporting non-traumatic brain injuries; recommendation to include such injuries in recordable lists.
- Issue 2B: Addressed under-reporting of traumatic brain injuries (TBI), especially from sources outside hospitals. Recommended all high schools (not just the largest) report concussions to improve data accuracy.
- Issue 2C: Removed focus on Justices of the Peace as mandated reporters due to minimal impact and jurisdictional issues. Instead, highlighted the need to connect registry data to services for affected individuals.
- Collaboration efforts include working with the Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council Stroke Committee and the UIL to address reporting barriers, and recommending Texas join a national work group on connecting data to services.

The report provides broader recommendations for improving data collection, encouraging legislative mandates, and increasing inter-agency collaboration.



There was discussion on challenges with payer accountability under the Texas Department of Insurance and the importance of ensuring access to care, not just coverage, particularly in rural areas.

MOTION: Pass (mystery) executive Commissioner's Report as written prevailed

**5. Presentation by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC),
Vocational Rehabilitation Division on: TWC's work as it relates to
brain injury services and support (ESBI)**

In Summary. Melissa Huston presented on Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) employment services for individuals with brain injuries. The ESBI (Employment Services for Brain Injury) program provides integrated therapeutic and employment preparation services.

Eligibility requires documented impairment; neuropsychological evaluations help determine service needs.

ESBI uses individualized, interdisciplinary teams to develop treatment and employment plans, supporting both residential/inpatient and outpatient/non-residential settings. Services include work experience, job training, job placement, supported employment, self-employment, and accommodations assessment.

TWC acts as payer of last resort after other funding sources are exhausted; coordination with other state agencies and insurance programs.

Application process is accessible via QR code, local offices, or the Rapid Engagement Team.

Federal funding via the Stevens Amendment and Department of Education grants is stable for now; unused funds may be carried over for future use.

Presentation



Standards for Providers – SFP-- [Vocational Rehabilitation Standards for Providers Manual - Texas Workforce Commission](#) Chapter 21 covers ESBI.

The VR Standards for Providers:

- helps ensure TWC customers receive quality services to assist them in achieving a successful outcome to their vocational rehabilitation or independent living goals;
- helps to ensure taxpayer funds are spent wisely and each purchase paid for with public funds represents full value to the taxpayer;
- provides published standards for maintaining compliance; and
- provides criteria in order to meet TWC performance expectations for each purchase.

****[Video Resource for JAWS](#)**

Services :

[Vocational Rehabilitation - Adults](#)
[Vocational Rehabilitation - Youth and Students](#)
[Vocational Rehabilitation - Business Relations](#)
[Criss Cole Rehabilitation Program](#)
[Older Individuals Who are Blind Program](#)
[Business Enterprises of Texas Program](#)
[Vocational Rehabilitation Provider Resources](#)

[We Hire Ability Employer Recognition Program](#)
[Tips & Tools - For Vision-Related Disabilities](#)
[Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation Services Provided by Local Workforce...](#)
[Tips & Tools - About Service Animals](#)
[Purchasing from People with Disabilities](#)
[Vocational Rehabilitation Self Employment Services](#)

Residential & Nonresidential Services. Therapy services include, but are not limited to the following:

- Cognitive Rehabilitation Therapy
- Occupational Therapy(OT)
- Speech Therapy (SLP)
- Physical Therapy (PT)
- Neuropsychological Service
- Behavior Interventions
- Community Reintegration
- Simulated Work Activities
- Job Samplings
- Transportation Training



Journey To Employment



FCE - Functional
Capacity Evaluations



VAT – Vocational
Adjustment Training



PSAT – Personal
Social Adjustment
Training



Neurological
Psychological
Evaluation



Vocational
Evaluations



EWA - Environmental
Work Assessment

Employment Supports

- Work Experience
- Job Skills Training
- Job Placement
- Supported Employment
- Self-Employment

Comparable Benefits

- Payor of Last Resort
- Private Insurance
- HHSC CRS
- Medicare & Medicaid
- Other state programs (ILS)



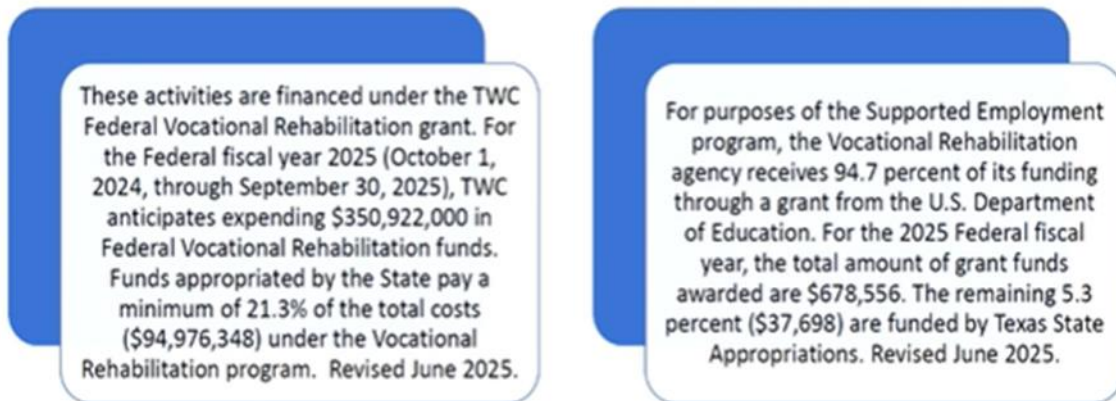
For a list of TWS-VRS offices, visit: [VR Office Lookup](#)

Rapid Engagement Team Locating a VR office for vocational rehabilitation services, please email vr.office.locator@twc.texas.gov or call (512) 936-6400.

VR.office.locator@twc.state.tx.us Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

Under the Stevens Amendment federal funding could be in jeopardy. We are anticipating spending \$350 million but we do not know if that has been allocated.

Steven's Amendment



On an annual basis if you look at the funds from the prior year, were all the funds utilized? TWC said they have not and will be made available for the following year.

Why are the funds not utilized? The programs are well known, and the funding is allocated based on projections, but sometimes there are events where the consumer does not use the funds (leaves the program, death, etc.)

How long has it been in process? TWC stated the program has been operating for 6 or 7 years.

If the person is working is the process still followed? TWC stated that the process is flexible to meet the needs for the consumer being served.

Is the process the same in rural areas? TWC answered in the affirmative.

Is there a waiting list (by county). TWC stated that there is not a waitlist and they have a back up plan when it appears a waitlist could be needed.

In broad categories the council would like to know how much went to the different categories (for a future meeting)



6. Committee updates

Executive—There is now a chair for legislative policy. They updated the EC report and worked at Brain Injury awareness and resource allocation.

Education, Awareness, Services, and Supports—They have been working with the Office of Acquired Brain Injury to update the Brain Injury Resource Guide. They are just in the beginning stages of making the update. They asked for input on resources to be included in the updated guide. [oabi-resource-guide.pdf](#)

Legislative and Policy—The work has focused on bylaws updating which were adopted today.

Database Review—The work of the subcommittee was presented above under the Executive Commissioner's Report. They want to partner with the legislative policy subcommittee. They will also meet with the GETAC particularly as it relates to stroke. They have explored data reporting with other high schools. The reporting does not go to a state registry, and this might be worth pursuing. There are barriers to all high schools reporting brain injuries. We want to think about what the best way is to use the data.

7. Announcements and updates regarding TBIAC

Legislative and Policy Committee elected John Wood to be Chair

8. Committee Chair Nominations

Luminary of the Year—Cindy Ivanhoe was selected to be the Texas Luminary of the Year

FY2026 TBIAC meeting dates: January 26, April 27, July 27, October 26, all in 2026.

Appointments updates—information will be provided soon. Members may serve for two terms.

9. Public comment.



Jessica Varian, Mother of Jeffrey (fentanyl overdose). She related her personal experience with accessing services for her son. Her son passed away because of a flawed system. She advocates for rights of people with brain injury:

- Protection from premature disconnection
- Warranty access to qualified specialists before ICU decisions are made
- Require insurance coverage for expert therapists

Texas is behind other states, and it is time to catch up with the use of technology.

A film “Open Your Eyes Jeffrey” and a film “What Science Didn’t See” explore Jeffrey’s experience. [Open Your Eyes Jeffrey \(2025\) - IMDb](#).

The Chair stated that this group is dedicated to your cause. Individuals are frequently not afforded the ability to reach their potential. Payors often use a myriad of prior authorization procedures, thus limiting care.

The request here is that we advocate for statutes for allowing individuals to not be on transition from acute care too soon without the thorough expertise being applied. Families should not be cut off from a level of care too soon.

A question was asked about ethical discussion at facilities, and are these not occurring in the case of anoxia? The speaker stated that the reality is that ICU and new physicians are nihilistic and push early disconnection because of their perceived quality of life.

Insurance companies have to be engaged to prevent pushing for a lower level of care.

All healthcare is local, and we have to figure out how to ensure individuals are afforded opportunity no matter where they live.

10. Review of agenda items for next meeting Next meeting January 26 , 2026.

- In broad categories, the council would like to know how much went to the different categories under the ESBI Program at TWC
- Challenges with acquired brain injury
- Expanding the utilization of telehealth and access
- Members signing Bylaws form



11. Adjourn. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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