

**Kronkosky Charitable Foundation
Roundtable Discussion**

Topic: Adults with Physical Disabilities

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Participants

Invited Agency Representatives

Robert P. Dugas	President/CEO	Goodwill Industries
Lynn Keith	Director of Industries	Goodwill Industries
Deborah Kruchak	Executive Director	Rainbow House
Ann Ohlson		Texas Rehabilitation Commission
Donald Weng	Executive Director	Center on Independent Living

Foundation Staff and Trustees

Palmer Moe	Executive Director
Megan Kromer	Director of Programs and Evaluation
Michael Bacon	Grants Manager
Mark Carmona	Grants Manager
Liz Ostendorf	Student Intern

Overview of Organizations

Rainbow House

- Long-term care facility for survivors of brain injury
- Serves seven people aged 26 to 47 with physical and cognitive disabilities
- There is a waiting list of seventy people and there is not a high turnover rate of occupants
- Currently funded by a grant from the Texas Department of Community Affairs

Goodwill Industries

- Provides vocational skills and training to aid individuals in reentering the community
- Serves children and adults with physical and mental disabilities
- Currently employs 800 people, 600 individuals with disabilities
- Recently started Goodwill Temporary Services (GTS) to employ people with disabilities on a temporary basis
- Operates Extended Rehabilitation Services (ERS) to move people from sheltered work to larger, more community centered jobs

Center on Independent Living (COIL)

- Provides transitional living training, vocational training, and information on services available in the community
- Serves adults with physical and mental disabilities who seek to enter the workforce and to live independently
- To qualify, these individuals must be able to safely live alone
- Provides assistance to individuals, who are being evaluated for home health care, often serves as an advocate in these meetings
- Earn money for all operations, no grants

Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC)

- State Agency which aids individuals with physical and mental disabilities
- Forty-five counselors in San Antonio area with a case load of 150 per counselor

- Provides vocational counseling and comprehensive rehabilitation services which include inpatient and outpatient services and equipment
- Negotiates with employers who are willing to employ persons with disabilities

Vocational Opportunities and Related Assistance

Most people with disabilities want to work and enjoy being a part of the real world. It is very important that they are contributing to the community and earning their own money to pay for housing and other services.

- COIL starts people with jobs in the COIL office and then moves them into the community.
- Jobs at the COIL office include:
 - Phone surveys of closed cases for TRC (paid per completed survey)
 - Reference checks for people who apply to work at the Medical Center
- Volunteer work is often used to prove an individual's level of commitment, reliability, and use of appropriate behavior. Options include the San Antonio Public Library and the Health Science Center.
- Sea World and Fiesta Texas are good employers of people with disabilities, but they provide transportation only during the peak season as opposed to year-round.
- Goodwill Industries is seeking to diversify the type of employment it offers. Currently the majority of jobs offered require manual labor such as lawn maintenance and painting. Expanded job descriptions are to include management and administrative positions.
- Many jobs are seasonal meaning they last for eight to nine months of the year. Goodwill Industries does not like to lay people off for the remaining months because of the increased likelihood that these individuals will not return to work. Options for avoiding this include:
 1. Absorbing individuals into other facets of employment at Goodwill, i.e. painting the Goodwill facilities
 2. Teaching budgeting skills to cover the entire fiscal year with seasonal pay
 - a. PASS Plan
 - Available to individuals with SSI
 - Reduces the income level over the course of employment to cover the entire year.
 - Allows individuals to remain eligible for SSI and Medicaid
 - Covers 100% of expenses
 - This is a complex program and the service should be provided by an independent agency in SA
 - b. Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE)
 - Available to individuals with SSD
 - Used extensively in San Antonio
 - Only covers 50% of the expenses which are incurred

Social and Recreational Activities Available

- Volunteer work
- Support Groups
 1. Alamo Head Injury Association
 2. Easter Seals-Brain Injury Group
- Warm Springs Rehabilitation Facility
 1. All Can Ski---conducted in conjunction with Sea World. It introduces persons with disabilities to water sports
 2. Bowling, other recreational sports
- Circle T Ranch
 - Horseback riding
- DASA
 - Dating services for people with disabilities to meet one another

Available Technology

- Ramping
- Automatic door openers (\$1500 per door)
- Environmental control devices
 - Light switch model (\$13 per switch)
 - Remote control for 5-7 switches (\$40 per remote)
 - Fluorescent lights (\$60 per light)
 - Computer Devices
 - Device in computer to control lights automatically (\$50-60)
 - Voice-activated computer to control environment (\$\$\$)
- Adaptive Devices
 - Braille board for the computer
 - Drag and Speak allows the user to utilize a computer to hear instructions rather than reading them
- People need to be trained in order to use these devices correctly and at their optimum potential
- Use of this technology can reduce the amount of time that someone needs an aide, thus reducing overall cost
- TRC will provide computers for environmental services as needed.
- COIL will arrange for these devices but restricts them to what the individual actually needs. They are meant to enable individuals to do more with what they have, not to make them more dependent.

Housing Related Services

- Neighborhood Housing Services Grant
 - Recently started through COIL
 - Two different programs:
 1. Helps individuals with disabilities to buy houses by paying for closing costs and helping with financing (sixteen home minimum)
 2. Renovation of existing homes, no income level required (twenty home minimum)
- Habitat Help
 - Provides renovation on homes to make them more appropriate for individuals with disabilities
- There are very long waiting lists (seven years) for government funded housing. These are equal opportunity programs and everyone must wait on the same list.
- Most people who have gone through COIL for housing assistance are located on the north side of San Antonio, although individuals may live wherever they choose.
- A company based in St. Paul, MN, is building facilities in Live Oak and Converse (one per city) which will provide subsidized housing and health care if needed.
 - There will be one and two bedroom apartments so that families can live there and the company will provide a van to take people to the VIAtrans Park and Ride locations because VIAtrans does not serve these communities.
- An increasing number of apartment complexes will modify apartments for people because they must have a certain number of apartments which meet the requirements set forth in the American s with Disabilities Act (ADA) in order to continue to receive government funds. Previously this cost was borne by the individuals of offset by private donations so this is a step forward.
- The cost of rent is increasing in San Antonio, which is detrimental to existing housing programs. Section Eight caps the level of payment for housing at \$420 per month, not including utilities. An individual is required to contribute 30% of his income in addition to this subsidy.

Prominent Issues for Individuals with Physical Disabilities

Aging of Population

- The aging process occurs more rapidly for people with disabilities and as a result, the need for services increases. There are two programs, which are currently dealing with this problem, but community leaders are seeking more extensive solutions. They are the:
 1. CLASS Program

This has strenuous requirements and a long waiting list. It is a Medicaid waiver program, which covers all services including physical therapy, occupational therapy, equipment, and attending care. The cap is \$50,000 per year per person. Once enrolled in this program, an individual is eligible for life.

2. CBA program
Covers a wider range of individuals than CLASS.
The cap is \$29,000 per year.
This program covers spinal cord injuries and the services are contracted out

Transitional Housing

Many expressed the need for transitional facilities to help people to move from the hospital setting to independent living. Life skills such as budgeting and cooking need to be taught so that an individual can effectively live on her own. This is essential because often it is young people who have never lived on their own who want to be independent. These programs normally consist of small efficiency apartments with common areas. Attended care is available when needed. The stay in such facilities is limited, so if individuals are not successful they are returned to a nursing home setting. One such site with twenty-six rooms is currently being built in San Antonio, but additional facilities are needed to meet the demand.

Transportation

-The public transportation system in San Antonio is good and people appreciate that it is trying to become more extensive, reliable, and user-friendly.

-VIATrans is moving to serve fewer people by:

1. Serving a smaller geographical area
2. Increasing the cost per ride
3. Tightening the restrictions on individuals that qualify to use the service.

-Other forms of transportation such as accessible taxicabs are expensive (\$15 minimum, one-way) and must also be scheduled in advance.

-The current system is not reliable enough for people to get to and from work. Often busses are late or do not show up at all. Users may wait for the bus for two-and-a-half hours after work or arrive excessively early. This is inconvenient and often presents safety concerns.

-Reimbursements given by employers for transportation costs are added to the employees salary. This has the potential to increase the salary to a level such that the individual no longer qualifies for welfare and/or Medicaid.

-There are enormous efforts being made throughout the community to ready people with disabilities for independent living, interaction with the community, and employment but because of the transportation issues, these people are being held back. If the public transit system were better, these monies and time would be more efficiently used.

-The transportation crunch leads to a domino effect within the disabled community. If a person is late to work, he may lose his job. If he is late returning from work, the aide will have left preventing his from completing daily tasks. This leads to headaches and often people give up because the battle becomes too hard to fight.

-VIA is planning to improve the current system by

1. Adding additional busses with chair lifts (They currently have two.)
2. Making bus stops more accessible
3. Continuing the subcommittee meetings to discuss relevant issues in this area.

-The disabled community needs to be more responsible about using these services in order to improve this situation. They should always call to cancel rides in advance, be as prompt as possible when using the services, and report all violations and concerns in an appropriate manner. A unified, responsible community is more likely to elicit change.

Consolidation of Agencies

-There are a wide variety of agencies, which provide similar services, if all of these were condensed, the amount of available power, support, and resources would increase a great deal.

-It is frustrating for people to compete with one another for funding of similar projects. Working together would decrease this frustration and increase the number of people being helped.

-Boards could maintain autonomy while creatively solving problems as a group.

-With regard to state agencies, all departments dealing with the disabled should be consolidated so the housing and human services are all in communication with one another.

Additional Services

- Warm Springs Resource Center
 - Place to go to research different services and opportunities in San Antonio
 - Responsive to the needs of the population with regard to information gathering
 - Does not provide the one-on-one services that COIL does

Additional Comments

- Often builders do not build houses to facilitate wheelchair access
- It is not known whether Internet providers provide Internet services at a discount for persons with disabilities. If so, this would provide additional work opportunities for people who are homebound
- The Courage Center based in Minneapolis, MN is a model that COIL would like to emulate.
- There is not a great deal of unity within the disabled community. This is in part due to the wide variety of organizations, which exist to serve the communities needs, as well as the diversity within the community itself. It was suggested that more would be accomplished and the group would likely gain respect if it were more united.
- Continuing education is needed to teach people that individuals with disabilities can manage on their own and be functional members of society both in the workforce as well as the social scene. There is a need to teach people how to react to people with disabilities.
- The counselors at the Department of Labor are not considered to be as effective as the staff at the TRC or COIL.

Attachments

- Submitted by Ann Ohlson, TRC:
- Ideas for Service Gaps
 - 6 Determining Eligibility for VR Services
 - 55 Extended Rehabilitation Services (ERS)
 - 56 Independent Living Services (ILS)
 - 57 Comprehensive Rehabilitation Services (CRS)