

Texas Council on Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders **Strategic Planning Process Overview**

This document is designed to help you better understand the strategic planning process the council is undertaking as well as how you can get involved to ensure success. This document can be downloaded for redistribution to interested parties at <http://sharedserver.org/autism/plan/overview.pdf> and the most current map of the plan can always be viewed at <http://sharedserver.org/autism>. There is a help video which explains most of this document by just watching at: <http://www.vimeo.com/2694527>

The goal of the strategic planning process is simply to understand where the State of Texas needs to go for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), what is holding us back, and what specific steps, in order of importance, can we take to get us there. That sentence is easy to write, however, due to the complexity of ASD causes, diagnosis, treatment, and life planning the task before us is enormous. However, if no strategic plan is in place disparate advocacy efforts will not produce the desired result, efforts will be duplicated and precious resources wasted, and progress that is made will likely not “fit” with other progress to produce the end result we are seeking. It is acknowledged that this strategic plan will not, and could not, be a perfect document, in no short part because it will be put together using volunteer resources. However, the quality of the end product will be in large part be directly related to the time and energy you put into helping create the plan. It is in that vein that we must implore you to participate and engage in the process. We desperately want and desperately need your hard work. To get engaged in the process please to do these three things:

1. Email Ron Ayer at ron.ayer@dads.state.tx.us , and let him know you want to be on the “Draft Strategic Plan Email List”, this will get you copies of all the drafts and strategic plan notifications.
2. Forward this document to any and all autism stakeholders so they can choose to be engaged as well.
3. Participate by writing up and submitting Phase II and III limiting factors and solutions, while commenting and providing feedback on the drafts submitted to the email list.

Phase I – Endpoint – The subcommittee responsible for the strategic plan has created the “endpoints of autism”. These endpoints are not policy statements or solutions but rather a few goals which encompass what the future of autism could look like. We welcome your comments and feedback at this and all phases of the process.

Phase II – Limiting Factors – The critical step which is most often skipped in strategic planning is correct identification of the problem. Individuals generally prefer to go directly to the solutions phase. Phase II will include correctly identifying the limiting factors that keep us from being at the desired endpoints. There are many many limiting factors for each endpoint and we will need your help in getting them properly noted. Please submit this form: <http://sharedserver.org/autism/plan/limiting.doc> to Ron Ayer via

email for each limiting factor you can comment on. It is important to provide a discussion and description of the limiting factor and how it limits and affects the endpoint as well as include citations, references, and weblinks where possible. One word like “money” does not provide a platform to generate change from so please take the time and formulate the best thoughts you can. Your words will very likely end up as part of the strategic plan so please make them as thoughtful as you can. The most up-to-date draft of this logic map can be viewed at <http://sharedserver.org/autism>. All documents available during the collaboration process are DRAFTS until they are approved by the council. Once the limiting factor submission forms are submitted they will be reviewed, collated, organized and additional drafts will be sent out for comment and review. There will be multiple opportunities for comment and review.

Phase III – Solutions – Once limiting factors are identified properly one can begin to devise solutions. Please submit this form:

<http://sharedserver.org/autism/plan/solution.doc> to Ron Ayer via email for each solution you can comment on. It is important to provide as much detailed information as possible while thinking about and trying to answer the solution rating questions. These rating questions will help determine how “good” of a solution you have proposed by taking into account such factors as:

- Overall difficulty of implementation
- Whether the solution has high, medium or low impact
- Whether this solution can be “stacked” with other solutions to make incremental progress toward the endpoint. Since it is not always possible to advocate for and get a perfect solution, concessions must be made at times. Solutions which can be put together in an incremental way or “stacked” with each other therefore have a higher value
- Whether the solution is a full and comprehensive solution or a partial solution to the limiting factor
- Whether legislative action is required
- How much new funding will be required to implement the solution – solutions that make better use of existing funding are always going to be easier to implement and therefore carry a higher rating
- Whether this solution would be supported by other disability groups.
- How many limiting factors this solution addresses
- Others factors as deemed appropriate

If you feel compelled please feel free to submit a limiting factor document and the associated solution document at the same time. Although Phase II and Phase III are technically to be completed in order there is room in the process for both to be submitted at the same time.

Phase IV – Once the endpoints, limiting factors, potential solutions are mapped out, and each solution properly rated the council will decide what solutions are most likely to yield the maximum benefit given the limited advocacy resources available. Then a priority map will be put together for which solutions the council intends to get

implemented and over what time period. This will be finalized and approved during the June 26, 2009 council meeting.

Phase V – Once the top tier solutions are identified and approved each participating agency will be required to submit a “Yes, If...” response to be included in the final published plan. In effect stating “Yes, we can and will do that solution if this funding request is approved and/or this legislative authority is given..” or whatever else might be needed to go forward. This critical step will allow a cogent advocacy and education effort to be mounted in order to ensure legislators are actually in a position to say “yes” to the proposed solution. The final plan, with the priority items, and the “Yes, if...” agency responses will be approved at the September 19, 2009 council meeting in time for the November publishing deadline.

Agency Participation – The success of this strategic planning process rests to a large degree with each agency taking an active participation approach. Should an agency take the approach of “we’ll see what they come up with and react later...” this plan is doomed to fail. Agencies and the individual employees within them are most qualified to give guidance on the limiting factors of the existing system and how to generate change within that agency. The council has set a tone of collaboration with each agency and we will rely and expect each agency to participate in offering their view of the limiting factors and possible solutions. Although official statements are preferred anonymous submissions of both limiting factors and solutions will be welcomed in this process.

Other State Resources – The council task force is in the process of completing a project where we catalogue and learn about other states and their response to autism. It is important to avoid duplicating resources whenever possible and the resources identified during this project will give us access to the state plans, strategic initiatives, advocacy efforts, innovative public and private school options, early childhood programs, transition planning, and innovative adolescent and adult solutions for individuals with ASD. This information will be used to create the strategic plan wherever possible as we recognize that other states have led the way in proactive autism initiatives and there is much to be learned from their efforts.

Town Hall Meeting Feedback – The council and the regional task forces performed extensive town hall meetings and feedback regarding community perception of need during 2007. That feedback will be reviewed to see where limiting factors and potential solutions can be gleaned and put into a cogent form such that real action can be taken to address those needs.

Other Advocate Work – Many other disability councils and private advocacy groups have done extensive work on outlining and providing recommendations for the wider population of people with disabilities. That work will be reviewed and incorporated wherever possible to align solutions and eliminate duplication of resources. If you are a member of one of those groups please take the time to send Ron.Ayer@dads.state.tx.us an email with links to your work product.

Revisions – This plan and the logic map created from it will be a great knowledge set to help future council's ensure that these efforts can be built upon without reinventing all the work completed. This plan and its assumptions and conclusions will go through a revision process ending on each 2nd anniversary of the submittal of this plan (Nov 2009).

Advocacy – Each solution the council intends to see implemented will require a cogent education and advocacy effort in partnership with key autism stakeholders. The council will determine how to best educate and advocate for the proposed solutions and will work diligently with key advocacy groups to see progress toward the strategic endpoints in the plan.

Measurement – The council will measure its success or failure in seeing solutions implemented and will report those metrics as well as other council activities every two years in its off year status report. The next status report will be delivered Nov 2010.

Timeline – The timeline for the strategic plan process, subject to change as conditions require, can be seen here: <http://sharedserver.org/autism/plan/timeline.pdf>

Feedback regarding the process is welcomed and may be addressed to the chair of the subcommittee responsible for the strategic plan: Mike Bernoski – mike@bernoski.net or to the council chair: Frank McCamant – fmccamant@me.com .

Thank you for your interest in ASD and the activities of the Texas Council on Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders. We look forward to working with you and all stakeholders to make a significant difference for families affected by ASD.