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	<p>were elected as co chairs.</p>
<p><b>DARS Update</b> Erin Wilder</p>	<p>In the last legislative session a bill abolished the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) as of September 1, 2016. DARS will be merged with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). A number of programs are staying with the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>§ Independent living</li> <li>§ Comprehensive rehab services – Traumatic brain injury (TBI) and spinal cord injuries</li> <li>§ Autism program for younger children</li> <li>§ Contracting</li> </ul> <p>The transition from DARS to TWC is expected to be smooth, without any interruption in services for consumers. Ms. Wilder made clear that this is not about reducing positions or about budget cuts. They do not anticipate changes in vocational rehabilitation services. They may look to reduce in areas that there is duplication in positions. There is a strong push to maintain the specialty areas that people have. There will be changes in the main office location, but eventually everyone will be housed with TWC. This next year is about moving to TWC, and the following year is about combining the divisions. They are already working on combining policy and standards</p> <p>Final regulations for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) have come out and are under review. DARS staff is working with TWC to follow their process for reviewing new legislation. They will use that review to determine what services count in which category. It contains a requirement that Vocational Rehabilitation programs spent 15% of VR funds to a specific group of individuals with disabilities. DARS and TWC will work to develop solid guidance to the field. Project SEARCH is continuing to grow across the state. They are working on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with TEA. The target start date is October 31, 2016. TWC will now have to sign off on it as well. TWC Vocational Rehab Division is a new division for the agency. There is a website link that includes explanations and pictures regarding the DARS transition process to HHSC and TWC. Ms. Wilder will send the link to the committee members. Current DARS field offices will remain intact until leases expire. When DARS leases end, TWC may look at moving each regional office to a TWC leased or owned building, therefore some field office may move. As of now, all of the policies in place at DARS will transfer to TWC. Ms. Moussa asked if DARS/TWC is considering new trainings on specific disabilities for staff in the field. She is hearing from consumers in the field that many DARS counselors lack knowledge in the area of autism specifically. Ms. Wilder responded that DARS has provided subject matter experts across the state in many areas of disabilities. The number of individuals with autism served has increased with success. Ms. Jennifer Kaut is the head of the autism team at DARS. Ms. Mitchell asked if there is a counterpart for deaf services. The Division for Blind Services (DBS) created a counter part for deaf services. Ms. Williams Briley asked who would be responsible for adaptive equipment after the transition from DARS to TWC. Ms. Wilder responded that the person currently responsible is retiring soon, and she is not sure if the position has been posted yet. In a follow up question, Ms. Williams Briley asked about the process for replacing equipment due for replacement (every 5 years). Ms. Wilder does not anticipate any interruption to the equipment replacement schedule.</p> <p>DARS is moving to TWC as the Texas Workforce Solutions Vocational Rehabilitation Division as of 9/1</p>
<p><b>Dialogue Time</b> Jennifer Cantu</p>	<p>€ Teacher preparation Ms. Lock shared information about the teacher preparation requirements and the new process they are implementing at Texas Tech. This program includes training in special education and ESL training. Both pre in</p> <p>teachers training. Both pre in</p> <p>The committee would like to have a the 2015</p> <p>€ Legislative</p>





