

**Texas Association of Addiction Professionals
Legislative Committee
First Quarter Report
August 1, 2009**

May 14, 2008 – DSHS Exceptional Item Support

After nine months of planning prior to the 2009 81st Session of the Texas Legislature, we began our campaign with the DSHS statewide teleconference on May 14, 2008. The teleconference, which included representatives from twenty-one Texas cities, was set up by DSHS. Cynthia Humphries of ASAP developed an excellent set of scripts and information to be used during the teleconferences. The purpose of the teleconference was to gather testimony to convince the Texas Legislature to support the DSHS exceptional item request. Cynthia provided the phrase “We Want to Secure A Safe, Healthy, and Productive Texas” to solidify our objective and to unify our efforts.

The exceptional item request was for \$33 million per year in additional funding for general prevention for substance abuse programs. Several TAAP members testified from the various cities. A few of those are Bill Coombs (Wichita Falls), Kay Austin (Houston), Chilo Madrid (El Paso), and in Arlington Ms. Stevie Hanson head of Addiction Services of MHMR Tarrant County and her husband Larry, me and nineteen others from the Fort Worth area.

February 25, 2009 - Texas Association of Addiction Professionals Legislative Day

The 2009 Legislative Day, sponsored by TAAP (Texas Association of Substance Abuse Programs, Cynthia Humphries), and the Texas Summit Committee for Prevention (Julie Stevens), was held on February 25, 2009. We met at St. David’s Church in Austin with 112 attendees from all over the state of Texas. Phyllis, TAAP State President, chaired the morning conference. House Representative Garnet Coleman from Houston addressed the group at lunch.

Thank you to the TAAP office staff, Leslie and Susan, who did a great job providing materials and facilitating Legislative Day 2009. Charlie McMordie was again successful in gathering funds from various treatment centers to underwrite the conference.

Especially noteworthy was the attendance of students from the Texas State Training Institute from Brownwood and Breckenridge. There were 18 students and their instructor Dr. Laurie Eccleston, Professor Joe Reed and his 10 students from Weatherford College in Weatherford, Texas, and 5 students from the ICDS School in Fort Worth Texas also attended. The students later joined with the various teams to participate in the visits to the Texas Legislators.

Our agenda was to continue our support for Senate Bill 278 (exceptional item for \$33,000,000 additional funding) sponsored by Senator Jane Nelson and Senator Chris Harris, and also advocating for Workforce Development.

The Workforce Development issues where: 1) make the Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor (LCDC) exams more accessible to applicants by eliminating the requirement for an oral examination; and 2) allow individuals with a desire to become counselor interns participate in an approved peer assistance network. Phyllis Gardner, TAAP President, and Frank Davis, head of the Certification Board, developed these points.

I was able to set up a meeting with Speaker of the House Joe Straus’s aide Ms. Jennifer Degan. She was able to put us in a large conference room. Student invitees from Weatherford College also attended and were able to observe advocacy in action. All the players were in the room: TAAP, The Association of

Substance Abuse Programs, and Texas Summit Committee for Prevention (represented by Phyllis, Frank, Charlie, Tricia, Cynthia, Julie, George Joseph, Pat Greer and others). Ms. Degan had allocated fifteen minutes, but gave us thirty minutes to present our legislative case. Everyone did an excellent job stating our collective issues.

The Weatherford College students and the Fort Worth ICDS students went with my Fort Worth A Team. By the end of the day the students were managing the final legislative interview with the aides of Rep. Todd Smith of Hurst. Dallas TAAP had 10 people in teams, including Pat Greer and made 28 visits; Fort Worth had 8 people and made 13 visits; Houston TAAP included George Joseph and Stacie Albin and others. The (10) students at ICDS of Fort Worth and Teresa Sawyer, their teacher, helped locate the 112 attendees' State Senators and State Representatives offices. Their work enabled the conference attendees to go quickly after the conference and find their local Senators and Representatives. Leslie helped distribute the Capitol maps my wife and I developed that contained the name and office location of the attendees' Senators and Representatives.

I was privileged to introduce Dr. Ed Burgin of San Antonio College, Joe Reed of Weatherford College, Dr. Levelle Hendricks at the University of Texas A&M at Commerce Texas, Ms. Liz Coccia of Austin Community College, and Dr. Laurie Eccleston of the Texas State Technical Institute in Brownwood and Breckenridge. These leaders of their respective two-year associates degree programs for the LCDC licenses were happy to meet each other and exchange information about their programs. They all plan to return on Legislative Day 2011 and bring their students for our combined Legislative Advocacy efforts.

Dr. Laurie Eccleston volunteered to develop and maintain a web page for all Texas campus candidates for LCDC licensing. This web page would be a center for counselor information and for Legislative updates concerning addiction issues (both state and federal). The web page could also be used to mobilize all campuses to attend such events as Texas Legislative Day 2011 in Austin.

Dr. Levelle Hendricks and Dr. Laurie Eccleston requested that I go to Commerce and Breckenridge and present my Legislative PowerPoint presentation "Legislative Advocacy Texas Style - We Are Winning" to their students. This presentation is designed to attract new Legislative Advocates and new student members. During the conference, with the help of ICDS student Barbara Brassell of Fort Worth, I was able to sign up 68 more legislative advocates for the TAAP legislative e-mail tree and added several new TAAP/NAADAC members.

March 4, 2009 – TCCC Presentation

At Tarrant County Community College Northeast Campus Fort Worth, Texas, I presented the PowerPoint presentation "Legislative Advocacy Texas Style - We are Winning" to Ms. Dolores Sutter's class of LCDC students. I signed up 22 more legislative advocates.

March 7-10, 2009 Washington D.C. NAADAC/NAATP Public Policy Conference

As usual the groups from Texas made the Advocacy in Action Day in Washington, D.C. a huge success. We were thrilled to be joined once again by the Houston Delegation and the Texas Youth for Legislative Change. NAADAC/NAATP and Daniel Guarnera, Director of Government Relations, NAADAC-NAATAP Government Relations Department, provided us with great materials to use on our Capitol visits.

Our agenda for the NAADAC Legislative Hill Day Agenda was: ask Congress to fund the Second Chance Act of April 2008-(Public Law 110-199); increase funding in the appropriations for fiscal year 2010 for SAMHSA, NIDA and NIAAA (funding for addictions was left out of the stimulus package Congress passed in the fall.); health care reform to include the workforce development issue (NAADAC/NAATP

document submitted to the Obama transition team); briefing the congressional staffs what parity means; and stressing to congress the cost saving of treatment, education and prevention of addictions issues.

We were provided a folder of information and a summary booklet entitled "Addiction Services: At the Heart of Health Care Reform" to assist us in our Legislative meetings. We met on Sunday for a final briefing and the traditional "Texas Dinner" organized for all of us by Keith and included the Texas Youth for Legislative Change (8 representatives).

We all experienced a very receptive audience during the Hill visits. The passage of the Parity Bill (10/3/08) has made a change of attitude with the Senators and Representatives. As in prior visits we broke into four teams and went to work. Tricia Hanson was asked by Daniel Guarnera to attend a meeting in Texas Representative Ted Poe's (Texas District #2) office to give input to his aides concerning a proposed 40- hour workweek for Federal prisoners, and other criminal justice matters. Tricia will have more details of her interview in her Vice-President's report.

The Houston team made 10 Federal appointments plus the two Senators: Keith Liles and the Texas Youth for Legislative Change, Ellen Horst, Frank Pietrowski, Stacie Allphin, Velma Smith, Sonya Adams and Michael Yeager. The Dallas Chapter Team (Sandy Simpson and Suzie Ferguerson) made 6 Federal appointments plus the two Texas Senators. The Hill Country Team (Sherri Layton) made five visits plus the two Senators. The Fort Worth/West Texas Team (Charlie McMordie, Tricia Hanson, and I) made 10 appointments plus the two Senators. Again this year, both Texas U.S. Senators gave us a large conference room for our discussions.

The next Public Policy Day will be in Washington D. C. on September 6-11, 2010, and will be combined with the Annual NAADAC meeting at the Crystal City Hyatt, in Arlington, Virginia (703-418-1234). The actual date of official Hill Day has not been determined. NAATP will join us for Public Policy Day. The combined NAADAC/NAATP conference will be held Monday through Friday.

A special thanks to the TAAP Chapters and organizations who underwrote the trip to Washington, D.C. for the eight representatives from the Texas Youth for Legislative Change: TAAP Chapters from Houston, Fort Worth, and Dallas; organizations Memorial Hermann, The Right Step, Extended Aftercare, Inc., and Addiction Specialty Group.

At the NAADAC/NAATP debriefing (at the end of Hill Day), chaired by Daniel Guarnera I got to meet Ms. Ashley Lilleholm, Student President of the South Dakota University Student Legislative Action Organization. She has agreed to share their by-laws and organization materials with TAAP Texas so we can duplicate their model with all the Texas Colleges who train LCDC candidates in their two-year programs.

March 13, 2009 - Fort Worth Sunrise Elementary School Career Day

For the last four years I have been invited to make a presentation to the students for Career Day about careers in the alcohol and drug abuse field. I am always paired with my friend and former probation officer Cle Benson. We speak to Kindergarteners through 5th grade. Cle's favorite phrase to the students is "Let nothing or no one keep you from your dream."

March 25, 2009 - Texas Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Task Force

I participated in several conference calls with other Board members of the FASD Task Force (Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities).

April 8, 2009 - University of Texas School of Social Work, Arlington, Texas

I was invited to present my PowerPoint “Legislative Advocacy Texas Style - We Are winning” to the Social Work graduate students and signed up 17 new legislative advocates.

April 9, 2009 Weatherford Junior College, Weatherford, Texas

As a Board member I attended the meeting of the Weatherford Junior College bi-annual Alcohol and Drug Counselor Curriculum Advisory Board. After the Board meeting, I gave my PowerPoint presentation “Legislative Advocacy Texas Style - We Are winning” to the Social Work Class. With the assistance of Kaye Degal from the Fort Worth Chapter, we signed up 15 new legislative advocates.

April 15-18, 2009 Fort Worth Chapter 22nd Annual Metamorphosis Arlington Hilton Hotel

At Metamorphosis I set-up and staffed the TAAP/NAADAC booth and assisted Jennifer and Scott with the TAPNET booth. I signed up 32 new legislative advocates and several new TAAP/NAADAC members.

As a part of Metamorphosis the Fort Worth Chapter of TAAP/NAADAC furnished pizza and drinks for Charlie’s meet and greet event for the CIs and counselors new to the field. We had 67 attendees at the meet and greet. I signed up 12 new legislative advocates and several new TAAP/NAADAC members. We invited students at Weatherford College, Eastfield College, Tarrant County Community College, ICDS Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas State Technical Institute (Brownwood and Breckenridge) [three girls from Brownwood came at their own expense], and Texas A&M University at Commerce, Texas, and the Social Work School at the University of Texas at Arlington, Texas to attend Metamorphosis 2009 as our guests. Sixty-five students and CIs came to Metamorphosis.

May 12, 2009 – Sobriety Check Point Bill

After advising Phyllis and obtaining her go ahead, at the request of Arlington Mayor Dr. Robert Cluck I assisted the Mayor in his efforts to support passage of the DWI sobriety checkpoint bill pending in the Texas Legislature.

May 15, 2009 Kennedale Junior High, Kennedale, Texas Career Day

For the third straight year I was invited to speak at the Kennedale Junior High Career Day. I spoke to them about “Do you want to be a counselor – specifically an alcohol and drug counselor”? In accord with their schedule, I did five 20-minute sets to a total of 74 kids. I asked them how many of them have friends who use alcohol or drugs. Of these students 98% responded “yes.” Kaye Degal of the Fort Worth Chapter of TAAP assisted me. After the Career Day event I received several thank you notes from the kids. The notes were encouraging. In several of the notes they expressed the desire to become alcohol and drug abuse counselors.

May 27, 2009 – Fort Worth Chapter of TAAP/NAADAC Meeting

I presented to the Fort Worth Chapter of TAAP/NAADAC my PowerPoint “Legislative Advocacy Texas Style - We are winning.” I signed up 6 new advocates.

June 1, 2009 – Bill SB 796

From Cynthia Humphries (Association of Substance Abuse Providers) - Victory in the Texas Legislature! Bill SB 796 sponsored by Senator Hinijosa was beaten down in the House but passed as an attachment to the Appropriation Bill in the Senate. Here is a recap of that attachment:

“Sec. 17.15. Medicaid Substance Abuse Treatment. Out of funds appropriated above in Goal B, Medicaid, the Health and Human Services Commission shall, beginning January 1, 2010, provide coverage for comprehensive substance abuse treatment services under Medicaid to persons who are at least 21 years of age, have a substance abuse disorder, and otherwise qualify for Medicaid. The commission may delay implementation pending federal approval. The commission shall analyze data relating to the provision of those treatment services and provide the data to the Legislative Budget Board in a format and at times requested by the Legislative Budget Board. The commission may not provide those treatment services if the Legislative Budget Board determines that the treatment services have resulted in an increase in overall Medicaid spending.”

At times it has been difficult, stressful, and pressured, but nonetheless it has always been exciting acting as Legislative Chair. Thanks to all of you captains, your teams and volunteers for your enthusiasm, hard work, and dedication to our cause and thank you to TAAP for allowing me to function as your Legislative Committee Chair. I also continue to be a member of the NAADAC Political Action Committee and work closely with Sherri Layton, NAADAC's Public Policy Committee. I am fortunate to be a part of an organization that pulls together for the good of the counseling profession and its members and look forward to future challenges on the legislative front.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert S. Miles
Legislative Chair, TAAP