



Our Mission:

* The mission of the Workforce Solutions East Texas Board is to improve the quality of life in this area through economic development by providing a first-class workforce for present and future businesses.

Our Vision:

* It is the vision of the Workforce Solutions East Texas Board that Business and Industry will regard East Texas as a region with an ever-improving quality of life, an active and coordinated economic development program, and a premier workforce.

Web site assists in emergency preparations

A new web site has been developed to assist individuals with disabilities in preparing for emergency situations. The site is found at www.accessibleemergencyinfo.com.

On the web site, users will find videos with American Sign Language interpreters advising how to prepare for 18 topics. The videos also have audio "voice over" and text, alongside the interpreter.

Along with the videos, the Emergency Preparedness Guide is formatted in Braille, large print, and regular PDF format for download. All information is free for public use and any organization may link to the web site and use the information to inform the public. The Braille documents are formatted for reprint using a Braille printer

and local health departments can purchase the printers and reproduce these files at a minimal cost.

Feedback is crucial to the project's success, and users can see the discussion



page on the site to post comments. Two surveys are also included for those viewing the videos to assess preparedness levels before and after experiencing the video. Please en-

courage people to complete the surveys.

Officials hope that the information will assist at-risk populations and will serve many different organizations as a tool to become prepared for all hazards. It is also hoped that the project serves as a springboard for further development of materials for at-risk population preparedness.

A radio ad has been developed and can be shared for those interested in promoting the material in local communities. Anyone wanting a copy can contact Stephanie Walker of the Northeast Texas Public Health District by email at stephanie.walker@talho.org with their name, organization, and area served.

Contact Information

Judd Quarles
Disability Program Navigator
4100 Troup Highway

Phone: 903-561-8131 Ext. 135
Fax: 903-561-4204
E-mail:
Judd.Quarles@twc.state.tx.us

This is an equal opportunity employer/ program. Auxiliary aids and services are available, upon request, to individuals with disabilities.
 Relay Texas 1-800-735-2989 (TDD)
 1-800-735-2988 VOICE

DARS seeks comments for ECI services

ECI (the Services Division for Early Childhood Intervention at the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services) is seeking public input in January 2010. ECI is a statewide program for families with children, 0-3 years, with disabilities and developmental delays. They provide early intervention, services, and supports that help children attain their

goals.

Why is the feedback important? The number of families and children served by ECI is growing exponentially, while the funding to provide ECI services has not followed suit. DARS is working hard to get feedback from consumers about the benefits of ECI services, and the need for ECI services in the future. Without feedback from the

public, the agency risks losing valuable services and supports for families in the future. If additional funds are not allocated to ECI, services will have to be reduced even further.

Who needs to attend public hearings? Anyone who has received ECI services in the past should attend the public meetings where they can

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Hallsville ISD to offer sign language classes

Hallsville High School students will have a new foreign language option in the 2010-2011 year when the school offers two American Sign Language courses.

The school board approved a roster of new courses at the high school during its monthly meeting Dec. 14. The new additions also include pre-advanced placement Spanish 3, Spanish 4, French 3 and French 4 as well as advanced placement biology and environmental systems.

High School Principal John Wink said the sign language courses provide a great foreign language option for students who do not excel at verbal languages. He said some students might want to learn sign language rather than study a new set of vocabulary with different spelling rules.

State law lists American Sign Language as a separate language that can be considered a foreign language for the purpose of fulfilling education requirements. Students taking the "recommended" study plan must complete at least two foreign language courses, according to the Texas Education Agency's Web site. Students completing the "minimum" study plan are not required to take any foreign language courses.

"It's a great opportunity for kinetic learners," Wink said.

The courses can also provide students with the base skill set needed to find some jobs. Wink said school districts constantly face a shortage of staff who can communicate in sign language. Hospitals, governments and other employers also have a need for translators, he said.

The proposal approved by the school board did not include recommendations to hire additional staff for any of the new courses. Wink said the campus will not know how many new teachers, if any, will be needed until campus staff assess student demand for the courses.

The Longview Independent School District also offers American Sign Language courses, Wink said. Wink, a former Longview ISD administrator, said Longview's success prompted his staff to recommend adding the language.

Article and information courtesy of the Longview News Journal.

ECI services, continued from Page 1

discuss things about the benefits of ECI services and supports that they have received. Anyone who is currently receiving ECI services is also encouraged to attend the meetings.

ECI will be holding hearings beginning on January 5 in San Antonio. For more information, see the DARS web site at www.dars.state.tx.us.

DID YOU KNOW?

In November 2009, the overall unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities was 14.1 percent, compared to 9.2 percent of persons with no disability.

Information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Technology Access Program offers to loan assistive devices

The Texas Technology Access Program has announced a service that allows individuals to borrow different assistive technology devices.

When individuals with disabilities, their families, and qualified professionals are able to borrow AT devices and assess them in the individual's normal environments, they are then better able to determine if the devices meet their needs or the needs of individuals with disabilities they are serving. They are then able to make informed choices about what device to purchase or whether to purchase a device at all.

The program works with agencies that provide assistive technology device loans to develop a system of mutual referral so consumers can find

the agency most appropriate to meet their equipment loan needs.

The Texas Technology Access Program is also developing an assistive technology device loan program designed to meet the needs of persons not served by existing agency loan programs.

The current inventory includes many devices which assist with activities of daily living including reachers and grabbers, support braces, kitchen aids, writing and typing aids, switches and switch mounts, communications devices, vision and hearing devices, computer access equipment, and other items.

Device loans:

- are free
- are for 6 weeks and

may be renewed if the device has not been requested by another borrower

- available to anyone in Texas
- shipping both ways is free

Loans are available to:

- people with disabilities
- family members
- educators
- service providers
- employers

As a borrower you must be responsible and agree to:

treat the device with care
return the device on time
pay for repair, or replacement, of the device if damaged due to abuse

or neglect

How to Request a

Device

- Download a **Device Loan Request Form** in Microsoft Word format. Download the loan request form at <http://tatp.edb.utexas.edu/loan.html>
- Call 1-800-828-7839 and ask that a **Loan Request Form** be sent to you in the mail.

For additional information, call 1-800-828-7839 or email Jcmorris1@mail.utexas.edu.