



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DARS Selects Service Providers for New Autism Program

(AUSTIN)—The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) has selected four providers for a pilot program to serve Texas children with autism spectrum disorder. The new \$5 million initiative will expand services for children ages 3 to 8 and should begin by April 1.

"This pilot project is a small step," said State Senator Florence Shapiro, R-District 8, who championed services for children with autism and their families during the 80th Legislature. "Hopefully, this will be the first of many positive steps for Texas as we strive to provide appropriate support for this growing population of children."

Pending final contract execution, the following providers will each receive \$1.25 million for their autism programs:

Texana Center will primarily serve Fort Bend, Austin, Matagorda, Colorado, Wharton, Waller, Harris, Montgomery and Galveston counties.

Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County will primarily serve Harris County, in partnership with the University of Houston at Clear Lake Department of Applied Behavior Analysis.

Easter Seals of North Texas will serve Dallas and Denton counties and the surrounding area, in partnership with the University of North Texas Department of Behavior Analysis.

Child Study Center will serve Tarrant County and the surrounding area, in partnership with the University of North Texas Department of Behavior Analysis.

Under this new pilot program, an estimated 300 children with an autism spectrum disorder will receive services.

DARS is a state agency which works in partnership with Texans with disabilities and families with children who have developmental delays to improve the quality of their lives and to enable their full participation in society. To find out more about the agency's services, call the DARS Inquiries Line at 1-800-628-5115. Information about DARS is also available at www.dars.state.tx.us.