AGENDA ITEM X-F

Academic Quality and Workforce

60x30TX

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Autism Grant Program: Annual Progress Report

DRAFT

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Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

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Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is to provide leadership and coordination for the Texas higher education system and to promote access, affordability, quality, success, and cost efficiency through *60x30TX*, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.

Agency Vision

The THECB will be recognized as an international leader in developing and implementing innovative higher education policy to accomplish our mission.

Agency Philosophy

The THECB will promote access to and success in quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access and success without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access and success is unacceptable.

The Coordinating Board's core values are:
Accountability: We hold ourselves responsible for our actions and welcome every opportunity to educate stakeholders about our policies, decisions, and aspirations.
Efficiency: We accomplish our work using resources in the most effective manner.
Collaboration: We develop partnerships that result in student success and a highly qualified, globally competent workforce.
Excellence: We strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

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Background

In 2013, the 84th Texas Legislature appropriated $8.1 million to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Coordinating Board) to make grant awards to Texas public general academic institutions (GAIs) that conduct research and/or provide treatment to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). House Bill 1, Article III, Rider 68, directed the Coordinating Board to establish three award categories with specific service and funding limits: Parent-Directed Treatment, Teacher/Paraprofessional Training, and Innovative Treatment Models. The following briefly summarizes the three categories:

- Parent-Directed Treatment – total available in each fiscal year of $2,250,000, with a maximum grant award of $250,000 per grant year, for research centers that serve a combined total of at least 750 children with ASD annually through parent-direct treatment methods. The parents, legal guardians, extended family members, and caregivers are included in the treatment of children with ASD and receive regular supervision by trained professionals. The treatment strategies are evidence-based, but they are not limited to Behavioral Analyst methodologies. The Behavioral Analyst Certification Board defines behavioral analysis as "the scientific study of principles of learning and behavior" (accessed online at www.bacb.com).
- Board-Certified Behavior Analyst Training for Teachers/Paraprofessionals – total amount available in each fiscal year of $950,000, with a maximum award of $237,500 per year, to autism research centers that serve a combined total of at least 2,547 children with ASD per year by training teachers and/or paraprofessionals. Teachers/paraprofessionals may be in public and/or private institutions, teaching grades prekindergarten through 12th grade. The training includes, but is not limited to, Behavioral Analyst methods as certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board.
- Research, Development, and Evaluation of Innovative Autism Treatment Models – total amount available in each fiscal year of $700,000, with a maximum award of $700,000 per year, to one or more autism research centers to research, develop, and evaluate innovative autism treatment models that provide treatment to the greatest number of children with ASD.

The Coordinating Board administers the Autism Grant Program (AGP) through a competitive grant application process. Grant recipients provide treatments through multiple approaches: conventional treatments (behavioral analysis), innovative treatments, treatments in the public school system, and treatments at home with parents and caregivers.

The Coordinating Board's AGP has a combined target for its recipients to serve 6,594 children with ASD over a two-year grant period. As of May 1, 2017, just five months into the 24-month grant cycle, the grant recipients have already treated 4,142 children with ASD. The program is well on its way to meeting and potentially surpassing its proscribed targets.

Table 1. Autism Grant Program Categories and Service to Date

Autism Grant Program Category	Total Amount	Teachers Served to Date	Children w/ASD Served to Date
Parent-Directed Treatment	$4,500,000		219
Behavior Analyst Training for Teachers/Paraprofessionals	$1,900,000	419	3,883
Innovative Autism Treatment Models	$1,400,000		40

Source: Coordinating Board

The AGP also included $150,000 per fiscal year for administrative costs, which the Coordinating Board uses to support staff salaries, external reviewers, and other related administrative costs.

The initial ASD grants were awarded in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, and a second Request for Applications (RFA) was issued in FY 2017. Funding was available to support additional awards in two of the three AGP categories: Parent-Directed Treatment, and the Research, Development, and Evaluation of Innovative Autism Treatment Models. The following amounts were available to support awards:

- Parent-Directed Treatment – total amount available is $1,229,325, with a maximum award of $250,000 per year over a two-year period, to research centers that serve a combined total of at least 120 children with ASD per year.
- Research, Development, and Evaluation of Innovative Autism Treatment Models – total amount available is $40,000 over a two-year period.

Program Development

Rules for the AGP were established using the Coordinating Board's negotiated rulemaking process with input from stakeholders, including representatives from Texas public universities, the Texas Autism Research and Resource Center, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Texas Council on Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders. Following the negotiated rulemaking process, the Coordinating Board adopted rules for the program in April 2016 and published an initial RFA; a second RFA was issued in April 2017, with awards announced in June 2017.

Selection Process

The AGP is a competitive grant, and applications are reviewed by Coordinating Board staff and external reviewers. To assist in the selection process, the Coordinating Board contracted with two external reviewers, one with primary expertise in parent-based treatment, and one with primary expertise in teacher/paraprofessional training. Another external reviewer with expertise in ASD grant projects volunteered from HHSC. The external reviewers were Dr. Jill Locke from the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; Dr. Jennifer Bogin from the Center for Human Development in Northampton, Massachusetts; and Dr. Joan Cooksey from HHSC.

Each application was reviewed by a three-member team comprised of the Coordinating Board grant administrator, an additional Coordinating Board staff member, and an external reviewer. Proposals were assessed based on criteria described in the RFA, including the projected number of children with ASD to be served, feasibility of the timeline, attainability of the goals, long-term influence of the project past the grant period, management structure, plans for evaluation, sufficiency and economy of the budget, and qualifications of the directors and key staff.

Fiscal Year 2016 Autism Grant Program Awards

Parent-Directed Treatment

In the Parent-Directed Treatment category, the Coordinating Board funded six applications. The following provides a brief overview of each of the FY 2016 awardees.

Texas A&M University, Center of Disability and Development. The Texas A&M University's AGP grant project offers a program in homes and online to train parents in communication strategies for their children with ASD. The program expanded its reach to include families who live in counties with relatively high poverty rates.

Total award: $498,599
Expenditures to date: $72,230.22
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 170
Parent/children pairs served to date: 79

Texas State University, Clinic for Autism Research, Evaluation, and Support (CARES). The Texas State University's AGP grant project offers families bilingual instruction in Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) treatments. The project offers training to parents in both small group and one-on-one sessions.

Total award: $105,548
Expenditures to date: $33,568.09
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 37
Parent/children pairs served to date: 12

University of Houston-Clear Lake, Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities. The University of Houston-Clear Lake AGP grant project offers communication and behavior management assessment training to Houston-area families. The project's reports show that participants in the study are showing high improvement rates. Two children with severe ASD demonstrated a 100 percent reduction in the problem behavior.

Total award: $330,600
Expenditures to date: $65,138.16
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 111
Parent/children pairs served to date: 14

University of North Texas, Kristin Farmer Autism Center. The University of North Texas AGP grant project offers school readiness training to parents via home visits to low-income and underserved populations. The project is ahead of schedule and will likely exceed its original target number of children served before the end of the two-year grant period.

Total award: $248,632
Expenditures to date: $18,688.32
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 100
Parent/children pairs served to date: 66

The University of Texas at Austin, Speech and Hearing Center. The University of Texas at Austin's AGP grant project offers five courses to parents in social communication training. The project reports show impressive measurable results in participating children's communication skills.

Total award: $397,991
Expenditures to date: $51,516
Parent/children pairs projected to be served: 300
Parent/children pairs served to date: 33

The University of Texas at San Antonio, Teacher Education Autism Model (TEAM). The University of Texas at San Antonio's AGP grant project offers ABA training to military families facing issues relating to frequent deployments and relocations. The project has just recently begun training with its first cohort, and it has been expanded to include a wider range of families while still prioritizing those in the military.

Total award: $459,976
Expenditures to date: $22,068.69
Parent/children projected to be served: 550
Parent/children served to date: 15

Teacher/Paraprofessional Training

In the Teacher/Paraprofessional Training Category, the Coordinating Board funded six applications. The following provides a brief overview of each project.

Sam Houston State University, Low Incidence Disabilities and Autism Program. Sam Houston State University's AGP grant project offers a course for Special Education teachers to become licensed Behavior Technicians. The course is scheduled to begin in June 2017, and the first students will begin training in July.

Total award: $150,100
Children projected to be served: 400
Teachers projected to be served: 20

Texas A&M University, Center on Disability and Development. The Texas A&M University's AGP project provides professional development, a practicum, and Behavior Technician training to teachers via distance education. The project reaches out to residents of counties with relatively high poverty rates.

Total award: $465,548
Expenditures to date: $67,901.45
Children projected to be served: 1,300
Children served to date: 230
Teachers projected to be served: 240
Teachers served to date: 48

Texas Tech University, Burkhart Center for Autism Education and Research. The Texas Tech University's AGP project offers three-day workshops on campus to teach Functional Behavior Assessment techniques. The program has proved popular, and there is a waiting list of teachers who would like to participate.

Total award: $443,512
Expenditures to date: $18,649.71
Children projected to be served: 2,250
Children served to date: 333
Teachers projected to be served: 150
Teachers served to date: 26

Texas State University, Clinic for Autism Research, Evaluation and Support (CARES). Texas State University's AGP project expands its existing ABA teacher training programs to include behavioral skills training. The project is serving twice the number of children with ASD than originally anticipated by this time.

Total award: $178,537
Expenditures to date: $58,551.60
Children projected to be served: 484
Children served to date: 359
Teachers projected to be served: 82
Teachers served to date: 23

University of Houston-Clear Lake, Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities. The University of Houston-Clear Lake's AGP project offers ABA training for Houston-area teachers with three or more students with ASD in their classrooms. The project is ahead of schedule in the number of children served.

Total award: $229,598
Expenditures to date: $60,000
Children projected to be served: 664
Children served to date: 174
Teachers projected to be served: 600
Teachers served to date: 101

The University of Texas at San Antonio, Teacher Education Autism Model (TEAM). The University of Texas at San Antonio's AGP project expands an existing program to include Special Education teachers in rural regions who reach many children with ASD in the course of a year.

Total award: $432,705
Expenditures to date: $57,510.04
Children projected to be served: 5,094
Children served to date: 2,787
Teachers projected to be served: 960
Teachers served to date: 221

Innovative Treatment Models

In the Innovative Treatment category, the Coordinating Board provided funding for two awards.

University of North Texas, Department of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. The University of North Texas' Innovative Treatment Model evaluates techniques to improve auditory processing so that students with ASD can increase attention and engagement in classrooms. The first students are just completing the study and the early results are positive.

Total award: $378,885
Expenditures to date: $48,325.78
Children projected to be served: 60
Children served to date: 6

The University of Texas at Dallas, UT-D/Callier Autism Treatment Research Center. The University of Texas at Dallas Innovative Treatment Model is researching the effectiveness of visual-based early intervention strategies to improve social interaction, attention, and play skills. The project reports strong early results with students' measurable improvement in eye contact, social engagement, and verbal reciprocity.

Total award: $980,712
Expenditures to date: $110,444.67
Children projected to be served: 252
Children served to date: 20

Fiscal Year 2017 Autism Grant Program Awards

In FY 2017, $2,499,050 was available to make additional awards. Two categories of funding were available, with $2,458,650 for Parent-Directed Treatment and $40,400 for the Innovative Treatment Models.

A second RFA was issued in April 2017. Eight applications were received for Parent-Directed Treatment, and two applications were received for Innovative Treatment models. Review of the applications is underway, and the Coordinating Board expects to issue notifications of grant awards in June 2017.

For the second round of grants to be awarded in June 2017, Dr. Jill Locke and Dr. Joan Cooksey served again as external consultants. The awards will be announced by the time this report is due to the Legislature on September 1, 2017.

The most recent awards information and an overview of the AGP is available at www.thecb.state.tx.us/agp.



This document is available on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website: http://www.thecb.state.tx.us

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