

Subject: Public Comment on ICF and HCS Services Rate Methodology
Date: Friday, August 9, 2024 at 1:08:14 PM Central Daylight Time
From: Toby Summers
To: PFD-LTSS@hhs.texas.gov

Dear Madam or Sir

In a News Release from HHSC Executive Commissioner on January 24, 2023, HHSC announced it was increasing salaries and starting pay at state hospitals and state supported living centers to help with critical staffing needs, maintain competitive wages and bring beds back online.

The news release included a quote from Governor Greg Abbott that, ***"By increasing salaries and wages to be more competitive, HHSC is addressing critical staffing needs and bringing more hospital beds back online. Together, we are bolstering recruitment and retention of the best and brightest health professionals to serve Texans in our state hospitals and state supported living centers."***

The news release also included a statement from Scott Schalchlin, deputy executive commissioner of HHSC that ***"Increasing starting salaries will bolster HHSC's recruitment and hiring of prospective employees, help us get fully staffed, and serve more people in need."***

The release further stated that the higher salaries included direct support professionals starting at between \$17.50- to \$21.00 per hour depending on experience as well as paid health and dental insurance, vacation and sick leave, a retirement plan, paid training, and advancement opportunities

A **State Hospital and State Supported Living Center Workforce Report** published by the Texas Health and Human Service in August 2024 confirms that the increase in salaries has produced positive results in recruitment and retention.

Question: Understanding that Direct Support Professional task responsibilities are the same in the State Hospitals and State Supported Living Centers as those in the ICF/IDD and HCS programs that are suffering from the same recruitment and retention problems, why has the State of Texas chosen not to offer the same solution with provider rates that allow for payment of the higher salaries of \$17.50 to \$21.00 per hour in those programs.?

Respectfully submitted,

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