



NEWS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

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EDITORS: Photos of ceremony honoring Amy Young available at www.tdhca.state.tx.us/ppa/media/index.htm

State awards first \$1.7 million to 8 local groups through new program improving accessibility for persons with disabilities

*TDHCA honors late disability advocate
Amy Young, renames housing program in her memory*

(AUSTIN) — The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) today announced the funding of the first Amy Young Barrier Removal Program awards totaling \$1.7 million to eight local nonprofit organizations, helping fund home modifications aimed at improving the home's accessibility for an estimated 154 low income persons with disabilities. The awards were the first ever through this new state-funded initiative to enhance the independence of persons with disabilities while creating a more stable home life.

Receiving an award to help improve home accessibility for persons with disabilities were the following:

Organization	Award	Service Area	Households Served
Ark-Tex Council of Governments (COG)	\$225,000	Bowie, Cass, Delta, Franklin, Hopkins, Lamar, Morris, Red River, and Titus counties	15
Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living	\$225,000	Nueces, San Patricio, Kleberg, Bee, Jim Wells, and Aransas counties	15
East Texas COG	\$225,000	Cherokee, Gregg, Harrison, and Rusk counties	15
Easter Seals of Central Texas (Urban)	\$225,000	Travis, Williamson, Hays, Dallas, and Tarrant counties	15
Easter Seals of Central Texas (Rural)	\$135,000	Bastrop, Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Fayette, Gonzales, Lampasas, and Llano counties	9
Habitat for Humanity of Smith County	\$225,000	Smith County	35
Meals on Wheels and More	\$225,000	Travis, Williamson, Hays, and Bastrop counties	15
South East Texas Regional Planning Commission	\$225,000	Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange counties	35

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TDHCA officials used the occasion of these first awards to honor one of the state's most passionate and persuasive advocates on behalf of Texans with disabilities, officially renaming the program after the late Amy Young.

Young, a public policy analyst with the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (TCDD), passed away in September 2008 after a sudden illness, just months before TDHCA announced an innovative housing program for persons with disabilities created in part to recommendations she had pushed for as part of an advocacy policy workgroup.

"Amy Young was a tireless advocate for a cause she deeply cared about, and her passing left real void in the disability community," noted TDHCA Executive Director Michael Gerber. "Although she didn't live to see her efforts come to fruition, the Department felt it was only appropriate to name this program in her honor. We are significantly improving the quality of life for hundreds of Texans with disabilities while providing the stability and dignity that comes with having a home of one's own. I feel Amy would be extremely pleased by today's awards."

Previously known as the HomeFree Barrier Removal and Rehabilitation Program, the Amy Young Barrier Removal Program helps finance home modifications that include the addition of handrails, widened doors, countertops and cabinets adjusted to appropriate heights, ramps, buzzing or flashing devices for persons with visual or hearing impairments, and accessible showers, toilets, and sinks.

The program provides one-time grants for up to \$15,000 per household in home modifications and up to an additional \$5,000 in other rehabilitation costs correlated with the barrier removal project. Funds target qualifying individuals who earn no more than 80 percent of the area median family income.

In addition to her duties with TCDD, Young also served as a member of the state's Disability Advisory Workgroup, a working body comprised of beneficiary representatives, community advocates, and potential applicants for funding which advises TDHCA in the process of crafting policies and rules impacting people with disabilities. The work group provides an opportunity for staff to interact with various program stakeholders in a more informal environment than that provided by the formal public comment process.

She was instrumental in giving shape to the program that now bears her name, urging the Department to use the Housing Trust Fund to help fund barrier removal activities for persons with disabilities. As the only state funded affordable housing program, the Housing Trust Fund has far greater flexibility and fewer regulatory restrictions than federally funded programs, making it an ideal vehicle for this initiative.

About The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs

The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs is the state agency responsible for affordable housing, community services, energy assistance, colonia housing programs, and disaster recovery housing programs. It currently administers \$2 billion through for-profit, nonprofit, and local government partnerships to deliver local housing and community-based opportunities and assistance to Texans in need.