



## LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ON TIERS/ELIGIBILITY SYSTEM TO HOLD HEARING ON MONDAY, JULY 14

Access to health care and good nutrition is vital to low-income Texas families who don't earn enough to make ends meet. Yet, enrolling in programs like Food Stamps and Medicaid has gotten harder over the last year due to problems with TIERS—the new computer system—and a staff shortage that resulted from a legislatively-mandated attempt by the state to privatize the system in 2006, which failed. Rebuilding a viable eligibility system promises to be one of the most important challenges facing Texas in the years to come. On Monday, July 14, the Legislative Oversight Committee overseeing efforts to rebuild the eligibility system will hold a public hearing. The Texas Health and Human Service Commission (HHSC) will provide a progress report and present the benchmarks that will be used in determining whether to continue implementing TIERS.

### Hearing Details

The hearing is scheduled for **Monday, July 14, 2008, at 10:00 a.m., Capitol Extension, E1.028, Austin, Texas.** The committee will hear invited testimony from HHSC on their efforts to rebuild and enhance the eligibility system including:

- Stabilizing the workforce (increasing staff, reducing turnover, and training staff to use TIERS);
- Expanding TIERS; and
- Awarding a new call center contract.

The committee will also take public testimony. **We encourage stakeholders to attend and provide input.**

### Issues of Concern

- **Timeliness in application processing is still below these federal standards, with the most severe delays occurring in applications processed in TIERS.** Several factors are contributing to these delays: staffing shortages: high staff turnover rates, reduced staff tenure, and problems training staff quickly enough to work cases in TIERS. HHSC should postpone any additional rollout of TIERS or entering into any new contracts until the system is meeting the federal standards for timeliness in application processing for all clients already in TIERS, and has enough workers to meet those standards for new rollout populations as well.
- **HHSC is planning several significant expansions to TIERS, yet the proposed benchmarks for determining readiness to expand do NOT include timeliness as a measure of system readiness.** HHSC is planning a limited geographic expansion of TIERS as well as conversion of all of the “MEPD” (Medicaid for the elderly and people with disabilities) over the course of eight months beginning in December 2008. HHSC has developed certain benchmarks that must be met before proceeding with these expansions. Though we support the use of benchmarks to determine readiness for further TIERS rollout, several flaws in HHSC's approach must be addressed first. Most significant, the benchmarks fail to include timeliness as an indicator of system readiness, despite timeliness being the best indicator of a system and a workforce that is stable enough to weather the strain that is inevitable in the conversion to a new computer system. We also have serious

---

concerns about the decision to convert all of the MEPD cases to TIERS, as well as with the proposed timeline for the implementation.

---

**To learn more, sign up for e-mails, or make a donation, go to [www.cppp.org](http://www.cppp.org).**

The Center for Public Policy Priorities is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization committed to improving public policies to better the economic and social conditions of low- and moderate-income Texans.