



# DPC Issue Brief

*...promoting progressive public policy  
for Texans with disabilities.*

**Title:** Oppose Public School Vouchers or any similar program.

**Background:** Students with disabilities and their families have achieved important educational rights under federal law in America's public schools. Given that private schools do not have to comply with laws, such as IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and No Child Left Behind, public schools has been the school of choice for the majority of families with students with disabilities. Public School Vouchers or any similar program that take funds and children from the public schools will weaken that system.

Private schools might offer specialized services to students with disabilities but they are likely to charge more than the amount of the voucher, thus limiting low income families from participating in this option. Private schools could also make it a practice to accept only the students with the mildest disabilities, leaving the students with the most significant educational needs in the public schools depleting the public school budget even further than the voucher amount.

Public school vouchers or any similar programs that would selectively target only students with disabilities as a pilot test for other such programs would necessarily treat students with disabilities differently than all other students, a practice that has been ruled discriminatory in the past.

The best way to enhance the education of students with disabilities is to strengthen the programs available in the public schools and not to decimate the system by siphoning funds and separating children.

Based on information gathered from other states that have a public school vouchers or similar programs is that most students with disabilities will remain in the public schools.

**Recommendation:** The Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) recommends that the Texas Legislature oppose public school vouchers or any similar programs that takes money from already underfunded public schools that will continue to serve the majority of students with disabilities.

**Contact information:** Linda Parrish, Texas A&M University Center on Disability, 4225 TAMU, Department of Educational Psychology, College Station, Texas 77843 (979) 709-7264 and/or Kay Lambert, Advocacy, Incorporated, 7800 Shoal Creek Blvd., Suite 171-E, Austin, Texas 78757, (512) 454-4816.

**MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS:** *Statewide Members:* Advocacy, Incorporated, Brain Injury Association of Texas, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities, Epilepsy Coalition of Texas, The Institute for Disability Access/ADAPT, Lone Star Association for Persons in Supported Employment, Mental Health Association in Texas, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Texas, National Multiple Sclerosis Society of Texas, Texas Advocates, Texas AIDS Network, Texas Association of Centers for Independent Living, Texas Association of the Deaf, Texas Center for Disability Studies/ Texas Technology Access Project, Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities, Texas Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Texas Legal Services Center, Texas Mental Health Consumers, Texas State Independent Living Council, Texas State Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, The Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University, Council for Families for Children, United Cerebral Palsy of Texas, The Spina Bifida Association of Texas, Inc., and the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Texas. *Local Members:* Epilepsy Foundation Central & South Texas. REACH Resource Centers on Independent Living – Dallas, Fort Worth and Denton, Corpus Christi Committee for Persons with Disabilities, Goodwill of Central Texas and Coastal Bend Center for Independent Living

**Allies:** Unlocking Autism, The Arc of Texas and the Texas Silverhaired Legislature