

# HHS Sunset: A Well-Check for Our Wellness Systems

**In 2026-2027, the entire 16-agency Texas health and human services system will undergo “Sunset review”—a once-a-decade, top-to-bottom review of state agencies designed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats—and to recommend legislative changes to strengthen the agencies and their programs, or to eliminate agencies or programs that are no longer needed. The process works by setting in an agency’s “enabling legislation” an automatic termination (Sunset) date on which the agency will be abolished unless the Legislature passes a bill to continue it, typically for another 12 years. Texas’ Sunset process includes significant public participation opportunities at every step, and it’s up to Texans to use those opportunities to advocate for strong systems that can keep our state on track and thriving.**

The “Sunset” review process was one of the first state-government accountability programs developed in the U.S. Colorado was the first state to adopt Sunset review legislation in 1976, and within five years, most states had adopted similar legislation. Texas adopted its Sunset statute in 1977. Today, only a few states maintain a Sunset review system, with Texas’ being one of the most robust and far-reaching.

Texas’ Sunset process is distinctive because of its size and scope, and because it offers the opportunity for significant public participation. The public participation component of Texas’ Sunset process is a vital counterpart to public participation during the legislative session: while the legislative session is short and intense, the Sunset process occurs over an 18-month period with many opportunities for citizen input both at the Capitol and in local communities. Like other public participation processes in state government, the public participation component of the Sunset review process is only as valuable as Texans make it.

Sunset is the regular assessment of the need for a state agency to exist. While standard legislative oversight is concerned with agency compliance with legislative policies, Sunset asks a more basic question: Do the agency’s functions continue to be needed? The Sunset process works by setting a date on which an agency will be abolished unless legislation is passed to continue its functions. This creates a unique opportunity for the Legislature to look closely at each agency and make fundamental changes to an agency’s mission or operations if needed.

The Sunset Commission staff performs the research and analysis functions of the review, with the appointed Commission members taking public testimony and voting on recommendations. The Sunset review process takes a full 18 months from start to finish.

The Sunset process is guided by a 12-member body appointed by the Lieutenant Governor and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Assisting the Commission is a staff whose reports provide an assessment of an agency’s programs, giving the Legislature information needed to draw conclusions about program necessity and workability. Staff of the Sunset Commission work extensively with each agency under review to evaluate the need for the agency, propose needed statutory or management changes, and develop legislation necessary to implement any proposed changes.

Generally, the Legislature groups and schedules agencies for review by function to allow the examination of all major state policies related to a particular function at once, such as health and human services, natural resources, and financial regulation. The Legislature may change

the review schedule to enable a closer look at certain agencies, to balance the Sunset work schedule, or to respond to a critical need or event. By using the Sunset process to examine agencies that are of special legislative interest, the Legislature further strengthens the accountability of state agencies. An agency is automatically abolished unless the Legislature passes legislation to continue the agency. If an agency is abolished, the Sunset Act provides for a one-year wind-down period to conclude its operations. The agency retains full authority and responsibility until the end of that year, when all property and records are transferred to an appropriate state agency.

The sixteen state agencies scheduled to go through the Sunset review process leading up to the 2027 session implement the policies and programs we know as the “health and human services system.” Collectively, these agencies are responsible for implementing policies ranging from intensive support for Texans with certain disabilities to administration of programs that impact literally every person in Texas. From health coverage, food assistance, and in-home care to maintaining birth and death records, licensing hospitals, and investigating child abuse, these agencies are foundational in our state’s public policy architecture.

## **Agencies undergoing Sunset Review for the 2026-2027 cycle:**

Statewide Interagency **Aging** Services Coordinating Council  
Texas **Civil Commitment** Office  
Texas Council for **Developmental Disabilities**  
Department of **Family and Protective Services**  
Texas **Funeral Service** Commission (Limited-Scope)  
**Health and Human Services** Commission  
Texas **Health Services** Authority  
Department of **State Health Services**  
Texas **Juvenile Justice** Department (Limited-Scope)  
**Maternal Mortality and Morbidity** Review Committee, Texas  
Governor’s Committee on **People with Disabilities**  
**Perinatal** Advisory Council  
**Public Health** Funding and Policy Committee  
Texas **Workforce** Commission State Use Program (WorksWonders)  
Texas **Workforce** Commission  
Texas **Workforce Investment** Council

## **Get Involved!**

As a human, a Texan, a member of communities, and potentially a professional or volunteer who serves clients of health and human services programs, you are a vital stakeholder in this Sunset cycle. To find out how you can plug in and participate, email Texas Impact’s HHS Sunset Coordinator Heather Malkawi at [heather@texasimpact.org](mailto:heather@texasimpact.org)



Texas Impact equips people of faith and conscience with information, opportunities, and outreach tools to educate their communities and engage with lawmakers on pressing public policy issues.  
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