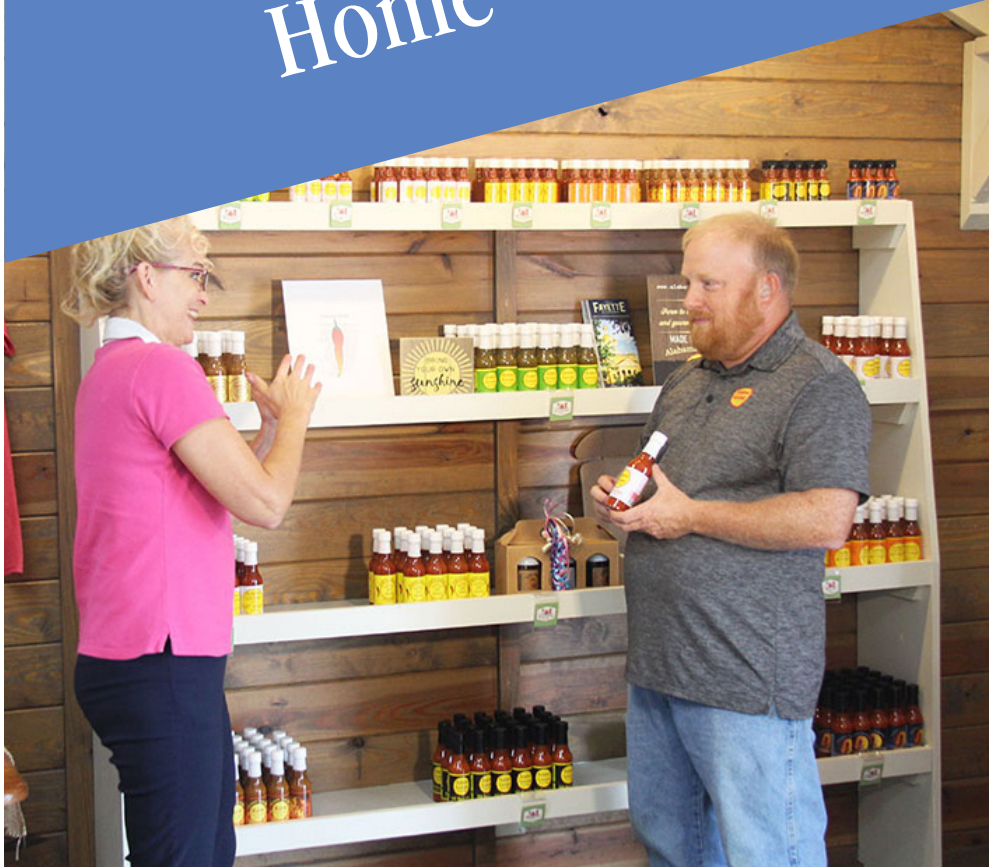




ADRS
2019
annual
report

together success
Home School Work



BLUEPRINT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

MISSION: TO ENABLE ALABAMA'S CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE THEIR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL

We VALUE the worth, dignity and rights of people with disabilities and we will:

- provide an easily accessible, integrated continuum of services;
- ensure quality services that are family-centered, culturally sensitive and community-based;
- promote and respect consumer choice regarding provision of services;
- advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities and promote self-advocacy;
- include people with disabilities, their families and advocates in agency planning and policy development.

We VALUE independence and meaningful work for people with disabilities and we will:

- educate families, children, employers, schools and the public that people with disabilities can and do work;
- advocate for quality health services and community supports that enable people with disabilities to work and/or function independently;
- develop, maintain and expand working relationships with employers;
- identify and create job opportunities that are compatible with consumer abilities;
- foster cross-divisional collaboration to achieve successful work outcomes.

We VALUE all staff and their contributions in achieving our mission and we will:

- communicate openly and honestly;
- recruit, develop, retain and promote a diverse, qualified staff;
- involve staff in agency planning, policy development and performance objectives;
- recognize and reward exemplary job performance;
- provide staff opportunities for personal and professional growth.

We VALUE leadership at all levels and we will:

- maximize staff participation in all agency initiatives;
- create an environment which encourages and supports creativity and innovation;
- facilitate teamwork among all staff;
- provide support and leadership development opportunities.

We VALUE maximum acquisition and efficient and effective management of resources and we will:

- acquire maximum resources;
- increase legislative support;
- develop and use appropriate technological advancements;
- evaluate the effective and efficient use of our resources;
- collaborate with organizations in the public and private sectors.

We VALUE public support and we will:

- educate the public about our mission, goals, services and expertise;
- secure support from business and industry, consumers of services, partners and policymakers;
- create partnerships that expand services to enhance opportunities for consumers;
- maximize staff involvement in the development of grassroots support.

Drawn by: Staff of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

Description: Mission/Values/Strategic Goals

Date: January 2000



From the commissioner



Dear friends, partners, and colleagues,

It's my pleasure to present to you Together Success, the 2019 ADRS annual report.

The numbers and individual stories of success found in these pages represent the more than 50,000 Alabamians with disabilities who are served through ADRS programs each year. They are a testament to the efforts of our staff and highlight the drive and determination of the people we serve to overcome challenges and reach their goals.

This report is a reflection of the many partnerships built around the state. We all have dedicated ourselves to the same mission and take great pride in the accomplishments of those we serve. To those partners, I would like to once again say "thank you" for another successful year and many more successes in the year to come as we work together to assist Alabama's children and adults with disabilities in achieving their maximum potential.

Sincerely,





together success

Home Features

School

Work

- 3 Our Continuum of Services
- 4 Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services
- 5 Our Success Stories
- 20 Alabama's Early Intervention System
- 22 Children's Rehabilitation Service
- 24 Vocational Rehabilitation Service
- 30 State of Alabama Independent Living/Homebound
- 32 Statewide Services





The continuum of services

Services across a lifetime ...

Whether the person is a child born with a disability or someone who acquires a disability later in life, the goal is the same: self-sufficiency and independence. With individualized services provided in homes, schools, the workplace, and the community, ADRS assists every person in achieving his or her maximum potential.

adrs

alabama's early intervention system

AEIS coordinates services statewide for infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays from birth to age 3, preparing them and their families for the transition to the state Department of Education's preschool program for 3- to 5-year-olds. Early Intervention also provides financial and technical support to dozens of community programs that provide direct service to families.

aeis

children's rehabilitation service

CRS provides individualized services to children with special health care needs from birth to age 21 and their families at home, school, and in the community. In addition, Children's Rehabilitation Service provides disability services, expertise, and adaptive technology to and for local school systems, assisting teachers, school nurses, and other staff in the education of children with disabilities. The CRS Hemophilia Program serves Alabama's children and adults with this life-threatening blood disorder.

crs

vocational rehabilitation service

VRS provides rehabilitation-, education-, and employment-related services to teens and adults with disabilities.

Every year, the Vocational Rehabilitation Service Business Relations Program provides disability management and employee placement services to Alabama businesses.

vrs

state of alabama independent living (homebound)

SAIL (Homebound) provides services to Alabamians who have the most-significant disabilities. SAIL/Homebound staff also provide education and support services to families with children and adults with significant disabilities to make them more independent in the home, community, or workplace.

sail



Meet our board



Dear friends,

I have served on the board for more than 10 years, and it has been my pleasure to be a part of this outstanding organization and the work that they do for our friends and families across the state of Alabama. I can attest to the good that they do, because my son received services and is a better person for the efforts of the staff of ADRS.

After you have read this year's annual report and see the services that the various departments have provided and marvel at the success that individuals have achieved, please join me in spreading the word about how great ADRS is for the state of Alabama. As a board member, I can report that ADRS staff members are known across the country for their expertise. Many have been called to national leadership positions and to be presenters at various seminars across the country.

Please join me, the rest of the board members, and the recipients of services from ADRS, in thanking the staff and leadership in another outstanding year for being at the forefront of providing services and inspiration to our family and friends.

Eddie Williams
Board Chairman, District 5



Stephen G. Kayes
District 1



Jimmie Varnado
District 2



Penny Foster
District 3



Leah Patterson Lust
District 4



Charles Wilkinson
District 6



Mitch Strickland
District 7

The Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services consists of seven members, one from each U.S. Congressional District. Board members are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Alabama Senate. Alabama law requires that three members be individuals with a disability, selected from consumer disability organizations; one member be the parent of a child with a disability; and three members be from organizations of business and industry within the state.

The board's responsibilities include making rules and regulations for the provision of rehabilitation services; directing and supervising the expenditure of legislative appropriations; disseminating information concerning and promoting interest in disability and rehabilitation issues; taking appropriate action to guarantee the rights of and services to people with disabilities; and serving as the governing body of programs administered by the department.



Board Chairman Eddie Williams is excited to help lead the department forward in the upcoming year.



Our success stories



Exton Black

Lee County

Opelika's Exton Black is learning and thriving every day through the tenacious efforts of his mother, Savannah, and Alabama's Early Intervention System.

The 2-year-old, who was once given 24 hours to live, makes progress and achieves goals every month.

Exton was born six weeks premature and soon diagnosed with Down syndrome, a misplaced aorta, and six holes in his heart. The family learned right away that he would need open-heart surgery within the first few months of his life.

Savannah said they later learned Exton had a severe form of tracheobronchomalacia with 90 percent of his airway blocked down to the branch of his lungs.

When an emergency tracheotomy was performed, Exton remained at Children's Hospital for four months. They later learned Exton has hypothyroidism and suprastomal collapse, which means his airway has collapsed above his trach.

As they addressed these issues at Children's Hospital, Savannah said the family was introduced to Early Intervention through a social worker. She described this as "life-changing."

"We have used all of the resources," she said. "We have thoroughly enjoyed it. They have been really awesome for us."

The Black family began their journey with Stephanie Wilkerson, who was then with United Cerebral Palsy of Central Alabama and is now a full-time employee of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Service's EI program. Savannah said they were nervous at first because they believed they would have to transport Exton to different clinics and appointments.

"I don't think I initially understood what Early Intervention was and how we are allowed to use it, but once we started it was great," she said. "These therapists have made a big, big, difference.



Top, EI's Stephanie Wilkerson and Exton work on sign language skills. Above left, Exton shows a little love to his mom. Right, Angie Gullledge and Exton play ball.

Especially the fact that they can come here."

Exton receives services through speech and occupational therapists, and Savannah said she knows she can contact them any time she has concerns. Exton is now walking, playing, and even learning sign language through programs and books.

In addition to the services they

provide, Savannah said EI programs help her provide the attention Exton needs to continue his development between visits.

"I can't imagine not having their guidance because they give you all of these tools and ideas to work with throughout the whole month," she said. "It makes me feel like I have accomplished something by the time they come back and evaluate him."



Kinley Grace James *Washington County*

Despite her tiny frame, Kinsley Grace James is an unstoppable force.

After being born at 28 weeks and weighing 1 pound, 2 ounces, the now-2-year-old has made consistent strides through services from Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS).

Kinsley's mother, Ashly James, said her daughter does not know the meaning of the word "quit."

"She is tough," she said. "We have been told plenty of times she would not make it. She is determined. She'll try something, and it might not work but she is going to keep going."

After her birth, Kinsley stayed in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for six months in Mobile and Hattiesburg, Miss.

She was diagnosed with bronchopulmonary dysplasia and pulmonary hypertension, and was prescribed Zantac, Prevacid, and Infacare. She went home with a gastronomy button and has endured two laser eye surgeries.

Kinsley received pediatric care from a pediatrician, eye doctor, pulmonologist, cardiologist, and gastroenterologist.

When she was first referred to AEIS by Children's of Alabama in Birmingham at 9 months old, Kinsley was five to nine months behind in her development.

Kinsley's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) had outcomes to help her roll back and forth and push up on her hands so she could play on her tummy and sit independently. This helped her to participate in a daily routine of bath time, mealtime, and playtime.

Initially, Early Intervention Service Coordinator and Special Instructor Jacynda Shepard said they feared her vision would slow her progress, but this has not been the case. Kinsley is not only walking but also running through the family home and breezing through her sessions.

"Kinsley has no fear," Shepard said. "That has really been a positive as far as not being afraid to try things."

They initially worked toward



Kinley Grace James participates in in-home sessions with Early Intervention Service Coordinator and Special Instructor Jacyntha Shepard.



Kinley participates in exercises to match items to help her move forward in her development.

improving her motor skills but have now moved on to a larger emphasis on speech-related exercises, Shepard said.

Kinsley can now match items with

pictures on a page and sound out words. Shepard said they are also focusing on feeding in the home and will eventually begin clinics.





Levi Adams plays a matching game with his mother, Dedra, and CRS Care Coordinator Sandra Bumgardner during a recent visit at the family home in Trussville. Dedra said the services the family receives from CRS have been a tremendous blessing.

Levi Adams St. Clair County

Trussville native Levi Adams is making strides every day with the help of his loving parents, his siblings, and Children’s Rehabilitation Service.

Levi, who is 4, is well on his way to taking his first steps, a feat his parents Dedra and Edward were once told was not a possibility.

Levi was referred to Children’s Rehabilitation Service from the newborn follow-up clinic for feeding issues with a G-Tube placement. Levi was diagnosed with Down syndrome and 9p deletion syndrome. He has also been diagnosed with failure to thrive, Lennox-Gastaut syndrome, and a variety of other conditions.

Through CRS, Levi receives occupational and physical therapy. He also has had ear tubes placed to correct his hearing, which is now normal.

Dedra said CRS has been a tremendous blessing.

“I have been able to come to them with any questions along the way,” she said. “They have been the best resource. Even the emotional support is one of the biggest things I appreciate. Just having somebody who cares, who knows him. He’s not just a number. They are invested, and that is what I appreciate more than anything.”

Levi attends Feeding Clinic every six months and is making steady progress. He regularly attends orthopedic and seating clinics and has been provided with bracing and medical equipment.



When Levi was born, his parents Dedra and Edward were told he would never walk. Levi has continued to work hard and will soon be taking his first steps unassisted.

Care Coordinator Sandra Bumgardner said she enjoys working with the family and is always excited to see the progress Levi continues to make.

“Levi has obstacles in life, and he faces them head on with a huge smile on his face,” she said. “He is such a special child that is full of life and determination.”





Left, Whitney Stephens is pictured with Candace Mitchell, who is now the supervisor of the Dothan Children's Rehabilitation Service office. Mitchell helped Whitney secure the assistance and items she needed to keep moving forward. Right, Whitney has become a favorite at the Dothan McDonald's.

Whitney Stephens *Houston County*

Don't let her size and sometimes quiet nature fool you. Dothan resident and Rehobeth High School senior Whitney Stephens is a fighter.

With help from the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Stephens has never let any obstacles – including 27 surgeries and 50 overall procedures – hold her back.

In December 2018, Stephens was recognized as the ADRS and Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities "Student of the Year." It was yet another victory in a journey that has seen continued success for the 18-year-old.

When Whitney was born, her mother Tina was told the chances of Whitney surviving were slim. She spent her first days in intensive care in Birmingham, where doctors learned she had a hole in her heart, deformed ribs, one kidney, scoliosis, and other health issues. Whitney had her first heart surgery at 3 months old, eventually received three metal plates in her right knee, and died on the operating table during a scoliosis surgery at age 12 before doctors revived her. She spent six weeks in intensive care in St. Louis following that setback.

During this time, her muscles withered, and she had to learn to write, walk, and perform other activities of daily living.

Through these early challenges, Children's Rehabilitation Service staff member Candace Mitchell, who is now the district

supervisor for the Dothan CRS office, became a part of the family's life.

"Candace followed us for a long time," Tina said. "She helped us to the point that (Whitney's) weight was stable, and she was off the feeding tube."

After being homeschooled for two years, Whitney rejoined her old classmates at Rehobeth High School. This is also when she connected with ADRS once again through Vocational Rehabilitation Service Counselor Kristie Grammer.

Grammer suggested that Whitney participate in the CONNECTIONS program, which inspired her to seek a part-time job. She recently celebrated her one-year employment anniversary at McDonald's.

Whitney participated in the ADRS assistive driver program and obtained her license shortly after her 16th birthday. She needed only one week of instruction to pass her driver's test.

"They were really impressed," she said. "(One of the instructors) told me he was really surprised and that I could pass my driver's test already."

Watching Whitney blossom has been a joy for Grammer.

"Whitney has it all together and has a very strong work ethic," she said. "She knows what she wants, and she is going to work hard to get it."





University of Alabama junior computer science major Brandon Charles once thought leaving home to attend college would not be possible. He is now on track to graduate in the spring 2021 and hopes to launch a software company that addresses the needs of people with disabilities. Left, Brandon and his CRS Occupational Therapist Lynn Bates discuss the progress he has made. Below, Brandon prepares to complete coursework from his on-campus dorm room.

Brandon Charles *Madison County*

At one time, Huntsville native and University of Alabama junior computer science major Brandon Charles thought attending college was not an option.

Several Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services programs and encouragement from his mother changed his mind.

After his birth, Brandon developed normally until he was about 3 years old, when he began falling down and experienced muscle weakness. By first grade, he was using a power wheelchair.

Brandon, who is on pace to graduate in the spring of 2021, moved to Huntsville as a junior and initially connected with Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) and Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) for some of his basic needs.

He said he quickly developed close relationships with the CRS and VRS staff and was impressed with their willingness to help.

"I got a lot of different things, like my phone holder and accommodations and modifications to my chair that were needed," he said. "Also, with medical supplies they informed me how I could get all the supplies I needed to have a successful journey and live on my own."

As Brandon prepared for college, CRS and Vocational Rehabilitation Service worked together to make sure he could live independently. He has a notetaker, use of the testing centers for a distraction-free environment, accessible furniture, and bath equipment.



Brandon said he might never have gone to college had he not been selected by ADRS to attend the Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum at Troy University.

"I learned a lot of valuable lessons from that experience that have helped me to this day," he said. "YLF really opened my eyes to the possibility of actually going to college."

After graduation, Brandon hopes to establish his own software firm to develop programs that assist people with disabilities.

CRS Occupational Therapist Lynn Bates said she has no doubt Brandon will be successful at anything he does.

"Brandon is a very unique, very motivated young man," she said. "I have never seen anything that he can't do. If he puts his mind to it and he wants to do something, he is great at problem-solving and figuring out what he wants and needs. We try to figure out how we can help meet those wants and needs."



Garrett Sanders

Calhoun County

For Jacksonville State University junior Garrett Sanders, the possibilities are endless. Despite his challenges, the journalism major is earning a name in sportswriting and broadcasting.

Sanders was born with an eye condition called optic nerve hypoplasia, which prevented development of the nerve in his right eye and rendered him legally blind in his left eye. Sanders was also diagnosed with Asperger's at 9.

Public school was a challenge for Sanders; however, he began to blossom when he enrolled at the Alabama School for the Blind in seventh grade. It was there that he met Vocational Rehabilitation Service Counselor Matt Haynes and learned about the summer work program and other opportunities.

He eventually moved into the caseload of VRS Counselor Joey Richey and things really took off.

"He came in and helped me a lot with everything," he said. "He helped me with my college expenses, he has helped me with my room and board, he has helped me with my meal plan. He has helped me find and get a job, and he has even helped me get an internship with 94.5 WJOX on ESPN radio in Birmingham."

Sanders participated in the E.H. Gentry College Prep program, where he learned about the accommodations he needed to complete his coursework. He participated in dual enrollment through Gentry and Central Alabama Community College before moving on to Jefferson State Community College.

From there, he made the move to JSU, where he currently has a 3.36 grade point average.

Throughout his college career, Sanders said Richey has always been there when he needed him. Richey used ADRS programs to provide accommodations, a laptop, a screen reader, and has served as a mentor.

"Joey has been a great help to me. He has been absolutely wonderful," he said. "He has been keeping in close touch. He really helped me get to where I needed to be. I think without Joey's help, none of this would be possible."

Sanders currently hosts a Friday night radio show at WLJS called "Tailgate Talk," where he is honing his skills to become the next Paul Finebaum. Richey said he has no doubt Sanders will achieve this goal.

"I feel like Garrett is going to reach the stars," he said.



Above, Garrett Sanders prepares for his weekly radio show in the JSU studio. Garrett said he hopes to be the next Paul Finebaum someday. Left, Sanders can often be seen walking the halls and talking sports with his fellow students and broadcasters. Below, Garrett and his VRS Counselor, Joey Richey, have formed a great friendship through the years. Garrett said Richey has been a wonderful mentor.





Nigel Davis and CRS Social Worker Constance Phillips discuss plans for the future. Nigel said Phillips has become a great friend and has always been there when he needed her assistance.

Nigel Davis

Marengo County

The word “quit” is not in the vocabulary of Demopolis native and University of West Alabama student Nigel Davis.

Nigel, who was born premature and diagnosed with cerebral palsy, realized early in life that education was his pathway to success. Doctors informed Nigel’s parents that his brain would develop normally, but he would have limited mobility.

As a young man, Nigel said he struggled to find his identity and sometimes struggled socially. Two surgeries his sophomore year and frequent visits to Birmingham for physical therapy as a junior at Demopolis High School left him wondering if he would ever be able to graduate.

Fortunately, through his determination and with help from Children’s Rehabilitation Service Social Worker Constance Phillips, Nigel’s family received the help they needed to stay on track.

CRS assisted with prescription copays, surgery copays, repairs to his wheelchair, and other expenses his insurance did not cover. They also helped with travel reimbursement for trips to Birmingham for his repairs to his wheelchair’s battery pack.

Nigel not only graduated, but a trip to Troy University and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Service’s Youth Leadership Forum left him determined to pursue a college degree.

Nigel is now receiving assistance from Vocational Rehabilitation Service programs, with VR Counselor Tasha Hackett helping him secure college sponsorships. The senior, who is pursuing a major in sociology major and a psychology minor, said he has been inspired to help others with disabilities and has had opportunities to speak to his fellow students about the importance of physical and mental health.



Nigel attended the Selma CRS Back-to-School Bash to encourage students to work hard and never let any obstacles stand in the way of their dreams. Davis often speaks to student groups at UWA as well.

“I really want to help those in a similar situation,” he said. “I want to let them know it is possible. That we can achieve what we didn’t think was imaginable.”

He is currently participating in the ADRS Lakeshore assistive driver program through the Tuscaloosa VRS office and said he is working hard to gain full independence.

Nigel said he is always eager to share his story with others, because he does not want anyone to ever feel that his or her goals are out of reach.

“I don’t want anybody, regardless of disability, to ever feel like their choices are limited,” he said. “I want them to be whatever they want to be. No matter what they want to be, I want them to be their best.”





Logan Horton used his story to inspire students at the 2019 Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum on the campus of his alma mater, Troy University. Horton said his participation in YLF was a huge factor in his decision to attend college and become a teacher.

Logan Horton

Mobile County

Logan Horton has always been an inspiration to others. Now, as a teacher at Chickasaw Middle School, he has an even better opportunity to encourage young people to be their best.

Horton has a miraculous story that has allowed him to reach his goals.

When he was born four months early on Jan. 26, 1993, at USA Women and Children's Medical Center, his chances of survival were slim.

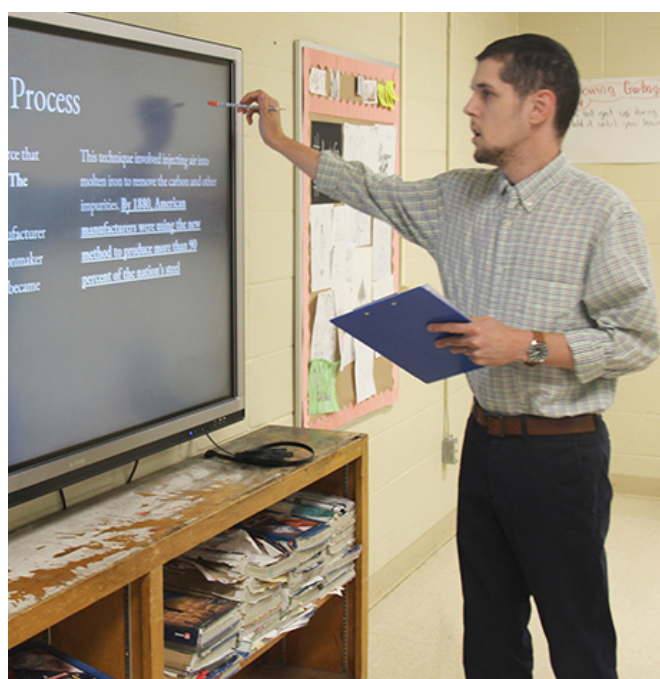
Horton was born with bronchial pulmonary displacia, which required medication to develop his lungs to full capacity. An open-heart surgery and cranial bleed kept Logan in the hospital until June, and he was later diagnosed with a mild form of cerebral palsy.

In his early years, Logan struggled with speech and motor skills, but he was determined to achieve his dreams and pushed forward with speech and physical therapy and a solid Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Accommodations through Vocational Rehabilitation Service and his counselor Connie Smith in Jackson helped Logan stay on track for college, and an opportunity to participate in the Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum at Troy University made his future clear.

"That was the first time my eyes were really opened to how wide of a spectrum of students with disabilities is because there were a whole host of people there who had what some may consider mild disabilities to very challenging disabilities," he said. "It really created a strong desire within me to show empathy to everyone."

Horton said his participation in YLF helped him decide to attend Troy and solidified his desire to become a teacher.



Logan prepares a lesson plan.

In college, Logan said he started strong but struggled in his second semester.

He again sought accommodations, and the results spoke for themselves. Logan never made less than a 3.0 for the remainder of his collegiate career.

Horton's teaching career led him through Florida and Alabama, where he now teaches close to home in the north Mobile County town.

Logan said he works hard every day to make sure his history students are good citizens and are successful in the classroom.

"I want them to understand the importance of being a good person and a kind person," he said. "I think at the end of the day, all you are is how you treat someone else who can do nothing for you."





The ADRS Lakeshore adaptive driver program helped 2019 Ms. Wheelchair Alabama Taria Jackson become significantly more independent. Taria said her participation in the program also opened many other doors through Vocational Rehabilitation Rehabilitation Service.

Taria Jackson

Jefferson County

Current Ms. Wheelchair Alabama Taria Jackson is using her platform to show the world that people with disabilities can accomplish anything they put their mind to.

Taria, who also finished first runner up in the Ms. Wheelchair America pageant in Little Rock, Ark., was born with spina bifida, is paralyzed from the waist down and has hearing loss. However, these challenges have not slowed her down.

As a child, Taria received services from Alabama's Early Intervention System and Children's Rehabilitation Service, later becoming an honor student at Parker High School. She initially became involved with Vocational Rehabilitation Service because she wanted to learn to drive.

Her association with VRS became much more than driving instruction. They provided services to help her graduate from the University of Alabama with a master of social work degree and helped with home modifications.

Rehab engineers installed a chair in the bathtub of her Birmingham home that leans back like a recliner. VRS has also helped Taria secure hearing aids and an adapted van, which opened up a new world for her.

"(Owning a vehicle) has allowed me to be independent," she said. "I will get in my car sometimes and thank God that I have the ability to drive because I know people with disabilities who have to wait on transportation."

Taria said even though she was an honor student in high school, she had not given college much thought until she attended the Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum at Troy University. After completing the week-long program, she



Ms. Wheelchair Alabama 2019 Taria Jackson and VRS Counselor Anita Turner discuss goals and accomplishments.

knew she could do anything she set her mind to, including earning the title of Ms. Wheelchair.

Birmingham VRS Counselor Tankiya Weldon initially encouraged her to enter the pageant, and though there were a few initial challenges, everything fell into place.

Taria said the process was stressful, but she is grateful for the platform to advocate for others.

"If I can just motivate one person, that's great," she said.

Her current counselor, Anita Turner, said she began working with Taria in June 2018 to help her return to college at UAB and achieve her goal of becoming a teacher. She said she is inspired by the 28-year-old's energy and determination.



David Smith

Fayette County

If you have shopped for groceries in Alabama or visited restaurants that like to give their food a little kick, odds are you have seen a bottle of Alabama Sunshine sauces.

The Fayette-based business, owned by David Smith, offers not only a great product but an interesting story.

Smith, who is deaf, worked in the steel industry in Indiana for years before returning to the family farm in west Alabama. Despite a strong resume, he initially had trouble finding a job because of his disability.

“A lot of people would look at me and see my resume, but they were concerned because I couldn’t hear,” he said. “I would tell them it doesn’t matter and to just look at the resume.”

Smith connected with the Tuscaloosa Vocational Rehabilitation Service office and Deaf Support Specialist Amelia England to increase his odds of finding employment. England offered instruction on resume writing, job coaching, a specialized alarm clock, and other services which helped him land a position at D.F. Industries. ADRS staffer Susan Gordon provided interpreting services to help Smith learn the ropes at his new job as well.

Smith had always been interested in purchasing Alabama Sunshine, and he had his chance three years ago when the owners approached him about their plans to retire. He now co-owns the business with his sister. Family members help grow the peppers on their farm and perform planting, picking, and processing at the downtown Fayette store.

Smith said he has also had the opportunity to provide jobs for two deaf friends, Jonathan and Jacqueline Hollis, who also were having trouble finding work.

The products are sold throughout Alabama, Florida, and Georgia and are available at www.alabamasunshine.com.

Smith, who has been featured in local and national news, said he appreciates the opportunity to be a role model for other deaf people.

“I’m very happy to be the co-owner of this business, and I’m proud that I’m deaf,” he said. “Other people can do it too. They don’t have to be afraid. They can do it.”



Alabama Sunshine owner David Smith discusses some of the sauces and products available at his Fayette store with Interpreter Susan Gordon. Smith has grown the company to include a customer base of several states and vendors. Below, Jonathan Hollis, who is deaf, washes peppers before sending them to be ground.





Bill Roberts

Talladega County

It is no surprise when Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services staffers make a difference in the life of a consumer.

However, through their efforts, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Brittney Urquhart and Rehab Engineer Tim Driskell have literally helped plant the seeds for success in the lives of many in Sylacauga.

The process began when consumer Bill Roberts, a former firefighter, fire marshal, and beloved member of the community, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1998.

Through the years, Roberts has battled the illness and continued to contribute to his community in many ways.

One of his most impactful contributions was his role as the city's head gardener at the community gardens at the elementary schools within the city of Sylacauga as well as at the main location at the Sylacauga Alliance for Family Enhancement (SAFE) Center.

Much of the garden's success has stemmed from Roberts' knowledge and supervision. However, as his symptoms progressed, Roberts began to face mobility challenges. Thanks to VRS, this is no longer a problem.

VRS helped him secure a motorized chair that allows him to easily maneuver through the rows, and his VR team is in the process of providing even more help.

"They are providing me with everything I need to get out in the garden," Roberts said. "They have been so cooperative and worked with us so much. That's what they are all about."

Roberts was first referred to VRS for assistance in acquiring a motorized



Sylacauga's Bill Roberts, a former firefighter, was unsure of how he would be able to serve his hometown when he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1998. After learning about the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services and its Vocational Rehabilitation Service program, Roberts is able continue to make a difference as the city's head gardener. Roberts, above, gave VRS Counselor Brittney Urquhart a tour of the gardens during a visit last summer. Below, the gardens feature several different fruits and vegetables that allow people within the city to create fresh meals for their families.



wheelchair. From there, he said the relationship has blossomed as VRS has gone above and beyond to provide the tools, equipment, and devices he needs.

"They are doers," he said. "They get the job done. It has been not only a pleasure, it has been an honor to work

with them."

There was a time when Roberts thought he might not be able to help out with the community gardens, but with the support of his family, friends, and VRS, he said he realized he can still have an impact in his community.





From left, Raven Hardy, Marilyn Long, Sharon Weaver, Glenn Baggett, and Mavis Moore enjoy a cool morning on Moore's front porch. Mavis is able to entertain people the way she always has thanks to help from the State of Alabama Independent Living program and Carpenters for Christ.



Mavis Moore Macon County

Mavis Moore loves spending time on the porch of her country home just outside of Tuskegee. However, not long ago an unstable set of steps left her spending more time inside.

A phone call from her daughter, Terry Moore Harper, to representatives of the State of Alabama Independent Living/Homebound program soon had this issue resolved.

"I got a phone call from her daughter who lived out of state at the time," then-SAIL staffer Sharon Weaver said. "She told me about Mrs. Moore, and how she was concerned about her mom coming in and out of the house. She felt like the steps at her house were not safe and the handrails were loose."

Sharon went out for a home visit, spoke to ADRS rehab engineers, and they soon had a plan in place for a ramp and front porch area.

Sharon discussed the project with Marilyn Long, Carpenters for Christ of Tallassee was contacted, and the project was soon in the works.

Mavis, a 79-year-old cancer survivor, said she could not believe how quickly the men worked.



Sharon Weaver and Mavis Moore share humorous stories about their first meetings and the process of building a new porch and ramp for her Macon County home. Everyone involved in the project formed a strong friendship with Moore.

"It didn't seem like they even took an hour," she joked.

SAIL covered the bill for materials, and Carpenters for Christ leader Glenn Baggett did the rest. Glenn said the landing was built ahead of time to streamline the project so that things moved more efficiently when they were on site.

Mavis is now able to welcome visitors to her porch and entertain as she always has. She said the new porch and ramp have been a blessing to her. Glenn, however, disagrees.

"We're the ones who get a blessing out of this," he said.

When Mavis's daughter Terry saw

pictures of the completed project, she could not contain her emotions in a voice mail to Sharon.

"You and the team you hired are exceptional," she said. "My mother is smiling from ear to ear. She was impressed by the tender love that they came and showed her."

She continued, "We are humbled, and we are so appreciative. You don't know what this means that she gets to sit on her porch and enjoy just having a conversation."

Mavis is now under the care of SAIL's Raven Hardy, and the two have already formed a friendship.





Section Street Pizza was founded by owner Elizabeth Pieczynski with the idea of offering jobs to veterans and people with disabilities. Elizabeth has worked with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services to recruit and hire workers, including Whitney Hemphill and Georgia Davis. Georgia, pictured to the left with Elizabeth, has also been a tremendous asset to the staff. Whitney, right, is known for her sunny disposition.

Section Street Pizza *Baldwin County*

Section Street Pizza owner Elizabeth Pieczynski knows that when given the opportunity, people with disabilities can be top-notch employees.

Pieczynski, who opened her downtown Fairhope restaurant in 2018, operates on the idea of opening positions to veterans and people with disabilities. Through the Mobile Vocational Rehabilitation Service office, two of those positions are currently occupied by Whitney Hemphill and Georgia Davis.

Hemphill, who has been on staff since spring 2019, greets customers, washes dishes, and busses tables.

However, Pieczynski said she brings much more to the table by creating a pleasant work environment.

“She is so sweet,” she said. “She

works very hard.”

Whitney is known for her friendly smile, inspirational signs, and the occasional homemade cookies she brings in for her coworkers.

“She brings a positive energy when she is here,” Pieczynski said. “You can’t be in a bad mood around her.”

Georgia has been on staff from the start and was in the first wave of applicants through her VRS job coach.

She busses tables, washes dishes, and wraps silverware.

Pieczynski said there was initial anxiety for Georgia, but she always worked through the challenges and never gave up.

“I am very proud of her, because she works on some of the busiest nights that we have,” Pieczynski said. “She has adapted really well.”

Pieczynski grew up helping her mother teach swimming lessons to children with special needs and learned at an early age that they could contribute to society if they were offered an opportunity.

Her restaurant has given her a chance to serve as an example to neighboring businesses.

She has received accolades for the opportunities she provides, including being named AL-APSE’s Small Business of the Year, but Pieczynski said the greatest reward is seeing the smiling faces of those she employs.

“I don’t think about it in terms of what I am doing for them, because when I am with them, the way that they make me feel is a blessing to me,” she said. “I don’t think people always understand what they do for me.”



Dothan Tarpaulin Products *Houston County*

Dothan Tarpaulin Products has proven to be a valuable resource for Vocational Rehabilitation Service counselors seeking employment for consumers.

The company, which runs seven days a week and produces more than 100 tarps a day, became a valuable partner after a chance meeting.

Shay Brantley, an employment specialist with the John Conti Center in Dothan who receives referrals from VRS Counselor Jennifer Boykins, said she decided to stop by after leaving another business.

After speaking to Production Supervisor Steven Powell and Cory Powell, Brantley was given applications and asked to contact the company if she had any fits. This did not take long.

Brantley was contacted by Boykins with a referral, a resume was created, the application was filled out, and the wheels were in motion.

The consumer, Javon Hill, received an interview the next day and was on the job a day later. Hill, who earned the Dothan Area Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities Small Business Employee of the Year Award, proved to be such a valuable member of the team that Dothan Tarp began hiring others with disabilities. They have even altered their schedule for an individual who was not able to work a full 40 hours.

On a weekly basis, individuals with disabilities have expressed their gratitude to be employed by Dothan Tarp. Some say they even plan to retire from the company because they are treated so well.

Along with Hill, Dothan Tarpaulin Products was recognized as the Small Business Employer of the Year. Representatives of the company have told Brantley and Boykins that the partnership has been extremely beneficial to their production.

“Steven and Corey Powell have stated on several occasions that our individuals are some of their best workers,” she said. “Our individuals are more than grateful that Dothan Tarp gave them a chance.”



Javon Hill, above, was honored as this year's Dothan Area Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities Small Business Employee of the Year for his work at Dothan Tarpaulin Products. Hill opened the door for the company to employ many more individuals with disabilities. Below, the company's founders and owners, Michael and John Godwin, have continued to provide opportunities for people with disabilities.





alabama's early intervention system

Early childhood development is vital to the growth and success for all children, but those early years are especially crucial for a child with a disability or developmental delay.

Created to be a critical first step to ensuring that all children enter school equipped to learn, Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS) is instrumental in ensuring a lifetime of success for children with disabilities and developmental delays.

Early Intervention works collaboratively with families, community organizations, and public and private service providers to enrich a child's development through its

community-based, family-centered system of support and evidence-based practices. EI also works alongside the family coaching them to enhance their child's development and learning.

Studies indicate that 85 percent of a child's brain develops in the first three years of life, and investing in early childhood programs increases the effectiveness of public schools, develops more-educated workers, and reduces crime.

Moreover, that investment is also a good one, with studies showing that each dollar spent on early intervention saves \$7 in future costs.

With 46 programs in local

communities across Alabama, Early Intervention deliver evidence-based services and support to infants and toddlers and their families in their home and community.

Because of Early Intervention, youngsters with disabilities are able to participate in an array of activities among their peers who do not have disabilities.

To be eligible for Early Intervention services, a child must be younger than 3 years old and have a delay in hearing, vision, walking, talking, or learning or have a diagnosed condition that has a high probability of resulting in a delay.

AEIS by the numbers

Source of Revenue

State: \$9,496,121.00 (40 percent)

Other: \$7,979,335.73 (34 percent)

Federal: \$6,226,016.70 (26 percent)

Use of Revenue

Services: \$22,301,107.79 (94 percent)

Administration: \$1,400,365.64 (6 percent)

AEIS 2019 highlights

In FY19, Alabama's Early Intervention System:

- received the highest rating of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) with AEIS and developed and submitted an Annual Performance Report (APR) based on indicators and goals outlined in Alabama's State Performance Plan per the U.S. Department of Education/Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requirements.

- continued to implement improvement strategies impacting social/emotional development, implementing evidence-based practices, and building expanded partnerships and submitted Phase V of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) to OSEP.
- worked to support and enhance healthy attachments between children birth to age 5 and the adults who care for them through promotion, prevention, and intervention supports within Alabama's early childhood systems as a founding partner of the Alabama Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (known as First 5 Alabama).

- developed and printed Pathways for Families, a new resource guide in collaboration with families of infants and toddlers who are deaf and hard of hearing and partners who deliver specialized services. Also, continued to forge new partnerships around the state to meet the growing needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing children, worked to broaden the knowledge and skills of staff, and streamlined the referral process to improve access to specialized individualized services.

- established an Early Childhood Autism Work Group to engage key stakeholders across the state to review the most-current literature on identifying early red flags, adopting evidence-based strategies, and developing a training program for professionals who work with young children with autism (birth through 2 years of age).

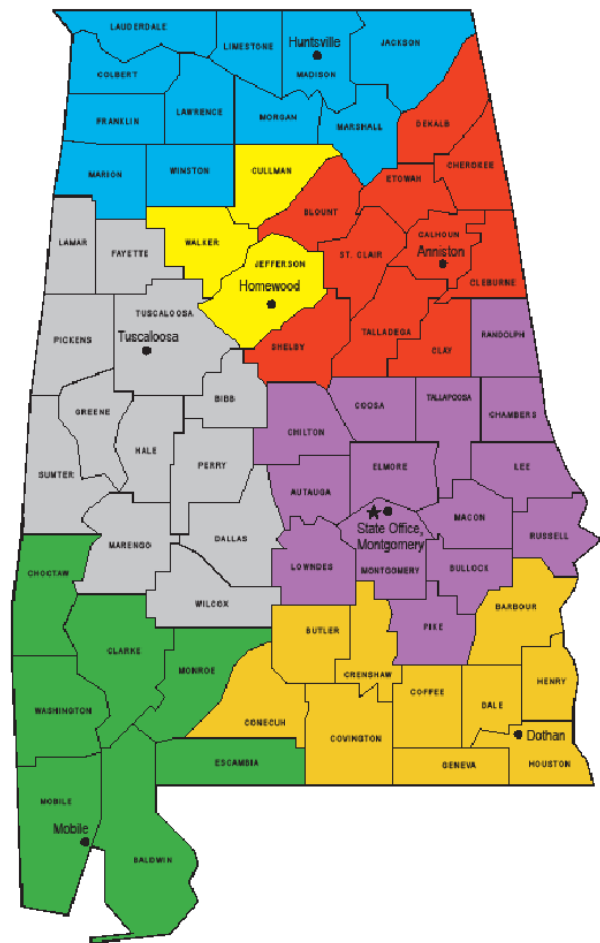
- served as a member of a cross-system team through Project Hope, which is designed to promote optimal health and well-being for young children, prevent and mitigate early childhood adversities, and improve adverse social settings to reduce radical ethnic, geographic, and economic inequities.

- established several new EI programs to serve infants and toddlers with developmental delays and their families: The

Wooley Institute for Spoken Language and Education, Watch Me Grow, and Village EI in the Birmingham district; EI at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.

- helped to establish the first Hands and Voices chapter in Alabama to support families of children who are deaf and connect them to needed specialized resources and services. Worked in coordination with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind to support and serve babies who are deaf or have a hearing loss who have been identified during the newborn screening process.

EI OFFICE LOCATIONS





children's rehabilitation service

For many parents of children and teens with special health care needs, Children's Rehabilitation Service is a cherished resource and proven lifeline.

Caring doctors, nurses, social workers, therapists, audiologists, and nutritionists partner with clients and their families to provide essential care, information, and support for each child to succeed in school, at home, and in the community.

Throughout Alabama, CRS collaborates with school systems to provide expertise and consultation for assessment, evaluation, therapy services, and assistive communication devices, helping children with special health care needs to participate more fully in school.

Fourteen community-based offices around the state offer a team approach to bring together health care specialists

from many fields providing services tailored to each family's needs.

Services include:

- **Information and referral:** links families to community resources and services
- **Care coordination:** assists the child and family in identifying, accessing, and using community resources to effectively meet their individual needs
- **Clinical evaluation:** identifies the unique needs of a child with feeding problems, mobility and/or communication challenges, or special diagnostic needs
- **Clinical medical:** operates specialty clinics throughout the state
- **Patient/family education:** provides information necessary to carry out treatment regimens and to make

informed choices about services

- **Parent Connection:** provides a network of family support
- **Youth Connection:** facilitates youth involvement with policy development and decision-making.

Services are available to any Alabama resident who has special health care needs and is younger than 21; individuals with hemophilia are eligible for services into adulthood.

Treatment options vary, ranging from clinical interventions and medication to specialized equipment and therapy services to care coordination and referral to community resources, as needed.

Families can receive services regardless of their income. Financial participation is on a sliding scale, based on each family's needs and resources.

CRS by the numbers

Source of Revenue

Other: \$13,915,602.27 (45 percent)

State: \$13,375,346.00 (44 percent)

Federal: \$3,447,738.26 (11 percent)

Use of Revenue

Services: \$26,590,758.92 (94 percent)

Administration: \$4,147,927.61 (6 percent)

CRS

In FY19, CRS:

- served 11,772 children with special health care needs, including 451 with no insurance through the clinic program.
- had a total of 154,784 clinic encounters and provided 2,066 information and referrals.
- expedited Medicaid NET travel reimbursements for an estimated total of \$157,785.
- partnered with nine major universities in Alabama to provide observation and or/practicum experiences for students interested in nutrition, physical therapy, audiology, speechlanguage pathology, social work, and other health-related or maternal and child health professions/careers.
- partnered with Family Voices of Alabama and the Family to Family Health Information Center to host the 2019 Partners in Care Summit, a two-day summit providing youth and family leadership development.
- completed the second year of the Collaborative for Improvement and Innovation Network (CoIIN) to Advance Care for Children with Medical Complexity (CMC), a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Health Resources and Services Administration/Maternal and Child Health Bureau/ Division of Services for Children with Special Health Care Needs and managed by Boston University.

In FY19, the CoIIN:

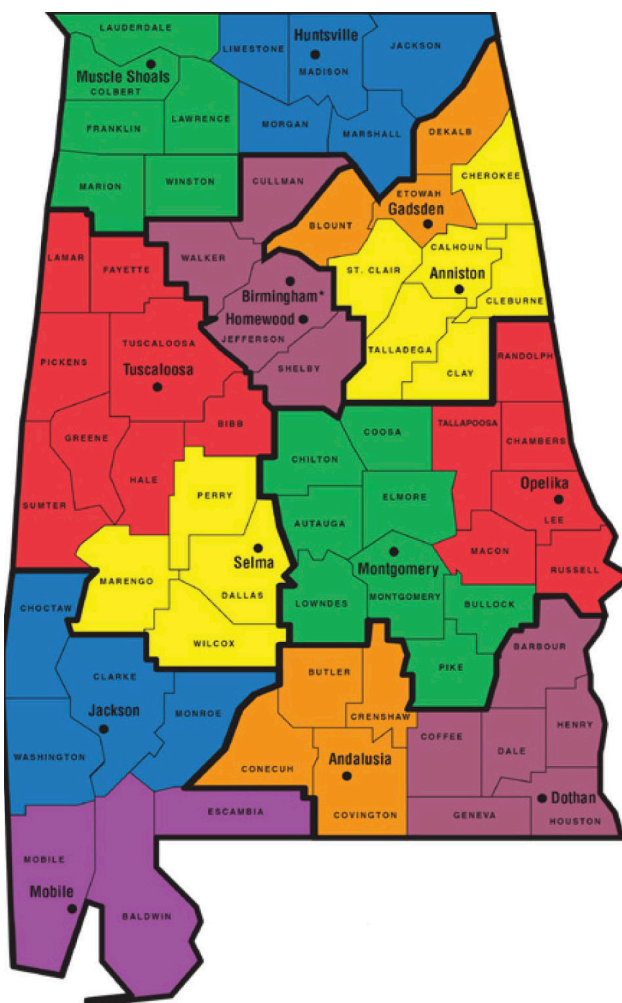
- hired a dedicated care coordinator to work between the Pediatric Complex Care Clinic at the University of South Alabama and the local CRS office.
- enrolled 230 eligible families into the project cohort – 92% of the target enrollment goal.
- completed 36 of the 40 quality measure surveys for the current evaluation cycle.
- continued work on developing a Shared Plan of Care (SPOC) to be used by families enrolled in the CoIIN project.

- had a CRS family leader participate in the CoIIN project work group to develop the questions and script for the CoIIN family focus group.

In FY 19, the Hemophilia Program:

- served 376 people with bleeding disorders.
- served participants through 38 comprehensive, multidisciplinary care clinics.
- held 24 clinics through Birmingham and two satellite clinics in Montgomery.

CRS OFFICE LOCATIONS





vocational rehabilitation service

Each year, Vocational Rehabilitation Service's general and blind/deaf programs offer specialized employment- and education-related assistance to tens of thousands of teens and adults with disabilities. Whether the person is a young adult going to school to prepare for his or

her first job or an older adult trying to remain employed, VRS can help. Partnerships are the key to VRS' success and the successes of those it serves. To assure consumers achieve in the classroom, VRS collaborates with high schools, vocational schools, junior colleges, and universities statewide

to assist students with disabilities in receiving appropriate educational opportunities. Through 21 strategically located offices, VRS works closely with Alabama employers, community rehabilitation programs, workforce partners, and other state agencies to match people with jobs.

VR by the numbers

Source of Revenue

**Federal: \$70,249,100.29
(81 percent)**

State: \$13,847,572.00 (16 percent)
Other: \$2,493,656.79 (3 percent)

Use of Revenue

Client Services: \$43,113,526.34 (50 percent)

Counseling and placement:
\$32,993,815.69 (38 percent)
Administration: \$10,482,987.05 (12 percent)

VRS 2019 highlights

GENERAL AND BLIND/DEAF SERVICES

In FY19, VRS-general services:

- assisted 4,228 individuals with disabilities in achieving their goal of employment, with an average annual wage of \$21,305, an increase from \$20,272 in FY18.
- continued to produce outstanding outcomes for competitive integrated employment through Project SEARCH. More than 70 percent of students and youth participating in this nationally recognized program exit into successful employment.
- remained committed to improving services for individuals with the most-significant disabilities and supporting the community rehabilitation programs (CRP) providing those services. Of the individuals who completed assessments for supported employment, 68 percent obtained employment and 77 percent of those were closed rehabilitated.
- sponsored the Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) on the campus of Troy University, with 32 high school juniors and seniors attending. The intensive, five-day career leadership training program for students with disabilities included activities focusing on career planning, leadership development, technology resources, and information on disability history.
- purchased pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS) for 7,932 students with disabilities. These services included job exploration counseling, work-based learning, counseling on opportunities for post-secondary training, workplace readiness training, and self-advocacy.



Students who completed the Project SEARCH program in 2019 were very emotional after proving to themselves and others that they could be productive members of the workforce.

VR OFFICE LOCATIONS





Year two of the College Quest program at Auburn University helped students with low vision acquire independent living skills.

VRS-Blind and Deaf Services

VRS-Blind and Deaf Services provides assistance to Alabamians statewide through its Blind and Low-Vision Services, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services, and the OASIS (Older Alabamians System of Information and Services) programs.

Services are delivered through a team of specialized professionals, partnerships with consumer organizations, and state and private organizations that serve individuals who are blind, deaf, or deaf-blind. In FY19, VRS-Blind and Deaf Services:

- held the first ACT Test Preparation Camp for blind and low-vision students, in partnership with Gentry Blind Services. Ten students participated in the one-week camp.
- in partnership with the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) and the Alabama Industrial Development and Training (AIDT),

held the second College Quest program for blind and low-vision students at Auburn University.

Eighteen students completed the program, which focused on vocational rehabilitation, independent Living, orientation and mobility, student advisement, assistive technology, and team-building. Participants completed a college class and received two hours of credit from Auburn University.

- held three transition camps for 67 students who are deaf or hard of hearing. College Prep camps were held at Jacksonville State University and Troy University, with a total of 31 student participating. An ACT camp at Auburn University had 36 students.
- sponsored summer work experience programs, with 26 blind or low-vision high school students and 27 deaf- and hard-of-hearing students participating statewide.
- in collaboration with AIDB regional centers, Blind Services held four statewide transition events for students grades 8-12, parents, and teachers for

students with vision loss. These events provided students and their parents with valuable information related to life after high school. The theme for the event was “STEM-finity Wars.” A record-number 75 students attended the events.

OASIS program

Older Alabamians System of Information and Services (OASIS) is a federally funded program designed to assist individuals age 55 and older who are blind or visually impaired in living more independently in their homes and communities.

Statewide, OASIS offers individualized independent living skills instruction to older Alabamians from vision rehabilitation therapists and orientation and mobility specialists. OASIS staff also link consumers to other community resources such as aging programs and local low-vision peer support groups.

In FY 19, the vision rehabilitation therapists and orientation and mobility specialists participated in 816 community activities or events to increase awareness of the program, reaching an estimated 7,191 people. The program also developed new fact sheets, display boards, and other outreach materials used to educate and promote the program at health fairs and other community events throughout the state.

5,039

The OASIS program provided 5,031 hours of vision rehabilitation therapy services and 422 hours of orientation and mobility services to include instruction on aids and devices valued at \$180,554.



ADRS Business Enterprise Program Director Lori Brady presents David Talley with a Teamwork Certificate at Fort McClellan. She said he was selected by his BEP peers because of his outstanding performance and dedication to the program.



ADRS currently has two clients that will be attending the pilot program training. One client is from Dothan, while the other client is from the Fort Payne area.

2,678

ADRS Lakeshore served 2,678 distinct consumers in the last fiscal year.

Business Enterprise Program

The Alabama Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides qualified blind individuals with job training and employment opportunities that offer independence through self-employment.

The program was awarded the dining hall contracts for the Center for Domestic Preparedness at Fort McClellan and the U.S. Coast Guard Aviation Training Center in Mobile. Recently, the Business Enterprise Program assumed the cafeteria operations at the Social Security Administration building in Birmingham, which transformed the business operations at this location.

400

The Business Enterprise Program has approximately 90 vendors, and they employ more than 400 Alabamians.

ADRS Lakeshore

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services operates the Lakeshore program located in Birmingham. This office serves individuals with disabilities statewide through such programs as vocational evaluation, career exploration, college preparation, assistive technology, and adaptive driving.

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitations Services at Lakeshore's adaptive driving program has partnered with Wallace State Community College in Hanceville for the first of its kind spinal cord injury CDL pilot program. This program will take two ADRS paraplegic clients through the training process and certification testing for CDL licensure with adaptive driving modifications

Following the completion of this training, we will be able to further explore the feasibility of full-time employment in this field with the groundwork that has already been established with industry partnerships within the trucking industry.

The course will include tuition, a Department of Transportation physical, the CDL written test, CDL learner's permit, CDL driver's license, housing, CDL written test, and the CDL skills test.

Community Rehabilitation Programs

Located throughout the state, the Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) network of private organizations has been providing services to ADRS consumers for more than 70 years.

Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) assisted approximately 1,340 Alabamians with disabilities in obtaining employment. Additionally, they provided Pre-employment Transition Services for over 6,000 Alabama high school students with disabilities, better preparing these students to eventually obtain and maintain competitive integrated employment.

6,000

Community Rehabilitation Programs provided pre-employment transition services for over 6,000 Alabama high school students with disabilities.





The Transition Services program enjoyed another successful year in 2019. The 593 ADRS staff members and school personnel involved with the program developed 350 action plans for Pre-ETS.

Transition Services

Through the Transition Services program, ADRS provides services to enable Alabama's students and youth with disabilities to be independent, productive, contributing members of their communities.

In FY 19, ADRS in collaboration with the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute, provided Transition Unlimited (TU) to high school systems across the state. Through TU, 593 ADRS staff and school personnel collaboratively developed 350 action plans identifying Pre-ETS services students could benefit from based on individual needs.

ADRS spent more than \$10 million on purchased, direct, and contract services for Pre-ETS for students with disabilities in Alabama. Pre-ETS services include job exploration, counseling, work-based learning, counseling on opportunities for post-secondary education, workplace readiness, and instruction in

self-advocacy.

These services include Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and Transition Services. Pre-ETS are provided to students with disabilities age 16 (or ninth grade) to 21 who are receiving services under an IEP or are eligible for a 504 plan. These students can be eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. Transition Services are provided to youth with disabilities age 14 to 24 who are not participating in an educational program and have been determined eligible for VR services.

1,861

In FY 19, 1,861 students and youth were closed as employed by ADRS.

Business Relations

The VRS Business Relations Program, known as READI-Net, is a vital workforce partner providing disability and employment-related services to Alabama's businesses, governmental entities, and federal agencies.

In FY 19, READI-Net placed an emphasis on assisting Alabama's business and industry in hiring disabled veterans. Highlights of READI-Net's work with Alabama's wounded warriors included the coordination and hosting of the Central Alabama Veteran's Employment Council's Veteran Employment Summit.

This two-and-a-half day event consisted of an employment readiness workshop, career fair, and hiring event for disabled veterans. As a result, 95 percent of the veteran attendees secured employment.

The READI-Net program expanded the Veteran's Employment Council into the northern part of the state in preparation for multiple Veteran Employment Summits in years to come. READI-Net also worked closely with several industries to build pipelines of qualified veterans.

95%

Ninety five percent of the veterans who attended the employment readiness workshop career fair and hiring event secured employment.



Supported Employment

Supported Employment (SE) assists VR consumers who have more significant support needs – including the need for extended support services – in obtaining and retaining competitive integrated employment.

Supported Employment continues to be a priority in Alabama and with VRS is continually expanding existing programs and creating new programs and initiatives to better

Alabama Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

The Alabama Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities promotes greater independence for people with disabilities and educates the public about the benefits of hiring workers with disabilities.

Fourteen local committees across the state actively provide programming, events, and public awareness activities which highlight employers and individuals with disabilities.

Each October, the local committees sponsor awards events to recognize

serve individuals with most significant disabilities. There are 16 Project SEARCH sites in our state. Twelve of these sites are for secondary students in partnership with local school systems, other state agencies, local employers, and community rehabilitation programs. Four PS programs are collaborations between ADRS, post-secondary education, local workforce boards, and the one-stop career centers. These programs were created to serve out-of-school youth with disabilities. More than 70 percent of participants in these programs achieve competitive integrated employment.

674

In FY 19, 674 individuals were closed working more than 23 hours at \$8.63 per hour.

employers employees, educators, partnerships, advocates, and students and youth with disabilities.

This year’s events, held during National Disability Employment Awareness Month, honored 160 winners in 14 local awards events.

In FY 19, local Governor’s Committees have actively promoted the hiring and advancement of individuals with disabilities through creative events.

The Covington-area committee sponsored an Employment and Training Conference for ninth- through 12th-grade students with disabilities from 11 schools in a three-county area. The Montgomery- area committee collaborated with local veteran groups to host a Veterans Employment Expo and supported the local Disability Expo.

TBI program

ADRS is the state’s lead agency in traumatic brain injury (TBI) and a source of education and resources for survivors, professionals, and organizations.

Services include community reintegration, housing, respite care, independent living, resource coordination, attendant care, medical supplies, assistive equipment, cognitive stimulation, recreation, and employment.

ADRS collaborates with the Alabama Head Injury Foundation, the Alabama Department of Public Health, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and other agencies, consumers, and family members to oversee and monitor the Alabama State TBI Plan.

In FY 19, Alabama was awarded a two-year Traumatic Brain Injury grant to increase the availability and capacity of comprehensive behavioral health services, state service systems, and supports that will foster optimal outcomes for children and adults with TBI and co-occurring mental health, addiction, and opioid-use disorders. ADRS will strengthen the state mental health system partnership and services by reviewing current practices, identifying TBI and evidence-based training, screening, and treatment interventions

Individuals and caregivers will be educated on empowerment and advocacy protocols in order to promote optimal services and supports.

ADRS is Alabama’s designated lead agency for traumatic brain injury (TBI) and a source of education and supports for survivors, family members, and service providers

Community reintegration, counseling, cognitive remediation, training, and trauma registry information and referral linkage and transition to employment are provided through the TBI program.

2,400

In Fiscal Year 19, 2,400 individuals were served through the ADRS TBI program.



state of alabama independent living (homebound)

Independence. Self-sufficiency. No two words better summarize the goal of the State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL)/Homebound program. With seven community-based offices located throughout Alabama to serve residents in every county, SAIL assists individuals with the most-significant disabilities in maintaining and regaining as much independence as possible while remaining in their homes and communities.

SAIL's team of registered nurses, rehabilitation counselors, and independent living specialists provides consumers and their families with individualized services and training about the unique problems and needs presented by their disability. Through specialized in-home education, counseling, attendant care, training, and medical services, consumers are taught about activities of daily living, health, safety, nutrition, and assistive technology.

SAIL is comprised of four specialized

programs: The SAIL/VRS Hybrid program allows individuals with the most-significant disabilities to consider and pursue educational training and employment options. Participants in this program receive Waiver or Homebound services and vocational rehabilitation services through one counselor.

Homebound Services provides a wide range of education and home-based services to assist people with the most-significant disabilities in leading more independent lives. To be eligible for this program, a person must:

- be an Alabama resident,
- be at least 16 years old,
- have a medical diagnosis of traumatic brain injury or quadriplegia,
- be dependent on others for assistance with activities of daily living,
- demonstrate a financial need.

Through the special SAIL Medicaid Waiver, the program is able to maximize its resources and access additional

programs and services for the individuals served by providing services in the participant's home, leading to reductions in institutional placements. To be eligible for services through the waiver, a person must:

- be at least 18 years old,
- be medically and financially eligible for a nursing home,
- have experienced the onset of the disability before age 60,
- have a neurological disability as a result of reasons other than aging.

The Community Supports program enhances and promotes independence in the home, community, and workplace. To be eligible, a person must:

- have a severe disability that limits his or her ability to live independently in his or her community,
- provide evidence that by receiving an CS service, his or her potential to participate full in the community will improve.

SAIL by the numbers

Source of Revenue

Other: \$8938664.80 (58 percent)

State: \$6,074,672.00 (40 percent)

Federal: \$338,717.00 (2 percent)

Use of Revenue

Services: \$14,139,715.01 (92 percent)

Administration: \$1,212,338.79 (8 percent)

SAIL (HOMEBOUND) 2019 highlights

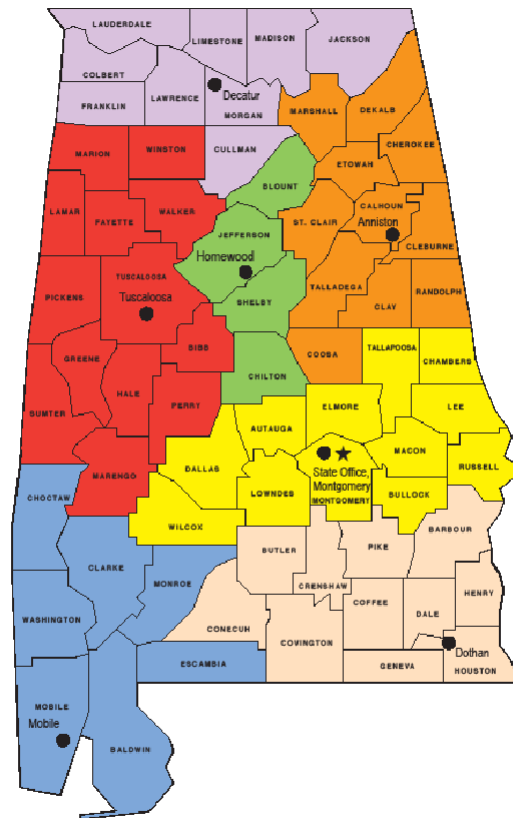


A partnership between the State of Alabama Independent Living/Homebound program and Carpenters for Christ has helped new home modification projects get off the ground in 2019.

In FY19, SAIL:

- assisted 1,677 Alabamians with the most-significant disabilities in remaining in their homes and communities.
- through the efforts of SAIL direct service staff, obtained \$138,262.58 in donated goods and services, which leveraged additional services for individuals with significant disabilities.
- continued outreach to community agencies and direct service providers to ensure that Alabamians in need of services are aware of how to access them and agencies can effectively collaborate with SAIL to provide comprehensive supports.
- grew SAIL's new home modification program throughout the state to include two workshops to build modular ramps and a large network of skilled volunteers to provide free and low-cost ramps and other home modifications to individuals with accessibility needs.

SAIL OFFICE LOCATIONS





The ribbon is cut on a new rehab engineering workshop in Anniston.

Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology

The Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology (REAT) Program provides state-of-the-art engineering and technology services to consumers across the continuum of ADRS divisions to facilitate the dignity and independence of individuals with disabilities in the community, at home, at school, and at work.

The statewide team of rehabilitation engineers, technology specialists, and technology assistants works with consumers to find or develop assistive devices that will reduce or remove barriers presented by disabilities to improve their quality of life

Team members systematically apply

engineering methodology and scientific principles to evaluate and provide technological solutions in areas such as mobility, communications, architectural access, vision, hearing, and cognition in activities associated with employment, education, independent living, and community integration.

Team members evaluate the functional abilities of people with disabilities, the tasks they perform, and the environments in which they live and work to recommend off-the-shelf, modified, or customized technology solutions to increase their independence. Training and support services are also provided to ensure that recommended devices are effective in reducing and minimizing barriers presented by disability.

In FY 19, the RE&AT program, in partnership with Children's Rehabilitation, found space and equipped

a workshop in Huntsville. Every office in the state with a rehabilitation engineer now has a workshop with the tools necessary to fabricate or modify assistive devices for children and adults with disabilities. Additionally, 3D printers were added to Mobile, Montgomery, and Huntsville to allow local staff to print assistive devices from plastic.

1,226

The Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Program served a total of 1,226 consumers including 305 CRS consumers, 705 VRS consumers, and 244 SAIL consumers.

STAR

STAR is Alabama's Assistive Technology Act program. Through its Reutilization, Training, and Alternative Finance programs and public awareness activities, STAR assists Alabamians with disabilities by improving access to and acquisition of assistive technology (AT) that enables them to live more productive and independent lives.

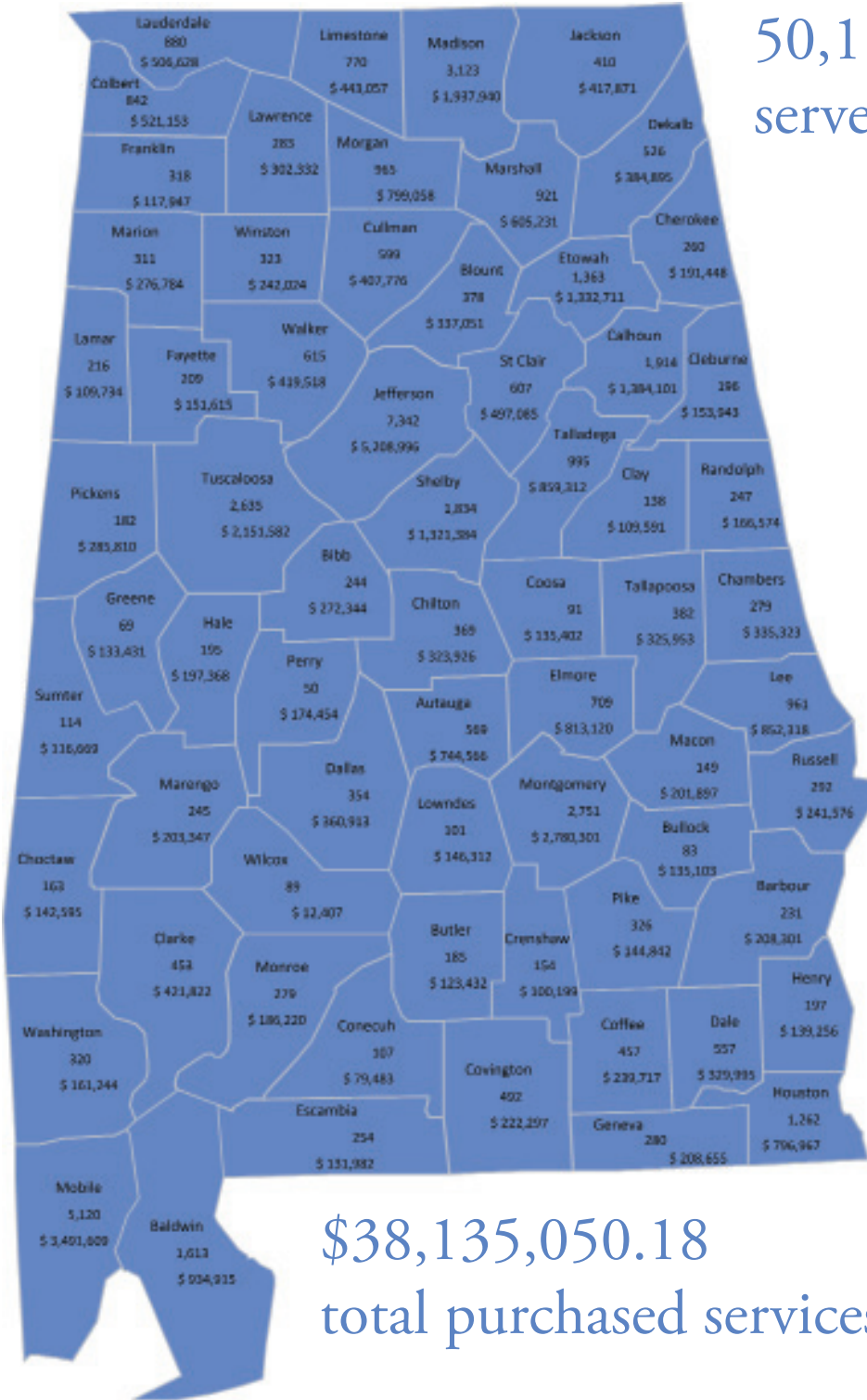
Through its Reutilization Program, STAR saved Alabamians with disabilities \$1,167,882.58. STAR received 69 referrals from ADRS, which saved the program \$41,804.98. Additionally, the program received 4,078 donated devices, 4,322 requests, and redistributed 3,602 devices to Alabamians with disabilities. The Alternative Finance Program approved twelve loans totaling \$244,812.16

\$1.2 M

The STAR program saved Alabamians with disabilities \$1,167,882.58 through its Reutilization Program.

ADRS people served, purchased services

50,111
served



\$38,135,050.18
total purchased services



community rehabilitation program locations

ALABASTER

Independent Advantage Placement Agency

ANNISTON

Opportunity Center-Easter Seals

BIRMINGHAM

ADRS-Lakeshore
Easter Seals of the Birmingham Area
Glennwood
Goodwill Industries of Alabama
Independent Advantage
The Is Able Center
Triumph Services
United Ability
Workshops Inc.

DECATUR

Erica Allen Employment Services (EASE)
Phoenix Rehabilitation Foundation

DOTHAN

Wiregrass Rehabilitation Center

GADSDEN

Darden Rehabilitation Foundation

HUNTSVILLE

Phoenix Rehabilitation Foundation
ARC of Madison County
Glennwood

JACKSON

Clarke County ARC

KELLYTON

Central Alabama Reach Out Center

MOBILE

Goodwill Easter Seals of the Gulf Coast
Howell Employment Services
United Cerebral Palsy of Mobile

MONTGOMERY

Easter Seals Central Alabama
Goodwill Industries of Central Alabama
Triumph

MUSCLE SHOALS

Northwest Easter Seals

OPELIKA

Achievement Center-Easter Seals
Jackie Johnson Employment Services

PELHAM

Shelby County ARC

SELMA

West Central Alabama Easter Seals

TUSCALOOSA

Easter Seals West Alabama

early intervention program locations

ANNISTON

East Central Alabama United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) Center Inc.

BIRMINGHAM

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, regional office
ARC of Central Alabama
Children R Us
Children's of Alabama Early Intervention Program
United Ability of Greater Birmingham – Hand in Hand
Village Early Intervention
Watch Me Grow
WISE - Wooley Institute for Spoken-Language Education

CULLMAN

Cullman County Center for Developmentally Disabled Inc. (Todd's Club)

DECATUR

Center for the Developmentally Disabled (CDD)
North Central Alabama Mental Retardation Authority

DOTHAN

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, regional office
Dothan-Houston County Mental Retardation Board Inc. (Vaughn Blumberg Center)

FLORENCE

SCOPE 310

GADSDEN

United Ability of Greater Birmingham – Hand in Hand

GUNTERSVILLE

Marshall/Jackson Mental Retardation Authority

HUNTSVILLE

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, regional office
ARC of Madison County
UCP of Huntsville and Tennessee Valley

JASPER

ARC of Walker County

MOBILE

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, regional office

Goodwill Easter Seals of the Gulf Coast
Gulf Coast Therapy Early Intervention
UCP of Mobile (Project Special Delivery)

MONTGOMERY

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, Montgomery and Auburn offices
Children's Center of Montgomery Inc. (PPEI)
Project Wiggles and Giggles
UCP of Mobile (Horizon)

OZARK

Vivian B. Adams Early Intervention

PELHAM

Shelby County ARC/Kids First

PRATTVILLE

ARC of Autauga/Western Elmore County (EIEIO)

ROBERTSDALE

Cindy Haber Center, Inc.
UCP of Mobile (Project Sunrise)

SCOTTSBORO

Marshall/Jackson Mental

Retardation Authority
Twin Acres Early Intervention

SELMA

Cahaba Center Early Intervention

TALLADEGA

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, regional office

TUSCALOOSA

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, regional office
Community Service Programs of West Alabama Inc.
Early Intervention at the University of Alabama

TUSCUMBIA

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, regional office
UCP of Northwest Alabama

VALLEY

Chattahoochee Valley ARC/Valley Haven Early Intervention

WINFIELD

Tri County Early Intervention



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to the hard-working ADRS staff who generously contributed their time, effort, expertise, and insights to this publication:

LYNN BATES
JENNIFER BOYKINS
SANDRA BUMGARDNER
RICK COUCH
CHANTEL CRUM
MARLA DOOLEY
PAUL DUNBAR
KRISTIE GRAMMER
ANGIE GULLEDGE
SUSAN GORDON
TASHA HACKETT
RAVEN HARDY
EMMA HEREFORD
MARILYN LONG
KATHLEEN McGEHEE
TAMMY MEYER
CONSTANCE PHILLIPS
JOEY RICHEY
JACYNDA SHEPARD
ANITA TURNER
BRITTNEY URQUHART
SHARON WEAVER
RANDY WHITT
STEPHANIE WILKERSON



The services described in this report are funded in part with federal funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Supported Employment Services, and the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) programs. For purposes of the VR program, the federal VR grant paid 78.7 percent of the total costs of the program. In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2019, the VR agency received \$64,256,695 in federal VR funds. Funds appropriated by the state paid 21.3 percent of the total costs (\$17,390,948) under the VR program. For purposes of the Supported Employment program, federal funds paid 95 percent of the total costs. In FFY 2019, the VR agency received \$300,000 in federal Supported Employment funds. Funds appropriated by the state paid 5 percent (\$16,667) of the total costs incurred under the program. For purposes of the OIB program, federal funds paid 90 percent of the total costs incurred under the program. In FFY 2018, the agency received \$479,726 in federal grant funds for this program. Funds appropriated by the state paid 10 percent (\$53,303) of the total costs incurred under the OIB program.

The services described in this report are funded in part with federal funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Infant and Toddler (Part C) program. The federal Part C grant paid 34.3 percent of the total costs incurred by the program. In federal fiscal year 2019, the total amount of Part C funds was \$6,348,653. Funds appropriated by the state or another non-federal allowable source paid 65.7 percent of the total costs (\$12,170,836) under the EI program.

The services described in this brochure are funded in whole with federal funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Assistive Technology Act Section 4 – State Grants for Assistive Technology program. The federal grant paid 100 percent of the total costs incurred by the program. In federal fiscal year 2019, the STAR program received \$477,105 in federal funds.



In the provision of services and in employment practices, the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, creed, national origin, religion, age, or disability. This material is available in alternate format upon request.

