

Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services  
560 S. Lawrence Street  
Montgomery, Alabama

Thursday, March 2, 2023  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 Noon

AGENDA

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Call to Order	Charles Wilkinson, Chair
Prayer	
Verification of Quorum	Karen Freeman
Verification of Open Meeting Act Notice	Charles Wilkinson
Approval of Agenda	Charles Wilkinson
Approval of Minutes for the December 1, 2022 meeting	Charles Wilkinson

**New Business:**

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services Presentation: Internal Audit Report	Frank Snyder, Internal Audit Manager
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Alabama Ethics Commission 2022 Statement of Economic Interests <a href="http://www.ethics.alabama.gov">www.ethics.alabama.gov</a>	Charles Wilkinson Ashley Hamlett, General Counsel
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Division Updates	Executive Leadership Team
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Commissioner's Comments and Legislative Update	Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Commissioner
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**Announcements:**

Charles Wilkinson

Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services meeting dates for **2023:**

- **Thursday, June 22, 2023 – 10:00 a.m.**, Off-site Location: TBD
- **Thursday, Sept. 14, 2023 – 10:00 a.m.**, Montgomery/State Office
- **Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023 – 10:00 a.m.**, Montgomery/State Office

Board Business/Discussion	Charles Wilkinson
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Adjourn	Charles Wilkinson
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## ***Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services***

*Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services*

*560 South Lawrence Street*

*Montgomery, Alabama*

*Minutes*

*Thursday, March 2, 2023*

### **Call to Order:**

Mr. Charles Wilkinson, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

### **Prayer:**

Dr. Graham Sisson, Jr., Executive Director of the Alabama Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD), opened the board meeting with prayer.

### **Verification of Quorum:**

**Board members present (in-person):** Mr. Charles Wilkinson, Board Chair; Mr. Kevin Kidd, Board Vice-Chair; Ms. Kimberlin Love; and Mr. Eddie Williams. A quorum was declared.

**Board members absent:** Ms. Michelle Glaze and Mr. Mitch Strickland

**Guests:** Mr. Dave White, Governor's Office, Senior Policy Advisor

**Interpreting Services:** Mr. Josh Brewer, ADRS, Coordinator of Interpreting Services

**Conference Call Participants:** Dr. Graham Sisson, Jr., and Ms. Susan Sellers, United Ability-Birmingham, Chief Executive Officer.

### **Verification of the Open Meetings Act Notice:**

Pursuant to the proclamation dated March 3, 2022, the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services' board meeting was conducted in-person and open to the public. The Open Meetings Act allows for electronic participation except to establish a quorum. The Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services requires four members to attend in-person to establish a quorum, but other members may participate via conference call.

Mrs. Karen Freeman verified that the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services meeting for March 2, 2023, was posted on the Alabama Secretary of State's website on January 23, 2023, at 1:28 p.m.

The meeting announcement and registration information were posted on the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services' public website on Monday, February 6, 2023 and made available at the following link: <https://rehab.alabama.gov/about/meet-our-board> with a registration deadline of Monday, February 27, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. CDST. Meeting registration was not necessary for in-person participants, but registration was required for those preferring to participate via conference call. A conference call line was established for board members and the public. Upon registration for the conference call, participants received an email with instructions and the telephone number to call.



## **Approval of Agenda:**

The board meeting agenda was mailed prior to the meeting. Mr. Wilkinson asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Wilkinson stated there were no changes and/or additions to the agenda and it was approved by unanimous consent.

## **Approval of Minutes for December 1, 2022 Meeting:**

The board meeting minutes were mailed prior to the meeting. Mr. Wilkinson stated that if there were no corrections, the minutes would stand approved as presented. The board meeting minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

## **New Business:**

### **Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, Chair:**

Mr. Wilkinson, Chair, expressed his appreciation to Mr. Eddie Williams, former Chair of the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services. Mr. Wilkinson indicated he would rise to the challenge and that it would be his honor serving as Chair. Mr. Williams expressed his genuine appreciation in serving the past 4 years as the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services Board Chair. He stated it has been his pleasure to be a part of the mission of the Department that works so hard to improve the lives of people with disabilities in Alabama.

### **Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Presentation: Internal Audit Section**

Mr. Frank Snyder, Internal Audit Manager; Mr. Matthew Watson, Staff Accountant; and Ms. Lisa Hill, Accountant, presented an in-depth overview of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), Internal Audit Section. The Internal Audit Section was created as an independent, objective, assurance and consulting function designed to add value and improve the Department's operations. The Internal Audit Section was developed from a study completed in 2013 by Auburn University Montgomery, Center for Government. The study recommended that the section conform to the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. The Internal Audit Section assists ADRS Management in achieving its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluating internal controls, organizational risks, and corporate governance. The authority comes from the Audit Section Charter, signed by the ADRS Commissioner and the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, Chairman, which outlines the purpose, scope, and responsibility of the section.

### **Alabama Ethics Commission, Statement of Economic Interests**

Mrs. Ashley Hamlett, General Counsel, reported the Statement of Economic Interests should be completed and filed with the Alabama Ethics Commission no later than April 30, 2023, for calendar year 2022. The Statement of Economic Interests form may be completed by visiting <http://www.ethics.alabama.gov>. Specific instructions for completing the form are available on the website, if needed.

## **Division Updates:**

Mrs. Tracy Bird, Division Director, **Human Resource Development**, introduced and welcomed Ms. Jessica Dollarson, Personnel Coordinator. Ms. Dollarson recently transferred to the Alabama



Department of Rehabilitation (ADRS) from the Alabama Department of Senior Services on February 1, 2023.

Mrs. Cathy Caldwell, Assistant Commissioner, **Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS)**, introduced and welcomed Ms. Vonda Reeves as State Parent Consultant. Ms. Reeves has been employed as a local Parent Consultant in the Dothan CRS office for more than 25 years.

CRS staff, in a coordinated effort with ADRS Computer Services staff, has made great progress in moving forward on the initiative to revise the CRS Plan of Care. Efforts to electronically test the revised document have been led by Ms. Kristen Moore, CRS Care Coordination Program Specialist. Ms. Moore and Ms. Stacey Neumann have been working diligently to develop a comprehensive training program for care coordinators to learn the new document. When the training and staging phases are complete, the new Plan of Care will be launched in the Spring 2023.

Mr. Ashley Townsend, Assistant Commissioner, **Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS), Blind and Deaf Services**, reported due to the lower incidence of blind and deaf individuals in the United States and Alabama, ADRS has smaller numbers and can survey 100% of the VRS consumers that are served rather than a sample each fiscal year. Following the board meeting, the 2022 Consumer Satisfaction Reports for Blind Services, Deaf Services, and the Older Alabamians System of Information and Services (OASIS) Program will be sent out electronically to board members for review.

Ms. Amy Blakeney, Division Director, **Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS)** and Commissioner Burdeshaw reported the Professional Consulting Group (PCG) was selected and received approval from both Gov. Ivey and the Senate to assist AEIS through the contract review process. PCG is working with statewide AEIS stakeholders through November 2023 to conduct an extensive rate study and suggest nationally recognized trends in AEIS service-delivery and reimbursement practices. The PCG team is conducting monthly calls and gathering programmatic data between meetings.

Mrs. Jill West, Governmental Relations Manager, Director of **Office of Communications and Information (OCI)**, and Commissioner Burdeshaw reported the public awareness campaign for Early Intervention, You know best. Know EARLY., was publicly launched in January 2023. The campaign website is live: [NeverTooEarlyAL.org](http://NeverTooEarlyAL.org). OCI continues to coordinate outreach strategies, media inquiries, social media, and other activities with Early Intervention's seven districts. The Outreach Toolkit is available for download from the [NeverTooEarlyAL.org](http://NeverTooEarlyAL.org) site, and a public service announcement video is under development.

### **Commissioner's Comments and Legislative Update:**

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported the end of the national **Public Health Emergency (PHE)** will be Thursday, May 11, 2023. The end of the PHE, paired with the unwinding of continuous enrollment for Alabama Medicaid services, will impact each division and the individuals served in different ways, particularly as it relates to health care coverage and out-of-pocket health care expenses. Some individuals and families could lose Medicaid coverage as soon as April 1, 2023. The Executive Leadership Team members are actively participating in technical assistance calls to determine how ADRS might best assist individuals and families during this transition. The guidance from our state and federal partners will be of particular importance to Alabama's Early Intervention System, Children's Rehabilitation Service, and the State of Alabama Independent Living divisions. The good news is that Alabama's ALL Kids/Alabama's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) will likely pick up many of the children no longer eligible for Medicaid. The Medicaid unwinding also signals the



release of new guidance regarding telehealth practices and reimbursements, broadly used for the first time during the pandemic.

Commissioner Burdeshaw and Mrs. Jill West have begun meeting with State Legislators prior to the 2023 Legislative Session. They are working to meet new members and educate them about the

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), and the Senate Confirmation members once it's known who Gov. Ivey appoints to fill the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services positions. Commissioner Burdeshaw reported initially ADRS did not request specific funding for the four major divisions. However, ADRS requested assistance for the **Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund** administered by ADRS and for one-time American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to expand Autism Diagnostic Clinics in existing Alabama's Early Intervention System programs. **Within the past few weeks, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) increased the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Annual Grant Allotment based on the consumer price index.** ADRS was not aware of this opportunity for additional federal funds when the budget request was submitted to Gov. Ivey and Mr. Bill Poole, Finance Director, or ADRS would have requested additional funding in the **Rehabilitation Services line item**. If Alabama invests an additional **1.7 million** annually in this line item, the program could match/draw down an additional 6.3 million in federal funds. ADRS could expand services such as the Older Alabamians System of Information and Services (OASIS) Program for the older blind population that helps seniors remain independent when losing their vision; expand the benefits counseling program that educates citizens about benefits cliffs and what it will require to go to work; and develop new business partnerships that lead to short-term training and credentials that increase the labor force participation rate of people with disabilities.

Commissioner Burdeshaw provided an update on the **Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) North Campus**. With the assistance from the Morgan County Legislative Delegation Office, Dr. John Mascia, AIDB President, has expanded AIDB's reach by creating the North Alabama Campus with ties to Gallaudet University, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education, and Craft Trade Workforce Training. The campus is next door to the local Mental Health Center and future Crisis Center. The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) has been invited to join the developing hub of disability support services located in Decatur to expand services within the region. The first step was reached when Dr. Mascia and Commissioner Burdeshaw spoke to the AIDB Board of Trustees about the proposal and received a favorable vote to proceed.

Commissioner Burdeshaw provided an update on the **Alabama Terminal on Linking and Analyzing Statistics (ATLAS) on Career Pathways**. Alabama continues efforts to streamline workforce operations through data sharing agreements and Alabama's Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) Grant funds to facilitate this data sharing. ADRS has been unable to enter into data sharing agreements until recently. There were concerns raised from the Social Security Administration (SSA) resulting from SSA agreements involving verified data received from SSA. Commissioner Burdeshaw expressed her appreciation to Dr. Beverly Floyd, Director, Information Technology and Ms. Donna Bowden, State Office Liaison to SSA, for working through any concerns and processing the agreement.

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported **Gov. Ivey issued nine Executive Orders** in January 2023. The Commissioner is working with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services' (ADRS) Executive Leadership Team to devise plans and action steps to quickly respond to each order as they relate to ADRS. The nine executive orders signed by Gov. Ivey include the following:



- Executive Order No. 726: Promoting the Faithful Execution of the Laws Within the Executive Branch of State Government
- Executive Order No. 727: Establishing the Governor's Study Group on Efficiency in State Government
- Executive Order No. 728: Promoting Efficiency and Accountability in the Use of State Vehicles
- Executive Order No. 729: Promoting Early Literacy by Establishing a Statewide Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Network
- Executive Order No. 730: Establishing the Governor's Commission on Teaching and Learning
- Executive Order No. 731: Ensuring Progress Toward Full Implementation of Foundational Education Initiatives
- Executive Order No. 732: Establishing a K-12 Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Pilot Program to Increase Pathways to the Teaching Profession
- Executive Order No. 733: Promoting and Defending Religious Liberty Through Implementation of the Alabama Religious Freedom Amendment
- Executive Order No. 734: Promoting Transparency in State Government Through Enhanced Accessibility of Public Records

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), Executive Leadership Team, has continued efforts to implement effective **Recruitment and Retention Strategies**. Two divisions have created work-based learning opportunities and hired individuals served through our Vocational Rehabilitation Service program. Minimum requirements for rehabilitation specific job classifications are being evaluated to determine if ADRS is creating unnecessary barriers to employment for qualified candidates. ADRS values all staff and their contributions to achieving the mission. Therefore, every effort will be made to develop, retain, and promote a diverse, qualified staff. To assist in this effort, ADRS staff seeking a career change and/or upward mobility opportunities, will receive notification of current job vacancies. In addition, the Commissioner will submit a new **Flexible Work Schedule** to the Alabama State Personnel Department for final approval. Once approved, the Executive Leadership Team will finalize policies and training for supervisory staff.

### **Announcements:**

#### **Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services meeting dates for 2023:**

- Thursday, June 22, 2023 – 10:00 a.m., ADRS Montgomery/State Office
- Thursday, September 14, 2023 – 10:00 a.m., ADRS Montgomery/State Office
- Thursday, December 7, 2023 – 10:00 a.m., ADRS Montgomery/State Office

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:41 a.m.

Minutes were taken by Karen Freeman.

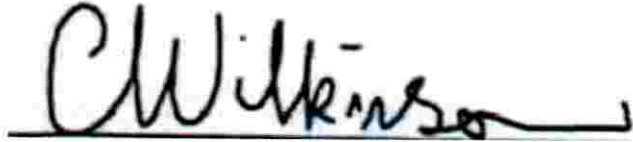
Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jane E. Burdeshaw".

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Jane E. Burdeshaw, Commissioner

Approved:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. Wilkinson".

Charles E. Wilkinson, Chair