

Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services
Montgomery, Alabama
Thursday, December 1, 2022
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon
AGENDA

Call to Order	Eddie Williams, Chair
Prayer	
Verification of Quorum	Karen Freeman
Verification of Open Meeting Act Notice	Eddie Williams
Approval of Agenda	Eddie Williams
Approval of Minutes for the Sept. 15, 2022 meeting	Eddie Williams
New Business:	Eddie Williams
ADRS 2022 Annual Report & Consumer Success Story	Jill West, Director, Office of Communications and Information/ Governmental Relations
Approval - ADRS 2022 Annual Report	Eddie Williams
Nomination/Election of Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services <i>Chair, Vice-Chair</i>	Eddie Williams
Division Updates	Executive Leadership Team
Commissioner's Comments	Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Commissioner
Announcements:	
Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services proposed meeting dates for 2023 :	
• Thursday, March 2, 2023 – 10:00 a.m. , Montgomery/State Office	
• Thursday, June 22, 2023 – 10:00 a.m. , Montgomery/State Office	
• 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	Eddie Williams
Adjourn	Eddie Williams

Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
560 South Lawrence Street
Montgomery, Alabama
Minutes
Thursday, December 1, 2022

Call to Order:

Mr. Eddie Williams, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:04 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. Eddie Williams, Board Chair; Mr. Kevin Kidd; Ms. Kimberlin Love; and Mr. Charles Wilkinson. A quorum was declared.

Conference Call: Ms. Michelle Glaze

Mr. Mitch Strickland was not available to attend the meeting.

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 electronically.

Mrs. Karen Freeman verified that the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services meeting for December 1, 2022, was posted on the Alabama Secretary of State's website on October 27, 2022, at 5:31 p.m.

The meeting announcement and registration information were posted on the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services' public website at the following link: <https://rehab.alabama.gov/about/meet-our-board> with a registration deadline of Monday, November 28, 2022, 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 participating electronically. Upon registration for the conference call, participants received an email with instructions and the telephone number to call. Ms. Michelle Glaze participated in the meeting via conference call. There were not any requests from the public. Interpreter services were provided by Mr. Josh Brewer.

Approval of Agenda:

Mr. Williams asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion to approve the agenda was made by Ms. Love and seconded by Mr. Wilkinson. The motion was approved.

Approval of Minutes for September 15, 2022 Meeting:

The board meeting minutes for the September 15, 2022, meeting were mailed prior to the board meeting. Mr. Williams 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's Children's Rehabilitation Service, Consumer Success Story: Gabe Marsh

Mrs. Jill West, Governmental Relations Manager and Director of Office of Communications and Information (OCI) presented the Consumer Success Story: Gabe Marsh.

Gabe, an accomplished swimmer, was recently selected for the Ken and Betty Joy Blankenship Student Achievement Athlete of the Year Award at the annual Bryant-Jordan Scholarship Banquet in Birmingham. Gabe's Care Coordinator through the Huntsville Children's Rehabilitation Service office, Mark Kearley, saw his potential early on. "There was something special about Gabe," he said. "He had the motivation that you like to see in people. Self-motivated and a strong family support system." CRS helped Gabe secure a manual wheelchair and enrolled him in amputee, seating, and Teen Transition clinics. They recently secured a motorized wheelchair, which has improved his mobility tremendously during his shifts at McDonald's. Read more about Gabe's future plans and how ADRS is helping him reach his goals: [Guntersville's Gabe Marsh leaves challenges in his wake \(alabama.gov\)](#)

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services 2022 Annual Report

Mrs. West presented the final draft of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services 2022 Annual Report for Board approval.

Commissioner Burdeshaw expressed her appreciation to the OCI team members, Mrs. West; Mr. Rick Couch, Public Information Specialist; Mr. Paul Dunbar, Audiovisual Specialist; and Mrs. Amanda Gunn, Communication and Public Relations Specialist, for the updated design of the 2022 Annual Report.

Mr. Williams moved that the Board approve and adopt the 2022 Annual Report submitted and to authorize the staff of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services' Office of Communications and Information (OCI) to make the necessary minor text and design changes prior to its publication. The motion was seconded by Ms. Love and subsequently approved.

Mr. Williams reported the leadership and staff of the department continue to provide excellent and dedicated service to the individuals they serve. The evidence of this is presented in this year's annual report. Mr. Williams requested board members join him in thanking the staff and leadership for

another outstanding year and for being at the forefront of providing services and inspiration to families. Mr. Williams expressed appreciation to Mrs. West and OCI staff for an excellent publication.

Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services Announcements:

Mrs. Penny P. Foster, Congressional District 3

Mr. Williams announced the resignation of Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, Vice-Chair, Mrs. Penny P. Foster, Congressional District 3, effective October 14, 2022 due to personal/family reasons. Mrs. Foster faithfully served approximately 5 ½ years and represented a parent of a child with a disability. Mrs. Foster's vacancy notice was successfully posted on the Secretary of State's website. Commissioner Burdeshaw will begin searching for a new member to fulfill Mrs. Foster's term effective immediately. Commissioner Burdeshaw, the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, and ADRS leadership expressed their sincere appreciation for Mrs. Foster's many years of service and wished her well in all her endeavors.

Mr. Mitch Strickland, Congressional District 7

Mr. Williams reported despite the inability to attend multiple meetings, that Mr. Mitch Strickland requested to remain on the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, in hope that he will join the board meetings again in-person before his term expires on September 30, 2023. Mr. Strickland will complete his two full 7-year terms in September as he represents an individual with a disability.

The Board's input about potential candidates is welcome.

Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services: Eligibility Requirements

Mr. Williams and Commissioner Burdeshaw reported 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.

Nomination/Election of Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, Chair

Mr. Williams opened nominations from the floor for potential candidates for Board Chair. Ms. Love made a motion to nominate Mr. Wilkinson for a two-year term as Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services Chair. After lengthy discussion, the motion was seconded by Mr. Eddie Williams, and Mr. Wilkinson was unanimously approved. Mr. Wilkinson expressed his appreciation for the nomination and indicated he would rise to the challenge and that it would be his honor to serve as Chair.

Commissioner Burdeshaw, the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, and ADRS leadership expressed their sincere gratitude to Mr. Williams for his many years of hard work and dedication as Board Chair. Mr. Williams expressed his heartfelt 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 so many Alabamians.

Nomination/Election of Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, Vice-Chair

Mr. Williams opened nominations from the floor for potential candidates for Board Vice-Chair. Ms. Love made a motion to nominate Mr. Kidd for a two-year term as Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services Vice-Chair. After discussion, the motion was seconded by Mr. Wilkinson, and Mr. Kidd was unanimously approved. Mr. Kidd expressed his appreciation for the nomination and would be honored to serve as Vice-Chair.

Board Member Questions and Division Updates:

The Executive Leadership Team members were provided an opportunity to answer any questions and give updates to their written reports.

Commissioner's Comments:

Commissioner Burdeshaw provided an update on the **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)** Funding Plan. The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) received the \$7 million in the first tranche of legislative appropriation for healthcare and related costs associated with the pandemic from the state-legislated ARPA funding. ADRS entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Alabama Department of Finance. The allotment was distributed on October 1, 2022, the start of the new fiscal year. ADRS program leaders reviewed proposals and spoke to staff and providers that were selected.

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported Governor Ivey agreed to begin the redesignation process of the State of Alabama **Client Assistance Program (CAP)** on the recommendation of ADRS to the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP). This process initially consisted of gathering consensus from Senior Services, the State of Alabama Independent Living Council, the State Rehabilitation Council, and ADAP. Then there was a public comment period and 2 public hearings. This information was shared with the Governor's Office prior to Gov. Ivey's decision to proceed with the redesignation. Once Gov. Ivey reviewed public comments and made the decision to proceed, there was a final waiting period and clearance to proceed from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The RSA Grant was transferred at the beginning of FY 2023. ADAP now houses all protection and advocacy grants for people with disabilities in Alabama. ADRS and ADAP have met for a transition meeting and are working through the logistics of paper files, website, and equipment transfers.

Commissioner Burdeshaw expressed her appreciation to Alabama Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD), Executive Director, Dr. Graham Sisson; Deputy Director, Ms. Marlene Word; and Governor's Office, Senior Policy Advisor, Mr. Dave White, for their assistance during the transfer. Dr. Sisson will soon submit the final RSA-227 federal report for the program.

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported the **2022 AlabamaWorks! Conference and the Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (AGCEPD) Annual Awards** was held at the Hyatt Regency - The Wynfrey Hotel in Birmingham on September 7 – 9, 2022. This is an annual conference hosted by workforce partners at the Alabama Department of Commerce and the Alabama Department of Labor.

For the second year, ADRS staff presented multiple concurrent sessions. The sessions focused on the untapped talent within the disability community and services offered by vocational rehabilitation. In addition, ADRS and AGCEPD hosted the statewide award winners with Gov. Ivey presenting the state awards.

The event was attended by news outlets and was well received by the larger workforce system. Commissioner Burdeshaw expressed her sincere appreciation to ADRS' Office of Communications and Information for their wonderful video vignettes, which can be viewed on the ADRS YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzvxhXHJ6zg&list=PL6lshQF-Yj-s7Py8BNSqaK5AL6PiHH2pO>.

She also thanked Mr. Eddie Williams, Mr. Jimmie Varnado, and Mr. Kevin Kidd for attending the awards ceremony. In addition, Mr. Charles Wilkinson presented a concurrent session on the final day of the conference.

Commissioner Burdeshaw and Mr. Kevin Kidd reported the **Fourth Annual Governor's Job Fair for People with Disabilities** was held October 5, 2022 at the Mobile Civic Center. ADRS staff did a tremendous job of getting the word out about the job fair. A record number of job seekers attended the event. ADRS was present and shared information about programs and services, and the department was featured on multiple news outlets.

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported the **Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Fall Conference** was held on October 30 – November 2, 2022 in San Antonio, Texas. It was the first time the conference was held in-person since the beginning of the pandemic. The CSAVR, Rehabilitation Services Administration, and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services shared national perspectives post-pandemic and highlighted areas of focus for the Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) National Program. It has been refreshing to see where the performance of the Alabama VRS program stacks up compared to the national program. The state outperformed the national average in 4 of 5 national performance measures. The one measure that did not exceed was the national average wages earned. This is not surprising given the state's overall wage gap compared to the nation and the use of federal minimum wage. In addition, the VRS-General program exceeded its overall employment goals, including the specific metric for successful closures for individuals with significant disabilities into competitive integrated employment. The VRS-Blind and Deaf Program exceeded its goals by an amazing 15% this year. Commissioner Burdeshaw expressed her appreciation to the Deputy Commissioner, Karen Jenkins, Assistant Commissioner, Ashley Townsend, and the VRS leadership and staff statewide for always making Alabama a bright spot in the VRS system.

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported that after the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services approved the ADRS Operations & Personnel Staffing Plan for FY 2022 – 2023, ADRS began to work on **Budget Projections for FY 2024** using historical expenditures and revenues. These projections were shared with the Finance Director's office to allow for planning for the next legislative session. Projects, staffing plans, overages, and shortfalls were discussed to determine agency needs. The FY 2024 projections are good. ADRS will not require a budget request for the 4 major programs. This is in part due to the influx of federal assistance dollars, the reduction in individuals who were seeking services during the pandemic, and the carryover of funds due to staffing shortages. Commissioner

Burdeshaw voiced support for an increase in the Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund (AHSCITF). ADRS administers the AHSCITF, and the Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund Board determines where those funds are directed for services. During the meeting with the Finance Director's office, Commissioner Burdeshaw voiced concerns about the bureaucratic hurdles impeding state agencies' ability to hire staff in a timely manner. She formally requested blanket approval for ADRS to fill both federally and state funded direct-service and support positions in its FY 2023 Staffing Plan. ADRS will not appoint FTEs outside of the approved staffing level. The blanket approval will allow ADRS to onboard in an efficient and effective manner as the current appointed FTE count is approximately 10% below the approved staffing level plan.

Commissioner Burdeshaw provided an update on the **Public Awareness Campaign for Early Intervention**. The launch date for the EI Awareness Campaign is today, December 1, 2022. The Office of Communication and Information (OCI) is working closely with Computer Services on preparing the campaign website and continues to work with the Early Intervention (EI) program, its public awareness committee, and EI district advisors.

Announcements:

Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services meeting dates for 2023:

- Thursday, March 2, 2023 - 10:00 a.m., ADRS, Montgomery/State Office
- Thursday, June 22, 2023 – 10:00 a.m., TBD
- Thursday, September 14, 2023 – 10:00 a.m., ADRS Montgomery/State Office
- Thursday, December 7, 2023 – 10:00 a.m., ADRS Montgomery/State Office

Mr. Williams reported prior to the pandemic the June board meeting was typically held at an off-site ADRS field office rather than the traditional Montgomery/State Office location. Board members were asked to notify Commissioner Burdeshaw as to their preference regarding an off-site meeting for the June 22, 2023 board meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Minutes were taken by Karen Freeman.

Respectfully submitted:



Jane E. Burdeshaw, Commissioner

Approved:



Eddie C. Williams, Chair