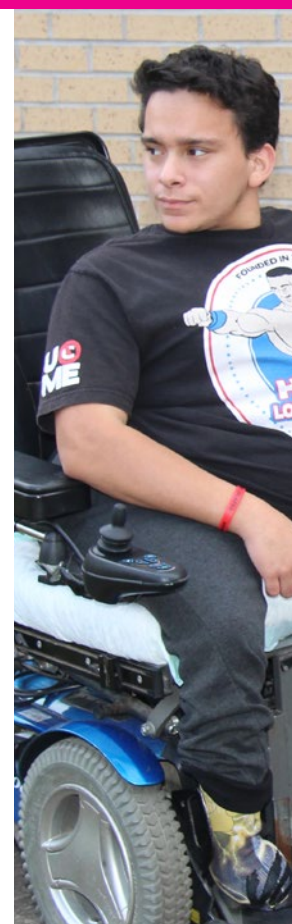




home.  
school.  
work.

# togethersuccess

2016 ADRS annual report



THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

# 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.



# from the commissioner

Dear Friends, Partners, and Colleagues,

It's my pleasure to present to you Together Success, the 2016 ADRS annual report.



As you read through this document, you will see that it is filled with numbers and charts that offer broad strokes of the work we do – the number of people we served overall and in each program, the amount of money spent by county. These numbers and charts are important because they show that we are good stewards of the funding that we receive.

For me, though, the work of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services boils down to the individual people we serve. For me, each number represents a baby, child, teen-ager, or adult. Each number represents a specific and unique set of challenges, a specific and unique set of needs, dreams, and aspirations.

That's why each year we dedicate an entire section of this document to recounting the achievements of a few of the people we serve. In this section, you will find stories of challenge, determination, courage, and – above all – success! These profiles give life to the numbers – and remind us all of the value of the work we do.

This report also serves a testament to the power of the many community partnerships we have built throughout the state with local school systems, community programs, other state agencies, and policymakers at every level of government. We have all dedicated ourselves to the same mission, and we share the excitement and pride that come from the accomplishments of those we serve. It is from those partnerships that we draw the name of this report, Together Success.

To our many partners, I say “thank you” for another year of successful collaboration.

And I'd like to issue a challenge for all of us for the new year: Let us recommit ourselves to each other and to our shared mission, to enable Alabama's children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jane Elizabeth Furukawa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.



# together*success*

2016 **ADRS** annual report

home.  
school.  
work.

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# for a lifetime

## the **ADRS** continuum of services:

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.

### **EI** **ALABAMA'S EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM**

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 more than 50 community programs that provide direct service to families.



### **CRS** **CHILDREN'S REHABILITATION SERVICE**

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.



### **VRS** **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE**

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. The Business Enterprise Program for Alabamians who are blind and visually impaired promotes independence through the operation of vending operations, snack bars, and cafeterias in locations statewide.



### **SAIL** **STATE of ALABAMA INDEPENDENT LIVING**

provides services to Alabamians who have catastrophic congenital disabilities or disabilities resulting from spinal cord or head injuries. State of Alabama Independent Living program/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.



# meet the board



Dear friends,

It has been a privilege to have served another year as the chairman of the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services.

Once again, I was awed by the life-altering impact this department had on the lives of tens of thousands of Alabama's children and adults with disabilities.

As you look through the pages of this year's Annual Report, you will see stories that are a testament to the excellent work of our staff, who labor tirelessly to ensure the success of those they serve. These success stories also serve to demonstrate the importance of the department's strong partnerships with community programs, school systems, and other government agencies.

On behalf of the board, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the ADRS staff as well as our partners for another outstanding year. Your collective efforts enable us to do more for those we serve, which truly illustrates the annual report's theme: *Together, Success!*

Jimmie Varnado  
Board Chairman  
District 2



Stephen Kayes  
District 1



Stacy Mitchell  
District 3 (resigned)



Andrea Collett  
District 4



Eddie Williams  
District 5



Roger McCullough  
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 rights of and services to people with disabilities; and serving as the governing authority of programs administered by the department.*



A woman with dark hair, wearing a bright pink short-sleeved top and blue jeans, is walking a black dog on a brown leather leash along a concrete sidewalk. The dog is also wearing a brown harness. They are walking towards the camera. In the background, there is a green lawn, some bushes, and a brick building with a window. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

**together***success*

meet our families





*Left, ADRS District Early Intervention Coordinator Tania Baldwin and Service Coordinator Debbie Sanchez with the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind visit the Poore family*

*Below, Raymond Poore sits in a hammock with his daughter, Elizabeth*



# the poore family

## TUSCALOOSA

Elizabeth Poore was born Halloween 2013 with no complications.

"Everything seemed normal during those first six months," said Elizabeth's mother, Amy. "She was rolling over by 6 months, but that ended up being the last milestone she made."

After missing several milestones, the Poore family was referred to Alabama's Early Intervention System for assistance. District Early Intervention Coordinator Tania Baldwin and Debbie Sanchez, a service coordinator with the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, responded by recommending physical and occupational therapies to help Elizabeth stay on track with other children her age.

"It was really tough to accept that Elizabeth was not where she should be," Amy said. "But Tania and Debbie really worked hard to help us realize that this wasn't the end of the world. They provided us with such a strong network of support, with answers we needed, and with the power to advocate for our child and give her a voice even when she can't speak for herself."

Early Intervention worked with Elizabeth to develop her core muscles, giving her the ability to sit up straight. Thanks to continuing PT, Elizabeth is now able to walk with the assistance of a gait trainer.

Elizabeth's hearing was also a major concern for the family, and CRS performed a hearing screening. When that testing proved inconclusive, a brain wave scan indicated that her hearing is normal.

"Early Intervention has been great for our family because I see the importance for Elizabeth to have as much

support as possible," said Elizabeth's father, Raymond. "To be the parent of a child with a disability – it's a stressful thing. You've just got to do the best you can to maximize her abilities. Encourage her and love her, because every little thing matters."

Raymond, who is a doctor, admits that his profession helps in many ways, but might hurt in others.

"I'm no expert in pediatrics or disability," Raymond said. "I know enough background information to provide explanations to Amy and her mother, but I also know that no doctor is perfect, nor is this something that we can take on on our own. That's why we trust Early Intervention."

Amy said that the progress they have seen in their daughter is amazing. With EI's help, Elizabeth has gone from making virtually no sounds to making "Mamamamama" sounds. She's taking steps with aid, and she's on the cusp of taking off. Thanks to CRS feeding clinic, she's also eating things like peanut butter and is getting school-ready with the assistance of ADRS services and the RISE program in Tuscaloosa.

"I can't imagine life without the support of EI," Amy said. "They've been fabulous, and I can't even fathom what it would be like without their help. Having a child with special needs is overwhelming. Having Early Intervention there has been a huge relief to our whole family."

Thanks to EI, the Poore family is now ready for the next step in their lives.

"I know I'm a lot stronger now than I was before, thanks to EI," Amy said. "Their strong network has definitely helped me along the way."



Mother Morgan Grimmatt and grandmom Janis McCormack have witnessed Caroline's communication skills flourish with help from Alabama's Early Intervention System



# the grimmatt family

MOODY



Caroline Grimmatt practices her colors and shapes with her mom, Morgan

Following a somewhat difficult pregnancy where she was placed on bed rest for 13 weeks, Morgan Grimmatt gave birth to her daughter, Caroline, on her 36th birthday.

"Through her first year, Caroline was what I considered to be a typical baby," said Morgan. "At 13 or 14 months, though, she started not meeting milestones, and we began to wonder if she was progressing."

Caroline's constant crying, tantrums, and head butting could all be attributed to her age, but her parents, and her grandmother, Janis McCormack, grew more concerned about her lack of communication and social skills.

"At first, her parents thought there was an issue with Caroline's hearing," Janis said. "She didn't make eye contact, and – it's going to sound strange – but she wouldn't laugh, and that concerned me deeply."

Caroline's pediatrician agreed with the Grimmatt family that there might be an issue and referred her to Alabama's Early Intervention System.

District Early Intervention Coordinator Brandi Brown evaluated Caroline when she was 16 months old. She determined that the youngster qualified for services in all areas of development and would benefit the most from speech therapy and special instruction.

"It was obvious from our first meeting with Caroline that her communication skills needed improvement," said Brandi. "She also seemed distant and needed assistance with social skills."

The Grimmatt family started therapies with EI in their home, and, within months, began to notice considerable improvements in their child.

"No one wants their child to be labeled," Morgan said. "We wanted it all to be private and in a non-threatening environment, so our home was ideal. The therapists all made it fun for Caroline, so she was learning without even realizing it."

And learn, she did. First came words, then sentences. Morgan and Janis were taught by the therapists to be attuned to Caroline's cues, and their entire experience just improved with each and every session.

"I used to expect terrible behavior from Caroline, but now I get great reports from her school," Morgan said. "She talks; she makes sentences. We would have settled for baby steps, but instead, we got marathons. EI has been a godsend. We called EI out of desperation, but for us, it ended up being an answered prayer."





*Left, teacher Jamie Evans works with Brady Arnold at the Sprayberry Center in Northport*

*Below, Dad Shane Arnold assists Brady as he walks up stairs*



# brady arnold

**RALPH**

As a first-time dad, Shane Arnold never expected to have all of the answers when his son, Brady, was born.

He certainly didn't expect what he found out about Brady when he was 5 months old.

"He cried all of the time and never slept," Shane said. "I suspected something wasn't right, and we discovered a host of issues."

In addition to being low weight, Brady was diagnosed with optic nerve hypoplasia. After more tests, he was found to have panhypopituitarism, a rare disorder of the pituitary gland with a wide range of associated issues – from an inability to control the bladder to problems developing a proper sleep/wake cycle.

Early Intervention and CRS immediately worked together to provide multiple services to assist Brady, including occupational and physical therapies and orthopedic, feeding, and seating clinics.

"Nutrition was such a critical component when I first met Brady," said CRS Nutritionist Claire Stephens. "He needed a G-tube when he was younger – which we helped him with – but his family always wanted him to eat on his own. We worked diligently to address inconsistencies in his nutrition and fluid intake, and now his eating is fantastic."

With Brady now 9 years old, CRS continues to follow

his success and celebrates his many little victories alongside Shane and grandmother Glynda Arnold.

"CRS has been such a blessing to our family," said Glynda. "Brady can now walk with limited assistance, and that's something I didn't think would be possible for him. CRS pushed, encouraged, and believed in him. They've helped tremendously with developing a sense of independence for him and have worked so hard to achieve the best quality of life possible for him and for Shane."

Because CRS was there every step along the way, the Arnolds were able to advocate more for Brady, to seek out support groups and encourage other families around the country and the world that face similar situations. The Arnolds even formed an organization – Changing Spaces – that advocates for better public restroom facilities equipped with larger changing tables to allow them to change Brady's diaper with dignity.

"You just can't take 'no' for an answer," Shane said. "Brady should have the same opportunities and rights to do things as a typical child. CRS has given him the tools he needs to succeed, and with their help, his future looks so much brighter."





# nicholas walls

## CROSSVILLE

Nicholas Walls has vivid memories of the day of his injury.

"Some friends were going to ride four-wheelers, and I asked my grandmother if I could go," said Nick, a junior at Crossville High School in DeKalb County. "I was told I could go if I didn't go past the fire department, which is a mile from our house."

Against his grandmother's instructions, Nick went several miles from home to coast down a mountainside, where he crashed – head on – into a tree.

"I spent six weeks at Children's of Alabama. I shattered my vertebrae, fractured three ribs, and my left lung collapsed," he said.

Following the accident, CRS Teen Transition Specialist DeAnna McMurtrey and Social Worker Suki Nielson were quick to respond to assist Nick and his grandmother, Barbara Shuman.

"When DeAnna arrived, the first thing she said was, 'Barbara, don't worry about anything. We'll take care of it,'" Ms. Shuman said. "Nick's rehabilitation process was very long, and CRS and VR were there every step of the way."

CRS assisted by providing Nick with a wheelchair, various personal

care items, and a transfer board to assist him in getting in and out of the car.

In addition to adaptive driving modifications to his car, VRS is also currently working with Nick to develop college and career goals.

"When this happened, we didn't have the knowledge to do anything to care for Nick," she said. "Without ADRS's help, I don't know where we'd be. His opportunities have expanded so much – from planning for college to adaptive driving – and I find comfort knowing ADRS is behind him to help him do anything he wants to do."

Nick's high school is providing encouragement, too. Because the young man was interested in sports before his accident, Crossville High Principal David Uptain asked him if he would be interested in trying out for the track team.

Since joining the team, Nick has excelled – particularly in throwing the shot put, discus, and javelin. Today, he holds several state records and even a few national records after attending a meet in Madison, Wis.

"Despite the injury, I feel encouraged and motivated," Nick said. "There are so many people who have it worse than I do. They keep going despite their obstacles, so why can't I?"

*Nicholas Walls is a national track and field champion in shot put, discus, and javelin events and serves as an inspiration to his Crossville High School classmates*







CRS Social Worker Alisha Love and Senior Rehabilitation Counselor Susan Edwards helped Jeremy Flippo realize he could continue his passion for CNC millwork despite his disability



# jeremy flippo

## NEW HOPE

In the early morning of July 3, 2013, Jeremy Flippo – a seemingly healthy 16-year-old – scared his mother when he collapsed to his knees clutching his chest.

After the terrifying incident, doctors discovered and began closely monitoring a tear in the young man's aorta.

In August 2015, while in surgery to repair the tear, Jeremy experienced complications that left him paralyzed from the waist down.

"When this happened, I was lost," said Tresa Clark, Jeremy's mother. "We had no idea this would happen to him, and we didn't know what to do."

CRS Social Worker Alisha Love met Tresa and Jeremy while he was recovering from surgery at Spain Rehabilitation Center in Birmingham.

"Alisha came to Spain Rehab, and I remember her bringing me all of these pamphlets and coming with all of this information," Tresa said. "I thank God for that help from CRS, from that first contact."

CRS provided in-home physical therapy for Jeremy and was instrumental in securing him personal care items when he returned home, providing a bath chair, a wheelchair, and personal care items. Because Jeremy was turning 18, CRS also helped secure him Social Security Disability Insurance to assist with his mounting expenses.

Vocational Rehabilitation worked diligently with Jeremy during his senior year of high school to better

develop his post-graduation plans.

"After high school, I didn't know what I was going to do," said Jeremy. "In the beginning, I felt like there was nothing to look forward to and that my original plans were gone. Then VR stepped in and changed all of that."

Rehabilitation Counselor Susan Edwards told Jeremy about VR's College Prep program, which prepares high school students with disabilities to make the transition to college life. Jeremy also participated in VR's Adaptive Driving program, learning to drive a vehicle with hand controls.

In talking with Jeremy, Susan and Alisha learned about his proficiency in computer numeric control (CNC) metal millwork. In his senior year, the young man placed fifth in a statewide CNC competition, and both Susan and Alisha encouraged Jeremy to study metal work at Drake State Community College in Huntsville.

"I'm the first to go to college in my family," Jeremy said. "It's kind of crazy to think about it, but without ADRS's help along the way, I don't know what I would be doing or where I would be. College Prep was huge, because it taught me how to study and stay organized. Now, heading into my midterms, I'm passing my classes with 90s. It's a great feeling to know you are ahead. VR has helped me tremendously."





# vincente carr

## DOTHAN

When Vincente Carr arrived in foster mom Carletta Belflower's home three years ago, she knew he had arrived in a home where he truly belonged.

"I met Vinny in a whirlwind," said Carletta. "I'd received a call about a difficult placement and was told that this person needed to be in a specialized home, and it had become an urgent situation. Because my whole house was accessible, I knew he was meant to come here. Within three days, he'd moved in."

Vinny, who has spina bifida, had moved around a lot in the foster care system before arriving in the Belflower home. He had not received proper care for quite some time and had many questions about his health and how to properly care for himself – most especially how to avoid pressure sores, which had led to the amputation of his right foot.

Although Carletta had extensive experience in caring for children with special needs, she had never cared for a child with spina bifida. Because of her previous experiences with Children's Rehabilitation Service, though, she knew exactly whom to call to get answers to Vinny's questions.

But CRS didn't *just* answer Vinny's questions. They organized a full roundtable discussion to address Vinny's many needs and also involved

Vocational Rehabilitation Service, the State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) service, and Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Services.

Because Vinny was transition-age, he attended the CRS Teen Transition Clinic, took an aptitude assessment, and discussed his college plans.

The cross-division collaborative effort also provided him with a hospital bed with a gel mat and a new shower chair to reduce the likelihood that he would develop pressure sores.

Independent Living Specialist Michelle Stephenson also recommended and completed an application for a service dog for Vinny.

"The support of ADRS," said Vinny, "is tremendous. I'm so thankful to be in school, and on the track to do something with my life. I'm learning to advocate for myself – something I haven't done for myself until meeting everyone at ADRS – and I'm working on becoming a disability lawyer. The experience has been incredible."

Said foster mom Carletta, "Before Vinny arrived with us, he was a make-doer, a survivor. Children's Rehab, Vocational Rehab, and Independent Living have all come together to make him thrive, and I couldn't be happier – or more proud – of him."



*Foster mom Carletta Belflower is thankful for the assistance Vincente Carr has received from the complete ADRS team, including CRS, VRS, SAIL, and Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Services*



*CRS Care Coordinator Attallah Cotton played a major role in obtaining a new hospital bed with gel mattress for Vincente Carr*





*Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Renee Hathcox meets with intern Montana Wimberly to discuss plans for an upcoming event*

# montana wimberly

## JACKSONVILLE

When Montana Wimberly envisioned going to college, she had already made up her mind that she would become a social worker.

Born with a visual disability, Montana graduated from the Alabama School for the Blind in Talladega in 2011. While in school, she connected with VRS Counselor Greg Richards, who worked to provide her with the tools necessary to make her career goals a reality.

So when Montana was asked where she wanted to go to complete her graduate internship from Jacksonville State University, her first thought was to go back to the same organization that had inspired her to be a social worker.

"I was fortunate to be accepted to do my internship with CRS and VR in Gadsden," said Montana. "When I met Greg, I remember him telling me, 'Your visual impairment isn't going to define who you are.' VR has taken away a lot of my stress, and I know I have what it takes to help others in the same way he helped me."

Montana has grown up in an age of accessibility and innovation. Assistive technology, like screen-reading software JAWS, allows her to use a computer in the same way as a

person with no visual disability.

"Assistive technology has been the great liberator for people with vision loss," said Greg. "Really, just about the only thing I can think of that Montana can't do right now is drive a car, and technology is quickly catching up to even make that a possibility."

After a consultation with ADRS Orientation and Mobility Specialist Jennifer Stephens to acquaint her with the layout of the Gadsden office, Montana was quickly on her way to impacting the lives of the people ADRS serves.

And the experience has been beneficial for ADRS staff as well.

"Having Montana here has helped us learn more about the many things VR has to offer," said Gadsden CRS Office Coordinator Emma Hereford. "Montana is going to be a fabulous social worker one day, because she is already more qualified than I am to work with people with disabilities, and I've been with CRS for 20 years. Because she has lived her life for 25 years with vision loss, she can truly sit down at a table with a family and tell them, 'I understand.' She's going to be an inspiration to a lot of families because she can directly identify with a client."



*Montana Wimberly chose to do her graduate internship at ADRS because of her positive experience working with the organization*





Norman Estes drives a shuttle van carrying veterans for the Central Alabama Veterans' Health Care System



# norman estes

## MONTGOMERY

Norman Estes' journey to find the perfect job has been a lengthy but fulfilling one.

Over the last 20 years, he's worked several different jobs and formed lasting friendships with many people in the Montgomery office of VRS Blind and Deaf Services.

"When I was a lot younger, dealing with my hearing loss was a frustrating experience," said Norman. "I had to learn to just do things and not let anything get in my way."

Never lacking in motivation, Norman worked several different jobs – from driving for a trucking company to operating his own cleaning business.

He's appreciated VR's assistance with employment, but has always been on the lookout for something more fulfilling.

Norman's breakthrough occurred after ADRS Business Relations Consultant Anna Taylor joined Rehabilitation Counselor Emma Iser and Deaf Support Specialist Raven Hardy to inform him of a new group – the Central Alabama Veteran's Employment Council.

The council comes together to share resources, information, and job leads within the disability community, particularly for disabled veterans. When the Veteran's Association learned that Norman Estes had a commercial driver's license (CDL), they wanted to hire him to drive a shuttle bus carrying veterans.

"At first, I was working with Emma," said Norman. "Then I met Raven. Then I met Anna. It was fantastic. There were three ladies all in one room, and they were all working for me to help get me this job. It was unbelievable, and after

I started working for the VA, I knew my long journey was finally over."

Norman said that working with America's veterans with disabilities has been humbling and rewarding and that he's honored by his work and feels that he can relate to their experiences better as a person with a disability.

"It's kind of sad because a lot of people don't realize what our vets have gone through," Norman said, fighting back tears. "I'm honored by my job each and every day because I am here to help transport them. I'm married to my job – 'til death do us part. This is where I want to be for the rest of my days."



Norman Estes shakes hands with a veteran



# joan smith

## MONTGOMERY

For Joan Smith, a 62-year-old woman with cerebral palsy, being able to live at home and on her own is a very big deal.

For years, she managed on her own with limited help from friends and relatives, but one night something happened that challenged her self-sufficiency.

"I tumbled out of bed and fell to the floor," she said. "My doctor was very worried. He said I can't fall any more. My bones just can't take it."

Luckily, Joan didn't break anything, but she knew she needed some additional help to continue living independently, so she contacted the State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) service.

"I met with Joan at her home to discuss things that we can do to improve her living arrangements," said Sharon Weaver, SAIL independent living specialist. "I immediately got stationary bed rails to help Joan transfer to and safely sleep in her bed."

While Sharon was visiting Joan, she also made note of several simple things she could do to make the Montgomery woman's home life easier and more manageable.

Joan had difficulty putting toothpaste on her toothbrush, so Sharon installed a wall-mounted toothpaste dispenser.

Joan needed a transfer wheelchair to aid in traveling out of the home, so Sharon got her one.

Joan struggled in the kitchen, particularly with bottles and cans, so Sharon recommended and acquired a host of different bottle and can openers to allow Joan to prepare her own cool drink or hot meal.

"What Sharon has done for me – it means so much," Joan said. "I love being on my own, and without her help, I would be somewhere else. I know she cares for me. She's someone I can talk to, and I know she's looking out for me. I can't thank her enough."

With Joan's fears about being able to continue living on her own behind her, she's now able to concentrate more of her efforts on hobbies and other interests, like arts and crafts.

"The mirror I made is my favorite," said Joan. "It took me five months, but when I look at it, it makes me smile."



Above, Joan Smith uses a toothpaste dispenser to brush her teeth

Right, Joan opens a soda bottle with an opener provided by SAIL



Joan holds a mirror she made to enter in the Alabama National Fair





*Left, Kathryn Funderburg cuts an onion with a high contrast cutting board*

*Below, Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Yolanda Burris helps Katherine with a talking blood pressure monitor*



# kathryn funderburg

## OXFORD

In 2012, an electrical fire woke Kathryn Funderburg in the middle of the night.

"The motor in the furnace started the fire," said Kathryn. "Of course, I was frightened. I thought the entire house was full of smoke. There was some smoke, but what I later realized is that my eyes were so cloudy, I thought there was a lot more smoke than was really there."

Kathryn sought the advice of different doctors and specialists, but she soon discovered that her vision was going to continue to deteriorate.

"I just thank God for the 65 years of eyesight that I did have," Kathryn said. "Things happen for a reason, and I was determined to still be as much as I can be at this stage of my life."

Kathryn was advised by a friend to contact OASIS, the state's program for older Alabamians with vision loss. She was quickly connected with Vision Rehabilitation Specialist Yolanda Burris in the ADRS office in Anniston.

"Yolanda really got the ball rolling for me," she said. "After this life-changing experience, I wanted to live a normal life, and Yolanda helped me out so much. Cooking is such a big thing for me, and she helped get me back into the kitchen. I have to be able to function in my own home."

Yolanda showed Kathryn different ways to do things in

the home, from adding bump dots to her washer and dryer to providing her with a high contrast kitchen cutting board and finger guard to keep her hands safe while chopping onions.

"She's a true example of a success story," Yolanda said of Kathryn. "She's like a sponge in that any little tidbit of information I gave her, she wanted to know more about it."

For this reason, Kathryn was a perfect choice to attend Camp SAVI (seniors adapting to visual impairments), a five-day independent living skills camp for seniors with vision loss sponsored by OASIS and the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind.

"Camp SAVI really gave me a different outlook on things," said Kathryn's husband, Charles, who attended the camp with her. "While we were there, they had us all try on these goggles to simulate our spouse's vision impairment. It was that moment when I realized just how profound my wife's vision loss was – and seeing what she sees – that was an eye-opening experience for me."

Now, Kathryn has the tools to not only adapt to her golden years but also to thrive.

"As long as you're still breathing, you should still be living," said Kathryn, "and OASIS helps me do just that!"





Left, Jean Stallworth stacks a pallet of fire extinguishers that are ready to ship

Below, Bobby Holliday measures a machined coupling for quality assurance



# amerex corporation

## TRUSSVILLE

*"Together, success."*

For decades, the very idea has been at the heart of everything ADRS does.

Thirty years ago, that philosophy led Stella Pelham, then an ADRS employer development specialist (now known as a business relations consultant), to approach fire extinguisher manufacturer Amerex about creating a partnership to hire persons with disabilities — particularly those with hearing impairments.

"In the early days of the partnership, there was some resistance," said Amerex Personnel Manager Reba Glidewell. "With time, that apprehension gave over to acceptance and, later, embracing the entire Deaf culture."

Glidewell said Amerex's business culture of inclusion starts at the top and filters down to every worker. Not only does Amerex provide necessary accommodations like interpreters for Deaf coworkers, but they also offer sign language classes for hearing coworkers so they can better communicate with their peers.

In addition, with the support of the ADRS business relations team, Amerex is secure in knowing that if there is an issue with an employee with a disability, additional assistance is just a quick phone call away.

This framework fosters a strong work culture and leads to happier employees who stay on the job longer.

"I'm fast on the line and work hard with my hands," said 13-year employee Jean Stallworth through an interpreter. "I love my job, and I love working here. I'm comfortable here, and I know Amerex cares because they make me feel important to them. I'm motivated to work because it's a

great place to be."

Of course, for a partnership to sustain for nearly 30 years, it needs to be beneficial for all parties, and as Amerex has learned, workers with disabilities very often make excellent employees.

"Our turnover rate is considerably lower than that of typical manufacturing businesses," said Glidewell. "I attribute that to the continued support we receive from ADRS and the Business Relations Program that assists us with accommodations and meeting our employees' needs."

ADRS Business Relations Consultant Debbie Clemons said that she helps businesses by getting to know their specific workforce needs and then by matching a worker's strengths to a specific job.

"We're a partner with that business," Clemons said, "and we're as invested in their success as they are."


In the end, it's all about success.

And Amerex is successful because they embrace the strengths of their workforce.

For them, it's not about what you can't do, but what you can.

"We have a family atmosphere here," said Bobby Holliday — a 16-year employee — through an interpreter. "At first, I was like a stranger in a strange world, but Amerex and VR worked hard to break the barriers of communication so we all feel equal. VR and Amerex have a wonderful relationship, and that makes me very happy. I depend on it. I wouldn't have lasted here all these years without their help."





*SERVING  
INFANTS  
&  
TODDLERS*

**together***success*

ALABAMA'S

**early intervention**  
SYSTEM





## main program overview:

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

Created to be a critical first step to ensure 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 and family-centered system of support. EI also works alongside the family to further 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 more than 50 programs in local communities across Alabama, Early Intervention delivers 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 experience delays in hearing, seeing, walking, talking, or learning or have a diagnosed condition that has a high probability of resulting in delays.

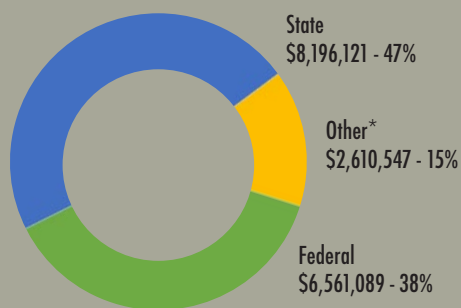
*Morgan Grimmatt has witnessed a dramatic transformation in her daughter, Caroline, thanks to Alabama's Early Intervention System*



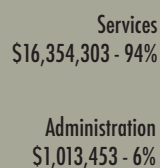
## by the numbers:

**More than \$17.3 million in services to infants, toddlers and families**

### Source of Revenue



### Use of Revenue



\*Medicaid reimbursements



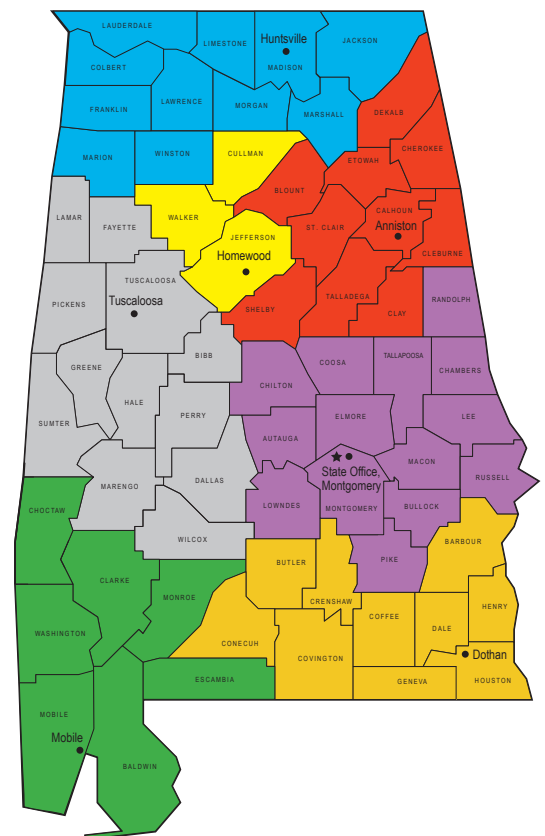
## EI program highlights:

- Provided services and supports to 6,316 infants and toddlers and their families in their natural environments.
- Continued to offer training and technical assistance on the regulations for Early Intervention under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to more than 50 EI community programs. Training focused on implementation of evidence-based practice strategies, routines-based assessments/interventions, smooth transitions to preschool, and developing improvement plans for the future.
- Developed and submitted an Annual Performance Report based on indicators and goals outlined in Alabama's six-year State Performance Plan per the U.S. Department of Education/Office of Special Education Programs requirements. AEIS once again received the highest ranking of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The intent of this process is to improve the quality of services to infants/toddlers and their families; improve service delivery; improve outcomes; and make this information available to the public. OSEP's results-driven accountability brings into focus the educational results and functional outcomes for children with disabilities while balancing those results with the compliance requirements of IDEA.
- Submitted Phase II of Alabama's State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) through which Alabama has begun to implement a plan to improve the social/emotional well-being of infants and toddlers and improve a family's ability to communicate their needs.
- Continued to collaborate, coordinate, and communicate with other early childhood partners, including Head Start, the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, the Alabama Department of Human Resources, the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC), and the Alabama Respite Coalition. Partnered with APC on Help Me Grow (HMG), which links infants and toddlers who do not meet the eligibility requirements for Part C Early Intervention and those who are transitioning out of Early Intervention into preschool to HMG resources, connections, and supports.
- Continued to partner with the Alabama Department of Mental Health and the Alabama Department of Public Health on Project LAUNCH to provide resources, training, and mental health consultation to programs that support the social-emotional growth and development of young children.
- Established a new partnership with the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Maternal and Child Health to develop an evaluation plan aimed at the effectiveness of the Early Intervention System in implementing new policies and procedures as outlined in our Improvement Plan specific to social-emotional development.
- Continued to maintain a high level of compliance, with excellent family survey results (56% response rate). Among the findings: 98% of families reported understanding their IDEA rights; 94% reported that service coordinators followed up on all of their concerns; 93% reported that service coordinators assisted them in obtaining needed community services; 96% reported that they were treated with respect; 96% reported that providers listened to their concerns and then helped them; 95% indicated that services were started promptly; and 93% indicated that their Early Intervention experience helped their family's ability to improve or enhance their child's development.



*Debbie Sanchez, a service coordinator with the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, works with Elizabeth Poore*

## EI office locations:





SERVING  
CHILDREN  
&  
YOUTH

together *success*

children's rehabilitation service



## main program overview:

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.

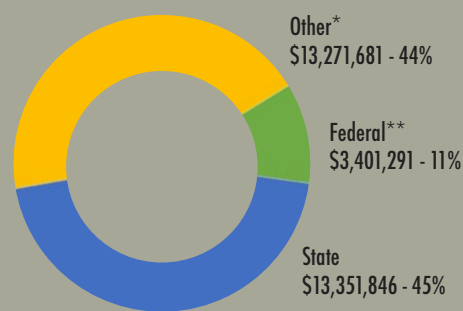


Nicholas Walls practices shooting hoops with his coach, Randy Haynes

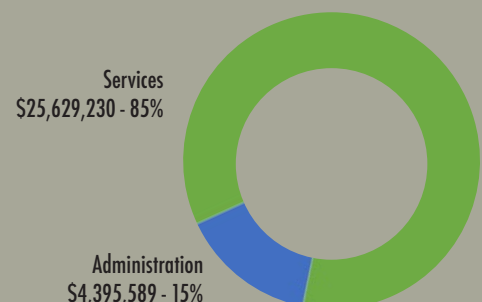
## CRS by the numbers:

More than \$30 million in services to Alabama's children and youth

### Source of Revenue



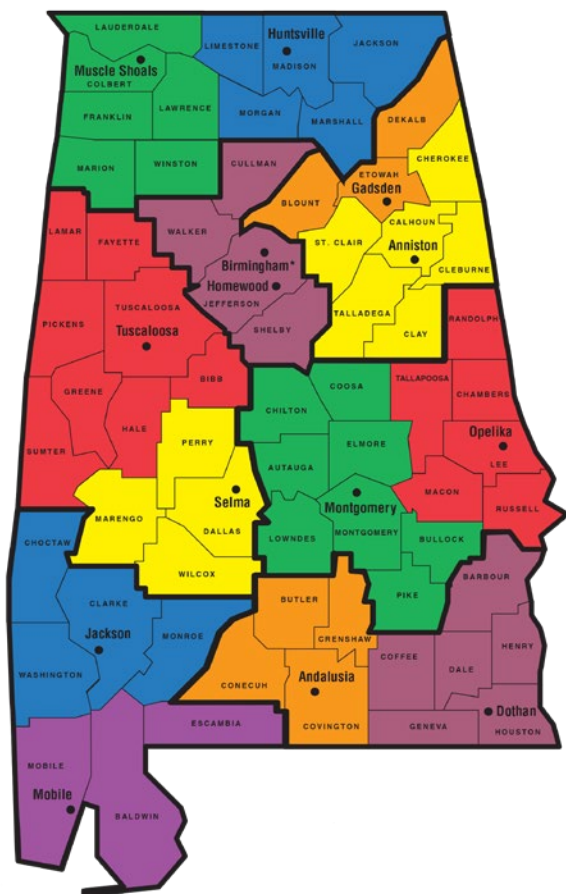
### Use of Revenue



\*Medicaid, insurance reimbursements \*\*Federal grants



## CRS office locations:



- Served 10,010 children and youth with special health care needs, including 270 with no insurance, through the CRS clinical programs.
- Had a total of 134,288 client encounters and provided 2,006 information and referral services.
- Had a total of 5,642 client contacts result in connection to \$300,701 in community resources, including audiology, nutrition, speech-language, and wheelchair-related items; food assistance; medical supplies; ramps; prescription medication assistance; utility bill assistance; and other miscellaneous items.
- Expedited Medicaid NET travel reimbursements for an estimated total of \$129,120.
- Partnered with nine major universities in Alabama to provide observation and/or practicum experiences for students interested in nutrition, physical therapy, social work, and other health-related or MCH professions/careers.
- Partnered with HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology in a pilot research project which provides unique, cutting-edge medical care for children with special health care needs and their families in the state of Alabama by expanding access to genomic medicine.
- Partnered with Family Voices of Alabama and the Family to Family Health Information Center to host the 2016 Partners in Care Summit, a two-day family/professional workshop providing youth and family leadership development.
- Participated in the National Academy for State Health Policy Learning Collaborative, From Engagement to Evidence: Using Patient Centered Outcomes Research and Comparative Effectiveness Research to Inform Policy Making.

## CRS hemophilia program:

- Served 338 people with bleeding disorders.
- Provided 32 Hemophilia Treatment Clinics (12 pediatric clinics in Birmingham, two pediatric clinics in Montgomery, 12 adult clinics in Birmingham, and six pediatric/adult combined clinics in Mobile).
- Served 17 uninsured participants.
- Provided approximately 650,000 units of clotting factor at a cost of nearly \$600,000.





*SERVING  
TEENS  
&  
ADULTS*

**together***success*

**vocational** rehabilitation service





**VRS**

## main program overview:

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.

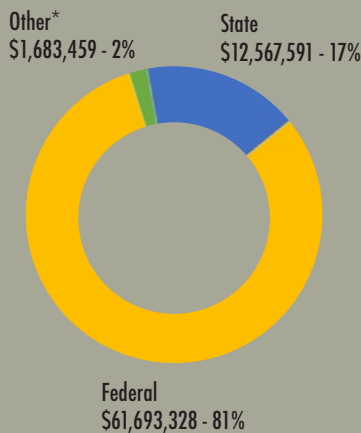
Through 21 strategically located offices, VRS works closely with Alabama employers, community rehabilitation programs, and other state agencies to match people with jobs.

**VRS**

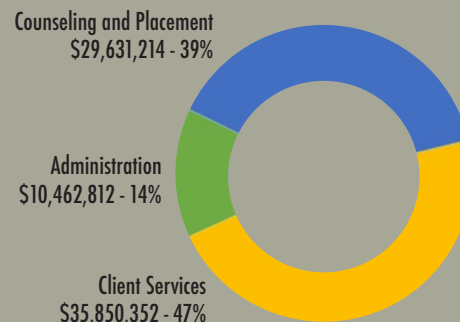
**by the numbers:**

*More than \$75.9 million to provide direct services to teens and adults*

### Source of Revenue



### Use of Revenue



\*Social Security reimbursements



# VRS 2016

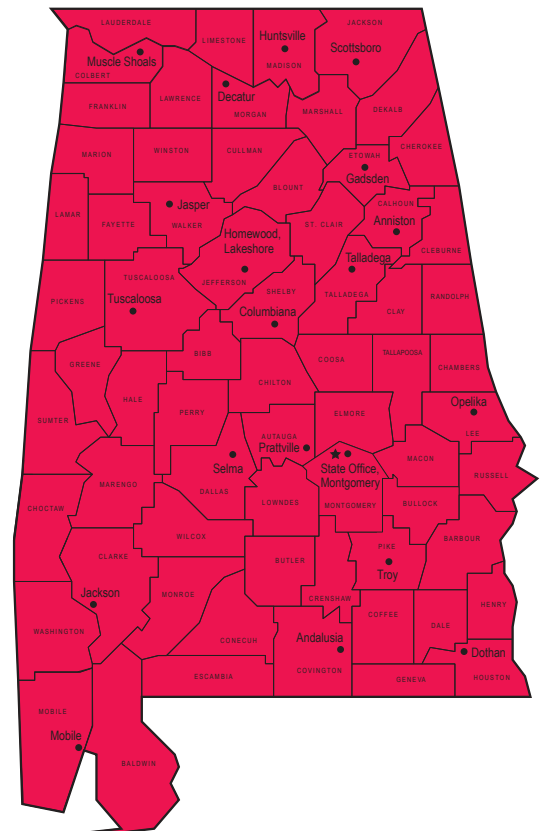
## VRS program highlights:

- Met and exceeded all six performance indicators from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for the first time.
- Exceeded by 11 cents an hour the average wage expectation for consumers who went to work.
- Partnered with other state agencies to develop a Combined State Plan that will streamline and enhance workforce development services to Alabama's job seekers, as mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Experienced cost savings of \$1.2 million in college-related expenses to consumers without reducing services as a result of restructuring how consumers are supported at the post-secondary level.
- Established new and innovative ways of providing a unique array of pre-employment transition services to students between the ages of 16-21, as mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. These innovative programs resulted in expenditures of approximately \$9 million.
- Working in partnership with community rehabilitation programs (CRPs), assisted 1,385 individuals with disabilities in becoming employed.
- Received a third year of Administration for Community Living (ACL) funding for the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) program to focus on improving outcomes of youth offenders by identifying and addressing related TBI in the juvenile justice system.
- Through the Independence Through Employment (ITE) Program – a partnership between ADRS and the Department of Human Resources (DHR) – renewed a \$1.14 million grant from DHR to provide employment services statewide to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients with disabilities.



VRS helped Jeremy Flippo succeed at Drake State Community College in Huntsville

## VRS office locations:



Jeremy Flippo is able to get to class on time thanks to a crane lift for his wheelchair and hand controls installed in his truck



## VRS blind and deaf services

The VRS Blind and Deaf Program provides assistance to Alabamians with vision and hearing loss 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.

### Highlights:

- Served more than 3,921 individuals with significant vision or hearing disabilities through individual employment programs. These services assisted 668 individuals with visual and hearing impairments in obtaining employment, with an average annual wage of \$26,394.
- Provided vision rehabilitation therapy to 1,408 individuals to enable them to live and work independently through individualized training and assistive technology.
- Provided orientation and mobility services to 350 blind and low-vision adults, teaching them to travel independently with a white cane.
- Served 572 new consumers through the Rehabilitation Audiology program, with 416 individuals fitted for hearing aids and 1,552 individuals receiving consultation/follow-up.
- In partnership with AIDB, sponsored three transition events to assist students who are blind or low vision and their parents in becoming familiar with resources to facilitate each student's transitioning from high school to postsecondary education or training and employment.
- Collaborated with AIDB and the Alumni of the Alabama School for the Blind to present the Technology Symposium, which provided individuals who are blind, low vision or deaf-blind and professionals who work in the field the opportunity to receive training and hands-on exposure to the most current technology.
- Began a partnership and alliance with the Alabama Industrial Development Training (AIDT) to establish a Ready



*Montana Wimberly was helped by VRS Blind and Deaf Services in FY16*

- to Work Program at E. H. Gentry, a component of AIDB.
- Continued to collaborate with the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) to provide sign language interpreters for Gov. Robert Bentley's news conferences on state emergencies.
- Expanded summer work and college prep programs for blind and deaf high school and college students.

## OASIS blind and deaf services

The Older Alabamians System of Information and Services program (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.

### Highlights:

- Provided instruction and services to 1,025 seniors with age-related vision loss to assist them in remaining independent in their homes. Six hundred and eighty-one consumers completed their individualized program, receiving 2,877 hours of instruction in their homes and communities.
- Purchased 39 new and recycled 79 pieces of assistive technology for consumers for reading or accessing print.
- Provided 60 hours of contract orientation and mobility instruction to 19 consumers in under-served areas.
- Held the sixth annual session of Camp SAVI (Seniors Adapting to Visual Impairment), a camp designed to assist seniors with vision loss and their loved ones in living more independently.



*Kathryn Funderburg pays bills with equipment for low vision provided through the OASIS program*



## **BUSINESS** enterprise program

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

BEP vendors operate snack bars, cafeterias, vending machine facilities, vending routes, a gift shop, and five federal dining hall operations statewide.

In FY16, vending machine operations accounted for the majority of the facilities, with Alabama's vendors operating approximately 64 vending machine routes – more than any program in the country.

### Highlights:

- Provided employment for more than 100 blind vendors and licensees, who in turn employed 471 other Alabamians, many with disabilities.
- Worked with the Rules Sub-Committee of the Elected Committee to successfully review, revise, and change the BEP Rules and Regulations.
- Worked with Alabama Interactive to develop an on-line payment system for BEP vendors to submit monthly reports and payments.
- Achieved \$26,694,909 in gross sales while increasing average income per vendor to \$43,370.



*Alabama BEP vendors operate 64 vending machine routes – more than any program in the country*

## **TRAUMATIC** brain injury system of care

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

In FY 2016, services funded by ADRS and the Impaired Drivers Trust Fund assisted more than 3,500 Alabamians with TBI. Services included community re-integration, 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 (AHIF), the Alabama Department of Public Health, the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), and other agencies, consumers, and family members to oversee and monitor the Alabama State TBI Plan.

### Highlights:

- Continued coordination of the Alabama Head Injury Task Force, the statewide advisory board established to develop and maintain the ideal service system for those with TBI. Training conducted through the Task Force

addresses concussion, juvenile justice, behavior, and other key issues.

- Continued to provide service linkage to eligible individuals through the State TBI and SCI (spinal cord injury) Registry. Respondents are provided with information and referral assistance to ADRS, AHIF, and other much-needed services and resources due to their injuries.
- Continued collaboration with AHIF – a key service and advocacy partner – in providing resources and supports to those with TBI and their families.
- Continued collaboration with UAB/Children's of Alabama in hosting the 3rd Annual Concussion Summit and partnering on the concussion task force as well as UAB/TBI Model Systems, one of 16 National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research programs improving research, care, and outcomes for TBI.

## **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.

In FY16, the network of 23 CRPs:

- Served 5,643 ADRS consumers, with 2,369 entering the Steps to Employment Program and 1,389 of those closed as rehabilitated in jobs with an average wage \$9.47 (an increase from \$9.24 in FY15).
- Assisted ADRS with the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, with many facilities at the forefront in providing services in the area of pre-employment transition services.
- Through consumer satisfaction surveys, continued to show positive responses to CRP network services, including evaluation, vocational training, job readiness, transition services, and job placement.



## ADRS lakeshore rehabilitation facility

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.

As a result of the shift in the referral population as well as the ADRS emphasis on providing services to those who need it the most, ADRS Lakeshore has continued to develop services designed to serve those with the most-significant disabilities. In addition, the program continues to expand transition services into schools across the state.

### Highlights:

- FY16 saw referrals and consumers served exceed 2,000 consumers for the first time in the history of ADRS Lakeshore. While Lakeshore continues to develop new services and revise/refine older services, the focus remains quality services for consumers.
- CONNECTIONS services continue to increase in popularity as there is an increase in the number of consumers who experience social skills as a primary barrier to employment. In FY16, there were more than 80 referrals for the Birmingham class and the first class started in Montgomery.
- Adaptive Driving Services expanded in FY16 to include services to consumers who are blind or have low vision. Bioptic driving, including night driving, will continue to expand as the service becomes available statewide.
- College Preparation classes expanded in FY16 and moved to new locations in the Birmingham area. The program was held at the University of Alabama Birmingham for four weeks in the summer, and there was a new session at Jefferson State Community College in Shelby County.



*ADRS Career Counselor Sabrina Wren assists students with goal planning at the College Prep session for students with hearing loss held on the Troy University campus*

## VRS transition service

ADRS Transition from School to Work Services strives to enable Alabama's students with disabilities to leave school as independent, productive, contributing members of their communities.

During FY 2016, transition services were provided by ADRS counselors to 16,405 youth with disabilities, with 2,189 of those youth becoming successfully employed.

In FY 2016, ADRS continued efforts to improve collaboration, increase partnerships, develop programs and services to prepare students with disabilities to enter competitive integrated employment, identify and explore career interests as well as increase individual independence, self-sufficiency, and inclusion of students with disabilities in their communities.

### Highlights:

- Continued collaboration with the Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, the Alabama Department of Mental Health, Troy University, and the Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities and partnership with the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation to provide the Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum. In FY16, 35 students with disabilities from throughout Alabama participated in this five-day program designed to enhance leadership skills and independence. Alumni of previous forums returned to work as staff.
- Continued College Prep Program services at 11 sites around the state, with more than 200 students participating.
- Continued collaboration with the Special Education Division of the Alabama State Department of Education and the Alabama Department of Corrections to implement the Prison Transition Initiative for students with disabilities incarcerated in adult prisons.
- Continued collaboration with local school systems across the state to provide jointly funded job coaches. These job coaches worked in 26 school systems to assist transition students in obtaining and maintaining employment.



*Thirty-five students with disabilities throughout the state participated in the Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum in 2016*



## BUSINESS relations

The state Vocational Rehabilitation business relations program, READI-Net, has a dual focus: a) address the workplace disability-related needs of Alabama businesses, and b) assist VRS consumers in their pursuit of employment.

READI-Net's business relations consultants (BRC) offer more than 20 products and services to employers: outreach, hiring, employee retention, staff training, accommodations, affirmative action, accessibility and more.

Involvement in employer co-op programs for college students with disabilities and building company-specific talent pipelines are the most-recent ventures.

### Highlights:

- Business partnerships totaled 1,190 with 7,148 no-cost services provided. The most popular of the services included outreach and recruitment, referrals to more than 3,144 job vacancies, ongoing supports post-hire, retention services, and staff training – all through a lead point of contact from the READI-Net team.
- The READI-Net team of 16 business relations consultants (BRCs) provided 7,628 services to 1,233 VRS consumers seeking employment or job retention assistance. The top services were job search assistance, referral to job leads, counseling, career exploration, assessment of readiness for work, 56 job readiness classes, and a variety of pre-hire work experiences.
- In addition, BRCs conducted 47 special events, 56 local partner collaboration meetings, and 46 presentations to business.
- READI-Net is the longest-standing VRS business relations program in the country. For this reason, it was featured in a national video intended for VRS professionals that focuses on various phases of business partnerships.



In July 2016, a film crew from the University of Massachusetts Boston Institute for Community Inclusion shot footage for a video that spotlights the ADRS Business Relations Program as a national model for business engagement

## What our business partners are saying about us ...

*"Over the past 35 years, we've continued our partnership with state VR simply because it works. Their responsiveness will keep us continuing to work together in the future."*

-Alesia Jones, chief HR officer, University of Alabama at Birmingham

*"ALILG is composed of Federal contractors & sub-contractors. Lots of organizations offer job candidates, but that's all they can do. VR delivers the full package....they are our most trusted partner and give us the resources needed to meet compliance obligations."*

-Charles Wilkinson, CEO, human resources management, Alabama Industry Liasion Group

*"I've been working with VR for more than 10 years in providing opportunities for people with different levels of abilities come work with us. It's part of our company's goal for building inclusion and VR helps us achieve our goals. When I don't know what to do for an accommodation, they step in. It's nice to have someone that I already trust suggest solutions."*

-Linda Cherrones, HR manager, CVS Health

*"We spend a lot of money developing and training our staff. Why would we want to let that talent walk out the door after the onset of disability? VR is our go-to group. They're experts in helping us retain these workers as productive employees. They help us do what's efficient and effective for both our employees and our customers. And it costs us ZERO! I tell my business managers, hey – even though they're a government agency they're a business partner, not compliance."*

-Jeff Cofield, disability management director, Alabama Power

*"It's the relationship that is key. VR was there every time we needed them, any time of day. They learned the job functions which led to effective screening so we never had to start a new hire in the wrong role. VR was embedded as part of our team working with director of operations, department supervisors, everyone. They helped us with strategic planning, training, resources, accommodations, on-site training, and hiring practices. We hired 72 associates in a two-year period and they performed better than most hires. VR delivered!"*

-Doug Parks, senior manager of operations, southeast region, HD Supply

*"Of benefit to us is this: VR knows our business and the jobs we have and can match people to them. They understand our business needs."*

-Rena Ramsey, senior VP HR diversity, Inclusion and Outreach, Regions Bank

*"We wanted to explore our diversity inclusion and be sure our products and services are accessible. I reached out to my VR partners and it was very successful. And feedback on their disability simulation training was overwhelmingly positive."*

-Kathy Lovell, senior VP ADA manager, Regions Bank



## **SUPPORTED employment**

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

Last year, ADRS contracted with 39 service providers to provide SE services, provided funding (in collaboration with our partners) for 10 Project SEARCH sites, developed a new transition pilot for autism in the tri-county area, and assisted with two IPS programs to serve individuals with serious mental illness and co-occurring substance abuse disorders.

In FY 2016, SE also:

- Had 919 consumers complete situational assessments and/or the Discovery process.
- Served 1,462 consumers who received an assessment or service in supported employment.
- Closed 472 consumers employed with a supported employment plan. These consumers worked an average of 23 hours a week and made an average of \$8.22 per hour.

Project SEARCH, a collaborative school-to-work transition program for students with significant disabilities, currently has 10 project SEARCH sites that produce excellent employment results (70 percent) with increased wages (averaging \$8.66 an hour) and opportunities for career employment and advancement.

Another collaborative effort is Individual Placement and Support (IPS), a program for individuals with serious mental illness and co-occurring disorders that views work as a part of recovery. IPS has served some 148 consumers, with 41 individuals becoming employed to date. The program is expected to expand and serve at least 450 consumers with a serious mental illness over a five-year period.



*Project SEARCH sites produce excellent employment results with increased wages and opportunities for career employment and advancement*

## **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 people with disabilities.

Highlights:

- Through the 13 local committees, presented numerous events, such as mentoring days, job fairs, and other activities enhancing employment readiness for VRS consumers, students, wounded warriors, and individuals with the most-significant disabilities.
- Engaged in celebrations for the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act while also updating the Facebook page for Governor's Committees at the state and local level, generating a growing number of followers.
- Held 13 local events to National Disability Employment Awareness Month, honoring 122 winners as employees, businesses, advocates, collaborators, educators, partners, and media of the year champions.
- Held the annual statewide Governor's Committee recognition ceremony and reception at the State Capitol in December to recognize the 12 state winners from the local events.



*Gov. Robert Bentley addresses the statewide winners of the 2015 Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities awards*



*SERVING  
PERSONS  
WITH  
SIGNIFICANT  
DISABILITIES*

together *success*

STATE OF ALABAMA

independent living





*A dental hygienist visits Joan Smith at her home to inspect a tooth*

## SAIL

### main program overview:

Independence. Self-sufficiency. No two words better summarize the goal of the State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) 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.

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 hybrid counselor. There are currently counselors in Birmingham, Decatur, and Tuscaloosa who work this specialized caseload.

SAIL is comprised of three specialized programs:

**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 a 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 **Independent Living** 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,
- provide evidence that by receiving an IL service, his or her potential to achieve independence will improve.



# SAIL 2016

## SAIL program highlights:

- Assisted 1,468 Alabamians with the most-significant disabilities in remaining in their homes and communities. Without these services, these individuals would be unable to live in their own homes.
- Provided services to consumers in all counties through seven SAIL district offices.
- Developed community resources, in-kind goods, and services in the amount of \$222,266 to maximize services to individuals through our independent living specialists.
- Continued collaboration with Alabama Medicaid as well as other state agencies to streamline referrals and access needed services.
- Expanded SAIL/VRS combined services to include services available in Decatur and Montgomery, with plans to develop other areas in 2017.
- Worked collaboratively with the State Independent Living Council to develop the State Plan for Independent Living, which will increase education, advocacy, and services throughout the state.

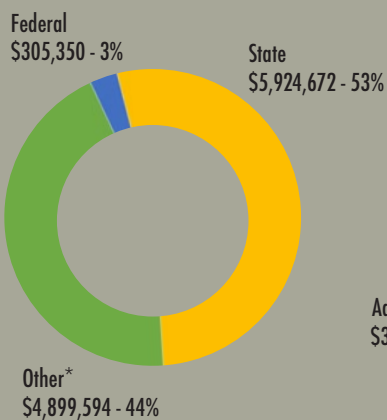


SAIL made recommendations and provided consultations to Vincente Carr

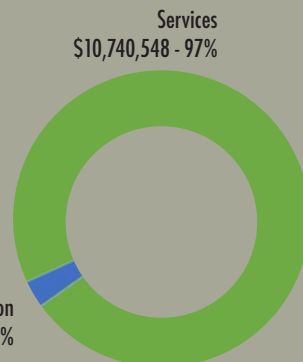
## SAIL by the numbers:

More than \$11.1 million to serve Alabamians with the most-significant disabilities

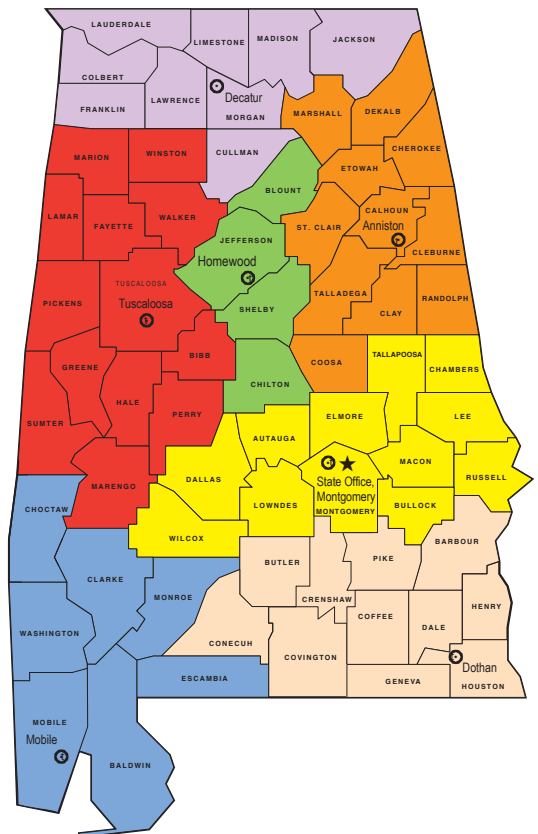
### Source of Revenue



### Use of Revenue



\*Medicaid reimbursements



A black and white photograph of a man with short, wavy hair and glasses, wearing a plaid shirt. He is focused on working with a mechanical device, possibly a piece of equipment used in rehabilitation. He is holding a tool with a white handle. The background is slightly blurred, showing some outdoor elements like trees and a building.

*SERVING  
ALABAMIANS  
IN ALL  
67 COUNTIES*

**together***success*

THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF  
**rehabilitation services**



# FOR ALL AGES

programs across the **ADRS** continuum

## REHABILITATION engineering & assistive technology services

The Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology (RE&AT) 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.

### Highlights:

- Provided services to 738 consumers being served by CRS, VRS, and SAIL.
- Custom modified, designed or developed 54 assistive technology devices.
- Implemented a 3D printing project to provide better-customized devices to children and adults with disabilities.
- Increased participation with several university engineering and design programs to develop assistive devices for ADRS consumers.



*Rehabilitation Technology Specialist Jeffrey Mega makes modifications to a cup holder to properly fit on Vincente Carr's chair*

## STAR: alabama's technology resource

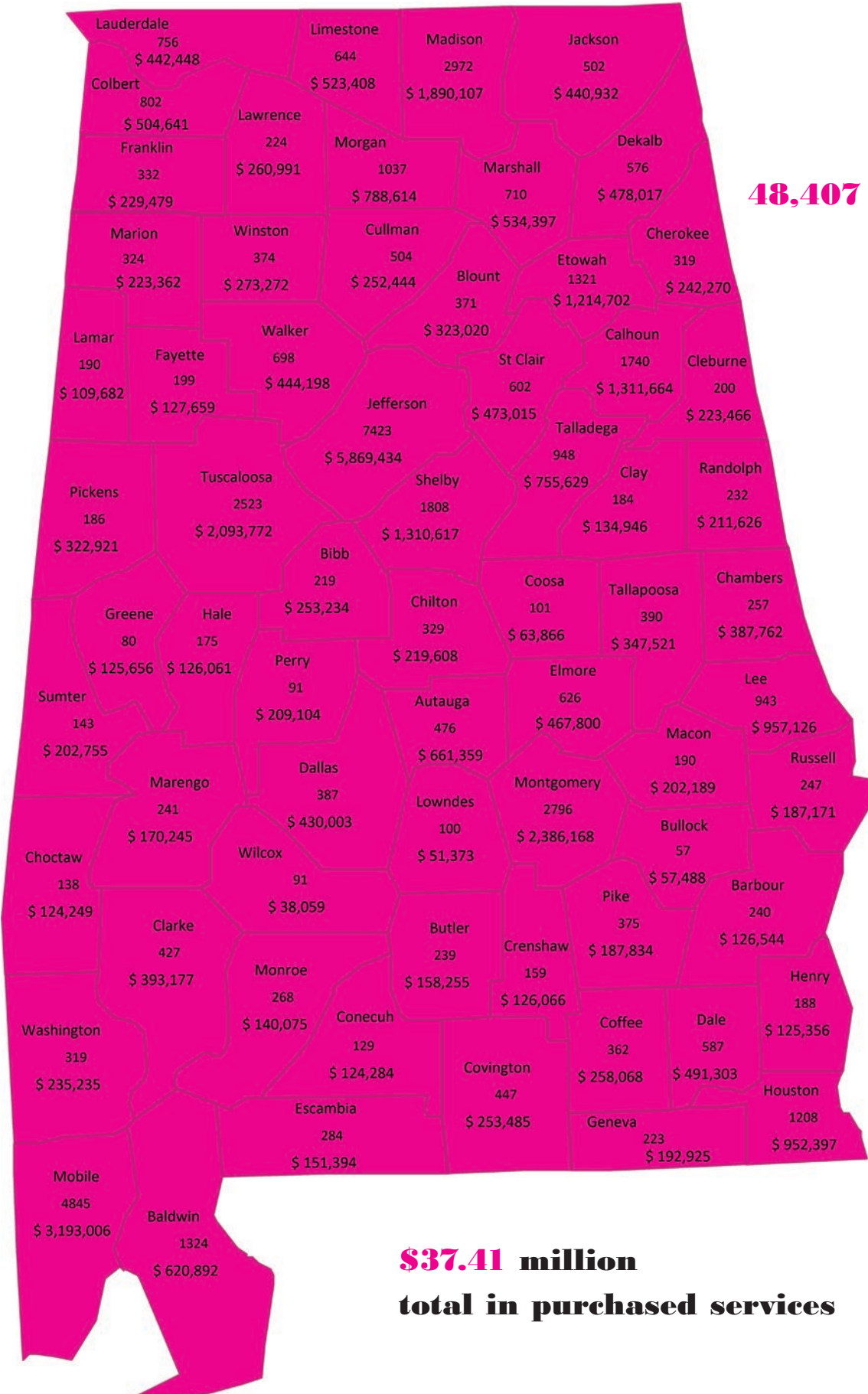


STAR is Alabama's Assistive Technology Act program. Through its Reutilization, Training, and Alternative Finance programs and public awareness activities, STAR assists Alabamians with disabilities by improving access to and acquisition of assistive technology (AT) that enables them to live more productive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

### Highlights:

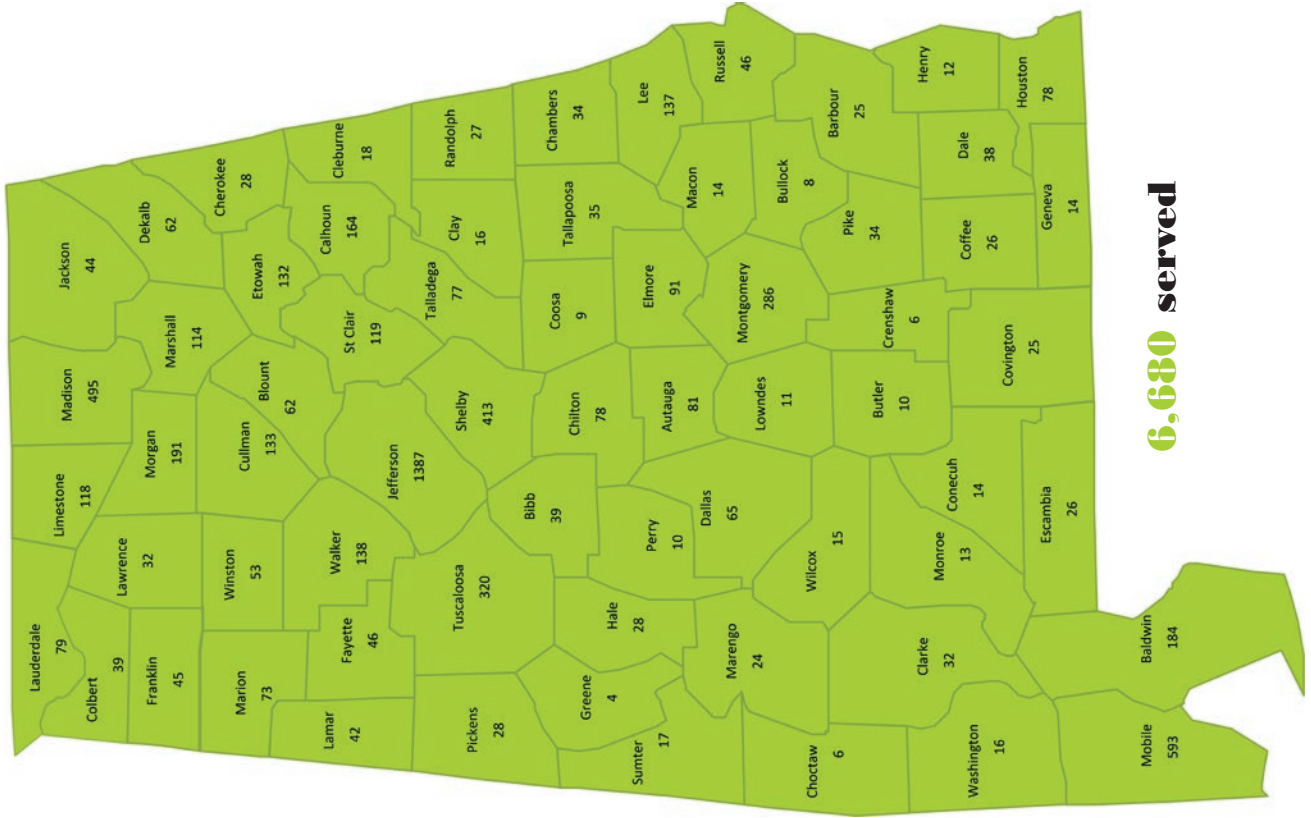
- Ranked third nationally among 56 programs, the Reutilization Program saved Alabamians with disabilities \$1,792,467.79 and ADRS consumers \$145,326. The program received 2,907 donated items, 4,101 requests (1,405 rural requests; 2,696 urban requests), and filled requests/reused 2,991 items.
- The Alternative Finance Program approved 12 loans totaling \$225,065.04. The top three loan requests were for adaptive vehicles, mobility equipment, and home modifications. The program established 12 new vendor partnerships to promote awareness and increase AT loans.
- The startraining.org website added 10 new webinars and a total of 62 modules about AT.
- The short-term Device Loan Program provided 81 AT devices to 39 borrowers. There were 66 AT demonstrations, an increase of 164 percent.

## people served, purchased services



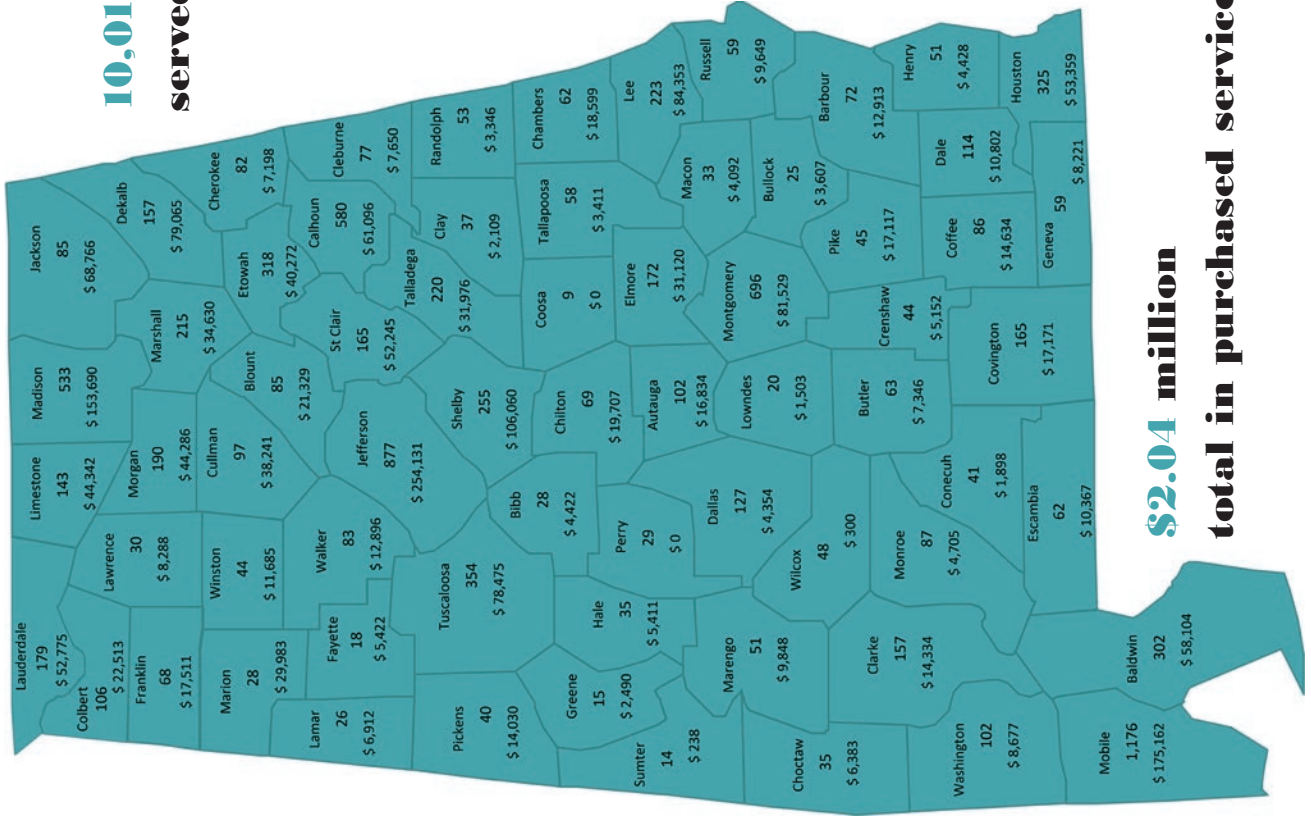


## infants and toddlers served



**6,680 served**

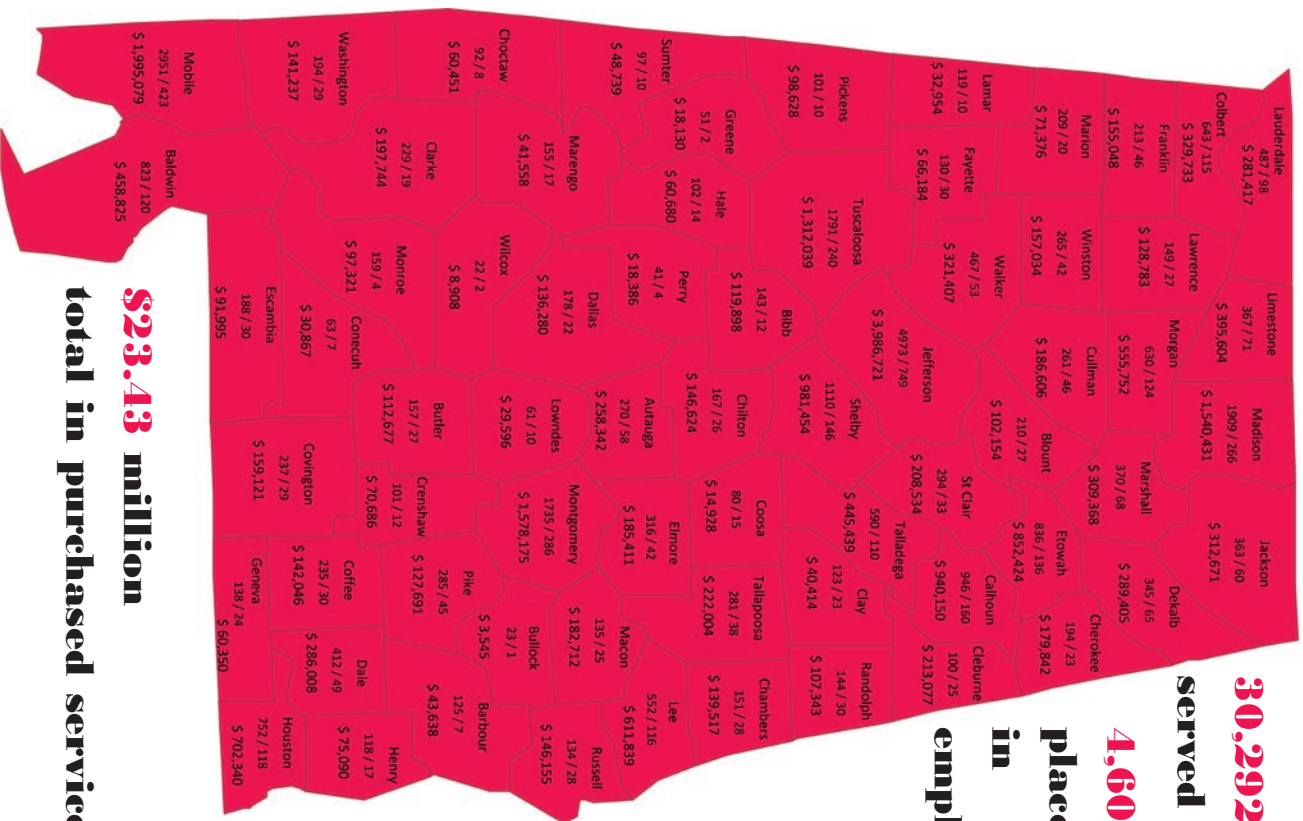
## children and youth served, purchased services



**\$2.04 million**

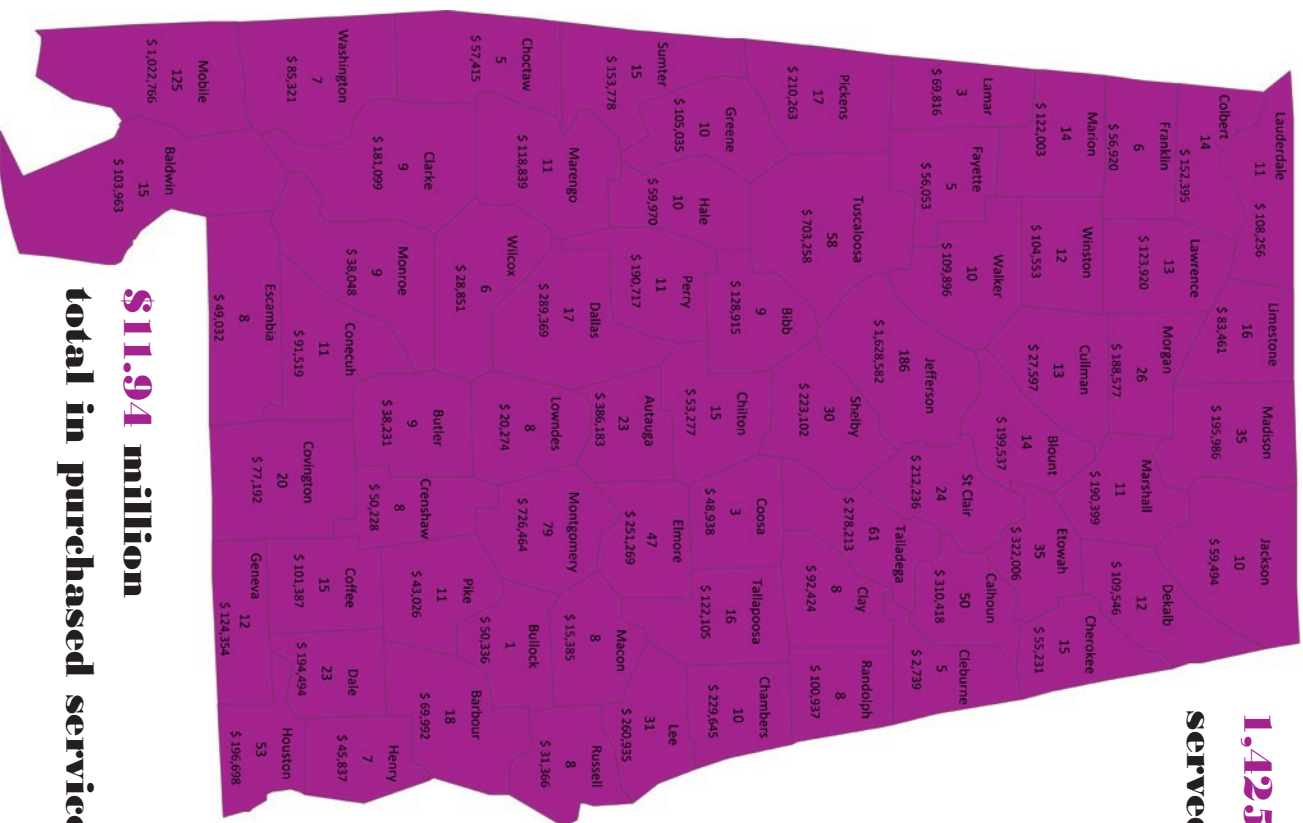
**total in purchased services**

## teens and adults served, purchased services



**30,292**  
**served**  
**4,607**  
**placed**  
**in**  
**employment**

## persons with significant disabilities served, purchased services



**1,425**  
**served**

**\$23.43 million**  
**total in purchased services**

**\$11.94 million**  
**total in purchased services**





ADRS Lakeshore is operated by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

## COMMUNITY rehabilitation programs:

### ANNISTON

Opportunity Center-Easter Seals

### AUBURN-OPELIKA

Achievement Center-Easter Seals  
Jackie Johnson Employment Services

### BIRMINGHAM

ADRS Lakeshore  
Easter Seals of the Birmingham Area  
Goodwill Industries of Alabama  
Independent Advantages  
Triumph Services  
United Cerebral Palsy

Vocational Resources Inc.  
Workshops Inc.

### DECATUR

Erica Allen Employment Services (EASE)  
Phoenix Rehabilitation Foundation

### DOTHAN

Wiregrass Rehabilitation Center

### GADSDEN

Darden Rehabilitation Foundation

### HUNTSVILLE

Erica Allen Employment Services (EASE)

Phoenix Rehabilitation Foundation

### JACKSON

Clarke County ARC

### MOBILE

Goodwill Easter Seals of the Gulf Coast  
United Cerebral Palsy of Mobile

### MONTGOMERY

Easter Seals Central Alabama  
Goodwill Industries of Central Alabama  
Triumph Services

### MUSCLE SHOALS

Northwest Easter Seals

### PELHAM

Shelby County ARC

### SELMA

West Central Alabama Easter Seals

### TALLADEGA

Central Alabama Reach Out Center  
E.H. Gentry Technical Center

### 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 Jefferson County Inc.  
Central Alabama Therapy Services, LLC  
Children R Us  
Children's of Alabama Early Intervention Program  
UCP of Greater Birmingham (Hand in Hand)

### BREWTON

UCP Mobile Families First

### 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)

### FAYETTE

Tri County Early Intervention

### FLORENCE

SCOPE 310

### GADSDEN

UCP 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

### McINTOSH

UCP of Mobile (New Journey)

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

### ONEONTA

UCP of Greater Birmingham (Hand in Hand)

### OZARK

Vivian B. Adams Early Intervention

### PELHAM

Shelby County ARC/Kids First

### PELL CITY

UCP of Greater Birmingham (Hand in Hand)

### PRATTVILLE

ARC of Autauga/Western Elmore County (EIEIO)

### RAINSVILLE

UCP of Greater Birmingham (Hand in Hand)

### ROBERTSDALE

The MR/DD Board of Baldwin County  
UCP of Mobile (Project Sunrise)

### SCOTTSBORO

Marshall/Jackson Mental Retardation Authority  
Twin Acres Early Intervention

### SELMA

Cahaba Center Early Intervention

### SYLACAUGA

Altapointe EI Program

### TALLADEGA

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, regional office  
Burton Center Early Intervention

### TROY

UCP of Mobile (Bright Beginnings and Family Ties)

### TUSCALOOSA

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, regional office  
Community Service Programs of West Alabama Inc.

### TUSCUMBIA

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

### VALLEY

Chattahoochee Valley ARC/Valley Haven Early Intervention

# A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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

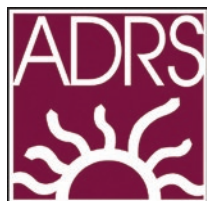
PEGGY ANDERSON  
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YOLANDA BURRIS  
BRANDI BROWN  
ATTALLAH COTTON  
DEBBIE CLEMONS  
SUSAN EDWARDS  
SUZANNE GOLSON  
RAVEN HARDY  
RENEE HATHCOX  
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EMMA ISER  
ALISHA LOVE  
DEANNA MCMURTREY  
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*The individuals listed represent only a small number of the hundreds of dedicated ADRS professionals around the state who work tirelessly to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Thanks to all ADRS staff who work each day to help the department accomplish its mission:*  
**to enable Alabama's children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential.**







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