

**Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services**

**Montgomery, Alabama**

**Thursday, December 4, 2025**

**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon**

**AGENDA**

Call to Order	Charles Wilkinson, Chair
Prayer	
Verification of Quorum	Karen Freeman
Verification of Open Meeting Act Notice	Charles Wilkinson
Approval of Agenda	Charles Wilkinson
Approval of Minutes for the Sept. 11, 2025 meeting	Charles Wilkinson
<b><i>New Business:</i></b>	Charles Wilkinson
ADRS 2025 Annual Report & Consumer Success Story	Jill West, Director, Office of Communications and Information/ Governmental Relations
Approval - ADRS 2025 Annual Report	Charles Wilkinson
Division Updates	Executive Leadership Team
Commissioner's Comments	Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Commissioner
<b><i>Announcements:</i></b>	
Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services <b><u>proposed</u></b> meeting dates for <b>2026:</b>	
• <b>Thursday, March 5, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.</b> , ADRS, Montgomery/State Office	
• <b>Thursday, June 25, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.</b> , ADRS, Montgomery/State Office	
• <b>Thursday, Sept. 3, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.</b> , ADRS, Montgomery/State Office	
• <b>Thursday, Dec. 3, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.</b> , ADRS, Montgomery/State Office	
Board Business/Discussion	Charles Wilkinson
Adjourn	Charles Wilkinson

## ***Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services***

*Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services  
560 South Lawrence Street  
Montgomery, Alabama  
Minutes  
Thursday, December 4, 2025*

### **Call to Order:**

Mr. Charles Wilkinson, Board Chair, welcomed Board Members, the Executive Leadership Team members, and guests to the quarterly board meeting. Mr. Wilkinson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

### **Prayer:**

Ms. Beverly Floyd, Information Technology Director, opened the board meeting with prayer.

### **Verification of Quorum:**

**Board members present:** Mr. Charles E. Wilkinson, Board Chair; Mr. Kevin D. Kidd, Board Vice-Chair; Ms. Judith M. Gilliam; Mrs. Norma M. Lemley; and Mr. Eddie C. Williams. A quorum was declared.

**Board members absent:** Ms. Michelle Glaze and Ms. Kimberlin Love.

Interpreting services were provided.

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

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

Mrs. Karen Freeman verified that the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services' announcement for the Thursday, December 4, 2025, meeting, was originally posted on the Alabama Secretary of State's website on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. The final revision being made on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 4:00 p.m., to include a brief description of the meeting,

The meeting announcement was posted on the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services' public website on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, and made available at the following link:  
<https://rehab.alabama.gov/about/meet-our-board>.

### **Approval of Agenda:**

The board meeting agenda was distributed to members by mail and electronically prior to the meeting. Mr. Wilkinson stated there were no changes and/or additions to the agenda and asked for a motion to approve the agenda as presented. The motion to approve the agenda was made by Ms. Gilliam and seconded by Mr. Williams. It was approved unanimously.

### **Approval of Minutes for September 11, 2025 Meeting:**

The board minutes were distributed to members by mail and electronically prior to the meeting. Mr. Wilkinson requested a motion to approve the minutes as is, with no changes presented, for the Sept. 11, 2025, board meeting. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Mrs. Lemley and seconded by Mr. Kidd. The minutes were approved unanimously by acclamation.

### **New Business:**

Mrs. Jill West, Governmental Relations Manager and Director of the Office of Communications and Information (OCI) presented a Consumer Success Story: *Shreve McWilliams, Orange Beach, AL.*

After giving birth prematurely, Mrs. Crawford McWilliams was told that her daughter had a buildup of excess calcium in her brain. Initial tests ruled out serious illnesses, but genetic testing revealed the diagnosis of CTNNB1 Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that affects the development of the brain and other parts of the body.

Shreve was enrolled in both Early Intervention (EI) and Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) where the family learned that they could receive services she needed such as orthopedic, mobility, and seating clinics. At the CRS Mobile office, with the help of CRS Physical Therapist, Ms. Cameron Riley, the family secured assistive devices for Shreve. "Our goal is for her to independently walk," Mrs. McWilliams said. "The gait trainer and standing device help Shreve work toward this goal, while the wheelchair is a tool to help her have some independence on long, active days and when she goes to school."

Mrs. McWilliams said talking to CRS Parent Consultant Ms. Cara Rain, who organizes Parent Connection meetings, is especially helpful because she is navigating a similar path. "She is a special needs mom herself," Mrs. McWilliams said. "Having a mom who cares because she is also a special needs mom, she can come in and make sure things don't slip through the cracks that I would not have thought about."

The Annual Report video highlighting Shreve McWilliams can be found at:  
<https://youtu.be/CcJGNZnAYVc>

## **Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services 2025 Annual Report:**

Mrs. West reported the final draft of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) 2025 Annual Report was distributed to members by mail and electronically prior to the meeting.

Commissioner Burdeshaw and Board Members expressed their sincere appreciation to the Office of Communications and Information (OCI) team members: Mrs. West; Mr. Rick Couch, Public Information Specialist; and Mrs. Amanda Gunn, Public Information Specialist, for their work compiling the 2025 Annual Report.

ADRS staff continually look for ways to provide effective and efficient services to demonstrate the importance of responsible stewardship of public funds. ADRS could not achieve this high level of efficiency without the many relationships that have been built with other state agencies, community providers, local schools, the community college and university systems, and the business community. ADRS is grateful for these relationships and the opportunities they provide to stretch every dollar ADRS receives to serve infants, toddlers, children, and adults of all ages through our continuum of service. Commissioner Burdeshaw is grateful for the continued support of Governor Kay Ivey, the Alabama Legislature, Alabama's Congressional Delegation, the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, and many agency and community partners.

Mr. Wilkinson moved that the Board approve and adopt the 2025 Annual Report submitted and authorize the staff of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services' Office of Communications and Information (OCI) to make all necessary minor text and design changes prior to its publication. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kidd and was unanimously approved.

The 2025 ADRS Annual Report Stories can be found at this link below with a full playlist on the ADRS Family channel:

[https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxl-NWt4SG-HiO1zmnFbOYFjkMLp2qa&si=i\\_gxv\\_TyecVqdDFn](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxl-NWt4SG-HiO1zmnFbOYFjkMLp2qa&si=i_gxv_TyecVqdDFn)

Subscribe to the ADRS YouTube channels (ADRS TV and ADRS Family) to be notified when new videos are posted.

### Division Updates:

Ms. Amy Blakeney, Director, *Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS)*, introduced and welcomed Ms. Dawn Bowles, Rehabilitation Specialist. Ms. Bowles previously worked at the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) and she is currently supervising the District Early Intervention Coordinators statewide.

Commissioner Burdeshaw stated the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) continues the transition to a fee-for-service reimbursement model in the AEIS program. ADRS Leadership staff continue to meet regularly with programs and providers to develop systems and payment structures that meet needs, while using verifiable data to make informed decisions. ADRS has already adjusted a newly established rate for service coordination because programs were able to share data that demonstrated a need for adjustments. Additional details will be shared at the quarterly Board meetings until the transition to the new structure and case management tool are complete.

Mrs. Cathy Caldwell, Assistant Commissioner, *Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS)*, welcomed and introduced Ms. Tammy Moore, State Parent Consultant. Ms. Moore has worked with CRS for over twenty (20) years and in August 2025, she moved into her new role. The Parent Consultants facilitated five (5) local Parent Advisory Committee meetings across the state. These meetings provide families with opportunities to review and advise CRS on important program changes, share insights on the needs of Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) in their communities, and a time and place to connect, learn, advocate, and grow together.

Mrs. Caldwell reported the CRS Mobile Clinic will house a full audio suite and primarily be used to provide newborn hearing screenings and diagnostic follow-ups, hearing assessment clinics, and hearing aid clinics. The goal is to utilize community partnerships to provide services in underserved communities. ADRS will partner with the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) to park the mobile unit at local health departments for newborn hearing screenings and collaboration with local pediatrician offices, HeadStart programs and schools. The tentative arrival date is set for early to mid-April 2026.

Mrs. Tracy Bird, Director, *Human Resource Development Division*, introduced and welcomed Ms. Gwenea Jackson, Rehabilitation/Recruitment Specialist. Ms. Jackson has worked at ADRS for many years and is assisting with recruiting, developing, retraining, and promoting qualified staff.

Mrs. Shay Cannon, Chief Financial Officer, *Finance and Purchasing Division*, and Commissioner Burdeshaw reported that the Alabama Examiners of Public Accounts are conducting their routine Legal Compliance Examination for October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2025. The examination will be performed under the authority of the Code of Alabama 1975, Section 41-5A-12. The legal compliance examination will include tests to determine whether ADRS complied with applicable state and local laws, and regulations.

Mrs. Lisa Alford, Director, *State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) Program*, reported the SAIL Waiver has completed its submission for the new five (5) year cycle. The public comment period has ended, and Alabama Medicaid has submitted the proposal to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for review and approval. Unfortunately, the government shutdown resulted in a delay in receiving CMS approval. ADRS has been instructed by Alabama Medicaid to continue providing services under the existing Wavier document until further notice. Commissioner Burdeshaw stated

the Alabama Medicaid Agency was approached about an increase in the reimbursement rate for the SAIL Waiver case management time. The rate has remained the same since the Waiver was approved in the early 1990s. Subsequent to the meeting, it was discussed ADRS had been approved for the rate increase.

Mr. Ashley Townsend, Assistant Commissioner, *Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS), Blind/Deaf Program*, and Commissioner Burdeshaw reported the Randolph-Sheppard Act is a longstanding federal law that gives priority to blind individuals (licensed through state vocational rehabilitation agencies) to operate vending facilities on federal property (e.g., cafeterias, snack bars, vending machines) as a way to promote economic independence and business ownership opportunities for people who are blind. Federal agencies are generally required to provide this priority when the State Licensing Agency (SLA) is competitive under the Department of Education regulations. The program is in a period of administrative change and uncertainty, particularly regarding how the priority is applied in federal dining contracts and institutional venues. Legal and advocacy challenges from blind vendors and organizations may emerge in response to those administrative shifts.

Mrs. Karen Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, *Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS), General Program*, introduced and welcomed Ms. Tiffany Moore, Rehabilitation Specialist. Ms. Moore transferred from the Alabama State Department of Education. She will be assisting in the Alabama Project SEARCH program, collaborating with multiple partners to ensure interns with disabilities are afforded positive experiences and valuable job training experience at a host site, potentially resulting in competitive integrated employment.

Mrs. Jenkins reported The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires a triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) to be conducted jointly by the Vocational Rehabilitation program and the State Rehabilitation Council. CSNA is an opportunity for combining existing information and new information to inform the State Plan. The previous CSNA was completed in 2023. A Request for Proposal (RFP) was submitted so that a provider can be selected. Currently, three (3) proposals have been submitted by the deadline. The goal is to have the upcoming CSNA completed by December 2026.

Mrs. Jenkins reported Commissioner Burdeshaw, and several ADRS Leadership staff, attended the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) 2025 Fall Conference in San Diego, CA in November. Commissioner Burdeshaw is currently serving as the President of CSAVR. While the Commissioner does not seek attention or accolades, Ms. Jenkins wanted to take a moment to let the board members know how well she represented the State of Alabama and the national Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. Commissioner Burdeshaw led great discussions regarding the future of the VR program during the Directors Forum and the CSAVR Business meeting. During the opening session, she did an excellent job encouraging everyone to share our story and how critical it is that we do so. Mrs. Jenkins heard numerous directors tell the Commissioner they appreciated her leadership during the Business meeting and later numerous attendees told her how much they

appreciated what she said during the opening session. Commissioner Burdeshaw has an incredible way of connecting with her audience. She is a remarkable leader, and Mrs. Jenkins is proud that the nation was able to see it. Mrs. Lemley, board members, and the executive leadership team concurred with the positive feedback provided to Commissioner Burdeshaw. Commissioner Burdeshaw expressed appreciation to everyone for their support and kind remarks.

Commissioner's Comments:

**Federal and State Administration Update**

Commissioner Burdeshaw mentioned in her September 2025 board report the federal appropriations process and its potential impact on the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) funding, specifically the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program and some of its sub-programs. While the recommendations from the Administration, the House, and the Senate are known, it is unknown when or if Congress will pass an actual budget. This makes it extremely difficult to project needs and give definitive answers to state leaders as ADRS plans for the next legislative session; however, ADRS used the recommendations from all three (3) sources to develop the department's budget request for FY 2027 that was due at the end of October 2025. All three (3) sources recommend significant reductions to the federal grant; one (1) source recommends a change in mandatory programs that would transfer the annual cost-of-living increase to another program; and one (1) recommends a reduction in discretionary grants. The program has already experienced a reduction in reimbursements from the Social Security Administration for employment services rendered for participants who were previously receiving benefits. The cumulative impact of the recommendations would lead to deep reductions within the program. ADRS knows that if the outlook remains the same, even with an approved budget request, the program will not have enough funding to serve all eligible participants beginning FY 2029. Finally, ADRS knows that if a VR program does not have sufficient funding to serve all eligible participants, the state must apply for and be approved to enter an Order of Selection.

[eCFR :: 34 CFR 361.36 -- Ability to serve all eligible individuals; order of selection for services.](#)

ADRS does not want to enter an Order of Selection, which would include serving only individuals with the most significant disabilities and placing all other eligible individuals on a waiting list. The goals of the ADRS budget request are to educate state leaders about the potential impacts and the return on investment possibilities, make a reasonable budget request based on congressional recommendations, reduce program expenditures now, and garner enough state funding to deter entering an Order of Selection until we know more about the short and long-term budget prospects. In preparation for our annual budget presentation (FY 2027) with Finance Director, Bill Poole, budget and finance staff from the Executive Budget Office, Mrs. Shay Cannon, CFO, and ADRS fiscal services staff assisted Commissioner Burdeshaw in preparing documents outlining the identified needs, the request, and the potential consequences if ADRS does not have the necessary funding.

Due to the reduction in the VR budget, Commissioner Burdeshaw requested VR Leadership in the General and Blind/Deaf programs review expenses (contracts, expenditures, travel, training, etc.) to determine where ADRS could implement changes that would lead to cost savings. The jointly funded job coach contracts will no longer be funded effective July 31, 2026. These services can be provided by the local Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP). ADRS has paused the summer camps. Travel has been cut, and staff have been directed to only participate in training conferences virtually. ADRS is evaluating positions as employees resign or retire to determine if some positions can be eliminated.

### **2025 Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (GCEPD) Awards**

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported the 2025 Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (GCEPD) Awards ceremony was held on October 27, 2025. The Office of Communication and Information recorded the event and the videos are available:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6lshQF-Yj-vgYkxoWkh5xgmQD1JOHI7I&si=Xgn9a2e2tl6L013X>

The 2025 Award Recipients include:

#### **Employees of the Year for a Large Business**

Erica Endress (Autauga) with AL Dept. of Corrections

Tonya Dalton (Tuscaloosa) with Hope Pointe Behavioral Health Crisis Care

#### **Employers of the Year for a Large Business**

New Flyer of America, Inc. (Calhoun)

Phifer Incorporated (Tuscaloosa)

#### **Employee of the Year for a Small Business**

Isaac Jackson (Cullman) with Cullman Florist

#### **Employer of the Year for a Small Business**

University of North AL Dining by Chartwells (Lauderdale)

#### **Partner Award**

Alabama Department of Corrections (VRS Business Enterprise Program partner)

Toyota Motor Manufacturing Alabama (Toyota Hiring Experience program)

#### **Public Service Award**

The Honorable Paul Lee (State Representative, AL House District 86)

The Honorable Katie Britt (U.S. Senator)

#### **Students of the Year**

Chase Lovell (Jefferson), Junior at Oak Mountain High School

Aidan Anderson (Mobile), Senior at Auburn University

## **Gadsden Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and Open House**

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported an overflow crowd assisted the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services staff members in Gadsden in welcoming everyone to the new building on November 12, 2025. The building project was sponsored by the City of Gadsden and the Public Building Authority. Commissioner Burdeshaw expressed her appreciation to the local dignitaries that were present to show their support; and the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, Chairman, Charles Wilkinson; Vice-Chairman, Kevin Kidd; and past Board Chairman, Eddie Williams. The new building will house the Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) and Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS). A+ Education Partnership Communications Manager and a former ADRS program participant, Ms. Emily Frederick, reminded those in attendance that the people inside the building are equally as important as the structure.

## **Dothan – Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) and Alabama's Early Intervention System Programs**

Commissioner Burdeshaw provided an update on the Dothan renovation for the Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) and Alabama's Early Intervention System programs. The Dothan office should be ready to open in early February 2026. ADRS was contacted by Dr. Marnix E. Heersink, Physician, Eye Center South, Partner Health Center South. Dr. Heersink wanted to learn more about CRS. ADRS was encouraged by this opportunity. Commissioner Burdeshaw; Mrs. Cathy Caldwell, CRS's Assistant Commissioner; Mrs. Candace Mitchell, CRS District Supervisor; and Ms. Cindy Fox, ADRS Real Estate Specialist; went to Dothan to meet Dr. Heersink on December 2, 2025. It was a very productive meeting.

## **Pig Out Day to Follow the Board Meeting**

ADRS staff members and those who attended the board meeting were invited to enjoy food and fellowship with their ADRS family members.

## **Announcements:**

### ***Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services meeting dates for 2026:***

- **Thursday, March 5, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.**, ADRS Montgomery/State Office
- **Thursday, June 25, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.**, ADRS Montgomery/State Office
- **Thursday, September 3, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.**, ADRS Montgomery/State Office
- **Thursday, December 3, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.**, ADRS Montgomery/State Office

With no additional business, Mr. Wilkinson moved to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Mr. Williams and approved by unanimous consent. The meeting was adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

Minutes were taken by Mrs. Karen Freeman.

Respectfully submitted:   
Jane E. Burdeshaw, Commissioner

Approved:   
Charles E. Wilkinson, Chair