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

Thursday, June 25, 2026
10:00 a.m.

AGENDA

Call to Order	Charles Wilkinson, Chair
Prayer	Beverly Floyd, Chief Information Officer
Verification of Quorum	Karen Freeman, Exec. Assistant
Verification of Open Meeting Act Notice	Charles Wilkinson
Approval of Agenda	Charles Wilkinson
Approval of Minutes for March 5, 2026	Charles Wilkinson
New Business:	
Commissioner's Annual Performance Appraisal	Charles Wilkinson
Administrative Code Rule 795-6-1-.08, Financial Accountability – Amendment	Ashley Hamlett, General Counsel
ADRS Operations Plan FY 2025-2026, Supplemental Appropriations for FY 2026	Shay Cannon, Chief Financial Officer
Division Reports Updates	Executive Leadership Team
Commissioner's Comments and Legislative Update	Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Commissioner
Announcements:	Charles Wilkinson

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

- **Thursday, Sept. 3, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.,** TBD
- **Thursday, Dec. 3, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.,** ADRS Montgomery/State Office

Board Business/Discussion	Charles Wilkinson
Adjourn	Charles Wilkinson

Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services

560 South Lawrence Street
Montgomery, Alabama
Minutes
Thursday, June 25, 2026

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, Chief Information Officer, opened the board meeting with prayer.

Verification of Quorum:

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

Board members absent: Ms. Michelle Glaze

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, June 25, 2026, meeting, was posted on the Alabama Secretary of State's website on Thursday, June 4, 2026, at 10:08 a.m., to include a preliminary agenda for the meeting. The meeting announcement was posted on the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services' public website on February 19, 2026, and made available at the following link:

https://rehab.alabama.gov/about/board-of-directors.

Approval of Agenda:

The board meeting agenda was distributed to members by mail and electronically prior to the meeting. Mr. Wilkinson asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion to approve the agenda was made by Ms. Judith Gilliam and seconded by Ms. Kimberlin Love. Mr. Wilkinson stated there were no changes and/or additions to the agenda and it was approved by unanimous consent.

Approval of Minutes for March 5, 2026, Quarterly Meeting:

The quarterly board meeting minutes were mailed prior to the meeting. Mr. Wilkinson asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented for the March 5, 2026, board meeting. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Mrs. Lemley and seconded by Mr. Williams. The minutes were approved unanimously.

New Business:

Commissioner Burdeshaw's Annual Performance Appraisal/Review

Mr. Wilkinson reported that the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services reviewed and evaluated Commissioner Burdeshaw's performance for 2025. On behalf of the Board, Mr. Wilkinson expressed appreciation to Commissioner Burdeshaw for her exceptional leadership to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) during a period marked by significant operational changes and uncertainty regarding federal policy and funding. Her leadership as President of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) brought about national discussions affecting the future of vocational rehabilitation and disability services nationwide. The Board commended the Commissioner for her commitment to ADRS' mission and her continued success in positioning the department to meet the evolving needs of Alabama's citizens and communities. The Board assessed the Commissioner's overall performance as consistently exceeds standards.

With the Board having reviewed and evaluated Commissioner Burdeshaw's performance during the last year, Mr. Wilkinson moved to provide a 2% cost of living adjustment to Commissioner Burdeshaw's salary, adjusted to the nearest dollar amount divisible by 24, effective September 1, 2026, and reflected on the October 1, 2026, paycheck. Mr. Wilkinson further moved to provide a 5% merit increase, adjusted to the nearest dollar amount divisible by 24, effective July 1, 2026, and reflected on the August 1, 2026, paycheck. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kidd. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Burdeshaw expressed her sincere appreciation to the Board and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services Executive Leadership Team for their continued involvement and support.

Alabama Administrative Code Rule: 795-6-1-.08
Financial Accountability – Emergency Amendment

Prior to the Board meeting, Commissioner Burdeshaw shared with board members by email the proposed changes to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Service section of the ADRS Administrative Code. She expressed her appreciation to the Board for their emailed questions concerning the proposed changes. As discussed, VR has experienced increased numbers and costs with a reduction in available funding. VR's goal is to continue serving all eligible individuals, while remaining out of an "Order of Selection." An Order of Selection would result in the exclusion of certain categories of individuals with disabilities from receiving services. ADRS needs an emergency rule change to the VR Sliding Fee Schedule, that applies to certain services, from 200% of the poverty level to 125% poverty level, to continue serving all eligible individuals. The emergency rule change would enable VR to prepare consumers who will be potentially impacted, including those attending four-year colleges, before fall tuition is due.

The second recommended change is to VR's college room and board policy. VR recommends that only individuals living thirty (30) miles or more from a community college or university be eligible for room and board assistance. Currently, someone can live in the same city as the school and be sponsored for room and board assistance if they meet financial eligibility requirements. If approved, there would be exceptions for disability-related factors.

Mrs. Karen Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner, VR-General program and Mr. Ashley Townsend, Assistant Commissioner, VR-Blind/Deaf program, reported that on Tuesday, June 2, 2026, they had a call with VR supervisors to inform them of the potential policy change and the process for an emergency amendment to the administrative code. They provided supervisors with information and asked them to communicate the information to their staff. After the call, an email was sent to all VR counselors and supervisors outlining the potential changes. A letter (the same letter shared with ADRS board members) was attached to the email. The letter was mailed to consumers who receive financial assistance for post-secondary education at a 4-year college or university, graduate school, and/or receiving assistance with room and board.

If the Board votes to support these recommendations, then another vote will be needed to certify the permanent rule change during the ADRS September Board meeting. As Commissioner Burdeshaw shared with the Board members by email, the proposed changes were also shared with the State Rehabilitation Council, as required and they have agreed to the recommendations.

Mr. Wilkinson moved that the Board adopt an Emergency Amendment and propose a permanent Amendment to the Administrative Code Rule 795-6-1-.08, Financial Accountability. This Amendment will change the VR Sliding Fee Schedule, that applies to certain services, from 200% of the poverty level to 125% of the poverty level. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Mrs. Ashley Hamlett, General Counsel, will work with the Legislative Services Agency to file the Emergency Amendment, for Rule: 795-6-1-.08- Financial Accountability. Upon approval by the Board, notice of the rule change will appear in the Alabama Administrative Monthly in the July 31, 2026, edition. The notice will call for public comments and written requests to orally address the Board concerning the rule changes. The proposed rule change will also be placed on the department's public website.

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services Operations Plan for FY2025-2026, Supplemental Appropriations for FY2026

Commissioner Burdeshaw welcomed Mr. Dave White, Senior Policy Advisor to Governor Kay Ivey. Commissioner Burdeshaw stated there will be a transition within the Governor's office in connection with the upcoming elections. Commissioner Burdeshaw and the Board expressed their sincere appreciation to Governor Ivey and Mr. White for their assistance, support, and leadership. On behalf of Governor Ivey; Finance Director, Bill Poole; and the Executive Budget Office; Mr. White recognized the valuable contributions made and thanked the Commissioner and board members for their professionalism and commitment.

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported that Governor Ivey and the Alabama Legislature supported the department's requests during the recent Legislative session.

Commissioner Burdeshaw and Mrs. Shay Cannon, Chief Financial Officer, reported during the 2026 Alabama Legislative session that ADRS received state supplemental appropriations for fiscal year 2026 in the amount of $7,961.087 and the 2027 departmental appropriations totaling $69,384,564.

One-time Supplemental FY2026 Includes:

- $5,461,087 for the Vocational Rehabilitation Service;
- $2,000,000 earmarked for Kulture City (Birmingham non-profit);
- $300,000 earmarked for United Ability; and
- $200,000 earmarked for UCP Huntsville

Departmental Appropriations for FY2027 Includes:

- $5,461,087 in additional funding for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Service;
- A 2% COLA for (state-funded) employees;
- An increase for (state-funded) employee health insurance;
- Additional $400,000 earmarked for the ARC of Madison County;
- Additional $100,000 earmarked for UCP Huntsville; and
- Appropriated Alabama Office of Disability (AOD), formerly the Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD), funds in the Education Trust Fund instead of the General Fund.

While the total amount requested for the VR program was split between the annual appropriations and the supplemental funding bill, ADRS was pleased with the support received at a time when many

agencies saw level-funding. As shared in previous discussions, this additional funding was critical to VR services and the ability to continue serving all eligible individuals seeking services.

Mr. Wilkinson moved to approve and adopt an increase to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services FY2025-2026 Operations Plan from $285,056,229 to the spending level of $293,017,316 due to supplemental appropriations by the Alabama Legislature. The increase contains $5,461,087 for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, $2,000,000 earmarked for the Kulture City Disability Workforce Center, $200,000 earmarked for United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Huntsville, and $300,000 earmarked for United Ability. Mr. Wilkinson moved to give authority to the Commissioner and Chief Financial Officer to revise the Operations Plan within the spending levels. Ms. Love seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Division Reports:

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

Mrs. Jill West, Director, **Office of Communications and Information (OCI)** reported OCI coordinated and assisted various program events this quarter including a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Centers of Alabama at the University of South Alabama (USA), Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Building in Mobile, AL., at 1:00 p.m., on Tuesday, May 19, 2026. Commissioner Burdeshaw reported the TBI Centers of Alabama initiative was made possible by Governor Kay Ivey, the Alabama Legislature and the State Veterans Mental Health Steering Committee. It is coordinated through ADRS, the lead agency for disability services, including the State TBI Program. TBI Centers of Alabama expanded ADRS's TBI services to five (5) regional offices strategically located to best serve Veterans, National Guard members, and others living with long-term effects from brain injury. Mrs. West and Mrs. Jenkins provided information regarding the upcoming TBI public events listed below.

- Aug. 6, 2026, TBI Opelika Ribbon Cutting
- Aug. 21, 2026, TBI Enterprise Ribbon Cutting
- Sept. 23, 2026, TBI Birmingham Ribbon Cutting
- Sept. 29, 2026, TBI Huntsville Ribbon Cutting

Commissioner Burdeshaw and Mrs. Jenkins commended Mrs. April Turner, Director, Traumatic Brain Injury Program, and her staff for an outstanding job with moving quickly to hire staff and locate partners. In addition to the clinical staff, Mrs. Turner has also hired two "Peer Mentors", who are Veterans with lived experience. ADRS is excited about the opportunities that lie ahead due to this Legislative expansion.

The Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities Awards Ceremony will be held on Thursday, October 22, 2026, in Montgomery. More information will be available as the date draws near.

Mrs. Cathy Caldwell, Assistant Commissioner, **Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS)**, reported the CRS Mobile Unit is scheduled to arrive on Friday, June 26, 2026. Mrs. Amy Ingram Williamson, CRS Audiology Program Specialist, is working with community partners, audiology programs, and other state agencies to provide hearing screenings in rural areas of the state.

Mrs. Tracy Bird, Director, **Human Resource Development**, reported that the Alabama State Personnel Department is excited about the improvements that the new applicant tracking system, NeoGov, will bring to the State's recruitment and hiring process. The new system will provide a more user-friendly experience and improved tools to better support agencies throughout the hiring process.

Mrs. Hamlett reported on the **Randolph-Sheppard Litigation**, in connection with the Alabama Attorney General's Office. ADRS retained outside counsel to file a bid protest complaint, on June 11, 2026, against the Department of Defense (DOD) in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims in opposition to the DOD's attempt to replace a successful Business Enterprise Program (BEP) vendor. On June 16, 2026, the Court approved the Army's Corrective Action and the parties' Joint Motion to Dismiss. The Army agreed to remove Fort Rucker from the scope of the Dining Excellence Initiative (DINEX) proposal, leaving Fort Lee as the only base in the proposal. The Army agreed to keep the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) at Fort Rucker and to use competitive bids for any new contracts.

Mrs. Lisa Alford, Director, **State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL)** Program, reported that the SAIL Waiver has completed its submission for the five (5) year cycle. SAIL is currently providing services under an extension for the current waiver cycle, as instructed by Alabama Medicaid. SAIL received notification that would require consumer choice for case management services, which are currently being provided by ADRS staff. SAIL was given the option of offering case management service provision through any willing and qualified case management service or submitting a 1915(b)(4) Waiver to provide case management as a sole source provider. SAIL Waiver Case Managers require a higher level of training and are supervised directly by ADRS staff. In addition, staff turnover is low compared with other waivers in the state. For these reasons, opening case management to outside entities would negatively affect the quality and consistency of services. After careful consideration, SAIL has submitted a 1915(b)(4) application with the assistance of Alabama Medicaid. The goal is to have the document ready for submission to Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) in June 2026.

Commissioner Burdeshaw and Ms. Amy Blakeney, Director, **Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS)** Program, reported that ADRS continues to field concerns about the rate changes from community Early Intervention providers and state lawmakers who were contacted during the Legislative session. Commissioner Burdeshaw met with the Decatur and Mobile delegation and answered detailed questions. They were pleased with ADRS's willingness to reach compromises with the local programs. In addition, ADRS responded to three (3) media inquiries (news and print) about the changes with AEIS.

Commissioner's Comments:

Legislative and Administrative Updates

Commissioner Burdeshaw and Mrs. Cannon reported the **Alabama's Examiners of Public Accounts** began the Legal Compliance Single Audit for the Vocational Rehabilitation program for Fiscal Year 2025 in February 2026. The Single Audit is required of state entities that spend more than $1,000,000 in federal funds within a year. Commissioner Burdeshaw reported there were no findings to report. She expressed her appreciation to Mrs. Cannon and the Accounting staff for all their efforts to meet and exceed expectations.

During the board meeting, Commissioner Burdeshaw shared a video highlighting the **Power of Partnership: Alabama Power and ADRS Are Building a Successful Workforce Together.** The video highlighted the value of working with ADRS, Mrs. Bobbi Stephenson, Director, Business Relations Program, and Business Relations consultants to meet workforce needs and build stronger, more inclusive teams. On behalf of ADRS, the Board and Commissioner Burdeshaw extended their sincere appreciation to Mr. Tom McNeal, Workforce Development Manager, Alabama Power, and Mr. Heath Hendrix, Key Account Manager, The Onin Group, for their support in this effort and for allowing their employees to be featured in the video. The video helped inform, educate and encourage employers across Alabama to explore workforce solutions that include hiring qualified employees with disabilities. Please click the link below to view the video.
https://youtu.be/pjhg0xwp6gQ?si=CyL9wk9y48F7zjMB

Commissioner Burdeshaw provided a **U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) Update**. The Council on State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) responded promptly to USDOE Secretary Linda McMahon's questions relating to an Interagency Agreement (IAA) to transfer the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) to one of two federal agencies, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). OSERS includes Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-Part B); Special Education Services, (IDEA-Part C), Early Intervention Services; and the WIOA Title IV; and Vocational Rehabilitation Service. The issue of whether OSERS should remain intact was also addressed.

The Commissioner reported following a poll of CSAVR and NCSAB membership organizations, the majority voted to keep OSERS intact and if moved from USDOE, reassignment to USDOL was preferred. The U.S. Trade Association of Special Education Administrators voted similarly. An IAA has not been released; however, it is imminent.

Commissioner Burdeshaw shared a picture of **Ms. Lois Curtis, the lead plaintiff in Olmstead v. L.C. (1999), one of the most important U.S. disability-rights decisions.** Ms. Curtis was a woman from Georgia with intellectual/developmental and psychiatric disabilities. She spent substantial periods in a state psychiatric hospital. Although doctors determined that she could be appropriately served in a community-based setting, Georgia continued to keep her institutionalized. In 1995, the Atlanta Legal Aid Society filed a lawsuit on her behalf under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Another woman, Elaine Wilson, later joined the lawsuit. The case eventually reached the U.S.

Supreme Court, which ruled in 1999. The Supreme Court's decision held that unjustified institutionalization of a person with a disability can constitute discrimination under the ADA. When a person is qualified for community-based services, the state generally must provide those services in the most integrated setting appropriate, rather than unnecessarily segregating the person in an institution. The Olmstead decision became a landmark for disability civil rights. It established the principle that:

People with disabilities have a right to live and receive services in their communities when community placement is appropriate.

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported that on June 18, 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) issued an opinion specifically addressing the "integration mandate" under the ADA and Rehabilitation Act. The OLC noted in the opinion, titled "Application of the Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act to State Institutionalization of Patients with Severe Mental Health Illness or Disabilities," that:

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the ADA do not impose an integration mandate on states;
- Those statutes (i.e., ADA and Rehabilitation Act) do not authorize federal executive agencies to impose such a mandate;
- Requiring states to treat people in "maximally integrated settings" raises questions involving the Fourteenth Amendment, Commerce Clause, and Spending Clause; and
- Olmstead v. L.C. did not hold that the ADA or Rehabilitation Act requires states to provide treatment in the most integrated setting appropriate to a person's needs.

This is a major change in the federal government's legal interpretation, but it is important to distinguish that an OLC opinion does not overrule the Supreme Court's ruling in Olmstead.

Commissioner Burdeshaw will share the OLC's June 18, 2026, opinion with board members.

Please click on the link below to review the Memorandum on "**Application of the Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act to State Institutionalization of Patients with Severe Mental Illness or Disabilities."** Link: https://www.justice.gov/olc/media/1446701/dl

Announcements:

Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services meeting dates for 2026

- Thursday, September 17, 2026 – 10:00 a.m.

  ADRS Office
  4104 Highway 31, South
  Building #2
  Decatur, Alabama 35603

The Board considered various off-site locations (Huntsville, Gadsden, and Decatur) for the board meeting scheduled for Thursday, September 17, 2026. After a brief discussion, Mr. Kidd recommended the new Decatur office as an option. It is in the North Alabama region. The Decatur office was made possible by a collaborative effort with the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB). Commissioner Burdeshaw will extend an invitation to the President of AIDB, to attend the September board meeting. The Decatur office houses the VRS-General, VRS-Blind-Deaf, and SAIL Program, along with the Adaptive Driving Program, Vocational Evaluation Program, the Employment Development Services Program, Business Enterprise Program, and other programs that assist people with disabilities in successfully transitioning from school into careers and becoming self-sufficient. Additional information will be provided once plans for the board meeting in September are finalized.

- Thursday, December 3, 2026 – 10:00 a.m., ADRS Montgomery/State Office

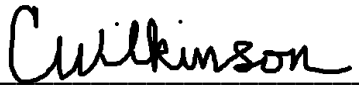
Adjourn:

With no additional business, Mr. Wilkinson moved to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Mr. Kidd and approved by unanimous consent. The meeting was adjourned at 11:12 a.m.

Minutes were taken by Mrs. Karen Freeman.

Respectfully submitted: 

Jane E. Burdeshaw, Commissioner

Approved: 

Charles E. Wilkinson, Chair