

# Alabama's Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund

## REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024

Every year 1.7 million individuals in the U.S. sustain a traumatic brain injury (TBI) or spinal cord injury (SCI); and more than 10,000 of those are Alabama residents. The nature of TBI requires specialized providers and individualized supports. Without timely access to expert care management and customized services, these children and adults are unable to live healthy, independent satisfying lives.

In response to this need, the Alabama Legislature in 1992 gave the Impaired Drivers Trust Fund Advisory Board the responsibility of facilitating a comprehensive system of services for Alabamians with head and spinal cord injury. The following year the Legislature passed Act 93-323 establishing the Impaired Drivers Trust Fund (IDTF) and imposing an additional \$100 fine on person convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, with proceeds allocated to the IDTF. Each year these proceeds are used as payer of last resort for costs of care provided to Alabamians who live with TBI and/or SCI. County clerks collect the funds and deposit them into the state treasury. The funds are included in the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) budget, and ADRS disperses monies in accordance with criteria established by the board.

In 2016, the law was amended (Act 16-259) to change the name to the Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund to represent more accurately who is being served with the revenue. Case management, counseling, pre-vocational services cognitive remediation, caregiver education, community resource provision, respite care, recreational supports, support groups and attendant care are provided by programs within ADRS and Alabama Head Injury Foundation (AHIF). These services are made possible by the trust fund and enable Alabamians with TBI and SCI to strive for and achieve an improved quality of life following injury.

In 2018, House Bill 14 was signed into law, which amended the driving under the influence law. It requires a mandatory \$100 fee be collected from any individuals who successfully completes any pretrial diversion program and deposited into the Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund. This Bill was amended due to a multi-year shortage in collected fees.

From 2019-2022, the Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund thankfully received line-item appropriations of \$250,000 each year totaling one million dollars. In 2023, the AHSCITF received a total of \$500,000 and in 2024 a total of \$750,000 from the Special Education Trust Fund.

In 2024, the line-item appropriation allowed ADRS to maintain 5 full-time field TBI Counselors and add an additional TBI Counselor position in the Anniston area increasing direct case services provisions to consumers across the state. AHIF added a full-time mental health counselor, a part-time intake specialist, and a part-time, bilingual counselor who works with all non-English speaking clients and caregivers.

Presently, ADRS and AHIF still remain below the staffing levels to meet the growing demand for services across the state, especially given the number of Alabamians identified with traumatic brain injury and spinal cord injury each year.

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### Advisory Board

**Chair:** Lorenzo Brown **Vice Chair:** Reyn Norman **Secretary:** Scott Powell

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Dear Legislator,

We are pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report for Alabama's Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund (AHSCITF). The services available to Alabamians with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and spinal cord injuries (SCI) equip them to work toward an improved quality of life following injury.

A collaboration between the AHSCITF Advisory Board and public and private organizations – including the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Alabama Head Injury Foundation, and the Alabama Department of Public Health – provides life-changing services.

Please join us in expressing our gratitude to the partners and staff who worked tirelessly during an extremely challenging year to improve the lives of Alabamians with traumatic brain and/or spinal cord injury.

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Commissioner,  
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

Lorenzo Brown, Chairman  
Alabama Disability Advocate

## What is Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)?

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is damage to the brain that results when the head is hit, strikes an object or is violently shaken. A TBI can occur without any outward physical evidence of trauma. Damage to the brain may occur immediately, or it may develop as a result of swelling or bleeding following injury. Common consequences of TBI can involve sensory, cognitive, behavioral and/or emotional impairments. Brain injuries are classified as mild, moderate, or severe depending on the type of injury or pressure and changes in the brain and can be temporary or lifelong.

## Service Components

Through funds provided by the AHSCITF, specific programs have been created and implemented to address the needs of individuals with TBI and SCI. In Fiscal year 2024, these programs provided the following services:

### **The AL Navigation Program, Helpline & Service Linkage Systems**

The Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Helpline 1-888-879-4706 with ADRS provided immediate information, education, referral, training, screening, resource facilitation and service linkage to 280 callers and 416 referrals of individuals with TBI and SCI. From the Trauma Registry, 6,697 hospital trauma records were collected and reviewed and 3,662 consumers were eligible to be contacted after hospital discharge.

### **Adult TBI Care Coordination Program- Interactive Community- Based Mode (ICBM)**

Through the efforts of this five-phased rehabilitation program with ADRS, 384 individuals with TBI transitioned from the hospital to home, school and/or community, reducing cost of post-acute care and increasing average salary income for those returning to work.

### **Support Services, Recreational TBI Camps & Support Groups**

This program provided direct services from AHIF to 872 individuals living with TBI and/or SCI, that included mental health counseling, recreational camps, therapy-based camps, support groups and/or connected to available community resources. AHIF received 334 new referrals and provided over 136 support groups through Zoom with more than 3,240 attendees.

### **Respite Care**

AHIF provided vouchers to 48 families, providing them with the opportunity for home health workers to briefly relieve them of their around-the-clock responsibility as caregiver. More than 1,710 hours of in-home care were provided.

Service Linkage System Helpline:  
1.888.879.4706