

Alabama's Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund

REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022

Every year, 1.7 million individuals in the U.S. sustain a traumatic brain injury (TBI) or spinal cord injury, 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 persons 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 spinal cord injury (SCI). County clerks collect the money and deposit it 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 more accurately represent who is being served with the revenue. Case management, counseling, pre-vocational services, cognitive remediation, family education, community resource provision, respite care, recreational supports, and attendant care are provided by programs within ADRS and the 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 complete any pretrial diversion program and deposited into the Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund. Alabama's TBI program also received \$250,000 in Fiscal Year 2019 supplemental appropriations and another \$250,000 in line-item appropriations for Fiscal Year 2021.

Despite COVID-19 related challenges, new line-item appropriations allowed ADRS to fund a field staff counselor to cover underserved areas and an increase in direct case service provision. AHIF was able to add two counseling interns, as well as promote a staff person to Director of Counseling Programs. The use of these funds matched the stated intent by each agency when these funds were requested.

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

Advisory Board

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Members: Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Sen. Tom Butler, Sara Franklin, Alice Floyd, Stephanie Logan, Leroy Miles, Rep. Phillip Pettus, Dr. Graham Sisson, Karen Watkins-Smith, Kimberly Boswell, and Dr. Derek Woessner.

Dear Legislator,

We are pleased to present the 2022 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

Despina Stavrinos, PhD, Chairman
UAB Injury Control Research Center

What is Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)?

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is damage to the brain that results when the head is hit, strikes a stationary 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 2022, these programs provided the following services:

The AL Navigation Program, Helpline & Service Linkage

The Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Helpline, 1-888-879-4706 provided immediate information, education, referral and service linkage to 221 callers and 305 referrals of individuals with TBI and SCI. From the Trauma Registry, 6,874 new hospital trauma records were collected and reviewed and 3,435 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 within ADRS, 378 individuals with TBI transitioned from the hospital to home and the 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 1066 individuals living with TBI and/or SCI, that included mental health counseling, recreational camps, support groups, therapy-based camps and/or connecting to available community resources. Of these, 178 were new clients who became clients during the fiscal year and over 135 support groups were held through Zoom and in person for a total of 3,240 attendees.

Respite Care

Services were provided to 36 families relieving them of the around-the-clock responsibilities of caring for a family member. More than 2,000 hours of in-home care were provided.

Service Linkage System Helpline:
1.888.879.4706