



Together

SUCCESS

2017 ADRS annual report

home, school, work,



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, Colleagues, and Partners,

It is my pleasure to present *Together Success*, the annual report for the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services.

I am happy to share with you the numbers that offer concrete evidence of our staff's hard work and accomplishments throughout the past fiscal year, however, it is the individual stories of success found in these pages that bring me the greatest joy and personal satisfaction. It is these stories that represent the almost 50,000 Alabamians with disabilities we serve each year. It is these stories that are the heart and soul of our efforts that highlight resilience, drive, and determination in the face of significant challenges.

This report also attests to the strength of the many community partnerships we have built around Alabama with local school systems, community programs, other state agencies, and policymakers at every level of government. We have all devoted ourselves to the same goal, and we all share the excitement and pride that come from the achievements of those we serve.

To those partners, I again say "thank you" for your commitment. The title of this report, *Together Success*, reflects our shared vision.

As we look ahead to a new year, I challenge all of us to recommit ourselves to our collective 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 Jurchak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.





together

SUCCESS

2017 **ADRS** annual report

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school,
work,*

features

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the ADRS continuum of services:

for a lifetime

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.



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 dozens of community programs that provide direct service to families.



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.



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.



state of alabama independent living

provides services to Alabamians who have the most-significant disabilities. 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 an honor and privilege to serve as the chairman of the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services for another year.

Again, I was inspired by the tremendous impact this department has on the lives of the tens of thousands of Alabama's children and adults with disabilities it serves. As you look through the pages of this year's annual report, you will encounter heartwarming accomplishments that offer a living testament to the unwavering efforts of our creative, caring, and committed staff.

On behalf of the board, I would like to offer my sincere thanks and heartfelt gratitude to the staff, community programs, and partner agencies for the vital role they play in improving the daily lives of so many. 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



Penny Foster
District 3



Andrea Collett
District 4



Eddie Williams
District 5



Roger McCullough
District 6



Mitch Strickland
District 7



In FY17, the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services held their first board meeting outside of Montgomery at the ADRS Lakeshore Facility in Birmingham

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 young girl with long blonde hair, wearing a blue hoodie and a white bow, is sitting in a wheelchair and smiling. She is positioned in front of a red fire truck. A man in a fire helmet is visible in the background. The scene is set at night or in a dimly lit indoor space. A blue banner with white text is overlaid on the image.

meet our families

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SUCCESS
seventeen



Sgt. Teneisha Towns-Hollowan uses a series of rolling carts and baskets supplied through ADRS to assist her in assembling thousands of Yellow Ribbon packets each year

Alabama National Guard

Montgomery County

When Eric Gerritson, economic development specialist with the Alabama National Guard and retired Air Force veteran, needed hearing aids, he first turned to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

“The VA told me I didn’t qualify,” Eric said. “I knew I needed hearing aids. It was affecting my job, and it was frustrating being denied.”

With that denial still stinging, by chance Eric crossed paths with ADRS Business Relations Consultant Anna Taylor at an event at the guard’s Alabama headquarters in Montgomery.

“When Anna started talking about the services ADRS provides, I knew I had a need,” Eric said. “I passed her a handwritten note asking about hearing aids, and within five minutes, I had



Anna Taylor, right, meets with National Guard employees to discuss improvements made since the guard started using rolling carts with their Yellow Ribbon program



Ryann Runyan Howard uses a vertical mouse she obtained through ADRS to input critical geographic data and in digitizing maps

an appointment to see an audiologist through VR.”

Two years prior, Taylor had forged a partnership with the Alabama National Guard to support the Yellow Ribbon Program for veterans returning home from deployment.

In that partnership, VR worked with the guard to provide several rolling carts and plastic bins to reduce back strain on the soldiers putting in long hours assembling welcome home packets.

The fix was simple and inexpensive, but it drastically upped productivity and allowed soldiers to more easily work 10-hour shifts without pain. Because Eric Gerritson's experience in acquiring hearing aids through ADRS was so positive, he looked at other ways VR could support Alabama National Guard employees – uniformed and civilian.

“When I started talking about the things I received through Alabama Rehabilitation Services, other people would say things like, ‘How do I get that?’” Eric said. “I called Anna, and she brought a team of counselors and specialists with her. Within five months, Alabama Rehabilitation Services assisted 20 different people working with the guard.”

The cases the Alabama National Guard opened through VR's RAVE (retaining a valued employee) program were mostly simple fixes. Standing desks, vertical computer mice, and office chairs with better lumbar support are commonly found within the guard's headquarters in Montgomery.

But the partnership is more than just specialized equipment for the guard.

It's really about helping members of the military be the absolute best they can be because their services are so crucial to the state of Alabama and the U.S. as a whole.

“These services help people in their jobs,” said Eric. “It keeps them here. A lot of our positions are highly specialized and only one-deep, with no backup. If someone's out sick due to pain, there's automatically a huge gap to fill, and we aren't as effective as we need to be. ADRS' name is golden within these walls because of what your services do for us.”

Maj. Heath McNaughton, continuous process improvement officer for the Air National Guard, uses a Varidesk height adjustable sit-stand desk and an ergonomic chair to work.

“I'll often spend hours inputting data, and posture becomes a huge issue,” he said. “Sitting there, hunched over your desk, you develop issues with your wrist, elbow, and back. Experts with ADRS helped me with things to correct posture at work, and it's made all the difference in the world.”

Ryann Runyan Howard, geographic information systems specialist for the National Guard, uses a vertical mouse to input critical map data to support soldiers. She credits ADRS for helping her do her job pain free and go home after work with enough strength and energy to be able to play with her young child at home.

She said, “What you do – it's making an impact, not just on what we do when we're on the the clock, but it's also helping to improve our daily lives. These fixes seem so simple, but the benefits from them are immeasurable.”



Eric Gerritson greatly expanded a partnership between ADRS and the Alabama National Guard after his positive experience in obtaining hearing aids necessary for his job



Maj. Heath McNaughton uses a height adjustable sit-stand desk to improve ergonomics and posture while inputting critical data



Pamela Reeves is thankful for the support AEIS and CRS have provided her daughter, MacKenzie



MacKenzie uses a 7-inch walker – custom-made by CRS – for the first time

MacKenzie Reeves

Morgan County

When Pamela Reeves was pregnant with her daughter MacKenzie, her obstetrician noticed that her legs were not forming as they should.

“We didn’t fully understand the issue until after the delivery,” said Pamela. “I felt blindsided when I was told MacKenzie had PFFD.”

PFFD – proximal femoral focal deficiency – is a rare, non-hereditary birth defect that affects the pelvis, particularly the hip bone, and the proximal femur. In addition to PFFD, MacKenzie was also born with a cleft palate and had several issues with her heart.

Pamela was referred to Alabama’s Early Intervention System and Children’s Rehabilitation Service (CRS) when MacKenzie left the NICU at three months of age.

“At that moment, we had God right there watching over us,” Pamela said. “I knew there was nothing I could do to change any of this, so I just asked myself, ‘How can I help her?’ Our journey brought us to ADRS.”

Early Intervention responded to the Reeves’ needs by providing speech, occupational, and physical therapies for MacKenzie and a strong support network for Mom.

CRS first served MacKenzie’s mobility needs by providing her with a power wheelchair when she was a year old. MacKenzie was also provided with a manual chair when she was capable of maneuvering it on her own.

“Some people may think it’s dangerous to provide a power chair to a child so young, but it’s quite the opposite,” said CRS Occupational Therapist Lynn Bates. “Mobility is really important, because it’s how kids learn. They explore their environment, and they learn about what’s going on by interacting with it.”

Following a double Boyd amputation of MacKenzie’s feet,

CRS now serves MacKenzie’s mobility needs by providing her with a 7-inch walker custom-made for her by CRS staff. Such an item is not commercially available, but was needed to assist MacKenzie’s strengthening process for artificial prostheses in the future.

“CRS watches her to see how she moves,” said Pamela. “I know that they are here for her benefit and to help make her mobility better. Her confidence builds as her mobility improves. I want her to be able to not look at her disability and say, ‘I can’t do that.’ She can do anything she wants to do, and she does.”

CRS is also working with Early Intervention in preparing MacKenzie for the next step of entering Morgan County Public Schools. EI and CRS will coordinate with the local school system to set an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in place so MacKenzie can maintain her therapy services while being enrolled in public school.

“She’s mine, and I’m just happy,” Pamela said. “I know she will be something in her life. I know she has a purpose. She makes my day and makes me want to be a mom. It gives me a smile on my face to just watch her grow and move and be able to play and laugh and be a normal 2-year-old. Early Intervention and CRS are there to push her and to push me to help get her ready, and I’m so thankful.”



Physical Therapist Bridget Jedlovec works with MacKenzie Reeves



The Pierce family – Tony, Madelynn, and Rhonda

Below, Donna Baird, occupational therapist and vendor for AEIS, feeds Madelynn foods with different textures as CRS staffers Lana Langley, Melvina Moss, and Willia McAlpine watch



Madelynn Pierce

Chilton County

When you live in extreme rural Alabama, it can be difficult to find a true sense of community.

But that's exactly what Tony and Rhonda Pierce – who live in unincorporated Lawley in Chilton County – found at the CRS office in Selma.

The couple's granddaughter, Madelynn, has Warburg micro syndrome, a rare autosomal syndrome with characteristics of microcephaly, microphthalmia, optic atrophy, and significant developmental delay.

Tony came to the CRS office armed with questions about his granddaughter's condition. He left with answers, advice, and a strong and supportive network of professionals to help Madelynn succeed.

After initial genetics counseling at Children's of Alabama, Madelynn received services through Alabama's Early Intervention System and attended orthopedic, seating, positioning, and mobility; and feeding clinics through CRS.

"The first time I went to a clinic, I felt like I was at home," said Tony. "You don't realize how different it is until you have child with a disability. CRS has given me so many helpful ideas on several things I would have never even thought of, like putting different food textures on the bottom of the spoon."

Helpful tips on little things – such as teaching Madelynn vowel sounds – might seem insignificant, but little things often yield a big result.

"Early Intervention has really taught me the benefits of play," Rhonda said. "We're trying to learn vowel sounds right now. A-E-I-O-U. Just any way to communicate. We're trying to learn her language, whether that's hand signals or watching her facial expressions. We used to watch TV at night, but now we'd

rather sit, watch, play, and enjoy our time with Madelynn."

Early Intervention and CRS have joined the Pierces in celebrating many of Madelynn's little victories, like being able to sit upright for several minutes.

Tony said CRS is currently working with Madelynn to help her stand. With enough push – and devices like AFO leg braces – he feels she'll soon be on her feet.

"One of the best things about CRS to me is they are always looking ahead to the next step," Tony said. "CRS keeps us on our toes and our wheels in motion."

One of the most-recent steps was installing a pool. When Madelynn unexpectedly took to the water on a recent beach trip, Tony consulted with CRS staff on the benefits of water therapy for her. They agreed it would help.

"She's come out of her shell in the last eight months," said Tony. "CRS is there for us 100 percent, not just for today or tomorrow, but months and years from now. I wouldn't know the first thing about therapy without them. With CRS on my side, I know she can accomplish a lot more."

With Madelynn completing her care through Early Intervention, the next big step for her is enrolling in the public school system. It's a step that Tony and Rhonda feel Madelynn is now ready to take.

"Madelynn means the world to me," Tony said. "She gives me a reason to get up in the morning. I want to see her be able to have the things other children have and do the things other children do."

With the Pierces and ADRS backing and supporting Madelynn, success is sure to follow.



Left, Diyari reads a book with her teacher, Cassie Jacobs



The Meal Buddy assistive feeder allows Diyari to eat independently

Diyari Askew

Chambers County

When CRS Social Work Administrator Melissa Alexander first heard from Cassie Laird that her 8-year-old daughter's one true wish was to be able to feed herself independently, she said, "Let's try to make it happen."

Diyari Askew is a very bright and precocious second grader in Ms. Jacob's class at W.O. Lance Elementary in Lanett. She loves reading, learning, and playing with her friends. Like a lot of kids her age, her most-favorite-subject-of-all in school is art.

This always-smiling kid is full of boundless, big ideas that are only matched by her big and generous heart. Yet, arthrogyrosis steals away more than 90 percent of the strength in her arms and upper body, and she isn't able to fully bring a spoon to her mouth on her own.

"I am always calling CRS whenever I have questions or problems," said Cassie. "They are a treasure trove of information for me. Without CRS, we were uneducated to our own needs or what is even possible. I talked to CRS about the feeding issues with Diyari, and Melissa recommended I take her to the feeding clinic."

Diyari's issues with independently feeding herself were not typical for the CRS feeding clinic, as that clinic usually handles chewing or swallowing problems or food texture issues. CRS tried several different techniques to assist Diyari, from differently shaped utensils to weighted spoons.

Nothing worked. Except for the Meal Buddy.

The Meal Buddy Assistive Feeder is a robotic arm that allows the operator to choose from one of three different bowls to eat from with the push of one button. The robotic arm wipes excess food from the spoon and even wipes drips from the bottom of the spoon.

"The Meal Buddy is just the most-recent example of CRS helping our family," Cassie said. "For as long as I can remember, CRS has been there."

Cassie said that when Diyari was born, her limbs were

twisted and locked in such a way that doctors told her not to expect positive growth or development.

Through physical and occupational therapies provided through AEIS and CRS, Cassie began to notice big changes within Diyari's first two years.

"She was a late bloomer," said Cassie. "But she was always trying. She learned to scoot on her hiney, and she was able to take her first steps when she was 4 years old. Once she realized she could do it, there was no stopping her."

Now, Cassie relies on CRS staff to help Diyari by attending IEP meetings and providing necessary school accommodations, like extended time for taking tests.

"It's difficult for her to write," Cassie said. "She's fully capable of doing the work, but she needs more time."

CRS also worked with ADRS Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology Services to see if Diyari was a good candidate for Dragon Natural Speaking speech-to-text software.

"The software is tuned for an adult's voice," said Cassie. "It wasn't a good match for her now, but it's nice to know that is an option as she gets older."

Knowing is the biggest victory for Cassie and Diyari – not only what is now possible, but also knowing the steps needed today to reach the goal for tomorrow.

"CRS is there for you, even when they don't have to be," said Cassie. "They encourage you when you are at your weakest, and they empower you to take those steps forward to having an independent lifestyle. I'm thankful that we are a part of that."



Diyari with her mom, Cassie, and her little sister, Desiree



Teacher Mallory McGinnis directs Kylie Carr as she goes through the school's cafeteria food line for the first time in her new wheelchair

Below, CRS Nutritionist Holli Griffin observes and visits with Kylie Carr during school lunch at John S. Jones Elementary in Rainbow City



Kylie Carr

Etowah County

2017 has been a banner year for Kylie Carr's success and independence.

With hard work, the first-grader at John S. Jones Elementary is now feeding herself enough table food to successfully reduce tube feedings to one a day. She has also recently been diagnosed as seizure-free and discharged from the CRS seizure clinic.

And, if you ask Kylie, best of all: She just received a brand-new pink wheelchair through CRS.

"Kyliee has come so far. It's hard for me to even fathom life before we became acquainted with CRS," said Kristen Rohrig, Kyliee's mom. "Today, she is a full 180 degrees from where we started. CRS has been a godsend for us."

Kylie Carr participates in a classroom activity



Naturally, staff in Gadsden's CRS office have been there for Kyliee every step along the way.

"In the beginning, doctors were left scratching their heads," said CRS Social Work Administrator Emma Hereford. "When Kyliee was 1 year old, we referred her to our specialty CRS Pediatric Assessment Clinic. Doctors were stumped because Kyliee did not exhibit several indicators that are typical of a cerebral palsy diagnosis. But after a brain scan, we were able to determine that is what she had."

Since enrollment, CRS staff have monitored Kyliee's improvements in various clinics, including orthopedic, seizure, and feeding.

In the past year, Kyliee's improvements have been dramatic.

CRS Nutritionist Holli Griffin is so encouraged by Kyliee's feeding, she believes she will soon be able to cease tube feeding entirely. Until recently, Kyliee was eating every meal through a feeding tube.

"Kyliee eats oatmeal for breakfast now," Kristen said. "It might seem insignificant to some people, but seeing my baby eat is huge for me."

Having CRS address Kyliee's mobility needs at home and in school is also a big deal.

"Kyliee is one of only a few girls in my class, so she is like a mama to several kids in the room, and she always wants to pitch in and help out however she can," said Mallory McGinnis, Kyliee's teacher. "With her in a new wheelchair, it's only going to help her become even more independent and willing to help others. Since school began in August, I've personally witnessed her become stronger and more capable, and I couldn't be more proud."

And of course, CRS works hand-in-hand with the local public school system to ensure success for students from K to 12 and beyond.

"CRS is a great asset to our school, and a great resource to helping us help students be more successful and more independent," said Tanya Clark, principal at John S. Jones Elementary. "Kyliee was just beaming when she first entered our school in her new pink wheelchair, and things like that help a young child's confidence and independence so much. I know it helps at school because she gets to be more like other kids, and she isn't relying so much on grown ups to get her around."

Said Kristen, "I'm thankful. My daughter is my whole world. Seeing her do so well now – after all that we've been through – it means everything to me. CRS is amazing, and I'm so appreciative of everything they do for me and Kyliee."



Travis Deese juices lemons for making his famous orangeade



Above, Tammy Deese, Travis' mom and job coach, looks over his shoulder to ensure he is properly following all directions

Travis Deese

Cleburne County

The old adage goes, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade."

Tammy Deese was busy in the kitchen preparing lemonade for an upcoming baseball tournament when she accidentally discovered her 18-year old son's deep-rooted passion for working in the kitchen.

At the time, Travis – who has autism – was on track with his homeschooling to graduate with a life skills diploma, and Tammy was looking ahead to life after high school with her son, wondering what was next.

Encouraged by her son's knack for juicing fruit, Tammy talked to a church friend who recommended Vocational Rehabilitation for advice on potentially transforming this hobby into an occupation.

"I kept asking myself, 'What happens after high school?'" said Tammy. "You know your life is changing, but you want your child to have his thing. Seeing my son in the kitchen, I thought, 'Travis finally has his thing.'"

Tammy met with then-Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Keith Dear to discuss the feasibility of her plan of building a family business around her son's love for the kitchen.

"I left Keith's office doing my happy dance," she said. "All my life, all

can't. He has autism.' It was such a joy to hear Keith say, 'He can do it' because for the first time in our lives, we had somebody in our corner."

ADRS worked to build a team around Travis and his family to support him in self employment. Southern Sweet Concessions was born.

VR arranged for Tammy and her husband to attend classes at Jacksonville State University's Small Business Development Center to formulate a solid business plan and discuss taxes, insurance, and general small business strategies.

Dear also set up an appointment with ADRS Lakeshore for a full vocational evaluation.

"When I left the appointment with Lakeshore, I cried," said Tammy. "Not because I was sad, but because – once again – we had someone in Travis' corner."

Senior Vocational Evaluator Andrea Nelson and Assistive Technology Specialist Pat O'Brien watched Travis work in the kitchen and offered helpful suggestions and practices to improve food safety and efficiency in the kitchen. They tried out several different knives, cutting boards, and aprons to find the most-appropriate tools to meet Travis' needs.

"All of the recommendations from ADRS were so helpful and were things that I never would have thought of," Tammy said. "We've mastered the apron, and the health inspector was so thrilled to see Travis wear it. We didn't know what we didn't know, and I credit ADRS for answering our many questions."

Today, Southern Sweet's red and white concessions trailer is a welcome sight at several events throughout northeast Alabama. With a growing menu of sandwiches, pizza, snacks, and hot and cold beverages, the Deese family found a tasty recipe for success that works for them.

Even sweeter, the icing on the cake for Tammy is seeing her son develop necessary independence skills through the supported employment experience of it all.



Vocational Evaluator Andrea Nelson visits the Southern Sweet Concessions trailer run by Travis and Tammy Deese

I've ever heard from doctors and therapists about Travis is, 'He

Pete Petro studies in the library at Samford University



Pete Petro

Jefferson County

Though Duchenne muscular dystrophy has made life a constant battle for 22-year-old Pete Petro, he has never once allowed it to tamp down his dreams or ambitions.

Rather, thanks to assistance from VR and SAIL, his visions of success have only grown more substantial.

“Without ADRS, I don’t know if I would have been able to complete college,” Pete said.

Pete didn’t just complete college, he excelled at it, graduating from Samford University’s Brock School of Business last May at the top of his class. In the fall, he returned to Samford to work on his master’s degree and prepare for the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) Exam.

SAIL Senior Rehabilitation Counselor Carla Harper, who has been monitoring Pete’s success in college for the past two years, said she expects to see Pete as an accountant at a top-notch agency or firm in the near future.

“Pete is an overachiever,” she said. “I have every faith and I believe he will succeed in whatever he does.”

In the months leading up to his graduation, Pete had an excellent opportunity to put all of those accounting classes to use when he was hired as an intern at the Alabama Family Trust (AFT), a Vestavia Hills-based organization that provides special needs trusts to individuals with disabilities and the elderly.

AFT Chief Financial Officer Doug Marshall said that even though his organization serves people with disabilities, AFT had never hired an employee with a disability, and so they wanted to ensure they could properly accommodate the young man.

“At Alabama Family Trust, all we do is serve those with special needs, but this was the first time we had an employee with special needs. We were a little apprehensive at first,

Below, SAIL Senior Rehabilitation Counselor Carla Harper with Pete Petro



questioning ‘How is all of this going to work?’ ” Marshall said. “Clearly our first concern – and really our only concern – was the desk. We knew our desks were not going to work for him, and we wanted him to have everything he could to do well here. Pete assured us from the beginning that ADRS would be all over it.”

ADRS Rehabilitation Technologist Bynum Duren was consulted to provide accommodations for Pete, which included the construction of an adjustable-height desk of his own design.

With the desk, Pete was able to prepare and file more than 800 tax returns for persons served by Alabama Family Trust.

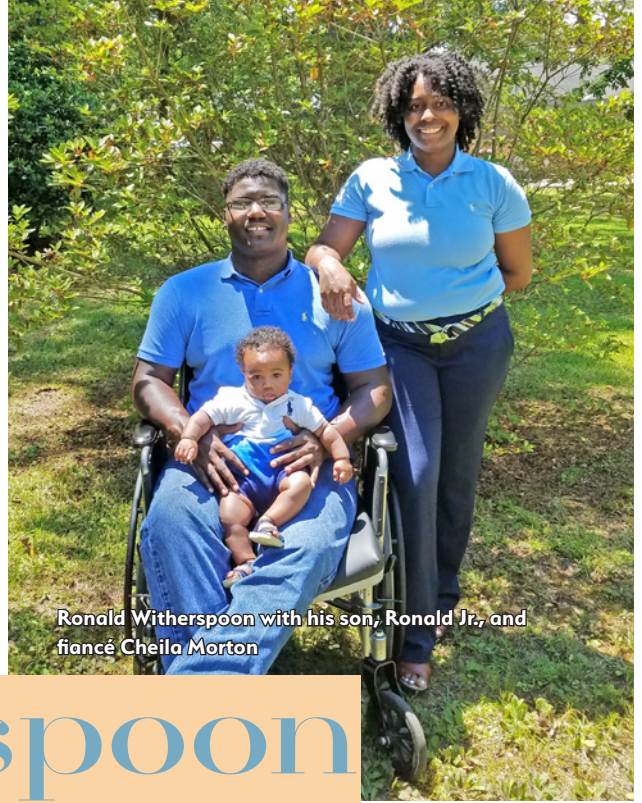
“This work opportunity definitely made me feel good about myself in that I was able to work for an organization that helps people with disabilities and the elderly,” said Pete, “and it’s definitely something that I need to continue doing.”

Marshall said that working with ADRS opened his eyes to the many valuable services the department provides to individuals with disabilities.

“We greatly value our relationship with ADRS. There are so many programs that ADRS has to serve the residents of Alabama with disabilities and their families,” Marshall said. “This experience added an entirely new dimension to our partnership with ADRS. Having Pete here was really special. Here we are, serving those with special needs, and – for the first time – a valuable part of our team is also someone with special needs.”

Pete said it is reassuring to know that ADRS is in his corner.

“It just makes me feel really good that ADRS is there looking out for me and helping me live the life that I want to live. As long as I put in the hard work and effort, I know that I will achieve what I want to achieve in life.”



Ronald Witherspoon works from home with help from Vocational Rehabilitation and State of Alabama Independent Living

Ronald Witherspoon with his son, Ronald Jr., and fiancé Cheila Morton

Ronald Witherspoon

Mobile County

For Ronald Witherspoon, 2016 was a mixed bag of joy and sadness.

Just a few months before becoming a father for the first time, the Mobile man was critically injured in a robbery attempt in a public park.

“It was about 9, 10 o’clock, and I was standing outside on my phone,” said Ronald. “I was shot twice in my thigh. I was shot in my stomach. I was also shot in my arm. And I was shot in the center of my spine, in my back. And the one in the back caused me to be paralyzed.”

Ronald spent more than a month in the hospital recovering from his injuries. When he was finally released from the hospital, he found his life at a crossroads.



SAIL Case Manager Sherrita Williams visits with Ronald Witherspoon in his home

“I was frustrated and angry,” he said. “Something that I used every day was taken from me. It was taken away from me for the rest of my life. Here I am, worried for the future, and I meet Polly Jones. And she changes everything for the better.”

Jones, an independent living specialist with SAIL, arranged for a ramp to be built at Ronald’s home. More importantly perhaps, she worked tirelessly to eliminate his frustration and restore his self-confidence.

And with the arrival of his newborn son, Ronald Jr., his newfound determination couldn’t have come at a better time. Ronald said his relationship with ADRS was life-changing

for him. Where he was once solely absorbed by his inability to walk, ADRS opened his eyes to the endless list of things he could still do – from fishing at his favorite spot to pursuing a career to provide for his growing family.

VR helped Ronald land a job working from home as a customer support representative. With continued VR support, he now has aspirations of returning to school to study network engineering.

To give him greater independence, ADRS Lakeshore Certified Driving Instructor Craig Rogers worked with Ronald to assist him in re-obtaining his driver license to operate a car with hand controls.

Ronald receives personal care through SAIL’s Personal Choice program, which gives him more flexibility in managing his care. He chooses how much to pay his attendants and is able to roll the savings into an account for necessary expenditures when the need arises.

“That’s a real game-changer,” Ronald said. “Personal Choice is a great option for people with disabilities.”

SAIL Waiver Case Manager Sherrita Williams said she admires Ronald’s response to difficult circumstances.

“He lost his mobility. He had a baby. He moved out of his mother’s house. He was unemployed,” she said. “With what happened, he could have responded so differently. I’m so proud of him because of what he has accomplished and what he’s overcome.”

Ronald, in the meantime, has nothing but praise for ADRS. “ADRS is my family. They are my go-to people. I can call anybody in that office and tell them my problem and what’s going on. They’re going to make sure that it’s taken care of.”

And he said he couldn’t imagine life without his new “extended family.”

“Where do I see myself without the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services? I honestly don’t know. I’d probably be somewhere balled up in a corner or something, still mad at the world.”



Javon Wilson

Javon Wilson works as a technician in Brannon Honda's service center

Jefferson County

While in high school, Javon Wilson was like a lot of other kids: quiet, reserved, and shy.

For Javon, however, quiet and reserved was less a reflection of his personality and more his method for dealing with profound hearing loss.

"It was awkward to communicate in high school," he said through an interpreter. "I was ready to put high school behind me and study car mechanics at Lawson State."

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Jamie Glass and Deaf Support Specialist Jaime Laird pumped the breaks on Javon's original plans, instead opting to first send the young man to E.H. Gentry Facility to improve his communications, immerse him in Deaf culture, and better prepare him for college in a way that his high school could not.

"Gentry was an amazing experience," he said. "I felt more comfortable there than I ever did in high school. I learned sign. I was inspired. I improved several different aspects of myself while there, and it absolutely was the right choice for me."

The additional step didn't just pull Javon out of his his shell and better prepare him for classes at Lawson State, it improved his employability. Javon soon was hired to work in Brannon Honda's service center while also continuing classes at Lawson State.

"Javon is bright. He works well with others and has a strong work ethic," said Jeff Martin, service department manager at Brannon Honda. "He's eager and wants to do well. More importantly, he's an asset to us. Javon provides us with a skill that we need in the shop."

Martin said that Vocational Rehabilitation staff worked to provide additional supports to ensure Javon and others hired through VR are good fits for the employer.

"We need skilled employees like Javon in our service center, and for 11 years now, I've trusted VR to help me find the skilled employees I need," said Martin. "From on-site training to ongoing education, VR works with us at every step of the hiring process, and its a partnership that really works for us."

With ADRS by his side, Javon has become an invaluable part of the team at Brannon Honda with ambitions to climb the ladder to soon become a master technician.

"I'm so thankful for VR helping me," said Javon. "For the first time in my life, my future is in line with the plans for my future. My relationship with VR has made the difference. It's all about making right choices, and trusting my future with VR was a really good decision for me."



Javon Wilson checks for drips while performing an oil change



Javon Wilson searches a box for the right tool

Marsha Mankiller uses a talking label reader to identify spices while cooking



Marsha Mankiller

Jefferson County

When Marsha Mankiller first contacted Vocational Rehabilitation's OASIS program, she got so much more than she originally bargained for.

The retired UAB nurse had recently developed major complications from retinitis pigmentosa, and she hoped to learn how to navigate by white cane.

"When I first spoke to (Vision Rehabilitation Therapist) Jane Bush on the phone, she didn't ask me about cane travel," said Marsha. "Her first questions were about me and how I was managing in my home. My first thought to myself was, 'Oh, she's going to be good!' Jane made me feel special. She was always positive, and I immediately knew she was exactly what I needed."

In that first phone call Marsha made to Jane, the two discussed various issues she was having due to vision loss. Nearly too embarrassed to mention it, Marsha told her of the daily nuisance of trying to see well enough to apply toothpaste to the bristles before brushing.

"Oh, lots of people ask that," said Jane. "Just make sure it's your own tube and squirt a little toothpaste in your mouth before brushing."

Marsha was amazed, and felt human again by knowing she wasn't alone with all of Jane's tips and tricks.

Marsha was amazed, and felt human again by knowing she wasn't alone with all of Jane's tips and tricks.

Jane also encouraged Marsha to get back in the kitchen, providing a high-contrast cutting board, full-arm oven mitt, appliance bump dots, and a talking label reader.

"Before, I was resigned to eating sandwiches because they

were easy to assemble," said Marsha. "Last night, I was able to make spaghetti. I never would have attempted that on my own before I met Jane. Now, I don't know what I was so afraid of."

Of course, Marsha still has humorous stories she likes to share about life's adventures, like that one time she accidentally ate a Splenda packet instead of the chips and salsa she ordered while out with friends.

Then again, the point is that Marsha is out having these adventures to share.

"OASIS has completely restored my confidence in myself," said Marsha. "Some people tell you that vision loss is the end of the road. It isn't. It's just that when it first happens, you become wrapped up in all the things you *can't* do, and you forget about all of the things you still *can* do."

Marsha said that she used to get so excited when she found out that Jane was coming over because she always brought great stuff with her – from check writing placeholders to bright magnifiers to allow her to read a favorite Bible passage – but what Marsha eventually realized was the actual reason she was so excited: Jane brought life and adventure back to her.

"One day, I took off walking with my cane – three or four miles – to the nail shop to get a pedicure," she said. "On the way, I stepped in a hole and broke my foot. When I got to the shop, the person giving me a pedicure looked at me and said, 'Gosh, your leg looks really swollen.' It sounds crazy, but I loved it, because I was confident. That plan didn't exactly work out, but I'm not going to sit in a chair out of fear when I can be out making new experiences."

Experiences, like traveling to Europe.

Marsha felt confident enough to book a two-week trip to tour foreign lands one more time before she goes completely blind.

"Travel is what I love," she said. "I'm not going to let something like my eyesight keep me from it."



Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Jane Bush helps Marsha with adequate reading light



alabama's

early intervention

system

aeis



ALABAMA'S EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM

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

Created to be a critical first step to ensuring 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 40 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.

AEIS BY THE NUMBERS

More than 19.9 million in services to infants, toddlers and families

Source of Revenue

State - \$8,196,121 (41%)

Federal - \$7,799,949 (39%)

Other* - \$4,000,809 (20%)

Use of Revenue

Services - \$18,762,489 (94%)

Administration - \$1,234,390 (6%)

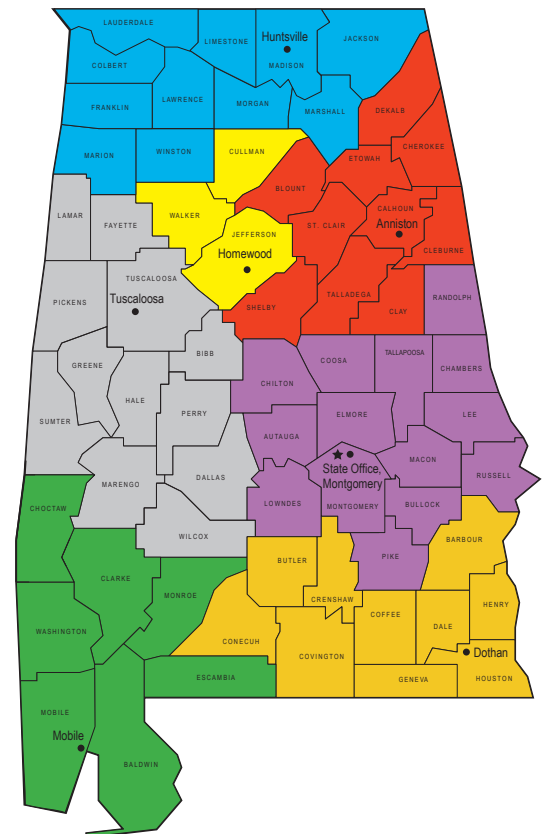
**Medicaid reimbursements*

- Provided services and supports to 7,033 infants and toddlers and their families in their natural environments.
- Offered training and technical assistance on the rules and regulations for Early Intervention under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to more than 50 EI community programs.
- Offered training through a 2017 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Plan that focused on implementation of evidence-based EI practice strategies; routines-based assessment/interventions; specialized services for babies with different diagnoses; family training initiatives; achieving family defined outcomes; smooth effective transitions to preschool; and stretching service dollars to meet the needs of infants, toddlers, and families.
- Received the highest ranking based on meeting all requirements of Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) from the U.S. Department of Education/Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).
- Submitted Phase III of Alabama's State Systemic Improvement Plan, which focused on implementing evaluations, strategies, and services to improve the social-emotional well-being of infants and toddlers while improving a family's ability to communicate their children's needs.
- Established a new partnership with the Alabama Academy of Pediatrics Reach Out and Read Program through which 36 pediatric offices distributed the book "Sometimes I Feel Sunny" to families and encouraged them to read aloud together, promoting early literacy skills and building strong relationships. The book included a bookplate explaining how to make a referral to AEIS and the importance of reading aloud to children.
- Continued to collaborate, coordinate, and communicate with other early childhood partners, including Head Start, the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education, the Alabama Department of Mental Health, the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, the Alabama Department of Human Resources, the Alabama Partnership for Children, Help Me Grow, the Alabama Department of Public Health, Universal Newborn Screening Program, Project LAUNCH, and other organizations that provide services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.
- Partnered with other state agencies in January 2017 to establish the Alabama Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (AAIECMH), known as First 5 Alabama, to promote healthy social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development of children from birth through five years of age.
- Continued to maintain a high level of compliance with excellent family survey results (56 percent response rate as compared to 37 percent nationally). Highlights of the findings: 99 percent of families reported that they understand their IDEA rights; 95 percent reported that service coordinators followed up on all of their concerns; 96 percent reported that service providers listened and respected their concerns; 95 percent reported that Early Intervention helped them in their ability to improve their child's development; 94 percent reported that they were better able to participate in making decisions about their children; and 94 percent reported that they have increased their ability to identify and respond to their child's social-emotional needs.



AEIS served the Pierce family in FY 17

aeis office locations





*children's
rehabilitation*



CHILDREN'S REHABILITATION SERVICE

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.

- Served 10,112 children and youth with special health care needs, including 330 with no insurance, through the CRS clinical programs.
- Had a total of 133,758 client encounters and provided 1,738 information and referral services.
- Had a total of 6,021 client contacts result in connection to \$712,620 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 \$134,291.
- 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 maternal and child health professions/careers.
- Partnered with Family Voices of Alabama and the Family to Family Healthy Information Center to host the 2017 Partners in Care Summit, a two-day summit covering youth and family leadership workshop providing youth and family leadership development.
- Awarded the Collaborative for Improvement and Innovation Network (CoIIN) to Advance Care for Children with Medical Complexity (CMC) grant, a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Health Resources and Services Administration/Maternal and Child Health Bureau/Division of Services for Children with Special Health Care Needs grant managed by Boston University School of Public Health-Center for Advancing Health Policy and Practice Program Design Characteristics. The purpose of the grant is to improve the quality of life for children with medical complexity, the well-being of their families, and the cost-effectiveness of their care through development and implementation of innovative care and payment models using a CoIIN approach. The funding amount is \$135,000 per year through 2021.

CRS BY THE NUMBERS

More than 29 million in services to Alabama's children and youth

Source of Revenue

Other* - \$13,041,189 (45%)

State - \$12,583,589 (43%)

Federal** - \$3,405,211 (12%)

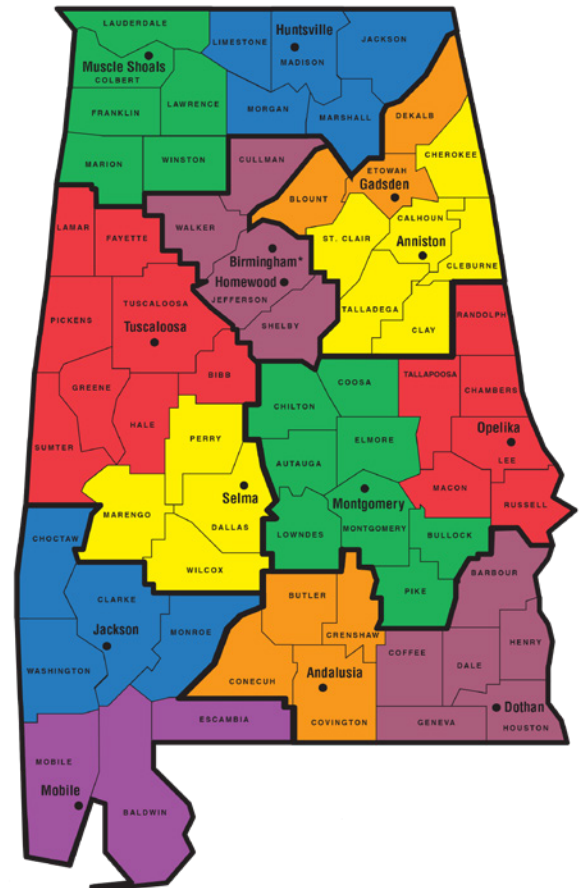
Use of Revenue

Services - \$24,794,186 (85%)

Administration - \$4,235,803 (15%)

*Medicaid, insurance reimbursements
**Federal grants

crs office locations

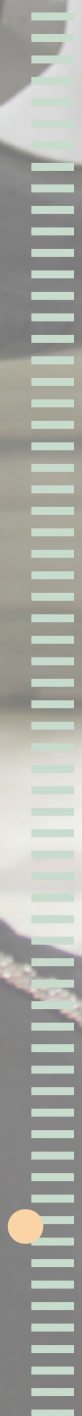


hemophilia program

- Partnered with the Alabama Department of Public Health to provide telemedicine services to clients with seizures/neurological disorders living in rural areas of the state. The first clinic launched in Anniston in November 2017.
- Served 338 people with bleeding disorders.
- Served 15 uninsured participants.
- Expanded the Hemophilia Clinic in Mobile by adding an adult hematologist. Will offer separate adult clinic every other month while continuing the pediatric clinic every other month.
- Provided 32 Hemophilia clinics.

A photograph of a male mechanic in a light-colored uniform with dark blue accents, wearing a headset. He is focused on inflating a car tire using a pressure gauge. The car is elevated on a yellow lift. In the background, a red car is visible. The scene is set in a well-lit garage or service bay.

*vocational
rehabilitation*





VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE

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 78.8 million to provide direct services to teens and adults

Source of Revenue

Federal - \$63,529,514 (81%)

State - \$13,335,848 (17%)

Other* - \$1,950,813 (2%)

Use of Revenue

Client Services - \$37,460,448 (48%)

Counseling and Placement - \$30,931,847 (39%)

Administration - \$10,423,879 (13%)

**Social Security reimbursements*

In FY17, VR-general and Blind and Deaf Services:

- Assisted 4,633 consumers in becoming employed, with an average hourly wage of \$10.93 (an increase from \$10.64 in FY 16, and from \$10.37 in FY 15).
- Received an additional \$850,000 appropriation from the Legislature, enabling the program to draw down an additional \$3.2 million in federal dollars.
- Partnered with the Alabama Department of Commerce, Alabama Department of Labor, and the Adult Education Program to create a data-sharing system to better serve consumers enrolled in multiple workforce development programs.
- In conjunction with its workforce development partners, developed a criterion for measuring effectiveness in serving employers to better assist them with their needs related to employing individuals with disabilities.
- Partnered with DHR and the Huntsville Rehab Foundation to provide evaluations for TANF recipients. Evaluation results and recommendations will assist DHR in referring consumers to the appropriate programs and will aid DHR in future program development.
- Partnered with the Southern Disability Foundation through the STAR Program to provide affordable loans to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining assistive technology.

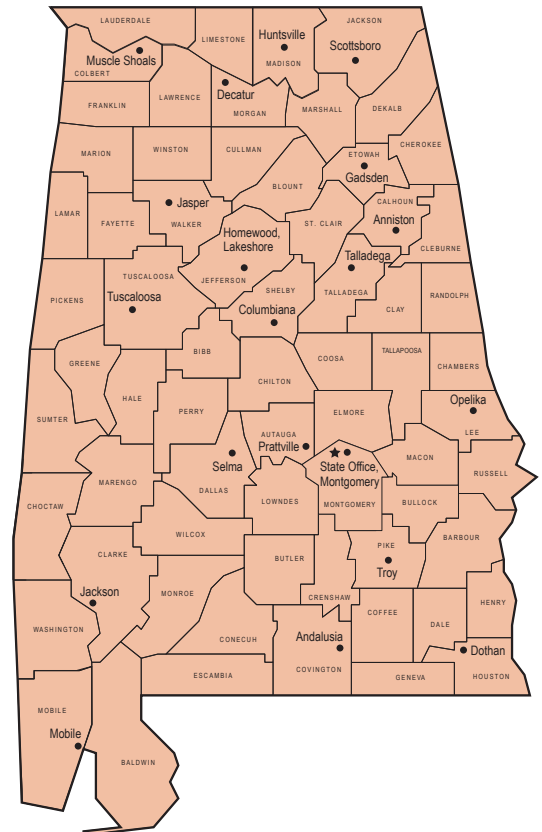


VRS Consumer Amanda Sigler found employment in FY17 at the Gadsden Public Library, in part due to a partnership forged with VRS Business Relations



VRS Consumer Christian Guevara was one of more than 35 students to participate in a STEM Wars competition located at Jacksonville State University in April. The event featured hands-on science, technology, and engineering activities for students in grades 8-12 who are blind or have vision loss.

vrs office locations



VRS blind & deaf services

The VRS Blind and Deaf Program assists Alabamians with vision and hearing loss 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.

In FY17, Blind and Deaf Services:

- established a partnership with the Statler Center Program of the Olmsted Center for Sight in Buffalo, NY, and E.H. Gentry/Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB) to provide a distance learning opportunity for our consumers in a business fundamentals class and/or telecommunications and hospitality. The first distance learning class in telecommunications training completed in July and the first student has entered into employment.
- began planning for College Quest, a statewide College Prep Program for individuals who are blind or low vision, with May 2018 as a target date for implementation.
- held the annual Technology Symposium at the Alabama School for the Blind. More than 300 attended the event, which had a theme of "In Perfect Harmony" and featured presenters and exhibitors from all over the country. The event was held in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the ASB Alumni Workers Association, which co-sponsored the event with ADRS and AIDB.
- in collaboration with AIDB regional centers, held four transition events on college campuses around the state, with 111 students attending. Programs were held at Auburn University, Bishop State University, Jacksonville State University, and the University of Alabama in Huntsville.



In FY17, ADRS partnered with AIDB to found the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind as Alabama's only structured discovery center

- held five transition camps for 130 deaf students at Auburn University, Jacksonville State University, Troy University, the University of Alabama, and the University of Alabama in Huntsville.
- through Deaf Services staff, provided training and made presentations nationally and internationally regarding strategies for interpreter services and understanding the role of support service providers for individuals who are deafblind.
- partnered with the AIDB Regional Center in Birmingham to establish the Alabama Freedom Center for the Blind. Instruction at the center is done using the Structured Discovery model, providing an alternative method of instruction for Alabamians with vision loss.

OASIS blind & 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.

In FY17, the OASIS program:

- provided services to 1,044 older Alabamians with vision loss and blindness, teaching them skills to help them maintain their independence and mobility. Of these, 674 persons completed their individualized programs, receiving 2,829 hours of in-home instruction to achieve their goals.
- purchased \$28,300 worth of assistive technology to aid consumers in reading printed material and redistributed more than 70 pieces of equipment at no cost to the program.
- through ADRS orientation and mobility specialists, provided 235 hours of individualized, in-home instruction in skills that maximize and maintain mobility in the home and community and provided 71 hours of contract services to 15 consumers where staff were unavailable.
- in partnership with the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, hosted the seventh Camp SAVI, providing seven consumers and five support persons in their lives information on resources, independent living skills, and peer support.



Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Jane Bush assists Marsha Mankiller with reading nutrition facts of dried cranberries with a smart phone app



Alabama BEP vendors operate approximately 70 vending machine routes – more than any program in the country

business enterprise program

The Alabama Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides qualified blind individuals with job training and employment opportunities that offer 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 FY17, vending machine operations accounted for the majority of the facilities, with Alabama's vendors operating approximately 70 vending machine routes – more than any program in the country.

In FY17, Alabama BEP:

- had approximately 93 blind vendors, with \$27.4 million in gross sales.
- increased average income per vendor to \$45,347.00.
- held its Annual Training Conference for Blind Vendors in July at Lakepoint State Park, with 118 attendees.
- held BEP technician training in July and BEP representative training in September.

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.



ADRS Lakeshore programs like Permit Training assist consumers with getting back behind the wheel

In FY17, the ADRS Lakeshore:

- continued to expand **CONNECTIONS**, its social skills training program, to areas across the state.

- expanded its Employment Development Services through the addition of a staff member in the Troy VR office, which improves services in the southeast corner of the state by providing college preparation, social skills groups, job readiness, and career exploration.
- expanded its Adaptive Driving Program through the addition of certified driving instructors in the Mobile VR and Montgomery VR offices, providing greater service coverage in south Alabama and the River Region.
- expanded its Vocational Evaluation program by providing pre-employment assessments and comprehensive assessments in more schools around the state.

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 FY17, the ADRS network of CRPs:

- assisted 1,446 Alabamians with disabilities in acquiring employment, with an average wage of \$9.31.
- added three CRPs to the network: Central Alabama Reach Out Center, Talladega; Howell Employment Services, Mobile; and Independent Advantage, Birmingham.
- in response to mandates in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, began assisting ADRS with pre-employment transition services, which focuses on high school students with disabilities. As active providers, the network assisted 4,690 students throughout the state.
- performed more than 2,600 vocational evaluations statewide to assist with vocational planning and match a person's interests to abilities.



Transition events, like Shelby County Career Prep, prepare high school juniors and seniors with disabilities for the world of work

transition service

ADRS provides services to enable Alabama's students and youth with disabilities to be independent, productive, contributing members of their communities.

This continuum of services includes Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and Transition Services. Pre-ETS are provided to students with disabilities age 16 (or 9th grade) and not older than 21 who are receiving services under an Individualized Education Program or are eligible for a 504 plan. These students can be eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. Transition Services are provided to youth with disabilities age 14-24 who are not participating in an educational program and have been determined eligible for VR services.

In FY17, this program:

- provided 5,024 students with disabilities with job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive training or post-secondary education, workplace readiness, including soft skills training, and instruction in self-advocacy.
- provided 24,281 services to students and youth, with 2,164 students and youth becoming gainfully employed.
- continued collaboration with the Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, the Alabama Department of Mental Health, Troy

University, Auburn University, the Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the Alabama State Department of Education to provide the Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum. In FY17, 32 students with disabilities from throughout Alabama participated in this five-day program designed to enhance leadership skills and independence.

- continued College Prep Program services at 13 sites around the state, with 228 students participating.
- continued collaboration with local school systems across the state to provide jointly funded pre-employment transition specialists. These Pre-ETS specialists worked in 28 school systems to provide job exploration counseling to students with disabilities; work-based learning experiences; counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive training or post-secondary education; and workplace readiness, including soft skills training and instruction in self-advocacy.
- collaborated with Auburn Transition Leadership Institute to provide Transition Unlimited in local school systems across the state. Through Transition Unlimited, teams consisting of an ADRS counselor, local education agency staff, and other transition stakeholders met to discuss needed Pre-ETS services and developed 360 action plans identifying those services based on the individual needs of the students in the school.

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 14 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.
- shared events through the Facebook page for Governor's Committees at the state and local level, generating a growing number of followers.
- held 14 local events for National Disability Employment Awareness Month, honoring 149 winners as employees, businesses, advocates, collaborators, educators, partners, and media of the year.
- 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.



ADR's Commissioner Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw speaks at the 2016 AGCEPD statewide awards ceremony with the statewide winners to her right

business relations

The business relations program, READI-Net, focused on three important “Rs” of being “READI” to provide services to Alabama’s businesses in 2017: relationships, recruitment, resources.

With 18 business relations consultants across the state, the READI-Net program offered more than 20 products and services to employers, including outreach, hiring, employee retention, staff training, accommodations, affirmative action, and accessibility. From being involved with special hiring initiatives with businesses to creating career exploration opportunities to high school students with disabilities, READI-Net focused on enhancing and expanding our relations, recruitment, and resources for Alabama’s businesses.

In FY17, READI-Net:

- provided 1,056 business customers with 5,706 no-cost services. The most-popular business services were outreach, recruitment, and referrals, with more than 3,723 services being provided. Other top services included identifying job vacancies, ongoing supports post-hire, disabled employee retention services, and staff training –all provided through a lead point of contact from the READI-Net team.
- provided 7,996 services to 1,752 VR consumers seeking employment or job retention assistance. Top services to consumers were job search assistance, referral to job leads, counseling, career exploration, assessment of readiness for work, job readiness classes, and a variety of pre-hire work experiences.
- conducted 96 special events, 110 local partner collaboration meetings, and 137 presentations to business.



Business Relations forged a partnership to serve more than 20 Alabama National Guard employees

What our business partners are saying about us ...

"We had a relationship with VR for many, many years – 30 or more years – and because of that relationship, we developed some good solid trust. Any relationship takes time, takes work, and so that relationship had been built with VR over the years."

-Jeff Cofield, disability management director, Alabama Power

"Thirty years ago, some people at the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services had a vision, and they were dedicated and they were dependable. They kept coming back. They didn't just come out and make a call. They believed in it, and they wanted to be part of the company. They wanted to be a true partner. It wasn't just making a call. It was getting involved in the whole aspect of business, and they've continued throughout the years to be a support."

-Reba Glidewell, personnel manager, Amerex

"I think that choosing Vocational Rehab as a partner was very important. I personally have a number of relationships with Voc Rehab counselors, job specialists, and I think it's a perfect match because they have resources available to assist in promoting hiring people with disabilities. From an employer standpoint, we need to know where to go to get help with job coaching, to have knowledge about the programs that are available to employers, and I think that's why it's such a good match because of all the resources and knowledge base."

-Linda Cheronas, HR manager, CVS Health

"Having state Vocational Rehabilitation as your go-to place makes it much easier to connect with people with disabilities. State Vocational Rehabilitation also has tremendous resources in terms of education, of talent, of assistance. It's sort of a one-stop shop, the go-to place for employers to really get everything they need when it comes to working with people with disabilities."

-Roger McCullough, director, Cooper Green Mercy Health Services

supported employment

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

In fiscal year 2017, ADRS contracted with 39 service providers to provide SE services, provided funding for 11 Project SEARCH sites, and expanded the Transition to Success program for students with autism.

The program also:

- had 1,019 consumers complete situational assessments and/or the Discovery process.
- closed 541 consumers in competitive integrated employment, representing a 15 percent increase from the previous fiscal year. The 541 consumers who went to work in the community worked an average of 23 hours a week at an average wage of \$8.30 per hour.
- added an 11th Project SEARCH site in Calhoun County and converted one existing site (Gadsden Regional Medical Center) to create a Youth Project SEARCH. At a national conference, seven of Alabama's 10 sites were recognized for their employment outcomes. The national average for employment for Project SEARCH is 70 percent, and these sites exceeded that average.
- closed 41 individuals in self-employment, a 17 percent increase from FY16.
- opened 86 Individual Placement and Supports (IPS) Supported Employment cases for two pilot sites and closed 24 successfully in the community. The program – a collaborative effort between ADRS, the Alabama Department of Mental Health, the Department of Veterans Affairs and Auburn University to serve individuals with serious mental illness – is in the fourth year of a five-year grant from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



Supported Employment helped Travis Deese find employment in FY17

traumatic brain injury (TBI) 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.

Services include community reintegration, 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.

In FY17, the TBI program:

- assisted more than 2,300 Alabamians with TBI.
- 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. Because of their injuries, respondents are provided with information and referral assistance to ADRS, AHIF, and other much-needed services and resources.
- continued collaboration with the Alabama Head Injury Foundation – 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 4th Annual Concussion Summit and partnering on the concussion task force as well as UAB/TBI Model Systems, one of 17 NIDILRR programs improving research, care, and outcomes for TBI.



Dustin Rowe, who has a TBI, did workforce training with the Green Pond Fire Department as part of his rehabilitation process in FY17

BROCK SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

state of alabama

independent living

COONEY HALL



sail



STATE OF ALABAMA INDEPENDENT LIVING

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.

- Assisted 1,447 Alabamians with the most-significant disabilities in remaining in their homes and communities.
- Through the SAIL independent living specialists, obtained \$86,400 in donated goods and services, leveraging their budgets for additional services to individuals with significant disabilities.
- Through the SAIL independent living specialists, engaged in regular outreach activities to hospitals, schools, and community and civic groups to promote program services, collaborate with other service providers, and engage volunteer workers.
- Developed agreements with two new fiscal agent vendors to provide more consistent statewide services for Homebound and Waiver participants.
- Expanded the Personal Choices program statewide so that individuals can direct their own care to meet their independent living needs.
- Expanded the Combined Services program into the Dothan area, allowing Waiver and Homebound participants to explore employment options.



The SAIL program assisted Pete Petro in FY17

SAIL BY THE NUMBERS

More than 11.6 million to serve Alabamians with the most significant disabilities

Source of Revenue

State - \$5,924,672 (51%)

Other* - \$5,399,630 (46%)

Federal - \$305,350 (3%)

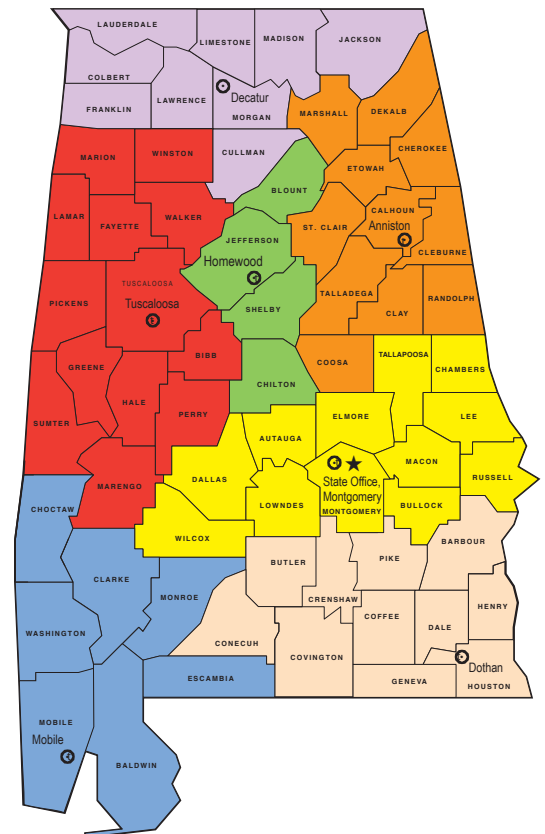
Use of Revenue

Services - \$10,759,574 (93%)

Administration - \$870,078 (7%)

*Medicaid reimbursements

sail office locations





the alabama department of
rehabilitation services



programs across the ADRS continuum:

for all ages



rehabilitation engineering & assistive technology

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.

In FY 2017, the RE&AT program:

- Served 860 ADRS consumers across all four divisions.



In FY17, ADRS Rehabilitation Technologist Bynum Duren constructs a desk of his design used by Pete Petro

- Improved services for students by adding two new positions for teachers with experience in assistive technology and special education.
- Individually evaluated more than 350 CRS, VRS, and SAIL consumers.
- Evaluated more than 200 consumers as part of the CRS ACT Clinic.
- Provided engineering design services to 116 consumers.
- Trained 133 consumers on technology devices.

STAR: alabama's technology resource

STAR is Alabama's Assistive Technology Act program. Through its Reutilization,

Training, AT demonstrations and short-term loans, 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.

In FY17, the Reutilization Program:

- was ranked among the top three of 56 programs nationwide.
- saved Alabamians with disabilities \$1,545,931 and ADRS consumers \$56,600.
- received 3,203 donated items, 4,416 requests.
- filled requests/reused 3,466 items.

The Alternative Finance Program:

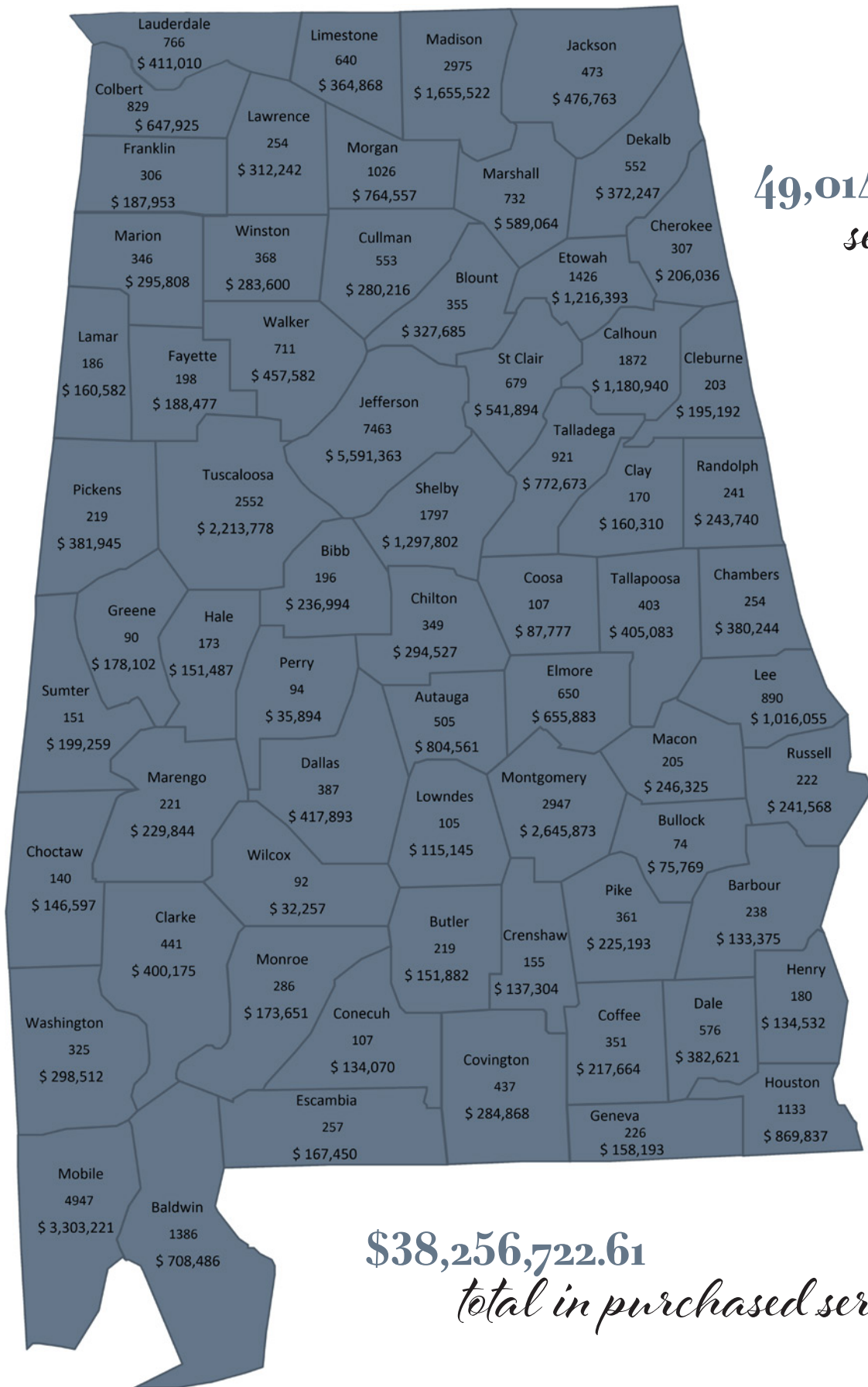
- approved 14 loans totaling \$277,601.06, with the top three loan requests being for adaptive vehicles, mobility equipment, and home modifications.
- established two new vendor partnerships to promote awareness and increase AT loans.

The training program:

- Offered 71 assistive technology training modules through www.startraining.org.
- Provided 19 onsite trainings and 105 online trainings.

The assistive technology demonstration and short-term loan program:

- Loaned 101 devices to 38 individuals.
- Provided 81 assistive technology demonstrations.



49,014
served

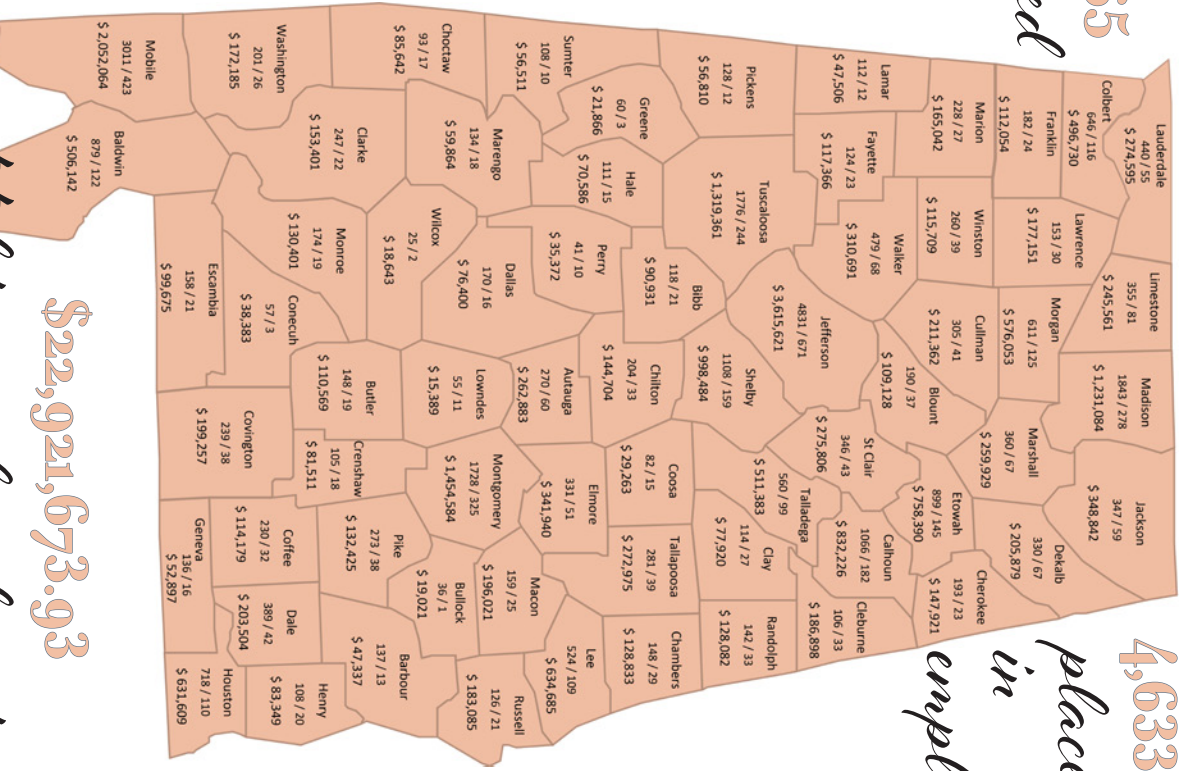
\$38,256,722.61
total in purchased services



Teens & adults served

38,065

served



4,633

placed in employment

\$22,921,673.93

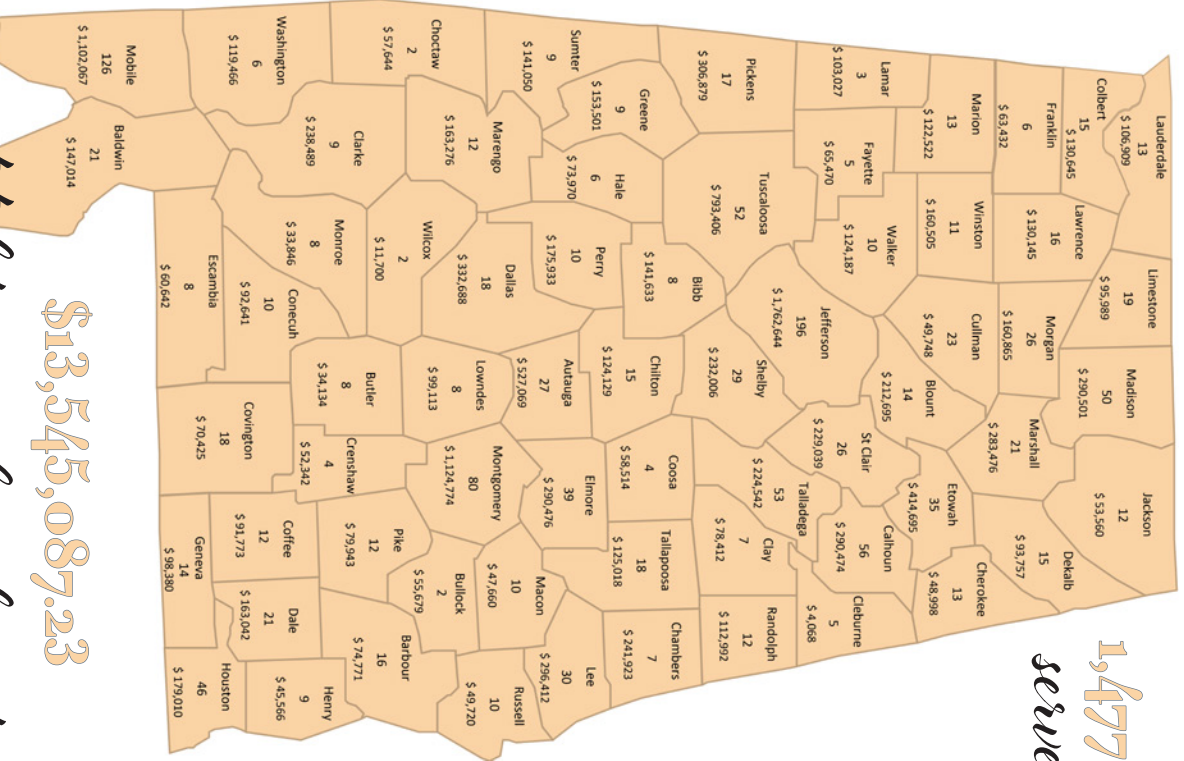
Total in purchased services



persons with significant disabilities served

1,477

served



\$13,545,087.23

Total in purchased services



community rehabilitation program locations

ALABASTER

Independent Advantage Placement Agency

ANNISTON

Opportunity Center-Easter Seals

BIRMINGHAM

ADRS-Lakeshore
Easter Seals of the Birmingham Area
Goodwill Industries of Alabama
Triumph Services
United Ability
Workshops Inc.

DECATUR

Erica Allen Employment Services (EASE)
Phoenix Rehabilitation Foundation

DOTHAN

Wiregrass Rehabilitation Center

GADSDEN

Darden Rehabilitation Foundation

HUNTSVILLE

Phoenix Rehabilitation Foundation

JACKSON

Clarke County ARC

KELLYTON

Central Alabama Reach Out Center

MOBILE

Goodwill Easter Seals of the Gulf Coast
Howell Employment Services
United Cerebral Palsy of Mobile

MONTGOMERY

Easter Seals Central Alabama
Goodwill Industries of Central Alabama

MUSCLE SHOALS

Northwest Easter Seals

OPELIKA

Achievement Center-Easter Seals
Jackie Johnson Employment Services

PELHAM

Shelby County ARC

SELMA

West Central Alabama Easter Seals

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
United Ability - Hand in Hand Early Intervention

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)

FLORENCE

SCOPE 310

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

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
Children's Center of Montgomery Inc. (PPEI)
Project Wiggles and Giggles
UCP of Mobile (Horizon)

OZARK

Vivian B. Adams Early Intervention

PELHAM

Shelby County ARC/Kids First

PRATTVILLE

ARC of Autauga/Western Elmore County (EIEIO)

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

TALLADEGA

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, regional office

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

WINFIELD

Tri County Early Intervention

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

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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.



ONE DEPARTMENT. ONE MISSION.

maximum potential for Alabama's children and adults with disabilities



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