



Home.

School.

Work.

together. success.

2018 ADRS annual report



# 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,

As commissioner, it is my pleasure to present *Together Success*, the 2018 annual report for the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services.

This report gives us the opportunity to share the numbers that highlight our staff's hard work and accomplishments throughout the past fiscal year. The individual success stories spotlighted here bring me great joy and personal satisfaction because they represent the almost 50,000 Alabamians with disabilities we serve each year. Their stories epitomize the heart and soul of our efforts and highlight resilience, drive, and determination in the face of significant challenges.

The pages of this report also attest 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 our 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, we are challenged 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 Durkin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.



# together. success.

Home.

School.

Work.

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# The continuum of services

## *Services across 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.

# adrs

## alabama's early intervention system

AEIS 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.



# aeis

## children's rehabilitation service

CRS 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.



# crs

## vocational rehabilitation service

VRS 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.



# vrs

## state of alabama independent living (homebound)

SAIL (Homebound) provides services to Alabamians who have the most-significant disabilities. SAIL/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.



# sail

# Meet our board



Dear friends,

It has been my pleasure to have served another year as the chairman of the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services.

Once again, I was impressed by the life-altering impact this department had on the lives of the tens of thousands of Alabama's children and adults with disabilities.

As you read through the pages of the 2018 annual report, you will see inspirational stories that highlight the excellent work of our staff. These staff members work tirelessly to ensure those they serve reach their maximum potential.

On behalf of the board, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the ADRS staff as well as our partners for another outstanding year. Your collective efforts make it possible for us to meet the needs of those we serve, which truly illustrates the annual report's theme, Together, Success.

Jimmie Varnado  
Board Chairman  
District 2



**Stephen G. Kayes**  
District 1



**Penny Foster**  
District 3



**Leah Lust**  
District 4



**Eddie C. Williams**  
District 5



**Charles Wilkinson**  
District 6



**Mitch Strickland**  
District 7



*District 1 Board Member Stephen G. Kayes and ADRS Commissioner Jane Elizabeth Burdesbaw catch up following the board's June 2018 meeting in Tuscaloosa.*

*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 the rights of and services to people with disabilities; and serving as the governing body of programs administered by the department.*



Our success stories



*Left, Denise Whatley and her son Cameron Caffey enjoy playing together. Top right, Cam is always ready to flash a smile for the camera. Bottom right, Mary Hobson has become part of the family. She provides insight and information to help Cam continue to develop.*

# Cameron Caffey

## Montgomery County

When Denise Whatley joined the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services team in February 2017, she was told that employees are considered part of the family.

This became even more evident when she learned she was pregnant and gave birth to her son, Cameron Caffey, who was diagnosed with Down syndrome.

Soon after she gave birth to Cam, Whatley said Alabama’s Early Intervention System Coordinator Betsy Prince visited her in the hospital to arrange a meeting with a case worker. Less than a week after Cam came home, the caseworker was there to outline options and programs available to the family.

Having this help available for the past year and a half has been a tremendous

help to Whatley, who said she had no idea what to expect after the diagnosis.

“The program has been great,” she said. “From the time that they told me he had Down syndrome, I came over and talked to Betsy, and she said anything I needed or any concerns I had to just come talk to them. She followed me through my whole pregnancy.”

Prince and her staff provided articles and information and even connected Whatley to a support group while she was in the hospital.

“It made me feel really comfortable and let me know that I wasn’t alone,” Whatley said. “It was scary at first, because I didn’t know anyone who had Down syndrome and didn’t have any experience.”

Through EI, Cam receives speech, occupational, and physical therapies to assure that he keeps pace with his typically developing peers.

The youngster, who was born two months premature, has made tremendous progress through EI services. He now crawls through the house, sports a big smile, and participates in many activities with his three siblings and cousins.

Whatley said she feels blessed to be a part of the rehab family and constantly sings the praises of EI and the department to others.

“Everyone here really does care,” she said.



*Above left, Carter Wilson sustained a traumatic brain injury at six weeks old, but the Summerdale resident has made tremendous progress with help from ADRS programs. Right, CRS TBI Care Coordinator Aimee Lott has become like a member of the family.*

# Carter Wilson

## Baldwin County

The life of Summerdale resident Carter Wilson took a dramatic turn less than two months into the young man's life. At six weeks old, Carter sustained a traumatic brain injury that forced doctors at USA Children's and Women's Hospital in Mobile to induce a coma during his healing process. Carter remained in the hospital until he was three months old.

His parents, Lauren and Jason, were concerned about what the future might hold for their son, but those questions were soon answered when Carter was referred to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation's Early Intervention and Children's Rehabilitation Service programs.

Through EI, Carter received vision and physical therapy services.

He continued to make progress while attending various CRS clinics, including hearing, neuromotor, orthopedic, seating, and feeding.

Lauren said Carter entered the hospital in March 2014, and by April they had entered ADRS programs with CRS TBI Care Coordinator Aimee Lott available to guide them through their

journey. Lott is now considered part of the family.

"She is very sweet," Lauren said. "We were overwhelmed with everything. Aimee gives us a sense of ease and calmed us down a lot."

Carter, who will be 5 in January, has made great strides since entering the programs.

He is able to speak, crawl through the family's home, and is learning to walk with a gait trainer. In addition to the in-home visits and weekly clinics, CRS helped provide a wheelchair, leg braces, prescriptions for medication, and a new car seat.

"They are great at getting you anything you need," Lauren said.

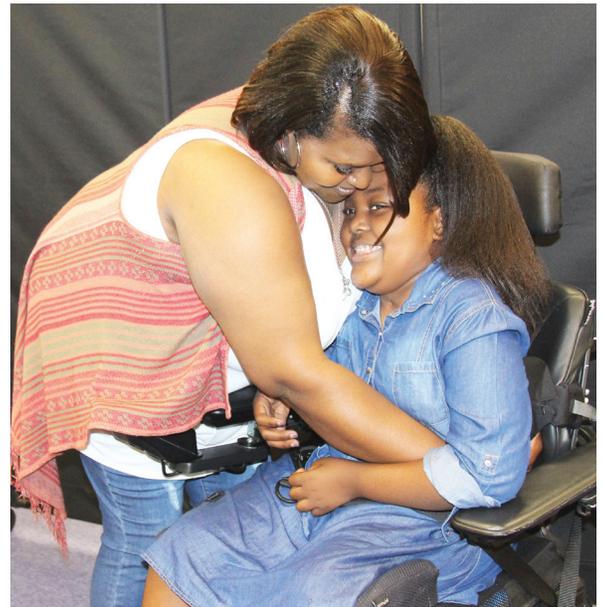
Lott said they will continue to provide support throughout Carter's academic career as well and through Vocational Rehabilitation Service during his adult years. Lott said she feels fortunate to be able to meet wonderful families like the Wilsons and make a difference in their lives.

"I am so thankful to be able to work with families like this and to be a part of their lives," she said.



*Above, the Wilsons were concerned and overwhelmed when they learned Carter had sustained a traumatic brain injury, but they are now optimistic for the future thanks to ADRS programs. Below, Carter receives a little love from his brother.*





*Above left, Ja'Kaliyah Fuller has become a star student at Myrtlewood Elementary School. She is an avid reader and loves working on vocabulary. Right, Ja'Kaliyah's mother Danielle has been an excellent advocate for her daughter.*

# Ja'Kaliyah Fuller

## Tuscaloosa County

When Tuscaloosa County resident Danielle Fuller began her relationship with Children's Rehabilitation Service in 2011, she did not know what to expect.

Danielle quickly discovered her daughter Ja'Kaliyah, who has a spinal cord injury, was in good hands with Social Work Administrator Monica Grammer.

"When I met her, she was so welcoming and talked to me about different things that they could provide," she said. "She told me about all the things they could help us with."

Danielle said she struggled trying to understand her daughter's challenges, but with Grammer easily accessible for appointments, clinics, individualized education program (IEP) meetings, and school visits, the situation was much clearer.

"Anything we needed, before we even asked, she was on it," Danielle said. "She was with me from A to

Z, and if I didn't understand some things she would break it down for me."

Ja'Kaliyah, who is in the fourth grade at Myrtlewood Elementary School in Fosters, now has all the tools she needs to succeed and even has a swing of her own as part of an updated playground.

Grammer helped the family secure a power wheelchair, accessible ramps at the school, speedy appointments when needed, and information on private funding groups when insurance coverage fell short.

Grammer said it is a joy to see the progress Ja'Kaliyah has made and to know that she was able to make a difference. "I love it," she said. "It is neat to see her overcome some of the concerns her mother had early on. They were legitimate concerns, but they have been able to work through them."



*Above, Ja'Kaliyah and Children's Rehabilitation Service Social Work Administrator Monica Grammer discuss schoolwork and other topics during a recent visit. The Fullers said Grammer has become like a member of the family because she has been with them for much of Ja'Kaliyah's life. Grammer made sure Ja'Kaliyah had everything she needed to excel at school and reach her goals.*



*Madyson Chisenall, center, is well-known at Pisgah High School in northeast Alabama for her smiling face and friendly demeanor. Dees, far left, and aide Darla Watkins, along with her grandparents, can also attest to Madyson's unique sense of humor.*

# Madyson Chisenall

## Jackson County

When Madyson Chisenall was born, her family was told that her brain would never develop beyond the mind of a 3-year-old.

Madyson, now a junior at Pisgah High School, continues to defy the odds and amaze her family, friends, and teachers.

The 17-year-old, whose favorite subject is math, is known for her wonderful sense of humor (she once tried to sell the family's home, tractor, and car online) and exceptional memory. She has the ability to easily remember passwords and has discovered ways to use her tablet that were thought to be impossible.

Madyson's journey began with Huntsville CRS Speech-Language Pathologist Jenna Dees at 3 years old and has continued to this point.

Their association began with an Augmented Communication Technology (ACT) Clinic and continued with Dees and CRS helping her secure a power wheelchair and a tablet with programs that help Madyson communicate, organize her schoolwork, and improve her all-around quality of life.

Grandmother Margaret Hawkins said in the past they used a system of signals to communicate with Madyson. Now, they can do so much faster.

"Before the computer, we would have to guess what was wrong, what she wanted to eat, or if she was hurting," she said. "The computer has been a life-changer. We don't have to guess anything anymore. She can tell us anything we want to know."

Madyson has defied the odds by remaining on track in regular classes with the help of her aide, Darla Watkins.

Chisenall expressed her gratitude to ADRS and the programs that have helped her reach her full potential.

"Thank you, ADRS, for helping me," she said.



*Madyson, pictured above with two of her best friends, is very popular among the students. Below, a tablet has opened the door to communication between Madyson and others.*





*Rachel Duncan of Asheville has not let the daily challenges she faces slow her down. With help from ADRS, Duncan is well on her way to earning an associate's degree from Gadsden State Community College. She hopes to graduate in May 2019.*

## Rachel Duncan

### Etowah County

Asheville's Rachel Duncan is living life to its fullest. The Gadsden State Community College honor student is reaching for the stars while overcoming the boundaries presented by arthrogryposis, a congenital disability that causes the curving of joints.

Duncan, 19, has made great strides with help from VRS, SAIL/Homebound, CRS, and CRS Social Worker Patricia Patterson, who Rachel said has always been there for her.

"She is the greatest," she said. "She has been here so long that she is part of the family."

Patterson was integral in making sure Duncan received the help she needed when she began her academic career in elementary school. Through her efforts, an aide, occupational therapist, and physical therapist were provided to ensure Duncan remained on target to graduate.

By first grade, CRS was able to provide Duncan with a chair she could maneuver with her chin and a table that allowed her to lay on her side to work on class assignments. By second grade, Duncan was able to complete her schoolwork by hand.

Now that Rachel is in college, VRS has provided assistance with tuition and books, a wheelchair lift for her van, and a drafting table for use in class at Gadsden State, where she is working toward an associate degree in applied science office administration and health information management.

SAIL has worked with Duncan on skills that will help her live independently such as budgeting and activities of daily living. She hopes to graduate in May 2019 and become a medical transcriptionist.



*Above, Duncan and Social Worker Patricia Patterson discuss school and share a laugh during one of their many visits. Below, Duncan and her mother Ginger enjoy cooking meals together. Spaghetti is a family favorite.*





*Reigning Ms. Wheelchair Alabama Hope Hodges does not let any obstacles stand in her way. The University of Montevallo freshman has thrived with help from ADRS. The adaptive driving program helped Hodges earn her license and secure a Volkswagen Beetle with hand controls. A Firefly device, pictured to the right, attaches to her wheelchair and allows her to maneuver across the UM campus much faster.*

## Hope Hodges

### Shelby County

University of Montevallo freshman and reigning Ms. Wheelchair Alabama Hope Hodges is an unstoppable force.

The 18-year-old computer informatics major has overcome the many challenges presented by arthrogryposis to achieve her goals and inspire others.

Hodges, who is a triplet, began receiving services from ADRS and Alabama's Early Intervention System soon after birth with her brothers Spencer and Payne.

In 2015, she re-enrolled in Children's Rehabilitation Service to participate in the program's Teen Transition Clinic (TTC).

After the clinic, Hodges was referred to Vocational Rehabilitation Service and the ADRS Lakeshore Adaptive Driving Program.

Gaining the ability to drive was a huge step in expanding her independence, Hodges said, and the instructors were extremely helpful.

"All of the driving instructors at ADRS were super nice," she said. "I got along with all of them really well. They made you feel safe. If you messed up, they didn't freak out about it, they just explained what you needed to do."

After earning her license, the program helped Hodges secure a yellow Volkswagen Beetle with hand controls.

Hodges continued her work with CRS by attending Seating, Positioning, and Mobility Clinic with CRS Physical Therapist Kristi Renneker. She had used a walker throughout her tenure

at Helena High School but was convinced to try a wheelchair her senior year. She adapted quickly to the chair and found that it made it much easier for her to get from class to class in college.

When preparing for college, Hodges worked with Renneker and VR Counselor Angel Mahand to research devices that could help propel her chair. This led to the addition of a battery-operated Firefly device that attaches to the front of the chair to convert it into a scooter. A free-wheel attachment also lifts the front wheels on her chair to allow Hodges to drive over cobblestone and brick. The device also allows her to maneuver on grass, opening the door for her to participate in an ultimate Frisbee game with her Alpha Gamma Delta sorority sisters during the fall semester.

Though she was reluctant at first, Hodges said she is glad to have made the transition to a wheelchair.

"I'm definitely fortunate for ADRS to have assisted with the purchase of my wheelchair and my Firefly, because I would not be here right now if it were not for them," she said.

While a senior at Helena High School, Hodges was encouraged to participate in the Ms. Wheelchair Alabama pageant by CRS Transition Specialist Minnie Jones. She won the August competition and earned the Ms. Wheelchair Scholarship (\$700) as well as the Chuck Sheehan Scholarship (\$1,500).

Hodges is fueled to succeed by strong family ties and her tireless work ethic, but she added that ADRS has also been there to help her move forward.

"I'm very fortunate for ADRS to have helped with these amazing devices to allow me to live my life more independently," she said.



*Deshon Washington, above, receives advice from his NASA mentor Edward Abmad. during a recent internship. Washington said he was excited for the opportunity and grateful to ADRS for helping make it a reality.*

# Deshon Washington

## Madison County

To say the sky is the limit for Deshon Washington would be an understatement.

The Alabama A&M University senior logistics and department management major recently overcame challenges presented by muscular dystrophy to complete an internship with Redstone Arsenal and NASA. The valuable experience he received came thanks to assistance from the SAIL-VRS Hybrid Program.

Washington became involved with SAIL-VRS hybrid services the second semester of his freshmen year.

The program helped him pay for school expenses and work through the entire process of being a college student. They

helped him secure the internship with NASA and provided an aide and much-needed medical equipment to assist with his activities of daily living and help him remain independent.

It was not easy getting to this point in his scholastic career, Washington said.

When he began classes as a freshman, he did not have a vehicle, and the rough terrain of a college campus was hard to maneuver from his wheelchair.

Once he was connected with VRS and SAIL, Washington said things began to fall into place.



*Left, the ADRS Lakeshore Adaptive Driver Program gave Washington the independence to transport himself to school. Right, Washington discusses his future plans with SAIL-VRS Hybrid Services Counselor Maria Carroll and Business Relations Consultant Senita Thorne.*



*Dewey Miller and coworker Vincent Butler work together to make sure all of the numbers are in order at Names, Frames & More in Eufaula. The VRS Supported Employment program helped provide Miller with the tools he needs to make a difference in his community.*

## Dewey Miller

### Barbour County

A desire to contribute fuels Eufaula native Michael “Dewey” Miller despite the daily challenges of cerebral palsy.

With the help of his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor LaToya Allen, he is not only working, he is helping move the family business forward.

Miller, 21, who was initially served by the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services through the Children’s Rehabilitation Service program, has been employed at Names, Frames & More since February and has been a valuable addition to the team.

This comes as no surprise to Allen.

“He wanted to work, and he wanted to do something other than just working from home,” she said. “Dewey wanted to be out in the community.”

Through the VRS Supported Employment program, Miller was provided the technology he needed to succeed. They assessed his work station and helped purchase the necessary equipment to complete his daily duties. Miller, who is in a wheelchair and has very limited mobility, is nonverbal. However, with the help of ADRS and Allen, he can communicate and perform data entry duties with the aid of an ECHO device which functions through his eye movements.

Miller’s job includes keeping track of orders and inserting them into his computer. He creates invoices, and once an item has been paid for, he can mark it as such. He also keeps track of sales and income tax and creates reports for his grandfather to review.

Dewey’s father, Rocky Norton, said ADRS and Allen have been a tremendous blessing in their lives. She helped the family secure a Dodge Caravan with a lift and conversion that they use to transport the young man to and from work.



*Above, Miller always enjoys his visits with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor LaToya Allen. Left, Miller is pictured with his father Rocky Norton and grandfather Gary Norton.*



# Chelsea Huggins

## Butler County

McKenzie native Chelsea Huggins has received her fair share of challenges in life, but she continues to overachieve.

In October 2012, Huggins was enjoying homecoming festivities at McKenzie High School when she and a few hometown friends were in a car accident that left her paralyzed from the chest down.

Through continued efforts with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Chad Grant, Huggins now has an art studio in her home featuring several of her own paintings, is able to drive a car, and will soon earn a psychology degree from Troy University.

When she first arrived home, Huggins worked briefly with Children’s Rehabilitation Service before transitioning to Vocational Rehabilitation Service and State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL). Through these programs, Huggins said she received information about programs that could allow her to become more independent. Huggins said SAIL provides an attendant at her home and during breaks at school.

“They (ADRS) mean more than I could ever put into words,” she said. “Because of CRS, I was able to gain more abilities to gain the independence I desired. With VR and ADRS, I have been able to do everything since then – whether it be in-home independence, being able to drive, going to school. Everything I am doing today is because of them.”

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*Editor’s Note: Chelsea Huggins died in a car accident Oct. 11, 2018. This story was written prior to her death.*



*Chelsea Huggins, above, works on a painting in her home studio. Below, Huggins and her VR counselor, Chad Grant, share a laugh during an in-home visit.*



*Chelsea Huggins and her mother Amy enjoy coffee and conversation at their home near McKenzie in south Butler County. Huggins overcame incredible obstacles to inspire others to pursue their dreams.*



Brooke Shepherd is pictured on the campus of the Alabama School for the Deaf, where she is able to use her experiences with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services to help others achieve their goals.

# Brooke Shepherd

## Talladega County

Brooke Shepherd is a living example of the importance of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services' *continuum of services*.

Shepherd – a product of the Early Intervention, Children's Rehabilitation Service and Vocational Rehabilitation Service programs – is now using her personal journey with ADRS to help others as a work experience coordinator at the Alabama School for the Deaf.

The opportunity to pass on the knowledge she has gained as both a consumer and former employee of ADRS through VRS is one that Shepherd takes very seriously.

"I think it is wonderful that I have been able to start from the beginning and go full-circle," she said. "I know what I had to do to go through the services, and by working in VR I know what people need to get. I have been a consumer and I understand their perspective, but I have also worked in VR and I know what consumers need."

Shepherd, 35, first entered what is now known as EI when she

was about 3 years old after her mother, Talladega VRS employee Carol McGrady, discovered that her young daughter had hearing loss. As she progressed through CRS, Brooke received hearing aids that allowed her to catch up to her peers and attend public schools.

Brooke excelled in high school with help from VRS and later earned a bachelor's degree in education from Jacksonville State University. After teaching at the Florida School for the Deaf and in Alabama public schools, she joined the VR team in Birmingham while she was a vocational rehabilitation counseling student at Auburn University.

Shepherd said VR was there to provide support while she pursued both degrees. While at JSU, she received an interpreter, tuition assistance, money for books, a laptop, and a printer. Hearing aids that are Bluetooth compatible made it easier for her to network.

Because of these experiences and the contacts she made, Shepherd said she is able to partner with VR to set up workshops to teach AIDB students skills like interviewing, self-advocacy, and job readiness.

Shepherd, whose older brother Jason Morgan is also deaf, said she can relate to the students well and understands deaf culture. Her experience with ADRS programs help her teach students how to be successful no matter what their disability might be.



Above left, Shepherd discusses the organization of a job fair with coworker Abby Jordan. Right, Shepherd and AIDB student Jessica Morris talk about goals for the future.

# Ricky Wilkins

## Montgomery County

Life for Ricky Wilkins changed on Father's Day weekend of 2015, but his desire to make a difference in the lives of others did not.

Wilkins, 50, was shot in the head by his next-door neighbor near his west Montgomery home resulting in an almost-total loss of vision in his right eye, some hearing loss, and memory loss due to a traumatic brain injury (TBI).

After stints at Baptist South and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, he arrived back home in Montgomery and began the road to recovery with help from TBI and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor April B. Turner.

Through the Traumatic Brain Injury and Interactive Community Based Model, Turner encouraged Wilkins to regain his stamina and strength, which led him to the downtown Montgomery YMCA and an eventual job.

Wilkins, who is now helping other young TBI survivors, said his recovery took time. He is still working to fully regain his memory and, "get back to 100 percent."

He added that the support he has received from Turner and the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services has had a huge impact on the progress he has made.

"They have been holding my hand ever since I have been getting back on my feet," he said. "They have really helped me out. I wouldn't be where I am without them. Truth be told, I would not be here."

The two have taken part in one-on-one counseling sessions at Wilkins' kitchen table and Turner leads him through brain exercises, cognitive games, and activities to increase his processing speed.



*The road to recovery has not been easy for Montgomery's Ricky Wilkins. Wilkins, who suffered a traumatic brain injury after being shot in 2015, has made tremendous progress with help from TBI and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor April B. Turner.*



*Left, Wilkins enjoys exercising at the downtown YMCA to keep his body and mind fit. Right, Turner and Wilkins discuss the progress he has made and plans for continued success in the future.*



*By working together, the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services and J. Lodge have been able to offer employment opportunities to people with disabilities. Tyler Spivey is one of more than 50 consumers who were placed in jobs at the company.*

## Covington County

Partnerships are crucial to creating opportunities for people with disabilities.

Fortunately, J. Lodge has proven to be a willing participant. The Fort Meyers, Fla., business has hired more than 50 consumers, Business Relations Consultant Patrick Daugherty said.

The partnership has been so fruitful, in fact, that the company was named the 2018 Large Employer of the Year by the Alabama Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.

Among those hired is Tyler Spivey, whose opportunities had been limited because of cerebral palsy. Spivey, who began working with the company in February, said he was especially excited about this opportunity because he knew of J. Lodge’s commitment to giving workers with disabilities a chance to prove themselves.

Spivey, a technical quality analyst with the company, said J. Lodge has done just that.

“It is a very good company for somebody with a disability,” he said. “A lot of people who work there work with VR counselors and are disabled and have certain issues.”

J. Lodge has made it easier for workers with disabilities to come on board by waiving initial equipment requirements that had been part of the hiring process.

Daugherty said VR has stepped in to help people obtain the equipment they need and the Andalusia office even provides a resource room with the necessary tools for consumers to begin working.



*Tyler Spivey’s performance with J. Lodge earned him the Covington County Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities Large Business Employer of the Year Award for 2018.*

# Maples Industries

## Jackson County

Employees with disabilities have made a tremendous impact at Maples Industries Inc., a rug manufacturing plant and Jackson County's largest employer.

Supervisors say the employees who were referred to the company by Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Mark Williams are among their most reliable.

About 20 workers are currently on payroll through the Milestones Program, a partnership between ADRS and The ARC of Jackson County. The program provides training for people with disabilities for many different jobs and has found Maples to be a valuable partner.

Mary Nell Bell, a line supervisor, said she knows she can count on employees placed by ADRS when they need them most.

"They work when nobody else will," she said. "They hardly miss a day."

Williams said some of the people placed through the program have been on staff for more than 10 years. He said it is exciting to see them thrive when they are offered an opportunity to showcase their abilities.

Nathan Bryan, a stacker, said he has made several new friends since joining the Maples team.

"There are plenty of people to talk to that are friendly and nice," he said. "That's one of the things I look forward to."

Another employee, John Smith, said he is grateful to Williams and ADRS for the opportunity to work full time.

"Mark helped me find a job," he said. "He had the programs I needed to help me get a job at Maples. I get to do a lot of different things in different places."

Both men said Maples allowed them to ease the anxiety of starting a new job by bringing them in before they were hired and showing them the ropes.



*Above, Nathan Bryan prepares rugs to be shipped as part of his daily duties. Below, John Smith inspects the rugs before they are loaded on to trucks and shipped.*



*Nathan Bryan, left, who works as a stacker, has a tough task. Every day at Maples Industries Inc. begins a hectic run. Bryan said he feels very comfortable and is able to keep up with the heavy load because of the help he received in preparation for his job. He said he looks forward to coming to work every day and spending time with his coworkers.*



*Above left, Zaxby's employee Dale Kennedy discusses his daily duties and shares a joke with store manager Tim Saint. Right, Seth Justice is a favorite of coworkers and customers.*

# Zaxby's

## Jackson County

Sometimes all a person needs is a chance.

This is proven every day by the work of Scottsboro Zaxby's employees Dale Kennedy and Seth Justice.

Kennedy and Justice, who have developmental disabilities, have not only performed their respective duties well, manager Tim Saint said they have taken on additional responsibilities.

Both Kennedy and Justice were referred to Zaxby's through Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Mark Williams and The ARC of Jackson County. Williams said Zaxby's and Saint have been a wonderful partner in providing people with disabilities an opportunity to enter the workforce.

When Williams referred Kennedy two years ago, his initial duties included cleaning the dining room on an 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. shift.

Saint said he soon felt Kennedy was ready to learn the ins and outs of preparing chicken and filtering the oil.

Kennedy said he was eager to learn more because it gave him the confidence to become more independent.

This, he said, has always been his goal.

For Justice, the social aspect of the job has been a strength. In his eight months of employment, Saint said Seth has become a favorite of regulars and coworkers.

"He doesn't meet a stranger," he said. "He will talk to people and is very customer-oriented. We never worry about somebody saying Seth was rude to them."

Justice, who works three days a week, is responsible for cleaning the dining area.

His duties have grown to include brewing tea and making sure the drink area is clean and has the necessary supplies.



*Above, Dale Kennedy prepares chicken well in advance of the lunch rush. He has developed a system to make sure only top-quality food is served. Below, Seth Justice makes sure the drink area is clean. Justice always takes time to share a smile with one of the restaurant's many daily visitors.*





# 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 39 programs in local communi-

ties 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, vision, walking, talking, or learning or have a diagnosed condition that has a high probability of resulting in delays.

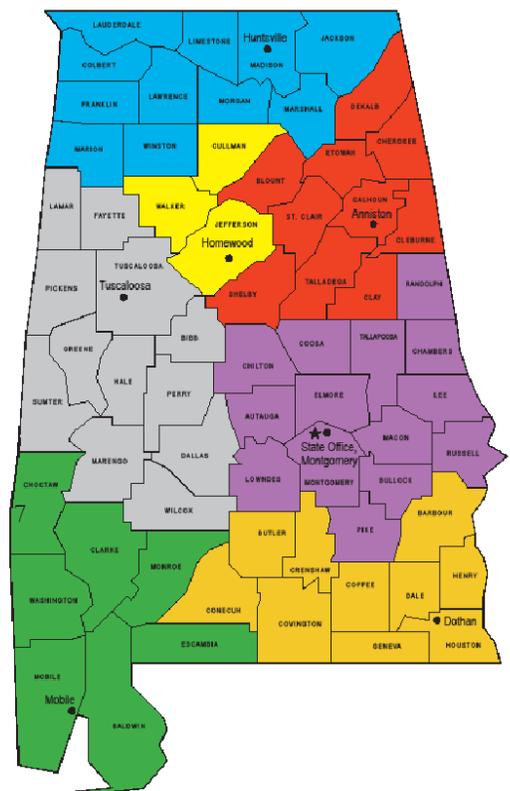
## AEIS by the numbers

- Received and processed 9,152 referrals and provided services and supports to 7,350 infants and toddlers and their families in their natural environments in every county in Alabama, a significant increase from last year.
- Implemented a monitoring process, technical assistance, and training 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, resulting in high levels of compliance with excellent family survey results.
- Developed and implemented a 2018 Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Plan including the gathering of training needs through a survey of practitioners; offering training through the seven Early Intervention district councils; adopting the Routines-Based Interview and Home-visiting Model of service delivery and developing an implementation plan; embedding Division for Early Childhood-recommended practices into training, program monitoring, and technical assistance; strengthening specialized services for babies with complex diagnoses; and collaborating with university programs on internship and practicum opportunities.
- Submitted an Annual Performance Report and received the highest ranking based on meeting all the requirements of Part C of IDEA from the U.S. Department of Education/Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).
- Collaborated with families of infants and toddlers who are deaf and hard of hearing and partners who deliver specialized services in the development of Pathways for Families, a resource guide to be distributed to providers and families. AEIS has forged new partnerships around the state to meet the growing needs of these children, broadened the knowledge and skills of staff, and streamlined the referral process to improve access to specialized individualized services.
- Submitted Phase IV of Alabama's State Systemic Improvement Plan, which focused on improving practices related to the social-emotional (SE) development of infants and toddlers; expanding ways of identifying children with SE concerns; providing training on the Child Outcomes Summary process to monitor progress in children; strengthening partnerships with other agencies; and developing strategies for increasing referrals to AEIS from counties of greatest need.
- Distributed more than 2,000 books with posters and bookmarks through a partnership with the Alabama Academy of Pediatrics Reach Out and Read Program. Pediatricians located in low-referring counties distributed the book "Bear Counts" to families and encouraged them to read aloud together to promote early literacy skills and build strong relationships. Each book included a bookplate explaining how to make a referral to AEIS and the importance of reading aloud to children.
- Continued work in the development of the first Alabama Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (AAIECMH) – known as First 5 Alabama – by promoting healthy social emotional development; establishing an endorsement process for professionals; providing extensive training opportunities for practitioners; and continuing collaboration and coordination with all state agencies and organizations working with young children and families.



*Cameron Caffey, pictured above with his mother Denise Whatley, was one of the more than 7,300 children who received services through Alabama's Early Intervention System in FY 2018.*

## EI OFFICE LOCATIONS





# 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.

## CRS by the numbers

- Served 10,784 children and youth with special health care needs, including 386 with no insurance, through the clinic program.
- Had a total of 145,020 client encounters and provided 2,165 information and referral services.
- Had a total of 5,258 client contacts result in connection to \$699,727 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 \$116,978 for consumers.
- Partnered with nine major universities in Alabama to provide observation and or/practicum experiences for students interested in nutrition, physical therapy, audiology, speech-language pathology, social work, and other health-related or maternal and child health professions/careers.
- Partnered with Family Voices of Alabama and the Health Information Center to host the 2018 Partners in Care Summit, a two-day summit providing youth and family leadership development.
- Completed Year I of the Collaborative for Improvement and Innovation Network (CoIN) to Advance Care for Children with Medical Complexity (CMC), 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.

- Requested and received Alabama Medicaid and ALL Kids (SCHIP) data on the number of CMC with Medicaid and ALL Kids as their health plan using the Seattle Children’s Hospital algorithm
- Conducted a survey on shared plan of care (SPOC) with families with children with special health care needs and youth with special health care needs
- Established project subcommittees to develop definition(s) for SPOC and care coordination
- Started the process of identifying families with CMC who are willing to serve on a family council
- Successfully identified a large pediatric practice at the University of South Alabama willing to provide a cohort of CMC as well as care coordination services



*Thanks to services provided by Children’s Rehabilitation Service, Flat Rock resident Madyson Chisenall can communicate with her family through a tablet. Chisenall is pictured discussing her schoolwork with CRS Social Worker Jenna Dees.*

## CRS OFFICE LOCATIONS





# 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, workforce partners, and other state agencies to match people with jobs.

## VR by the numbers



*In FY18, Vocational Rehabilitation Service assisted 3,479 individuals with disabilities in achieving their goal of employment. Among them was newly certified truck driver Joey Woodle. Woodle, who is deaf, is pictured fist bumping Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Quentin Morris after passing his driving test at Central Alabama Community College.*

## GENERAL AND BLIND/DEAF

- Assisted 3,479 individuals with disabilities in achieving their goal of employment, with an average annual wage of \$20,286 (an increase from \$19,024 in FY17).
- Working in conjunction with our Workforce Development partners, developed additional Project SEARCH sites, using funding from ADRS and the Department of Commerce.
- In addition to traditional transition services, partnered with the Alabama Department of Education and community rehabilitation programs to provide pre-employment transition services to students in all Alabama local education agencies to assist educators in preparing students for employment.
- Developed a new referral system with the Department of Human Resources to facilitate referrals of TANF recipients with disabilities from DHR case managers to VR counselors, enhancing joint service provision from both agencies.
- Updated and received approval from the Rehabilitation Services Administration for amending the Combined State Plan under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Through our Supported Employment Program, assisted 482 individuals with the most severe disabilities in finding employment.

## VR OFFICE LOCATIONS





# state of alabama independent living (homebound)

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.

SAIL is comprised of four specialized programs:

**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.

**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 the 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:

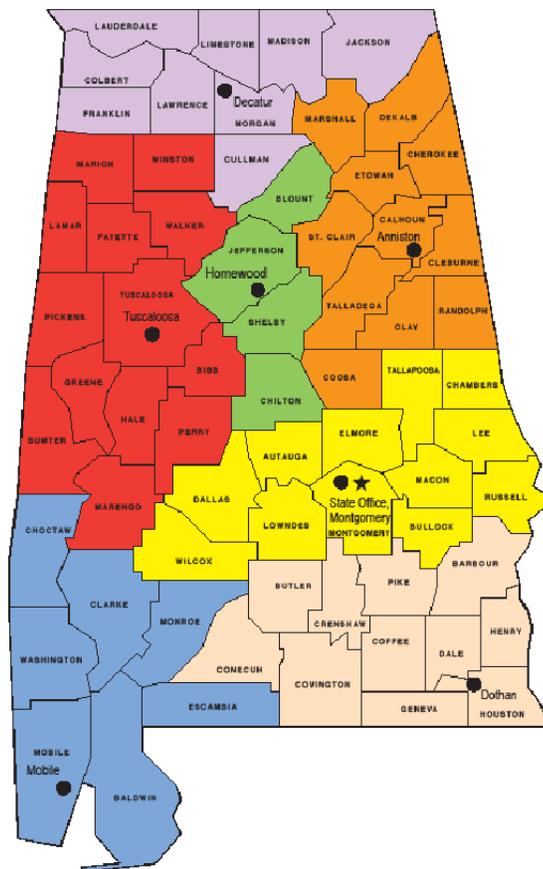
- have a severe disability that limits his or her ability to live independently,
- provide evidence that by receiving an IL service, his or her potential to achieve independence will improve.

## SAIL by the numbers

# SAIL (HOMEBOUND) 2018 highlights



## SAIL OFFICE LOCATIONS



*In FY18, The State of Alabama Independent Living Program partnered with Carpenters for Christ to provide wheelchair ramps and other home additions for people with disabilities. The group, based out of First Baptist Church of Tallassee, helped the SAIL program meet the needs of Alabamians with the most-significant disabilities and allow them to remain in their homes.*

- Assisted 1,521 Alabamians with the most-significant disabilities in remaining in their homes and communities.
- Through the SAIL independent living specialists, obtained \$131,068.30 in donated goods and services, leveraging their budgets for additional services to individuals with significant disabilities.
- Provided training and outreach to community agencies and service providers to increase awareness of services so that Alabamians who need these services can access them.
- Began a new ramp initiative to meet accessibility needs throughout the state. SAIL staff, in collaboration with Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Services (RE&ATS) staff and volunteer groups, built ramps and solved home modification issues around the state.
- Received training on person-centered planning. The model is recommended by Medicaid and is designed to assist case managers in providing services using a holistic, client-directed model.



*Lillian Butler, left, a Homebound Program Specialist, discusses eligibility requirements for SAIL during a summer training program for ADRS employees in Huntsville.*

## VRS Blind and Deaf program

The VRS Blind and Deaf Program provides assistance statewide to Alabamians with hearing and vision loss through its Blind and Low-Vision Services, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, and OASIS (Older Alabamians System of Information and Services) program. 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 FY 2018, Blind and Deaf Services:

- Conducted the first College Quest program for blind and low-vision students for two weeks in June at Auburn University with a grant through the Alabama Department of Commerce and in partnership with the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (AIDB) and Alabama Industrial Development and Training (AIDT). Eleven students successfully completed the program, which focused on vocational rehabilitation, independent living, orientation and mobility, student advisement, assistive technology, and team building.
- Conducted the 13th Annual Technology Symposium in May, in partnership with the Alabama School for the Blind Alumni and Workers Association and the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind. More than 200 professionals and consumers attended the event, which was held on the campus of the Alabama School for the Blind in Talladega. Workshop topics included Banking Security, Emergency Preparedness, Safe Travel, Alexa and Echo, Deaf/Blind Communication, and Cyber Security.
- Created the pre-employment transition specialist classification and hired four statewide to identify and work with young students with vision and hearing



*Students pose with Aubie the Tiger during last summer's College Quest program.*

loss in the school systems throughout Alabama.

- Conducted four summer transition camps for deaf and hard of hearing students, with 69 participants. The camps took place at Auburn University, Jacksonville State University, Troy University, and the University of Alabama.
- Conducted summer work experience programs, with 36 blind and low vision and more than 20 deaf and hard of hearing high school students participating statewide.
- Partnered with AIDT and Gentry at AIDB to develop an accessible version of the Ready to Work Program for VR consumers, with several students completing the program and receiving the Alabama Certified Worker designation.
- Conducted Deaf Services Strategic Planning meetings around the state, with almost 200 stakeholders including consumers, agency partners, educators,

parents, and employers participating. ADRS developed its first strategic plan for the rehabilitation of consumers who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind in October 2000. The purpose of the plan was to improve the quality of services, maximize resources, and better address the needs of consumers. The cycle for strategic plan is 2018-2021.

## Community Rehabilitation

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 FY18, the ADRS network of CRPs assisted 1,145 Alabamians with disabilities in acquiring employment, with an average wage of \$9.44 an hour.

There are a total of 26 CRPs in the community rehabilitation network.



*Taina Garcia assists a consumer through the OASIS program. The program helps older Alabamians with vision loss learn to live more independently.*

## OASIS Blind and 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 FY18, the OASIS program provided services to 1,058 older Alabamians

with vision loss, teaching them skills to help maintain their independence and mobility. The 658 consumers who completed their program in FY18 received 2,889 hour of in-home instruction. OASIS purchased \$37,179 in new assistive technology to assist consumers in reading print material and redistributed 65 pieces of equipment at no cost to the program.

ADRS orientation and mobility specialists provided 269 hours of individualized mobility instruction. In areas staff were not available, contract O&M specialists provided 36 hours of training to 10 consumers.

OASIS partnered with the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind Mobile Regional Center to host the first Camp SAVI event in Mobile. This event helped five consumers and their loved ones

learn about resources, independent living skills, and peer support.

## ADRS Lakeshore

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.

In FY18, the program continued to expand transition services into schools across the state.

Those expanded services included the creation of initiatives targeting soft skills training, job readiness, and college prep programs for VR and pre-application students.

One of the programs introduced in 2018 was Student Employment Training (SET), which is intended as a supplement to the college prep and job readiness workshops offered each summer.

The SET program assisted counselors by providing services that better prepare students for the job search process.

SET is divided into three sections: Ready, Set, and Go.

During the “Ready” portion, students begin to understand how their first impression can affect employment prospects.

The “Set” segment focuses on the completion of job applications and tips for interviewing.

“Go” provides guidelines for proper conduct when employment is secured. This includes behaving professionally, being a good employee and coworker, and providing good service to customers.

The SET program will allow counselors to reach more students in less time and without interfering with classes.

## Transition Services

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

These services include 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 FY18, ADRS, in collaboration with the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute (ATLI), provided Transition Unlimited (TU) to high school systems across the state. Through TU, 633 ADRS staff and school personnel collaboratively developed 351 action plans identifying pre-employment transition services students could benefit from based on individual needs. ADRS spent more than \$6 million for Pre-ETS Services for 8,564 students with disabilities in Alabama. Pre-ETS services include job exploration counseling, work-based learning, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in post-secondary education, workplace readiness, and instruction in self-advocacy.

In FY 2018, 1,561 students and youth were closed as employed by ADRS.

## Business Relations

The VRS Business Relations Program, known as READI-Net, is a vital workforce partner providing disability and employment-related services to Alabama's businesses, governmental entities, and federal agencies.

With 18 business relations consultants



*Dalton Jacobs, a shining star of the VRS Business Enterprise Program, fills vending machines at the Hyundai plant in Hope Hull.*

across the state, READI-Net offers more than 20 products and services to employers such as 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 focuses on meeting the disability and employment-related needs of business and industry in Alabama.

In FY18, READI-Net expanded its number of business partnerships and services provided to Alabama's business and industry.

Business partnerships in 2018 totaled 1,130 with 6,906 no-cost services being provided to our business partners. The READI-Net team of 18 business relations consultants (BRCs) also provided 7,683 services to 1,440 VR consumers.

Efforts continue in outreach and training activities to regional workforce partners, community rehabilitation programs, students with disabilities, and internal staff with more than 1,094 services being provided in the areas of collaboration meetings, presentation/trainings, job readiness classes, and

other activities.

READI-Net's BRCs across the state were very active in their partnerships with work-from-home companies. One such partnership was with J. Lodge A Cognostante Company. Through a thorough understanding of the company's culture, positions and recruiting needs and requirements, the BRCs secured employment for more than 60 individuals with disabilities in work-from-home positions, enhancing VR consumers' abilities to become self-sufficient.

## VRS 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 FY18, the program was awarded the full food service contracts at the United States Coast Guard Aviation Training Center in Mobile and at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery.

*Despite sustaining a traumatic brain injury in 2015, Ricky Wilkins, right, pushed forward with help from ADRS programs. Wilkins now works part time for the downtown Montgomery YMCA.*



## Traumatic brain injury

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 FY18, the TBI program served more than 2,300 individuals and completed a four-year grant focused on improving outcomes of youth offenders.

More than 350 adjudicated youth were screened and evaluated for services. Justice staff statewide – judges, probation officers, attorneys, and diversion programs – were trained.

The pilot site, Calhoun County, received behavioral intervention and pre-employment transition services for youth offenders.

Alabama hosted a national Justice Summit for 11 states to review current national findings and publish practices for addressing issues for youth with TBI in the justice system.

## 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 FY18, Project SEARCH, a year-long transition program where students are fully immersed in a local business, continued to expand, with 13 sites.

In addition, seven Project SEARCH sites were recognized at the National Project SEARCH conference for employment outcomes of more than 70 percent.

ADRS recently submitted, and was awarded, three requests for proposal by local workforce boards for youth Project SEARCH programs. These programs are in partnership with VRS' core workforce partners.

Also in FY 2018, 482 individuals were closed in working an average of more than 23 hours at \$8.39 an hour.

In addition, SE provided 1,620 assessments in supported employment to 1,075 individuals – including situational assessments in the community, person-centered profiles and Discovery.

The program served 108 individuals in self employment and closed 31 cases, with annual increases in salary of 5.9 percent.

Lastly, SE added a third Individual Placement and Support (IPS) site in Montgomery to serve individuals with serious mental illness and substance abuse using employment as a tool to recovery.

## Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

The Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (AGCEPD) promotes greater independence for people with disabilities and educates the public about the benefits of hiring workers with disabilities.

In FY18, the committee presented a number of events through the 14 committees. The events included mentoring days, job fairs, and other activities enhancing employment readiness for VRS consumers, students, wounded warriors, and individuals with the most-significant disabilities.

The program also held 14 local events for National Disability Employment Awareness Month, honoring 151 winners as employees, businesses, advocates, collaborators, educators, partners, and media of the year.

In addition, AGCEPD held the annual statewide Governor's Committee recognition ceremony and reception at the State Capitol in December to honor the 12 statewide winners from the local events.

## Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology

The Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology (RE&AT) Program provides state-of-the-art engineering and technology services to consumers across the continuum of ADPRS 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 2018, the RE&AT Program partnered with CRS, VRS, SAIL, and Robert Davie in Anniston to construct a rehab engineering workshop and space to store, repair, and wash equipment for children and adults with disabilities. The new workshop will provide space to assemble, modify, and create customized assistive technology and durable medical equipment for people with disabilities



*In 2018, the Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology Program partnered with CRS, VRS, SAIL, and Robert Davie in Anniston to construct a rehab engineering workshop and space to store, repair, and wash equipment. The new workshop will provide space to assemble, modify, and create customized assistive technology and durable medical equipment for people with disabilities throughout east central Alabama.*

throughout east central Alabama.

The program served 261 CRS consumers, 675 VRS consumers, and 201 SAIL consumers. There were 185 consumers served through the ACT Clinic, 47 custom devices built in workshops, and 300 consumers received assistive technology training.

## STAR

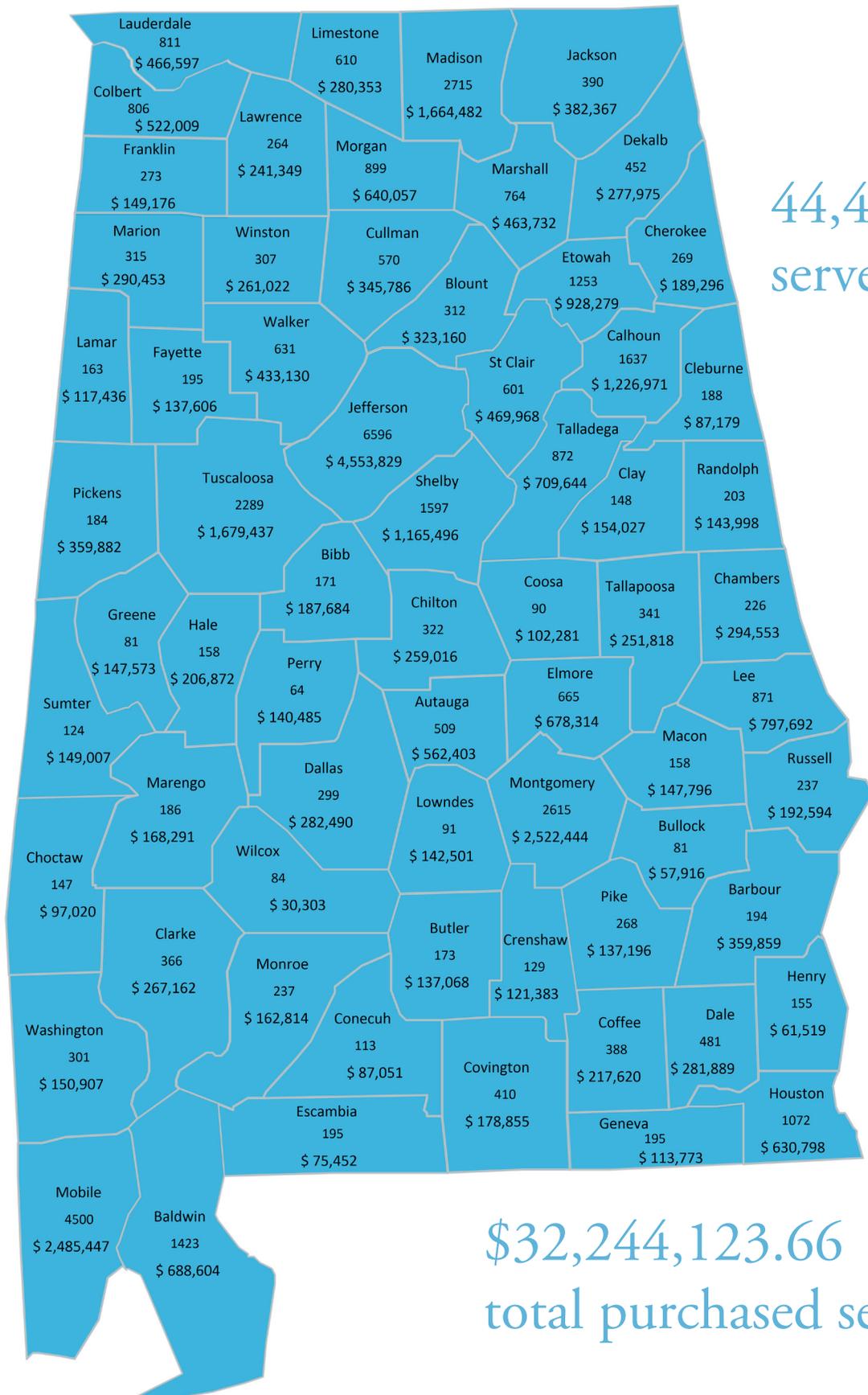
STAR is Alabama's Assistive Technology Act program. Through its Reutilization, Training, assistive technology (AT) demonstrations and short-term loans, and Alternative Finance programs and public awareness activities, STAR assists Alabamians with disabilities by improving access to and acquisition of AT that enables them to live more productive and independent lives.

In FY18, STAR's collaborative

partner, UCP Huntsville, created the Assistive Technology (AT) to aid aging caregivers training for UCP's Alabama Lifespan Respite initiative, Helping Those Who Care (HTWC). This statewide program offers simple AT solutions and was created to benefit aging caregivers of care recipients with developmental disabilities and later for those with age-related disabilities through funding from the Alabama Department of Senior Services.

As a result of this training, participants were able to increase awareness of and access to AT tools and online resources, identify AT options that best meet their needs, acquire AT through purchase or long-term loan, and improve their quality of life through the understanding and use of AT.

# ADRS people served, purchased services



44,447  
served

\$32,244,123.66  
total 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 Central Alabama  
Central Alabama Therapy Services, LLC  
Children R Us  
Children's of Alabama Early Intervention Program  
United Ability of Greater Birmingham – Hand in Hand

### 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

### GADSDEN

United Ability of Greater Birmingham – Hand in Hand

### 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, Montgomery and Auburn offices  
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

Cindy Haber Center, Inc.  
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

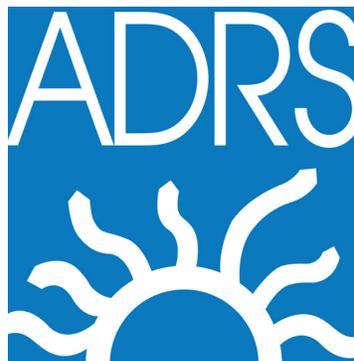
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