



2025



Alabama Department of  
Rehabilitation Services

ANNUAL REPORT





# ADRS

## **THE ADRS CONTINUUM OF CARE**

Whether a person is born with a disability or acquires a disability later in life, the goal is the same:  
increased independence and self-sufficiency.

With individualized services provided in homes, schools, the workplace, and the community, ADRS programs work together to serve Alabamians at any age and stage of life providing what they need to achieve their maximum potential.

# ADRS 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.



# Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) was created by the Alabama Legislature in 1994 to consolidate services for all Alabamians with disabilities whenever and wherever they need them. ADRS is the lead state agency for the delivery and coordination of services for any type of disability. As one department with one mission, the department meets the needs of individuals and families effectively and efficiently. Our “continuum of care” approach means that support, training, specialized services, and resources are available through one agency.

Services are provided through 29 community offices, reaching residents in all 67 Alabama counties.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS)**, ADRS's largest division, serves teens and adults by providing specialized employment and education-related services and training. Programs within this division include Blind-Deaf Services, Business Enterprise Program, Business Relations Program, Lakeshore Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology, Traumatic Brain Injury Program, Pre-Employment Services for students, and the OASIS Program for seniors with visual impairments.

**VRS on page 15**

**State of Alabama Independent Living - Homebound (SAIL)** assists individuals with the most significant disabilities, providing a wide range of education, assistive technology, adaptive training, and home-based services to increase independence. Programs within this division include Medicaid Waiver, Homebound, Community Support and the Hybrid SAIL-Vocational Rehabilitation program.

**SAIL on page 31**

**Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS)** serves children from birth to age 3 by coordinating services statewide for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or medical diagnoses that could result in developmental delays. Early intervention focuses on teaching the parents and families how to help their children reach developmental milestones within the routines of their daily lives in their own homes and communities.

**AEIS on page 35**

**Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS)** serves children and teens from birth to 21 with special health care needs and their families, and also individuals with hemophilia at any age. Programs within this division include Medical Clinics, Clinical Evaluation, Hemophilia Support and Resources, Care Coordination, Information and Referral, and Parent / Youth Connection Programs.

**CRS on page 41**



I am proud to present the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services 2025 Annual Report, including just a few of the success stories of the 72,236 Alabamians served through our programs. These individuals and families prove what is possible when a desire for increased independence and self-sufficiency is paired with appropriate services. With your on-going support, ADRS continues to meet Alabamians where they are, at any age and stage of life, to empower, educate, and enhance opportunities for individuals with disabilities and the communities in which they live, learn, and work.

To honor state and federal investment in ADRS programs, staff continually look for ways to provide effective and efficient services to demonstrate the importance of responsible stewardship of public funds. Examples this year include: a rate study of all early intervention services to assess actual costs of service provision and subsequent changes from a capitated rate payment structure to a fee-for-service model; on-going development of autism diagnostic clinics through a partnership between Alabama's Early Intervention System and Children's Rehabilitation Service; the use of one-time funding to develop mobile audiology services to reach children in rural counties; changes/elimination of contracts in the vocational program based on outcome measures; and modifications to the SAIL Medicaid Waiver that provide direct relief to in-home recipients and personal care workers.

We could not achieve this level of efficiency without the many relationships we've built with other state agencies, community providers, local schools, the community college and university systems, and the business community. We are grateful for these relationships and the opportunities they provide to stretch every dollar we receive to serve infants, toddlers, children, and adults of all ages through our continuum of service.

ADRS has shown a 4.51% average annual increase in the total number served over the last ten years. This equates to an average increase of 2,450 citizens each year. This trend demonstrates both the growing need and the growing awareness of the success of our services.

One area that experiences consistent growth is the Vocational Rehabilitation Service, a core partner in the state's workforce system. Individuals with disabilities remain unemployed and under-employed at a much higher rate than individuals without disabilities and the vocational rehabilitation system is the only program dedicated to creating employment access and opportunity

for this specific population. As a core partner in the state's workforce plan and member of the Alabama Workforce Board, ADRS ensures that Alabamians with disabilities are included in strategies to strengthen the state's workforce and overall labor participation rate. We look forward to participating in this year's state plan modification, our continued partnership with the Alabama Department of Workforce, and new partnerships with Alabama business and industry. In addition, ADRS continues to maximize our partnership with the community college system and advance programs that include work-based learning opportunities.

Serving as President of the national Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) this year, I've had the opportunity to share Alabama's successes at a national level, learn best practices from other states, build upon our interstate relationships, and engage in national discussions regarding changes at the federal level. This direct involvement places Alabama at the forefront of any changes impacting the individuals we serve and the businesses that depend on our programs to meet the needs of tomorrow.

Please take the time to review the data in the report and remember that each of the metrics represent people. While we only have the space to share a few success stories and pictures, my hope is that the stories enable the data to come to life.

I want to thank Governor Kay Ivey, the Alabama State Legislature, and Alabama's Congressional Delegation. Without your support, these stories would not be possible. I am thankful to be surrounded by dedicated public servants who understand the importance of investing in every Alabamian and who continue to support programs that help improve the quality of life for their constituents.

I look forward to a new year full of opportunities to serve the people of our great state.

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw

Commissioner



# Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services



Dear friends,

It has been both an honor and a privilege to serve as Chair of the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services again this year.

Throughout 2025, our dedicated team has continued to deliver services that make a profound difference — empowering individuals, creating pathways to opportunity, and building a more inclusive Alabama. From advancing early intervention and rehabilitation programs to expanding vocational and business relations initiatives and supporting self-directed independent living, our collective work reflects a shared commitment to breaking down barriers, building bridges, and unlocking full potential.

I am continually inspired by the dedication and relentless drive of our leaders, staff, and community partners. Every day, their tireless efforts help individuals reach their goals, participate more fully in their communities, and lead more independent and fulfilling lives. The stories featured in this annual report bring that impact to life — highlighting the powerful results of the perseverance, hope, and dedication of all our stakeholders united in a common mission.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our incredible ADRS team and valued community partners for their exceptional contributions throughout the year. Your unwavering commitment ensures that our mission not only endures but continues to grow — creating brighter futures, fostering greater success and independence, and making Alabama stronger for everyone.

Together, united in purpose, we are driving meaningful change that uplifts individuals, empowers employers, and enriches communities across our great state.

With gratitude and resolve,

Charles Wilkinson, Chair

**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.



**Michelle Glaze, District 1**

Representing a person with a disability, she serves as Director of Professional Outreach for the Foundation Fighting Blindness and works to increase awareness and referrals by reaching out to the professional community of optometrists, ophthalmologists, retinal specialists, low-vision specialists, vocational rehabilitation programs, and schools for the blind to share information about resources available to patients with inherited retinal diseases.

**Kimberlin Love, District 2**

Representing business and industry, she is the Practice Administrator for River Region Dermatology and Laser, a Leadership Montgomery member, and a board member for the Montgomery Junior League where she assisted with the addition of a sensory center at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts. She graduated from Howard University, worked with America's Promise, and served as a deputy press secretary in the White House.

**Judith Gilliam, District 3**

Representing a person with a disability, she serves on the Alabama Licensure Board for American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters and Transliterators. A graduate of Gallaudet University, she served as a board member of the National Association of the Deaf, was a Commissioner on Collegiate Interpreter Education, and helped pass a bill making ASL a foreign language credit in Alabama schools.

**Kevin Kidd, District 4, Vice Chair**

Representing both business and a person with a disability, he serves as Director of Employment Services for the Alabama Department of Workforce. He graduated from the University of Alabama and worked at Darden Rehabilitation before joining the Department of Workforce in 1998. He has won numerous professional awards and is a lifelong advocate for disability rights.

**Eddie Williams, District 5**

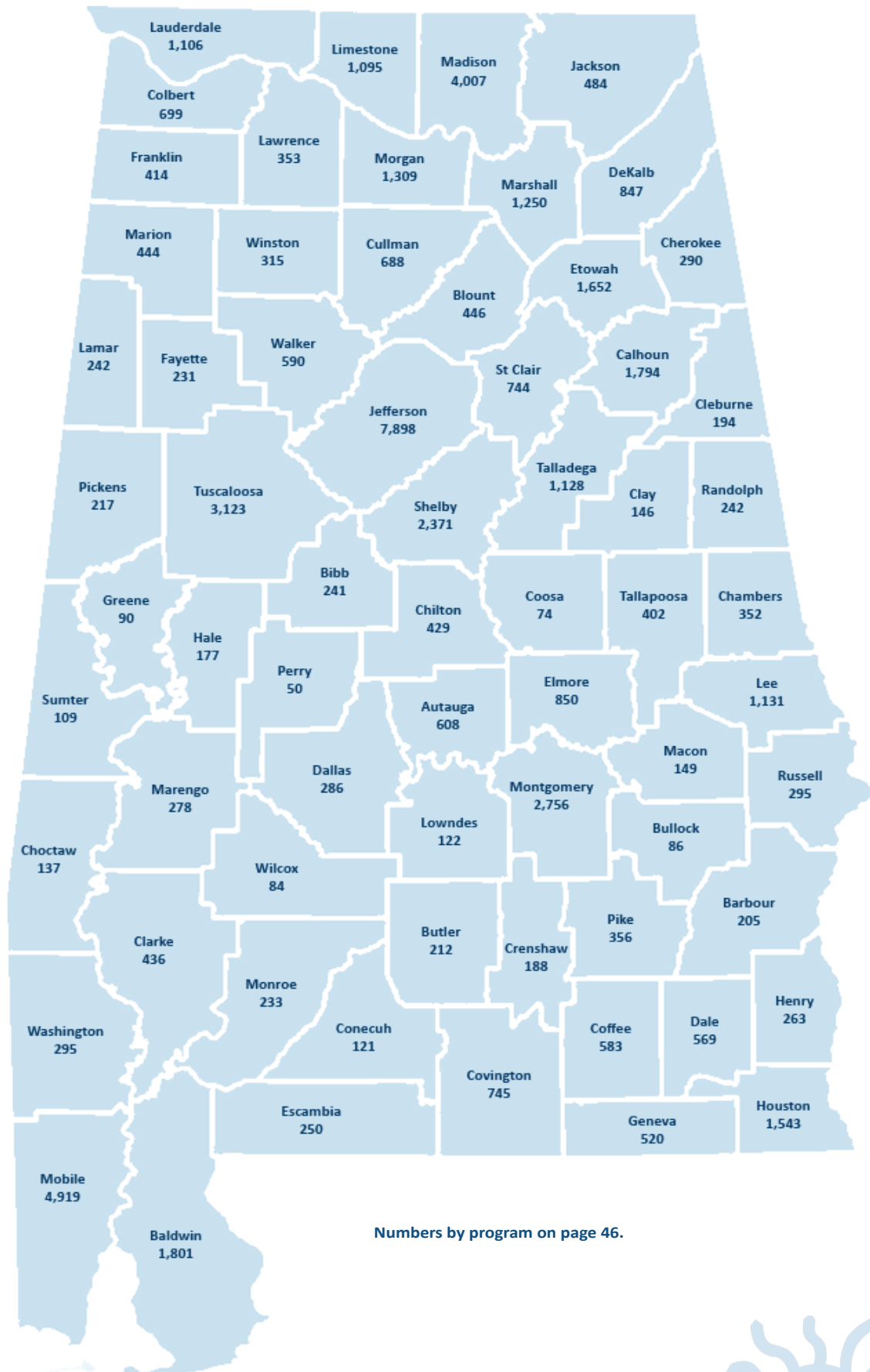
Representing business and a parent of a child with a disability, he is a retired Senior Avionics Program Manager at Sanmina-SCI's Defense and Aerospace Division. He has served on boards including the North Alabama Autism Society, Huntsville's Downtown Rescue Mission, the Huntsville Chapter of the 100 Black Men of America, and the National Management Association. He is also a past Chair of the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services.

**Charles Wilkinson, District 6, Chair**

Representing both business and a parent of a child with a disability, his connection with ADRS spans over 30 years, assisting with accessibility provisions under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), developing a recruitment program, working with federal contractors regarding the hiring of individuals with disabilities, and is a vocal and tireless advocate for workers with disabilities.

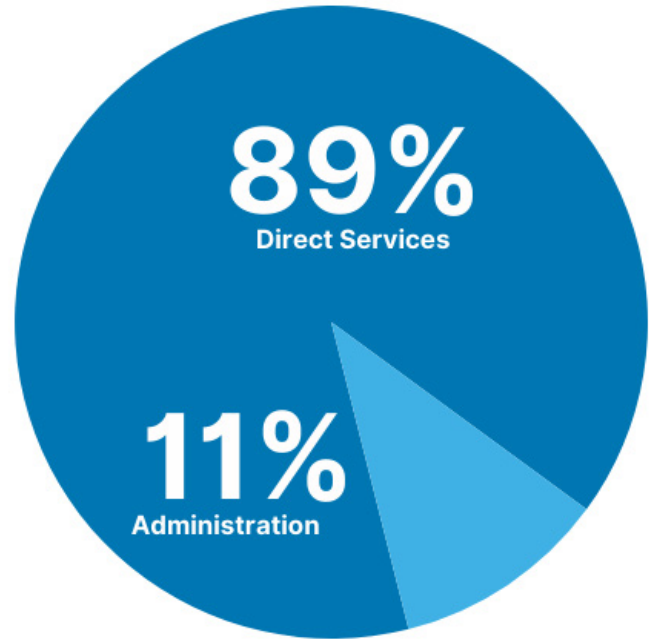
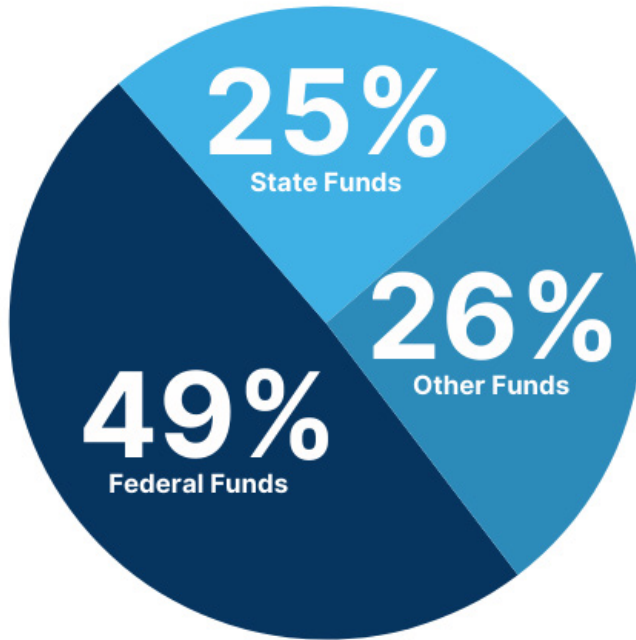
**Norma Lemley, District 7**

Representing the parent of a child with a disability, she serves on the Alabama Disability:IN Board of Directors. She is a retired attorney who spent 32 years at the University of Alabama in the System's Office of Counsel and taught a graduate-level course at the University of Alabama College of Education in Higher Education Law. She graduated with high honors from Auburn University and Magna Cum Laude from the Cumberland School of Law.

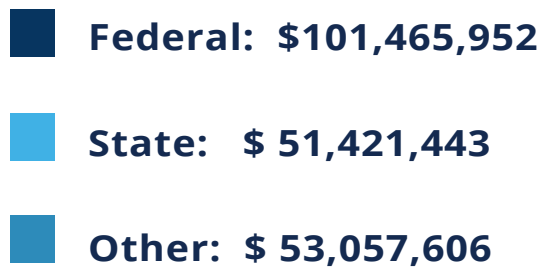


# 72,236

## Total Alabamians Served by ADRS



### Total revenue:



### Total expenditures:

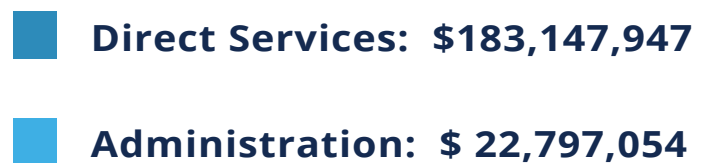




Image from Alabama News Center

“Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services has always been a partner in helping us recruit and retain our valuable employees due to their dual approach to serving both consumers and businesses as ‘customers.’

This is a unique approach compared to other state [rehabilitation] agencies around the country, and it positions ADRS to use their expertise in finding creative accommodations to employ people with disabilities: not just finding the citizen a job but also helping current employees stay at work and be productive.”

*Jeff Cofield, Alabama Power's Manager of Disability Management*

# Helping Build Alabama's Workforce: ADRS Business Relations Consultants

ADRS Business Relations Consultants (BRC) are a vital partner for both individuals seeking employment and businesses who need to fill vacancies by matching the best candidates with the right jobs.

Alabama employers partner with BRCs to hire skilled, qualified and highly motivated employees who have disabilities. These businesses discover that most individuals with disabilities often have an incredible work ethic and to be more reliable employees. People with disabilities have been challenged throughout their lives to overcome barriers and find different ways to accomplish goals independently, and BRC business partners understand that this experience is a valuable asset.

During the 2025 Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities awards ceremony, Governor Kay Ivey said that Alabamians with disabilities represent a growing segment of our state's workforce, and much of the credit for this rise is due to the beneficial training programs offered by ADRS.

"Over 35 percent of Alabamians with disabilities are realizing that dream of holding a job to provide for themselves and their families," Ivey said. "In fact, the number of working Alabamians with disabilities has increased more than 21 percent over the last decade."

Some business partners include Mercedes-Benz, Alabama Power, Phifer Inc., and numerous other businesses - small and large - around the state.

Alabama Power recognizes the value and benefits of the BRC partnership. They have hired talented

## 978

### Participants Served

### and

### 4,890 Services Provided to Businesses and Individuals

### in FY 2025

employees who came through Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) and help encourage other businesses to do the same. In 2025, the company published an ADRS success story on its website, *Alabama News Center*,\* featuring VRS participant Louis Griffin, who had what he described as a "career-ending accident." During his long recovery, he enrolled in VRS programs and was connected with a Business Relations Consultant who helped him work toward his goal of returning to his first love - teaching.

The Business Relations Program continues to develop relationships with WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) partners and collaborate with the business community to produce qualified candidates. BRCs assist employers with successfully hiring and retaining employees with disabilities, provide staff training and consult on ADA compliance, and facilitate appropriate and innovative accommodations for employees to be successful.

\*Story on Alabama News Center website: [alabamane.wscenter.com/2025/07/11/alabama-department-of-rehabilitation-services-is-a-hidden-talent-pipeline-for-employers/](https://alabamane.wscenter.com/2025/07/11/alabama-department-of-rehabilitation-services-is-a-hidden-talent-pipeline-for-employers/)



## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE

# 2025 Accomplishments

- Served 45,793 individuals.
- Took in 9,455 new applications, developed 7,879 initial plans for employment, and closed 3,999 individual cases in competitive integrated employment.
- Received \$3,474,131 in Social Security Administration reimbursements for case service expenditures used to successfully employ former Social Security recipients.
- Provided Pre-Employment Transition Services to 10,429 students with disabilities in the 9th - 12th grades with the cooperation and assistance of local education agencies and community rehabilitation providers.

## VRS Blind-Deaf Division

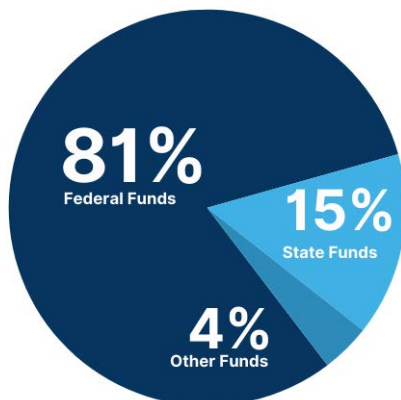
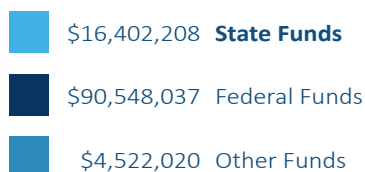
- Assisted 797 individuals who are blind, low-vision, deaf, or hard of hearing into successful employment outcomes.
- Achieved record-high average earnings of \$23.65/hour upon exit from the program.
- Served 748 people through the older blind (OASIS) program, with 99% reporting increased ability to perform major life activities and 98% reporting they feel more confident to live in their current living situation as a result of services. 555 participants completed their rehabilitation plan in the year, receiving 3,167 hours of individualized instruction and devices and equipment.
- Assisted 60 licensed blind vendors in managing their own business through the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). These 60 vendors employ 275 Alabamians and generate \$28 million in gross annual sales.



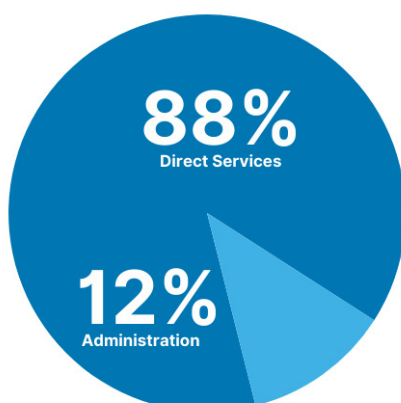
# Vocational Rehabilitation Service

**45,793**  
**Individuals Served**  
**in FY 2025**

## Revenue



## Expenditures



Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS), the largest ADRS division, is a vital part of Alabama's workforce system. VRS provides specialized, individualized services and supports for businesses and for individuals with disabilities who want jobs.

Studies show that for every \$1 invested in VR services, \$5 is returned to benefit Alabama's economy, and it bolsters the state's labor force with more skilled and motivated workers.

VRS also collaborates with Children's Rehabilitation Service, high schools, vocational schools, junior colleges, and universities statewide to assist students with disabilities in receiving appropriate educational opportunities. Through 21 offices, VRS works closely with Alabama employers, community rehabilitation programs, workforce partners, and other state agencies to successfully match people with jobs.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Governor Kay Ivey's Success Plus initiative put a strong focus on skills gains, credentials, and access to in-demand careers. VRS is a vital part of the collaborative workforce ecosystem addressing barriers while building an educated and skilled workforce with people of all abilities.

### VRS Blind and Deaf Services

**VRS-BD** empowers blind and deaf individuals to lead independent and productive lives by providing the services, training, and support needed for them to be successful in today's workforce.

Services are delivered by a team of professionals who are trained in the unique communication, technology, and culture of this population. Increased access to assistive technology, along with training programs in both technical and traditional colleges, has and will continue to lead to more in-demand job opportunities.





Alabama Governor's Committee  
on Employment of People  
with Disabilities

2025  
Student of the Year Award

presented to  
**Aidan Anderson**

*For demonstrating exemplary efforts in pursuit of  
your education, the determination to overcome  
complex challenges, the resolve to consistently  
enhance your individual talents and strengths,  
and the drive to achieve your maximum potential.*

# Aidan Anderson

## Auburn, AL

Mobile resident and Auburn University junior Aidan Anderson was recognized as the 2025 Student of the Year by the Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (GCEPD) during its annual ceremony.

Aidan, who began losing his vision at 19 after his freshman year at Auburn, said he was thrilled to earn such a distinguished honor.

"I was just super excited to know that I was being acknowledged with such a prestigious award," he said. "Whenever I first experienced this disability, I was filled with a lot of confusion and fear. To know that I was able to conquer it and face it, that really meant the world to me. I felt honored, enthusiastic, and excited."

Aidan said he was uncertain of his future as a student when he began losing his vision, but with the help of a desktop magnifier, a handheld magnifier, Zoom text on his laptop, and other tools, he remained successful.

ADRS Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Carmen Young, who helped Aidan secure the tools needed to continue his education, said he is very deserving of any accolades because he has maintained a positive attitude and strong work ethic despite his challenges.



"To me, that stands out a lot because you're 19 years old, you are in college, and go from having vision to not having vision," she said. "He didn't stop. He didn't let that stop him from achieving his goals or getting the degree to work in the career field he wants to. He hasn't let anything stop him."

Aidan, who is a computer science and software engineering major, said he hopes to pursue a career in cybersecurity. He said he would like to work in a role where he can find vulnerabilities before they are detected by enemies of the United States whether it be organized crime syndicates or hacktivists.

"My goal is to discover those vulnerabilities, develop solutions, and implement them across different sectors," he said.







# Leland Zimmer

## Columbiana, AL

When Columbiana's Leland Zimmer began his internship at the Shelby County Museum and Archives, he didn't expect it to lead to a full-time position. However, after a few weeks, the museum staff saw his value and felt his permanent employment was crucial to the museum's future.

Leland, who has cerebral palsy and hearing loss, breezed through his classes at Montevallo University, graduating magna cum laude with a 4.0 grade point average.

When it was time to complete an internship his senior year, he was connected with the museum through his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Jamie Glass.

"When Leland started his internship here, there was not a permanent position for him," Jamie said. "But the museum staff was impressed by his passion for history and strong work ethic. So, they came up with the money and created a position to keep him on. He did such an amazing job."

Jamie helped Leland obtain hearing aids and recommended the assisted driver training at ADRS Lakeshore to help him earn his driver's license. He said it was evident early in the process that Leland was willing to put in the work to succeed.

"He had the fortitude and the 'want' to be successful, and that made all the difference,"

Jamie said. "He was willing to do what it took to get the job done and be successful."

Leland, who wears many hats at the museum, said he considers it a privilege to preserve the county's history and share it with others. He keeps things organized, conducts tours, assists with meetings, assists researchers, and has written several articles highlighting the museum.

Leland has become a fixture at the museum and local events. He is well-known in the area for his knowledge and willingness to lend a hand wherever he is needed.

The experience gave Leland a new perspective on the importance of ADRS and its programs and the dedication shown by staff members like Jamie.

"People like me benefit from having people like him who really care and have the work ethic and determination to give assistance to others," he said. "I know his faith plays a role in that, but it's his personality too. He's just a very helpful, sincere, and passionate man."



# OASIS Program

OASIS (Older Alabamians System of Information and Services) assists individuals ages 55 and older who are blind or visually impaired to live more independently in their homes and communities. Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (VRTs) help participants learn techniques for how to use assistive devices to do everyday activities, such as reading mail and safely using appliances. Orientation and Mobility Specialists help them learn to use travel strategies like using a white cane. OASIS connects participants to local community resources such as the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind and Area Agencies on Aging.

In FY25, 748 people participated in the program, 72% of those served this year were consumers receiving services for the first time. 99% reported increased ability to perform major life activities and 98% reported they feel more confident in their current living situation as a result of services. 555 participants completed their rehabilitation plan in the year, receiving 3,167 hours of individualized instruction and over \$186,429 in devices and equipment.

# Traumatic Brain Injury Program

ADRS is the state's lead agency in Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) services. It is a source of information, referral, resources, education, and care coordination for individuals with brain injuries, their families, professionals, and the community. It provides community reintegration assistance, counseling, cognitive remediation, TBI education/training, Trauma Registry service linkage, and transition services to schools, communities, and/or employment settings.

In FY25, TBI served 6,087 individuals across all physical, socioeconomic, and cultural lines. Through this program, the quality of life for many Alabamians with TBI or spinal cord injuries have been improved through services funded by the Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund. The Adult TBI Program serves individuals in their homes with post-acute services. This program receives referrals from the Alabama Head and

The FY24 consumer satisfaction survey released in February 2025 provided comments from consumers, such as:

"It's given me tools to help manage my vision loss and allow me to be more independent."

"I am able to take care of my household, such as paying bills and other things around the house."

"It's made me aware of devices that are available to me and teaching me how to use them has made a big difference in my life and my attitude."

Staff educated local communities through outreach events like local senior health expos, connecting with local area agencies on aging, and speaking to local senior centers or senior living facilities. In FY25, staff reached an estimated 6,747 people through community activities such as this. The OASIS program hosted a Peer Support Leader training this year using American Rescue Plan Act funds. Partnering with AIDB, disABILITY LINK, an organization from Georgia specializing in peer leader training provided training to 16 peer leaders, which was vital to rebuild from the declines in peer leader groups experienced during COVID.

Spinal Cord Injury Registry and facilitates TBI services, linking individuals with resources in their communities. Funded by Federal TBI Grants, the program has created the TBI Navigation System and Helpline and an on-line Brain Injury Screening Tool known as the OBISSS.

In FY25, TBI provided direct assistive technology services to 907 individuals enrolled in ADRS programs: 102 in CRS, 305 in SAIL, and 465 in VRS. The TBI program also collaborated with a student engineering program for the assistive technology design projects, which involved 53 students across 11 design teams from the University of Alabama, University of Alabama at Birmingham, Alabama State University, and Hoover High School. Notable devices designed by the students included a hearing aid battery loader, wheelchair protection solutions for airline travel, and an improved portable wheelchair ramp.

## Community Rehabilitation Program

The ADRS Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) is a network of private organizations across the state that provide a full range of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services to individuals with disabilities for more than 70 years. There are 36 CRPs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, and they partner with VRS to provide services such as pre-employment transition services, job readiness training, job development, job retention, job coaching, supported employment, vocational evaluations, and training for participants to obtain their driver's permit and driver's license. In FY25, the program served over 14,000 individuals statewide. Throughout the years, CRPs have adapted to an increase in pre-employment transition service provision for high school students along with an increase in job placement and work adjustment training in competitive integrated employment (CIE) opportunities.

## Transition Services

The ADRS Transition Services program enables Alabama's students and youth with disabilities to be independent, productive, contributing members of their communities. In FY24, VRS counselors coordinated Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for 10,429 students with disabilities in 9th through 12th grades to help them successfully transition from school into post-secondary education, career training, and employment. The Transition program also connected 48 students with the Jobs for Alabama Graduates (JAG) program, 8 interns with the STRIVE program, and 10 students in the Out-of-School Project SEARCH program. Additionally, 24 students were selected to attend the Governor's Youth Leadership Forum for leadership and self-advocacy training.

## Lakeshore Rehabilitation

ADRS Lakeshore continues to consistently work towards helping individuals with disabilities improve and develop soft skills, provide guidance to counselors and participating individuals regarding strengths and weakness through vocational assessments, independence through driving training and adaptive equipment recommendations, college preparation, and support and recommendations related to assistive technology. ADRS Lakeshore continues providing cutting edge out of the box thinking services to help individuals with disabilities work towards reaching their maximum potential.

## Business Enterprise Program

The Alabama Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides qualified blind individuals with job training and entrepreneurial opportunities that enable independence through self-employment. Established through the Randolph-Sheppard Act, the program supports legally blind individuals managing vending and food service businesses on federal, state, and private property. In FY25, 60 licensed blind vendors worked within the Alabama BEP to own and manage their businesses, and they employ about 275 other Alabamians. The BEP generates more than \$28 million in annual gross sales providing vending, commissary, coffee and food services to NASA, U.S. Postal Service, military bases, Interstate rest areas and numerous private corporations, such as Airbus and International Paper. BEP Vendors earn their license by completing a 6-month training course at the E.H. Gentry Technical Facility in Talladega through a partnership between ADRS and the Alabama Institute for Deaf & Blind (AIDB).









# KD Hill

## Birmingham, AL

A former Ole Miss football standout who earned the Chucky Mullins Award, KD Hill was well on his way to pursuing a career in professional football. But days before entering training camp with hopes of being picked up by the Buffalo Bills or New York Jets, he was involved in an accident that resulted in the amputation of his right leg from the knee down.

Since his accident, KD has inspired hundreds of people by sharing his story on the ABC daytime television program GMA3, through his book "The Uphill Climb: The KD Hill Story," and through the KD Hill Foundation.

Part of reaching his goals involved getting connected with ADRS services. He was referred by Spain Rehabilitation

to participate in the Adaptive Driver Program at ADRS Lakeshore, but he found that ADRS had much more to offer.

"The people I met with ADRS, it felt like family," he said. "It was something that came from passion, from their hearts. They were impacting people and showing them that, despite their disabilities and their injuries, they are somebody."

KD has served as a motivational speaker to the Clemson football team, financial companies, churches, businesses, and government offices. His goal is to reach more people in the coming years, but he said his primary objective is to stay aligned with God's will for his life.

# Chandler Rice

## Athens, AL

Chandler Rice will graduate from Calhoun Community College in May, 2026, Magna Cum Laude and in the top 10 percent of his class. His plans after that are to turn his hobby of working on cars into a career.

Chandler, who has autism, often shares with others his passion for cars along with his story of how he pushed through many difficulties before finding the right support system and accommodations through ADRS to help him succeed.

As a student at Calhoun, Chandler tutored other students and achieved the role of adjunct assistant for his program.

In 2025, he spoke to students at Athens Renaissance School about focusing on their strengths.

"I told the students that, if you truly want to go after something, just apply yourself a little bit," he said. "Don't over-stress about things and be open to receiving help when it is needed."

Chandler works for his uncle at Cheesey's Customs in Tanner, where he has taken on a more active role in learning how the business operates.

"I'm getting the experience with him of how to run my own business," he said. "I want to open my own shop someday, and I'm getting good experience."



## Community Partner: Flourish of Cullman



Flourish of Cullman Founder and CEO Melissa Dew is a former police officer who was injured on the job and forced to pursue a new career. Now she uses her experiences to provide training and opportunities to others who face challenges.

Flourish, a nonprofit organization, provides community-based support to individuals with diverse abilities who wish to live as independently as possible. The nonprofit has become a valued partner for ADRS and an important part of the community.

Melissa has personal experience with Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS), which helped pay for her to return to school at Wallace State Community College to become an occupational therapy assistant. Following graduation, she worked for Encore Rehabilitation for 15 years and

became aware of the growing need for expanded services and opportunities for people with disabilities in Cullman.

"That's when I really saw that there were so many individuals graduating and not having a place to gain skills," she said.

After a meeting with VRS representatives, Melissa was urged to become certified in community-based supports and create Flourish of Cullman.

"They (VRS staff) saw the potential in our organization and gave us the chance to participate in supported employment," she said. "When people served by Flourish and ADRS are provided with opportunities to prove themselves, they not only succeed; they pave the way for others."

## Large Business Partner: Phifer, Inc.

Phifer Incorporated of Tuscaloosa is leading the way in demonstrating to other employers in Alabama the advantages of hiring employees of all abilities. Studies show that these benefits include improved profits, lower turnover and higher retention, and greater employee reliability, innovation and productivity.

The Tuscaloosa-based company works closely with the ADRS Business Relations Program and Vocational Rehabilitation Service to help find qualified and motivated people with disabilities to fill needed vacancies.

Business Relations Program Director Bobbi Stephenson said the company has been a wonderful partner because they want their employees to succeed.

“They look at everybody for what their ability is,” she said. “If one job isn’t a good fit, they’ll try to find a position that might be a better fit.”

Phifer’s Vice President of Human Resources, Russell DuBose, said their relationship with ADRS has been mutually beneficial. Participating in

the Paid Work Experience Program, which helps individuals with disabilities gain valuable skills and helps the company identify prospective employees, has been a wonderful tool to fill vacancies.

In an 18-month span, 17 individuals with disabilities participated in paid work experiences at Phifer. DuBose said those who earn full-time employment prove to be huge assets to the company.

“We become the real benefactor, because our experience has been when they become our employees, they stay with us,” he said. “They look at this as a career opportunity, and we embrace that and create long-term pathways if they want to move into technical roles or leadership roles. All of those opportunities are available to them.”

Phifer was recognized by the Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities as the 2025 Employer of the Year for a Large Company.

### ADRS Vocational Rehabilitation Service: Reaching a Standard Other States Want to Reach

At the national level, Alabama’s Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) is often looked to as an example by many other states. Because of the Alabama Legislature’s vision and action in 1994 to create a department where all disability supportive services are consolidated under one roof, the state demonstrates success in helping its citizens with disabilities get the education and training they need to be successfully employed.

In 2024, Commissioner Burdeshaw was elected as President for the national Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). From this leadership position, she is able to share Alabama’s successes and offer examples of how Alabama is able to increase the labor force participation rates of people with disabilities through partnerships with state agencies, business and industry, and organizations statewide.

Alabama’s VRS program has consistently ranked nationally in successfully getting its participants into jobs and helping them retain their jobs long term. In 2023 program year, Alabama \*ranked 7th among all states and territories for its employment rate of participants in the 2nd and 4th quarter after exit, 18th in credential attainment, and 24th in measurable skill gains. For these reasons, Alabama can be proud of the results to build Alabama’s workforce.

*\*Ranking based on the most recent data for Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act (WOIA) 2023 VR performance indicators*

# The University of Alabama's Mechanical Engineering Capstone Class

For the second year, ADRS Rehabilitation Engineers Michael Papp and Silvia Perez collaborated with the University of Alabama's Mechanical Engineering Capstone Class to provide projects for three of their teams.

Silvia said projects like these allow ADRS to bring awareness to daily obstacles that individuals with disabilities may experience and provide an opportunity for upcoming engineers to create systems, buildings, environments, and devices using universal design, which means designing an environment that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their ability or disability.

The projects included a self-leveling wheelchair seat, airline wheelchair protection, and a hearing aid battery loading device.

The self-leveling wheelchair seat was created to assist individuals with disabilities such as advanced Multiple Sclerosis or Spinal Muscular Atrophy. For these individuals, maintaining precise positioning while driving their power wheelchair is crucial. The team addressed the need for a seat stabilizing system to keep the user in a level position even while driving on uneven ground or across slope.

Their project provided proof of concept of the stabilizing seat mechanism and is a great starting point for developing future affordable solution options.

The hearing aid battery loading device was created to assist hearing aid users who have difficulty replacing batteries due to poor dexterity, low vision, the small size of the devices, or other challenges.

The student team developed a 3D-printed hand-held tool with an accompanying base to hold the over-the-ear hearing aid in place. However, after getting feedback from users, they created a single device with a stable suction cup base, a claw piece



to open the hearing aid battery compartment, and a magnet to hold the battery in a set place during this process.

The distinguishable features of this device help the user tactilely orient their hearing aid and the battery correctly. This base design could possibly be customized or adapted for different sizes or types of hearing aids, high-contrast colors, or include further tactile markers.

Because of this innovative design, the team was awarded first place by the professors for their project presentation.

The airline wheelchair protection was created because thousands of wheelchairs are damaged during air travel each year, limiting users' mobility and independence, both short-term and long-term.

This team worked together to develop a portable protective device that uses airbags and foam padding to help prevent damage during transit. They received great feedback from wheelchair users and incorporated it into their design. Overall, this is a fantastic starting point for developing a solution to this issue.



# Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology

The Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology (RE&AT) Program empowers individuals with disabilities across Alabama to achieve greater independence and participation in everyday life through innovative technology solutions and expert support. In FY25, RE&AT provided direct, person-centered services to over 900 Alabamians of all ages, helping children, adults, and seniors access specialized devices and strategies tailored to their unique needs. By partnering with educators and community agencies, RE&AT expands opportunities for individuals to succeed in school, at work, and in their communities. Each year, the program's commitment to creative problem-solving and training multiplies its positive impact, opening new doors to accessibility statewide.

The RE&AT Program has continually evolved to address a broader spectrum of assistive technology needs, including a statewide training partnership

with the Alabama State Department of Education. This year, RE&AT improved access to AT assessment training, introducing AI-powered student chatbots that allowed special educators to practice real-world assistive technology evaluations. RE&AT staff also delivered more than 90 AT training presentations at community events across Alabama, empowering participants with practical knowledge and strategies to enhance accessibility and improve independence for people with disabilities. The program continues AT design collaborations with engineering students, resulting in creative solutions like a 3D-printed hearing aid battery loader for individuals with limited hand function and a special wheelchair threshold ramp for sliding glass doors. As needs and technology continue to change, the program remains committed to advancing independence for all Alabamians with disabilities through expertise, creativity, and collaboration.

## Accessing Potential Through Assistive Technology (APTAT)

The Accessing Potential Through Assistive Technology (APTAT) program serves as a leading resource for individuals seeking information and support related to assistive technology (AT) in Alabama. Through its programs, APTAT provides opportunities to explore AT hands-on and learn more about the latest innovations. The experienced team is dedicated to increasing the capacity of AT services in Alabama through in-depth training, technical assistance, collaboration, outreach, and advocacy. APTAT programs include:

- **Short-Term Loan Program:** Individuals can borrow devices for up to 30 days to try before buying.
- **Short Term Loans:** 930 items have been borrowed from APTAT this year.

In addition to our APTAT lending Library, APTAT manages a lending library for the Alabama State Department of Education, which is designed for

schools to have easier access to devices to assist with the implementation of assistive technology services in IEPs (Individualized Education Plans). APTAT has assisted with 49 demonstrations and has five demonstration partners across the state of Alabama who can also provide AT demonstrations. These partnerships have expanded our capacity and make an on-site demonstration more accessible to those who are not able to travel to our APTAT office in Birmingham. Also, 6,006 items were distributed through APTAT's Device ReUse program, saving participants \$2.3 million. Over 185 trainings have been provided across the state.

APTAT held four major events during the year promoting assistive technology, including our first Toy Take Over, where we demonstrated how toys can be adapted for children with disabilities, and our CRS Summer Jam when AT items were distributed to local children and families.



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

The Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities recognizes each year the contributions and successes of individuals with disabilities and the businesses that provide opportunities for success through competitive integrated employment. The awards are given to employers, employees, students, community partners, and public officials who understand the value that people with disabilities bring to Alabama's growing workforce.

During the 2025 ceremony, Gov. Kay Ivey said the number of working Alabamians with disabilities has increased by more than 21 percent over the last decade. Average full-time earnings have grown by more than 29 percent over the same time period, from \$35,300 to \$49,800.

"Much of the credit for this rise is due to the beneficial training programs at the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services," she said. "I'm proud to note that ADRS's programs, which celebrate the value and talent of Alabama's workers with disabilities, ranked among the highest performing in our nation."

ADRS Commissioner Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw said she is proud to lead a department that consolidates so many services and resources for people with disabilities under one roof. She said it is an honor to shine the light on businesses, leaders, and employees, and praise those who help people with disabilities reach their maximum potential.

"As a member of the Alabama Workforce Board, I see first-hand the collaborative efforts across the state to create opportunities by bringing top-notch business and industry to Alabama, all while training every Alabamian to fill these critical jobs," she said. "Our department and its community providers are proud to be a part of this amazing collaboration to build Alabama's workforce."

## 2025 Award Winners

### ***Public Service Awards:***

The Honorable Paul Lee, AL State Representative  
*and*

The Honorable Katie Britt, U.S. Senator

### ***Students of the Year:***

Aidan Anderson (Mobile)  
Senior, Auburn University  
*and*

Chase Lovell (Birmingham)  
Junior, Oak Mountain High School

### ***Partners of the Year:***

Alabama Department of Corrections,  
ADRS Blind Enterprise Program partner  
*and*

Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Alabama

### ***Employer of the Year for a Small Business:***

Chartwell's at the University of North Alabama

### ***Employee of the Year for a Small Business:***

Isaac Jackson (Cullman),  
Floral Assistant for Cullman Florist

### ***Employers of the Year for a Large Business:***

Phifer Incorporated (Tuscaloosa)  
*and*  
New Flyer of America (Anniston)

### ***Employees of the Year for a Large Business:***

Tonya Dalton (Tuscaloosa),  
Hope Pointe Behavioral Health Crisis Care  
*and*  
Erica Endress (Marbury),  
AL Dept. of Corrections



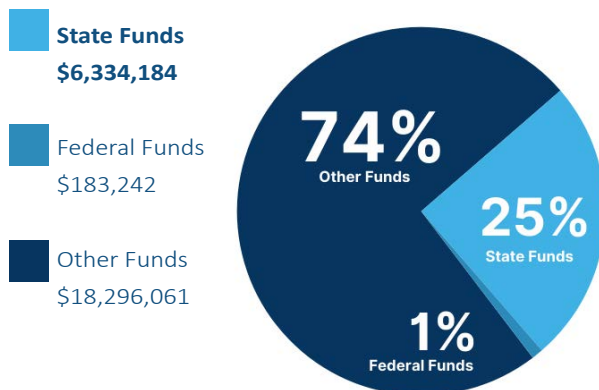


# SAIL - Homebound Program

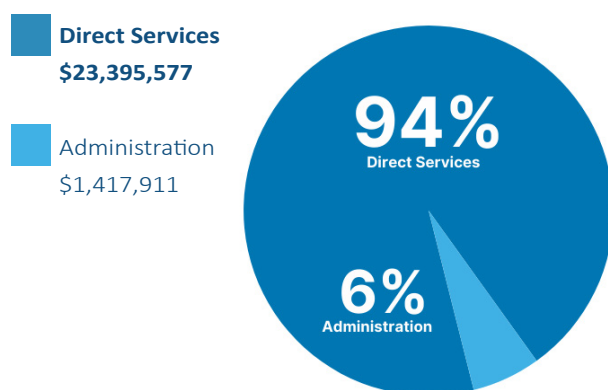
## 2025 Accomplishments

- Served 1,775 individuals in their homes, reducing state and federal costs for nursing home care.
- Leveraged more than \$322,258 in donated goods and services to support individuals in need of accessibility renovations to safely remain in their homes.
- Effectively used American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant funds to provide more direct-care services in the homes of individuals with significant disabilities.
- The Medicaid Waiver program worked with the Alabama Medicaid Agency to develop services for the next five years, adding additional supports to strengthen access to personal care.
- Continued to weather the national direct-care workforce crisis by strengthening the self-directed service provision and providing additional supports to Medicaid Waiver participants in their homes.
- Successfully leveraged additional funds to provide direct services to Alabamians with the most significant disabilities to continue to live and work in the community.

### Revenue



### Expenditures



# State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) Homebound Program

## 1,775

### Served in their homes in FY 2025

The State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) - Homebound program assists individuals with the most significant disabilities in maintaining and regaining as much independence as possible while remaining in their homes and communities.

With seven community-based offices serving all 67 Alabama counties, SAIL's team of registered nurses, rehabilitation counselors, and community support specialists provides individuals and their families with personalized services and training for the unique needs presented by their disability. Some services include in-home education, counseling, attendant care, training, and medical services, and assistive technology.

SAIL is comprised of four specialized programs:

**The Homebound Services Program** provides education and in-home services to assist people with achieving greater independence.

#### Eligibility:

- Alabama resident
- At least 16 years old
- Have a medical diagnosis of traumatic brain injury or quadriplegia
- Dependence on others for assistance with activities of daily living
- Demonstrate a financial need

**The SAIL Medicaid Waiver Program** reduces institutional placements by maximizing home and community service provision.

#### Eligibility:

- be at least 18 years old
- be medically and financially qualified 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 Community Supports (CS) program** enhances and promotes independence in the home, community, and workplace. To be eligible, a person must:

- have a severe disability that limits their ability to live independently in their community
- provide evidence that by receiving CS service, their potential to participate fully in the community will improve

**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 counselor.



## Celebrating the Homebound Program's 50th Anniversary

2025 marked the 50th anniversary of the Homebound Program, which, in Alabama, is coordinated through ADRS's State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) division. The program assists individuals with significant disabilities regain and maintain as much independence as possible, while remaining in their homes and communities.

Homebound was established in 1975 by the Alabama State Legislature to better serve people with spinal cord injuries and those with more significant disabilities. Before Homebound, the standard of care for many with severe disabilities was a nursing home. Now, Homebound makes every effort to provide the support and services people need to live independently, and to customize accommodations so they can work, if they choose.

SAIL Director Lisa Alford said the program has grown tremendously and has been a valuable asset to the state.

"Alabama has had this service in place for 50 years to support people with catastrophic disabilities in their communities," she said. "You only have to go into one home of a Homebound participant to know how lives are changed."

Homebound provides nursing management, guidance and counseling, patient and family education, attendant care, assistance with medical supplies, prescribed medical equipment, some home modifications, and referrals to other services. Program Specialist Lillian Butler said Homebound differs from programs in other states because it has more flexibility in its services. Through Homebound, Alabama can design the program to meet the unique needs of individuals.

"That's why the program works," Lillian said. "It grows, evolves, and changes to meet the needs of the current population. I am honored to be a part of that."

# Joan Kirkland

## Birmingham, AL

Joan Kirkland of Birmingham needed a new ramp, an important part of her home that removes barriers to her getting to the doctor, going to church, and visiting friends.

Building accessible ramps is more than just nailing boards together. For the State of Alabama Independent Living Program (SAIL), it begins with building relationships between the family and community volunteer teams.

The project for Joan (pictured on the opposite page) brought together SAIL staff members, Kirkland's family, and the Church of the Highlands Fultondale campus to collaboratively construct a safe, durable ramp that meets ADA accessibility standards.

Joan, who has cerebral palsy and is enrolled in the Homebound program, began receiving services in 2021 through SAIL Nurse Coordinator Amy Gibbs.

When Amy noticed the ramp leading into the home had become worn and damaged, she talked with Joan's daughters about the possibility of building a new ramp through SAIL.

SAIL Community Support Specialist Daffany Jackson searches for partners like Church of the Highlands to provide volunteer resources and manpower for these projects. This partnership alone has led to the construction of more than 100 ramps in the Birmingham area.



For Joan's ramp, ADRS Rehabilitation Technology Specialist Bynum Duren worked with Mike Campbell with Church of the Highlands to develop a strategy. Volunteers first prefabricated sections of the ramp in an indoor facility in Boaz, then finished sections were transferred to Joan's home where a team of more than 30 volunteers - and two of Joan's granddaughters - assembled the L-shaped ramp in four hours.

Bynum said he currently has a volunteer team statewide with indoor building facilities in Boaz and Mobile, but they can always use more.

"The more teams that we can get involved in this process, then the more ramps we can build and the more people we will be able to serve," he said. "There's a lot of need out there."







## 2025 Accomplishments

- Served 8,884 children and their families.
- Results from comprehensive fiscal analysis and rate study led to a data-driven decision to move from a capitated rate structure to a fee-for-service model, aligning Medicaid and state reimbursement structure and rates.
- Continued efforts to support the infrastructure redesign of the GIFTS II database system to a fully electronic record including third-party billing.
- 19 early interventionists successfully completed the Developmental Specialist Certification Workshop, facilitated by Dr. Vanessa Hinton with Auburn University. The training provides an understanding of special education law that shapes EI programs and service delivery best practices.
- 43 service coordinators completed the Routines-Based Interview (RBI) Training and became Alabama RBI-approved. RBI is a research-based assessment method designed to understand the needs of children with disabilities and their families by focusing on daily routines. This process helps build rapport with families and create family-driven outcomes to enhance the child's development and meet the need.

# Alabama's Early Intervention System

Early childhood development is vital to the growth and success of all children, and those early years are especially crucial for a child with a disability or developmental delay. Studies indicate that 85 percent of a child's brain develops in the first three years of life. It's during this critical time that Early Intervention (EI) can make the greatest impact toward a lifetime of success for children served by the program.

Created to be a critical first step to ensuring that all children enter school equipped to learn, Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS) serves infants and toddlers under the age of three who have a developmental delay or a diagnosed medical condition that can cause delays and prevent the child from meeting developmental milestones.

Working alongside the family in their natural environment, the goal is to train, equip, and support parents and caregivers in being their child's first and best teachers.

AEIS has built a strong, statewide network connecting families, community organizations, and public and private service providers to ensure families and caregivers have everything they need to enhance their child's development through its community-based, family-centered system of support and evidence-based practices.

## 8,884

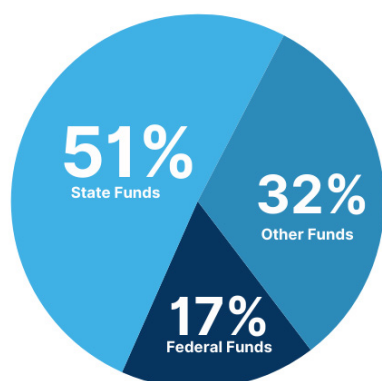
### Infants & Toddlers Served in FY 2025

Alabama benefits from early intervention services, as well. Studies find that investing in early childhood programs increases the effectiveness of public schools, reduces crime rates, and meets the state's economic needs with more individuals participating in the workforce.

**Eligibility:** Infants and toddlers from birth to age 3 who either have a diagnosed physical or mental condition which has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay or are experiencing a developmental delay in one or more of the following areas: Cognitive development, Physical development, including vision and hearing, Communication development, Social or emotional development, or Adaptive development skills.

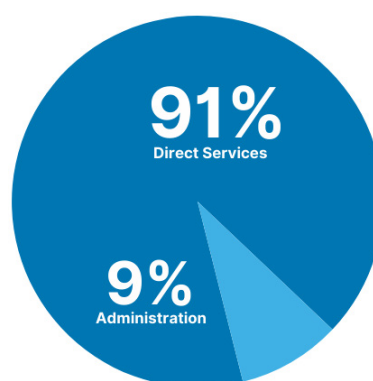
## Revenue

State Funds	\$14,705,362
Federal Funds	\$4,984,987
Other Funds	\$9,126,457



## Expenditures

Direct Services	\$26,309,230
Administration	\$2,507,576







# The Sorenson Family

## Hartselle, AL

Elizabeth Sorenson of Hartselle, whose daughter Alyce entered ADRS's Early Intervention (EI) program at the age of 2, said she has seen continuous progress with Alyce through speech and occupational therapy sessions.

Alyce was referred to the Arc of Madison County's Autism Diagnostic Clinic after Elizabeth expressed concerns about her development to their pediatrician. After evaluations, Alyce was enrolled in both speech and occupational therapy with EI.

Sessions with Speech Language Pathologist Joy Boyd led to significant improvement in Alyce's ability to communicate, Elizabeth said.

"(Before speech therapy), she would scream and cry, and it was really just a hard time," she said. "The speech therapy has really helped her come such a long way. She's finally started to talk in sentences, and it has been wonderful. It's amazing."

Alyce's motor skills and mobility were also an issue before she began occupational therapy. Elizabeth said that Alyce has made so much progress with Occupational Therapist Ashley Johnson that she will soon be able to focus on speech alone.



**"Now she can walk anywhere," she said. "She can pretty much do anything requiring hand-eye coordination. She has progressed so much there."**

Elizabeth said one of the best parts of the process has been the staff members who led her through this journey.

"Everybody is amazing," she said. "They are so nice and friendly. This whole experience has been incredible and I'm so thankful."





# The Parker Family

## Birmingham, AL

Rebecca Parker, whose daughter Mia had physical and developmental delays that were detected before her first birthday, said learning about services provided through Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS) has been a life-changing experience for her and her family.

"If I could give them (EI staff) 10 stars, I would," Rebecca said. "I would not have made it this far without them."

Mia was referred to EI services when she was not sitting up on her own or meeting many other developmental milestones expected for her age. A neurologist at Children's Hospital in Birmingham referred her for EI services through one of ADRS's partner providers, East Central Alabama United Cerebral Palsy (UCP).

"It truly takes a village to ensure parents and caregivers are connected, quickly and early, to the right services for a child with developmental delays," said Alabama's EI System Director, Amy Blakeney.

Rebecca said that having EI staff come to her home and teach her how to work with Mia every day has been one of the reasons for Mia's continued progress. She said keeping her in her comfort zone and making things easier and convenient for parents are major benefits.



Since the EI team has taught her how to provide many of the therapeutic exercises for her daughter, she now knows how to help Mia improve her skills and progress in her development.

EI Service Coordinator Ashia Moore said,

**"It's great when you have parents who are willing to take the advice and use it at home, and that she is still working when we are not around."**





## 2025 Accomplishments

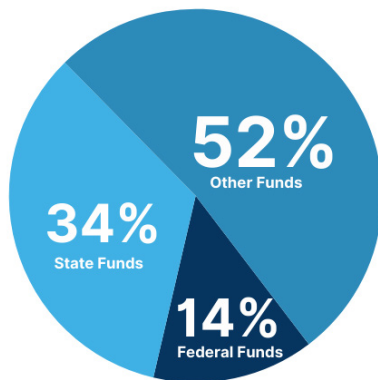
- Purchased a Mobile unit to provide audiology services, care coordination and direct service in local communities, reducing transportation barriers to CRS services. The unit, which was purchased using funds from the America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), is on target to be ready by April 2026.
- ARPA funds also purchased Tele-health carts to help reduce barriers to accessing health care for those with transportation issues.
- Connected 258 individuals with community resources totaling \$343,748.93 for audiology, nutrition, speech-language, food assistance, medical supplies, wheelchair ramps, prescription medication assistance, and other items.
- Piloted an advanced early autism screening by partnering with Alabama Early Intervention System, the University of Alabama, and the University of Alabama-Birmingham (UAB) Civitan-Sparks Clinic.
- Accomplished 14,858 clinic visits and 4,038 Information and Referral contacts.
- Served 534 clients in the Hemophilia Program.
- Conducted Pediatric Evaluation/Assessment in Autism Diagnostic clinics located in Tuscaloosa, Homewood, and Mobile.
- Increased referrals and served 438 with no insurance.
- Completed a statewide needs assessment with input from state and community partners, ADRS staff, and families, who together identified three top priorities to focus on over the next five years: 1) help families navigate the system of care, 2) help children transition to adulthood, and 3) increase family and youth peer support.



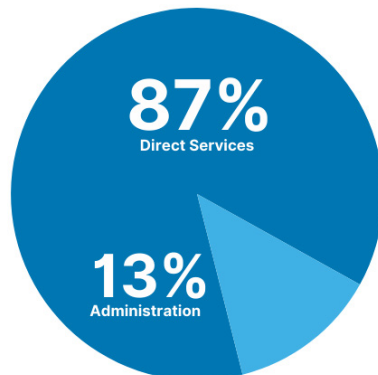
# Children's Rehabilitation Service

**15,784**  
**Children and Youth Served**  
**in FY 2025**

## Revenue



## Expenditures



Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) is a proven lifeline for many parents of children and teens with special health care needs. CRS partners with families to develop a plan of care with a team of doctors, nurses, social workers, therapists, audiologists, and nutritionists, so that each child can succeed in school, at home, and in the community.

CRS also collaborates with school systems statewide to provide consultation, assessment, evaluation, therapy services, and assistive technologies to help children with special health care needs participate more fully in school.

Services provided from fourteen community-based offices around the state include:

- Clinical medical services through specialty clinics.
- Care coordination and clinical evaluation to identify the child's unique needs.
- Information and referral to community resources.
- Patient and family education to carry out treatment regimens successfully and to make informed choices about services.
- Parent Consultants that build strong family and professional partnerships, and provide information, support, and opportunities for families to engage in program and policy development.
- The Youth Connection, which facilitates youth involvement with policy development and decision-making.

Treatment options can include clinical interventions, medication, specialized equipment, assistive technology, and referral to community resources for therapy services as needed. Families can receive services regardless of their income.

**Eligibility:** Must be an Alabama resident with special health care needs younger than 21, or individuals with hemophilia at any age.





# CatLynn Poe

## Alabaster, AL

CatLynn Poe, a 17-year-old junior at Thompson High School, has competed and earned awards in numerous pageants throughout the state. She has been involved with Miss Alabama and was named one of Miss America's 2025 rising stars.

Her competitive nature is no surprise, according to her mother Ericka Poe, because she has been a fighter since birth.

After a normal pregnancy, there were complications during CatLynn's birth causing severed nerves on her spinal cord.

CatLynn and her family first received services from Alabama's Early Intervention System, a division of ADRS. At age three, she was enrolled in ADRS's Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) to continue her progress and get ready for school.

"Hard times might be difficult, but you still have to endure through life," Ericka said.

As CatLynn grew, she attended CRS seating, orthopedic, and spinal clinics, which became even more crucial after a complicated surgery that involved a neck fusion.

Ericka became involved in the Homewood Parent Advisory Committee with CRS State Parent Consultant Tammy Moore, where she had a chance to network and learn from other parents.

CRS Social Worker Tiffany Chess accompanied the family at Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings at CatLynn's school to advocate for her needs.



She also helped her get involved in CRS teen clinics and secured a Chromebook as an assistive device for CatLynn with options to enlarge print.

CatLynn now takes the lead at her IEP meetings.

"For her to be able to advocate for herself is wonderful," Tiffany said. "That's the overall goal; for her to be able to speak up for herself."

CatLynn, who hopes to become a podiatrist or a journalist after high school, uses communication as her superpower. She is focused on her platform of advocating for people of all abilities in everything she does. She encourages those she meets to meet their challenges head on.

"Just focus on yourself," CatLynn said. "Be positive and try not to let your disability affect you that much."







# Eli Woolsey

## Opp, AL

When the Woolsey family adopted their son, Eli, he had a broken back, two shunts in his head, a broken leg, and a broken clavicle. It was clear he would need significant medical and therapeutic needs to heal.

At two, Eli received Early Intervention (EI) services and moved into Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) at seven where he attended hearing, neurology, and seating clinics.

CRS also provided Eli with assistive devices including a wheelchair lift, a car seat, bath chairs, and a stander device.

Eli's mother Charlotte said he still has to travel to Birmingham for some services, but it has been great to have the CRS Andalusia office nearby as a resource for many of their needs.

"It's nice to have so many things in one place. If you need something for your child and CRS has it, the doctors can just send orders to CRS, and it is taken care of," she said.

# Shreve McWilliams

## Orange Beach, AL

After giving birth prematurely, Crawford McWilliams was told that their daughter had a buildup of excess calcium in her brain. Initial tests ruled out serious illnesses, but genetic testing revealed the diagnosis of CTNNB1 Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that affects the development of the brain and other parts of the body.

Shreve was enrolled in both Early Intervention and Children's Rehabilitation Service where the family learned that they could get services she needed at the CRS Mobile office, such as orthopedic, mobility, and seating clinics. With the help of CRS Physical Therapist Cameron Riley, the family secured assistive devices for Shreve.

"Our goal is for her to independently walk," Crawford said. "The gait trainer and stander device help Shreve work toward this goal,

while the wheelchair is a tool to help her have some independence on long, active days and when she goes to school."

Crawford said talking to CRS Parent Consultant Cara Rain, who organizes Parent Connection meetings, is especially helpful because she is navigating a similar path.

"She is a special needs mom herself," she said. "Having a mom who cares because she is also a special needs mom, she can come in and make sure things don't slip through the cracks that I would not have thought about."



## Children and Adults Served by County

County	AEIS	CRS	VRS	SAIL	County	AEIS	CRS	VRS	SAIL	County	AEIS	CRS	VRS	SAIL
Autauga	96	181	296	35	DeKalb	94	382	358	13	Mobile	735	1,423	2,615	146
Baldwin	296	385	1,093	27	Elmore	102	228	423	97	Monroe	23	86	117	7
Barbour	13	117	63	12	Escambia	29	63	151	7	Montgomery	326	903	1,331	196
Bibb	48	60	121	12	Etowah	154	476	985	37	Morgan	243	380	663	23
Blount	87	170	163	26	Fayette	45	57	122	7	Perry	12	18	10	10
Bullock	7	28	31	20	Franklin	43	153	214	4	Pickens	31	59	112	15
Butler	23	92	87	10	Geneva	19	136	357	8	Pike	29	123	187	17
Calhoun	207	659	868	60	Greene	18	33	33	6	Randolph	23	61	154	4
Chambers	56	62	214	20	Hale	40	54	65	18	Russell	48	78	153	16
Cherokee	31	77	174	8	Henry	12	91	148	12	Shelby	654	389	1,297	31
Chilton	70	95	243	21	Houston	129	662	709	43	St. Clair	174	192	346	32
Choctaw	13	33	81	10	Jackson	65	151	263	5	Sumter	22	24	54	9
Clarke	30	192	201	13	Jefferson	1,766	1,210	4,703	219	Talladega	149	213	703	63
Clay	15	47	78	6	Lamar	80	44	115	3	Tallapoosa	44	68	251	39
Cleburne	17	68	106	3	Lauderdale	156	247	689	14	Tuscaloosa	577	787	1,681	78
Coffee	39	362	171	11	Lawrence	50	83	216	4	Walker	112	172	288	18
Colbert	62	195	434	8	Lee	169	226	692	44	Washington	10	100	175	10
Conecuh	8	36	72	5	Limestone	153	271	659	12	Wilcox	19	50	11	4
Coosa	14	15	35	10	Lowndes	23	36	50	13	Winston	78	64	163	10
Covington	19	446	236	17	Macon	17	15	103	14	Other*	-	12	15,960	-
Crenshaw	13	73	99	3	Madison	726	1,269	1,974	38					
Cullman	124	161	384	19	Marengo	30	69	171	8	Total by program	8,884	15,784	45,793	1,775
Dale	43	248	264	14	Marion	109	93	227	15	<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>72,236</b>
Dallas	44	150	72	20	Marshall	171	581	482	16					

\*Moved out-of-state or pending eligibility

### ADRS EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Commissioner  
 Karen Jenkins, Deputy Commissioner - Vocational Rehabilitation Service (General)  
 Ashley Townsend, Assistant Commissioner - Vocational Rehabilitation Service (Blind/Deaf)  
 Cathy Caldwell, Assistant Commissioner - Children's Rehabilitation Service  
 Amy Blakeney, Director - Alabama's Early Intervention System  
 Lisa Alford, Director - State of Alabama Independent Living-Homebound Program  
 Shay Cannon, Chief Financial Officer  
 Beverly Floyd, Chief Information Officer  
 Ashley Hamlett, General Counsel, Director - Legal Division  
 Tracy Bird, Director - Human Resource Development Division  
 Jill W. West, Governmental Relations Manager - Director, Office of Communications & Information (OCI)  
 Frank Snyder, Internal Audit Manager

#### ADRS Office of Communications and Information (OCI):

Jill W. West, Governmental Relations Manager - Director, OCI  
 Rick Couch, Senior Communications & Public Relations Specialist, Media Relations & Records  
 Amanda Gunn, Senior Communications & Public Relations Specialist, Outreach & Education



## Dr. Graham Sisson, Executive Director of the Governor's Office On Disability, Retires



Dr. Graham Sisson retired on June 1, 2025, after a 27-year career advocating for people with disabilities in Alabama and around the nation.

Honoring Dr. Sisson, ADRS Commissioner Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw said, “Your life experience, both professional and personal, led you to a life of public service and made you a tremendous leader and advocate. The resulting impact of your service led to changes in public policy, increased access for all, reduced barriers to community integration and employment, and enhanced public knowledge of disabilities and the law.”

Dr. Sisson's career began in 1998 when then-ADRS Commissioner Lamona Lucas recruited him to manage the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). He became an assistant attorney general and was asked to manage the Americans with Disabilities Act hot line. In these roles, Dr. Sisson helped hundreds of people with disabilities and provided hundreds of presentations statewide on ADA requirements and related laws. In 2007, Gov. Bob Riley asked him to serve as executive director and general counsel for the Governor's Office On Disability (GOOD).

ADRS, its partners, the governor and state legislature are grateful for the many contributions by Dr. Sisson in improving the lives and lifting up the successes of people with disabilities in Alabama.

*Read more about Dr. Sisson on the ADRS blog on [rehab.alabama.gov](https://rehab.alabama.gov).*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to the dedicated ADRS staff and leaders who generously contributed to the 2025 ADRS Annual Report.

For electronic, text-only or printed copies of this report, contact the ADRS Office of Communications and Information  
[oci@rehab.alabama.gov](mailto:oci@rehab.alabama.gov)

Stories also available in video format and can be viewed and shared on  
[youtube.com/adrsfamily](https://youtube.com/adrsfamily) and [youtube.com/adrstv](https://youtube.com/adrstv)

Join the #ADRSfamily community on Facebook, X, Instagram and LinkedIn.







**Pictured clockwise from top-left:**

Micah Williamson, executive director for Darden Rehabilitation Foundation in Gadsden, presents Mylene Martinez of Muscle Shoals with the 2025 Alabama Rehabilitation Association Children's Rehabilitation Service Award.

Children's Rehabilitation Service Parent Consultants Amy Barnes, left, and June Wilson, right, volunteered to work with Sen. Arthur Orr, center, to educate lawmakers about the need for adult-size changing tables in public bathrooms. The resulting passage of Senate Bill 83 was celebrated by parents of adult children with significant disabilities.

Accessing Potential Through Assistive Technology (APTAT) director Ashley McLeroy is with Nakisha Adams representing APTAT and ADRS on Birmingham's WBRC News to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). They are pictured with WBRC news anchor Sheldon Haygood.

Davina Patterson, Jessica Powell and Devon Washington with the Disability Resource Network in Huntsville are pictured with ADRS Commissioner Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw.

The services described in this report are funded in part with federal funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Education under the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Supported Employment Services, the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) programs, the Infant and Toddler (Part C) program, and the APTAT program (formerly known as STAR). For purposes of the VR program, the federal VR grant paid 78.7 percent of the total costs of the program. In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2024, the VR agency received \$78,790,757 in federal VR funds. Funds appropriated by the state paid 21.3 percent of the total costs (\$21,324,563) under the VR program. For purposes of the Supported Employment program, federal funds paid 95 percent of the total costs. In FFY 2024, the VR agency received \$684,045 in federal Supported Employment funds. Funds appropriated by the state paid 5 percent (\$38,003) of the total costs incurred under the program. For purposes of the OIB program, federal funds paid 90 percent of the total costs incurred under the program. In FFY 2024, the agency received \$493,903 in federal grant funds for this program. Funds appropriated by the state paid 10 percent (\$54,878) of the total costs incurred under the OIB program. For purposes of the Early Intervention program, the federal Part C grant paid 26.6 percent of the total costs incurred by the program. In federal fiscal year 2024, the total amount of Part C funds was \$7,756,434. Funds appropriated by the state or another non-federal allowable source paid 73.4 percent of the total costs (\$21,441,870) under the EI program. For the purposes of the APTAT program (formerly known as STAR), the federal grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the Assistive Technology Act Section 4 – State Grants for Assistive Technology program paid 100 percent of the total costs incurred by the program. In federal fiscal year 2024, the APTAT program received \$527,704 in federal funds.



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