

together success

Home
one department
School
one mission
Work



BLUEPRINT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

MISSION: TO ENABLE ALABAMA'S CHILDREN AND ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE THEIR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL

We VALUE the worth, dignity and rights of people with disabilities and we will:

- provide an easily accessible, integrated continuum of services;
- ensure quality services that are family-centered, culturally sensitive and community-based;
- promote and respect consumer choice regarding provision of services;
- advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities and promote self-advocacy;
- include people with disabilities, their families and advocates in agency planning and policy development.

We VALUE independence and meaningful work for people with disabilities and we will:

- educate families, children, employers, schools and the public that people with disabilities can and do work;
- advocate for quality health services and community supports that enable people with disabilities to work and/or function independently;
- develop, maintain and expand working relationships with employers;
- identify and create job opportunities that are compatible with consumer abilities;
- foster cross-divisional collaboration to achieve successful work outcomes.

We VALUE all staff and their contributions in achieving our mission and we will:

- communicate openly and honestly;
- recruit, develop, retain and promote a diverse, qualified staff;
- involve staff in agency planning, policy development and performance objectives;
- recognize and reward exemplary job performance;
- provide staff opportunities for personal and professional growth.

We VALUE leadership at all levels and we will:

- maximize staff participation in all agency initiatives;
- create an environment which encourages and supports creativity and innovation;
- facilitate teamwork among all staff;
- provide support and leadership development opportunities.

We VALUE maximum acquisition and efficient and effective management of resources and we will:

- acquire maximum resources;
- increase legislative support;
- develop and use appropriate technological advancements;
- evaluate the effective and efficient use of our resources;
- collaborate with organizations in the public and private sectors.

We VALUE public support and we will:

- educate the public about our mission, goals, services and expertise;
- secure support from business and industry, consumers of services, partners and policymakers;
- create partnerships that expand services to enhance opportunities for consumers;
- maximize staff involvement in the development of grassroots support.

From the commissioner



Dear friends, partners, and colleagues,

It's my pleasure to present to you **Together Success**, the 2020 ADRS annual report.

The stories of success and program highlights found in this document represents the more than 45,000 Alabamians with disabilities who are served through ADRS programs each year. They are a testament to the drive and determination of the people we serve to reach their goals, and to the efforts of our staff to overcome the new challenges of 2020.

This report is a celebration of the partnerships built around the state. We all have dedicated ourselves and made the necessary adjustments during the pandemic to accomplish the same mission and take great pride in the success of those we serve. To the Alabama State Legislature and our many partners, I would like to once again say "thank you" for another successful year. May we have many more successes in the year to come as we work together to assist Alabama's children and adults with disabilities in achieving their maximum potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jane Elizabeth Furchehaw". The signature is fluid and cursive.



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continuum of care ...



Whether the person is a child born with a disability or someone who acquires a disability later in life, the goal is the same: self-sufficiency and independence. With individualized services provided in homes, schools, the workplace and the community, ADRS assists every person in achieving his or her maximum potential.

alabama's early intervention system

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.



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.



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.



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.



Leah Patterson Lust

January 14, 1971 - April 25, 2020

Leah Patterson Lust, who was appointed to the board in the spring of 2018, passed away April 25 following complications from a prolonged illness related to a prior surgery.

ADRS Commissioner Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw said that Leah's experiences, both personally and professionally, made her a great addition to the board.

"Leah was a joy to work with," said Burdeshaw. "She was truly interested in individuals and how helping individuals ultimately helped a community. I'm so glad I got to know her and that she was willing to join our board. She loved helping others, encouraging others and making others smile."

Leah sustained a spinal cord injury at age 17 in a car accident and used a wheelchair for mobility. It was through this very personal experience that she was able to provide the board with an important perspective of the real challenges faced by those with disabilities. At the time of her appointment, she said her goal was



to help bring solutions to some of these challenges.

She tried to use what she knew to benefit others, and I think she never wavered from that commitment.

"The people in (central Alabama) with disabilities and throughout the state have many needs," she explained. "I hope that I can bring information to the table that will be beneficial and that will help the agency as it tries to meet the needs of the people."

According to Michael Lust, her husband of 18 years, Leah continues to have a positive effect on those served by the ADRS family. Michael received several donations in her name to the ADRS State of Alabama Independent Living/Homebound program (SAIL) to build ramps for people with limited mobility, among other similar projects in her hometown of Cullman.

"She tried to use what she knew to benefit others, and I think she never wavered from that commitment."

A passionate, tireless advocate, Leah will be deeply missed.

Meet our board



Dear friends,

I have been blessed to serve another year as the Board Chair of the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services. I am proud to serve on a board that provides such outstanding services to Alabamians of all ages.

There is a saying that “Working Together Works,” and the ADRS staff works together with each other and the consumers they serve to make the mission of the department work for the citizens of our state.

As you review this annual report, I’m sure you will agree that the staff works to make our state a better place for all of us.

I ask you as I did last year to please join me, the rest of the board members and the recipients of services from ADRS, in thanking the staff and leadership in another outstanding year in being on the forefront of providing services and inspiration to our family and friends.

Sincerely,

Eddie C. Williams
Board Chairman, District 5



Michelle Glaze
District 1



Jimmie Varnado
District 2



Penny Foster
District 3



Leah Patterson Lust
District 4



Charles Wilkinson
District 6



Mitch Strickland
District 7

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.



The Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services is excited to welcome District 1 Representative Michelle Glaze.

Rainbow Cafe

Etowah County



Above, Gadsden City Schools Special Education Teacher Chip Rowan teaches cafe workers the proper way to prepare a veggie burger. Right, the group meets every morning before opening to discuss the day's menu and specials.

collaboration ...



When Gadsden City Schools' special education teacher Chip Rowan began incorporating gardening into his curriculum, he never expected the program to blossom into a treasured community restaurant housed by the local public library.

Rowan connected with the Gadsden library through ADRS Business Relations Consultant Daniel Spencer in July 2016. Rowan and his students had previously served customers with an after-school and summer venture, and Spencer knew he was looking for a more permanent location.

Those meetings soon led to the successful placement of Amanda Sigler, a VR consumer, into employment.

The space was renovated, A Beautiful Rainbow Café was born, and accolades poured in. In 2019, the café was recognized

by the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities through its "Collaboration Award."

Many of the students have gone on to secure employment and internships through programs like Project SEARCH, Rowan said. The lessons they learned at the café have been crucial to this process.

The café was chosen for this award because of the wide spectrum of skills it teaches its students. Along with food preparation and gardening, they also have a partnership with Exchange Bank to promote financial literacy education to students.

"Not only do they make food, sales and greet the customers, we're always working on those soft skills like how do you get along with your coworkers? How do you handle conflict? How do you work as a team? How do you work independently? How do you problem solve?" he said. "It's all of those kinds of skills that you can learn best in an on-the-job setting."

The café sometimes welcomed about 50 customers at a time, but COVID-19 caused a gap in these services when schools and the library closed. Rowan, who always sees an opportunity to teach, said this gave them a chance to address the importance of virtual learning.

Thanks to continued support from the community and partnerships, the café was able to reopen during the fall semester and is excited to welcome back old friends.

success through

Alabama Lions *Statewide Projects*



Above, members of the Lion's Club have been hard at work in 2020 partnering with the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Service's State of Alabama Independent Living/Homebound program. Right, a facility in Boaz provided by Darden Rehab Center has been a huge help for prebuilds.

partnerships ...

Partnerships are critical to Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services programs.

This is especially true for the State of Alabama Independent Living/Homebound program when it comes to the construction of ramps.

Fortunately, Lions Clubs throughout the state have been a tremendous asset.

ADRS Rehab Engineer Bynum Duren said a program that began with former District 1 Board of Rehabilitation Services Representative and Lions Club member Stephen G. Kayes has grown into a statewide effort to provide ramps for people who want to remain in their homes.

A group of north Alabama Lions Duren refers to as the “Limestone Cowboys” is led by Tim Carter and has become a crew that is able to produce a ramp every Tuesday when they are not limited by COVID-19.

“These guys are just awesome,” Duren said. “It’s a great group of guys to work with on these projects.”

The crews are able to produce ramps in two ways, Duren said. They can construct ramps on site or through a facility provided by

Darden Rehab Center in Boaz. Duren said crews work in the large, warehouse-style facility to build sections of ramps that can easily be put together at the homes. A standard was created to ensure the ramps meet the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

These ramps have become especially important to the mission of SAIL during the pandemic.

The SAIL program is structured to prevent consumers from having to enter nursing homes.

This has been especially crucial in the last year.

When they began, Duren said they were averaging 65 to 75 ramps per year with a backlog of 116. That quickly changed.

“Even with a three-month delay because of COVID, we have been able to get to a point where we are down to 65 and 70 ramps that we are working,” he said.

That number is expected to dwindle even more.

Duren said the north Alabama Lions have agreed to train other clubs to offer their services in other sections of the state.



Marshall's *Madison County*



Above left, Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services Business Relations Consultant Cassie N. Shropshire discusses plans for the future with Marshall's Store No. 422 Manager LaShandra Collins. Marshall's was named this year's Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities "Large Business Employer of the Year." The store has been a wonderful partner for ADRS as well.

opportunities ...



Often, people with disabilities need only a chance to prove themselves in the workplace.

Marshall's Store No. 422 in Huntsville has shown that they are ready and willing to offer those opportunities.

The store, which recently received the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities "Large Business Employer of the Year Award," reached out to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services for assistance to help them fulfill hiring goals.

Business Relations Consultant Cassie N. Shropshire was happy to help. The store's management was informed about ADRS's pre-hire work experience program and wanted to

provide consumers with disabilities an opportunity to train in their store and possibly achieve employment.

Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities' Large Business Employer of the Year Award winner

Marshall's store management met with Cassie and they decided to take up to 10 Vocational Rehabilitation Service consumers to train for six weeks as processors in their back room.

Cassie and the Marshall's team worked together to provide all the

necessary information to the TJ Max Corporate office to ensure that the program was approved at the highest corporate level.

Over the course of a year, the store was able to bring in nine consumers and six were hired after their paid work experience.

When COVID-19 hit paid work experiences were suspended, but the management team has remained in contact with Cassie about continuing the program in the future.

Marshall's has been a great partner to VRS, and an amazing employer to consumers. Cassie said for this reason, she was excited to see them receive the governor's committee award.

extraordinary times call

ADRS staff answers 2020 COVID challenge

2020 presented enormous challenges for ADRS employees and consumers in facing a pandemic that completely changed our lives. But ADRS staff worked together, getting creative and ensuring that our consumers continued to receive needed services.

For Vocational Rehabilitation Service, it was especially challenging to get students with disabilities safely back on school campuses and make sure they had the necessary plans in place to continue their education.

ADRS staff altered and developed innovative plans to help our consumers return to school seamlessly and safely. Students were given the option of returning to school in a traditional setting, virtually or a combination of both.

"For our students attending in the traditional method, it was business as usual while strictly practicing social distancing and adhering to school system regulations," said Statewide Transition Coordinator Tasha Harrison-Betts. "As schools closed their doors due to the pandemic, our services did not stop; we adjusted our methods.

"Counselors (continued to attend) Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings through virtual platforms ... and also maintained contact with students, parents, school partners and community rehab partners via phone, email and secure virtual platforms," Tasha said.

As school systems developed plans of what their school year would look like, Tasha said VRS worked diligently to ensure that they had a method for service delivery conducive to each system.

Students who elected virtual academic training continued to have access to pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) and transition services through virtual means

whenever possible. Providers developed curriculum approved for eligible VRS participants in classroom settings, and many of these training modules could also be provided virtually since they were delivered in a HIPPA-compliant platform. Other options continue to be explored including service delivery at facilities in small groups where virtual or on-campus service provision is not an option.

"As we continue to receive information from school systems, we will put every measure in place to work with our partners for the best method for our students," Tasha said.

Like VRS, Assistant Director of Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) Kim McLaughlin said the program continued to work with students throughout school closures and summer vacation.

"CRS staff continued to participate in IEP meetings when requested by the family and invited by the school," she said. "In May, at the end of the school term, CRS participated in IEPs through Zoom invitation from the school or through conference calls. It is likely that CRS staff will continue to participate in this same way as long as COVID-19 poses a health threat."

For Early Intervention, an increase in funding for FY20 was very helpful as they faced this new challenge.

When ADRS staff was sent home as mandated by Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey's State of Emergency "Safer at Home Policy," staff and providers immediately swung into action providing ongoing guidance to programs on ways to continue providing services to families using telephone and virtual platforms.

"Gratefully, Alabama Medicaid provided permission and guidance for AEIS to continue providing services and the ability to bill Medicaid using virtual service methods,"

As schools closed their doors due to the pandemic, our services did not stop; we adjusted our methods.

for extraordinary people ...



El director Amy Blakeney said. "Despite the challenges that AEIS has faced during COVID-19 in FY20 with a slight decline in referrals in the last few months, it appears that these numbers are beginning to increase once again which will likely bring new financial and system capacity challenges moving forward."

Partnerships have been a huge part of the State of Alabama Independent Living/Homebound program's contributions during the pandemic.

The program's goal to provide services to Alabamians who have the most-significant disabilities has taken on added importance during the pandemic.

Providing support services to families with children and adults with significant disabilities to make them more

independent especially in the home has been crucial.

A partnership to provide ramps to homes (highlighted on pages 10-11), has been successful in keeping many consumers in their homes and out of nursing homes where they might have had a higher chance of being exposed to COVID-19.

Maneuvering through the pandemic has been a challenge for everyone, but it is a challenge that ADRS has been willing and able to address.

Our staff will continue to make strides during the upcoming year to ensure that Alabama's children and adults with disabilities have an opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

Alabama's
EARLY
INTERVENTION
System





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, family-centered system of support and evidence-based practices. EI also works alongside the family coaching them to enhance 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 43 programs in local communities across Alabama, Early Intervention delivers evidence-based 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.

AEIS 2020 highlights

In FY20, Alabama's Early Intervention System:

- Received once again the highest rating of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) after submitting the Annual Performance Report (APR) (based on indicators and goals outlined in Alabama's State Performance Plan as required by The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP): an indication of how AEIS has improved the quality of service to infants/toddlers and their families, improved child/family outcomes, and to made the program more available to public.
- Continued to implement improvement strategies that impact the social/emotional well-being of infants/toddlers and their families. As described in AEIS' State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)-Phase VI submission to OSEP, it has accomplished this through required assessments of social-emotional development, implementing evidence-based practices with fidelity, and expanding professional development.
- Continued its partnership with First 5 Alabama to equip professionals through an endorsement process. Other partners include the Alabama Departments of Mental Health (ADMH) and Early Childhood Education (DECE), the Alabama Partnership for Children, and other agencies that serve young children. Once endorsed, these professionals will work as consultants with early childhood programs serving and supporting young children with mental health concerns and their families.
- Continues to form new partnerships to meet the growing needs of infants and toddlers who are deaf and hard of hearing in collaboration with their families and caregivers. AEIS collaborates with the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Learning Committee Work Group by participating in monthly meetings and quarterly participation with its Advisory Board.
- Provided "one-on-one" coaching and mentoring to seven AEIS providers across the state on specific Autism practices as the Early Childhood Autism Work Group entered Phase II. This training allows these seven EI providers to provide ongoing consultation/training to other EI providers in the state.
- Worked with the Infant & Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA) in the development of a national position paper on strategies for serving young children with autism and their families.
- Submitted a formal request to Alabama Medicaid to continue the use of Tele-intervention (virtual) services after the pandemic ends as an additional service-delivery option for families who feel safer and who benefit more from this service method.
- Continues its involvement with DECE 0-5 Grant for the second year, allowing evidence-based practice for training to continue: Routines Based Interview (RBI) for service coordinators and Routines Based Home Visiting (RBHV).

You would never know that child was delayed in her motor skills ... She is able to run, she is able to jump, she loves to climb, swing in a swing ... We're very grateful for the support we had through Early Intervention to get her on track." -Katie Mills



Madelyn Mills, a triplet, has made tremendous progress through Early Intervention services. She has thrived with physical therapy and has now expanded her vocabulary through speech therapy.

Madelyn Mills *Madison County*

Every day is an adventure and a learning experience for the Mills family of Madison.

The Mills, who have 2-year-old triplets, were concerned when their daughter Madelyn was not progressing with her siblings. At 16 months, her brother James was walking. Her sister Emma was close behind, but their mother Katie noticed Madelyn needed a little extra attention.

Katie graduated with a special education degree from Samford University and knew about Early Intervention.

"I knew that Early Intervention is essential and would be a good resource for us, so I reached out to EI myself and made the referral," she said. "Maddie qualified under needing physical therapy and delayed motor skills."

After receiving the referral in November 2019, Service Coordinator Michelle Creekmore began to put a plan in place. An evaluation was conducted later that month. She then met with Katie for a routines-based interview in December and looked for ways EI could help to get Maddie where she needed to be.

Goals were established along with a plan for physical therapy and speech and language services and physical therapy continued through about 20 months.

"You would never know that child was delayed in her motor skills," Katie said. "She is able to run, she is able



Madelyn Mills and her mother Katie share a laugh while taking a break from playtime. Madelyn is always quick to smile.

to jump, she loves to climb, swing in a swing without any support. We're very grateful for the support we had through Early Intervention to get her on track."

Madelyn is also responding well to speech therapy. She had a vocabulary of 19 words by her second birthday but expanded that number to 35 words at 28 months.

"She has made a ton of progress," Michelle said. "We have loved watching her. The success of a child in Early Intervention depends on the parent's involvement, and she has amazing parents. They have just jumped on every recommendation."

AEIS by the numbers

Infants & Toddlers Served

7,785



Serving all 67 Alabama
counties from seven
locations

Sources of Revenue

State: \$12,944,341

Other: \$5,973,235.78

Federal: \$5,739,264.96

Use of Revenue

Direct Services:

\$23,259,677.11

Administration:

\$1,397,164.63

Will Howard

Pickens County

After a tough start, there is no slowing down James "Will" Howard.

Will, a resident of the small Pickens County town of Reform, was born Dec. 30, 2017, and diagnosed with hypoplastic right heart syndrome, which required multiple open-heart surgeries.

From the time he was born, Will spent his first six months at UAB hospital. When he came home, his mother Hannah noticed that when Will was around many other children he seemed to be developmentally behind.

"I realized when I got around other babies who were six months old that he was not doing what they were doing," she said. "I decided it might be a good idea to get him some type of services."

One of Will's therapists recommended Early Intervention and they were soon connected to ADRS service coordinator, Karen Smith. She coordinated physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and special instruction for Will. Currently, Amy Fernandez continues to oversee his case.

Will, who will turn 3 in December, has made great progress - even with the limits presented by COVID-19. While in-home visits were placed on hold for Early Intervention, Hannah said the program has worked with them to continue moving forward.

"We go on Zoom and they are able to see Will and how he is doing," she said. "They send me worksheets and we will play together and read books and puzzles. They give me a lot of little tips and stuff that will help him hurry along with his development."

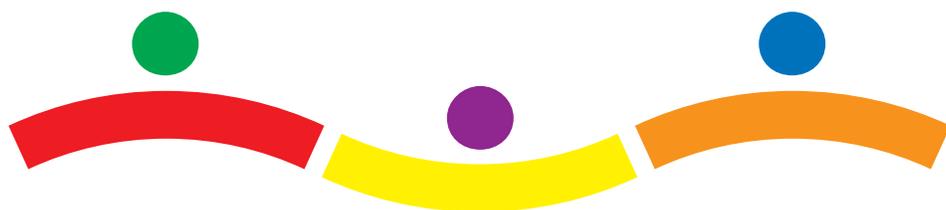
The programs and exercises have helped Will make tremendous progress.

"When he first started, he would sit in his bouncy seat all day long. That's all he wanted to do," Hannah said. "Then they came, and we started tummy time and working on him crawling and we have gone from that to walking and working on running now. We have come a long way from where we started."



Will Howard had a tough start to life but has made tremendous strides after open-heart surgeries. Above, Will is excited to show off some of his favorite toys. Left, Will enjoys playing with electronics and has a knack for reprogramming them! Below, Will gives his mother Hannah a kiss as they take a break from playing to cuddle.





CHILDREN'S
Rehabilitation Service



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.

In FY20, Children's Rehabilitation Service:

- Served 12,091 children and youth with special healthcare needs including 406 with no insurance through the clinic program.
- Accomplished a total of 145,787 client encounters, 11,137 clinic visits and 2,230 information and referral contacts. Expedited Medicaid travel reimbursements for an estimated total of \$123,436.
- Assisted 1,758 clients with connecting to community resources totaling \$656,901 for assistance including audiology, nutrition, speech-language, wheelchair related items, food assistance, medical supplies, ramps, prescription medication assistance, medical supplies, ramps, prescription medication assistance, utility bill assistance and other miscellaneous items.
- Accepted (as one of 10 states) into the Maternal and Child Health Bureau funded Care Coordination Academy cohort. Participation in the Academy will enable teams to acquire the essential knowledge, skills and competencies for effective care coordination through continuous quality improvement.
- Convened a work group of CRS Care Coordinators, Parent and Youth Consultants, and other staff to revamp the comprehensive CRS Plan of Care, which is a family and staff collaborative to conduct an annual assessment of needs/concerns and develop/report a summary of services.
- Collaborated (CRS Parent Consultants) with staff from Family Voices of Alabama to build connections with families by creating a Facebook Group, "Alabama Special Needs Parents-Support Group" which now has more than 500 members, who share information and support with one another daily.
- Completed the third year of the Collaborative for Improvement Innovation Network (CollIN) to advance care for Children with Medical Complexity (CMC), a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant that is administered by Boston University.
- Applied for and was accepted to participate in the National Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Workforce Development Center 2020 Cohort. CRS participated in a seven-month Cohort with six other state teams, during which time the Center supported work on a Health Transformation project to improve service delivery for Children with Special Health Care Needs and their families. The Center provided CRS staff and key stakeholders specialized training, intense coaching, and participation in collaborative learning events. CRS is continuing this work through a Single State Intensive project with the Center.

In FY20 the Hemophilia Program:

- Served 382 people with bleeding disorders
- Served participants through 36 on-site comprehensive, multidisciplinary care clinics and 12 telemedicine hemophilia clinics.
- The Birmingham Hemophilia Treatment Center held 23 on-site clinics, and also held two on-site satellite clinics in Montgomery.
- Because the population utilizing the Mobile HTC is smaller, 11 on-site clinics and one telemedicine were held.

“When Ava came along, I realized that there was so much that I did not know. I was very happy to find out that there were programs to help my family learn how to best care for her.”

-- Rachel Winston

Ava Winston

Colbert County

The Winston family of Florence understands the importance of advocacy and steps to the front of the line when it is time to raise awareness.

Rachel, whose daughter Ava was born at 24 weeks and diagnosed with cerebral palsy, knows first-hand how important it is for families of disabled children to receive the support they need.

Rachel said Ava remained in the hospital for six months in Birmingham after she was born. But before they were discharged, she was connected to Early Intervention and United Cerebral Palsy Center by a case worker and later learned about additional ADRS services.

"When Ava came along, I realized that there was so much that I did not know," said Rachel. "I was very happy to find out that there were programs and services to help my family learn how to best care for Ava and how to gain access to the resources she needs to reach her potential."

Ava began making immediate progress, Rachel said, and the same was true when they moved into Children's Rehabilitation Service.

Ava's current CRS Social Worker Victoria Weatherby has a relationship with the family that goes beyond the walls of CRS.

"I really got to know them well when we used to do respite care. It was called 'Break Time,'" Victoria said. "It was like a support group for special needs children where we did respite care one Friday night a month."

Ava now attends CRS seating and feeding clinics along with orthopedic clinics, and she and Rachel always arrive in great spirits.

"You never see her without a smile



Above, Ava Winston receives an adjustment at a seating clinic in September. The Winstons are not only CRS consumers, they are outstanding advocates for people with disabilities. Below, it is hard not to smile when you have a chance to visit CRS Social Worker Victoria Weatherby.



on her face," Victoria said. "She is just awesome."

Rachel has an even bigger platform to advocate for children and adults with disabilities as a nursing professor at the University of North Alabama and recently elected member of the Florence City School Board.

She often sings the praises of ADRS

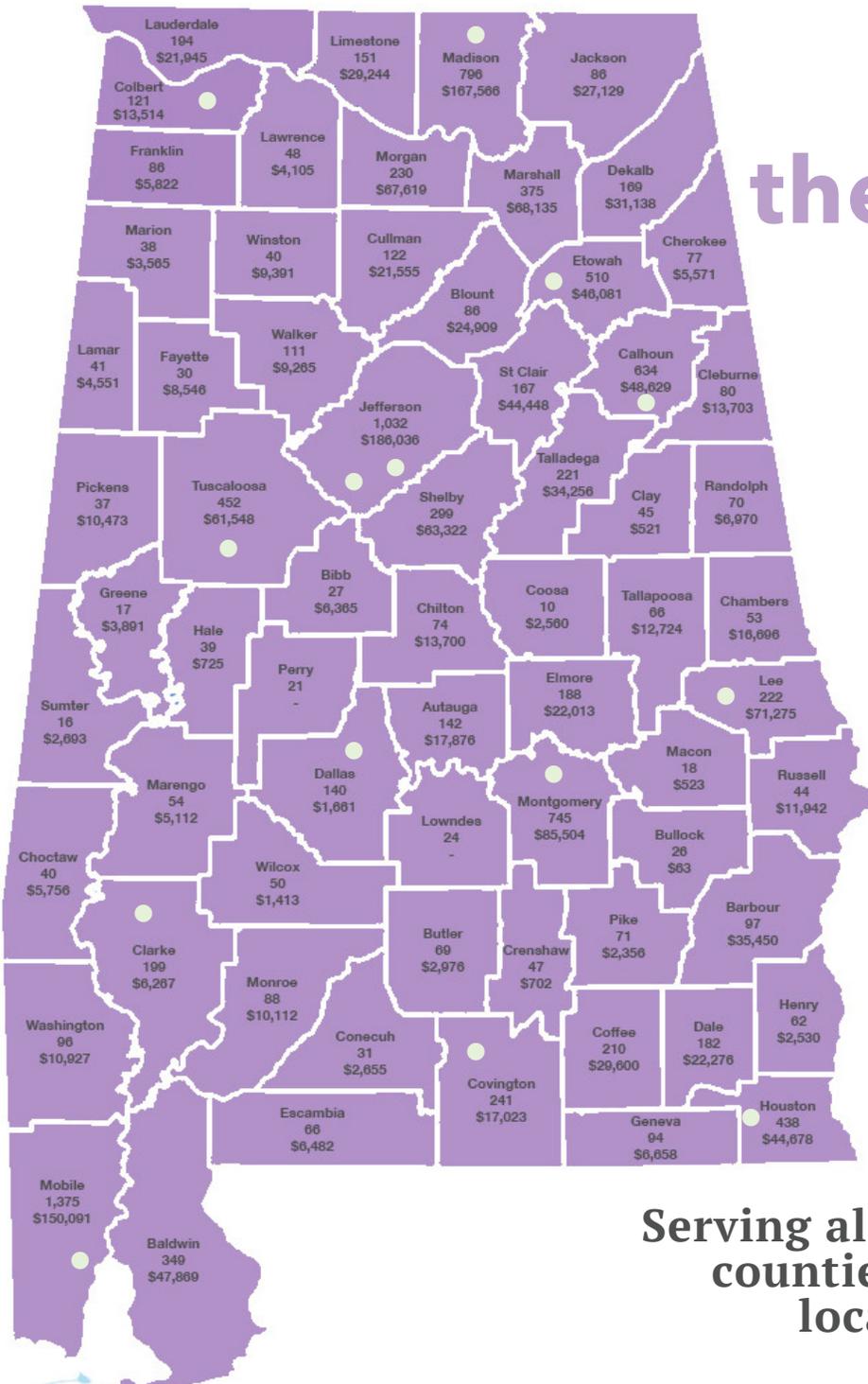
programs when she has a chance to discuss services with other parents.

"I would tell them that ADRS can provide a wealth of services, resources, and access that your child needs to reach his or her potential," she said. "ADRS is also full of knowledgeable and compassionate providers who can help you navigate your way through the process of caring for a child with special needs."

CRS by the numbers

Children Served

12,091



**Serving all 67 Alabama
counties from 14
locations**

Sources of Revenue

State: \$13,580,207.47

Other: \$12,261,638.91

Federal: \$3,468,949.67

Use of Revenue

Direct Services:

\$25,159,800.44

Administration:

\$4,150,995.61



Levi, left, takes a little time to catch up with Children’s Rehabilitation Service Nurse and Andalusia Office Coordinator Brandi Thomasson during a recent visit to the Covington County office. Right, after numerous surgeries and a long recovery, Levi is finally able to get back to the hobbies he loves.

Levi Garrett *Covington County*

It has been a tough journey for 8-year-old Andalusia resident Levi Garrett who has craniofacial issues. These had never been addressed since he was otherwise healthy. However, complications with his vision and headaches led to a visit to an optometrist who referred him to an ophthalmologist.

He was diagnosed with exotropia at age 2, and his poorly controlled eye muscles would lead him to have strabismus surgery.

In 2019, doctors also diagnosed left nasal obstruction with suspected frontonasal dysplasia with exorbitism and strabismus. Since his left nostril was completely obstructed, doctors determined it would need to be repaired. An eye surgery would also need to be completed separately.

Because of COVID-related closures, the surgery could not be completed until May 5, 2020, and it was going to be expensive. Fortunately, the Children’s Rehabilitation Service’s state office assisted with payment for the surgery since all doctors involved in were CRS vendors and would see Levi in the CRS clinic for follow-up visits.

“CRS has been great,” said Levi’s mother, Serena. “They have covered us with the surgery. When he got put back

in the hospital, they covered that. They have covered it all.”

As Levi began his recovery, CRS Nurse and Andalusia Office Coordinator Brandi Thomasson continued to help coordinate doctor visits and future arrangements.

“There was a lot of care coordination and getting him with the right doctors who knew what to do,” she said.

Complications arose with an infection, but Levi, true to form, battled through and was cleared to return to school in August. This is no small feat considering the surgery required much of his face to be reconstructed and his eyes shifted.

His mother now works at the Andalusia CRS office where she and Brandi have an opportunity to discuss Levi’s future often.

Brandi said Levi’s treatment and recovery has been a team effort between the Andalusia and Mobile offices (Mobile initially had Levi’s case before the family moved to Andalusia).

“We’re so proud that even with everything he has faced he has been a trooper,” she said.





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 gain employment or 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.

VRS Blind and Deaf DIVISION

VRS-Blind and Deaf Services provides assistance to Alabamians statewide through its Blind and Low-Vision Services, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services, Business Enterprise Program and the OASIS (Older Alabamians System of Information and Services) programs.

Despite a turbulent year of providing needed services during a pandemic, Blind and Deaf Services was able to exceed its goal for successfully employed individuals by 25 percent with a record high average hourly wage of \$18.48.

“I want to show people that just because you have a disability, doesn’t mean it can stop you from doing what you want to do.” -- Mikey Ledford

(story page 34)

In FY20, Vocational Rehabilitation Service:

- Assisted 4,027 individuals with disabilities in achieving their goal of employment, with an average annual wage of \$23,298, an increase from \$21,270 in FY19.
- Many services/programs such as pre-employment transition services, Youth Leadership Forum, Project SEARCH and services through our community rehabilitation programs were impacted due to the pandemic. VRS staff began working immediately to identify virtual platforms so that many of these services could continue to be provided to consumers.
- Provided pre-employment transition services to 4,600 students with disabilities, in person or through a virtual platform. These include job exploration counseling, work-based learning, counseling on opportunities for post-secondary training, workplace readiness training and self-advocacy.
- Eleven of 12 eligible Project SEARCH programs were recognized nationally for their excellent employment outcomes.

In FY20, Vocational Rehabilitation Service, blind/deaf division:

- Saw the sign language interpreting program develop new procedures using updated technology that enabled interpreting services to continue remotely when in-person services were not possible due to the pandemic. These enhancements will allow for more efficient services in the future even after the pandemic has gone.
- Nineteen high school students with blindness or low vision participated in our summer work program, which provides a critical opportunity for these individuals to have actual work experience during their high school years.

“When I first heard what he (Sammy) wanted to do and I saw how passionate he was about it, I knew I had to help him ... I knew I could help him reach his dream.”

-- Angela Thomas

Sammy Eaton

Mobile County

Mobile's Sammy Eaton, also known as "Cowboy Sammy," has quickly built a reputation as a festival favorite because of his delicious food truck treats.

Sammy, who began losing his vision in his 50s in 2013, said he wanted to remain in the workforce and always had a dream of owning his own food truck. Thanks to his determination and drive - and help from Vocational Rehabilitation Service - Cowboy Sammy's Concessions has become a great source of income.

When Sammy first met his VRS counselor, Angela Thomas (who is now the Unit 63 Supervisor), his plan included a hot dog cart. But Angela encouraged him to aim higher.

"When I first heard what he wanted to do and I saw how passionate he was about it, I said, 'I have to help him.' I knew I could help him reach his dream."

It wasn't easy, but Sammy and Angela kept pushing forward. VRS helped Sammy secure funding to renovate his trailer with all of the features and upgrades needed to comply with food service rules and regulations. Angela also encouraged him to take a Hadley School for the Blind business course, which Sammy said was very beneficial.

Sometimes the situation looked grim, but Sammy said Angela always had his back.

"Every time I would go to her, she would say 'Okay. We'll get it. Hang in there and don't give up.' So I just kept on working at it."

Their plan was to have the food truck ready by Mardi Gras 2020, and they accomplished that goal. Sammy has now been featured twice on television and is excited about the many upcoming festivals.

Sammy said his success would not have been possible without Angela in his corner.

"When you have a dream or vision, other people might not see it," he said. "You just have to keep working toward it. Angela saw what I saw and always told me I could do it."



Sammy Eaton achieved his goal of launching "Cowboy Sammy's Concessions" by the 2020 Mardi Gras season with help from VRS Unit 63 Supervisor Angela Thomas. Below, Sammy points out the features he was able to add to the food truck with help from VRS to meet guidelines.





Addison Williams is pictured left with VRS Counselor Pam Solomon who said she is very excited for the progress Addison has made through the years and eager to see just how far she flies. Below, Addison was a participant in the 2018 Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum. She enjoyed the group's visit to Camp Butter and Egg in Troy, especially the zip line.

Addison Williams *Henry County*

Addison was a very shy student who was afraid to be called upon in middle school. But through Children's Rehabilitation Service and Vocational Rehabilitation Service she has become a successful student, graduating third in her class at Abbeville High School.

VRS Senior Rehabilitation Counselor Pam Solomon said Addison had to push harder than most students to learn, but by doing so she turned frustration and embarrassment into strength and determination.

"In the time I have gotten to know Addison, she has demonstrated a great deal of depth and maturity well beyond her years," Pam said. "Having learning disabilities in both reading and math is no excuse for her. She is driven and works twice as hard to compensate to accomplish her goals, despite the many challenges she has faced."

During high school, Addison received several VRS pre-employment transition services and job readiness training. These helped expose her to different options and better prepare her for life after high school.

One of her more memorable experiences was a visit to the Alabama Governor's Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) on the campus of Troy University in the summer of 2018.

"Something I will never forget was while at YLF I learned



I could work with my disability. There are options if I want to continue my schooling, to become an educator, if I want to go into different parts of the world and be able to help people, I do have resources that could be available to me so I wouldn't be at a disadvantage," she said.

During a YLF trip to Camp Butter and Egg, Addison said she remembers seeing a fellow camper who was able to fully experience a zip line for the first time despite being in a wheelchair. At that moment, Addison said she realized that as long as you have hope, you can overcome your disability.

Addison is currently a student at Wallace State Community College in Dothan and hopes to become a veterinary nurse in the future.

Mikey Ledford

Cherokee County



Mikey Ledford and VRS Counselor Susan Ferguson discuss his plans for the future. Mikey said Susan has always been in his corner fighting to help him achieve his goals.



A car accident changed James “Mikey” Ledford’s life forever, but it did not stop him from achieving his goals. The Cherokee County resident kept on fighting and working to achieve his dream of becoming a fifth-generation trucker. This was possible through a team effort between ADRS and Wallace State Community College at Hanceville.

Despite a devastating injury following a car accident that left him paralyzed, James “Mikey” Ledford has kept on trucking.

Mikey was a certified welder at the time of his accident. But the Cherokee County resident knew he still had a purpose; he had no intention of giving up.

“I went to Shepherd’s and realized that God wasn’t done with me,” he said. “He still had a plan for my life. I started getting motivated and started working really hard.”

Mikey began working toward his dream of becoming the fifth generation in his family to drive a truck. A visit from representatives of the State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) program to build a ramp at his home eventually led to his connection with Vocational Rehabilitation Service Counselor Susan Ferguson. This, he said, was a life-changing experience.

“She showed me that no matter what your condition is there are always people out there who are going to help

you,” Mikey said. “She is truly the bright side of America. The people who want to help other people. I really thank her for that.”

Susan and Mikey worked tirelessly to find a program for him to gain his commercial driver’s license. With the help of Craig Rogers, who coordinates ADRS Lakeshore’s Adaptive Driving Program, a partnership was established with Wallace State Community College at Hanceville. Complications from COVID-19 shutdowns delayed Mikey’s progress, but he was eventually able to pass all of his tests with flying colors.

Mikey is currently working as a hot-shot trucker hauling items with a dually and large trailer when 18-wheelers are not a feasible option. However, he said he eventually would like to make the jump to big rigs.

“I want to show people that just because you have a disability does not mean it can stop you from doing what you want to do,” he said. “That’s really, really important to me.”

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.

The BEP has 83 vendors operating various vending and food service facilities around the state, generating sales in excess of \$25 million and employing more than 400 Alabamians.

The program continues to experience robust growth, adding 85 new business locations last year. The BEP has maintained a substantial presence on federal property with operations at NASA, Redstone Arsenal, Fort Rucker, Maxwell AFB, Brown's Ferry Nuclear Plant, U.S. Coast Guard in Mobile and Fort McClellan.

400

BEP generates sales in excess of \$25 million and employs more than 400 Alabamians.

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.

ADRS Lakeshore's Adaptive Driving program CDL trained two ADRS spinal cord paraplegic clients who both earned full Class A Commercial

Driver's Licenses.

We are actively working with the Local State Vendors on modification options for presentation to trucking companies to allow our clients employment opportunities.

We are working closely with the BRCs for job placement of the two recent graduates.

In services related to employment development, we held the first-ever Virtual College Prep via Zoom with 62 participants over a two-week time period and 16 students were served during a Deaf Hard of Hearing Zoom College Prep.

Our Virtual Connections program began for the first time with more than 85 attendees for the student/parent orientation meeting that was conducted Aug. 25.

The classes take place via Zoom each Tuesday night through November.

We have 52 participants that have been consistently attending each meeting.

To serve our transition population, the evaluation team has been flexible and creative in scheduling to better accommodate the various instructional options students have selected or schools have implemented.

In addition to providing vocational evaluations virtually, Zoom has continued to offer a platform to conduct intake interviews and feedback sessions with consumers when feasible and appropriate.

Overall, 2,244 distinct consumers were served.

Community Rehabilitation Programs

Located throughout the state, the Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) network of private organizations has been providing services to ADRS consumers for more than 70 years.

Two of the CRPs obtained CARF

certification which enables them to provide employment services to our consumers.

This brings the total of CRPs with CARF certification to 29.

We worked this year to structure and implement a \$500 fee increase for our job retention payment, which is distributed when a consumer has worked 90 days and the case is eligible for rehabilitated closure.

CRP finalized an agreement for an incentive payment of \$500 for consumer employment when the case is eligible for closure with the consumer earning \$11.24-plus per hour and working more than 35 hours per week.

This living wage incentive payment began Oct. 1.

In addition to the many other services CRPs provided to consumers, they assisted with approximately 1,000 consumer cases being closed as rehabilitated. This is only a 4 percent drop from the previous year, which is wonderful given a pandemic that resulted in CRP closures for varying periods of time.

Twenty four of our CRPs completed the requirements to offer virtual job shadowing for high school students. This will allow services to continue to be offered in systems where students are attending high school virtually or have chosen the hybrid method.

The average hourly pay rate increased from \$9.92 in 2019 to \$11.23 in 2020.

1,000

Approximately 1,000 cases were closed by CRP programs.



Vocational Rehabilitation Service Counselor Joey Richey, left, and Geoffery Lockhart share a few stories and a laugh during one of Joey's visits to Hueytown Middle School. Right, the success Geoffery achieved at HMS helped him land a position as the defensive line coach at Montevallo High School for the 2020 season.

Geoffery Lockhart *Shelby County*

It seems natural that Geoffery Lockhart would find himself serving as a defensive line coach at Montevallo High School.

Geoffery was born with ocular albinism - a genetic condition that reduces the pigmentation of the iris and the retina causing low vision - and has spent most of his life working past blocks to find success. Now he is able to share his experiences to motivate students on the field and in the classroom as a coach and special education teacher.

Like many young men, sports, specifically football, offered an important life lesson for Geoffery. He spent most of his time at Isabella High School as a member of the band but decided he wanted to give the gridiron a shot. For years, he had been told he could not play sports, but he joined the team, earned a starting position on the defensive line, and gained the respect of his coach who quickly put away any doubts after seeing Geoffery compete in their opening game.

"That next Monday, he pulled me aside and said, 'Hey, I'm glad you played,'" he said.

Football opened up a new world of possibilities, Geoffery said, and meeting Vocational Rehabilitation Service Counselor Joey Richey fueled the fire. When he

decided he'd like to go to college, Geoffery said Joey helped him choose the best school for his needs, which was Jacksonville State University.

He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees and did something many people, including himself never thought possible; Geoffery entered the bioptic driver training program and earned his license.

For years, Geoffery said he had depended on friends for transportation. It was a huge thrill to finally be the one behind the wheel.

"It was just mind blowing to be able to say, 'Hey, I got you this time,'" he said.

Geoffery said he is fortunate to have VRS, a school staff, and coaching staff to work with him to make sure he has the necessary tools to succeed.

Through the use of magnifiers, binoculars, an iPad, and other software he is able to be an effective teacher and coach. More than this, he has an opportunity to serve as a role model for students who think they might not be able to achieve their goals.

"It's great to be able to show kids you can do anything you want to as long as you find a way to get there," he said. "There are definitely opportunities out there for us to take, it's just a matter of how far you are willing to go."



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.

In FY20 the Business Relations Program:

- Added six new Business Relations Consultants
- Conducted the 2020 Medical and Psychological Aspects of Disability in the Workplace Conference
- Conducted ADA and COVID-19 Reasonable Accommodation Statewide Training
- Provided virtual consumer and business services
- Created Virtual Disability Etiquette Training, shared nationally
- Provided ADA and Reasonable Accommodation Training for Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- Eight Business Relations Consultants became certified trainers for Windmills - Changing Perceptions in hiring individuals with disabilities
- Continued participation in Office of Disability Employment Policy's

Disability Employment Taskforce

- Added new business partnerships with Stateside BPO, Buffalo Rock, Nextek, Amerex, University of Alabama, Samuel Tube Group (international company headquartered in Ontario, Canada), America's Thrift Stores
- Continued partnership and support of Disability:IN Alabama
- Represented ADRS on Governor's Challenge to prevent suicide among service members, Veterans, and their families
- Represented ADRS on the Governor's Executive Veterans Network, AlaVet-Net
- Earned the Alabama National Guard Dedicated Partners Award

Numbers served:

Services to Business Partners 4,835 services

Total Number of Consumers Served: 1,318

Total number of VRS consumers hired or retained: 616

• RAVE - Employees Retained: 131,1048

Special Events: 245 (job fairs, educational events, awards

gatherings, career days, essential skills training, etc.)

Transition Services

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

FY19 and FY20, ADRS engaged in contracts with Jobs for Alabama Graduates (JAG). Changes to Transition Unlimited were implemented as meetings were conducted virtually with technical assistance available.

FY20 started with consistency and ended with changes to our transition program. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and Transition Services began in our local schools and VRS offices as scheduled until the pandemic occurred, resulting in school closures. Transition Conference was held as scheduled and was a success with great attendance, presenters and times for collaboration. Pre-ETS Curricula was approved for in-person and virtual service delivery and ADRS employed measures to ensure services continued with minimal disruption as a result of the current pandemic. Pre-ETS virtual platforms were explored and virtualjobshadow.com was purchased as another option for Pre-ETS.

In FY20, over 4,600 pre-employment services were provided to students with disabilities.

COVID significantly altered the way transition services were provided. Counselors, local schools and Community Rehabilitation Partners work innovatively together to ensure a continuation of services. Despite schools closing, provider facilities closing and/or working remotely, pre-employment transition services provided to students with a disability only decreased by 15 percent.



Left, Hunter Lane is pictured with Vocational Rehabilitation Service Counselor Tonya Sanders as the two discuss his plans for the future.

Hunter Lane *Pike County*

Hunter Lane, a 24-year-old Troy University student, was told in the past that he would never be able to keep a regular job.

Now, the former Ozark resident is not only juggling a full load of classes, he is working as a computer tech at Troy Regional Medical Center and was named the 2019 Dothan Area Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities Student of the Year.

Vocational Rehabilitation Service Counselor Tonya Sanders, who took on Lane's case in February of 2017, said she was told by her supervisor ahead of time about the young man's potential.

Hunter, who has Asperger syndrome, said he had little hope of ever achieving great things as a high school student, but his sister Angel kept encouraging him.

Lane suffers from Misophonia and Hyperacusis which makes him very sensitive to sounds. He could not shop or be around large crowds without headphones.

Initially, Tonya said Lane was so shy that she communicated more with his sister than with him. But as he continued his training, his confidence began to grow.

With Tonya's help, Lane has overcome these obstacles and made great progress. He even entered the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services Driver Assistance Program and eventually earned his license.



Hunter Lane was named the 2019 Dothan Area Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities Student of the Year.

Lane said the support of his sister and ADRS gave him hope when he felt he had no future.

"I really would not have dreamed of being where I am today," he said. "A lot of people talk about if your 13-year-old self could see you now, what would they say? I'd say, 'Oh my gosh!' The change, even in just the past five years, has been like a totally new life."

Lane, with the support of his wife Jolene, now sees the future as an exciting journey. He said he hopes to earn his bachelor's degree soon and possibly pursue a master's degree at an Ivy League school.



TBI Program

ADRS is the state's lead agency in traumatic brain injury (TBI) and a source of education and resources for survivors, professionals and organizations.

They also provide community reintegration, counseling, care coordination, cognitive remediation, TBI education/training, trauma registry information and referral linkage and transition to school/employment.

In FY20, the ADRS Traumatic Brain Injury Program was awarded a two-year Administration for Community Living grant, partnering with the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) to screen, identify and customize treatment interventions for TBI within the state behavioral health and substance use disorder programs. ADRS piloted a nationally recognized TBI Screening Protocol and offered/developed intensive trainings with TBI subject matter experts from Ohio State University to educate ADMH staff, ADRS VRS counselors and CRS Social Workers. TBI staff were additionally trained in Person Center Planning and Trauma Informed Care. ADRS partnered with the Alabama Head Injury Foundation, the state Protection and Advocacy program and ADMH to create a statewide Caregiver Advocacy Program through the grant. Additionally, the TBI Program has also

partnered with UAB in developing TBI Professionals and Caregivers Needs Assessment Surveys to shape the development of an updated TBI State Plan. More than 2,700 individuals served in this fiscal year.

Supported Employment

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

In FY20, Supported Employment contractually provided IPS services. Beginning Oct. 1, 2020, VRS transitioned to an outcome-based fee for service payment structure. The three IPS sites located in the state will invoice VRS for services and include required documentation of services. ADRS continues to collaborate with ADMH to make IPS supported employment services available to individuals with a serious mental illness and co-occurring substance use disorder. Last year ADRS, in seeking to assist consumers with most significant disabilities improve their quality of life, the program re-evaluated and made changes to their outcome payments to providers. We increased our Milestones 3 (job stability) by \$250 and Milestones 4 (90 days after job coaches fade) by

\$250. This increase helped emphasize to providers the importance we place on consumers obtaining and retaining employment. Additionally, beginning in October of this year, we implemented an Exceptional Wage Outcome payment (\$500) for employment outcomes where the consumer earns \$9.25+/hour AND works more than 25 hours per week. This will encourage better employment outcomes which benefit the consumers.

In FY20, 588 individuals were closed in SE averaging 23.7 hours and \$9.30 per hour. COVID affected providers and consumers in a significant way. Many of the boards and directors closed their programs. This impacted not just day programs but employment programs. Some consumers asked that their employment be placed on hold. We still rehabilitated 87 percent of what was done in 2019, despite the fact that many supported employment providers closed for six to seven months. Some programs remain closed. In FY20 the average wage increased from \$8.63 to \$9.30.

OASIS Program

Older Alabamians System of Information and Services (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.

In FY20, OASIS consumers received 4,038 hours of vision rehabilitation therapy instruction and 290 hours of orientation and mobility Instruction and \$136,313.27 in adaptive aides and devices. There were 879 consumers served.

In FY20, staff completed 278 community awareness activities that reached an estimated 3,665 people to help them learn and share with others about OASIS services. OASIS was able to reissue 76 returned or donated assistive technology items to consumers.



From left, Andrea Carroll, Megan Baird and Lisa Le have a unique relationship as counselor, consumer, friends and coworkers. The three have worked hard to make sure Megan achieves all of her goals.

Megan Baird

Jefferson County

Megan Baird, who had suffered a traumatic brain injury, first learned about Vocational Rehabilitation Service from a friend while attending college. She began her journey with ADRS as a consumer, and continues that relationship today as an employee. Megan is able to use her experience to provide insight and comfort to families who visit the Lakeshore facility.

Megan is originally from Georgia, and after she graduated and began working, she felt like she needed more of a challenge. In January 2018, she called the Lakeshore office and her life has never been the same.

Megan and her VRS Counselor Lisa Le began mapping out a plan for her to achieve her goals. At this point, Megan said she finally saw a light at the end of the tunnel.

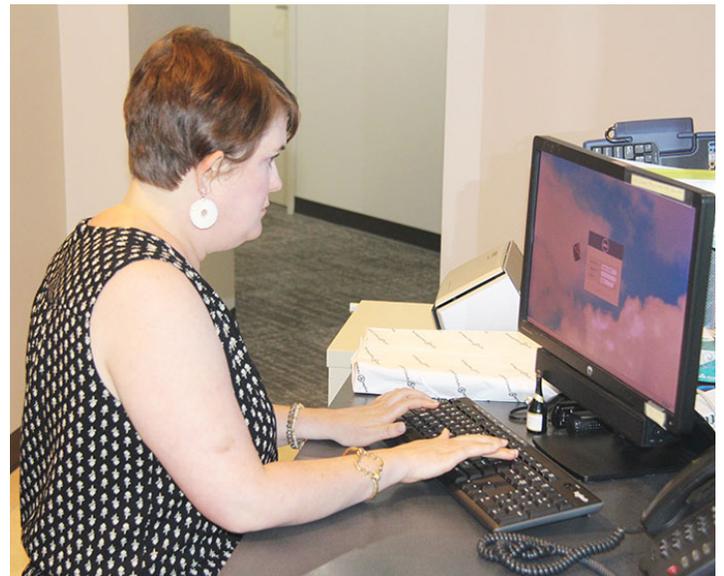
"I remember walking out of the building and feeling for the first time like there are people here who can help," she said. "This is where I need to be and something good is going to come from it."

Lisa said she instantly knew Megan had untapped potential.

"Megan just has something special, a very nice way about her," said Lisa. "She had expressed some frustration over where she was ... I felt like she was underemployed, for sure, and just had not found a job that filled that niche where she felt she should be."

VRS Program Coordinator and Supervisor Andrea Carroll said that she too saw something special in Megan.

"The first five minutes I met her, I had this gut feeling that



Above, Megan prepares for another busy day of spreading smiles. She has proven to be a tremendous asset as an office worker and as a comforting presence for consumers.

she would fit in here so well."

The staff worked together to examine her skills, discuss accommodations, scheduled various, comprehensive evaluations and assessments.

When a job opened at ADRS Lakeshore, Megan applied and went through a competitive interview process. This led to a job offer that she enthusiastically accepted to work with VRS as an Administrative Support Assistant.

Above and beyond her administrative duties, Megan loves to be an ambassador of good will for the office.

She is quick to recognize birthdays, cheer anyone up who is feeling down and comfort families as they begin their ADRS journey. She said this is one of the most rewarding parts of her job.





state of alabama independent living (homebound)

Independence. Self-sufficiency.

No two words better summarize the goal of the State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL)/ Homebound 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 community support specialists provides consumers and their families with individualized services and training on the unique issues 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 counselor.

Homebound Services program provides a wide range of education and in-home 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

The SAIL Medicaid Waiver 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 Community Supports 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 in his or her community
- provide evidence that by receiving CS service, his or her potential to participate full in the community will improve

SAIL 2020 highlights

In FY20, State of Alabama Independent Living (homebound) program:

- Assisted 1,581 Alabamians with the most-significant disabilities in remaining in their homes and communities.
- Through the SAIL Community Support Specialists obtained \$110,523.81 in donated goods and services, leveraging their budgets for additional services to individuals with significant disabilities.
- Increased collaboration through community partners and SAIL offices throughout the state to facilitate the provision of home modification service in underserved areas.
- Received a renewed contract from Alabama Medicaid and CMS to provide waiver services through 2025. This renewed contract includes additional services for consumers as well as expansion of 140 new waiver slots for Alabamians in need of community-based services to avoid institutional care.
- Developed operating procedures to provide full-service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic to individuals quarantining for safety due to high risk medical conditions.



Roger Kelley, left, and State of Alabama Independent Living staff member Maria Carroll discuss some of his exciting plans for the future. Roger, with help from the SAIL program, is launching a home-based website design and marketing business.

Roger Kelley

Morgan County

Improvise, adapt and overcome has been the motto for Hartselle resident Roger Kelley since a car accident in 1981 left him paralyzed from the neck down.

Though he has had his ups and downs, Roger has never given up. Now that he has been connected to State of Alabama Independent Living/Homebound and Vocational Rehabilitation Service Hybrid Counselor Maria Carroll, he is ready for the next step in his journey.

Roger's passion is computers and technology, and for the past 40 years he has been learning and planning to grow his own business. Of course, he said the journey has been built around small victories.

Before he was creating websites and marketing strategies Roger was unsure how life after his accident would unfold. One morning, a simple spoonful of Cheerio's became the mustard seed that moved mountains.

His mother normally fed him, but after gaining some use of both arms he asked her to let him try feeding himself. He succeeded and anything seemed possible from there.

"When I got that first bite of Cheerio's I knew I had won," he said. "It was a defining moment in my life. I knew if I could feed myself that it was only the beginning."

Roger went through training programs and eventually moved to Birmingham after landing a job at a printing shop. In no time, he was able to create systems that compounded work that took an hour down to minutes.

He continued to gain confidence, but transportation and workplaces in the 1980s were not as accessible as they were after the Americans with Disabilities Act passed.

Roger moved back to Hartselle and continued to learn and began building websites. He again had his ups and downs but kept learning and kept adding clients.

When his mother died in 2003, he again felt alone and defeated. But another wonderful surprise was awaiting him. Roger reconnected with a young lady who was the daughter of one of his former nurses. They continued talking, and by 2010 they were married.

Again, the desire to keep learning and keep growing knowledge was ignited.

That desire hit its peak recently when Roger reached out to SAIL and VRS to discuss starting a new business that creates websites and makes businesses more visible in search engines. Carroll said they were able to provide computers, software, marketing tools and other assistance to get the business off the ground.

Roger's preparation has not only created a great opportunity for himself, it will also mean jobs for others when he has fully launched. He plans to use the business to provide inspiration and a purpose to others with disabilities.

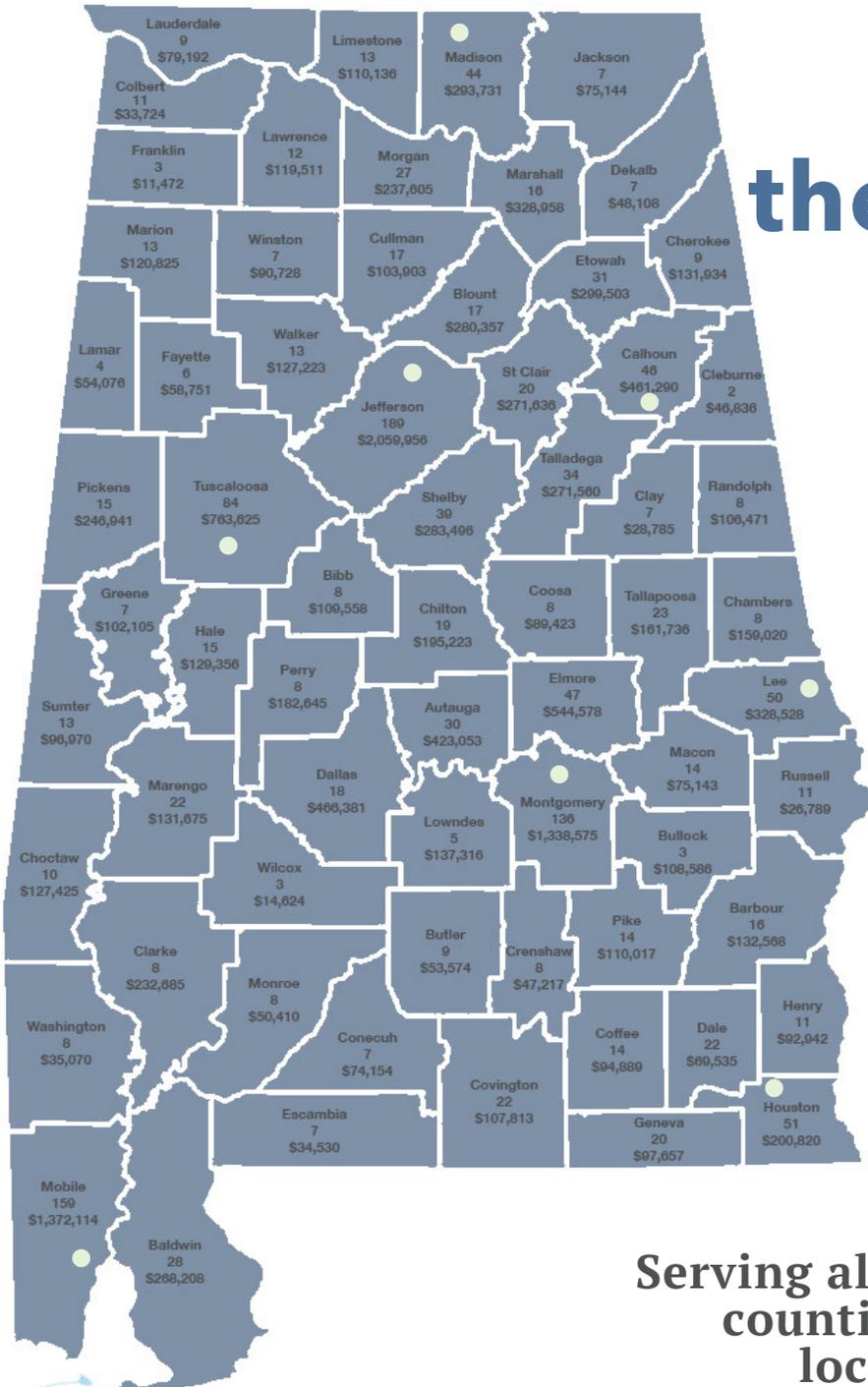
Carroll said she is excited to see how far Roger and his business can go. She said it has been a joy to work with him and see him make progress.

"He is so motivated," she said. "He definitely has that as well as the knowledge."

SAIL by the numbers

Consumers Served

1,581



Serving all 67 Alabama
counties from 7
locations

Sources of Revenue

State: \$6,189,172

Other: \$10,105,316.89

Use of Revenue

Direct Services:

\$15,208,200.93

Administration:

\$1,086,287.96



The addition of a Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology workshop in Anniston has been part of the reason the program was able to serve 901 consumers in FY 20.

Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology

The Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology (RE&AT) Program provides state-of-the-art engineering and technology services to consumers across the continuum of ADRS divisions to facilitate the dignity and independence of individuals with disabilities in the community, at home, at school and at work. The RE&AT program hosted a

Remote Education and Employment Technology Summit with assistive technology experts throughout the country to develop and share best practices for virtual evaluations and training.

These new practices allow the program to continue services without interruption, decrease the lead time for evaluations, increase and improve training opportunities for consumers, and allow staff to spend more time focusing on serving people with disabilities.

A total of 901 consumers were

served through CRS, VRS, and SAIL. In addition, 525 consumers received evaluations, 181 consumers received training, and 110 consumers received rehabilitation engineering design services.

901

A total of 901 consumers were served through CRS, VRS, and SAIL.

STAR

STAR is Alabama's Assistive Technology Resource program. Through its Reutilization, Training, and Alternative Finance programs and public awareness activities, STAR assists Alabamians with disabilities by improving access to and acquisition of assistive technology (AT) that enables them to live more productive and independent lives. In spite of COVID-19 during FY20 the STAR Reutilization Program experienced an increase in overall

savings to consumers totaling \$1,419,592.24 (17.73 percent), \$44,437.00 savings to ADRS consumers (5.92 percent), 3,864 items reused (6.78 percent), 4,884 requests (11.51 percent) as compared to FY19. ADRS referrals increased from 69 in FY19 to 120 in FY20. However, there was a decrease of 29.42 percent in donations which could be attributed to the pandemic.

Overall, there were 4,099 individuals served.

Through its training and public

awareness activities, there were 286,396 individuals potentially impacted. Additionally, there were 16,959 visits to the www.StarTraining.org website.

4,099

More than 4,099 individuals were served through the STAR program in FY20.



ADRS

people served,
purchased
services

total served
48,942

total
purchased

State: \$46,478,534.47

Federal: \$75,564,420.05

Other: \$30,399,889.39

**Direct Services:
\$135,112,218.77**

Administration:
\$17,330,625.14

ONE DEPARTMENT. ONE MISSION.

Our mission is to enable Alabama's children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential.

community rehabilitation program locations

ALABASTER

Independent Advantage
Placement Agency

ANNISTON

Opportunity Center-Easter
Seals

BIRMINGHAM

ADRS-Lakeshore
Easter Seals of the
Birmingham Area
Glennwood
Goodwill Industries of
Alabama
Independent Advantage
The Is Able Center
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
ARC of Madison County
Glennwood

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
Triumph

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
Children R Us
Children's of Alabama Early
Intervention Program
United Ability of Greater
Birmingham - Hand in Hand
Village Early Intervention
Watch Me Grow
WISE - Wooley Institute for
Spoken-Language Education

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.
Early Intervention at the
University of Alabama

TUSCUMBIA

Alabama Institute for Deaf
and Blind, regional office
UCP of Northwest Alabama

VALLEY

Chattahoochee Valley
ARC/Valley Haven Early
Intervention

WINFIELD

Tri County Early Intervention

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