

Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services ANNUAL REPORT



empower.



equip.



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EVERY PERSON'S POTENTIAL.

unique

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.

Developed by: Staff of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
Description: Mission/Values/Strategic Goals





Dear friends, partners, legislators, and colleagues,

It is my pleasure to present to you the 2022 ADRS annual report.

We are excited to highlight individual success stories and the successes of our programs that represent the almost 63,000 Alabamians with disabilities who were served through ADRS this year. We continue to seek innovative solutions and partnerships that lead to increased independence, self-sufficiency, employment, and community access.

In 2022, our Early Intervention (EI) and Children's Rehabilitation Service (CRS) were able to partner with the University of Alabama, UAB Civitan-Sparks Clinic, and the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council to pilot a pediatric evaluation/diagnostic clinic for the early detection of autism. Many children do not

receive a diagnosis until at least age four, leading to delays in appropriate service provision. This pilot has shown tremendous efficacy, has been published in a national journal, and has the potential, once replicated, to reduce the average age at diagnosis for children in Alabama.

Our largest program, Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS), continues to provide much-needed training and employment services to individuals and to Alabama's business and industry. The national and state labor force participation rate of persons with disabilities remains unacceptably low, while the demand for talent is at an all-time high. Alabama's workforce system, which includes VRS, has developed a strategic plan to reach Alabama's special populations with necessary services and supports, and Alabama VRS is already exceeding the national average in four of the five federal indicators of performance: employment 2nd quarter after exit, employment 4th quarter after exit, credential attainment, and measurable skills gains.

Our SAIL/Homebound program served a record number of individuals with the most significant disabilities through the SAIL Medicaid Waiver, expanded the home modification program, enabling individuals to remain in their homes and communities, and secured record numbers of donated goods and services, enabling budget maximization.

This report is a celebration of the resilience of the human spirit, the hard work of the dedicated staff, and the value of public/private partnerships. May we continue to adapt and accomplish our mission of helping Alabama's children and adults reach their maximum potential.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Governor Kay Ivey, the Alabama Legislature, and our many partners for another successful year. I look forward to many more successes in the coming year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw
Commissioner



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Continuum of Care

for life!

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 their maximum potential.



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 (EI) also provides financial and technical support to dozens of community programs that provide direct service to families.



CRS provides individualized services to children and youth with special health care needs from birth to age 21 and their families at home, school, and in the community. In addition, the 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.



VRS is an integral partner in Alabama's workforce system providing rehabilitation-, education-, and employment-related services to teens and adults with disabilities, and providing disability management and talent acquisition services to Alabama businesses through its Business Relations Program. VRS also links businesses and individuals to our Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology service when customized services and supports are needed.



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 help them live independently in the home, community, or workplace.



Meet Our Board



Eddie C. Williams
District 5

Dear friends,

Serving another year as the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services Board Chair has been my pleasure. I am proud to be a part of the mission of this department that works so hard to improve the lives of so many Alabamians.

The leadership and staff of the department continue to provide excellent and dedicated service to the individuals they serve. The evidence of this is presented in this year's annual report. Please join me, the board members, and the recipients of services from ADRS in thanking the staff and leadership for another outstanding year and for being at the forefront of providing services and inspiration to our families and friends.

Sincerely,

Eddie C. Williams
Board Chairman, District 5



Michelle Glaze
District 1



Jimmie Varnado
District 2



Penny Foster
District 3



Kevin Kidd
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.



Alabama's
Early
Intervention
System

Alabama's Early Intervention System introduced a new logo this year.

*best starts
in life*



Alabama's Early Intervention System

Early childhood development is vital to the growth and success of 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 (EI) 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 - virtually if needed - 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. Investing in early childhood programs increases the effectiveness of public schools, develops more educated workers, and reduces crime.

Moreover, that investment reaps good returns, with studies showing that each dollar spent on Early Intervention saves \$7 in future costs.

Because of Early Intervention, youngsters with disabilities can participate in an array of activities among their peers who do not have disabilities. With 43 programs in local communities across Alabama, EI delivers evidence-based services and support to infants and toddlers and their families in their homes and community.

In the coming year, EI will launch a statewide public awareness campaign, "You know best. Know EARLY." with the goal of reaching families in rural and underserved communities. The message to parents, caregivers, healthcare providers, and other referral sources is that "it's never too EARLY" for Early Intervention. This campaign was developed with input and assistance from the EI advisory groups in every region of the state. They will also be leading efforts in their local communities to promote this campaign in order to increase referrals.

AEIS 2022 Highlights

In FY22, Alabama's Early Intervention System:

- Was awarded a \$2.9 million grant through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and maintain safe operations.
- Continued to use IDEA Part C funds to provide technical equipment and virtual services to families when needed, secure support for infrastructure changes to our database system to include third-party billing, and maintain initiatives already in place for the following year.
- Continued to collaborate with Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC) through the Early Childhood Autism Work Group in establishing best-practice strategies for intervention with young children with Autism.
- Continued to partner with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMH) on identifying EI families and their children needing mental health consultation and accessing appropriate interventions/services.
- Continued to disseminate a resource guide, Pathways for Families, in collaboration with families of infants and toddlers who are deaf and hard of hearing and partners who deliver specialized services for this population.
- Continued to collaborate with the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (EHDI) Learning Committee Work Group and the APDH EDHI Advisory Board.
- Continued to partner with the National Infant & Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA), which includes other states' Early Intervention Part C coordinators.
- Continued providing training based on evidence-based practice through the Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE) Grant.
- Continued to serve more children each year, including during the pandemic.

Sources of Revenue

State: \$14,699,005
Other: \$6,564,147
Federal: \$6,113,894

Use of Revenue

Direct Services: \$25,977,398 (95%)
Administration: \$1,399,648 (5%)



Lorde Wilson *Madison County*

The odds were stacked against Huntsville's Lorde Wilson as he prepared to enter the world.

Born May 4, 2020, at 3 pounds-10 ounces and 19 inches, Lorde spent 77 days in the Huntsville Hospital NICU battling bradycardia and desaturation spells because his body was not quite ready to work on its own. But he was a fighter; he kept growing and progressing, and he was able to come home on his original due date of July 19.

Representatives at the hospital shared with Lorde's family information about Alabama's Early Intervention Program prompting his mother, June, to contact The Arc of Madison County's Infant and Toddler Program Service Coordinator, and Assistant Director Christy Marks.

Lorde was born during the initial COVID surge and was among the first EI consumers to receive physical and occupational therapy sessions virtually, where the family was guided through the activities step by step.

June said she was unsure of the effectiveness of online sessions but was pleasantly surprised by the plan Christy had in place and the positive results.

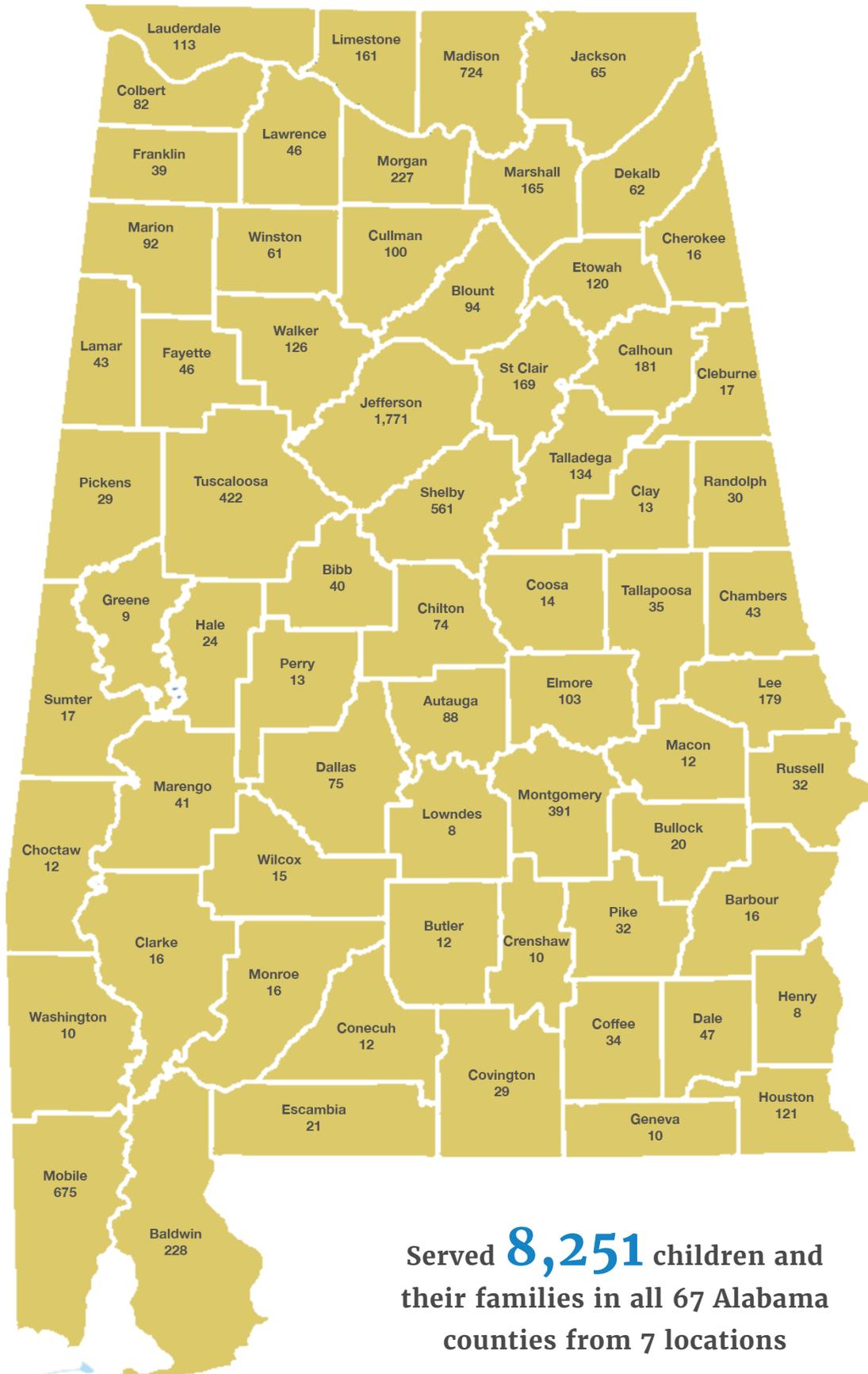
"It worked phenomenally," she said. "They had the program set up, and it was pretty much them instructing me as a mom and my husband as a dad what to do and some things we could work on."

Through occupational therapy, Lorde has mastered tasks like clapping, using a spoon, and putting his arms through his shirt as he dresses. These might seem ordinary, June said, but for a premature baby, they are important milestones.

Lorde has bilateral sensorineural hearing loss, uses hearing aids, and is now beginning speech therapy. Thanks to EI, June said they are ready to move into the Children's Rehabilitation Service when the time comes.

View this and more success stories on the official ADRS YouTube channels: ADRS Family (youtube.com/adrsfamily), and ADRS TV (youtube.com/adrstv).

AEIS Statewide Impact





Autism Clinic *Tuscaloosa County*

The process for parents or guardians awaiting an autism diagnosis for their child can be frustrating.

The Tuscaloosa Children’s Rehabilitation Service office and Early Intervention, with the help of other partners in the community, are streamlining this process and replacing frustration with optimism through a pilot Autism Diagnostic Clinic.

To get the clinic off the ground, EI’s Marybeth Vick reached out to Dr. Ashley Evans, a pediatrician with Cahaba Medical Care. They agreed that the clinic is the first step in what could grow into a statewide program to provide children with an early diagnosis.

Dr. Evans said that one in every 55 to 60 children in Alabama has autism, which can lead to long waiting lists for assessments. She said having EI and CRS working together will make the clinics even more effective.

“It’s true for any child; the sooner they get into therapy services once they are diagnosed with any developmental delay, they do better down the road,” she said. “Their future looks better the sooner they can get in. That is especially true for children with autism.”

During clinic visits, the doctor, physical therapists, occupational therapists, nutritionists, nurses, social workers, and speech therapists are there to observe a child who has shown signs of autism. Afterward, the group reconnects to discuss their findings.

An essential tool employed by every member of the health team is a checklist required by Medicaid and Blue Cross. The list was developed at the Children’s Hospital of Alabama and the Sparks Clinic.

Upon the success of this pilot clinic in Tuscaloosa, the hope is to expand to CRS offices statewide.



*growing,
adapting &
learning*

Children's Rehabilitation Service

For many parents of children and teens with special health care needs, Children's Rehabilitation Service is a vital resource and a proven lifeline.

Caring doctors, nurses, social workers, therapists, audiologists, and nutritionists partner with families to provide essential care and share 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 technologies, 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 healthcare specialists from many fields providing services tailored to each family's needs.

Services include:

- Information and referral to link families to community resources and services.
- Care coordination to assist the child and family in effectively identifying, accessing, and using community resources to meet their individual needs.

- Clinical evaluation to identify the unique needs of a child with feeding problems, limited mobility, communication challenges, or other special diagnostic needs.
- Clinical medical services, operating specialty clinics throughout the state.
- Patient and family education, which provides information necessary to carry out treatment regimens and to make informed choices about services.
- Parent Connection, which facilitates strong family and professional partnerships, providing information and support to families, and opportunities to participate in program and policy development.
- Youth Connection, facilitating youth involvement with policy development and decision-making.

Services are available to any Alabama resident with special health care needs younger than 21; individuals with hemophilia are eligible for services into adulthood.

Treatment options vary and can include clinical interventions and medication, specialized equipment, assistive technology, and referral to community resources for therapy services, as needed.

Families can receive services regardless of their income.

CRS 2022 Highlights

In FY22, Children’s Rehabilitation Service:

- Served 13,777 children and youth with special healthcare needs, including 296 with no insurance, through the clinic program.
- Accomplished 14,067 clinic visits and 3,036 information and referral contacts.
- Expedited a total of \$138,427 in Medicaid travel reimbursements to help families with travel expenses.
- Connected 1,814 individuals with community resources totaling \$1,498,373 for audiology, nutrition, speech-language, food assistance, medical supplies, wheelchair ramps, prescription medication assistance, and other items.
- CRS Parent Consultants collaborated with Family Voices of Alabama to build connections with families by creating a Facebook group, “Alabama Special Needs Parents-Support Group,” which now has over 1,100 members.
- Continued working with the National Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Workforce Development Center on a Health Transformation project to improve service delivery for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) and their families. CRS was one of four states selected to participate in a new Population Health Learning Journey, and worked with partners statewide on ways to improve health outcomes, reduce inequities, and improve quality of life for CYSHCN and their families.
- Met the need for early Autism screening by partnering with EI, the University of Alabama, and the UAB Civitan-Sparks Clinic, to develop a pilot Pediatric Evaluation - Autism Diagnostic Clinic in the Tuscaloosa office for children currently enrolled in EI.
- Utilized the National Family Voices Family Engagement in Systems Assessment Tool (FESAT) to assess levels of family engagement within CRS across four domains: commitment, transparency, representation, and impact. Each CRS district utilized the results of the FESAT to develop a Family Engagement Quality Improvement Initiative to strengthen family engagement in their district.
- To improve transition services, CRS leadership met with National Got Transition® staff to review the Six Core Elements of Health Care Transition and identify areas of improvement.
- Completed the final year of the Collaborative for Improvement Innovation Network (ColIN) to advance care for Children with Medical Complexity (CMC), and continued efforts to spread the ColIN model across other areas of the state.
- The Hemophilia Program served 433 people with bleeding disorders through 38 on-site comprehensive, multidisciplinary care clinics, and 12 telemedicine hemophilia clinics.

Sources of Revenue

State: \$13,598,551
 Other: \$14,497,543
 Federal: \$3,519,932

Use of Revenue

Direct Services: \$27,278,832 (86%)
 Administration: \$4,337,194 (14%)



Colton Arnold *Calhoun County*

The Anniston Children's Rehabilitation Service office and the Arnold family have proven that anything is possible through determination, innovation, and teamwork.

10-year-old Colton Arnold, who was diagnosed with Perisylvian syndrome at ten months old, recently became independently mobile for the first time through the use of a Tobii Dynavox ACD device. This new technology allows the Tobii and the chair to communicate with each other.

His mother, Amanda, said she could hardly contain herself when she saw Colton move the chair, and staff cheered as they witnessed Colton powering his chair forward with eye-gaze technology set up by the ADRS Rehabilitation Engineers and Colton's CRS team.

"I've never been so excited for something in my life," she said.

The same is true for CRS Physical Therapist Lisa Ellis, who has known Colton nearly his entire life.

"It's a dream come true when you have wanted something for that long, and to believe it's going to happen and not know how," she said. "It has been a surreal experience."

Reaching this milestone took a lot of time and effort, but Amanda said she was encouraged by early conversations with Lisa, CRS staff, and the Rehab Engineers, whose specialized skills provide innovative assistive technology solutions that are customized for an individual's unique needs.

The first test run came in May of 2021. Another trial later in the summer had anticipation building for the Arnolds.

Several ADRS staffers played a crucial role in helping Colton reach his goal of moving independently in his motorized chair. Of course, Lisa added, none of this would be possible without the entire Arnold family believing it could work: especially Colton.

View this and more success stories on the official ADRS YouTube channels: ADRS Family (youtube.com/adrsfamily), and ADRS TV (youtube.com/adrstv).



Gabe Marsh *Marshall County*

Guntersville's Gabe Marsh never shies away from a challenge. He credits his faith and his extensive support system for much of his success, and there has been no shortage of success.

Born with no legs and one arm, Gabe was adopted by the Marsh family when he was only one week old and is one of 12 siblings. Today, he is an accomplished swimmer.

This year, Gabe earned the Ken and Betty Joy Blankenship Student Achievement Athlete of the Year Award, which was presented to him at the Annual Bryant-Jordan Scholarship Banquet in Birmingham.

The recent Guntersville High School graduate will begin work on the next phase of his life at Snead State Community College.

His goal is to pursue a degree in theology as he prepares to become a minister and motivational speaker so he can share his faith with others.

Mark Kearley, Gabe's Care Coordinator through the Huntsville Children's

Rehabilitation Service office, said he is very excited about the impact Gabe will have on others. Mark began working with Gabe when he was 12 and said he saw his potential immediately.

"There was something special about Gabe," he said. "He had the motivation that you like to see in people. Self-motivated and a strong family support system."

CRS helped Gabe secure a manual wheelchair and brought him in for amputee, seating, and Teen Transition clinics. It also helped secure a motorized wheelchair for him, which has improved his mobility tremendously during his shifts working at McDonald's.

The next step, Mark said, is the adaptive driver program and even more independence.

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Alexus Cleary *Etowah County*

Marianna Welbourne *St. Clair County*

Increased independence becomes a top priority as children progress through their teenage years. For a pair of Gadsden-area teens served by CRS, the presentation of Obi Robotic Independent Feeders added another task the girls could perform on their own.

CRS Occupational Therapist (OT) Dana Grady said helping Gadsden City High School student Alexis Cleary and Springville Middle School's Marianna Welbourne secure the feeders was a new experience for everyone involved.

Alexus, whose arthrogryposis limits motor movements in her upper extremities, attended a seating clinic with Physical Therapist Lisa Ellis, who suggested she try a robotic feeder. Alexis is highly intelligent, and they knew she would be an excellent candidate. After a trial run, she quickly learned how to use it successfully.

"We brought her in, and she just immediately knew how to do this with no problems at all," Dana said.

The same is true for Marianna, who was born with multiple limb deficiencies. She has a functional lower-left extremity and has been using it effectively to hold utensils, play video games, type, and perform other daily tasks.

But Dana said holding things this way can be tiring after a full day of school and other activities, so the robotic feeder simplifies meals.

Like Alexis, Marianna had no problems adapting, thanks in part to a mount ADRS Rehab Engineers created specifically for her. This mount holds the robotic feeder's two switches, and she can access them with her left lower extremity.

The device is battery-operated and comes with a carrying case. It has different bowls for different foods and a calibrated robotic arm to bring the desired food close to the user's mouth.

It even includes a sensor to detect when the amount of food in the bowl is getting low so that it can scrape what remains to the center for easier pickups.



Madison Martin *Walker County*

The night Madison was born, doctors told her mother that if she survived, she would have a very long recovery. But her mother, Angela Martin, said that Madison had other plans. By the night's end, her tube was removed and she started breathing on her own, sparking a pattern of triumphs she would achieve throughout her young life.

Madison, a senior at Oakman High School, was presented this year with the Class 3A, Region 5 Bryant-Jordan Student-Athlete Achievement Award, and she also received an A-Club Scholarship.

Angela said those who know Madison well are not surprised by her accomplishments.

"From the day she was born, she wanted to prove everybody wrong and show that she could do whatever she set her mind to," she said.

Madison's pathway to success has been built brick by brick. She always wanted to do things independently and said she was fortunate to

have people in her corner willing to make that possible.

The support system stretches beyond her family members and school, including CRS Social Work Administrator Ginny Rediker.

"She (Ginny) helped me get adaptive technology; she also helped me get into college and gave me a few different recommendation letters," she said. "She has been great. I could not have done a lot of stuff without her."

Madison said she hopes to continue working with Ginny throughout college.

"I really don't know what I would have done without ADRS," she said. "ADRS has given me all kinds of technology I needed for college. I am very thankful to be part of the program."

View this and more success stories on the official ADRS YouTube channels: ADRS Family (youtube.com/adrsfamily), and ADRS TV (youtube.com/adrstv).



workforce and
job skills
development
V

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 a young adult is going to school to prepare for their first job or an older adult is trying to gain employment or remain employed, VRS can help.

VRS is the largest ADRS division. As 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.

Partnerships are the key to the program's success and the success of those it serves. To ensure consumers achieve in the classroom, VRS collaborates with CRS, 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 successfully match people with jobs.

VRS scored higher than the national average on 4 of the 5

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Performance Indicators:

59.8% 2nd quarter employment rate (compared to 52.5% nationally)

58.5% 4th quarter employment rate (compared to 48.0% nationally)

35.7% credential attainment rate (compared to 30.8% nationally)

51.9% measurable skill gains (compared to 43.0% nationally)

\$4,291 median earnings average (below the national average of \$4,776)

VRS 2022 Highlights

In FY22, Vocational Rehabilitation Service:

- Assisted 3,944 individuals with disabilities in achieving their goal of employment.
- Assisted 652 individuals with the most significant disabilities to work in competitive, integrated jobs averaging 24 hours per week at \$10.63 an hour. 116 individuals in the program met the criteria for the Exceptional Wage Incentive.
- Saw an average of 70% positive outcomes for Project SEARCH Alabama and a growing interest in expansion to two new programs each year.
- Exceeded the 15% goal for successfully employing individuals from its Blind/Deaf division, with 796 blind/low-vision and deaf/hard-of-hearing individuals achieving their employment goals, at a record high average earning of \$19.51 an hour.
- Continued to offer Supported Employment Services in all 67 counties to people with the most significant disabilities to find specialized employment close to home.
- Collaborated with ADMH to continue providing successful and well-attended Customized Employment Training twice a year.
- Blind and Deaf Services partnered with AIDB and AIDT to host transition events focused on in-demand careers for high school students and their families, with over 250 participating.
- Hosted a successful 2022 Summer Work Experience Program with blind/low vision and deaf/hard of hearing students, who earned wages for working up to 40 hours/week.
- Hosted College Quest in partnership with AIDB and Auburn University, a college preparatory program for students with vision loss designed to simulate two weeks in the life of a college freshman with a focus on assistive technology, independent living, orientation and mobility, and more to prepare them for success in college.
- Hosted the 2022 Technology Symposium/Expo in partnership with the Alabama School for the Blind Alumni Association and AIDB Regional Centers, with about 175 attending and more than a dozen assistive technology vendors demonstrating their products.
- Supported one of the first apprenticeship programs for deaf students in the steel industry in partnership with the Alabama School for the Deaf and Ironworkers Steel Institute (ISI), hosted by Garrison Steel in Pell City.
- Facilitated the ACT Boot Camp for visually impaired students in partnership with the Alabama School for the Blind (ASB) and E.H. Gentry.
- Hosted Deaf Service’s annual summer camps on college preparation (Jacksonville State University) and ACT preparation (Auburn University). Over 40 students participated.

Sources of Revenue

State: \$13,894,212
 Other: \$7,054,763
 Federal: \$65,021,487

Use of Revenue

Direct Services: \$42,500,267 (49%)
 Counseling & Placement: \$32,610,676 (38%)
 Administration: \$10,859,520 (13%)



Derek Schmitz *Calhoun County*

Oxford High School's Derek Schmitz can't recall when he was not advocating for people with disabilities.

For this reason, Anniston Vocational Rehabilitation Service Counselor Pamela Curry knew he would be a perfect fit for an internship through the Council of State Governments and the Center on Advancing Policy for Youth Employment.

Helping shape policy, particularly for young people with disabilities, is paramount for Derek because he said the people who benefit from these policies are not always part of the planning process.

"That's really important to me personally because when policies are made, they don't often consult disabled people, especially disabled youth," he said.

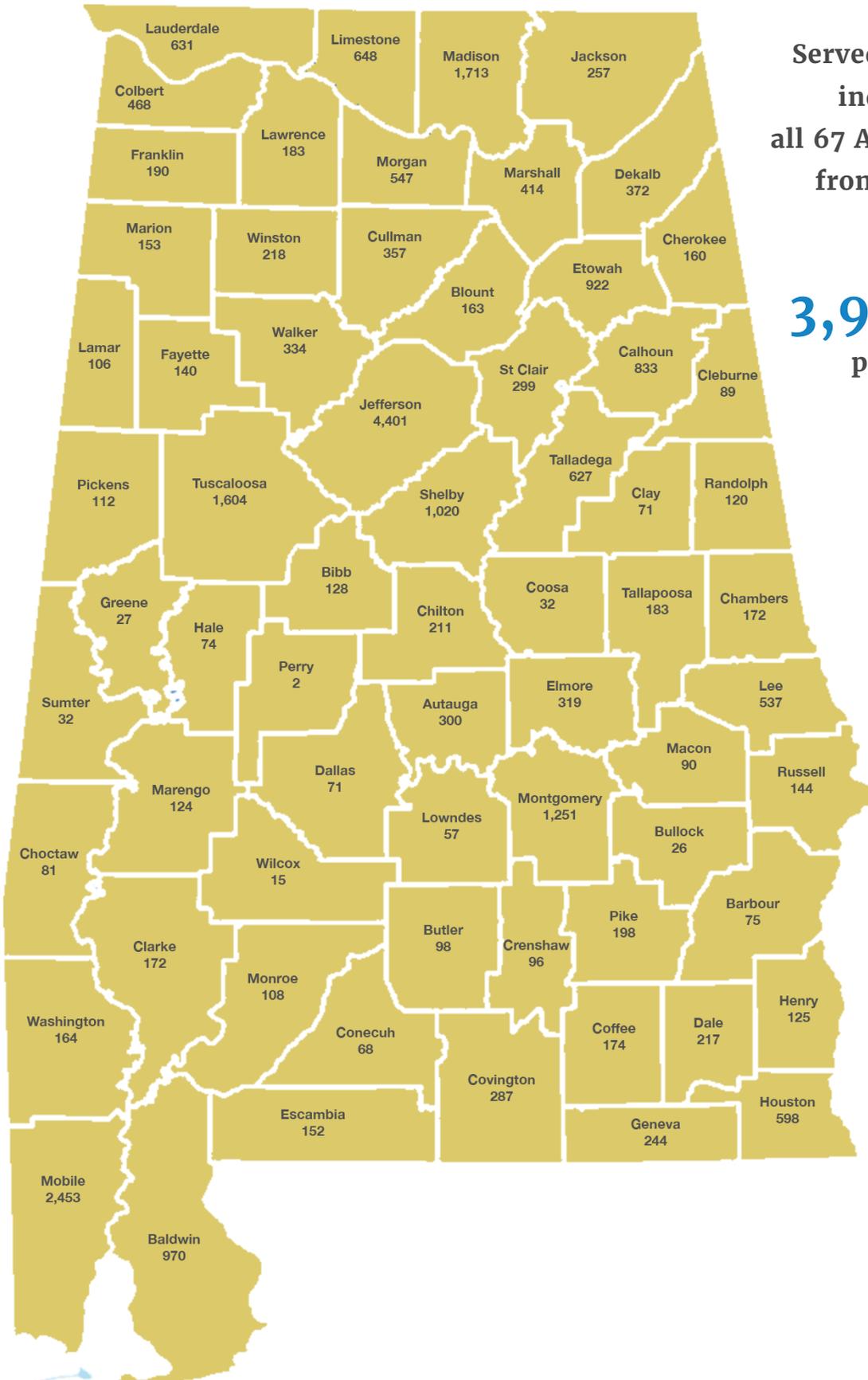
Derek, who has cerebral palsy, arthritis, and Hemiplegia, was initially referred to Children's Rehabilitation Service to participate in the Teen Transition Clinic.

He developed a wonderful relationship with CRS Social Worker Sandra Bumgardner before jumping to VRS and meeting Pamela.

"She (Pamela) is awesome," he said. "When we started everything, I initially set my career goal as doing something in law because that is something I am really passionate about. I'm really into disability advocacy and ADA enforcement and just making sure everybody has everything they need from a disability standpoint."

After high school, Derek plans to earn his four-year degree before heading to law school. His goal is a career focused on disability law representing people on a sliding scale or pro bono basis based on SSI denial claims or ADA noncompliance.

VRS Statewide Impact



Served **38,936**
individuals in
all 67 Alabama counties
from 21 locations

3,968 individuals
placed in jobs



Taina Sparks Crenshaw County

Highland Home native and Troy University student Taina Sparks uses her challenges to set a positive example for others. Sparks, who recently earned the Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities Student of the Year Award, said she hopes to pursue a career where she can help others with disabilities aim high and reach their goals.

Taina has been challenged through the years by a learning disability and physical setbacks. Still, she credited one member of her cheering section for keeping her focused on her goals.

"The most important person who really did try to push me and always kept me going was my late grandmother, Sophrania Hardy," she said. "She kept pushing me, always told me to put God first, and never doubted me."

Taina is a highly dedicated and diligent student who displays the character and attitude that instructors desire most. She

has demonstrated her perseverance by continuing her studies and performing well in the classroom while managing her learning disabilities. She also served others in a volunteer capacity at the Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) at Troy University.

Taina, who is pursuing a career in rehabilitation counseling, thanked ADRS for inviting her to attend YLF. It was there that she met her future mentor and forged her path.

"My interest was not really in rehab until Dr. Sharon Weaver here at Troy University introduced me to the program," she said. "She showed me how caring of a teacher she is, and I'm blessed and thankful to even meet somebody like that."

Taina said she is excited to use the Student of the Year award and her career to show others they can overcome obstacles to achieve their goals.



Allen Honeycutt *Mobile County*

Mobile's Allen Honeycutt lets nothing steal his joy. Diagnosed with Usher syndrome, a rare genetic disease that affects his hearing and vision, he approaches challenges with a positive attitude.

Allen's contagious energy also impacts his employers and coworkers at Squid Ink.

This year, he earned the Spirit Award for the 2021 Alabama Restaurant and Hospitality Association Stars of the Industry. Allen will celebrate two years with Squid Ink in March of 2023, and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Blair Cowan said no one could have written a better script for his story.

"It has been like one of those experiences you only hear about in movies," she said.

The journey to Squid Ink, a perfect fit for Allen, took a few twists and turns. Creating a suitable working environment meant finding the right situation. A part of that journey began when Blair met Allen more than five years ago through the Step Ahead program at the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind. The program helped him learn job readiness skills, technology, and tips for daily living.

Allen's adaptability has amazed owners, managers, and coworkers. Once provided with a workstation that fit his needs, he was off and running and driven to succeed. Also, his success has already opened the door for other individuals with disabilities to join the workforce at different local restaurants.



Julius Love *Etowah County*

Life has been a whirlwind for Julius Love since he received the call to join The Blind Boys of Alabama two years ago. Julius, who was born with limited sight in one eye and lost his vision entirely at two years old, said he often reflects on those who helped make this possible and listed the ADRS staff among his most loyal supporters.

Gadsden VRS Counselor Marquita Mansfield and others have had an enormous impact. Julius said he is grateful for them doing everything they could to ensure he had the accommodations and tools he needed to succeed.

"Whatever I started doing, VRS was there. AIDB was there," he said. "I just thank God for those people helping me accomplish what I needed to, especially when I didn't have the funding. I thank everybody for that opportunity."

Julius said he never takes his incredible opportunity to travel with The Blind Boys of Alabama for granted and puts his heart into every show.

"The Blind Boys have such a legacy and such a true culture," he said. "Folks don't know just how awesome it is to travel with those guys. Many of the originals are gone, but they paved the way for us today, and every time I get up and sing, I remember just why I am singing because they paved the way for what is going on now."

Julius said he hopes his story inspires others working to overcome challenges by encouraging them to celebrate their victories and build their legacy brick by brick.

"All of the things that you have accomplished as an individual should always let you know if you put your mind to it, you can do it," he said. "Be a failure but a tryer, and more than that, always know that God has your back."

Business Relations Program

The ADRS Business Relations program is the state's lead connection to Alabama businesses for disability issues in the workplace. The Business Relations program plays an integral role in ensuring that disability- and employment-related needs of businesses and industries are being met by the state workforce system.

In FY 2022, the program continued its efforts to address emerging issues for businesses and industries including:

- Helping business partners navigate accommodations and retain employees who were impacted by COVID-19 and Long COVID through the ADRS RAVE (Retaining a Valued Employee) Program.
- Addressing the workforce shortage in Alabama by connecting businesses with a qualified pool of job-ready applicants with disabilities.
- Rolling out new training programs to help businesses and industries become more inclusive with their hiring practices.
- Assisting employers in developing their DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility) outreach plans to provide more employment opportunities for qualified people with disabilities.

In FY 2022, the statewide team of 17 Business Relations Consultants:

- Provided 5,192 no-cost services and 65 trainings to Alabama businesses and industries, including: UAB (University of Alabama at Birmingham), Southern Company, Cooper Green Mercy Hospital, Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System, Jefferson County Commission, Auburn University, the Alabama Department of Commerce, Regions Bank, the University of Alabama, Leadership Lee County, United Way of Central Alabama, Montgomery Police Department, Kinedyne Corporation of Prattville, Renaissance Hotel and Spa, Innovation Depot of Birmingham, Anniston Army Depot, Anniston Housing Authority, Kronospan, Children's Policy Council in Marshall County, Disability:IN Alabama, Ability-GO, The Society of Human Resource Managers in Baldwin County, the City of Huntsville, and The Center of Domestic Preparedness, a division of Homeland Security.
- Assisted 948 ADRS individuals seeking employment with job-readiness services and provided over 20 specialized training sessions in local high schools.
- Created new opportunities for paid work experiences and employer hiring opportunities.
- Helped 489 individuals gain employment throughout Alabama.
- Were featured on a national podcast about TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury), highlighting the collaboration between Opelika Power and ADRS and explaining how to hire and retain survivors of traumatic brain injuries.
- Partnered with the statewide Regional Workforce Councils to conduct disability etiquette training and informational sessions for Educator Academies and assisted the councils in planning World of Work Events for high school students. Collaborated with Region 6 to start military and veteran employment outreach initiatives and career- and college-prep events.
- Trained 100 community resource providers on the latest rule changes for federal contractors.

Statewide Events:

- Governor's Job Fair for People with Disabilities: The Business Relations team assisted the Alabama Department of Labor in hosting the Governor's Job Fair for People with Disabilities. Held in Mobile, this event saw over 450 job seekers and 40 employers.
- DisABILITY Hiring Expo in Birmingham: The Business Relations Program in Homewood partnered with United Ability Birmingham to host the first annual DisABILITY Hiring Expo, which resulted in over 180 job seekers meeting with 19 businesses, and 45 individuals with disabilities being hired.
- A second hiring event in Tuscaloosa was also held and drew more than 178 attendees who were able to meet with 20 local businesses.
- 2022 Disability:IN Alabama Conference: Disability:IN Alabama (formerly the Alabama Business Leadership Network) partnered with the Business Relations team to host a conference in Trussville to teach businesses the value of hiring people with disabilities. There were over 200 in-person attendees.

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.

Currently, 70 blind vendors are working within the Alabama BEP and they employ about 300 other Alabamians.

In addition to the operation of traditional vending facilities and military dining halls, our blind vendors are pursuing novel and innovative opportunities such as coffee services and micro-markets. This flexible business approach ensures that Alabama's BEP can remain viable and profitable even in the challenging, post-pandemic economic climate.

Thanks to the perseverance, hard work, and entrepreneurial spirit of our blind vendors, the Alabama BEP continues to thrive.

Supported Employment

For the Fiscal Year 2022, there were 652 consumers with the most significant disabilities rehabilitated and working in competitive integrated employment averaging 24 work hours per week and earning \$10.63 an hour on average. The Exceptional Wage Incentive, instated for community partners in FY 2020 to emphasize the importance of helping individuals with significant disabilities earn higher wages (\$9.25/hour working at or above 25 hours per week), continues to make an impact. There were 95 consumers in our traditional Milestone program

and 21 consumers in our Individual Placement and Supported Employment programs totaling 116 who met the criteria of Exceptional Wages. ADRS continues to offer Supported Employment Services in all 67 counties of the state. Therefore, consumers with the most significant disabilities may access specialized employment in whatever county they reside. ADRS, in collaboration with ADMH, continued providing Customized Job Coach training twice a year.



Full Moon Bar-B-Que General Manager Rusty Roberts, pictured accepting this year's Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities Small Business of the Year Award, said the Alabaster location was excited to work with The Arc of Shelby County to offer job opportunities to people with disabilities.



Full Moon Bar-B-Que *Shelby County*

Providing an opportunity for people with disabilities to be gainfully employed and successful in their jobs has been a focus for Alabaster's Full Moon Bar-B-Que.

The restaurant was named the 2022 Small Business of the Year by the Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities for its commitment to providing job opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Full Moon was nominated by The Arc of Shelby County Job Coach Johanna Jones, who said the restaurant creates an inclusive culture for the community by establishing internal practices that prioritize hiring people with disabilities.

"By taking steps to raise awareness regarding the

"By taking steps to raise awareness regarding the benefits of hiring people with different abilities, Full Moon is making sure that people with disabilities are present, welcomed, and accommodated

- Johanna Jones

benefits of hiring people with different abilities, Full Moon Bar-B-Que is making sure that people with disabilities are present, welcomed, and accommodated," she said. "Additionally, Full Moon Bar-B-Que is utilizing supportive employment, which is enabling people with disabilities to tap into their strengths and abilities."

Jones added that by developing reasonable accommodations, the Full Moon Bar-B-Que

management team is helping The Arc's program participants by making adjustments so they can perform the essential functions of their position.

Full Moon's General Manager Rusty Roberts said he was surprised to learn of the award but also excited

to have given individuals a chance to prove themselves.

"It's great to be noticed for things, but it's one of those things that is dear to my heart," he said. "You do it because it's the right thing to do."

To build on its commitment, Full Moon is modifying the application process to ensure workers with disabilities can easily apply for open positions by presenting understandable and easy-to-read information.

Traumatic Brain Injury Program

ADRS is the state's lead agency in Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) services. It is a source of information, referral, resource facilitation, education, and care coordination for individuals with brain injuries, their families, professionals, and the community.

It also provides community reintegration, counseling, cognitive remediation, TBI education/training, Trauma Registry Service Linkage, and transition services to schools, communities, and/or employment.

In FY 2022, the TBI Program:

- Was awarded a two-year Federal Administration on Community Living Public Health Grant totaling \$86,400 to address social isolation, health inequities, and gaps in statewide service provision for individuals with traumatic brain injuries and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic. The TBI Program will offer statewide telehealth private counseling services and use the remainder of the grant funds to assist in identifying, defining, and resolving information/data gaps and outcomes within the ADRS/Public Health Trauma Registry.
- Completed its first of five grant years with the new Federal Administration on Community Living (ACL) Federal Systems Change Grant to assist individuals with TBI, families, and programs, continuing its successful partnership with the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) to expand screening and education statewide to ADMH Community Providers, Crisis Intervention Centers, Department of Corrections, Veteran Affairs, and hospital behavioral health units.
- Initiated a statewide TBI navigation system within ADRS for helpline calls, resource facilitation, and information or referral services. The Alabama TBI Helpline (1-888-879-4706) is open daily.
- Coordinated with the pediatric and adult TBI care coordinators on streamlining referrals with hospitals and finding efficient ways to address the TBI Helpline and its increased calls.
- The Alabama Head Injury Task Force met and reported accomplishments for first-year annual goals under the five-year TBI State Plan. The newly created Task Force Advisory Council, mostly made up of individuals with lived experience, met throughout the year and approved the first-year annual report.
- The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) partnered with the Administration for Community Living's Administration on Disabilities (AOD) and other federal partners to improve competitive integrated employment and economic outcomes for individuals with various abilities.
- The TBI Program partnered with Dr. Karen McAvoy, a Pediatric Psychologist in Colorado, to expand the reach of the "Get Schooled on Concussion Online Teacher Acute Concussion Tool (TACT)," sponsored by the TBI program. The TACT is active now and available to all Alabama private and public school teachers working with a child or teenager with a concussion/mild head injury and can be found at www.alabamatbi.org under Return to Learn.

OASIS Program

Older Alabamians System of Information and Services (OASIS) is a federally funded program that assists individuals 55 and older who are blind or have low vision in living more independently in their homes and communities.

In FY22, OASIS consumers received 3,933 hours of vision rehabilitation therapy instruction, 534 hours of orientation and mobility instruction, and

\$172,291.74 in adaptive aides and devices. There were 870 consumers served.

In FY22, staff completed 581 community awareness activities that reached an estimated 4,963 people to help them learn and share with others about OASIS services. OASIS reissued 26 returned or donated assistive technology items to consumers.



Governor Kay Ivey pictured with representatives of the disability community to sign a proclamation for TBI Awareness.

(L-R: Brandon Miller-Veterans Recovery Resources (survivor and veteran); Graham Sisson-GOOD (Task Force Advisory Council); Eleora Littlejohn (survivor); April Turner-State Head Injury Coordinator; Governor Ivey; Dr. Despina Stavrinou-Chair, Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund; Joshua Harmon-Coosa County (survivor); Brinda Dungan-TBI Grant Navigator (survivor); Ian Phillips-Autauga County Task Force Advisory Board; Matt Beth-Lee County Task Force Advisory Board (survivor))

Alabama Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities (AGCEPD)

The Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities educates the public about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities while promoting greater independence for people with disabilities.

The 2022 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) theme was “America’s Recovery: Powered by Inclusion.” Some of the month’s celebrations included:

- Awarding the Alabama Governor’s Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities statewide winners during the AlabamaWorks annual conference. Winners were: The University of Alabama-Employer of the Year (large business), Mark Robertson-Employee of the Year (large business),

Full Moon BBQ-Employer of the Year (small business), Shelby Thomas-Employee of the Year (small business), Jefferson County District Attorney Danny Carr-Public Servant of the Year, and Taina Rae Sparks-Student of the Year.

- Also during the AlabamaWorks conference, special guest Richard Pimentel and the Business Relations program presented updated training on Disability Etiquette.
- Three “Fireside Chats” were live-streamed on ADRS-TV, the department’s official YouTube channel, which are still available to view.

ADRS Lakeshore

Lakeshore Vocational Rehabilitation Service assists people throughout the state with significant disabilities to achieve their maximum potential – whether it leads to vocational training, college, or employment. Services are individualized and may include vocational assessment to identify skills, abilities, and career goals. Lakeshore is ADRS Lakeshore is comprised of four programs: Adaptive Driving Training, Assistive Technology, Employability Development, and Vocational Evaluation.

The facility, centrally located in Birmingham, is accredited by the Council on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities and provides quality services for multiple disability groups.

In FY 2022, Lakeshore Vocational Rehabilitation Service:

- Conducted Winter College Prep via Zoom during the first week of January.
- Held the second Virtual Connections program, the 13th year for the Connections program. Two parent orientations took place for the upcoming Connections program participants and parents.
- Delivered job readiness, social skills programs, permit training classes, and financial prep groups to Tuscaloosa Project SEARCH, Huntsville Hospital Project SEARCH, and about 20 Alabama high schools.
- Hosted four College Prep courses on college campuses and virtually.
- Successfully conducted the Pilot Program for the Spinal Cord Injury commercial driving program, with the outlook for the employment of participants being extremely high.
- Hosted the 2022 driver education two-week training and certification course for the Department of Education.



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.

In FY 22, VRS counselors coordinated and provided Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and post-secondary transition services to students with disabilities in a greater capacity than in the previous fiscal year. Ease in pandemic restrictions created more access to meeting students in person. Some accomplishments include:

- Successfully transitioned 1,861 students and youth into gainful employment.
- Authorized Pre-ETS activities for 7,951 students and approximately 1,800 transition-age students were successfully rehabilitated.

Community Rehabilitation Programs

Located throughout the state, the Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) is a network of private organizations that have been providing a full range of vocational rehabilitation services to individuals for more than 70 years. Partnerships have been established with 35 CRPs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

In FY 2022, the Community Rehabilitation Program:

- Assisted 943 individuals gain and maintain employment. The average hourly wage was \$13.95, with an average of 36 hours per week.
- Provided summer work-based learning opportunities through Job Exploration Training (JET) with 619 students participating. CRPs

assisted 280 consumers obtain their driver's permit and 66 to earn their driver's license.

- Provided several virtual and in-person training opportunities for CRP staff around the state, including specialized training on working with individuals with autism and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Business Relations Consultants also provided training, including a presentation by Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services District 6 Representative Charles Wilkinson, and other presentations by ADRS leadership.
- Alerted CRP staff to training offered by other organizations, including Rapid Job Training for High Demand Industries, Blindness/Low Vision, and Deaf-Blind Awareness.

- 48 students received Pre-ETS and transition services, and a new Jobs for Alabama Graduates (JAG) site was added.
- Conducted Transition Unlimited Initiative virtually and provided guidance to local education agencies to develop 364 action plans for the delivery of Pre-ETS for their students with disabilities who may become eligible for VRS.
- Held a successful Transition Conference with local educators attending in-person sessions, and 89 ADRS/VRS staff attending virtually.
- The Governor's Youth Leadership Forum returned after the pandemic drove it into hiatus, with 25 delegates and eight graduate mentors from around the state working together to develop independent living and self-advocacy skills.
- Expanded Project SEARCH to 13 secondary sites and an additional youth site. One program

operates in conjunction with the Workforce Development Division of the Alabama Department of Commerce. Employment outcomes remain high with more than 70-percent employment rates, and there is ongoing interest in continuing the program's expansion.

- Began Project STRIVE in DeKalb county, a pilot program for young adults 18-24 that provides hands-on job skills, smart work ethics, and financial literacy training. In partnership with the local career center, participants earned 350 hours of paid internships.
- Coordinated two successful resource fairs through our Prison Transition and Re-entry programs in partnership with J.F. Ingram State Technical College. Adding to its training offerings, Ingram was awarded a grant to teach coding for Apple products.



quality of
life
✓

State of Alabama Independent Living Homebound Division

The State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL)/ Homebound program operates from seven community-based offices throughout Alabama serving 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 individuals and their families with personalized services and training on the unique issues and needs presented by their disabilities.

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:

1. **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.
2. **The 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
3. **The SAIL Medicaid Waiver program** can 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 assistance through the waiver, a person must:
 - be at least 18 years old
 - be medically and financially qualified for a nursing home
 - have experienced the onset of the disability before age 63
 - have a neurological disability as a result of reasons other than aging
4. **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 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

SAIL 2022 Highlights

In FY22, State of Alabama Independent Living-Homebound:

- Assisted 1,753 Alabamians with the most-significant disabilities in remaining in their homes and communities.
- Added additional SAIL case managers to provide Home and Community Based services in underserved areas of Alabama.
- SAIL Community Support Services Specialists obtained \$258,488.26 in donated goods and services, leveraging their budgets for additional services to individuals with significant disabilities.
- Expanded home modification services to provide ramps and other accessibility adaptations to 132 individuals with disabilities in Alabama, and secured funding to further expand these services in 2023.
- Collaborated with the ALS Association to share resources for providing augmentative communication, home modification, and assistive technology to ensure independence and support families in crisis due to ALS diagnosis.

Sources of Revenue

State: \$6,272,898
Other: \$13,106,798
Federal: \$0

Use of Revenue

Direct Services: \$18,323,048 (95%)
Administration: \$1,056,648 (5%)



Matt Beth *Lee County*

When Matt Beth sustained a traumatic brain injury after falling off a building in 2016, it was a miracle he survived. Six years later, his life has transformed from a fight for survival to continued success.

Matt's recovery not only allowed him to return to school but also paved the way for completing his bachelor's and master's degrees. He had formed a clear vision for his future in less than two years.

When he connected with State Head Injury Coordinator April Turner about five years ago, the plan for success began to take shape. A whole team of ADRS staff across several programs began discussing Matt's future.

April contacted Villa Danford with SAIL for independent living needs; Speech Therapist Dianna Penn to demonstrate different apps on an iPad for better communication; a Lakeshore Specialized Vehicle Modification Evaluation with Craig Rogers and Whitney Storey; and

Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff Mary Browning and Ashley Robinson helped formulate a pathway to finish school.

A Lakeshore Vocational Evaluation and Assistive Technology Evaluation with Fran Hershey and Pat O'Brien helped determine what accommodations were needed, and Auburn University's Office of Accessibility proved to be very helpful and receptive to any needs on campus.

Matt soon enrolled at Auburn and is currently studying different neurodegenerative diseases and movement disorders. He is also involved in several other projects for his doctorate, including a study on Parkinson's disease comorbidities. He is working on a study with a lab mate on the effect of different walking prompts on dynamic stability variables and another study focused on the feasibility of more complex telemedicine techniques and practices.



Donnie Goodin *Jefferson County*

Donnie Goodin is a man of many talents. Recently, he added author to that list when his book, “Finding Joy and Living with Cerebral Palsy,” was published.

Donnie, diagnosed with cerebral palsy at birth, makes friends all over downtown Birmingham who come to purchase candy and gum from him, earning him the nickname “Candyman.” He has built a strong support system through the years, which includes ADRS.

SAIL Living Nurse Coordinator Amy Gibbs has gotten to know Donnie very well over the past four years. She has helped Donnie secure a shower chair, medical supplies, and many other things. She said that working with Donnie is a joy, and she always enjoys visiting with him to see what is new in his life and share a few jokes.

“It’s exciting for us because we love to be able to help people,” she said. “That’s what we love

to do, and we love to see someone like Donnie taking advantage of his success and doing all he can.”

Donnie’s story exemplifies how ADRS programs work together across disciplines to provide individualized services. Homewood Children’s Rehabilitation Service Speech and Language Pathologist Karen Baggett has helped Donnie by providing augmentative communication devices and mount systems for his wheelchair. SAIL staff also secured a computer mouse system that Donnie could operate with his head.

COVID-19 made Donnie’s work more challenging, but Amy said he found ways to stay safe and continue with his candy sales. Amy said Donnie’s positive attitude plays a huge role in his success because people want to be a part of his life.



Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology

The Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology (RE&AT) Program provides innovative accommodation and assistive technology solutions to remove barriers to education, vocation, and independent living for people with disabilities enrolled in an ADRS program.

Using comprehensive knowledge of engineering principles, technology, human behavior, and disability, along with an array of technical skills and methodologies, rehab engineers develop recommendations to assist individuals in utilizing their abilities to achieve their unique goals. RE&AT staff is passionate about helping individuals with disabilities reach their maximum potential.

Services are available to anyone enrolled in an ADRS program (EI, CRS, VRS, or SAIL) and are not limited by age or disability. ADRS rehab engineers or assistive technology specialists may be seen providing mounting solutions for CRS Augmentative Communication Clinic, assisting schools with the implementation of Assistive Technology (AT) for students of all ages, working alongside employment specialists to train VRS participants how to use their AT at work, in the local RE&AT workshop building a custom jig to help an individual complete a task, or working with a family to design a more accessible living space. They maintain

a working knowledge of a variety of technical fields, including fabrication, construction, design, computer-aided drafting, ergonomics, biomechanics, assistive technology, educational technology, informational technology, and more, to ensure that people across the continuum of care at ADRS, especially those with the most complex needs, can benefit from their services.

In FY 2022, the RE&AT program was able to return to in-person events to bring awareness of rehabilitation engineering and assistive technology. The program was represented at the Alabama Education Technology conference, the Alabama Department of Education's MEGA conference, the Technology Symposium at the Alabama School for the Blind, and the North Alabama Worlds of Work Expo. They also continued to develop their recruitment and training initiatives by working with local engineering student groups on assistive technology design projects. These initiatives help increase awareness of AT concepts and disability needs to future innovators and often result in job shadowing or internship opportunities that help the program recruit future staff.



STAR

STAR is Alabama's Assistive Technology Assistance Program, funded through the federal Assistive Technology Act grant. The program's mission is to increase knowledge, access, and acquisition of assistive technology (AT) for Alabamians with disabilities. The AT Act grants funding to 56 states and territories to provide services related to AT, including alternative financing, reuse, short-term loans, demonstrations, training, technical assistance, public awareness, and information and referral. This year STAR continued to work with community resource partners to provide utilization of durable medical equipment at local reuse centers. Through the reuse centers, individuals can acquire recycled, durable medical equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, toilet risers, and more at no cost.

STAR also continued to work with the Southern Disability Foundation to provide low-interest financial loans to fund assistive technology.

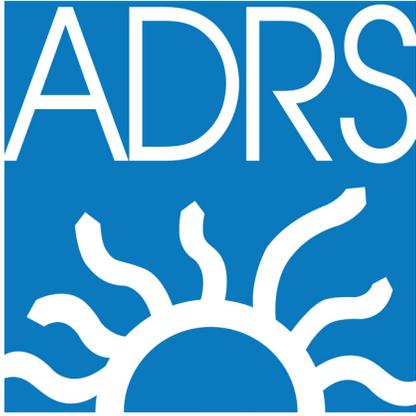
In FY 2022, the remaining grant activities were provided in partnership with the ADRS Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology through a new project called Accessing Potential Through Assistive Technology (APTAT). APTAT began with a new short-term lending library based in the Homewood ADRS office, with over 160 items added to the inventory. Technology in the library is available for 30-day loans to allow individuals to try before they buy, use as a loaner while a device is being acquired or repaired, use as a short-term accommodation, or increase their professional knowledge. Individuals can visit al.at4all.com and request available items from the APTAT program.

A new monthly APTAT webinar series was coordinated to offer lunch-and-learn style training to participants seeking to increase their knowledge of AT-related products and services. The most popular webinars were related to augmentative communication and AT for mental health. APTAT also fulfilled training requests for outside organizations, including the Alabama Parent Education Center, ALS Association Alabama Chapter, Alabama Developmental Disability Network, Alabama Department of Education, National Association of State Head Injury Administrators, Alabama Head Injury Foundation, UAB Engineering Design Program, and the University of Montevallo Counseling program. Each training focused on AT used in the organization's network, including AT for independent living, transition, vocation, and education. Their presentations at the Alabama Education Technology and MEGA conferences hosted by the Alabama Department of Education aided in making connections with special education providers from local education agencies across the state, eager to improve their AT knowledge and excited to learn about the lending library.

Moving forward, APTAT hopes to continue building partnerships with disability organizations, build a demonstration center, and increase the value of the lending library.

return on
investments:
SUCCESS



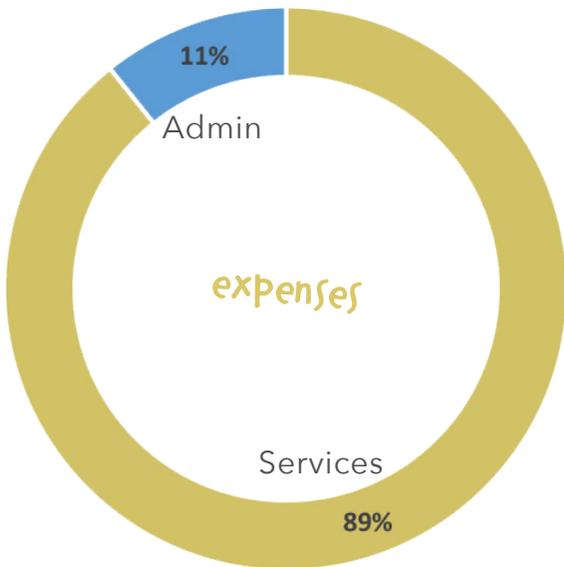
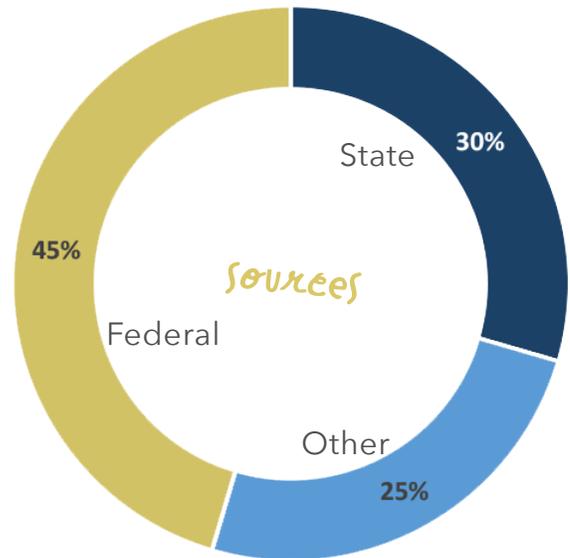


\$146,690,221
purchased services

62,717
total Alabamians served

Total revenue:

- State: **\$48,464,666**
- Federal: **\$74,655,314**
- Other: **\$41,223,251**



Total expenditures:

- Direct Services: **\$146,690,221**
- Administration: **\$17,653,010**

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

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, Decatur Regional Office
Center for the Developmentally Disabled (CDD)
North Central Alabama MRA

DOTHAN

Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind, regional office
Dothan-Houston County MRB Inc. (Vaughn Blumberg Center)

FLORENCE

SCOPE 310

GADSDEN

United Ability of Greater Birmingham - Hand in Hand

GUNTERSVILLE

Marshall/Jackson MRA

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)

MUSCLE SHOALS

Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, regional office

OPELIKA

Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind, regional office

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 MRA
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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

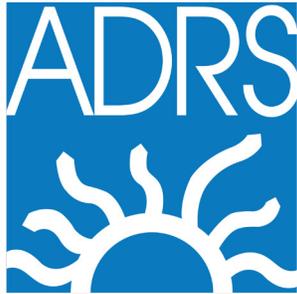
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Alabama Department of
REHABILITATION SERVICES

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