2021

Alabama's Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund

REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021

Every year, 1.7 million individuals in the U.S. sustain a traumatic brain injury (TBI), and more than 10,000 of those are Alabama residents. The nature of TBI requires specialized providers and individualized supports. Without timely access to expert care management and customized services, these children and adults are unable to live healthy, independent, satisfying lives.

In response to this need, the Alabama Legislature in 1992 gave the Impaired Drivers Trust Fund Advisory Board the responsibility of facilitating a comprehensive system of services for Alabamians with head and spinal cord injury. The following year, the Legislature passed Act 93-323, establishing the Impaired Drivers Trust Fund (IDTF) and imposing an additional $100 fine on persons convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, with proceeds allocated to the IDTF. Each year, these proceeds are used as payer of last resort for costs of care provided to Alabamians who live with TBI or spinal cord injury (SCI). County clerks collect the money and deposit it into the state treasury. The funds are included in the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS) budget, and ADRS disperses monies in accordance with criteria established by the board.

In 2016, the law was amended (Act 16-259) to change the name to the Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund to more accurately represent who is being served with the revenue. Case management, counseling, pre-vocational services, cognitive remediation, family education, community resource provision, respite care, recreational supports, and attendant care are provided by programs within ADRS and the Alabama Head Injury Foundation. These services are made possible by the trust fund and enable Alabamians with TBI and SCI to strive for and achieve an improved quality of life following injury.

In 2018, House Bill 14 was signed into law, which amended the driving under the influence law. It requires a mandatory $100 fee be collected from any individuals who successfully complete any pretrial diversion program and deposited into the Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund. Alabama's TBI program also received $250,000 in Fiscal Year 2019 supplemental appropriations and another $250,000 in line-item appropriations for Fiscal Year 2020.

Despite COVID-19 related challenges, the new funds allowed ADRS to fund two full-time field staff to help cover underserved areas in our state, and AHIF was able to add a dedicated field staff person for the heavily populated Central Alabama corridor, as well as add a full-time mental health counselor to begin offering mental health counseling services to clients and caregivers. The use of these funds matched the stated intent by each agency when these funds were requested in 2019.

Presently, ADRS and AHIF still remain below the staffing levels required to meet the growing demand for services across our state, especially given that the number of Alabamians identified with traumatic brain injury each year has increased significantly: more than ever recorded in the state registry's history.

Advisory Board

Chair: Despina Stavrinos **Vice Chair:** Reyn Norman **Secretary:** Scott Powell

Members: Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Sen. Tom Butler, Sara Franklin, Alice Floyd, Stephanie Logan, Leroy Miles, Rep. Phillip Pettus, Dr. Graham Sisson, Karen Watkins-Smith, and Dr. Derek Woessner.

Dear Legislator,

We are pleased to present the 2021 Annual Report for Alabama's Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund (AHSCITF). The services available to Alabamians with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and spinal cord injuries (SCI) equip them to work toward an improved quality of life following injury.

A collaboration between the AHSCITF Advisory Board and public and private organizations – including the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Alabama Head Injury Foundation, and the Alabama Department of Public Health – provides life-changing services.

Please join us in expressing our gratitude to the partners and staff who worked tirelessly during an extremely challenging year to improve the lives of Alabamians with traumatic brain and/or spinal cord injury.

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, Commissioner
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services

Despina Stavrinos, PhD, Chairman
UAB Injury Control Research Center

What is Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)?

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is damage to the brain that results when the head is hit, strikes a stationary object, or is violently shaken. A TBI can occur without any outward physical evidence of trauma. Damage to the brain may occur immediately, or it may develop as a result of swelling or bleeding following injury. Common consequences of TBI can involve sensory, cognitive, behavioral, and/or emotional impairments. Brain injuries are classified as mild, moderate, or severe depending on the type of injury or pressure and changes in the brain, and can be temporary or lifelong.

Service Components*

Through funds provided by the AHSCITF, specific programs have been created and implemented to address the needs of people with TBI and SCI. In Fiscal Year 2021, these programs provided the following services:

Registry Helpline and Service Linkage

The Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Registry Helpline, 1-888-879-4706, provided immediate information to 308 callers, a 54-percent increase. There were 6,769 new hospital trauma records collected and reviewed -- an increase of 7 percent -- and 3,585 consumers, an increase of 6 percent, were eligible to be contacted to provide information, referral and service linkage after hospital discharge.

Resource Coordination & Recreation

This program provided direct services from AHIF to 1,463 individuals living with TBI and /or SCI, that included counseling, respite care, recreational camp, support groups, therapy-based camp and/or connecting to available community resources. Of these, 171 were new clients who became clients during the fiscal year.

Adult TBI Program - Interactive Community-Based Model (ICBM)

Through the efforts of this five-phased rehabilitation program, 378 consumers transitioned from the hospital to home and the community, reducing cost of post-acute care and increasing average salary income for those returning to work. This was an increase of 10 percent.

Respite Care

Services were provided to 33 families, relieving them of the around-the-clock responsibilities of caring for a family member. More than 1,437 hours of in-home care were provided.

Support Groups

AHIF held 137 support groups this fiscal year, all though Zoom, and had a total of 4,932 attendees.

** The data in this report is in comparison to last year's report.*

Service Linkage System Helpline:
1.888.879.4706