



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF
REHABILITATION SERVICES

Opportunities for Independence

OVR/OVRB Public Hearing

Welcome & Public Hearing Purpose

**Dorothy L. Young, Director, Office of
Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind
(OVRB)**

OVR/OVRB Public Hearing

OVR/OVRB Public Hearing on the following:
Updated Postsecondary education policy,
Updated Pre-ETS and Transition Policy, Project
SEARCH policy, Ethical Guidelines Policy,
Implementation of Order of Selection.

Agenda

I. Policy & Procedure Updates

II. Implementation of Order of Selection



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF
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**Overview of changes to Postsecondary
Training Policy and Procedures**

**Dr. Jennifer Jackson, Director, Office of
Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)**

Postsecondary Education and Training Policy and Procedure Updates

Funding for Four-Year Universities

If an individual elects to begin their postsecondary education at a four-year university, OVR/OVRB may sponsor their attendance at the four-year institution at a rate not to exceed the highest in-state community college rate for the first 60 credit hours, provided the chosen program aligns with the individual's employment goal and is determined necessary to achieve that goal.

OVR/OVRB funding for four-year colleges, after the first 60 credit hours, shall be at the rate of the in-state public college/university attended, if applicable (see Fee Schedule). Funding for private or out-of-state post-secondary institutions may not exceed the cost of the highest in-state public college/university. An exception to provide funding for tuition and fees in excess of the in-state rates for private or out-of-state institutions requires approval of the Client Services Director or designee.

Postsecondary Education and Training Policy and Procedure Updates

Transportation - Day Students

The student must reside 60 miles or greater from the institution to receive transportation assistance. (This is one-way.) The cost of travel each semester **cannot** exceed the cost of dorms per semester at the school the individual attends.

Meals

The agency may assist students (on campus and/or off campus) with a meal plan purchased up to the amount allowed in the Fee Schedule or the actual cost of the meal plan, whichever is less. The authorization for meals will be issued directly to the school.

Postsecondary Education and Training Policy and Procedure Updates

Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Education Program (CTP)

Individuals who attend a CTP are also subject to the same requirements as traditional students, including, but not limited to:

- a. Participation in Counseling and Guidance
- b. Annual completion of the FAFSA
- c. Adherence to the Standards for VR Sponsorship in Post-Secondary Education ([MDRS-VR-PSED-01](#)) (with exception of the GPA and full-time status requirements)
- d. Costs as published in the Fee Schedule

MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY & JUNIOR COLLEGES

SCHOOL YEAR 2025 - 2026

APPROVED FEES PER SEMESTER

	Tuition	Other Fees	Total	Distance Learning/On-Line	Dorm	Meals	
						5-Day	7-Day
Coahoma	1,700	T100; P**	1,800	\$50 Course*	950-980	N/A	1,555
Copiah-Lincoln	1,950	T175; V175	2,300	\$40 Course	1,150-1,250	N/A	1,600
East Central	1,880	<u>T200; R50; A45; J15P**</u>	2,190	\$40 Course	850-950	1,065	1,285
East Mississippi^	1,800	R120; T/SCH11; H35	1,962	\$30 Course	1,250-1,475	1,050	1,400
Hinds	1,850	R150; T150	2,125	\$20 SCH	1,100- 1,650*	N/A	1,650
Holmes	1,450	F255	1,705	\$10 SCH	900	1050	N/A
Itawamba`	1,550	\$160 Flat Fee	1,710	\$10 SCH	900- 1,400	1,150	1,375
Jones Jr.~	2,468*		2,468*		950-1,350	N/A	1,750*
Meridian☼	1,929	R25; HS40; TZ270	2,276	\$20 Course	1,100-1,250	N/A	1,450
MS Delta	1,725	A45; T/SCH10	1,920	\$25 SCH*	M-650 – F-750	N/A	1,650
MS Gulf Coast`	1,800	R125; T200	2,125	None	New Male Dorm 1200 1,400-1,600	1,215	1,365
NE Mississippi	1,915	N/A	1,915	None	795-1,075	1,410*	1,700
NW Mississippi	1,800	R75; T75	1,950	\$20 SCH	800-1,200	1050	1,175
Pearl River'+	1,800	R100	1,900	\$40 Course	2,600 Dorm/Meal Combined		
SW Mississippi	1,780	V150; T150	2,080	\$30 Course	900-1,000		1,500

OVR/OVRB Public Meeting

**Overview of Proposed Transition and
Pre-ETS Policy Updates**

Dr. Jennifer Jackson, OVR Director

Major Enhancements & Strategic Shifts

- Pre-ETS and broader transition moved into two distinct sections
- Step-by-step intake, referral, eligibility, monitoring, and review timelines
- Early exploration via broad occupational categories before precise outcome setting
- Enhanced data tracking, reporting, and case-management expectations
- Explicit target groups: age-ranges, PE students, homeschoolers
- Proactive referral and consent timelines to ensure equitable access



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**Overview of Project SEARCH Policy &
Procedure**

Dr. Jennifer Jackson, OVR Director

Project SEARCH Policy & Procedure

- Business-hosted, nine-month immersive program with internships to develop employment skills
- Two tracks: Transition Services (ages 18–21, in school) and Adult Services (ages 18–30, out of school) Counselors submit referrals by January; skills assessments and interviews follow shortly after
- Daily management by On-Site Team; strategic oversight by multi-agency Steering Committee
- Participants with significant disabilities may transition to Supported Employment services via case transfer
- All PS Referrals must be received no later than January 31st each year to ensure the client's participation in the spring interview and assessment process.
- Any clients interested in Project SEARCH that are not referred by January 31st each year will be considered during the next program year.

OVR/OVRB Public Meeting

**Overview of Ethical Guidelines Policy
& Procedure**

Dr. Jennifer Jackson, OVR Director

Ethical Guidelines Policy & Procedure

- **Purpose and Scope:** Establishes clear ethical guidelines for staff of Mississippi's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR/OVRB) to ensure professional integrity, client welfare, and public trust.
- **Core Ethical Principles:** Emphasizes autonomy, beneficence, fidelity, justice, nonmaleficence, and veracity as the foundational values guiding staff actions and interactions.
- **Standards and Conduct:** Outlines specific behavioral expectations related to moral/legal obligations, client relationships, confidentiality, advocacy, professional interactions, and competence.
- **Accountability:** Mandates staff adherence to ethical practices, provides avenues for informal ethical consultation, and specifies procedures for reporting ethical violations.
- **Consequences for Non-Compliance:** Clearly states that violations can result in disciplinary actions according to state personnel regulations and MDRS policies.

OVR/OVRB Public Meeting

Implementation of Order of Selection

Dr. Jennifer Jackson, OVR Director
Dorothy L. Young, OVRB Director

What is an Order of Selection?

- An order of Selection is a process to follow when an agency has determined there are not enough available resources to serve all individuals with disabilities in the state.
- If a vocational rehabilitation agency is unable to serve all eligible individuals, that state must put into place an Order of Selection.
- An Order of Selection is meant to assess and prioritize an individual's needs and then determine their category of service based upon the assessment findings
- In an Order of Selection, individuals with the most significant disabilities will be selected first for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.

What is the purpose of an Order of Selection?

- The utilization of the Order of Selection is the appropriate mechanism as defined within the Rehabilitation Act for VR programs to manage the client caseload when there is insufficient funding or staffing to support the demand.
- OVR's Rehabilitation Services Administration will ensure that the Order enforces the intent of the Rehabilitation Act to serve those customers with the Most Significant Disabilities.
- Utilizing the Order will allow OVR/OVRB time to adjust programs and implement additional cost savings measures under the assumption that flat funding may continue.

Federal Regulation (Prohibited Factors)

- Factors that cannot be used in determining order of selection of eligible individuals. An order of selection may not be based on any other factors, including-
- Any duration of residency requirement, provided the individual is present in the State;
- Type of disability;
- Age, sex, race, color, or national origin;
- Source of referral;
- Type of expected employment outcome;
- The need for specific services except those services provided in accordance with 361.36(a)(3)(v), or anticipated cost of services required by an individual; or
- The income level of an individual or an individual's family

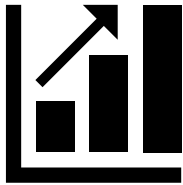
Federal Regulations on Implementing OOS

- 34 CFR Part 361.36 Ability to serve all eligible individuals; order of selection for services (in part):

Steps to Implementation of Order of Selection

OVR/OVRB is projecting a budget shortfall due to:

Increase in Clients



Increase in Client Service Expenditures



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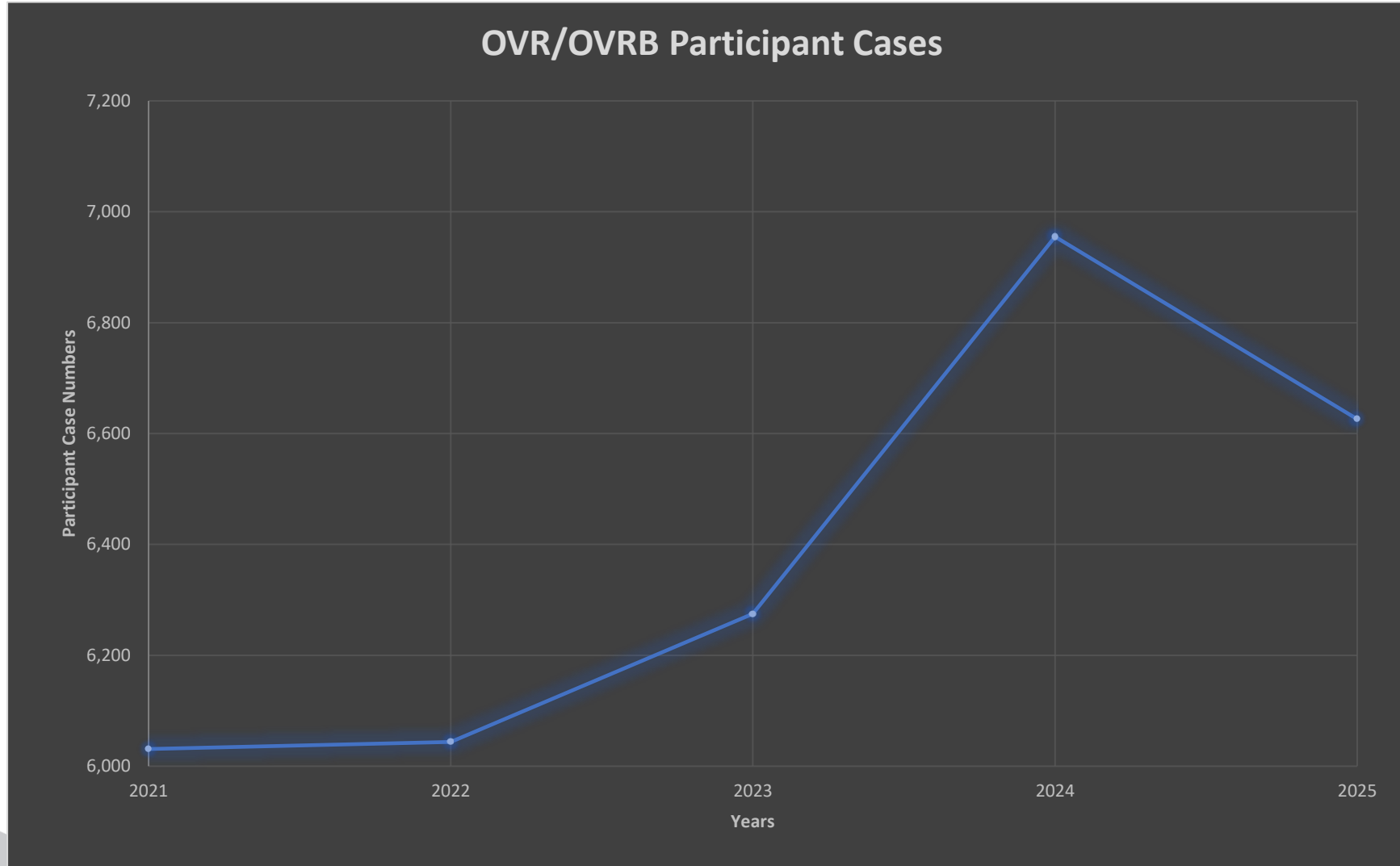


Opportunities for Independence

Steps to Implement OOS

- Agency leadership along with fiscal staff reviewed financial resources, long range fiscal forecasting, personnel projections, etc.
- Based on the above information it was determined that the full range of services can no longer be provided to all eligible consumers and OOS is necessary.
- Priority categories are being reviewed but no definitions were changed.
- The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) was notified.
- OVR/OVRB Directors consulted with the Technical Assistance Center on Quality Management (TAC-QM). State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), Client Assistance Program (CAP), and MDRS internal leadership
- A special SRC meeting was held on April 30, 2025.
- Public comments are required, and 30 days has been allotted for this.

Implementation of Order of Selection



Office of Vocational Rehabilitation/Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind



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Implementation of Order of Selection

Steps OVR/OVRB has taken to address the increase in caseloads and expenditures:

- Revised the Postsecondary Education and Training Policy
- Training for staff on eligibility determination.
- Training for staff on the use of comparable benefits.
- Reinstatement of the financial needs analysis
- Decreased travel for staff
- Hiring Freeze
- Reduction of Contractual and Temporary Staff

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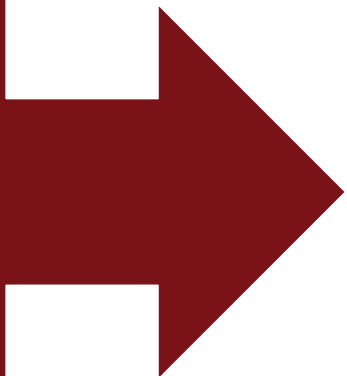


Opportunities for Independence

Implementation of Order of Selection (OOS)

Next Steps: Preparing for OOS

OOS is a tool directing how state VR programs should deliver services when there are not enough resources to serve everyone who is eligible.



- **Waitlist for services**
- **Prioritize those with the most significant disabilities and date of application.**
- **Waitlist does not apply to students receiving Pre-ETS**

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Implementation of Order of Selection

Impact to clients and partners

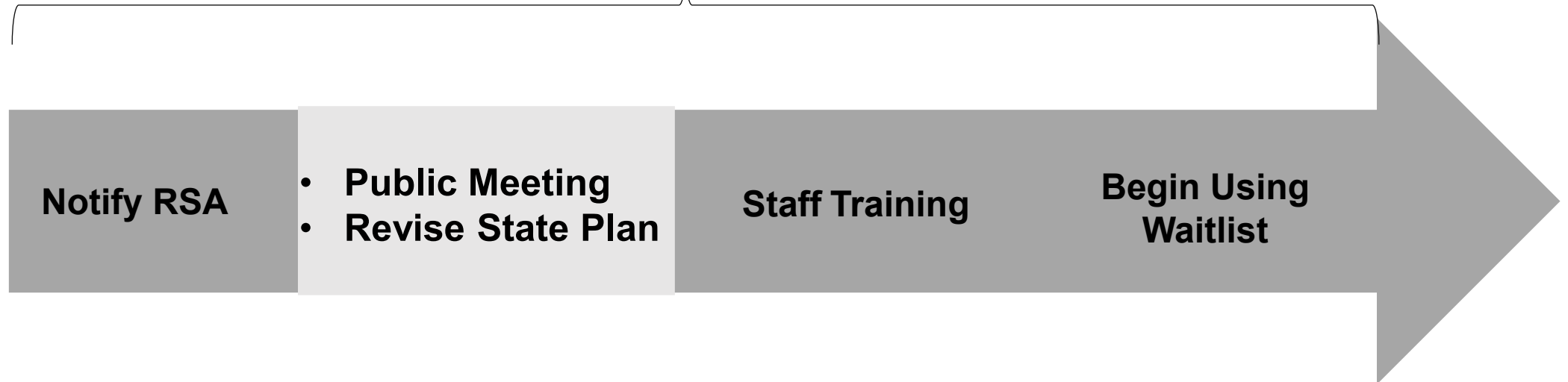
Applicants	Longer wait times for services, especially those clients with no significant disability
Community Rehabilitation Providers	Fewer referrals for services
Mississippi Department of Education and Local School Districts	Increased collaboration with schools to ensure the provision of Pre-ETS
Mississippi Workforce Development Agencies	More collaboration to deliver comparable benefits to clients

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Implementation of Order of Selection

NEXT STEPS:

Consult with State Rehabilitation Council



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Opportunities for Independence

Implementation of Order of Selection

Client Service Priority Categories

Priority 1

- Has a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits three (3) or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome, and
- Will require multiple VR services for an extended period of time.

Priority 2

- Has a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits one (1) or two (2) functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome, and
- Will require multiple VR services for an extended period of time.

Priority 3

- Has a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment and who can benefit, in terms of an employment outcome, from the provision of VR services.

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Implementation of Order of Selection

What does this mean for clients?

- ☐ All individuals currently receiving services under an approved Individualized Plan for Employment will continue to receive all approved services.
- ☐ **New applicants** will be placed on a waitlist and released when funds are available.
- ☐ All **application and eligibility timelines** will be in effect.
- ☐ **Applicants** will continue to receive any needed assessments, evaluations or other services required to help the person receive an accurate eligibility determination.
- ☐ **Individuals at imminent risk of losing their job** due to a disability-related reason may apply for services to help them stabilize their job.
- ☐ **Students** will be able to continue to receive Pre-Employment Transition Services as long as they receive at least one service prior to being placed on the waitlist.

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Open the Floor for Public Comments

Dorothy L. Young, OVRB Director

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Closing Remarks

Dr. Jennifer Jackson, OVR Director
Dorothy L. Young, OVRB Director

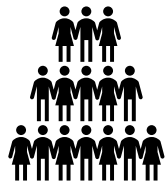
A Commitment to Our Goals



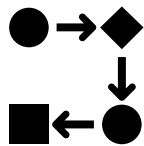
Exceptional service to our clients



Create and Improve Partnerships



Hire and Keep Well-Trained Staff



Ensure Effectiveness of VR Processes so that services can effectively assist clients

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THANK YOU



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