



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2022**

**MDRS** 

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF  
REHABILITATION SERVICES

*Opportunities for Independence*



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## MISSION STATEMENT

**The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) is the state agency dedicated to helping Mississippians with disabilities to live and work independently. It is the mission of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) to provide appropriate and comprehensive services to Mississippians with disabilities in a timely and effective manner. Programs and services assist individuals with disabilities to gain employment, retain employment and to live more independently.**



## VISION STATEMENT

**The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services is committed to being recognized as the premier agency for Mississippians with disabilities by creating a culture of care with compassionate, valued, and knowledgeable staff. We will promote an environment where customers and staff work together to achieve our common goal of empowering and improving the lives of Mississippians with disabilities.**



**Chris M. Howard**  
**Executive Director**

On behalf of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), I am pleased to present our state fiscal year (SFY) 2022 Annual Report. We are excited to note that our agency is diligent in serving Mississippians with disabilities during this challenging time with workforce placement across the state and nation and we have learned that we are as resilient as those we serve. We feel the challenges faced and the lessons learned have only better equipped us to serve our great state. Through our four major programs, we continue to provide important services to 1) assist those we serve in preparing for, obtaining and maintaining employment, 2) as well as helping those with more significant disabilities live at home as opposed to a long-term facility, and 3) to make Social Security determinations to determine eligibility to obtain disability income that will provide for individuals who are unable to work and their families. These great services would not be possible without your continued support.

As we reflect on this past fiscal year, one thing I can boast with confidence is GROWTH. We experienced growth in many ways this year. Fiscal Year 2022 was another year we saw an increase in the number of Project SEARCH sites across our state, from a strong thirteen to an incredible eighteen with room and potential for many more. Our state still saw substantial growth and accomplishments in partnerships with businesses who share the same passion as we do. We have seen steady growth in the number of Mississippi ABLE accounts opened as education and awareness efforts grow. We also began holding in-person learning events for ABLE around the state which has assisted in spreading the word. Our Vocational Rehabilitation Programs served just over 15,000 Mississippians. Our Office of Special Disability Programs served close to 4,000 in our state, and our Disability Determination Services processed over 50,000 claims—that is tens of thousands of people assisted by just this one program within our office.

In addition to the accomplishments noted above, below are additional bullet points of other accomplishments we made over this past year.

**Disability Determination Services (DDS) Program**

- Despite nationwide staffing challenges among DDS’s, MS DDS still processed 51,693 claims. This is 99 percent of the budgeted workload.
- MS DDS successfully transitioned to a new claims processing for non-federal (Medicaid) claims.
- MS DDS staff yielded a Production Per Work Year (PPWY) of 233.
- Although costs per case increased nationally, MS DDS continues to have one of the lowest Cumulative Cost per Case rates in the Atlanta region at \$461.
- SSA has allowed for the resumption of in-person hearings and MS DDS resumed this option for hearing level claimants.
- Mississippi’s Combined Overall Initial Processing Time was 184.8 days for FY22 which remains below the Region (216.1 days) and only slightly above the Nation (183.1 days).

**Office of Special Disability Programs (OSDP)**

- Provided services to over 4,200 individuals across the State providing the opportunity for these individuals to live at home as opposed to a long term care facility.
- Provided nearly a \$40,000 cost savings per individual per year to the State of Mississippi through the administering of two Home and Community Based Programs.
- Provided close to 264 home modifications to individuals across the State to ensure individuals with disabilities are safe and secure in their homes.
- In partnership with the Mississippi Highway Patrol developed presentations for high school students regarding the PROM (Please Return on Monday) initiative.
- Provided over 12,000 bicycle helmets to elementary schools as a safety prevention activity through the TBI/SCI Trust Fund Program.

**Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)**

**Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (VRB)**

- Assisted over 2,400 individuals with disabilities to successfully obtain and retain employment.
- Collaborated and partnered with local school agencies to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to over 2,200 students with disabilities while in high school.
- Partnered with and developed 12 new partnerships with Community Rehabilitation Partners to provide Pre-Employment Services – Transition camps to students with disabilities.
- Conducted two job fairs with over 60 businesses in attendance held in Jackson.

The information contained within this report will provide you with even more information about our service to the state this fiscal year. You are a key part to our successes, and we thank you for your support and very much look forward to working with you in the upcoming year.

Sincerely,



**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF  
REHABILITATION SERVICES**

*Opportunities for Independence*

## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

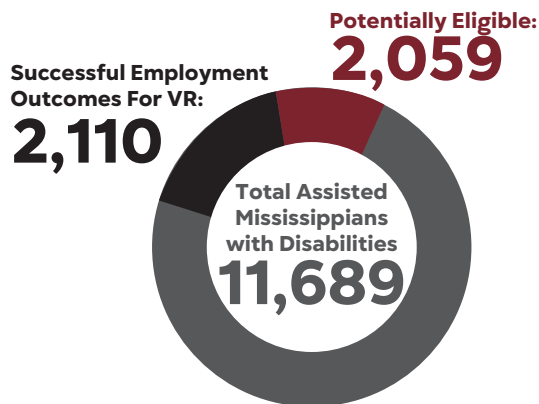
1,399 CLIENTS SERVED

Assistive Technology (AT) is defined as the application of technology to alleviate barriers that interfere with the lives of individuals with disabilities. It is intended to help the individual maintain or enhance his or her ability to function personally, socially and/or vocationally. MDRS Rehabilitation Engineers and Rehabilitation Technologists provide consultations on all AT referrals. The Rehabilitation Technologists and Specialists perform initial evaluations and assessments, set up AT equipment, provide follow-up evaluations, design and fabricate original items and provide specifications and final inspections for AT services. The Assistive Technology division staff evaluates MDRS clients for the most appropriate assistive technology, thus enabling them to return to work and/or live independently. During the SFY 2022, the Assistive Technology division served a total of 1,399 individuals with disabilities.

This information only reports clients who were assigned to the Assistive Technology division during SFY 2022 and does not reflect clients who continue to be served from previous fiscal year(s).

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

2,110 SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENTS



We help over 10,000 Mississippians a year overcome limitations imposed by physical or mental disabilities in order for that person to secure or maintain employment. In the SFY 2022, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services assisted 11,689 Mississippians with disabilities in receiving services including, but not limited to: counseling and guidance in adjustment to disability, vocational exploration, physical and mental restoration, job training, assistive technology, and job placement. VR also assisted 2,059 potentially eligible clients that are under the Transition Program. Individuals served by VR have a wide array of

disabilities including, but not limited to: hearing loss or deafness, amputations, mental and emotional disorders, epilepsy, developmental disease and disorders, traumatic brain injuries, orthopedic impairments, residuals from cancer, and speech impairments. The total number of VR consumers employed during SFY 2022 was 2,110.

## ABILITYWORKS

1,374 CLIENTS SERVED

AbilityWorks is a network of 15 community rehabilitation programs providing vocational assessment and work adjustment training for individuals with disabilities. This is possible through a wide array of contract and subcontract services provided to local business and industry. During SFY 2022, AbilityWorks served a total of 1,374 individuals with disabilities. AbilityWorks establishes cooperative agreements with local businesses to provide community based work experience, customized training and on-the-job training.

## DEAF SERVICES

1,067 SUCCESSFUL REHABILITATIONS

We help people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or late deafened find employment, attend education and training programs, and learn more about their community resources. The MDRS Deaf Services Program continues to promote excellence by striving to assist new RCD's (Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf) to reach the required communication skills level on the Signed Communication Proficiency Interview, an American Sign Language assessment developed by the Rochester Institute of Technology. Adequate communication skills are a prerequisite to meaningful counseling and guidance with people who are Deaf and use manual communication. This skill, along with other specialized training, has been a vital factor in the successful rehabilitation of individuals with deafness or significant hearing loss. In SFY 2022, Deaf Services were provided to 2,957 Mississippians resulting in 1,067 successful rehabilitations.

## SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

70 SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENTS

We assist individuals with the most significant disabilities who require intensive support services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment. Each MDRS district has a Supported Employment Team consisting of a specialized VR/SE counselor, and a Vocational Training Instructor who oversees the work of Job Trainers working on site with our consumers. During SFY 2022, 616 individuals received Supported Employment services, 70 resulting in successful employment.

## TRANSITION & YOUTH CAREER SERVICES

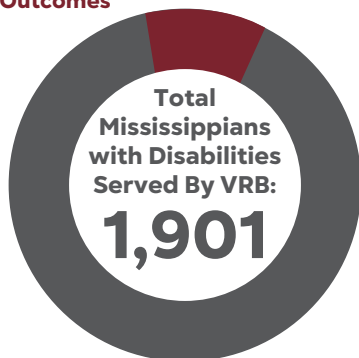
141 SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENTS

We work with potentially eligible students with disabilities ages of 14 through 21 to provide pre-employment transition services. We also work with eligible secondary school students with disabilities, their families, and school personnel, to assure there is an integrated program of education and vocational training available. We help build a foundation for a career pathway and help provide a seamless transition from school to work. In SFY 2022, the number of students receiving transition services was 2,835 potentially eligible and 141 Transition Youth students found employment. Services may be provided to students both on and off campus or at one of the 15 AbilityWorks as a part of their school day.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

Successful Outcomes for VRB:

352



We specialize in working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired to ensure opportunities for inclusion into the workforce, community, and home. Of the 2,462 successful employment outcomes by MDRS, 352 were achieved through Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (VRB). VRB provided the consumer services such as counseling and guidance in adjustment to disability, vocational exploration, orientation and mobility training, job training, and assistive technology. The total number of Mississippians with disabilities served by VRB during SFY 2022 was 1,901.

352 SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES



# ADDIE MCBRYDE REHABILITATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND

PROVIDED TRAINING TO **94** CONSUMERS

The Addie McBryde Rehabilitation Center for the Blind provides traditional intensive evaluation, training, and adjustment services on the campus of the University of Mississippi Medical Center. In SFY 2022, the Addie McBryde Center provided training to 94 consumers.



# BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

**36** SUCCESSFUL BEP VENDORS

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides support for self-employment opportunities in the food service industry for Mississippians who are legally blind. These BEP entrepreneurs operate a variety of businesses including vending machine routes, snack bars and cafeterias on military bases. In SFY 2022, 36 individuals operated successful businesses as BEP vendors.



# INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

PROVIDED SERVICES TO **664** CONSUMERS

We serve individuals who are legally blind and either over the age of 55 or have a significant secondary disability by providing a variety of independent living services. In SFY 2022, Independent Living Services (ILB) served over 100+ consumers through indirect services such as health fairs, vision screening, peer groups, and outreach. ILB provided direct services to 178 consumers in Part B and 486 in Older Blind.



# DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

**51,693** CLAIMS PROCESSED

We operate in a partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to determine the medical eligibility of individuals to receive benefits from Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income as directed by federal guidelines from SSA. This office handles disability claims from all 23 SSA offices in Mississippi.



# SPECIAL DISABILITY PROGRAMS

**4,253** INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES PROVIDED

We specialize in assisting individuals with the most severe physical disabilities to remain active in their homes and communities. Services are provided based on need as determined by functional assessment and are provided through an individualized plan of services and supports. The Office of Special Disability Programs (OSDP) offers services that include, but are not limited to: case management, attendant care, durable medical equipment and specialized medical supplies, home and vehicle modifications, respite care, and transition services. During the SFY 2022, The OSDP provided independent living services for 4,253 individuals with significant (severe) disabilities. OSDP administers the Traumatic Brain Injury/Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund. A full copy of that report can be found at [www.mdrs.ms.gov](http://www.mdrs.ms.gov).

# ITINERANT TEACHER PROGRAM

PROVIDED SERVICES TO 12 CONSUMERS

Itinerant teachers work closely with VRB counselors to coordinate services, evaluate client needs, develop living-needs plans and instructional materials, and provide on-site training for consumers who are blind or visually impaired. In 2022, the Itinerant Teacher Program provided services for 12 VRB consumers.

# BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The MDRS Office of Business Development (OBD) is committed to being a valuable resource for any business. During FY 2022 MDRS Business Development Representatives (BDR) helped support hundreds of employers across the state in sourcing, hiring and retaining qualified candidates with disabilities. Visit [mdrs.ms.gov](http://mdrs.ms.gov) to find a MDRS Business Development Representative in your area.

- January - June 2022 Total Referrals - 214
- July - December 2022 Total Referrals -443
- Total Year Referrals - 657

## Team Placement Percentage

- December 2021 - 64.6%
- June 2022 - 69.2%

## Yearly Calls

- Total Contact to Businesses Made - 9,284 Contacts
- Team Weekly Call Average - 20.77 Calls per Week Per Rep

## Top 5 Placement Business Sectors:

- Food Service 20.1%
- Retail 18.2%
- Educational Services 13.8%
- Fed / State / Local Gov. 11.9%
- Other 10.1%

## Top 5 Disability Breakdown:

- Learning Disability 28%
- Autism 19.0%
- Intellectual 16.6%
- Orthopedic / Physical 11.3%
- Other 6.9%

## Top 5 Business Contact Type Breakdown:

- In-person Cold Call 44.26%
- Phone 26.2%
- Email 15.9%
- In-person Scheduled 7.7%
- Social Organization 5.47%

# PROJECT SEARCH

The Project SEARCH Program is a unique, business-led, nine-month employment preparation program that takes place entirely at the workplace. Up to 12 students with disabilities experience total workplace immersion, classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through three different worksite rotations. The goal for each participant is competitive employment. To reach that goal, the program provides real-life work experience combined with training in employability and independent-living skills to help young people with significant disabilities make successful transitions to productive adult life.

141 individuals with disabilities have graduated from Project SEARCH Mississippi since Project SEARCH UMMC launched in August 2018. 97 of those individuals have gained employment. The job search continues for graduates. 73 interns will be participating in Project SEARCH across the state and will graduate in May, 2023.

# VR/VRB PROGRAM FUNDING

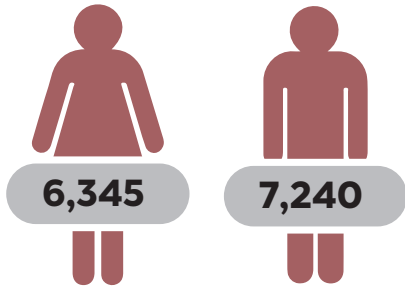
## Title One Section 110 Match Funding

	<b>2022</b>
<b>Section 110 Grant</b>	<b>\$49,922,356 (78.7%)</b>
<b>State Match</b>	<b>\$13,511,387 (21.3%)</b>
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$63,433,743 (100.0%)</b>

## IN-DEPTH LOOK AT VR & VRB

### Demographics of Person Served

#### Gender



Doesn't wish to self identify: 6%

#### Age at Application

20 <	3,737
21-30	1,624
31-40	1,785
41-50	1,987
51-60	2,433
61-70	1,475
71-80	475
81-100	75

#### Measurable Skill Gain (14-21)

Number of Students with Disabilities (SWD)  
Reported in PY 2021 **2,963**

Number of SWD receiving Pre-Employment  
Transitions Services **2,280**

#### Measurable Skill Gain (All Ages)

Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) Rate in PY 2021 **2,963**

Total Participants who earned MSGs **1,445**

Total MSGs earned **1,813**

#### MSGs Earned by Type:

- Educational Functional Level (EFL) **3**
- Secondary or Postsecondary Transcript/Report Card **1,332**
- Training Milestone **61**
- Skills Progression **68**

#### Race

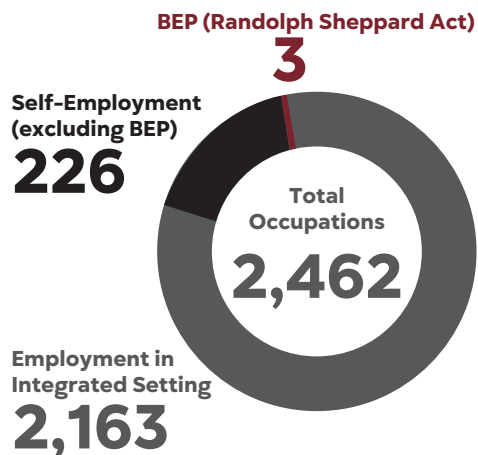
American Indian or Alaskan Native	.99%
Asian	.82%
Black or African American	58.45%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	.19%
Multi-Racial	.311%
White or Caucasian	76.41%
Hispanic/Latino	1.82%
Does Not Wish to Self Identify	.28%
Not Completed	.6%



# IN-DEPTH LOOK AT VR & VRB

## Status of Persons Rehabilitated

### Employment Status of Persons Rehabilitated



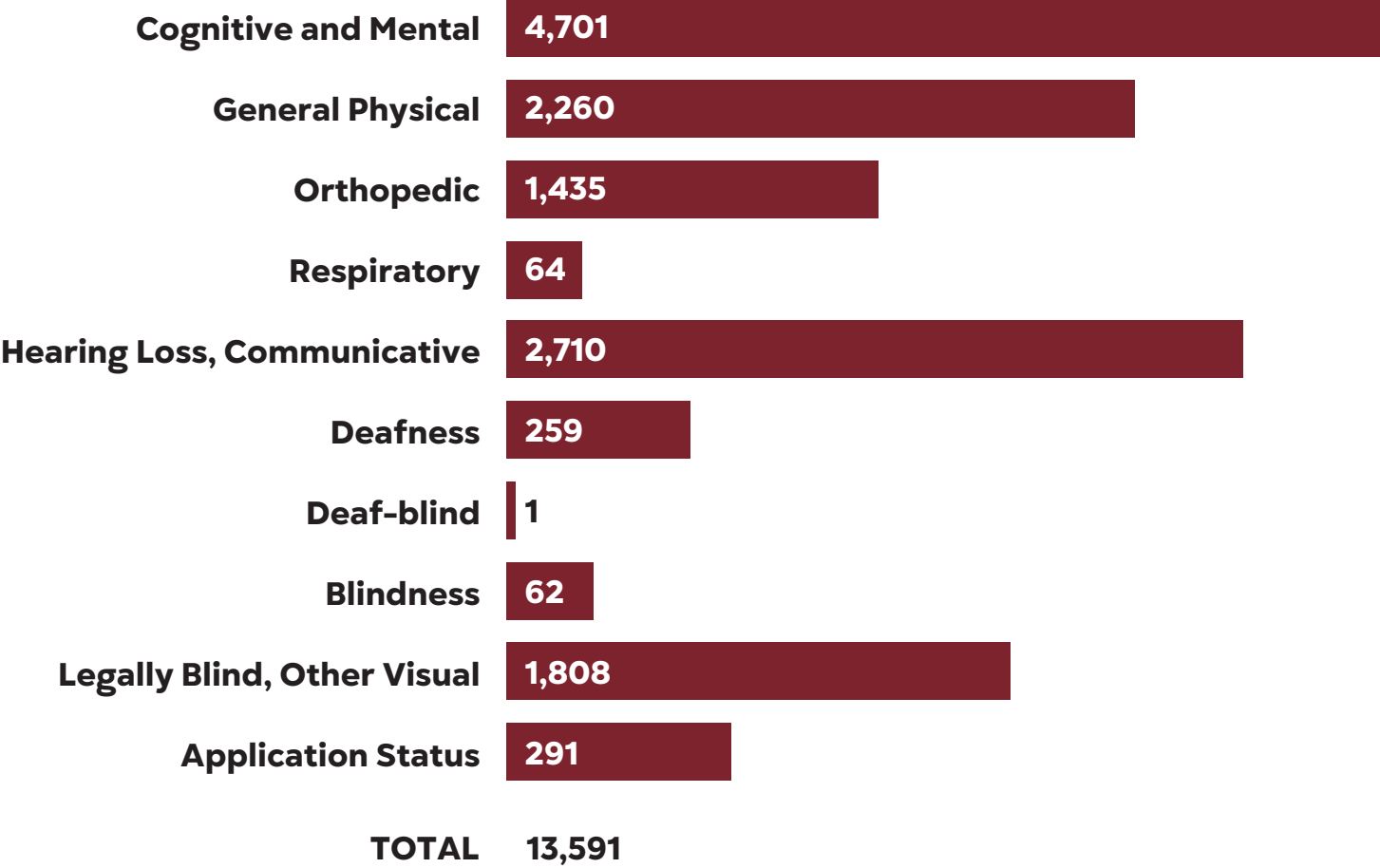
### Employment in Integrated Settings

Architecture & Engineering	14
Clerical and Administrative Support	2
RSA Special Occupations	3
Military Specific Occupations	7
Life Physical & Social Science	10
Computer & Mathematical	19
Legal	11
Operative	32
Transportation & Material Moving	168
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media	32
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	23
Laborer	39
Service Worker	80
Protective Service	41
Sales	54
Professional	54
Business & Financial Operation	70
Healthcare Support	53
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	74
Community & Social Service	72
Education, Training & Library	115
Food Preparation & Food	103
Building/Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	88
Construction & Extraction	93
Skilled Craft	143
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	114
Personal Care	106
Production Occupations	116
Technical/Paraprofessional	13
Sales & Related Occupations	125
Secretarial/Office/Clerical	296
Management	245
Office Worker, Secretarial, Clerical	47

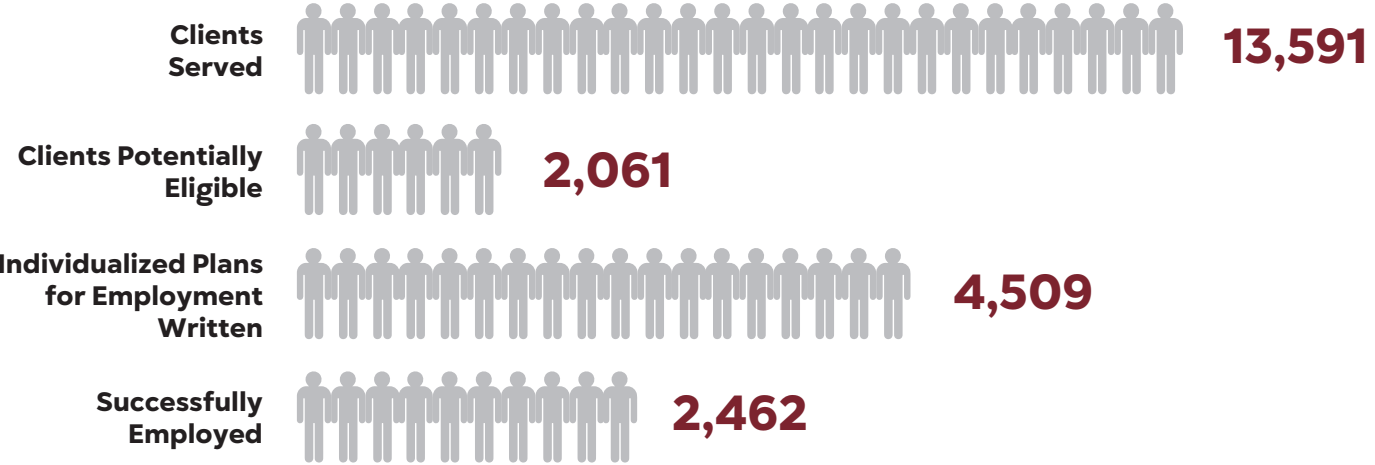
**2,462**

# IN-DEPTH LOOK AT VR & VRB

## Persons Served by Primary Disability



## Clients Served - 2022



# IN-DEPTH LOOK AT DDS & OSDP

## Office of Disability Determination Services

<b>Claims Processed</b>	<b>51,693</b>
<b>Average Processing Time</b>	<b>T2-194 days/T16-193 days</b>
<b>Average Cost per Case</b>	<b>\$46.16</b>
<b>Decisional Accuracy Rate</b>	<b>95.0%</b>

T2 benefits are based on the amount of years a person has worked

T16 benefits are based on a person's income and assets.

## Office of Special Disability Programs

	<b>Number Served</b>
<b>Independent Living Waiver</b>	<b>2,809</b>
<b>TBI/SCI Trust Fund</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>TBI/SCI Waiver</b>	<b>914</b>

## Proof of Performance

### Office of Disability Determination Services

#### Processing Time

Year	National Average	Mississippi Average
2015	110 Days	89 Days
2016	83/86 Days	90/85 Days
2017	83/85 Days	81/74 Days
2018	86/90 Days	84/71 Days
2019	87/94 Days	81/73 Days
2020	110/120 Days	105/105 Days
2021	122/134 Days	140/129 Days
2022	144/157 Days	194/193 Days

#### Cost Per Case

Year	National Average	Mississippi Average
2015	\$462	\$316
2016	\$491	\$310
2017	\$498	\$313
2018	\$542	\$378
2019	\$537	\$367
2020	\$599	\$425
2021	\$645	\$477
2022	\$741	\$461

#### Production Per Work Year

Year	National Average	Mississippi Average
2015	310	357
2016	313	324
2017	306	329
2018	303	306
2019	302	302
2020	255	268
2021	238	215
2022	230	233

## Office of Special Disability Programs

Year	National Average	Mississippi Average
2015	3,874	\$216,208,403
2016	4,043	\$222,365,814
2017	3,636	\$207,231,672
2018	3,270	\$156,960,081
2019	3,717	\$140,175,338
2020	3,706	\$148,593,508
2021	3,615	\$143,598,487
2022	3,723	\$166,479,730*

\* As of 6/30/22

\* Figures shown above are based on the Division of Medicaid cost reports for the Independent Living Waiver and the Traumatic Brain Injury Waiver. • OSDP numbers are reported from the State Fiscal Year.

# Mississippi ABLE

*Achieving a Better Life Experience*

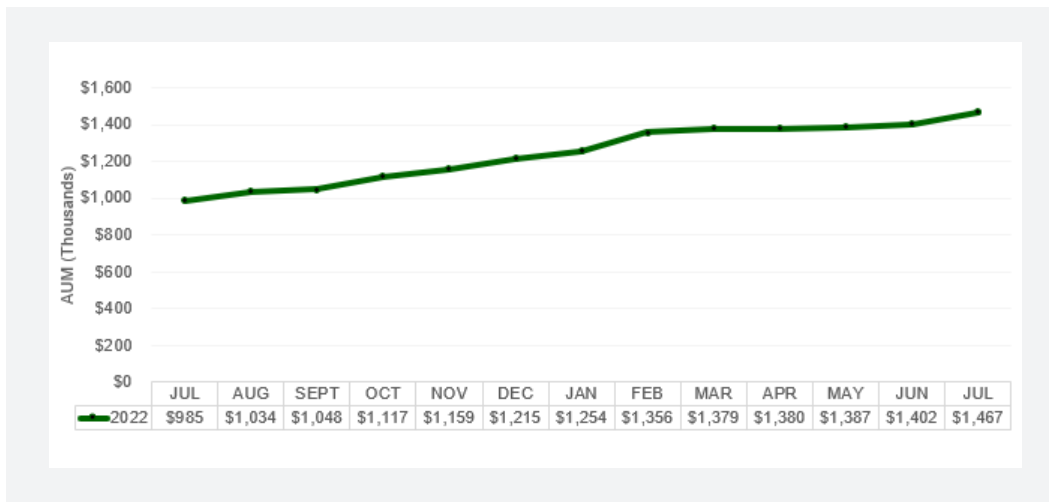


# The Mississippi ABLE Program

The Achieving a Better Life Experience Act (ABLE) of 2014 allows individuals with disabilities to save money in a tax-advantaged account that may be used for qualified disability related expenses while keeping eligibility for federal public benefits.

The Mississippi ABL Act is codified in Miss. Code Ann. 43-28-1 et. seq. The legislation established an ABL Board which works with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services to administer the program. The program launched in Mississippi in June of 2019.

Total Assets by Month



Accounts by Eligibility and Custodian Type  
(as of 7/31/2022)

Eligibility Description	Open Accounts	Funded Accounts	Open Unfunded Accounts	Total Assets	Average Account Size
The Account Owner is eligible for Supplemental Security Income benefits	120	112	8	\$503,706.46	\$4,497.38
The Account Owner is eligible for Social Security Disability benefits	94	87	7	\$468,946.16	\$5,390.19
The Account Owner has eligibility established by a disability certification	87	84	3	\$494,629.25	\$5,888.44

Custodian Description	Open Accounts	Funded Accounts	Open Unfunded Accounts	Total Assets	Average Account Size
Account Owner/Self	166	152	14	\$596,822.46	\$3,926.46
Parent/Guardian	79	77	2	\$421,619.49	\$5,475.58
Authorized Individual of Adult	56	54	2	\$448,839.93	\$8,311.85

To learn more about ABL or sign up visit [mississippiable.com](http://mississippiable.com).  
To order brochures or schedule a presentation email [msableinfo@mdrs.ms.gov](mailto:msableinfo@mdrs.ms.gov).

To contact customer service call 888-609-3469

# DISTRICTS & OFFICE LOCATIONS

## District I

51 County Road 166  
Oxford, MS 38655  
VR: (662) 234-3171  
VRB: (662) 234-6092  
OSDP: (662) 234-5744

## District II

2620 Traceland Drive  
Tupelo, MS 38801  
VR: (662) 842-1010  
OSDP: (662) 840-9947

615-A Pegram Drive  
Tupelo, MS 38801  
VRB: (662) 844-5830

## District III

104 Professional Plaza  
Greenwood, MS 38930  
VR: (662) 453-6172  
VRB: (662) 455-1432  
OSDP: (662) 477-1888

## District IV

317 Industrial Park Road  
Starkville, MS 39759  
VR: (662) 456-2116  
OSDP: (662) 324-1881

48 Datco Industrial Drive  
Columbus, MS 39702  
VRB: (662) 328-8807

## District V

3895 Beasley Road  
Jackson, MS 39213  
VR: (601) 898-7004  
OSDP: (601) 898-7034  
2550 Peachtree Street  
Jackson, MS 39296  
VRB: (601) 987-7403

## District VI

1032 Center Pointe Blvd  
Suite A  
Pearl, MS 39208  
VR: (601) 709-5631  
VRB: (601) 709-5625  
OSDP: (601) 709-5657

## District VII

1003 College Drive  
Meridian, MS 39307  
VR: (601) 483-3872  
VRB: (601) 483-5391  
OSDP: (601) 482-1594

## District VIII

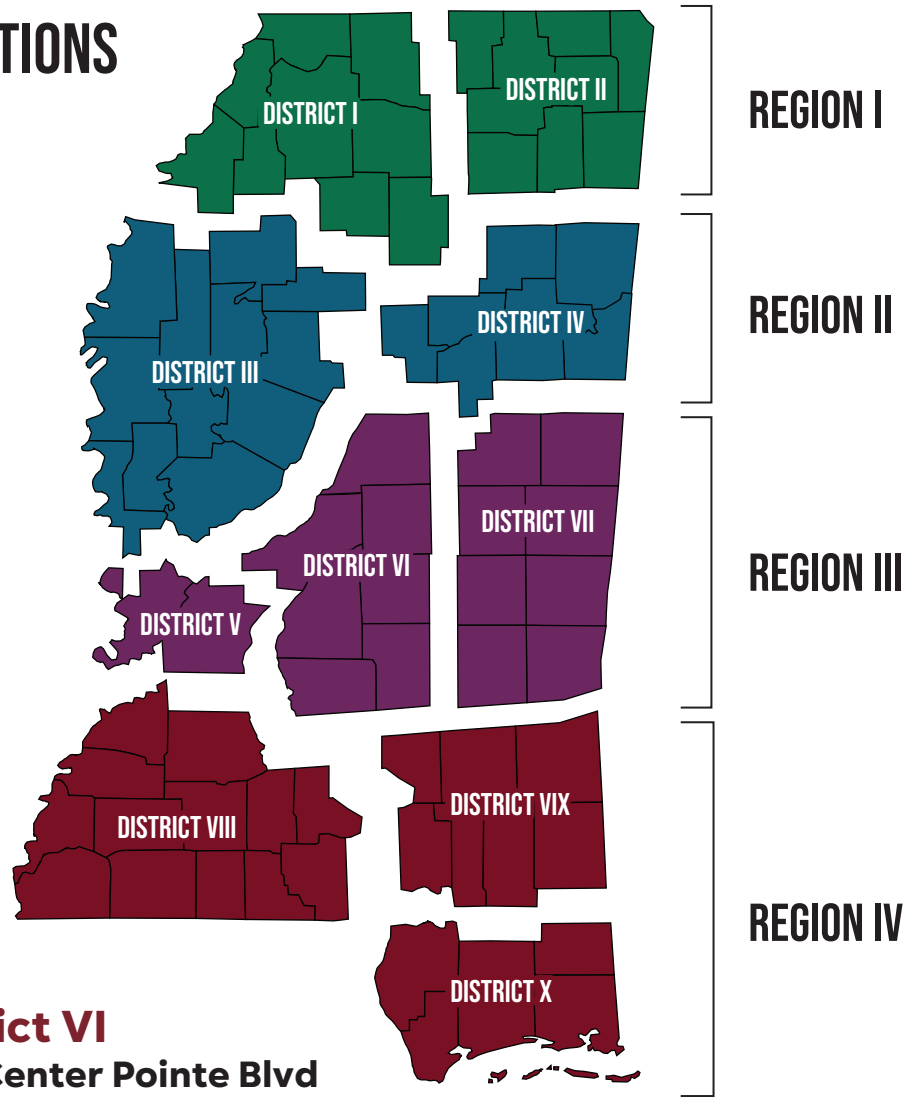
1221 Parkland Road  
McComb, MS 39648  
VR: (601) 249-4627  
VRB: (601) 684-3392  
OSDP: (601) 249-4140

## District IX

17 J M Tatum Industrial Drive  
Hattiesburg, MS 39401  
VR: (601) 545-5619  
VRB: (601) 545-5613  
18 J M Tatum Industrial Drive  
Hattiesburg, MS 39401  
OSDP: (601) 545-5644

## District X

13486 Fastway Lane  
Gulfport, MS 39503  
VR: (228) 575-3789  
VRB: (228) 575-3788  
OSDP: (228) 575-3786





**Your perspective is extremely valuable,  
and we greatly appreciate any and all feedback!  
(A digital copy of this report can be found at [www.mdrs.ms.gov](http://www.mdrs.ms.gov))**

**Please send direct comments or questions to:  
Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services  
ATT: Office of Communication  
Post Office Box 1698  
Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1698  
1.800.443.1000  
[www.mdrs.ms.gov](http://www.mdrs.ms.gov)**



**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF  
REHABILITATION SERVICES**

*Opportunities for Independence*