

*P*roviding THE FREEDOM TO LIVE



Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
2006 ANNUAL REPORT

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Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

Message from the Executive Director



Dear Governor Barbour and
Members of the Mississippi Legislature:

On behalf of the citizens with disabilities we serve, let me sincerely thank you for the support you have given the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS). We are making great strides in serving Mississippians with disabilities and you are certainly a part of every success story that we have. We are continually working to improve our services to consumers and develop partnerships with other agencies, consumer groups, and businesses.

At MDRS, we provide a quality program of comprehensive rehabilitation services, independent living services, and disability determination services for people with disabilities that will result in social and economic independence, employment opportunities, improved quality of life, and integration into the community. The Office of Special Disability Programs continues to increase home and community based services to our consumers with severe disabilities at a staggering rate. Without your help funding these services, many individuals would live in institutional settings instead of their own homes surrounded by their families and caregivers. The Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind have continued to meet or exceed all federal standards and indicators prescribed by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and were rated as the #1 combined state rehabilitation program in America. The Office of Disability Determination Services (DDS) continued to process a phenomenal number of cases with increased accuracy and with one of the best processing times in the country.

At MDRS, we are always working to serve Mississippians with disabilities in a timely and effective manner, mindful of our consumers' needs and concerns. Throughout our report, you will meet the many consumers and employers we have had the opportunity to serve and work with during 2006. I hope you enjoy reading about them and the accomplishments we have made together.

Sincerely,

H.S. "Butch" McMillan
Executive Director

Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

Who We Are

MISSION

It is the mission of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services to provide appropriate and comprehensive services to Mississippians with disabilities in a timely and effective manner.

VISION

Since the earliest program that would become the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services was established, there has been a singular goal: provide individuals with disabilities the freedom to live. This freedom is gained through the support and guidance of the Department Of Rehabilitation Services as well as its offices and community rehabilitation centers. This freedom is also gained through the determination of individuals with disabilities who are extraordinary people in their own right; people who envision a better life for themselves and work hard to attain it.

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) is one of the largest agencies in state government committed solely to serving individuals with disabilities in Mississippi. Each year, nearly one hundred thousand Mississippians receive services from four offices within MDRS: the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB), the Office of Special Disability Programs (OSDP), and the Office of Disability Determination Services (DDS).

Improving the independence of our customers is our reason for existing. Our staff will be informed and valued, pursuing lifelong learning and striving to improve their professional skills. We will strive to create an environment where customers and staff work together to achieve their common goal.



MDRS employees Kellye Summerhill and Greg Goldman

Funding for MDRS comes primarily from federal sources with only 10.2% of the budget received from the state general fund.

During 2006, the appropriated budget for MDRS totaled over \$139.1 million. Approximately \$14.3 was million in state funding, which included \$7.8 million in General Funds and \$6.5 million in Health Care Expendable Funds. The total MDRS budget included \$80.5 million in federal funds and \$44.3 million in “other” funding.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

What We Do

Vocational Rehabilitation Services - We help over 19,000 Mississippians a year overcome limitations imposed by physical or mental disabilities in order for that person to secure or maintain employment.

Community Rehabilitation Programs - We operate a network of 17 facilities, known as AbilityWorks, Inc., located throughout the state, to provide services such as vocational assessment, job training, and actual work experience for individual with disabilities.

Workforce Investment Act - We play a vital role in workforce development for our state to help ensure that Mississippians with disabilities are integrated into the workforce.

Transition Services - We 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 to provide a seamless transition from school to work.

Deaf Services - 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.

Supported Employment - We assist individuals with the most significant disabilities who require intensive support services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind - We specialize in working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired to ensure opportunities for inclusion into the workforce, community, and home.

Independent Living Services for the Blind - 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.

Business Enterprise Program - We provide support for self employment opportunities in the food service industry for Mississippians who are legally blind.

Disability Determination Services - We determine the medical eligibility of individuals with disabilities to receive benefits from Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) directed by federal guidelines from the Social Security Administration.

Special Disability Programs - We assist individuals with more severe disabilities continue to function or move toward functioning independently in the home or community.

Selected Social Security Services - We help individuals with disabilities currently receiving Social Security Disability benefits explore employment opportunities without the fear of losing their benefits.

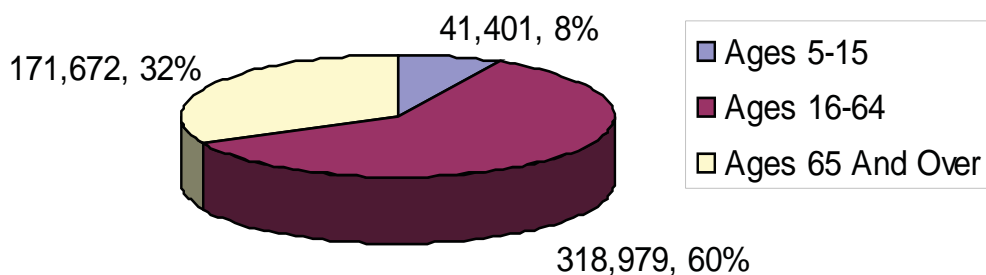
Assistive Technology - We provide evaluations and assessments assuring that customers of MDRS have maximum access to technology available for individuals with disabilities.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

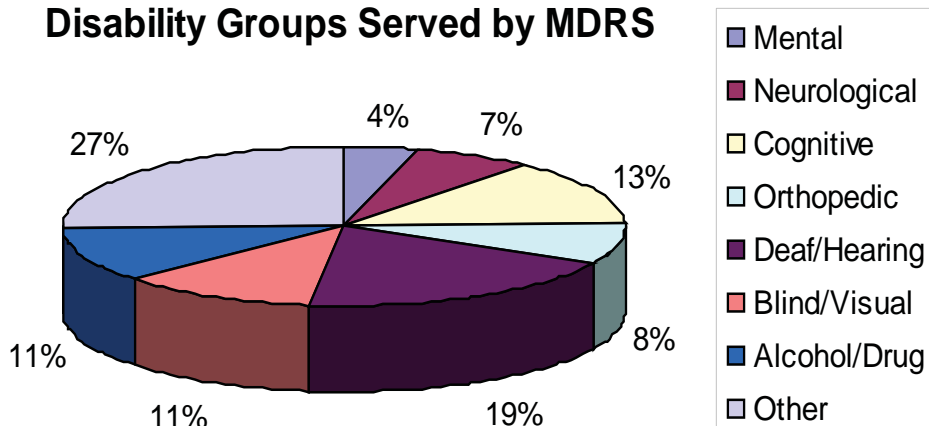
Who We Serve

Ages Of Mississippians With Disabilities



Five hundred thirty-one thousand nine hundred and ninety-two individuals in Mississippi have a disability. Overall, that is 20.6% of the state population.

Disability Groups Served by MDRS



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Access to Services

In order to provide the best service to clients of MDRS, the state has been divided into four (4) regions and nine (9) districts. District managers report to the regional manager over their area. Each district includes general counselors and assistants, as well as specialized staff for blind and deaf counseling services, independent living, supported employment services, and transition services. Information can be obtained through any of these offices or by calling toll-free 1-800-443-1000.

District Offices

District I

51 County Rd. 166
Oxford, Ms 38655
VR/VRB: (662) 234-2723
OSDP: (662) 234-6086

District II

2620 Traceland Dr.
Tupelo, MS 38801
VR/VRB: (662) 842-1010
OSDP: (662) 840-9947

District III

207 Industrial Park Road
Starkville, MS 39760
VR/VRB: (662) 323-9594
OSDP: (662) 324-9646

District IV

1003 College Drive
Meridian, MS 39304
VR/VRB: (601) 483-3881
OSDP: (601) 483-5394

District V

17 J. M. Tatum Industrial Dr.
Hattiesburg, MS 39404
VR/VRB: (601) 545-5619
OSDP: (601) 544-4860

District VI

10280 Larkin Smith Drive
Gulfport, MS 39503
VR/VRB: (228) 897-7601
OSDP: (228) 897-7624

District VII

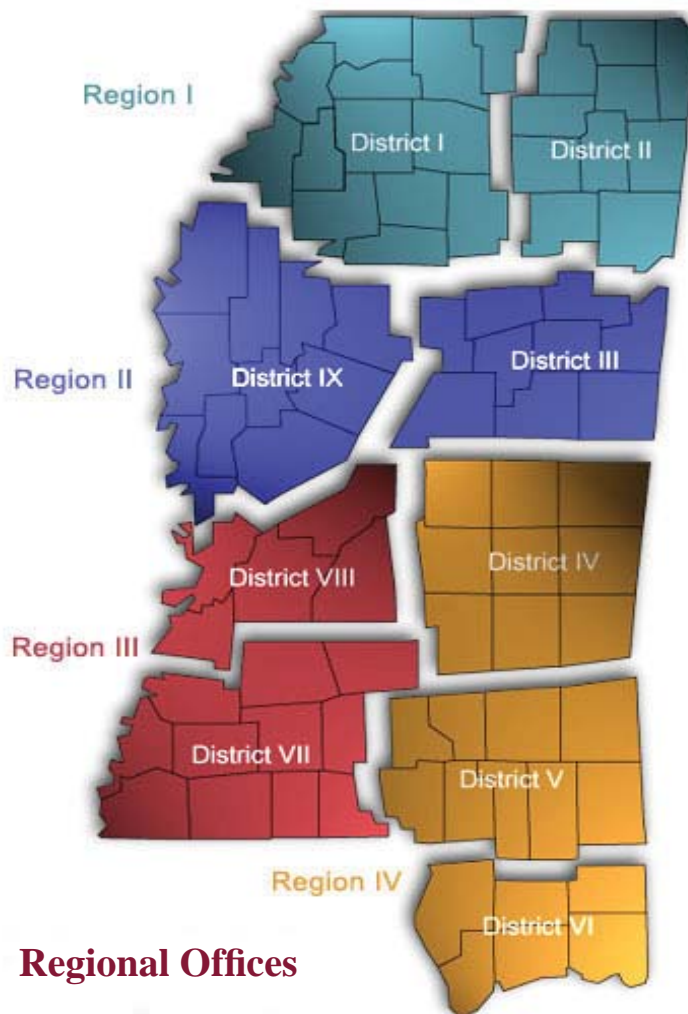
1400- AHarrison Drive
McComb, MS 39649
VR/VRB: (601) 249-2498
OSDP: (601) 249-4646

District VIII

3895 Beasley Road
Jackson, MS 39213
VR/VRB: (601) 898-7005
OSDP: (601) 898-7055

District IX

201 Highway 7 South
Greenwood, MS 38930
VR/VRB: (662) 453-6172
OSDP: (662) 455-2706



Regional Offices

Region I VR

613 Pegram Drive
Tupelo, MS 38801
(662) 842-1973

Region I OSDP

2701 County Road 402
South Fulton Drive
Corinth MS 38834
(662) 287-6951

Region II

201 Highway 7 South
Greenwood, MS 38930
VR: (662) 459-9795
OSDP: (662) 455-2706

Region III

3895 Beasley Road
Jackson, MS 39213
VR/VRB: (601) 898-7005
OSDP: (601) 898-7055

Region IV VR

10280 Larkin Smith Drive
Gulfport, MS 39503
(228) 897-7616

Region IV OSDP

18 J. M. Tatum Industrial Dr.
Hattiesburg, MS 39401
(601) 544-2613



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Vocational Rehabilitation Services



"The credit for Summer's success at work goes to her. When she first came to work, many people just saw her as someone in a wheelchair - now they see her for the person she is. She never uses her wheelchair as an excuse and that has earned her tremendous respect in the workplace."

Dr. Mark Yeager, Cental MS Residential Center
Director, shown with employee Summer Measell

Summer was referred to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services in her senior year of high school by her principal. As she continued her education, her VR counselor, Frankie Fitzgerald provided services and support until her degree was completed and she was ready for employment. That's when VR counselor Marbeth Carter entered Summer's life. Summer's employment goal was to teach school so Marbeth and Barbara White, MDRS Employment Coordinator, worked with Summer without success in job placement. She became very discouraged and believed that her obvious disability was the problem. Summer is mobile with a wheelchair, due to deformity of both legs. Although Summer felt she would be a good teacher, she was told in one interview that she would be unable to control the students because of her limitations and she began to have her doubts about her vocational goal. She decided to enroll at East Central Community College to obtain a technical degree in computer programming. She excelled and completed the degree and once again, Marbeth and Barbara began the job placement search with Summer. It was not an easy road, but Summer stayed determined and never gave up.

In June 2004, Marbeth received a phone call from Dr. Mark Yeager, Director of Central Mississippi Residential Facility, inquiring about Summer's job application. He knew Summer was a wheelchair user but didn't know a lot about her past job experiences. When he interviewed her for the job, Dr. Yeager was impressed by her straightforward attitude, strong will, and her obvious desire to work.

How do Summer's coworkers describe her? She's a very interesting and unique young lady with a dynamic personality and a love for her work that has created a strong relationship with her coworkers. When asked her feelings regarding her employment success, Summer states, "I don't see myself as a success because of my disability. I'm just out there like everyone else trying to make it."

In 2006, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services assisted over 19,000 eligible Mississippians with disabilities receive 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.

Individuals served by OVR have a wide array of disabilities including: hearing loss or deafness, amputations, mental and emotional disorders, epilepsy, developmental disease and disorders, traumatic brain injuries, orthopedic impairments, residuals from cancer, speech impairments, and the like.

The total number of successful employment outcomes for our VR consumers in 2006 was 3,803.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Job Assessment and Training

The Busy Bee Truck Plaza in Laurel is, as the name implies, a well visited spot by travelers and locals alike. It's the kind of business open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week that requires honest and dedicated employees like Donald Landrum. In fact, Donald's dedication to his job is apparent by the fact that he is on call 24 hours a day and works overtime when other employees can't work their shifts. In fact, Donald's supervisor considers him one of his most dependable and honest employees.

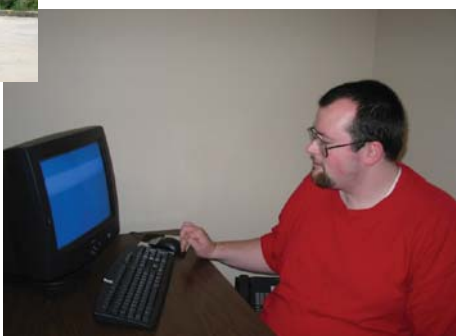
This wasn't always the story with Donald. Some of his family members even considered him incapable of finding or keeping a job. That's when one family member suggested he visit the local MDRS office in Laurel to inquire about assistance in overcoming a variety of disabilities which affected his adaptive behavior skills. When he first met VR counselor Pam Hall, she had her doubts about whether Donald would ever be successful in his employment pursuits without assistance and job skills training. She referred him to AbilityWorks of Laurel where Donald was evaluated and assigned to appropriate job training duties specialized to help him overcome the employment barriers caused by his disability. He quickly blossomed in that environment, even assisting AbilityWorks instructors with the reading classes taught to other clients. His self esteem and confidence skyrocketed!

The time had come for Donald to apply his newly learned and developed skills in the workplace so Job Placement Instructor, Angela Boykin, secured an on-the-job training with the Busy Bee Truck Plaza in Laurel. He completed his training with flying colors and was hired as a cashier in full time employment. Counselor Pam Hall and Donald give a lot of credit to the AbilityWorks staff for his success and Pam happily states, "Donald has come so far from the shy young man who sat in my office on his first visit. I'm proud of his accomplishments." Today, Donald remains employed by the Busy Bee continuing to excel in his job.



"Everyone I worked with at AbilityWorks was very helpful. I liked my job training and liked working with the people the most."

Donald Landrum, Heidleburg, MS



AbilityWorks provides vocational assessments, job training, and actual work experience for clients of OVR.

In 2006, AbilityWorks served 2,156 consumers placing 907 in employment opportunities resulting in 765 successful employment outcomes.

AbilityWorks are located in Brookhaven, Columbus, Amory, Kosciusko, Hattiesburg, Tupelo, Olive Branch, Jackson, Corinth, Oxford, Laurel, Philadelphia, Meridian, Greenville, Greenwood, Gulfport, and Starkville.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Supported Employment

When people meet Marcus Robinson for the first time, they can't help but smile. Marcus has a contagious smile that lights up the room and one immediately knows that Marcus is ready to help. That's exactly what Marcus does at the Madison County Chancery Clerk's Office. With the combined efforts of Vocational Rehabilitation staff, Supported Employment, and Work Adjustment Instructors, Marcus now has what he calls his "perfect job" and is an official deputy clerk.

Madison County Chancery Clerk Arthur Johnston first met with Work Adjustment Instructor Frances Coleman who explained the VR program to him and asked if he would interview Marcus. Mr. Johnston was very interested in the program and in Marcus but expressed concerns regarding Marcus' functional limitation in standing for long periods of time, a requirement for the job, since Marcus ambulates with forearm crutches and intermittent use of a wheelchair. He met with Marcus and was very impressed with his interview skills and abilities and wanted to find a way to accommodate Marcus. When Mr. Johnston learned that another county office was moving and that he could acquire a rotating file system which would allow Marcus to sit while filing, he was hired to work on a part time basis.

Marcus has been an inspiration to his supervisors and co-workers. He is constantly striving to perform to the best of his ability and enjoys coming to work every day. If you ask Marcus his favorite part about his job he smiles and says, "Everything." Since beginning last year, Marcus has received a raise and is currently working towards a full time position.

The Supported Employment Program serves 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 2006, 691 individuals received Supported Employment services, 124 resulting in successful employment.



"If I can find a way to accommodate an individual with a disability and put him to work that's what I want to do. People with disabilities want to be and need to be working and productive members of society."

Madison County Chancery Clerk Arthur Johnston, shown with employee Marcus Robinson.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Transition Services



Teacher Jessica Smith with Meaghan, a transition student, who received her occupational diploma. Also pictured is Transition Counselor, Renee Mayfield.

Students transitioning from school to work may experience difficult vocational decisions. These career choices are among life's most difficult decisions and are especially so for students with disabilities. In order to make the process easier, transition services are provided to eligible high school students with disabilities in their final year in the school system. After evaluation and assessment, a Transition Counselor determines if the student meets necessary qualifications for participation. If eligible, a counselor works directly with the student, his/her family, and school personnel to assure that there is an integrated program of education and vocational training available to help provide a seamless transition from school to work. To accomplish this, the counselor works with the classroom teacher to implement a career exploration curriculum for the student. When students leave the school system, they continue to work with the Vocational Rehabilitation system until such time that the individual is successfully employed.

In addition to maintaining an Interagency Agreement with the MS Department of Education, MDRS maintains 142 Cooperative Agreements between our District Offices and local School Districts that define procedural guidelines and methods of working cooperatively to provide services to students.

Examples of transition services are vocational-technical training, vocational evaluation, work adjustment training, on the job training, job search skills, and work experience programs.

These services may be available both on and off campus or at one of the 17 AbilityWorks near their school as a part of their school day.

In 2006, the number of students receiving transition services was 1,922. Successful employment outcomes resulted for 346 students.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Deaf Services

For Mississippians with disabilities, employment is vital to independence and a better quality of life. One such case is Josh, whose disability is severe bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. Josh applied for services with MDRS in his senior year of high school. His work experience was limited to the school cafeteria during his last semester of high school, part of vocational training through MDRS transition services. Josh hoped to go to college and his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Keely Green, and MDRS Employability Skills Training (EST) counselor, LaWanda Rausch, spent a great deal of time helping him explore this possibility. Due to family responsibilities, Josh elected to delay attending college and enter the workforce in an effort to help his family meet obligations. His counselors began working diligently with Josh preparing him to enter competitive employment.

Completing applications, interviewing skills, appropriate work attire, and work habits were only some of the counseling and guidance Josh received. His counselors contacted Fibre Craft and asked if they would interview Josh for a position with their company. When Ms. Childers, of Fibre Craft, saw Josh's enthusiasm and desire to work, he was hired immediately and began employment. Josh completed his probationary period, became eligible for full benefits, and has received a raise since beginning employment.

Later in his employment, Ms. Lawson, Josh's immediate supervisor, contacted his MDRS counselor and stated that Josh's hearing aides were no longer operable and could not be repaired. She had learned that insurance would not cover new hearing aides for him. Ms. Lawson stated that with the loss of localization of sounds, Josh was unable to do his job satisfactorily. With the help of his MDRS counselors, Josh received new hearing aides and assistive technology devices were reviewed with Josh and Ms. Lawson to determine if there were other needs that would help Josh become a more productive employee. A personal paging system was selected which allowed the supervisor to move Josh from one site to another in a more timely manner. Josh and Ms. Lawson remain extremely pleased with their working relationship and Ms. Lawson states that Josh remains a model employee.



Josh Coker on the job site at Fibre Craft

Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCDs) possess required communication skills level on the Signed Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI), an American Sign Language assessment developed by the Rochester Institute of Technology.

This skill, along with other specialized training, has been a vital factor in the successful rehabilitation of 596 persons with deafness or significant hearing loss.

In addition, 6 staff interpreters are available to assist consumers and staff members and use American Sign Language to insure maximum assessibility throughout the rehabilitation process.

Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Employment Partnerships



*Kimberly Dickinson, MDRS
Disability Program Navigator*

Employment for vocational rehabilitation consumers is achieved through a variety of programs and partnerships working in coordination with a VR counselor. In addition, the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 created a nation-wide one-stop delivery system of employment services, known as the Workforce Investment Network (WIN) in Mississippi. Vocational Rehabilitation is a mandated partner in WIA, or WIN in Mississippi, and plays an active role at the state and local levels. As partners, MDRS is responsible for developing jobs for our consumers by working with Mississippi businesses. Nine (9) Employment Coordinators work to build long term relationships with employers with the purpose of developing jobs for VR consumers. MDRS also operates 3 WIA funded programs for youth with disabilities, named Employability Skills Training, in 3 of the 4 local workforce investment areas in Mississippi. This program provides intensive services to youth who will be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services to help them prepare to enter the workforce.

Through special grant programs, MDRS houses various staff in the WIN Job Centers located throughout the state including: 5 Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach Specialists at 5 centers to counsel Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance beneficiaries about the effect employment will have on their benefits, and 2 staff of the Mississippi Model Youth Transition Innovation to work with youth with severe disabilities who are transitioning from school to work.

In 2006, MDRS continued implementation of two subgrants with the Mississippi Department of Employment Security, the state's administering entity for WIA. In these subgrants, MDRS received funds to continue projects regarding agency activities in the WIN Job Centers. These projects include funding of Disability Program Navigators (DPNs) in 9 centers throughout the state. MDRS Navigators, like Kim Dickinson, help people with disabilities access appropriate services in the WIN system. Kim is located in the Hattiesburg WIN Job Center and prides herself in being actively involved in community activities in order to promote the abilities of people with disabilities in the workforce. She does this by making outside presentations to educate individuals or groups on MDRS and the services we provide. Kim also began a quarterly newsletter for the Hattiesburg WIN Job Center staff called "Navigator Info" which assists in training the other WIN Center staff regarding disability issues and keeps them informed of activities of the Navigator Project. She is a member of the South MS Long Term Disaster Recovery Team and the Planning Committee for the City of Hattiesburg's Annual "Walk with Me" event that highlights disability issues during National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

MDRS has 10 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and 5 Counselor Assistants located in 5 WIN Job Centers on a full time basis.

In addition, MDRS has 14 VR Counselors co-located on a part time basis in 14 different WIN Job Centers.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Blind Services

Imagine what it's like being a hardworking young man just out of high school looking towards your future in nursing school. During your regular studying you realize that you can't read the print in your textbook. In fact, your having trouble focusing on small objects and things don't seem clear. Thomas "T.J." Faeser knows the feeling. Shortly after graduating in 2003 from D'Iberville High School, he lived this experience, and eventually lost his sight completely due to a genetic, generative eye disease known as Leber's Optic Neuropathy. That turn of events led T.J. to the MDRS Gulfport office where he met with a counselor for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind.

Working with MDRS counselors, T.J. began planning for his future career. He knew that he wanted a job where he could help others and began thinking about a job with his local police or fire department as a dispatcher. He was referred to a MDRS personal adjustment center to assist him in making personal and vocational adjustments to his recent blindness. One road block for T.J. was anxiety attacks he suffered while in public places with crowds. He would become anxious because he knew people were looking at him as he found his way with his cane and he didn't feel comfortable with his mobility skills. Orientation and mobility training provided by MDRS helped T.J. overcome this fear and greatly increased his confidence. As these skills improved, T.J. began focusing on vocational adjustment skills which included learning new computer skills using adaptive software.

When T.J. completed his training, the job search started with the assistance of his counselor, Bryce Upshaw. Bryce knew that T.J. was a bright and enthusiastic young man and anticipated that he would be successful in any job. He was right. T.J. is the state's first blind emergency dispatcher working with the Department of Marine Resources. MDRS staff worked with Marine Resources human resource staff in job training and technology including a laptop and adaptive software that lets T.J. convert information into an audio format. His job responsibilities include answering radio calls from officers patrolling waters in the Gulf and checking boat registration information. T.J. credits MDRS in helping him live independently and improving his confidence. In fact, not only is he the first blind emergency dispatcher, he's also the first blind body-builder to win the Mr. Gulf Coast, not once, but twice. T.J. feels he was fortunate to lose his sight as a young man rather than later in life. He knows he's young enough to learn and adapt to whatever changes come his way and no longer lives with self-doubt.

In 2006, OVRB served 2,124 consumers who received 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 successful employment outcomes for our VRB consumers in 2006 was 584.

"At first I thought, what am I going to do? My whole life changed in a blink."

T.J. Faeser, shown with Counselor Bryce Upshaw and MDRS Executive Director Butch McMillan



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through Blind Services

Independent Living Services for the Blind

Independent Living Services for the Blind enable individuals with blindness to meet their independent living goals. Through these programs, eligible consumers receive adjustment services, peer group counseling, assistive technology evaluation, orientation and mobility training, personal adjustment instruction and training in techniques for daily living. Eligible consumers may receive home, office or community instruction, assistance with transportation, aids and appliances, and therapeutic treatment even though their potential for returning to work may be limited.

In 2006, the Independent Living Program for the Blind provided services to 818 consumers.

Itinerant Teacher Program

Itinerant Teachers are specially trained to provide services to consumers who are blind or visually impaired. Working with the area counselor, teachers provide itinerant services in the consumer's home, community or work environment. Teachers work closely with counselors to coordinate services, evaluate client needs, develop living-needs plans and instructional materials, and provide onsite training.

In 2006, Itinerant Teachers were provided for 78 consumers.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

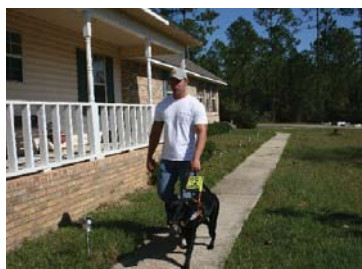
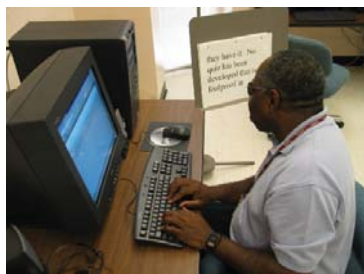
The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides full-time self-employment opportunities for about 40 legally blind Mississippians. These BEP entrepreneurs, more commonly known as blind vendors, operate a variety of businesses including vending machine routes, snack bars and cafeterias on military bases. In 2006, BEP was successful in securing a new avenue for vendors. The first of two Interstate Highway Rest Area Vending Pavilions managed by BEP vendors was established on I-55 near Batesville.

In 2006, Two (2) individuals were provided initial training, licensed, and placed as BEP vendors.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Personal & Vocational Adjustment



Three facilities around the state serve blind individuals and assist them in making personal and vocational adjustments to blindness. The goal of these facilities is to increase and improve independence and self-reliance of those with severe visual impairments.

Addie McBryde Rehabilitation Center for the Blind

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. This training capitalizes on remaining sight with the use of magnifying devices and software as a part of an individual's training. Also, the state's first autonomous Deaf-Blind Program was established in 2001 for high functioning individuals who are both deaf and blind. In 2003, this program was consolidated at the Addie McBryde Center.

REACH Center for the Blind

The REACH Center for the Blind in Tupelo, formerly called Allied Personal Adjustment Center, began in 2003 under the provision of structured discovery training. This method involves the use of sleep shades (blindfolds) for all students at all times, increasing self reliance and reducing recidivism. Mississippi is the only state in the nation to use publicly funded rehabilitation centers to provide personal adjustment training to blind consumers under both of these methodologies.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (OVRB) also works closely with Mississippi Industries for the Blind by means of a contractual relationship in the provision of an outplacement program designed to help persons who are blind obtain work in a competitive, integrated setting.

In 2006, the Addie McBryde Center provided training to 138 consumers. REACH Center for the Blind provided training to 35 consumers. Both centers experienced an increase in the number of consumers served from 2005.

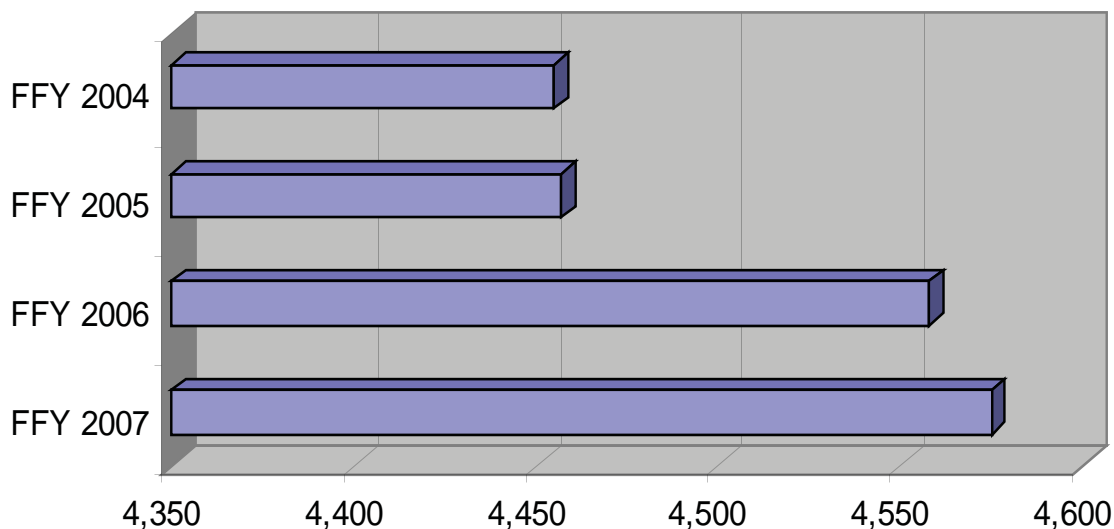
Also in 2006, Mississippi Industries for the Blind averaged placing 1 consumer per month in competitive, integrated, employment.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

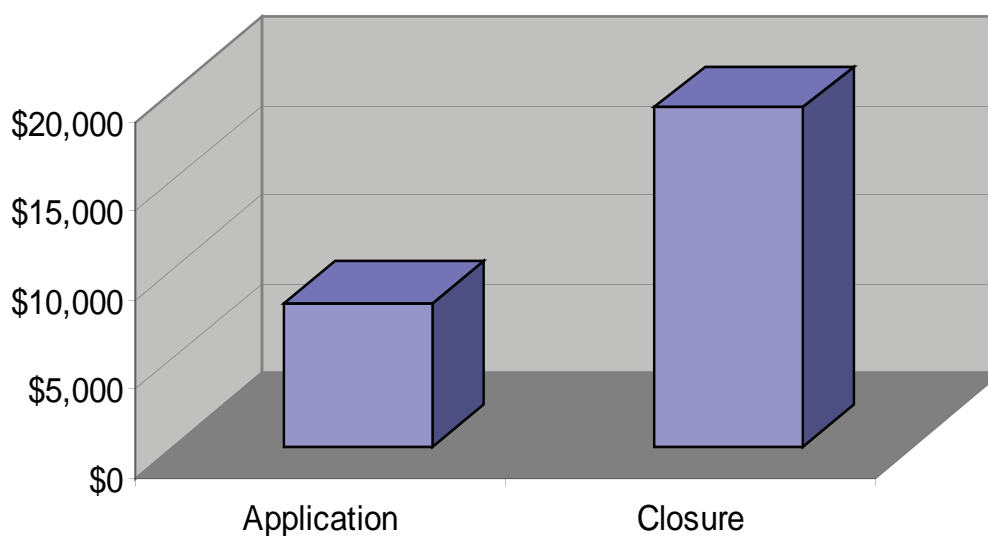
through our Accomplishments

MDRS VR/VRB Successfully Rehabilitated Clients



Annual earnings increase by 135% after an individual receives services from the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services.

Annual Earning Comparison of Rehabilitants



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Disability Determination

The Office of Disability Determination Services (DDS) is 100% federally funded through the Social Security Administration (SSA) and establishes eligibility for Mississippians with disabilities that apply for Supplemental Security Income and/or Social Security Disability Insurance. Applicants file for disability benefits in Social Security field offices throughout the state and these claims are forwarded to our office where criteria set forth by SSA is used in developing the claim and making the disability decision.

When a claim reaches DDS, it is assigned to a Disability Examiner. An examiner is responsible for developing the claim and recommending a disability decision, based on SSA criteria. In order to carry out this process, the examiner develops the medical and vocational evidence required to evaluate the extent of the applicant's limitations. Contacts by mail and/or telephone are made with the claimant and treating sources to secure pertinent information. If the available medical information is incomplete, the examiner may request a consultative examination (CE), at no cost to the applicant.

The Mississippi DDS has a Medical Unit staffed with medical and psychological consultants who provide expert medical knowledge about the functional limitations imposed by the impairments present. When all medical and vocational development is complete, the examiner recommends a decision regarding disability. When all case processing actions are completed, cases may be randomly selected for internal quality review within the department (QA) and/or for review by the Disability Quality Branch (DQB), in SSA's Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia.

Mississippi DDS continues to demonstrate national and regional leadership in its efforts to meet regional and national goals. In 2006, Mississippi DDS exceeded many goals in measurable performance elements and, in several of the categories, including processing times and cost effectiveness, the Mississippi DDS was in the top achievers nationally.

The leadership and dedication of the Mississippi DDS is reflected in our willingness to participate in new endeavors, and work with other organizations in a cooperative spirit. The Mississippi DDS has faced adversities and challenges in hiring and recruitment, but has never wavered in our commitment to serve the public. The Mississippi DDS is the best in the nation and exemplifies our dedication to public service.

The Mississippi DDS continues to be one of the best in examination, processing over 70,000 claims this year, which result in more than \$100 million in federal payments made to Mississippians per month.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Disability Determination



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Highest productivity in the region, with Production Per Worker Year (PPWY) 37 points above the national average and 30 points above the regional average.
- Performance accuracy improved with net accuracy of 96.2%, above regional and rational averages.
- Overall processing time more than 6 days below the regional average, and 8 days below the national average.
- Both overall cost per case and medical cost per case are the lowest in the region and one of the lowest in the nation. The lowest cost-per-case in the Region (\$78 below the Regional average).
- A Presumptive Disability rate four times the national average and twice the regional average. This reflects a commitment to expediting payments to the most needy citizens.
- Continued outstanding partnerships with the Area Director Office, Social Security Office, and Disability Adjudicative Review offices in Mississippi, assuring the smooth flow of cases in the new electronic process.
- Continued national leadership in the Electronic Records Express (ERE) project, with percentage of electronic records more than 11 points higher than the national average.
- Assisted other states in the Region in the medical review of disability claims



DDS staff members are always helpful when discussing issues with claimants filing for Social Security benefits. Social Security Staff is on hand to assist with matters involving field offices.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Independent Living Services



It was the big game everyone was waiting to see, Mississippi Valley State against rival undefeated Prairie View in basketball. One of the rising young stars for Valley, Michael Archie, had been waiting for this night and a chance to show off his talents to his family and friends. He was acclaimed in three sports and considered one of the most well known college basketball players in Mississippi. His proud parents were thrilled as they watched Michael lead the way in Valley's defeat over Prairie View. It's a night they will remember forever; not just because of the win, but because of the phone call they received later that evening. Michael's dad was accustomed to receiving phone calls at bed time. He was a veteran law enforcement officer who had recently been promoted to Detective for the local police department. Although he was accustomed to taking emergency calls at home, this one was different. The bad news was about his own son; the son he had just watched lead his team to victory on the basketball court.

Michael was hit by a stray bullet in an exchange of gunfire at a local college hang-out where people were gathering to celebrate the victory. The injury left him paralyzed and his parent's fearful for his survival and future. Luckily, Michael survived his life threatening injury and his recovery process began. Shella Head, a counselor with the Office of Special Disability Programs (OSDP) heard about the tragedy and contacted Michael's family at the hospital the day after the incident. Shella let the Archies know that MDRS would be there to help Michael with his transition back into his home. This was welcome news for the family who had vowed to do whatever it took to make sure Michael continued to have a productive life no matter what the cost. Since Michael had suffered a traumatic spinal cord injury, he qualified for services through the MDRS Traumatic Brain Injury/Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury Waiver and the TBI/SCI Trust Fund. When Michael was released from the hospital and returned home, his parents began to realize how important the services they would receive from MDRS would be for Michael. These services included personal care attendant services through the TBI/SCI Waiver program which allowed Michael's parents to return to work. They also included home modifications which allowed Michael to live independently in his home and vehicle modifications which gave him more freedom and independence in his community.

In fact, due to the services provided, Michael returned to college the following semester and graduated in May 2006 right on schedule. As Michael states, "because of the services I received I felt as if I had been let out of prison. A new way of life has unfolded for me and due to Ms. Head's help and MDRS, I can live life to the fullest and know that I've been blessed."

During 2005, the Office of Special Disability Programs provided independent living services for 2,026 individuals with significant (severe) disabilities.

Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Home and Community Services

State Attendant Care Program

In 1985, the Mississippi Legislature created the State Attendant Care Fund. This program provides personal care services to individuals with Significant (Severe) Disabilities. The provision of a personal care attendant allows an individual to function as independently as they can in the home or community. Often times, individuals are able to continue in competitive employment.

Independent Living Waiver

Through a cooperative agreement with the Mississippi Division of Medicaid, MDRS administers this home and community based program which allows us to provide personal care services to eligible individuals. Eligible individuals are those with severe orthopedic and/or severe neurological impairments that render them dependent upon others, assistive devices, other types of assistance or a combination of these to accomplish the activities of daily living. In addition, these individuals must be medically stable and able to communicate effectively with caregivers, personal care attendants, case managers, and other involved in their care. Without this service, these individuals would be at risk of nursing home placement.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Spinal Cord Injury Waiver

Through a cooperative agreement with the Mississippi Division of Medicaid, MDRS administers this home and community based program which allows us to provide attendant care, respite care, limited home modifications, medical equipment and supplies, and transition assistance services to individuals determined eligible. Eligible individuals are those with traumatic brain injury and/or traumatic spinal cord injury who are certified as medically stable by their primary care physician. Without this service, these individuals would be at risk of nursing home placement.

In 2006, a total of 554 individuals received services through the TBI/SCI Waiver.

Traumatic Brain Injury and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund Program

In 1996, the Mississippi Legislature established the TBI/SCI Trust Fund. These funds are 100% special funds generated by surcharges on moving traffic violations and violations of the Implied Consent Law. The goal of this program is to enable individuals who are severely disabled by a traumatic brain injury or traumatic spinal cord injury to resume the activities of daily living and re-integrate into the community with as much dignity and independence as possible.

In 2006, a total of 874 individuals received services utilizing funding through the TBI/SCI Trust Fund.



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Access to Services

State Office Building

1281 Highway 51 North

Madison, MS 39110

Phone: 601-853-5100 or 1-800-443-1000

www.mdrs.state.ms.us

Executive Director

H.S. McMillan

601-853-5200

Management Information Systems

Paula Brown, Director

601-853-5141

Deputy Director

Shelia C. Browning

601-853-5209

Financial Management Services

Chris Howard, Director

601-853-5220

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

Gary Neely, Director

601-853-5230

Human Resources Development

Rene Woodward, Director

601-853-5260

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind

Michael Gandy, Director

601-853-5245

Assistive Technology Division

Kris Geroux, Director

662-324-0285

Office of Disability Determination Services

Jo Ann Summers, Director

601-853-5235

Selected Social Security Services

Rebecca Doyle, Director

601-853-5332

Office of Special Disability Programs

Lavonda Hart, Director

601-853-5333

Administrative Services

Tommy Browning, Director

601-853-5151



Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

through Boards and Advisory Councils

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Providing THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

Organizational Chart

