

2020
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MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF
REHABILITATION SERVICES

Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
Annual Report

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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) 2021 Annual Report. The second half of this fiscal year (January 1, 2020-June 30, 2020) brought with it many challenges in dealing with the repercussions of the COVID pandemic. Our team has worked hard to stay safe while continuing to provide services to Mississippians with disabilities during this challenging period. Those challenges will continue into the next fiscal year and we hope to be able to better analyze and adapt until this season is past. 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 back on this fiscal year, we have seen an increase in the number of Mississippi ABLE accounts. The COVID pandemic has forced us to continue to adapt our efforts in spreading the word about ABLE. Our total number of Project SEARCH sites has grown to seven with four additions just this year. We expect at least that many in the next fiscal year. Our project with beauty retail giant Sephora in North Mississippi has already resulted in the hiring of over 100 individuals with disabilities and is proving to be a model of inclusivity for businesses across the globe.

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

- Processed 60,1374 claims
- Led the Region by being the first State in the Region to rollout our new case processing system (DCPS). Expect 100% implementation by March, 2021
- Production Per Worker Year (PPWY) of 268
- Cumulative Cost per Case of 425 is one of the lowest in Region.
- Continued to process hearings expeditiously prior to COVID.

Office of Special Disability Programs (OSDP)

- Provided services to over 3,500 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 \$60,000 cost savings per individual per year to the State of Mississippi through the administering of two Home and Community Based Programs
- Provided more than 200 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 10,000 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 3,000 individuals with disabilities to successfully obtain and retain employment
- Collaborated and partnered with local school agencies to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to over 7,100 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 one job fairs with over 130 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris M. Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ABILITYWORKS

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 2020, AbilityWorks served a total of 1,356 individuals with disabilities. AbilityWorks establishes cooperative agreements with local businesses to provide community based work experience, customized training and on-the-job training.

1,356 CLIENTS SERVED

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Assistive Technology is defined as the application of technology to alleviate barriers that interfere with the lives of individuals with disabilities, and 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 2020, the Assistive Technology division served a total of 974 individuals with disabilities.

This information only reports clients who were assigned to the Assistive Technology division during SFY 2020 and does not reflect clients who continue to be served from previous fiscal year(s).

995 CLIENTS SERVED

DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

We operate in a partnership with the Social Security Administration 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.

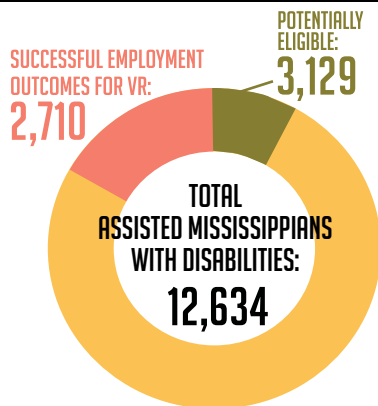
60,374 CLAIMS PROCESSED

SPECIAL DISABILITY PROGRAMS

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 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 State Fiscal Year 2020, the Office of Special Disability Programs provided independent living services for 3,706 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.

3,706 INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES PROVIDED

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES



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 State Fiscal Year 2020, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services assisted 12,634 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 3,129 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 2020 was 2,710.

2,710 SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENTS

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. 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 communications 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 pre-requisite 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 2020, Deaf Services were provided to 1,189 Mississippians resulting in 1,189 successful rehabilitations.

1,189 SUCCESSFUL REHABILITATIONS

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

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 2020, 555 individuals received Supported Employment services, 82 resulting in successful employment.

82 SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENTS

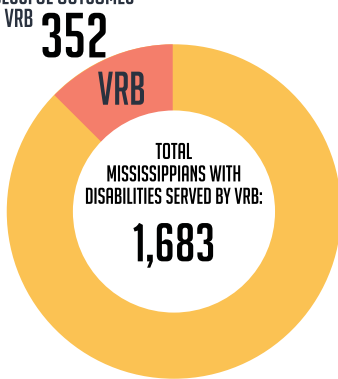
TRANSITION & YOUTH CAREER SERVICES

We work with potentially eligible students with disabilities between the ages of 14 through 21 to provide pre-employment transition services, as well as our 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 begin to build a foundation for a career pathway, and then to help provide a seamless transition from school to work. In SFY 2020, the number of students receiving transition services was 7,176 potentially eligible and 76 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.

76 SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENTS

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES FOR VRB



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 3,062 successful employment outcomes by MDRS, 352 were achieved through Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind. VRB provided consumers 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 2020 was 1,683.

352 SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

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. In SFY 2020, the Addie McBryde Center provided training to 70 consumers.

PROVIDED TRAINING TO 70 CONSUMERS

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

The Business Enterprise Program 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 2020, 35 individuals operated successful businesses as BEP vendors and 3 others are in training to become vendors.

35 SUCCESSFUL BEP VENDORS

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. In SFY 2020, ILB served over 550 consumers through indirect services such as health fairs, vision screening, peer groups, and outreach. ILB provided direct services to 796 consumers.

PROVIDED SERVICES TO 796 CONSUMERS

ITINERANT TEACHER PROGRAM

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 2020, the Itinerant Teacher Program provided 19 services for VRB consumers.

PROVIDED SERVICES TO 19 CONSUMERS

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The MDRS Office of Business Development (OBD) is committed to being a valuable resource for any business. During FY 2020 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 to find a MDRS Business Development Representative in your area.

Total Calls: 11,053.0

Total Referrals: **431**

Final Employed: **143**

Final Adult Internships: **23**

Final Student Internships: **39**

Final Community Based Evals: **6**

Secondary Adult Internships: **27**

Secondary Community Based / Internships: **2**

Year End Active Job Search / Internships: **61**

Average Referral Placement Percentage Per Rep: **74.2%**

2020 Average Monthly Referrals: **29.1**

2020 Average Monthly Placements: **12.5**

Referral Source:

VR – **60.3%**

VRB – **7.0%**

SE – **29.5%**

DEAF – **.9%**

A&D – **2.3%**

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.

Over 50 individuals with disabilities have graduated from Project SEARCH Mississippi since Project SEARCH UMMC launched in August 2018. 22 of those individuals have gained employment. Fourteen (14) individuals are currently participating in a 320-hours paid internship which will result in gainful employment. 50 interns are currently participating in Project SEARCH in seven locations across the state.

VR/VRB PROGRAM FUNDING

Title One Section 110 Match Funding

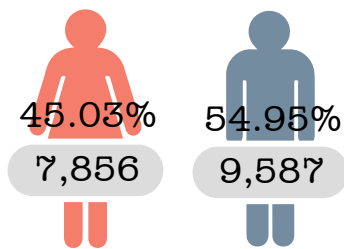
2019

Section 110 Grant	\$46,749,348 (78.7%)
State Match	\$12,652,619 (21.3%)
Total Funding	\$59,401,967 (100.0%)

IN-DEPTH LOOK AT VR & VRB

Demographics of Persons Served

Gender



Doesn't wish to self identify: .03%

Education Level of Persons Served

Bachelor's degree/Masters Degree; Degree above Masters	4.34%
Elementary Education (grade 1-8)	0.97%
High School graduate or GED	17.74%
No Formal Schooling	0.11%
Post-secondary education, academic/Associates deg.	4.26%
Secondary Education, no HS diploma; Occup	9.27%
Special Education (completion or in attendance)	2.35%
Technical or Occupation Skills Program (not provided by employer)	0.13%
Adult Secondary Education Program (Non-State)	0.13%
Adult Secondary Education Program (State)	.68%
Career/ Tech Training Program:	
(Leading to a Recognized Post Secondary credential)	1.07%
(Not Leading to a Recognized Post Secondary Credential)	0.34%
Employer Training Program	0.02%
Education not listed	23.44%
IPE has not been developed as of 6/30/19	2.61%
No Plan Date	32.53%

Age at Application

20 <	6,758
21-30	1,784
31-40	2,051
41-50	2,156
51-60	2,536
61-70	1,598
71-80	480
81-100	85

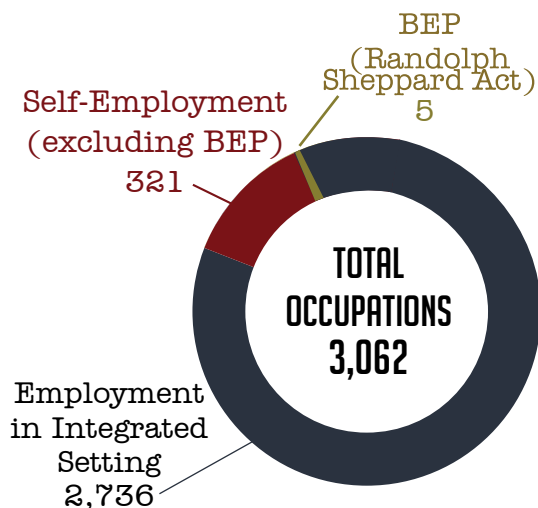
Race

American Indian or Alaskan Native	.29%
Asian	.40%
Black or African American	44.60%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	.05%
Multi-racial	2.62%
White or Caucasian	51.80%
Does not wish to self identify	.09%
Not Completed	.15%

IN-DEPTH LOOK AT VR & VRB

Status of Persons Rehabilitated

Employment Status of Persons Rehabilitated



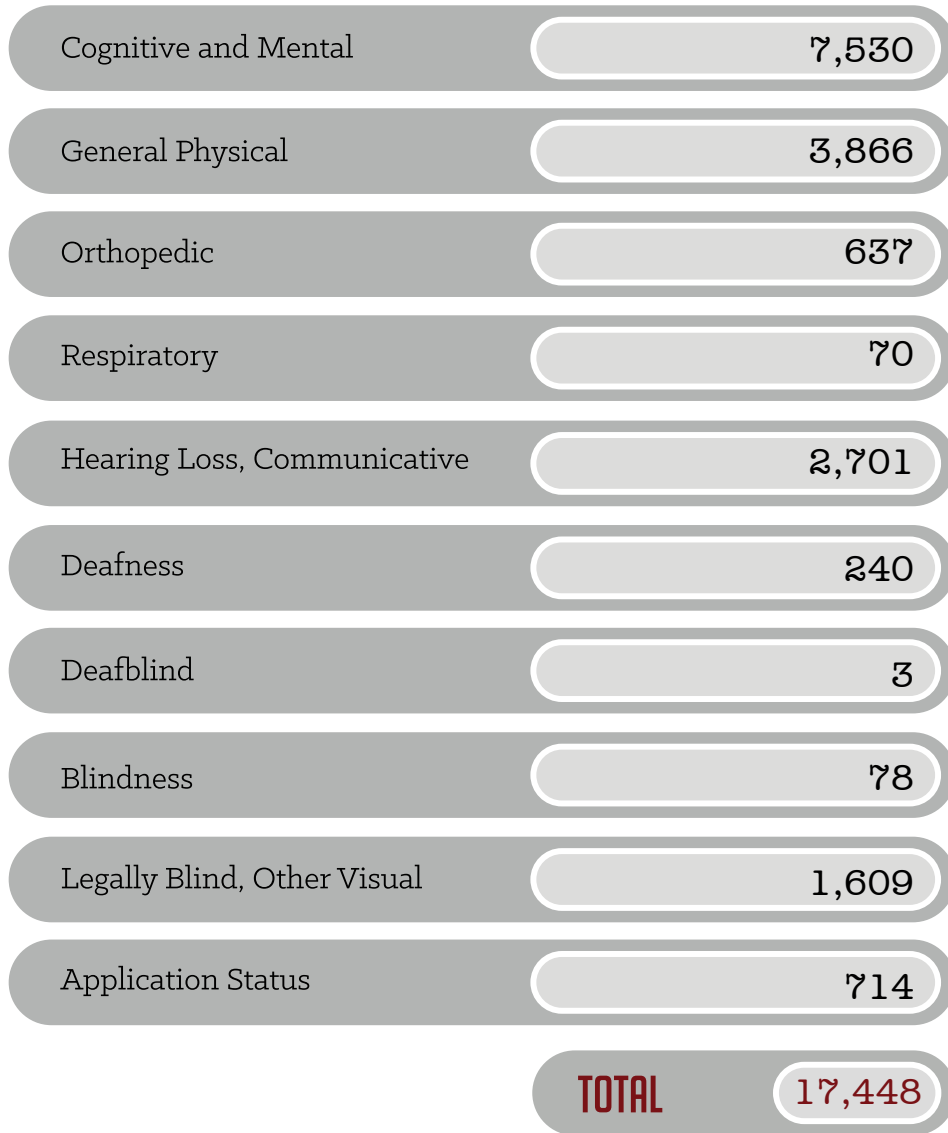
Employment in Integrated Settings

Office/Administrative Support	405
Sales	225
Transportation & Material Moving	188
Management	181
Food Preparation & Food	158
Production Occupations	156
Skilled Craft	163
Building/Grounds Cleaning & Maint.	138
Personal Care	116
Service Worker	103
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	110
Education, Training & Library	118
Construction & Extraction	87
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	87
Community & Social Service	80
Healthcare Support	56
Protective Service	60
Professional	45
Laborer	60
Business & Financial Operation	43
Operative	33
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	25
Architectures & Engineering	15
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media	29
Legal	14
Technical/Paraprofessional	16
Life Physical & Social Science	7
Computer & Mathematical	14
Military Specific Occupations	4

2,736

IN-DEPTH LOOK AT VR & VRB

Persons served by Primary Disability



Clients Served - 2020



IN-DEPTH LOOK AT DDS & OSDP

Office of Disability Determination Services

Claims Processed	60,374
Average Processing Time	T2-105 days/T16-105 days
Average Cost per Case	\$425.00
Accuracy Rate	95%

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

	Number Served
Independent Living Waiver	2,621
TBI/SCI Trust Fund	42
TBI/SCI Waiver	905

PROOF OF PERFORMANCE

Office of Disability Determination Services

Processing time

Year	National Average	Mississippi Average
*2014	104 Days	89 Days
*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

Cost per case

Year	National Average	Mississippi Average
2014	\$462	\$316
2015	\$462	\$316
2016	\$491	\$310
2017	\$498	\$313
2018	\$542	\$378
2019	\$537	\$367
2020	\$599	\$425

Production per Work Year

Year	National Average	Mississippi Average
2014	310	357
2015	310	357
2016	313	324
2017	306	329
2018	303	306
2019	302	302
2020	255	268

*Prior years reporting is based on Overall Processing time. The reporting for FFY2016 forward is based on claim type (T2 vs T16).

Office of Special Disability Programs

Year	Number of Clients Served	Annual Cost Savings to the Division of Medicaid
2014	3,739	\$220,322,128
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	\$146,367,819

*As of 6/30/20

*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.



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 ABLE Act is codified in Miss. Code Ann. 43-28-1 et. seq. The legislation established an ABLE Board which works with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services to administer the program. The program launched in Mississippi in June of 2020.

Month	New Accounts	Closed Accounts	Total Contributions	Withdrawal
July	8	1	\$17,115.00	(\$50.00)
August	10	4	\$15,549.25	(\$5,633.09)
September	9	5	\$65,271.45	(\$1,479.22)
October	9	0	\$45,421.72	(\$1,090.10)
November	3	2	\$35,907.37	(\$8,585.89)
December	5	4	\$30,612.63	(\$5,418.09)
January	4	2	\$40,876.97	(\$12,572.15)
February	6	1	\$11,010.21	(\$5,038.91)
March	6	5	\$13,957.61	(\$3,903.97)
April	1	0	\$42,808.41	(\$5,543.90)
May	8	1	\$15,647.55	(\$7,604.60)
June	7	3	\$26,292.67	(\$5,894.84)
Year end as of 6/30/2020				
	76	28	\$360,470.84	(\$62,814.76)
ACCOUNTS & ASSETS as of 6/30/2020				
		Funded Accounts	Assets	
		73	\$356,898.08	

To learn more about able or sign up visit www.MississippiAble.com.
To order brochures or schedule a presentation email 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) 840-9946

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) 453-2253

District IV

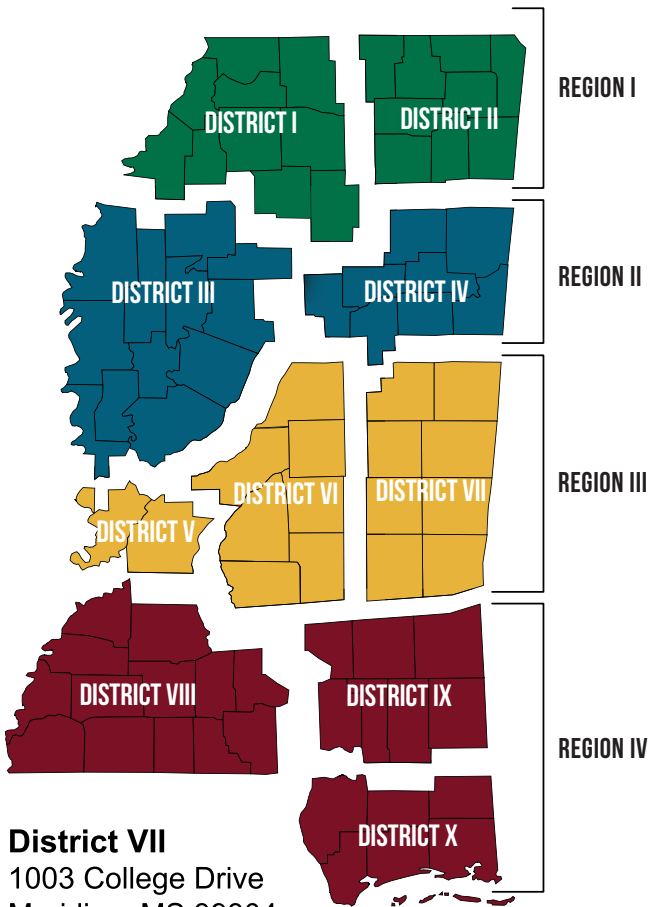
317 Industrial Park Road
Starkville, MS 39760
VR: (662) 323-9594
OSDP: (662) 324-1881
48 Datco Industrial Drive
Columbus, MS 39704
VRB: (662) 328-8807

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) 709-5601
VRB: (601) 709-5625
OSDP: (601) 709-5657



District VII

1003 College Drive
Meridian, MS 39304
VR: (601) 483-3881
VRB: (601) 483-5391
OSDP: (601) 482-1594

District VIII

1221 Parklane Road
McComb, MS 39649
VR: (601) 249-2498
VRB: (601) 684-3392
OSDP: (601) 249-4646

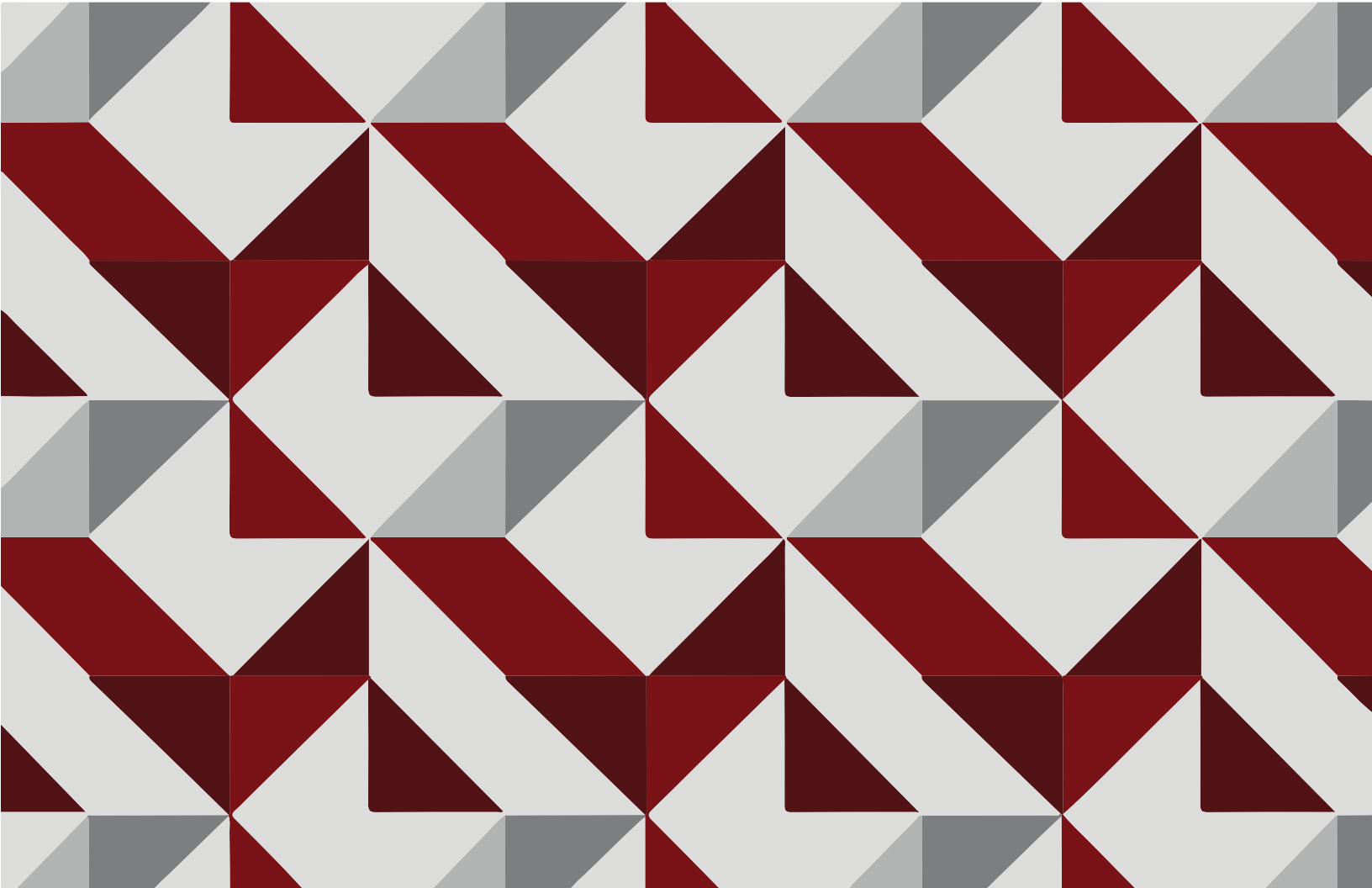
District IX

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) 575-3785

Additional locations can be found at www.mdrs.ms.gov using the location finder.



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)

Please send direct comments or questions to:

Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
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Opportunities for Independence