## State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report 2011







# Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services

Providing the freedom to live



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#### **Mission Statement**

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It is the express mission of the State of Mississippi Rehabilitation Council to ensure that Mississippians with disabilities have a strong role in shaping the vocational rehabilitation programs of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services.



### **Vision Statement**

The vision of the State of Mississippi Rehabilitation Council is to ensure that the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services provides Mississippians with disabilities empowerment through informed choice, inclusion through equal access and full participation, independence through employment opportunities, and integration through advocacy.

#### Dear Governor Barbour and Members of the Mississippi Legislature:

On behalf of the members of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), I am pleased to present you with our 2011 Annual Report. This report is designed to inform you all of the status of vocational rehabilitation programs in Mississippi. Our council has met regularly to produce this report for you and could not have accomplished our work without the extremely capable support staff at MDRS.

The SRC was created in 1992 by the United States Congress as part of the Rehabilitation Act. The council's charge is to review and advise the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation of the supports and services and programs impacting persons with disabilities in our state. The majority of the members of our council are individuals with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities. We know how important these services are to us all and take our voluntary service quite seriously.

Although 2011 was a successful year in spite of some ecomonic downturn, we will continue to face tough ecomonic challenges in 2012. It is imperative that we continue to receive the support you have given us in the past so that we may successfully assist an increasing number of Mississippians with disabilities find employment and achieve economic independence.

Working together with the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, we have continued to enhance the vision of empowerment through informed choice and inclusion. We have also experienced some success this year by "just doing the right thing" helping folks find jobs and a place to belong, and helping employers realize how beneficial it can be to hire a person with a disability. I am proud to serve as your chairperson and look forward to another successful year ahead. I do hope you find this report helpful and enlightening.

Here to Help,



#### Dear Governor Barbour and Members of the Mississippi Legislature:

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you a few of the many accomplishments of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council in 2011. Our partnership is vital to carrying out our mission of providing quality services to individuals with disabilities in a timely and effective manner. I would like to thank the members for their service, guidance, and valuable input in the agency's work to provide quality services to Mississippians with disabilities.

Although the citizens of Mississippi have faced some tough economic times this year, at MDRS we continue to strive to meet the needs of Mississippians with disabilities who rely on our services to become successfully employed. In 2011, the Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind have served 21,492 job seekers with significant disabilities and achieved outstanding ratings in client satisfaction surveys. This year, we have achieved our goal of assisting over 4,500 people enter into the workforce and become successfully employed leading to economic independence.

In our report, we have included success stories of our consumers. These successes could not be achieved without the dedication and hard work by the staff of the MDRS in consultation with the members of the State Rehabilitation Council and the consumers we serve. We look forward to this continued partnership and another year of successful outcomes.



H.S. McMillan, Executive Director MS Department of Rehabilitation Services





### **Guide Through The System**

- **STEP ONE: Referral** I provide contact information to VR to arrange a meeting.
- **STEP Two:** Orientation I learn what VR is about and if it is right for me.
- **STEP THREE:** Application I declare that I intend to work and need assistance in getting or keeping a job.
- **STEP FOUR:** Assessment and Evaluation My counselor collects information about how my disability affects work, including medical information from my doctors, to determine my strengths and limitations.
- **STEP FIVE:** Determine Eligibility The counselor reviews all the information to decide if I am eligible for VR services.
- **<u>STEP SIX</u>**: Individualized Plan for Employment (IEP) Together, my counselor and I design the roadmap to help me go to work a plan to reach a job goal that is right for me.
- **STEP SEVEN:** Action Along with my counselor and other VR staff, I work my plan to reach my job goal.
- **<u>STEP EIGHT</u>:** Employment I've reached my job goal!
- **<u>STEP NINE</u>**: Case Closure I am employed for at least 90 days.
- **STEP TEN: Post Employment Services** If I have problems at my job, I can contact my VR counselor to help me stay employed.



### **Program Funding**

#### **Title One Section 110 Match Funding**





### **Consumer Satisfaction Survey**

The ratings for the various services consumers received are presented below using the average (mean) score given to each item by all respondents interviewed. The respondents were asked by an independent third party to rate the following items on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very bad and 5 being very good. Thus, a high score indicates that the service was good and a low score that it was bad.

- *ITEM 1:* The help the VR staff provided at the time you applied for VR services.
- **ITEM 2:** The help from the VR staff during the planning of your services.
- *ITEM 3:* The help from the VR staff when you were receiving your VR services.
- ITEM 4: The help you received from other agencies or service providers.
- **ITEM 5:** Your employment outcome.
- **ITEM 6:** Employment benefits provided by your new employer.
- **ITEM 7:** Overall, how do you rate the services you received?



#### Average Consumer Rating

### **SRC Comments & Recommendations**

**SRC Recommendation:** Add all SRC meeting dates to website as early as set so consumers can plan to attend as desired.

**Agency Response:** This recommendation is being implemented and the change is being made to the MDRS website.

**SRC Recommendation:** I believe that use of a Financial Needs Analysis serves as a disincentive to individuals to work and be as best as they can and earn as much as they can. The more a person earns the less services they can receive.

Agency Response: MDRS applies policies uniformly to all individuals in similar circumstances and policies ensure that the level of an individual's participation in the cost of vocational rehabilitation services is: 1) reasonable; 2) based on the individual's financial need, including consideration of any disability-related expenses paid by the individual; and, 3) not so high as to effectively deny the individual a necessary service.

**SRC Recommendation:** Does (VR/VRB) get all consumers to report back to them on the survey?

**Agency Response:** A percentage of each geographic location, known as a stratified sampling method, is used and most people contacted by telephone do participate in the survey.

As the 2012 State Plan was being developed, members of the SRC were contacted and asked to assist MDRS staff members in developing any attachment of interest to them or to provide input into any changes they would suggest for the 2012 State Plan.

The members of the SRC were provided notice that the attachments were linked on the MDRS website and each member was emailed copies of every attachment. Additionally, each member of the Council was sent an electronic questionnaire regarding any feedback or comments that they would like to offer.





### **Vocational Rehabilitation**

The total number of individuals served in 2011 was 21,492, and the total number of successful employment outcomes was 4,559. The total taxes paid by an individual in the first year of employment after a successful closure were \$766.40. The total taxes paid in the first year of employment for all clients in Fiscal Year 2011 were\$3,494,024.35.

Will Beasley was 20 years old when he had his accident in April 2001. The shallow diving accident paralyzed Will as a c5 quadriplegic. Vocational Rehabilitation allowed Will to focus on his personal goals and accomplishments without adding the extra stress of accumulating financial sources to help him continue his education. Being a quadriplegic is hard enough with its multiple limitations, but life can be even more difficult with the added stress of mobility and accessibility. Will stated that the assistive technology provided by VR allowed him to become mobile and reduced the stress and worry from his life about transportation.

As he became mobile and worked through therapy, he regained his strength and self-confidence and returned to the University of Mississippi to finish his bachelor's degree. VR helped Will acquire his tuition and books to finish his bachelor's degree, and also helped him network with other support organizations to assist him in Law School. Will graduated from Ole Miss Law School in 2008, and is now an attorney in Tupelo with Phelps Dunbar Law Firm. Will stated that having VR support his return to school and adapt his van with assistive technology helped him gain confidence and pride in his life. He now lives as independently as possible and works full time. Vocational Rehabilitation set the wheels in motion to propel Will into a successful career and rewarding life.



### **AbilityWorks**

During FFY 2011, AbilityWorks served a total of 2,962 MDRS clients, resulting in 900 successful employment outcomes.

Lori Gillis grew up in Starkville, MS where she is active in her church and enjoys family activities. She has two older sisters, who have moved from the home, leaving Lori in the care of her parents. Although they are supportive, the family is also very protective of Lori, since she is legally blind, with a degenerative nerve disease. For 11 years, Lori attended the MS School for the Blind, beginning in the 2nd grade. She was 4 credits short for a high school diploma, so she obtained a special certificate of completion. Utilizing the AT equipment MDRS purchased for her, Lori hopes to obtain her GED.

She became an MDRS client in 2009; and, although her parents were hesitant for her to work, Lori insisted on obtaining a part-time job. She participated in the AbilityWorks program and in August 2010 began work at Aramark, MSU's food service company. With the assistance of a Supported Employment job coach, Lori was trained to be a lobby hostess. Because of her good attitude, people skills and work ethic, she was recently given a 2% raise. Her Vocational Evaluator, Marie Portera was instrumental in encouraging Lori to achieve her goal of employment. Marie says, "Lori is a very tender-hearted, compassionate person, with an awesome faith in God. She has a significant speech impediment, making it difficult to understand her at times, so Lori is often asked to repeat herself. Instead of getting irritated, she responds in a very calm, patient manner. She is an amazing woman." One of Lori's talents is photography. Because of her limited vision, Lori takes photos of people so she can get a clearer image of them. These photos are kept in a special album to help her remember people important to her. Lori says, "I want to be an inspiration to other people with disabilities, to encourage them to keep the faith." She firmly believes God put her here for a reason.



### **Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind**

Of the 4,559 successful employment outcomes by VR, 559 were achieved through Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (VRB). The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides support for self employment opportunities in the food service industry for Mississippians who are legally blind. In 2011, thirty eight (38) individuals operated successful businesses as BEP vendors.

Elliott Street is a 64 yr. old male playwright, actor, director, and screenwriter. He has been involved with theater since the young age of 11. He acquired his skills naturally, as both parents were charter members of the Meridian Little Theatre. He also has a 14 yr. old son. Elliott has a visual impairment due to endothelial guttata of corneas with secondary edema and pseudophakia. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB) referred him to assistive technology, where he was evaluated for Adaptive Computer Access and Jobsite Accommodation. He was also referred by OVRB to the Addie McBryde Rehabilitation Center for the Blind for low vision evaluation and aids. Elliott then returned to Meridian to work with the restoration of Meridian's Grand Opera House and to teach Theatre Arts and Oral Communication at Meridian Community College.

In 2003, due to copyright infringements, Mr. Street was unable to get material enlarged enough to enable him to see to perform a play. OVRB provided Mr. Street with his first viewer to enable him to read on the computer screen and continue working, which he did for the next few years until he reached another obstacle. In 2006, Elliott needed a computer to participate in a workshop. His employer, Meridian Community College, provided him with the computer, but he still needed a projector in order to adequately view the material for lesson planning. Again, OVRB came to his aid, purchasing the necessary equipment for him to retain employment.

During his tenure as a teacher, he developed a hearing loss resulting in OVRB's purchase of hearing aids to keep him alert and sharp in his performance as a teacher and actor. By providing the low visual aids, hearing aids, and adaptive equipment, OVRB has enabled him to continue working over the years. Elliott not only serves as a teacher, but also as a highly recognized actor. Through the efforts and services of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind, Elliott Street and his passion for the fine art of theatre continue to be in the spotlight.



In FFY 2011, the Transition Program served approximately 3,263 students and placed 468 in successful employment outcomes.

In the fall of 2002, Byron came to MDRS as a transition student seeking assistance with job training and placement services. After expressing interest in working as a stocker/bagger or a custodial worker, he entered the AbilityWorks program in Oxford, Mississippi. While working and training at the AbilityWorks facility, Bryon was noted as a good worker with good attendance, but his production was low. In 2003, Byron and his mother moved to Holly Springs, where he received a new MDRS counselor.

At the initial interview with his new counselor, Bryon thought he wanted to be a dishwasher. He went through AbilityWorks for an evaluation. Job rediness services were provided. An Evaluator and his Counselor worked with Byron by providing Job Readiness Skills, Job Search Skills and Job Placement Skills and Counseling and Guidance. Eventually, Byron decided that he wanted to be a bagger in the grocery store again. Upon discovering that Bryon lived next door to Big Star in Holly Springs, his Evaluator called and spoke with Mr. Carlisle, the owner. While initially hesitant, Mr. Carlisle agreed to try Byron through the LINCS program. After LINCS was over, Mr. Carlisle hired Byron on September 2010.



### **Supported Employment**

During FFY 2011, 837 individuals received Supported Employment services, and 116 resulted in successful employment outcomes.

Jason Hadley of Bogue Chitto came to MDRS for assistance in July 2006. Jason has Asperger's Syndrome, one of the autism spectrum disorders that affect how the brain processes information. This disorder causes difficulty in communication, building relationships, and with social interaction. With counseling from Sherry Hughes-Brown, Supported Employment Counselor in McComb, and guidance from Cindy Collinsworth, the Vocational Training Instructor in Brookhaven, Jason was better able to understand his limitations, as well as his capabilities; and, in so doing, learned how to function successfully in a business environment. A Customized Employment plan was then utilized to place Jason in a position with the Lincoln County Chancery Clerk's Office on May 17, 2011. His primary job is to file and organize books in the Records Room; however, he is doing such an outstanding job there, that he has also been assigned to other offices in the Courthouse to file and organize, as well. His case was successfully closed on Sherry Hughes-Brown recalls, "Jason has a passion for reading, and 9/28/11. he especially enjoys collecting books about famous people. Because of this, as well as his punctuality and skills in organization, he is perfect for this job and enjoys it very much." Cindy Collinsworth states, "Jason is a perfect example that Customized Employment works!"

### **Clients Served Per County**



THE AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER PERSON SUCCESSFULLY REHABILITATED FOR 2011 WAS \$5,568.05.



### **Field Office Locations**

#### **District** I

51 County Road 166 Oxford, MS 38655 OVR: (662) 234-3171 OVRB: (662) 234-6092

#### **District** II

2620 Traceland Drive Tupelo, MS 38803 OVR: (662) 842-1010

613 Pegram Drive Tupelo, MS 38802 OVRB: (662) 844-5830

#### **District** III

201 Highway 7 South Greenwood, MS 38930 OVR: (662) 453-6172 OVRB: (662) 455-1432

#### **District IV**

207 Industrial Park Road Starkville, MS 39760 OVR: (662) 323-9594

48 Datco Industrial Drive Columbus, MS 39704 OVRB: (662) 328-8807

#### **District** V

3895 Beasley Road Jackson, MS 39213 OVR: (601) 898-7004 OVRB: (601) 898-7023

#### **District** VI

1032 Center Pointe Blvd., Suite A Pearl, MS 39208 OVR: (601) 709-5601 OVRB: (601) 709-5625

#### **District** VII

1003 College Drive Meridian, MS 39304 OVR: (601) 483-3881 OVRB: (601) 483-5391





#### **District VIII**

1400-A Harrison Drive McComb, MS 39649 OVR: (601) 249-2498 OVRB: (601) 684-3392

#### **District IX**

#17 John Merle Tatum Industrial Dr. Hattiesburg, MS 39404 OVR: (601) 545-5619 OVRB: (601) 545-5613

#### District X

13486 Fastway Lane Gulfport, MS 39503 OVR: (228) 575-3789 OVRB: (228) 575-3788











Your perspective is extremely valuable, and we greatly appreciate any and all feedback! Please send any comments or questions to:

Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services Attn: Joyce White Post Office Box 1698 Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1698





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