





State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report

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MISSION STATEMENT

It is the 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.



Chris M. Howard
Executive Director

WELCOME

from the Executive Director

Dear Governor Bryant, Members of the Mississippi Legislature and fellow Mississippians:

Thank for the opportunity through this report to share a few of the many accomplishments of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council during Fiscal Federal Year 2016. July 1, 2016 marked the end of my first year as Executive Director of MDRS. It has been an amazing year for me as director and a great year also for our agency.

The partnership this agency has with each of you and the State Rehabilitation Council is vital to carrying out our mission of providing quality services to individuals with disabilities in a timely and effective manner. Thank you to each and every one of you for your service, guidance and valuable input to this agency's work to assist Mississippians with disabilities to become successfully employed.

In FFY2016, the MDRS Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind served 15,812 job seekers with disabilities while at the same time achieving outstanding ratings in client satisfaction surveys. We successfully helped 4,212 individuals with disabilities enter the workforce and become successfully employed, leading them to greater economic independence.

The key to any success we experience as an agency is to be credited to our outstanding staff at MDRS who consult 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.

Sincerely,

Chris M. Howard

Executive Director

Dear Governor Bryant and Members of the Mississippi Legislature,

On behalf of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), I am happy to share the annual report of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS).

The State Rehabilitation Council is a body mandated by CFR 361.17. Members represent a broad range of individuals with disabilities, following the regulations established in this section for composition.

Our functions include:

- Reviewing, analyzing, and advising MDRS on the performance of their responsibilities
 related to eligibility and order of selection; the extent, scope, and effectiveness of
 vocational rehabilitation services; and functions that affect the ability of individuals
 with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes
- Partnering with MDRS in developing goals and priorities; and evaluating the effectiveness in obtaining these goals
- Advising MDRS in the vocational rehabilitation portion of the Unified State Plan
- Conducting a review and analysis of consumer satisfaction
- Submitting this report and making it available to the public
- Coordinating activities with other named Councils within the state, to include the Statewide Independent Living Council
- Performing other relevant functions the SRC determines appropriate consistent with the purpose of the agency

We are pleased to report the many successes that occurred during the last year – having significant impact on the lives of Mississippi citizens who experience disability; but also significantly impacting the state's economy by adding these workers' skills to the workplace.

We look forward to working with the staff of the MDRS and expect to see continued excellent outcomes for the citizens of Mississippi who experience disability.

Sincerely,

Mary Lundy Meruvia, Chairperson State Rehabilitation Council

2016 State Rehabilitation Council Members

Mary Meruvia, SRC Chairman Chris Howard. Ex. Officio

Tanya Bradley
Pam Dollar
John McGinn
Steve Gray

Cliff Hardin Shannon Hood Bradley Porche Maria Portera

Cassandra Singleton Scott Stanford Mark Yeager

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

In 2016, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) **assisted 14,204** eligible Mississippians with disabilities to 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 VR have a wide array of disabilities including:

Hearing Loss or deafness • Amputations • Mental and emotional disorders • Epilepsy • Intellectual and

Developmental Disorders • Traumatic brain injuries • Orthopedic impairments • Speech impairments.

3,637 SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

ABILITYWORKS

Vocational Rehabilitation operates a statewide system of 16 Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) called AbilityWorks, Inc. These CRPs are located throughout the state to provide individualized Vocational Evaluation, Work Evaluation, Work Adjustment Services, and Community Based Services (for Vocational Evaluation, Work Evaluation, and/or Work Adjustment services) to individuals with disabilities. AbilityWorks, Inc.'s mission to clients is "to improve the quality of life, employment opportunities, and integration of people with disabilities into the community."

All services at the CRPs are individualized to meet the needs of the clients and prepare them for entry into competitive integrated employment. AbilityWorks, Inc. provides Vocational Assessment services designed to assess the abilities, assets, interests, and needs of the clients. Work Adjustment services is to promote the development of physical, mental, social and work skills, and appropriate work habits required by the clients to be successfully employed in the competitive labor market. Community Based Services are to promote and facilitate the integration and the transition into employment opportunities for our clients in the local community. The Community Based Services are based on cooperative participation agreements with businesses in the community for a time-limited period to assist with the providing clients these services and opportunities. AbilityWorks, Inc. is able to create a realistic work setting in which clients can be evaluated and trained within the CRPs. This realistic work setting allows for both work observation and work experience to be gained while at the CRPs.

All of the CRPs referrals are received from Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. During FFY 2016, **AbilityWorks served a total of 1,323 MDRS clients**, resulting in 647 successful employment outcomes.

DEAF SERVICES

In FFY 2016, **Deaf Services were provided to 3,537 Mississippians**, resulting in **1,425 individuals with disabilities becoming successfully employed**. The Deaf Services Program continues to promote excellence by striving to assist new RCDs (Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf) to reach the required communications skills level on the Signed Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI), 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.

TRANSITION & YOUTH CAREER SERVICES

Through the Transition Services Program, the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services assists eligible secondary school students with disabilities to enable them to make the difficult transition from school to subsequent work environments. Working cooperatively with the Mississippi Department of Education and local school districts, MDRS vocational rehabilitation counselors plan and implement programs designed to provide this training and assistance.

Examples of services to youth which may begin as early as age 14 include development of self-awareness, enhancement of self-esteem, and advancement of self-empowerment skills. Examples of pre-employment transition services provided to students included Job Exploration Counseling, Workplace Readiness Training, Work-Based Learning Experiences, Counseling on Comprehensive Transition or Post-Secondary Education Enrollment, and Instruction in Self-Advocacy. In FFY 2016, the Transition Program served approximately 2,525 students and placed 328 in successful employment outcomes.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

The Supported Employment Program is a specialized placement and training program to assist those individuals with the most significant disabilities in finding and maintaining employment. Choice of employment is based on such things as the individual's: Unique strengths • Interests • Resources • Capabilities • Abilities • Priorities • Concerns • Informed Choice.

Working together, trained vocational rehabilitation counselors and instructors provide support needed for the individual to prepare for and secure an appropriate job match, as well as to retain or regain employment. During FFY 2016, 496 individuals received Supported Employment services, and 79 resulted in successful employment outcomes.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FOR THE BLIND



Of the 4,212 successful employment outcomes by MDRS, **575 were achieved** through Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (VRB). VRB consumers received services such as counseling and guidance in adjustment to disability, vocational exploration, orientation and mobility training, job training, and assistive technology. In FFY 2016, VRB served 1,608 Mississippians with visual disabilities. Itinerant teachers work closely with VRB counselors to coordinate services, evaluate client needs, develop living-needs plans and instructional materials, and provide onsite training for consumers who are blind or visually impaired. In 2016, the Itinerant Teacher Program provided 63 services for VRB 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 2016, the Addie McBryde Center provided training to 166 consumers.

Independent Living Services for the Blind (ILB) enables eligible consumers to receive peer group counseling, assistive technology evaluation, adjustment services, orientation and mobility training, personal adjustment instruction and training in techniques for daily living. In 2016, ILB served over 2,200 consumers through indirect services such as health fairs, vision screening, peer groups, and outreach. Furthermore, ILB provided direct services to 669 consumers 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.

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 military base cafeterias. In 2016, 36 individuals operated successful businesses as BEP vendors with an additional two entrepreneurs awaiting facilities.

CONSUMER GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

ONE Referral

I provide contact information to VR to arrange a meeting.

TWO Orientation

I learn what VR is about and if it is right for me.

THREE Application

I declare that I intend to work and need assistance in getting or keeping a job.

FOUR Assessment & Evaluation

My counselor collects information about how my disability affects work, including medical information from my doctors, to determine my strengths and limitations.

FIVE Determine Eligibility

The counselor reviews all the information to decide if I am eligible for VR services.

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

Together, my counselor and I design the road map to help me go to work - a plan to reach a job goal that is right for me.

SEVEN Action

Along with my counselor and other VR staff, I work my plan to reach my job goal.

EIGHT Employment

I've reached my job goal!

NINE Case Closure

I am employed for at least 90 days.

TEN Post Employment Services

If I have problems at my job, I can contact my VR counselor to help me stay employed.

FFY 2016 Section 110 Grant
Program Funding: Title One Section 110 Match Funding

2016

Section 110 Grant \$44,589,605 (78.7%)

State Match \$12,068,089 (21.3%)

Total Funding \$56,657,694 (100.0%)

IN DEPTH LOOK AT VR & VRB

Demographics of Persons Served

Gender





Age at Application

AGE

10-20 ■ 3,258

21-30 **2**,381

31-40 ■ 2,309

41-50 **2**,556

51-60 2,826

61-70 1,714

71-80 ■ 653

81-100 115

Education Level at Application

No Formal Schooling .12%

Elementary Education 3.05%

(Grades 1-8)
Secondary Education
(No. 1 link Salacal Divisions)

(No High School Diploma)

High School Graduate or 33 37%

Equivalency Certificate

Post-Secondary

Education (No Degree) 13.66%

Post-Secondary Education (Academic/Associates Degree) 6.13%

A Degree of Vocational Technology Certificate 2.37%

Bachelor's Degree 6.99%

Master's Degree or Higher 2.95%

Special Education (completion or attendance) 13.36%

Education Not Listed .70%

Race

American Indian or Alaskan Native .27%

Asian .32%

Black or African American 42.31%

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander .06%

Multi-racial 3.37%

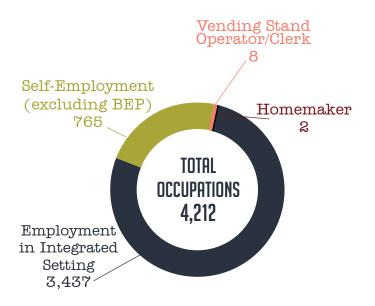
White or Caucasian 53.60%

Race not listed .06%

Hispanic/Lationo .01%

Status of Persons Rehabilitated

Employment Status of Persons Rehabilitated



Employment in Integrated Settings

Service Worker	877
Sales	403
Skilled Craft	500
Secretarial/Office/Clerical	453
Laborer	315
Professional	381
Operative	207
Executive/Managerial	158
Technical/Paraprofessional	81
Production Occupations	7
Community & Social Service	6
Architectures & Engineering	3
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	8
Healthcare Support	2
Computer & Mathematical	6
Education, Training, & Library	12
Protective Service	2
Personal Care	1
Building & Grounds Cleaning/Maintenance.	7
Food Preparation & Servicing	4
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	2
Transportation & Material Moving	2

3,437

Clients Served and Closed for 2016



IN DEPTH LOOK AT VR & VRB

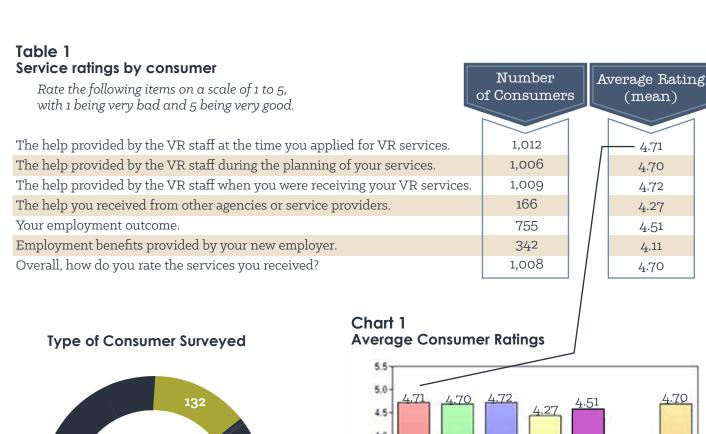
Persons Served by Primary Disability

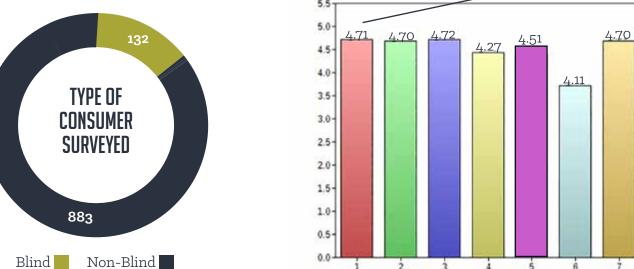
Cognitive and Mental		<mark>5</mark> ,459
General Physical		4,225
Hearing Loss, Communicative		3,187
Legally Blind, Other Visual		1,504
Orthopedic		678
Deafness		316
Blindness		94
Respiratory		84
Deafblind		9
Application Status		256
	TOTAL	15,812

CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Annual FY 2016 Results for the Closed Ended Questions

The ratings for the various services consumers received are presented below using the average (mean) score given to each item by all respondents interviewed. If an item did not apply to a particular respondent or if the consumer did not know or refused to rate an item he/she is not included in calculating the average score for that item. The seven items rated are in Table 1 (to get an exact wording, see the questionnaire.) Chart 1 is included for an easy visual comparison. The respondents were asked to rate the items (Questions1-9) 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.





SRC comments and/or recommendations for input into the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services' Office of Vocational Rehabilitation or Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (VR/VRB) service delivery system:

- Great services.
- Outcomes look good. It is exciting to see the collaborations that are happening.
- Good report
- I was happy to hear that state budget cuts will be attempted to be absorbed in ways with the least impact to the consumers. Continue to encourage the counselors to have more one on one contact with their clients.
- Would like to see more detail in the numbers reported especially VR in the area of SE and CE versus restoration.
- The PCP meeting for the student who attended The School for the Blind was a good idea. The parent, student, and staff from other support organizations were present to participate in the future planning for the student. However, planning for a student such as a student from the School for the Blind should begin earlier within the time the student is leaving school such as one year to six months prior. Continue marketing to let Mississippi Citizens with disabilities be aware of the excellent support services.
- It is exciting to hear the changes for pre-transition services and supported employment.
- I continue to feel that the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is lacking any consistent measure rising to the needs of autistic clients. This group has some very unnamed needs and presents a particular challenge to the agency. The consistent lack of placement is telling.
- I believe that MDRS does a good job most of the time. There is a few that communication is a large problem.

Agency VR Response: The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation appreciates the comments regarding services and outcomes. We will begin to provide the SRC with more detailed information specifically in the area of Supported Employment and Deaf Services.

Agency OVRB Response: The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind has a School for the Blind Liaison that focuses on transition services and VRB Services as early as age 14. OVRB strives to have an IPE (Individualized Plan for Employment) signed before leaving any High School which details services that will lead to competitive integrated employment.

SRC comments and/or recommendations concerning the results of consumer satisfaction surveys:

- Good reportConsumer satisfaction is high, indicating that consumer need is being met.
- I think the survey questions need to be fine-tuned (question 4) to define why that rating is lower (still good, but less satisfaction to pinpoint the specifics. I believe they are doing a great job and hope it will continue with the new regs and combinations that will happen.
- Overall, the surveys indicate good satisfaction. The lower ratings always fall under employer
 provided benefits. Maybe, consumers should be encouraged to reach for higher level
 positions which usually come with better benefits. There is a need to do a midterm client
 satisfaction assessment (if it is not already being done) through the service delivery system
 to determine if the services are satisfactory, if that is the course that will bring a successful
 outcome.
- I would love to have a map included, as reference, showing locations of districts.
- Good to hear all the positives comments. MDRS services even through a few negatives, which we can learn from. Client satisfaction at case closure is high indicating that customer needs and expectations are being met.
- None It will be interesting to see the new changes in this area. Overall comments were very good, however there will always be complaints.
- Consumers continue to indicate satisfaction.

Agency Response: VR is always happy to hear the positive comments made by clients that have been provided VR services. We also look at the not so positive comments as an opportunity to improve on service delivery and customer satisfaction. VR believes that, with the changes in our performance measures and the changes to the program as a result of the passage of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act, we will improve in this area and help move our clients toward preparing for careers. We see this as a very powerful opportunity to assist them in obtaining employment with employers that provide benefits to employees. Under the leadership of our Executive Director, MDRS has a new Office of Business Development that will work diligently to provide services to employers as well as provide a better opportunity to let employers know the value of VR and specifically the value of the individuals that are preparing every day to enter today's labor market.

As a reference for SRC members, maps and information regarding our districts and staff will be provided.

SRC comments and/or recommendations for input in terms of potential service providers or discussions on the performance of service providers currently being used by OVR/OVRB:

- It seems that a wonderful network has been built and continually strengthened for the best benefit of your consumers.
- OVR & OVRB should develop a procedure for a consumer and/or their family to file a
 formal complaint & procedures for investigating and resolving those complaints. Data from
 these complaints and the investigations/reports should be analyzed & used form program
 improvement. In order to answer the question, we need more information about the
 providers. When reviewing potential service providers we should be provided some historical
 overviews of their past performance.
- I believe that a specific initiative that is disability specific based on the Internship model would be a huge success.

Agency Response: VR will review our current system and work to enhance its current system regarding client complaints and how the complaints are resolved.

SRC comments and/or recommendations concerning the State Plan Hearing, VR Policy, Service Satisfaction Survey, or Transition Programs, Supported Employment or Internship Program:

- Presentation was good. I think this is going to be a very positive service for students and MDRS.
- I like the term youth career services being utilized. Pamphlet is excellent.
- I'm happy they are addressing transportation at the beginning to help show/explain to the students.
- I would like to read over it once again after the verbal description; but I would try to keep
 this service category most flexible and non-restrictive versus more so. Encouraging anyone
 to attend post-secondary education will increase their chances to be marketable for good,
 higher paying jobs. I would suggest graduate degrees when possible for obtainment or
 advancement into high level positions.
- Good report on changes being made with WIOA.
- Look forward to seeing the SE guide for service.
- Having more for Blind (phone call, having someone read for them, phone call where automated reading survey to them.) If you know client can read braille, have braille sent to them. If person isn't happy in my opinion they won't fill out MDRS Survey.
- Any surveys used with people with disabilities should be developed with input from individuals with disabilities.
- I believe Supported Employment numbers (served) will be increased with described efforts and staff training planned.
- Yes, the midterm survey is critical to the positive outcome for a client. "Thank you for
 implementing the process. As a result of the midterm report, it is clear that if follow-up has
 not been made with the person within the first six months of contact some effort should be
 made for contact that would prevent lack of contact or no contact with the client
- One method of maintaining contact with the client could be through a contact letter just to see if the client is still interested in the services or lives at the same address.
- See Above. The model has to bring lots of people to the table with a wide range of experience and expertise.
- Timing is what it is all about. Give the time to the client to have a chance to complete and do what they can.

Agency VR Response: VR will continue to work to implement a consumer satisfaction survey for open cases. A pilot was conducted in one district which generated good response from the clients. The SRC recommended that the survey be developed with the input of individuals with disabilities. VR and the SRC will work toward developing a committee to work on the survey to help ensure that individuals with disabilities have input in its development.

VR will continue to work to develop changes to existing Supported Employment policy and procedures to ensure that staff is continuously trained in Supported Employment. VR presently has designated Supported Employment counselors and VR counselors who work with youth and students with disabilities who are trained in Supported Employment. VR will extend this training to all VR counselors.

Agency VR Response: VRB will review the Service Satisfaction Survey to make sure that we are offering accessible formats for our consumers who are blind and visually impaired. One mechanism we will utilize is the NFB News line and Mississippi Industries for the Blind Call Center.

CLIENTS SERVED

Per County

Adams	233
Alcorn	172
Amite	78
Attala	202
Benton	46
Bolivar	185
Calhoun	110
Carroll	84
Chickasaw	
	92 77
Choctaw	
Claiborne	39
Clarke	97
Clay	118
Coahoma	149
Copiah	148
Covington	80
DeSoto	335
Forrest	582
Franklin	86
George	83
Greene	60
Grenada	144
Hancock	108
Harrison	784
Hinds	1120
Holmes	133
Humphreys	73
Issaquena	6
Itawamba	111
Jackson	471
	129
Jasper	
Jefferson	43
Jefferson Davis	79
Jones	511
Kemper	48
Lafayette	310
Lamar	290
Lauderdale	538
Lawrence	79
Leake	88
Lee	537
Leflore	439
Lincoln	182
Lowndes	350
Madison	414
Marion	177
Marshall	72

Monroe	109
Montogomery	111
Neshoba	131
Newton	157
Noxubee	73
Oktibbeha	334
Panola	218
Pearl River	181
Perry	69
Pike	301
Pontotoc	207
Prentiss	171
Quitman	67
Rankin	731
Scott	106
Sharkey	42
Simpson	116
Smith	70
Stone	68
Sunflower	123
Tallahatchie	147
Tate	66
Tippah	92
Tishomingo	102
Tunica	23
Union	144
Walthall	85
Warren	310
Washington	350
Wayne	142
Webster	105
Wilkinson	55
Winston	151
Yalobusha	159
Yazoo	157
Out of State	47



DISTRICT I

(Calhoun, Coahoma, Desoto, Lafayette, Marshall, Panola, Tate, Tunica, Quitman, Yalobusha)
51 County Road 166
Oxford, MS 38655
(662) 234-3171 **OVR** (662) 234-6092 **OVRB**

DISTRICT II

(Alcorn, Benton, Itawamba, Lee, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tippah, Tishomingo, Union) 2620 Traceland Drive Tupelo, MS 38801 (662) 842-1010 **OVR**

615-A Pelham Dr.

Tupelo, MS 38801 (662) 844-5830 **OVRB**

DISTRICT III

(Bolivar, Carroll, Grenada, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Washington, Yazoo) 201 Hwy 7 South Greenwood, MS 38930 (662) 453-6172 **OVR** (662) 455-1432 **OVRB**

DISTRICT IV

(Clay, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Lowndes, Monroe, Montgomery, Oktibbeha, Webster) 207 Industrial Park Road Starkville, MS 39759 (662) 323-9594 **OVR**

48 Datco Industrial Dr.

Columbus, MS 39704 (662) 328-8807 **OVRB**

DISTRICT V

(Hinds, Warren) 3895 Beasley Road Jackson, MS 39213

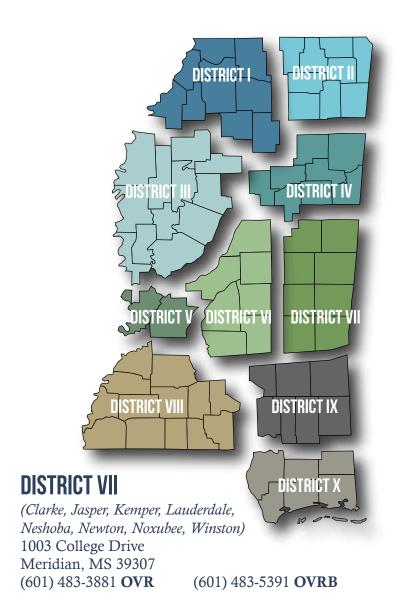
(601) 898-7004 **OVR**

2550 Peachtree St. Jackson, MS 39216

(601) 987-7403 **OVRB**

DISTRICT VI

(Attala, Leake, Madison, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Smith) 1032 Center Pointe Blvd. Pearl, MS 39208 (601) 709-5601 **OVR** (601) 709-5625 **OVRB**



DISTRICT VIII

(Adams, Amite, Claiborne, Copiah, Franklin, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lincoln, Lawrence, Marion, Pike, Walthall, Wilkinson) 1400-A Harrison Drive McComb, MS 39648 (601) 249-2498 **OVR** (601) 684-3392 **OVRB**

DISTRICT IX

(Covington, Forrest, Greene, Jones, Lamar, Perry, Wayne) 17 J.M. Tatum Industrial Drive, Suite 130 Hattiesburg, MS 39401 (601) 545-5619 **OVR** (601) 545-5613 **OVRB**

DISTRICT X

(George, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Pearl River, Stone) 13486 Fastway Lane Gulfport, MS 39503 (228) 575-3789 **OVR**

(228) 575-3788 **OVRB**

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: Betsy Simoneaux Post Office Box 1698 Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1698

1.800.443.1000 www.mdrs.ms.gov



