



2017  
two thousand seventeen



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF  
REHABILITATION SERVICES

# 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 2017.

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 FFY2017, the MDRS Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation and Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind served 13,435 job seekers with disabilities while at the same time achieving outstanding ratings in client satisfaction surveys. We successfully helped 3,182 individuals with disabilities enter the workforce and become successfully employed, leading them to greater economic self-sufficiency.

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' Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVR/OVRB).

The State Rehabilitation Council is a body mandated by The Rehabilitation Act and its resulting regulations at CFR 361.16. Members represent a broad range of individuals with disabilities across the state.

Our functions include:

- Reviewing, analyzing, and advising OVR/OVRB 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 OVR/OVRB in developing goals and priorities; and evaluating the effectiveness in obtaining these goals
- Advising OVR/OVRB 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

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services' OVR/ OVRB has achieved many successes in 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. The leadership and staff continue to strive to continue practices that are effective as well as seek out new approaches for best success in placing Mississippians who experience disability in the competitive workforce.

The State Rehabilitation Council is happy to continue to advise the agency in regards to the individual stakeholder groups who we represent.

Sincerely,

Mary Lundy Meruvia, Chairperson  
State Rehabilitation Council

**2017 State Rehabilitation Council Members**

Mary Meruvia, SRC Chairman  
Chris Howard, Ex. Officio

Donald Brown  
Lee Cole  
Pam Dollar  
Jean Walley  
Marie Portera

Cliff Hardin  
Shannon Hillman  
John McGinn  
Mary Meruvia

Presley Posey  
Cassandra Singleton  
Danielle Winningham  
Mark Yeager  
Tanya Bradley

# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

In 2017, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) **assisted 12,034** eligible Mississippians with disabilities. The services received include, but are 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.

**2,855 SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES**

## ABILITYWORKS

Vocational Rehabilitation operates a statewide system of 15 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 Evaluation 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 of our clients into employment opportunities 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 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 CRP's referrals are received from Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. During FFY 2017, **AbilityWorks served a total of 1,368 MDRS clients**, resulting in **457 successful employment outcomes**.

## DEAF SERVICES

In FFY 2017, **Deaf Services were provided to 3,076 Mississippians**, resulting in **1,371 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 communication 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 potentially eligible and 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.

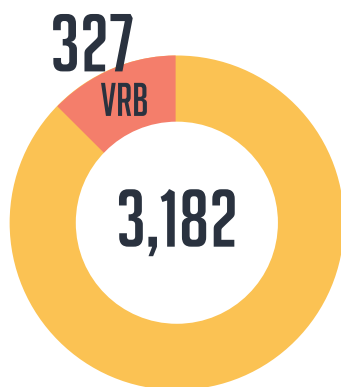
Examples of services to youth, which may begin as early as age 14, include development of self-awareness, enhancement of self-esteem, and advancement of self-empowerment skills. Examples of pre-employment transition services provided to students include Job Exploration Counseling, Workplace Readiness Training, Work-Based Learning Experiences, Counseling on Comprehensive Transition or Post-Secondary Education Enrollment, and Instruction in Self-Advocacy. In FFY 2017, the **Transition Program served approximately 3,528 students** and placed **332 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 2017, **391 individuals received Supported Employment services**, and **50 resulted in successful employment outcomes**.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FOR THE BLIND



Of the 3,182 successful employment outcomes by MDRS, **327 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 2017, **VRB served 1,401 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 2017, the **Itinerant Teacher Program provided 79 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 2017, the Addie McBryde Center provided training to **175 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 2017, **ILB served over 1,200 consumers** through indirect services such as health fairs, vision screening, peer groups, and outreach. Furthermore, **ILB provided direct services to 1,041 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 2017, **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.
- SIX** ▶ **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.

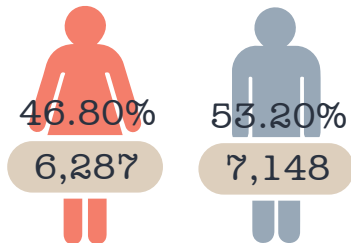
## FFY 2017 Section 110 Grant Program Funding: Title One Section 110 Match Funding

	2017
Section 110 Grant	\$42,781,732 (78.7%)
State Match	\$11,578,792 (21.3%)
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$54,360,524 (100.0%)</b>

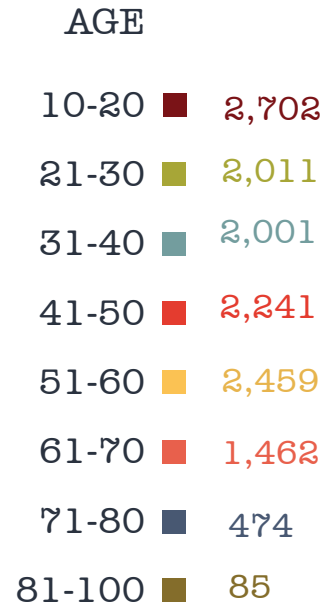
# IN DEPTH LOOK AT VR & VRB

## Demographics of Persons Served

### Gender



### Age at Application



### Education Level at Application

October 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017 \*\*

No Formal Schooling	.18%
Elementary Education (Grades 1-8)	2.99%
Secondary Education (No High School Diploma)	16.98%
High School Graduate or Equivalency Certificate	32.90%
Post-Secondary Education (No Degree)	13.99%
Post-Secondary Education (Academic/Associates Degree)	6.66%
A Degree of Vocational Technology Certificate	2.80%
Bachelor's Degree	7.25%
Master's Degree or Higher	3.26%
Special Education (completion or attendance)	12.80%
Occupational Credential beyond graduate degree	.03%
Occupational Credential beyond undergraduate degree	.16%

### Race

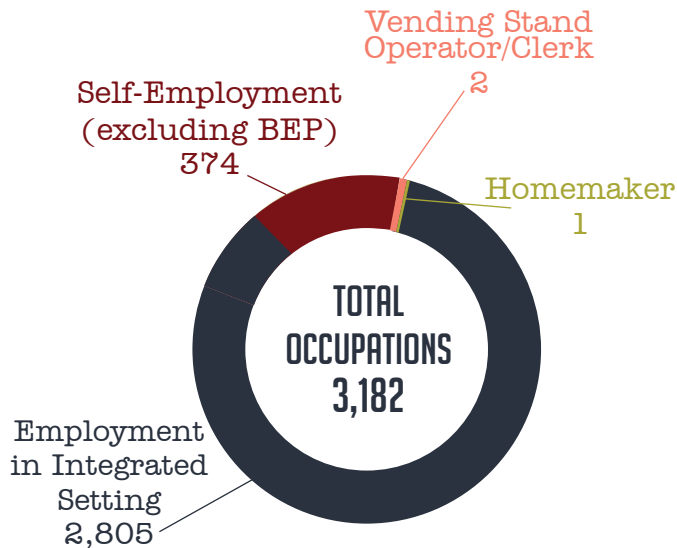
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.78%
Asian	.36%
Black or African American	41.90%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	.22%
White or Caucasian	54.70%
Hispanic/Latino	.94%
Does not wish to Self identify	.02%

\*\* Beginning July 1, 2017, Education Level at Application is no longer collected. Education Goal Level at IPE is now being collected.



## Status of Persons Rehabilitated

### Employment Status of Persons Rehabilitated

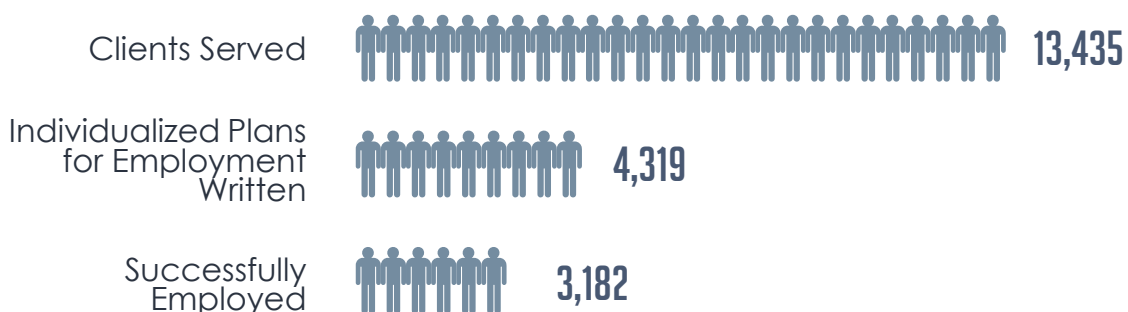


### Employment in Integrated Settings

Service Worker .....	385
Secretarial, Office, Clerical Worker .....	395
Skilled Craft .....	301
Sales .....	286
Professional .....	229
Laborer .....	176
Executive .....	157
Operative .....	97
Food & Food Preparation .....	104
Technical/Paraprofessional .....	52
Transportation & Material Moving .....	84
Production Occupations .....	82
Building/Grounds Cleaning & Maint. ...	60
Personal Care .....	56
Education, Training & Library .....	43
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical ...	43
Installation, Maintenance & Repair .....	40
Construction & Extraction .....	47
Protective Service .....	34
Healthcare Support .....	37
Community & Social Service .....	33
Architectures & Engineering .....	8
Business & Financial Operation .....	19
Farming, Fishing & Forestry .....	11
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media .....	10
Computer & Mathematical .....	5
Legal .....	5
Life Physical & Social Science .....	6

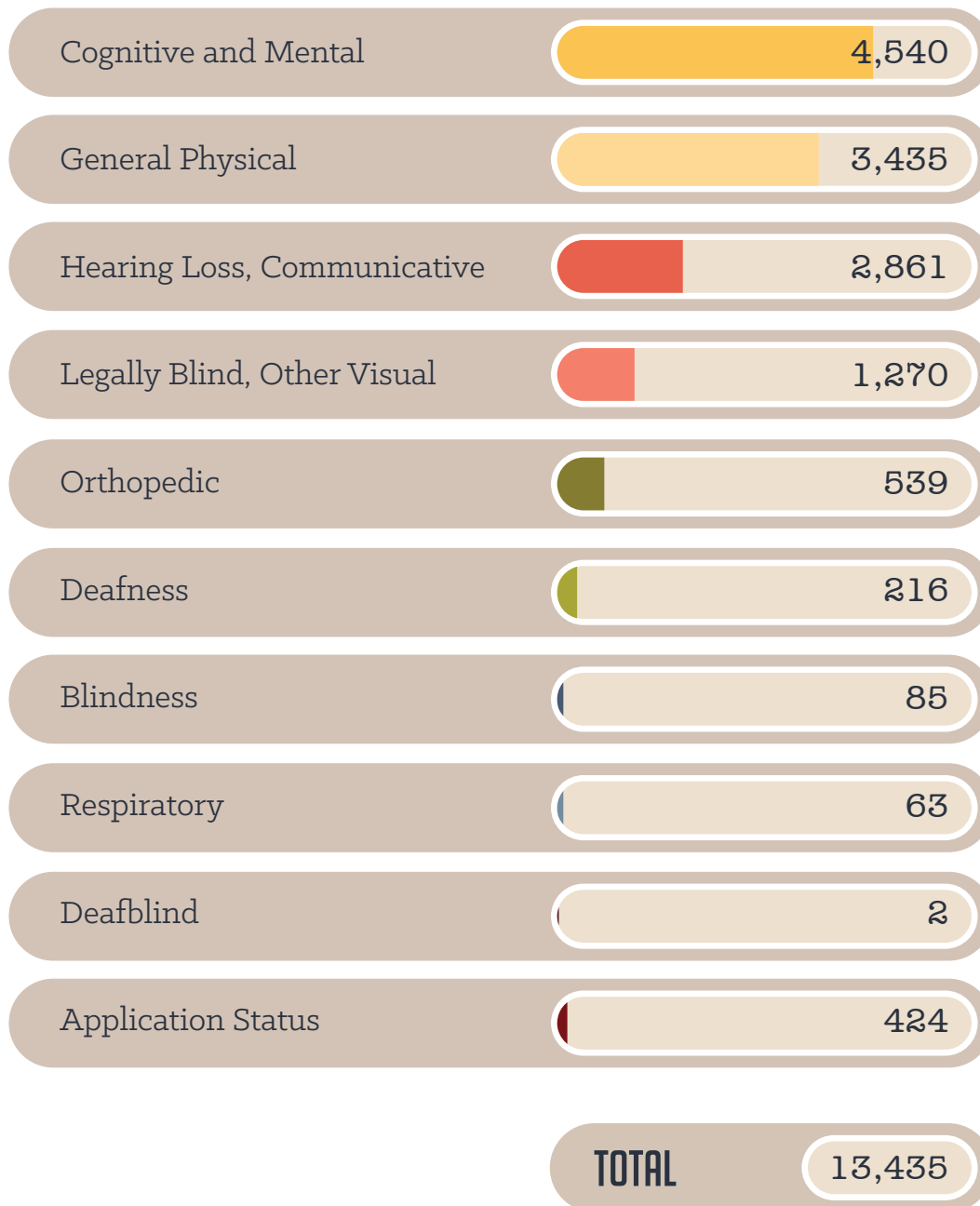
**2,805**

### Clients Served and Closed for 2017



# IN DEPTH LOOK AT VR & VRB

## Persons Served by Primary Disability



# CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

## Annual FY 2017 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 (Questions 1-9) 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.

**Table 1**  
**Service ratings by consumer**

*Rate the following items on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very bad and 5 being very good.*

The help provided by the VR staff at the time you applied for VR services.

The help provided by the VR staff during the planning of your services.

The help provided by the VR staff when you were receiving your VR services.

The help you received from other agencies or service providers.

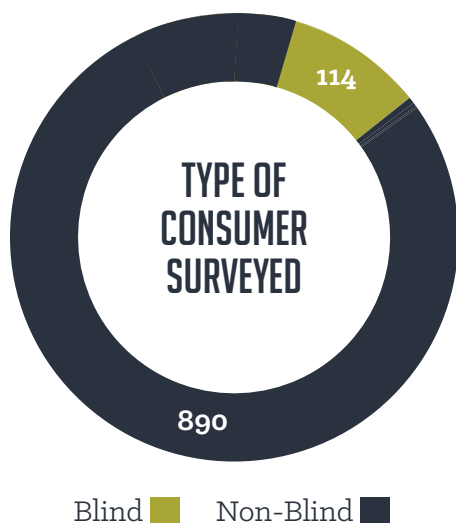
Your employment outcome.

Employment benefits provided by your new employer.

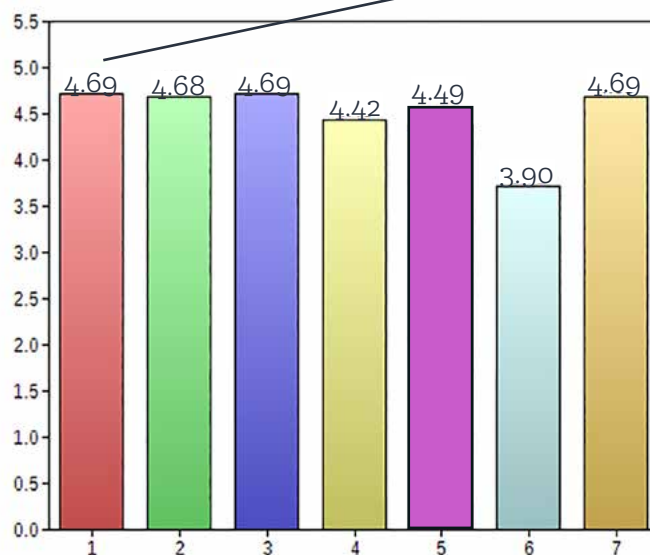
Overall, how do you rate the services you received?

Number of Consumers	Average Rating (mean)
1,002	4.69
998	4.68
992	4.69
303	4.42
796	4.49
480	3.90
997	4.69

**Type of Consumer Surveyed**



**Chart 1**  
**Average Consumer Ratings**



# SRC COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## **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:**

- *Very informative report from LaVonda. Dorothy has worked diligently on making the job fair a success.*
- *Good job on the upcoming job fair for citizens with disabilities.*
- *Job Developers should get job goals from counselors to seek out jobs that current consumers want.*
- *Great report from Dorothy regarding job fairs. Wonderful to have that kind of success.*
- *I believe the teams described to evaluate & enhance quality services provision are a new approach that will be successful.*

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

- *Overall satisfaction remains high this quarter after reviewing the satisfaction survey for the quarter. Look forward to hearing quarterly CAP and IHO issue summaries.*
- *Results are positive on satisfaction surveys. Look forward to hear report from CAP and MDRS on any grievances filed.*
- *Consumer responses indicate service delivery process is meeting their needs.*
- *Good report.*

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

- *High Quality, Assessable and Confidential – important considerations for providers.*
- *By satisfaction surveys, consumers seem to be happy with overall providers*
- *Increase Internship program as funds allow.*

## **SRC comments and/or recommendations concerning the Career Counselor Presentation and/or Business Development:**

- *LouEllen enhanced her presentation with a colorful handout. I think the career counselor program is very beneficial however there is an overlap in services provided by AbilityWorks.*
- *More VR counselors with smaller caseloads might alleviate the need for separate career counselors.*
- *Josh did a great job explaining BDS and the benefit of that program brining more awareness to MDRS and AW.*
- *Are the business development professionals starting with career goals of the clients? (when contacting business).*
- *Having list of IPE goals written?*

## **SRC comments and/or recommendations concerning concerning the presentation on services offered at AbilityWorks-Vocational Evaluation:**

- *Excellent service to lead to the most positive outcomes.*
- *Very exciting improvements being made for AbilityWorks.*
- *Good Report.*

## **SRC comments and/or recommendations concerning the presentations on the new VR/VRB Teams that have been created:**

- *Find a way to measure the effectiveness of these teams in terms of consumer outcomes.*

# SRC COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## **VR Response:**

The State Rehabilitation Council is a very important partner in the success of the VR program in Mississippi and the consumers we serve. Their interest in the policy, procedures, performance, consumer satisfaction and implementation of WIOA has been a key element in our continued pursuit of innovations that provide high quality VR services to the individuals we serve. With input from the SRC, we will continue to strive to improve our service delivery through our programs and services. The SRC's input is greatly appreciated and necessary to ensure that the needs of the people with disabilities remain at the forefront of all our efforts.

OVR/OVRB is proud to have played a part in assisting individuals with disabilities in this state. Our staff is honored to enable our clients the ability to share their skills and talents in Mississippi's workforce and to experience greater independence and self-sufficiency.

Our teams will continue to come to the table to work through processes and procedures to ensure that staff has the resources and tools needed to move consumers toward competitive integrated employment opportunities.

Our Career Counselors (VR Counselors) work collaboratively with the caseload carrying counselors to ensure that the individuals we serve are job ready and ready to meet the demands of the opportunities and relationships that have been developed in Mississippi's workforce by our Office of Business Development.

Our staff that provide services to our clients at AbilityWorks (community rehabilitation programs) received additional training and tools to help ensure that counselors have the support and services needed to ensure that our consumers are aiming for vocational goals and employment outcomes that are consistent with their strengths, interests, capabilities, resources and informed choice and goals and opportunities that are available in Mississippi's labor market.

We look forward to our continued partnership in ensuring that Mississippi's job seekers with disabilities have access to the highest quality employment and training services that our job fairs and internships provide. We will continue to strive to increase the number of participants in these programs each year.

LaVonda C. Hart, Director  
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

# CLIENTS SERVED

## Per County

Adams	172	Monroe	94
Alcorn	173	Montgomery	87
Amite	64	Neshoba	107
Attala	200	Newton	135
Benton	29	Noxubee	52
Bolivar	153	Oktibbeha	273
Calhoun	81	Panola	130
Carroll	77	Pearl River	181
Chickasaw	61	Perry	41
Choctaw	70	Pike	258
Claiborne	27	Pontotoc	139
Clarke	107	Prentiss	109
Clay	90	Quitman	40
Coahoma	85	Rankin	653
Copiah	124	Scott	93
Covington	58	Sharkey	27
DeSoto	265	Simpson	104
Forrest	443	Smith	54
Franklin	65	Stone	64
George	80	Sunflower	115
Greene	36	Tallahatchie	108
Grenada	126	Tate	53
Hancock	108	Tippah	68
Harrison	701	Tishomingo	75
Hinds	1114	Tunica	13
Holmes	124	Union	131
Humphreys	74	Walthall	68
Issaquena	5	Warren	265
Itawamba	97	Washington	308
Jackson	420	Wayne	108
Jasper	111	Webster	94
Jefferson	39	Wilkinson	55
Jefferson Davis	57	Winston	136
Jones	394	Yalobusha	111
Kemper	48	Yazoo	146
Lafayette	258	Out of State	37
Lamar	254		
Lauderdale	438		
Lawrence	70		
Leake	68		
Lee	437		
Leflore	434		
Lincoln	159		
Lowndes	332		
Madison	359		
Marion	142		
Marshall	74		



## 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)*

104 Professional Plaza

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**

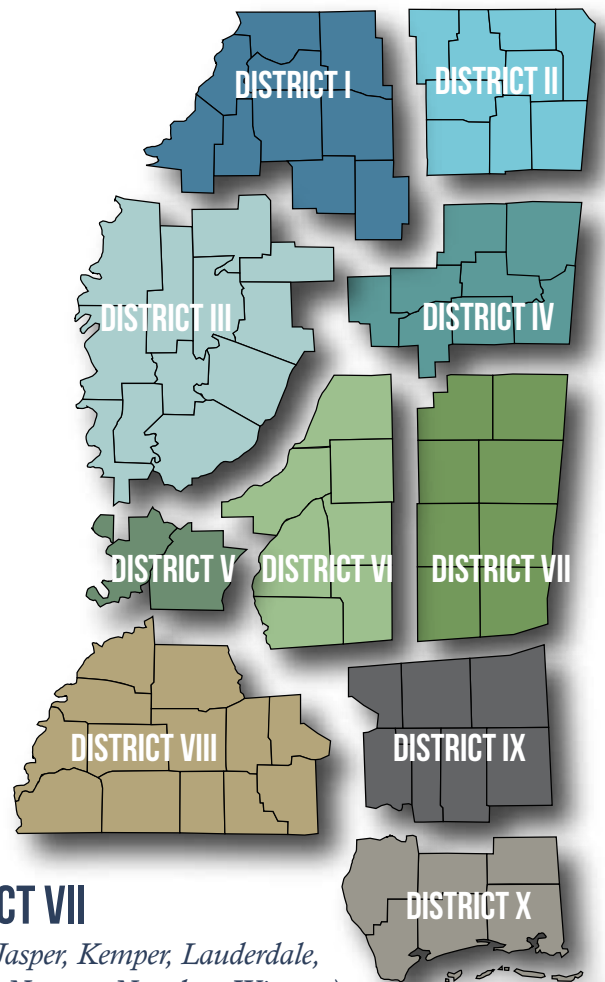
## DISTRICT VI

*(Attala, Leake, Madison, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Smith)*

1032 Center Pointe Blvd.

Pearl, MS 39208

(601) 709-5601 **OVR** (601) 709-5625 **OVRB**



## DISTRICT VII

*(Clarke, Jasper, Kemper, Lauderdale, Neshoba, Newton, Noxubee, Winston)*

1003 College Drive

Meridian, MS 39307

(601) 483-3881 **OVR** (601) 483-5391 **OVRB**

## DISTRICT VIII

*(Adams, Amite, Claiborne, Copiah, Franklin, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lincoln, Lawrence, Marion, Pike, Walthall, Wilkinson)*

1221 Parklane Road

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!  
(A digital copy of this report can be found at [www.mdrs.ms.gov](http://www.mdrs.ms.gov))

*Please send direct comments or questions to:*

Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services  
Attn: Betsy Simoneaux  
Post Office Box 1698  
Jackson, Mississippi 39215-1698  
1.800.443.1000  
[www.mdrs.ms.gov](http://www.mdrs.ms.gov)



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