Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB)

 **Public Hearing Notice**

**Rescinding the Financial Needs Assessment (FNA)**

**Policy Manual Revisions for Post Secondary Training, maintenance, and**

**Overview of the Order of Selection (OOS)**

**MDRS OVR/OVRB** **Public Hearing**

Friday May 9, 2025; 10:00 a.m.

**Options to participate in our MDRS OVR/OVRB** **Public Hearing**

1. **Join Zoom Meeting:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89789467770?pwd=ULHhT5h2IclAdFa7ua9BHMHTnkShBH.1>

Meeting ID: 897 8946 7770
Passcode: 639468

1. **Join via Conference Call:**

 Phone Number: **(**605) 313-5568

 Access code: 1090450

1. **Register to attend:**

 Locations are listed below

**OVERVIEW**

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), specifically the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (OVRB), will hold a Public Hearing to gather comments on proposed policy changes. These changes concern the Post-Secondary Training, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Maintenance Sponsorship, and the Financial Needs Assessment (FNA) tool, which will be rescinded and applied to all eligible Mississippians seeking VR services.

The MDRS Public Hearing will outline the MDRS OVR/OVRB policy changes and will include a discussion on the Order of Selection (OOS), as MDRS OVR/OVRB are taking steps toward potential implementation upon receiving approval from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). These proposed changes are aimed at ensuring that the Rehabilitation Act effectively serves Mississippians with significant disabilities. Once approved by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, these updates will become part of the current MDRS OVR/OVRB Policy and State Plan.

We invite our fellow Mississippians, particularly families and individuals with disabilities, to attend the **Public Hearing** on **Friday** **May 9, 2025**. Your input is essential in shaping these changes. Interested citizens can provide written comments and feedback on the agency's required policy changes, reimplementation of the FNA, and discussion of Order of Selection from **May 9, 2025**, through **June 30, 2026**. Please direct your comments to Excellanxt Woodard at 1-800-443-1000 or via email at ewoodard@mdrs.ms.gov.

***Submit written comments by April 30, 2025 to****:*

**Excellanxt Woodard, VRB Program Coordinator**

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind

1281 Highway 51 North

Madison, MS 39110

ewoodard@mdrs.ms.gov

**Accommodations**

If you need a reasonable accommodation, please submit your request at least two weeks in advance to Denee Smith, State Coordinator of Interpreting Services, by email at desmith@mdrs.ms.gov.

*\*\*Requests made less than 2 weeks before the meeting will be considered but may not be possible to fill.  Please advise if you will need American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and/or Communication Access Real Time Transcription (CART) services.*

Copies of the MDRS OVR/OVRB Policy changes will be available in large print for review beginning **Tuesday, May 2, 2025** at the Madison Central Office and the locations listed below. The MDRS website will also provide a link to the MDRS OVR/OVRB Proposed Policy Changes. A version is also available in braille, upon request.  If you would like to review the MDRS OVR/OVRB Proposed Policy Changes on Newsline, a service for the blind, at no cost, you may access it online at <https://nfb.org/programs-services/nfb-newsline> or contact Margaret Y. Smitherman, Reader’s Advisor, at MS Talking Book Services, MS Library Commission at (601) 432-4111. All comments regarding changes to the MDRS OVR/OVRB proposed policy, received during the public hearing or submitted in writing, will need to be noted, recorded and considered.

Remote public hearing sites will be at the following locations, and you can access the zoom link, join via conference call or register to attend in person by contacting Excellanxt Woodard at 1-800-443-1000 or via email.  There will be a limited of seating to 10.  Please register in advance for face to face with Excellanxt Woodard by calling 1-800-443-1000. We want your involvement but also offer a safe environment.

1. **AbilityWorks, Inc.**

3895 Beasley Road

Jackson, MS 39213

(601) 898-7076

1. **AbilityWorks, Inc.**

613 Pegram Drive

Tupelo, MS 38802

(662) 842-2144

1. **AbilityWorks, Inc.**

2503 Browning Road

Greenwood, MS 38930

(662) 453-7500

1. **AbilityWorks, Inc.**

1003 College Drive

Meridian, MS 39034

(601) 649-8094

1. **AbilityWorks, Inc.**

934 Industrial Park Road, N.E.

Brookhaven, MS 39601

(601)  833-3201

1. **AbilityWorks, Inc.**

10280 Larkin-Smith Drive

Gulfport, MS 39503

(228) 897-7616

1. **Addie McBryde Center**

2550 Peachtree Street

Jackson, MS 39296

(601) 364-2700

**8.** **The ARC of Mississippi**

704 North President Street

Jackson, MS 39202

(601) 355-0220

**9.**  **The ARC of Coastal Counties**

    3109 Gulf Avenue

 Gulfport, MS 39501

    (228) 497-1035

 10. **MS EMERGE Center**

 310 N. Cleveland Ave

 Long Beach, MS 39560

 (228) 240 -2240