



*P*roviding
THE FREEDOM TO LIVE

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES
2009 ANNUAL REPORT

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES



This past year, the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) has continued to play a significant role in meeting the needs of Mississippians with disabilities.

At MDRS, we provide a quality program of comprehensive rehabilitation services and assistance to over 100,000 Mississippians each year. Our programs help our state's citizens with disabilities gain or retain employment, achieve economic independence, and improve their quality of life. Even though state government faces the challenges of a tough economy and decreasing revenues, our agency has continued to meet the goals set forth by our federal partners and is recognized as one of the leading rehabilitation agencies in the country.

I am appreciative of our hard working employees and the continued support of our governor and legislature. Working together, we will continue to achieve our purpose of providing Mississippians with disabilities the freedom to live and work independently in the communities of their choice.

Sincerely,

H.S. "Butch" McMillan
Executive Director

MDRS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dr. Tom Burnham

Dr. Mary Currier

Curtis Dupree

Ed LeGrand

Mike Mulvihill

Don Thompson

Jack Virden, Chairperson

Everything that is really great and inspiring is created by the individual who can labor in freedom.

~~Albert Einstein



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Vocational Rehabilitation Services - We help over 20,000 Mississippians a year overcome limitations imposed by physical or mental disabilities in order for that person to secure or maintain employment.

Community Rehabilitation Programs - We operate a network of 17 facilities, known as AbilityWorks, Inc., located throughout the state, to provide services such as vocational assessment, job training, and actual work experience for individual with disabilities.

Workforce Investment Act - We play a vital role in workforce development for our state to help ensure that Mississippians with disabilities are integrated into the workforce.

Transition Services - We work with 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 provide a seamless transition from school to work.

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.

Supported Employment - We assist individuals with the most significant disabilities who require intensive support services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind - We specialize in working with individuals who are blind or visually impaired to ensure opportunities for inclusion into the workforce, community, and home.

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.

Business Enterprise Program - We provide support for self employment opportunities in the food service industry for Mississippians who are legally blind.

Disability Determination Services - We determine the medical eligibility of individuals with disabilities to receive benefits from Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) directed by federal guidelines from the Social Security Administration.

Special Disability Programs - We assist individuals with more severe disabilities by providing supports which allow them to continue to live or move toward living independently in the home or community.

Selected Social Security Services - We help individuals with disabilities currently receiving Social Security Disability benefits explore employment opportunities without the fear of losing their benefits.

Assistive Technology - We provide evaluations and assessments assuring that customers of MDRS have maximum access to technology available for individuals with disabilities.



Shirley Sanders, a Hurricane Katrina survivor, came to live with her son in DeSoto County after the tragic loss of her husband and other members of her family in

the disaster. Shortly after her move, she discovered she had a malignant lung cancer, which required the removal of a lung. With only one lung, she developed COPD, plus she had arthritis and rheumatism, causing pain and problems in standing or walking.

At MDRS, she was given an evaluation, revealing to her VR Counselor that Shirley would be an ideal candidate for the Experience Works program at the DeSoto County WIN Job Center. The program requires participants to continue to look for employment while performing jobs referred by the Center. Shirley was allowed to work as front desk receptionist for the Job Center, where she performed her job in a dedicated and caring manner. As a result, she was able to locate a lucrative position with the Internal Revenue Service.



Brandon Streetman received a Certificate of Life Skills from high school and was referred to MDRS for vocational rehabilitation. It was very evident that Brandon was highly motivated to work, but he wasn't clear on what type of job he should pursue. Brandon, his parents, and his VR counselor determined he should have a Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation (CVE) to help him have a better understanding of employment opportunities.

AbilityWorks of Tupelo recommended that he participate in a period of Job Readiness Training designed to develop his work skills and allow for job exploration. Brandon progressed handily through a variety of work assignments, always treating each assignment as an opportunity to demonstrate his enthusiasm and positive attitude, as well as his willingness and ability to learn new tasks and accept responsibilities. He also attended GED preparation classes to improve his reading and math skills.

Brandon eventually progressed in his CRP training to the point of being assigned to an on-the-job evaluation/training experience with a premier company specializing in the proper disposal and management of hazardous medical waste. Because of her belief in Brandon's competency to perform well within this company's work environment, Employment Coordinator LaWanda Rausch approached the company's General Manager on his behalf and recommended Brandon for employment.

At the completion of Brandon's training, he was hired on a full-time basis as a cleaning technician by Cardinal Health, performing an important multi-step job. He now earns \$9.50/hour, with full company benefits, including accrued vacation time and health insurance. When asked how life is treating him, Brandon enthusiastically responds, "I love my job!"

In 2009, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services assisted 19,762 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.

Individuals served by OVR have a wide array of disabilities including: 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 to name a few.

The total number of successful employment outcomes for our VR consumers in 2009 was 4,555.

AbilityWorks provides vocational assessments, job training, and actual work experience for VR consumers.

In 2009, AbilityWorks served 2,684 consumers resulting in 766 successful employment outcomes.

AbilityWorks has 17 community rehabilitation programs throughout the state.



In 2008, 17-year old Kyle Bullock entered AbilityWorks of Hattiesburg as a transition student. Kyle underwent an evaluation process via the McCarron-Dial Work Evaluation System and performed simulated work in the AW workshop as a result of his diagnosis as Specific Learning Disability (SLD). He also participated in a Community Based Job Readiness program at Purvis High School as a custodial worker with no significant work-related problems.

In 2009, he was assisted by the AW evaluator in completing an application for Walmart as either a custodian or cart pusher. When contacted for an interview, Kyle was aided by his evaluator in a 3-panel interview for the cart pusher position and was offered the job. In his first week, Kyle was assisted by a job trainer to help him learn the new tasks. As a result, the Walmart Manager reports that Kyle is one of Walmart's best employees; dependable with a strong work ethic.

In 2009, the number of students receiving transition services was 2,627. Successful employment outcomes resulted for 385 students.

Examples of transition services are vocational-technical training, vocational evaluation, work adjustment training, on the job training, job search skills, and work experience programs.

These services may be available to students both on and off campus or at one of the 17 AbilityWorks as a part of their school day.



Mary was first introduced to MDRS staff while living in a nursing facility. With a dual sensory impairment, she communicated through tactual sign language. Born deaf, Mary lost her sight later in life, leaving her with light perception only. Although she had many service providers caring for her, it was clear that Mary did not trust the world around her. She was reluctant to open up to others and allow new people into her life. In the nursing facility, Mary had become withdrawn from the world around her. Luckily, she had two guardians and a team of service providers searching for funding to get her into the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC).

Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCDs) possess required communication skills level on the Signed Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI), an American Sign Language assessment developed by the Rochester Institute of Technology.

This skill, along with other specialized training, has been a vital factor in the successful rehabilitation of 626 persons with deafness or significant hearing loss.

In addition, 6 staff interpreters are available to assist consumers and staff members and use American Sign Language to insure maximum accessibility throughout the rehabilitation process.

After a four year struggle, they were finally able to obtain the funds and Mary, her brother, and the MDRS Deaf Blind Coordinator flew to HKNC, where Mary found the help she desperately needed. The first six months were a daily struggle for Mary, but then she began to open up. The staff members who were born deaf were able to win Mary's confidence, and the bond they formed led to various jobs on campus. Off campus, she worked in food services for a local bowling alley and at Applebee's. Now, after 2 1/2 years of intense training, Mary is back home living in her own apartment, working at a local Chili's and living an active life in her community.

In 2009, OVRB served 2,014 consumers who received services such as counseling and guidance in adjustment to disability, vocational exploration, orientation and mobility training, job training, and assistive technology.

In 2009, the Independent Living Program for the Blind provided services to 952 consumers.

In 2009, Itinerant Teachers were provided for 107 consumers.

In 2009, three (3) individuals were provided initial training, licensed, and placed as BEP vendors.

In 2009, the Addie McBryde Center provided training to 112 consumers. REACH Center for the Blind provided training to 37 consumers.

When VRB counselor Francis Lee met with Ray Renderman, she learned of his articulate speech and friendly, laid-back nature, which made it easy to forget the fact that Ray was legally blind as a result of Retinitis Pigmentosa. Ray's goal was to participate in the Business Enterprise Program; however, since there were no vacancies, he had to consider other types of employment that would allow him to use his skills to support his family.



The first step for Ray was to determine his strengths, identify alternative vocations, and decide what would be required to reach his goal. A vocational evaluation was conducted at the Addie McBryde Center for the Blind which resulted in a decision to focus on bookkeeping and small business management as secondary goals. Ray then went to the Center to participate in personal adjustment training, with a strong emphasis on learning computer skills.

Francis worked with Beth Frantz, Employment Coordinator, on a job opportunity with a manufacturing company in Ellisville. An on-the-job-training (OJT) was set up, and Ray began working all the while facing challenges such as negotiating salary, getting loaner AT equipment, and learning a new job. Ray was always on time and a model of efficiency; however, due to budget cuts, he was laid off in less than a year. Although very disappointed, Ray was tenacious in starting the job search again.

This time, a vacancy was available within the Business Enterprise Program. Ray applied, and, with the help of a very supportive recommendation from Francis, was selected. With the use of a CCTV and several other low vision devices, Ray now lives on the Coast and runs one of the most successful vending routes within the BEP.

Amy Shirley, a 30-year old Courtland resident, came to the Batesville Vocational Rehabilitation Office seeking assistance for Arachnoiditis. This debilitating neurological condition is caused by inflammation in an arachnoid lining surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Preservatives in epidural steroid injections can cause arachnoiditis, especially if the medication enters the cerebral spinal fluid, which occurred in Amy's case, resulting in chronic, persistent pain and an absence of spinal fluid in her lower lumbar.

Whereas most people with arachnoiditis are unable to work due to the pain and lack of mobility, Amy continues to work. She is aware, however, that she will eventually be confined to a wheelchair, because there is no cure for arachnoiditis. Amy is excited about the services MDRS provides her through Assistive Technology. She celebrated the completion of her vehicle modification, including hand controls, on December 17, 2009. She is employed with the Mississippi Department of Human Services as the supervisor for Family and Children Services in Hernando. Amy is an inspiration to her counselor, Lula Merrell, because, despite her condition, she chooses to be happy and live life to the fullest.



Through the increasing equipment loan program, Project START loaned over 450 pieces of equipment to schools, individuals with disabilities, and organizations for people with disabilities.

In State Fiscal Year 2009, Project START sub grants provided over three thousand demonstrations for assistive technology services and devices.



In 2007, Supported Employment Counselor Leslie Shake met with Ricky Williams to discuss his employment

needs and the services available. With a Cognitive Disability and Hearing Impairment, Ricky was seeking help at a workshop for people with severe disabilities.

After providing Ricky with hearing aids, his counselor assisted him with interview skills and job applications, and then approached the Manager of a local grocery store about hiring Ricky. Noting that he was eager to work, she stressed that Ricky would make an ideal cook for the deli.

He was hired a couple of weeks later, working 20 hours/week. Although he had a speech impediment, he overcame that adversity with a beautiful smile and attitude. After two months, his hours were increased to 35. Because he mastered his duties, proved he could work independently, and did not miss work, Ricky is now successfully employed.

The Supported Employment Program serves 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 2009, 788 individuals received Supported Employment services, 121 resulting in successful employment.

On November 19, 1969, two beautiful little girls were born-- Karen and Sharon Nolan. Neither parent noticed at birth that the girls may face physical challenges; but, by the time they reached a year old and were not walking, the Nolans became a little concerned. By 18 months when the girls were still unable to walk, they were taken to the Cooper Children's Center where the girls were fitted with braces. Then, at age 2, they were diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy.



The twins did well academically in public school and learned to speak more clearly in speech therapy classes. In the 1980s, however,

both Karen and Sharon began having difficulty walking; so, their parents took them to the Shriners Hospital in Shreveport, LA. Karen's hip socket was too shallow and Sharon's was out of place, so they were placed in standard wheelchairs. Then in 1996, Karen and Sharon could no longer operate their chairs and sought assistance from MDRS to obtain electric wheelchairs. Thus began a rewarding relationship with the Nolans and MDRS.

In February of 2007, it was discovered during a home visit that both sisters were having increased difficulty in speech and movement. When the counselor asked the sisters if they were restricted in communicating their needs to others, it caused an emotional response. The counselor suggested equipment that would allow Karen and Sharon to better communicate. After an evaluation, TK Martin recommended the Vanguard Plus with integrated head pointing. Karen and Sharon spent many hours working with the staff of TK Martin to learn how to effectively use the equipment.

The counselor notes, "The greatest moment of my case management came with a telephone ring. Upon answering, Karen and Sharon had commanded the Vanguard to recite their heartfelt thank you." It seems they were slowly being locked away into a cell of isolation as they were losing their ability to communicate. Their mom stated, "This has been the biggest and greatest change in their day-to-day life. It has also given them more independence than anything ever has."

During 2009, the Office of Special Disability Programs provided independent living services for 4,145 individuals with significant (severe) disabilities.

As a person who enjoyed working, Johnny was having difficulties adjusting to the obstacles that life had recently given him. He was unable to work due to health issues and trying to live on a limited income of Social Security benefits. This was not how he saw his life. When Johnny received his Ticket to Work from Social Security, he felt things might be looking up!

He contacted his previous employer to find out how he could return to work. With a job offer in the works, Johnny made his first of many calls to Mississippi Partners for Informed Choice (M-PIC). Though the original job offer did not materialize, Johnny continued to search for work by utilizing the local WIN Job Center.

Two months later, he started working 15 to 20 hours per week as an Ad setter. While his earnings were just below \$700 a month, Johnny did not feel this was a problem. He began seeking additional employment opportunities with plans to work two part-time jobs. He was making it happen! He assigned his Ticket to Work and began making follow up calls on applications he had recently submitted to prospective employers.

Four months later, Johnny was back working with his previous employer and no longer working for two employers! By utilizing his 9 Trial Work Period months, Johnny was able to test his ability to work while keeping his cash SSDI benefits. He loves once again being able to work and earn his own paycheck.



Mississippi DDS continues to demonstrate leadership in its efforts to meet regional and national goals. In 2009, Mississippi DDS exceeded many goals in measurable performance elements and, in several of the categories, including processing times, cost effectiveness, quality, presumptive disability rate and electronic transfer of records, the Mississippi DDS was in the top achievers nationally. The leadership and dedication of the Mississippi DDS is reflected in our willingness to participate in new endeavors, and work with other organizations in a cooperative spirit. The Mississippi DDS has faced adversities and challenges in hiring and recruitment, but has never wavered in our commitment to serve the public. The Mississippi DDS is the best in the nation and exemplifies our dedication to public service.

In 2009, Mississippi became one of only four states across the nation chosen as an EST site (extended service team) for DDS. The other states are Virginia, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. The EST states will process disability claims for other states in need of assistance with their workload.

Many factors played a part in the selection of Mississippi as an EST. Not only is Mississippi one of the most cost effective DDSs in the nation, but it excels in providing quality service to its claimants. The MS DDS has a long history of outstanding performance with excellent processing time and accuracy.



2009 DDS PROGRAM INFORMATION

- **Title II Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Beneficiaries** **146,149**
- **Title XVI Supplement Security Income (SSI) Disabled Recipients** **109,506**
- **The DDS demonstrated outstanding and balanced performance in FY 2009, with processing time and productivity significantly better than Regional and National averages, and the lowest cost-per-case in the Nation.**
- **In FY 2009, Mississippi processed over 1,600 Informal Remand cases for ODAR, resulting in expedited approvals for more than 600 applicants.**
- **The DDS agreed to increase its budgeted CDR workload by over 2,300 cases to help the Region, and then significantly exceeded even the revised goal.**



William Heard never thought about being an artist. Art was his mother's passion and he was too involved in athletics to ever give it any thought. It wasn't until a motor vehicle accident in 2000 that caused his spinal cord injury that he ever explored his creative side.

William founded "Our Artworks" with the assistance he receives through a sub-grant with the Traumatic Brain Injury/Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund. Our Artworks teaches art to individuals with spinal cord injuries and traumatic brain injuries. The sub-grant allows individuals with these injuries to discover their abilities and realize they still have very full lives to live. The classes are very therapeutic and beneficial for all involved.

Annually, Our Artworks showcases the students' work in a local art show. Each of the students is talented in their own way. One of William's goals is to have an enduring program that will grow and spread in the community. He hopes all participants reach their full potential, feel like a part of a family, and use their voice to spread the word of the numerous capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

IN DEPTH LOOK AT 2009

PERSONS SERVED BY PRIMARY DISABILITY

PRIMARY	NUMBER SERVED
Physical Disability	7,416
Sensory/Communicative Disability	5,366
Mental Disability	6,939
Other Disability	41
Total	19,762

EMPLOYMENT IN INTEGRATED SETTINGS

OCCUPATION	NUMBER EMPLOYED
Service	1,014
Clerical and Administrative Support	401
Sales and Related Occupations	419
Professional and Technical	547
Production, Construction, Operating, Maintenance, Material Handling	1,114
Agricultural, Fishery & Forestry	156
Managerial and Administration	188
Total	3,839

EMPLOYMENT WORK STATUS OF PERSONS REHABILITATED

OCCUPATION	NUMBER REHABILITATED
Employment in Integrated Setting	3,839
Self-Employment (except BEP)	691
Homemaker	17
Vending Stand Operator	4
Unpaid Family Worker	4
Total	4,555

ANNUAL INCOME OF PERSONS REHABILITATED (BEFORE AND AFTER SERVICES)

Time of Application	\$ 11,660.34
Time of Closure	\$ 22,629.84

*THE AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER REHABILITANT
FOR 2009 WAS \$4,218.54.*

IN DEPTH LOOK AT 2009

OFFICE OF DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

Claims Processed	82,814
Average Processing Time	92 Days
Average Cost Per Case	\$330
Accuracy Rate	99%

OFFICE OF SPECIAL DISABILITY PROGRAMS OVERVIEW

PROGRAM	NUMBER SERVED
Independent Living Waiver	2,389
TBI/SCI Trust Fund	56
TBI/SCI Waiver	770

SELECTED SOCIAL SECURITY SERVICES

TICKETS

Issued to Mississippi	180,000
In Use with Vocational Rehabilitation	2,561
Assigned to MDRS as Employment Network	66

M-PIC

Total number served through September 2009	7,110
Community Work Incentive Coordinators	4

(Tupelo WIN Center, Pearl WIN Center, Greenwood MDRS Office, Gulfport MDRS Office)

APPROPRIATED FUNDING BY BUDGET UNIT

BUDGET UNIT	STATE			FEDERAL	OTHER	TOTAL
	General	Tobacco	Budget Contingency			
Vocational Rehabilitation	6,938,026	1,868,074	249,970	43,076,354	3,773,530	55,905,954
Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind	1,186,166	322,012	43,528	9,374,368	2,846,447	13,772,521
Disability Determination Services	0	0	0	37,444,687	400,000	37,844,687
Special Disability Programs	3,826,200	1,491,716	2,500,000	4,970,218	40,236,516	53,024,650
Spinal Cord and Head Injury Program	0	0	2,500,000	0	28,737,923	31,237,923
Support Services	0	0	0	0	2,512,232	2,512,232
TOTAL	11,950,392	3,681,802	5,293,498	94,865,627	78,506,648	194,297,967
PERCENTAGE OF FUNDING	6%	2%	3%	49%	40%	100%

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

STATE OFFICE BUILDING

1281 HIGHWAY 51 NORTH
MADISON, MISSISSIPPI 39110

POST OFFICE BOX 1698
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI 39215-1698

1.800.443.1000

WWW.MDRS.STATE.MS.US
