

Expect. Employ Empower.



Alabama State Rehabilitation Council 2020 Annual Report

*Vocational Rehabilitation Service
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services*



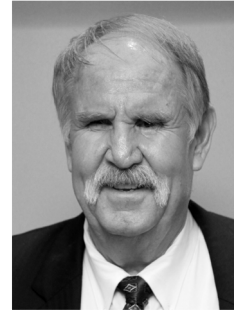
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Expect. **Employ. Empower.**

The State Rehabilitation Council strives to represent persons with disabilities and inform them of the services they need to become productive and self-sufficient by securing gainful employment. A continued partnership with the Vocational Rehabilitation Service division of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services allows the SRC to support persons with disabilities so they can reach their maximum potential and achieve their goals of employment and independence.

This report outlines the SRC's accomplishments in FY2020 despite the challenges of a pandemic and its strong efforts to positively impact the lives of Alabamians with disabilities.



Karl Wade, chairperson
State Rehabilitation Council



The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services takes great pride in ensuring that people with disabilities have a chance to achieve their maximum potential, even when presented with the challenges of a pandemic. Strong partnerships are crucial to the department's success. In FY 2020, the Vocational Rehabilitation Service division of ADRS partnered with the State Rehabilitation Council to provide education and employment-related services to Alabamians with disabilities, with 616 of those finding employment.

As we enter a new year and continue to address the challenges COVID-19 presents, I would like to commend SRC members for their commitment to quality service and excellence. Because of these challenges, I believe the SRC and ADRS will continue – both personally and professionally – to work even more diligently in 2021 to ensure that all Alabamians with disabilities have an opportunity to achieve their maximum potential.

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw, commissioner
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services



A unique partnership:

Vocational Rehabilitation Service and the State Rehabilitation Council

In January 1995, as mandated by the Alabama Legislature, Vocational Rehabilitation Service was moved from the State Department of Education to the newly created Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS). This milestone event created a unique partnership between the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the newly named Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services. Working in partnership with ADRS, SRC provides valuable input in administrative codes and rules necessary to regulate Alabama's vocational rehabilitation services.

Working together, the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council strengthen the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services for all Alabamians with disabilities.

The mission of the council is ...

... to provide support and assistance to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services through program planning, policy development, and delivery of services, thus preparing Alabama's citizens with disabilities for competitive employment.

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL Membership Composition

Mandated Representation	Current Number of Representatives	Number of People with Disabilities	Number of Parents
Commissioner	1	0	0
State Independent Living Council (SILC)	4	4	0
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (State Department of Education)	1	0	0
Client Assistance Program	1	1	1
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	1	0	0
Community Rehabilitation Programs	1	0	0
Business, Industry and Labor	8	0	0
Physical Disabilities	8	8 **	1
Cognitive / Learning Disabilities	2	2	1
Sensory Disabilities	4	4	0
Mental Illness	1	1	0
Intellectual Disability	1	1	0
Advocacy Organization	1	1	0
American Indian Program Representative	0	0	0
WIA Representative	1	0	0
Former or Current Recipient of VRS Services	12	12	0
Parent Training Center Representative	1	0	0
Assistive Technology Program Representative	1	0	0
Total	49*	32	3

SRC membership consists of persons with disabilities, parents and guardians of persons with disabilities, advocates, service providers, and representatives of the business industry and labor community.

Members are appointed by the governor, and most have a personal interest in ensuring that Alabama's citizens with disabilities receive the services and supports they need to become productive and self-sufficient through gainful employment. Membership is geographically and culturally diverse to assure a broad view into decisions that impact vocational rehabilitation services.

* Actual membership is 31, with some individuals representing more than one category, but includes those who resigned or had their terms expire in 2020. Persons with disabilities comprise a majority (16) of members.

** Does not include sensory disabilities



SRC Functions

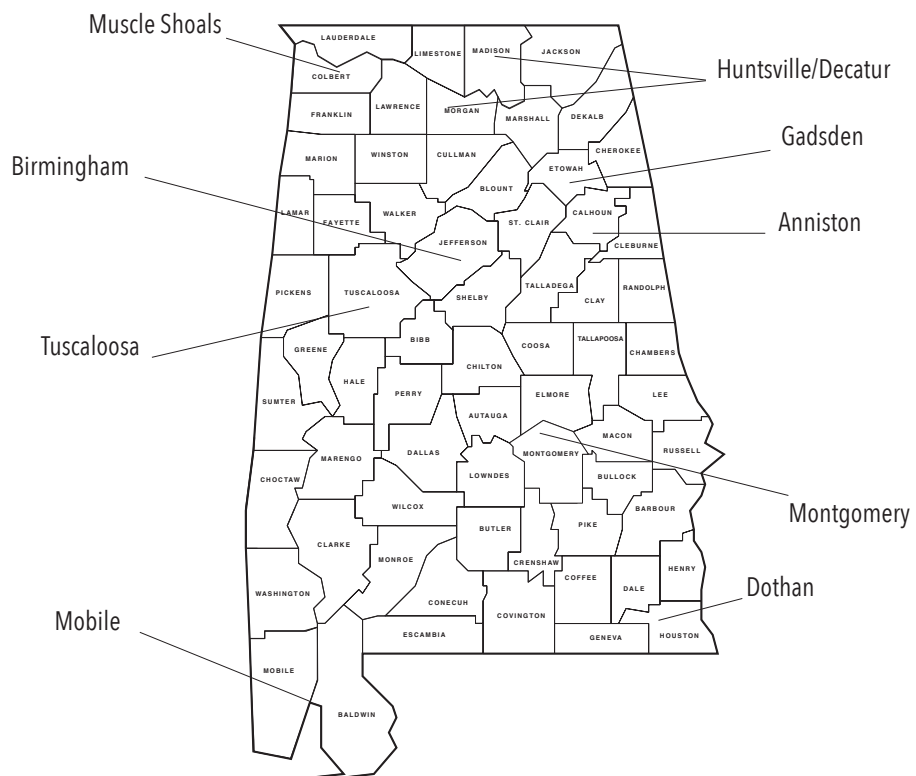
- to review and analyze the State Plan and advise ADRS regarding its related responsibilities within the plan
- in partnership with ADRS, to develop and review goals and priorities, evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program, and submit reports of progress to the Rehabilitation Services Administration commissioner
- to advise ADRS regarding authorized activities under the Rehabilitation Act and to assist in preparation of the State Plan and its amendments and in carrying out other requirements of the Rehabilitation Act
- to review and analyze the effectiveness of consumer and other surveys
- to provide for coordination and establishment of working relationships among ADRS, the State Independent Living Council, and independent living centers
- to coordinate council activities with activities of other councils
- to perform other functions consistent with the purpose of the Rehabilitation Act
- to prepare and submit an annual report of council activities to the governor and the ADRS commissioner

Local advisory councils *meet regularly to ensure a voice for consumers at the grassroots level.*

In FY 2020, topics of discussion included:

- Updates on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (impact on COVID on face coverings and telework)
 - Continued review of state legislative proposals, such as those related to accessible parking and a state tax credit for employers that hire people with disabilities
 - Unmet needs of persons with disabilities to provide the Governor's Office on Disability with information
 - Proposed Federal legislation like the Disability Integration Act, amendment of HAVA, TBI and PTSD Law Enforcement Training Act, expansion of Autism Spectrum Disorder ID card
 - U.S. Census
- * Meetings were held via Zoom due to Covid-19

These advisory groups continue to increase opportunities to obtain consumer input at the local level and as recruiting grounds for SRC



SRC performance

During quarterly meetings on March 10, May 12, Aug. 11, and Oct. 20, 2020 (the last three meetings were held via Zoom due to the COVID pandemic), the SRC sought to perform the following functions:

Review and input on consumer satisfaction surveys for blind and deaf individuals and their results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Received information on the Blind Services Satisfaction Survey• Received information on the Deaf Services Satisfaction Survey• Made no recommendations for changes to these surveys• One area noted for improvement was additional training for counselors
Review and input on consumer satisfaction surveys for the general VR program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Received information on the general VR Satisfaction Survey. New survey process was implemented in 2020.• Made no recommendations for changes to these surveys
Review and input on impartial hearing officer (IHO) List	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Received information on hearings conducted during 2020• Recommended no changes to IHO list• Approved continuation of list during 2020
Reviewed and updated SRC Resource Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changed mileage reimbursement to 57.5 cents per mile
Review and provide input on Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SRC members were provided information on the Agency's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) and recommended no significant changes when provided the opportunity to give input.• Each SRC member was notified of current training programs for VR staff and made no significant comments when given the opportunity to give input.• Recommended no significant changes to training programs for VR counselors
Review and input on State Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No comments were received on the state plan or attachments.• Recommended no changes• The next State Plan revision will be in 2022

Training and/or information on the following subjects:

- US Census
- ADRS Budget
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
- Alabama Library for the Blind and Print Impaired
- VR production and average hourly working wages
- Self-Employment Program
- RSA Corrective Action Plan and Fiscal issues
- Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities
- Lakeshore Foundation
- VR Transition program
- VR Supported Employment program
- VR Quality Assurance
- STAR Tech Act program
- VR TBI program

Coordinated council activities with activities of other councils

- Provided annual reports and resource plans to other SRCs upon request
- The SRC liaison continued to participate in the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Council conference calls and annual training conferences.

Established working relationships among the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), the State Independent Living Council (SILC), and independent living centers (ILCs)

- The SRC has made its meetings open to members of the public including those of the ILCs or SILC.
- Some SRC members attend SILC meetings and report back to the SRC any significant information.
- One member of the SRC is the chair of the SILC and shares information from SILC meetings with SRC members

Perform other functions consistent with the purpose of the Rehabilitation Act

- Signed new conflict of interest forms

SRC subcommittee activities

Executive Subcommittee

Chair: Karl Wade

Vice chair: Jeff Cofield *

Members: Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision statement: To conduct planning for and administration of SRC meetings

Responsibilities

- Schedule and make arrangements for quarterly meetings
- Plan the SRC agenda
- Report accomplishments
- Nominate officers
- Facilitate appointment of subcommittee chairs and SRC members
- Update SRC Resource Plan
- Assist in Preparation of SRC Budget
- Plan SRC Orientation

Accomplishments/Activities

- Scheduled and made arrangements for quarterly meetings, planned the agendas and reported SRC accomplishments
 - Approved new meeting format from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with subcommittee meetings between full SRC meetings
 - Appointed new subcommittee members to Consumer Satisfaction/Program Evaluation and Employment Subcommittees
 - Amended the SRC Resource Plan to increase the mileage rate to 57.5 cents per mile
 - Appointed new subcommittee chair for Employment Subcommittee and nominated new SRC Vice Chair
- *New vice chair for 2021- Kathy Lovell

Business Relations and Employment Subcommittee

Chair: Jeff Cofield *

Vice Chair: Kathy Lovell **

Members: Susan Crow • Mickey Hutto • Kenneth Fine • Michelle Galipeau • Celena Grant* • Heath Hendrix

• Scott Besong • Carl Flemons • Andrew Richards • Glenda Statum

Staff Liaison: Leslie Dawson

Vision Statement: To enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities and employer satisfaction with VR services

This subcommittee continued to maintain the following priorities:

1. OFCCP Section 503, 7 percent people with disabilities hiring quota for federal contractors
2. Business and labor market trends that parallel or do not parallel consumer goals
3. E-Verify for employers and agency
4. Federal employment issues under Schedule A
5. Department incentives to promote hiring and retention of people with disabilities

Recommendation

- The Agency should support legislation that gives employers state incentives to hire individuals with disabilities.

Activities

- The subcommittee discussed model state employer project for Alabama; COVID's effect on employers, RAVE, safety in the workplace after COVID, Windmills training and ADA 30th Anniversary training.

* Rotated off Aug. 31, 2020

** New Chair for 2021- Kathy Lovell

Legislative/Public Information Subcommittee

Chair: Michele Martin

Members: Dennis Duncan • Linda Lamberth • Jack Franklin • Michael Talley

Vision statement: To inform SRC members of existing and new legislation which affects the VRS program and people with disabilities and to advocate for legislation, policies and practices that will enhance employment opportunities for people with disabilities

Responsibilities

- Same as vision statement above

Activities

- Monitored state and federal legislation that affects individuals with disabilities and provided information on pending legislation
- Agreed to continue focus on state funding as a legislative priority

Consumer Services/Program Evaluation Subcommittee

Chair: Dr. Marie Kraska

Vice Chair: Jeana Winter

Members: Rachel Hughes • Karin Korb • Susan Goldthwaite • Tom Schwarz • Jon Brock • Kim Mensi • George Neal • Tim McClure • Helen Baker

Staff Liaison: Michael Quinn

Vision statement: To enhance consumer satisfaction with services, service providers, and employment, and to assist VRS in developing and implementing strategies to ensure consumer satisfaction

Responsibilities

- Facilitate council review of the agency's consumer satisfaction survey and results
- Collaborate with the agency in conducting the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment every three years

Activities

- Reviewed Blind Consumer Satisfaction Survey and its results
- Made no recommendations or changes to existing blind survey
- Discussed and received information on new survey process for general VR Program

SRC subcommittee activities

- Discussed and received information on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment process
- Received additional information on proposal for peer support specialists for mental health consumers
- Announced and discussed current events for consumers
- Provided updates on member programs

Recommendation

- Create mental health peer support employment pilot program based on unmet need identified in 2017 CSNA

Membership/Nomination Subcommittee

Chair: Tom Schwarz

Members: Jack Franklin

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision statement: To maintain SRC membership so that it meets federal law and enables the SRC to perform its duties

Responsibilities

- Maintain current membership list
- Recruit new members to fill vacancies
- Secure re-appointments of existing members where eligible
- Assist in orientation of new members
- Assist in identifying training needs of SRC members

Activities

- Through the SRC liaison, updated the SRC list on the Alabama secretary of state's website,
- Facilitated reappointment of eligible members
- Nominated members to fill vacancies and facilitated their appointment
- Gave update on SRC membership status at most SRC meetings

Bylaws Revision Subcommittee

Chair: Carl Flemons

Members: Jack Franklin

Staff Liaison: Graham Sisson

Vision statement: To maintain SRC Bylaws so that they are consistent with federal law and allow for smooth operation of the SRC

Responsibilities

- Monitor effectiveness of bylaws
- Recommend any necessary changes on an annual basis

Activities

- Continued to monitor the effectiveness of the bylaws and will recommend any necessary changes yearly

Deaf Advisory Subcommittee

SRC Liaison: Marcus Washington

Staff Liaison: Bedarius Bell

Vision statement: To inform the SRC and the VR agency of issues or input for the VR program for people who are deaf

Responsibilities

- Report on issues of the deaf and assist in the development of a strategic plan for people who are deaf

Activities

- Continued to inform SRC members of issues in the Deaf community, including interpreter licensing issues and shortage and legislation that aids Deaf persons
- Continued to recommend that ADRS make strong efforts to encourage interpreters as a vocation due to the shortage of interpreters
- Discussed face mask issues and impact on communication

Blind Advisory Subcommittee

SRC Liaison: Michael Talley

Staff Liaison: Dana Barber

Vision statement: To inform the SRC and the VR agency of issues or input for the VR program for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Responsibilities

- Report on issues of the blind or visually impaired in the development of a strategic plan for people who are blind or visually impaired

Activities

- Informed SRC members of the results of the Blind Surveys
- Shared minutes and information from the Blind Advisory meetings
- Shared information on the blind services strategic plan

2020 highlights



4,835

businesses receiving no-cost services

(including recruitment assistance and disability management, training, and employee retention services, with a special emphasis on federal contractor businesses)

20

*community VRS offices
strategically located
throughout the state*



6,857

*Consumers receiving one-
on-one services from ADRS
business relations consultants*

(to ensure their "job readiness" and to facilitate their employment in the public and private sector)

616

consumers placed in employment

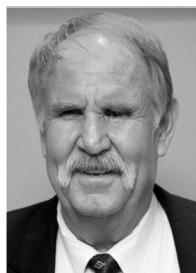


1,318

VR consumers served



SRC membership



Karl Wade
Chair, consumer
Prattville



Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw
Commissioner
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
Montgomery



Parent
Scott Besong
Auburn



Tech Program Representative (STAR)
Helen Baker
Montgomery



Consumer
Jon Brock
Birmingham



Employer
Jeff Cofield
Alabama Power
Birmingham
Rotated off Aug. 31, 2020



Employer/CRP Representative
Susan Crow
Workshops Inc.
Birmingham



Consumer/SILC Representative
Dennis Duncan
Russellville
Rotated off Aug. 31, 2020



**Consumer
SILC**
Jack Franklin
Vina



Labor
Kenneth Fine
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Birmingham
Rotated off Aug. 31, 2020



Employer
Celena Grant
Buffalo Rock
Courtland
Rotated off Aug. 31, 2020



Employer
Michelle Galipeau
Children's Hospital
Hoover

SRC membership



Consumer
Carl Flemons
Somerville



Special Education
Susan Goldthwaite
State Department of Education
Montgomery



Employer
Heath Hendrix
Onin
Tuscaloosa



SACAP Representative
Rachel Hughes
State of Alabama
Client Assistance Program
Montgomery



WIA Board Representative
Mickey Hutto
Montgomery



Program Evaluation Representative
Dr. Maria Kraska
Auburn



Consumer
Karin Korb
Birmingham



Employer
Kathy Lovell
Birmingham



Consumer
Timothy McClure
Mobile



Consumer
Linda Lambreth
Anniston



Consumer
George Neal
Montgomery



Family Member
Dr. Michele Martin
Auburn



Consumer
Kim Mensi
Montgomery



VRS Counselor
Andrew Richards
Montgomery



Consumer/Veteran
Tom Schwarz
Semmes



Employer
Glenda Statum
Netek Inc.
Brownsboro

SRC membership



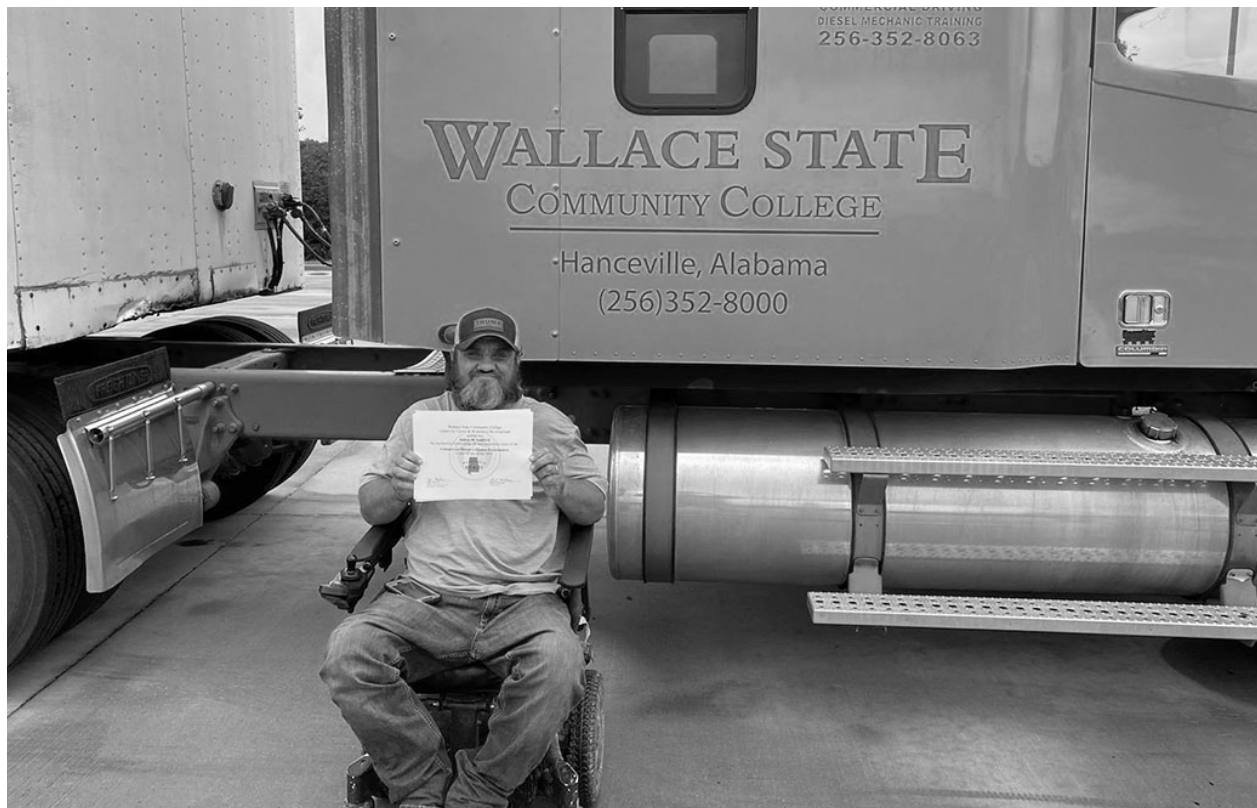
Consumer
Michael Talley
Bessemer



Consumer
Marcus Washington
Pelham



Parent Training Center Representative
Jeana Winter
Alabama Parent Education Center
Wetumpka



SRC Conflict of Interest Policy

Statement of Policy

No member of the council shall cast a vote on any matter that would provide direct financial benefit to the member or the member's organization or otherwise give the appearance of a conflict of interest under state law. 34 CFR Part 361.17 (g). When conflicts of interest are identified, the council member to whom the conflict applies must abstain from voting on the issue causing the conflict.

Required Disclosure

Each council member shall disclose orally or in writing all conflicts of interest, including those which are unclear or potential. Such disclosure shall be made to the chairperson of the council.

Effective Date

This Conflict of Interest Policy shall become effective immediately upon approval by a majority of the council. Upon such approval, this policy is incorporated by reference into the council bylaws.

Approved: November 29, 2000

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AND THANKS FOR A JOB WELL DONE TO FORMER MEMBERS:

*Celena Grant, Jeff Cofield, Dennis Duncan
and Kennith Fine*

Comprehensive statewide needs assessment

The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services' Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) work together to jointly articulate goals and priorities within the VR Services portion of Alabama's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan. While the state plan is on a four-year cycle, an update is required every two years. The next WIOA Combined State Plan update will be due in the spring of 2022. Federal law and regulations governing the rehabilitation program state that the basis for establishing goals and priorities must (in large part) proceed from a comprehensive, statewide needs assessment (CSNA) that is jointly conducted by VR and the SRC every three years. The ADRS 2020 CSNA is drawing near to completion and will be distributed in draft form to SRC members prior to the SRC meeting planned for March of 2021. Final input and approval will be solicited from the SRC at that time.

A CSNA must describe the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of; A) Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services; B) Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program; C) Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and D) Youth with disabilities, and students with disabilities, including; 1) Their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services; and 2) An assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services provided under this part are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The CSNA must also include an assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs.

While presently in an early draft form, the 2020 CSNA has been heavily influenced by events of the final year of the three-year assessment cycle, as it included the Corona Virus pandemic. Efforts will be made to convey what has been learned from the disruption of in-person services, the impact of the economic downturn, and the challenges and opportunities that came with necessary technological innovations. To be certain, in a world where internet bandwidth and technology are made essential, a great many Alabamians with disabilities are left behind. Especially those who are poor or living in a rural area.

The 2020 CSNA will draw upon multiple sources of input including program performance data, consumer surveys, partner surveys, and discussion groups. In its final form, the 2020 CSNA will serve as a resource for future planning and prioritization. It will cover each of the required topics while also providing necessary context and background. Again, prior to completion, SRC members will be called upon for review, subject matter expertise, and final recommendations.

Prepared by:



Alabama Department of
REHABILITATION SERVICES

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw
Commissioner

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