



**OKLAHOMA**  
Rehabilitation  
Services

Annual Report  
**2022**

Empowering  
Oklahomans  
with disabilities





Oklahoma Rehabilitation Services  
**Impact on Oklahoma**

**184,082** Total number of people served by DRS in State Fiscal Year 2022.



Oklahomans served by DRS in State Fiscal Year 2022. **83,283**

**11,458**  
 Individuals who received assistance from DRS' Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired in SFY 2022.

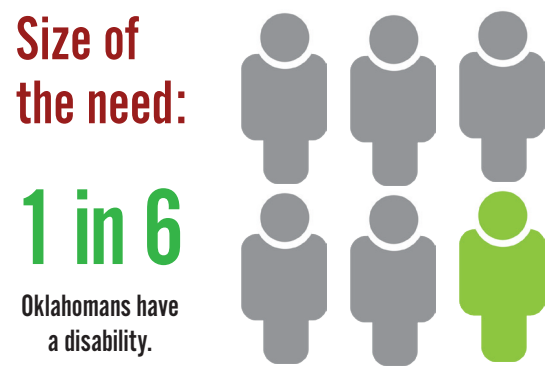
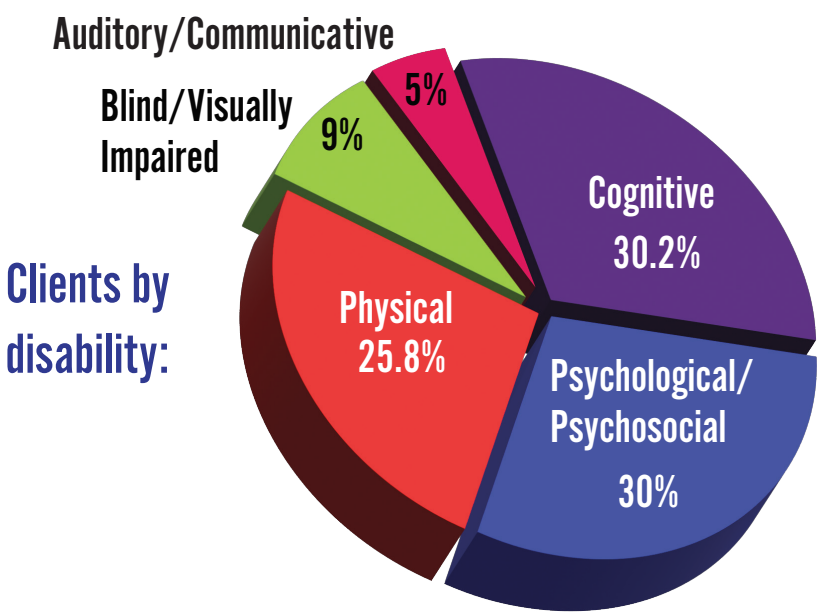
**50,926**  
 Individuals served by DRS' Disability Determination Services in SFY 2022.

**\$26,795**  
 Annual average earnings in SFY 2022 of clients who received VR and SBVI services.

**\$4,019**  
 Annual average taxes paid in SFY 2022 by clients who received VR and SBVI services. (Based on 15% tax rate.)

**3,000+**  
 Oklahomans with Developmental Disabilities who are potentially eligible for VR and SBVI services.

**3,974**  
 Total participants in Transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services.



# Federal funding impact

## \$4 to \$1

Federal match to state funds for VR and SBVI employment programs in SFY 2022.

## \$12,522

Average cost of services per employed VR and SBVI client. Federal government pays 78.7% of that with the state paying 21.3%.

## \$7 to \$1

Taxpayers are saved \$7 for every \$1 that would have been paid out in benefits over the lifetime of a person who gets off SSA benefits.

## Federal match boosts DRS' efforts to build state workforce

DRS receives full reimbursement from the federal government for all case costs for any client who was previously reliant on Social Security Income or Social Security Disability Income. The reimbursement comes when Social Security determines the client has met its Substantial Gainful Activity level.

In 2022, that means a person must make \$1,350 per month if they are receiving benefits for a disability other than legal blindness, and \$2,260 if their disability benefit is due to being legally blind.

SSA reimburses DRS' VR the entire cost of the case plus a monthly administrative stipend for the months the case was

open. SSA has determined that this is a good investment because they estimate that they save \$7 in return for every dollar they reimburse VR. This is determined based on what the individual would have received over a lifetime of disability benefits.

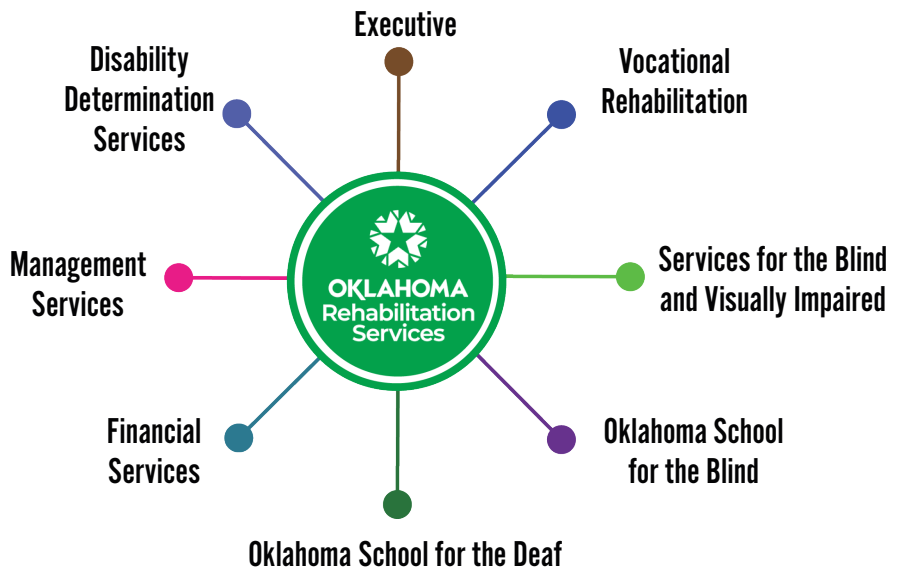
Oklahoma is among the top performing states when it comes to successfully helping people trade a life of disability benefits for a lifetime of quality employment.

As of July 8, DRS has received more than \$1.8 million in reimbursement for federal fiscal year 2022 for 152 Oklahomans who traded staying at home to returning to work.



### DRS' DIVISIONS

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services has eight divisions.



## Chairwoman Theresa Flannery



Theresa Flannery, of Mustang, was appointed by Gov. Kevin Stitt to serve as a member of the Commission for Rehabilitation Services.

Flannery is a senior director for social services at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. Prior to that, she worked closely with DRS for 20 years when she was community resources and compliance director at Dale Rogers Training

Center in Oklahoma City.

Flannery has received numerous awards for her work to help employ people with disabilities.

She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford. She and her husband Todd have two grown children, Samantha and Nickolas.

## Vice Chairman Jace Wolfe



Jace Wolfe, of Edmond, is the director of audiology and research at the Hearts for Hearing Foundation in Oklahoma City.

He is also an adjunct professor in the audiology department at the OU Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City and Salus University.

He provides clinical services for children and adults with hearing loss and is actively

engaged in research pertaining to hearing aids, cochlear implants, hybrid cochlear implants and personal remote microphone systems.

Wolfe has authored and co-authored numerous textbooks, publications and articles in professional journals.

He has also presented at state, national and international conferences.

## Commissioner Wes Hilliard



Wes Hilliard is a Davis banker and former Oklahoma state representative.

Oklahoma House of Representatives Speaker Charles McCall, R-Atoka, appointed Hilliard to the Commission for Rehabilitation Services, which oversees the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services.

Hilliard is president of Simmons Bank in

Davis. He served in the Oklahoma House of Representatives from 2004 to 2012.

He has a bachelor's degree in political science from Oklahoma State University and a master's in education from East Central University in Ada.

Hilliard and his wife Melissa have three children, Weston, Jaxson and Blake.

## Executive Director Melinda Freundt



Melinda Freundt was named executive director of the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services in 2018.

Her past positions with DRS included chief of staff, executive-level project coordinator and program manager of the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council.

Fruendt grew up the youngest of six children on a family farm in Chouteau in

Eastern Oklahoma and continues to farm and ranch with her husband Paul in Guthrie where they have a cow-calf and stocker operation, as well as diversified crops production.

Fruendt holds both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in agriculture education from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater.



**Funding** for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired is **eligible for a federal/state match.**

## DRS leverages funding to support programs for Oklahomans

Staff of the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services leverages state and federal resources to ensure Oklahomans with disabilities reach employment goals and pursue lives of independence.

The majority of funding for the Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired is eligible for a federal/state match of 78.7 percent/21.3 percent.

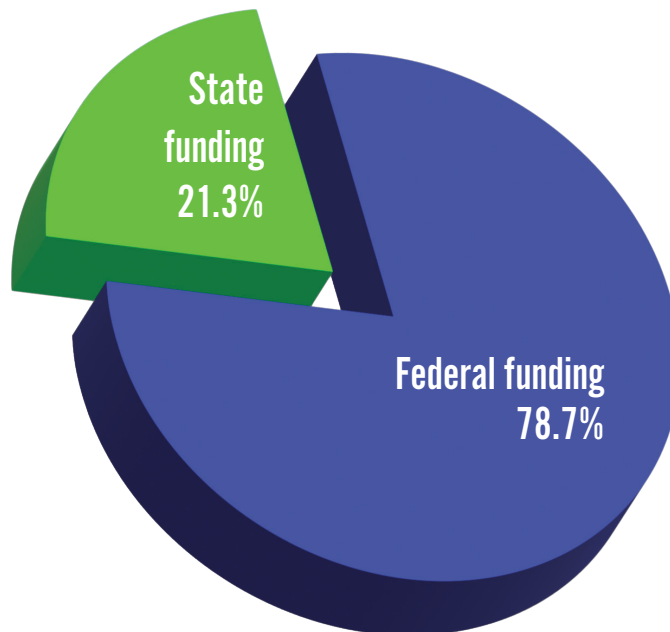
The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is state-funded.

The majority of funding for Oklahoma School for the

Blind and the Oklahoma School for the Deaf is state appropriations. Other key OSD funding comes from the Equipment Distribution Program, which provides telecommunications and other equipment to deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind and severely speech-impaired individuals.

In support services, DRS utilizes an indirect cost rate as the standardized method for individual programs to pay a fair share of support service (general administration) costs. Statistical information is based on State Fiscal Year 2022.

### Basic support



## State Fiscal Year 2022 Expenditures

	VR/SVBI	Oklahoma School for the Blind	Oklahoma School for the Deaf	Disability Determination	Support Services	Total
State	\$13,751,000	\$7,722,000	\$9,827,000	\$551,000	\$2,753,000	\$34,604,000
Federal	\$36,529,000	\$0	\$0	\$41,554,000	\$6,376,000	\$84,459,000
Inter-agency	\$136,000	\$457,000	\$780,000	\$0	\$306,000	\$1,679,000
Other	\$252,000	\$37,000	\$348,000	\$0	\$5,000	\$642,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$50,668,000</b>	<b>\$8,216,000</b>	<b>\$10,955,000</b>	<b>\$42,105,000</b>	<b>\$9,440,000</b>	<b>\$121,384,000</b>



# DRS Programs

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services through its Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired divisions help Oklahomans with disabilities build independence through work.

The two divisions offer many of the same services, but each also offers unique programs that address the needs of Oklahomans with disabilities.

Here is the look at services that are offered by both divisions.

Early intervention for children with disabilities

Job counseling, guidance and job placement

Medical and psychological assessments

Information and referral to other agencies for additional services.

Assistive technology to enable clients to succeed in workplace

Training includes vocational, post-secondary, on-the-job, personal and vocational adjustment training, job search skills development and job coaching

Diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental disabilities may be provided to enhance consumers' employment opportunities when services are not available through health insurance or other benefits

Post-employment services help consumers get, keep or move ahead in their jobs.



Vocational Rehabilitation staff assist Oklahomans to achieve **independent lives** and obtain economic freedom **through work.**

**Taxpayers save \$7 for every \$1** that would have been paid out in benefits over the **lifetime of the person** who DRS successfully helps gets **off SSA benefits.**



## DRS helps Oklahomans with disabilities achieve independence

DRS' Vocational Rehabilitation staff makes it possible for Oklahomans with disabilities to live independently and pursue economic freedom through work. The VR staff offers employment services for people with any disability, except blindness or visual impairments.

Vocational rehabilitation staff uses a range of tools that empower the clients including in-person counseling, testing and online tools when necessary to see that each client is on a path to start or return to work. DRS staff removes any barriers to employment for each client. Oklahomans with disabilities can become Oklahoma taxpayers,

strengthening the state workforce.

DRS' staff guides and counsels clients on employment goals and networks with employers on behalf of people with disabilities. Staff can also assist employers in training the employees and advise on workplace accommodations, if needed.

Clients achieving their dreams of living independently and pursuing a career is possible because of DRS services that include career counseling, vocational education and training, and medical services if it is determined it will help a client find employment. They may also receive assistive technology, job placement and coaching.

## VR fast facts

12,030

Vocational Rehabilitation cases served in State Fiscal Year 2022.

4,315

Program applications made for VR services in SFY 2022.

2,961

Client employment plans completed.

1,027

Employment outcomes achieved.

\$26,402

Average yearly earning of clients after receiving VR services.

\$3,960

Average yearly taxes paid by clients (based on 15-percent tax rate).

# VR prepares Oklahomans for the workplace

## Education and training

DRS helps Oklahomans with disabilities obtain vocational training, a college degree or other skill-building training. The services a person receives are determined by Individualized Plan for Employment, which are developed for the specific needs of each client. This plan outlines a person's employment goal and the services that are needed to enable the person to achieve that goal.

## Career planning

During the course of services, DRS staff will work with clients to determine their career objectives and develop a plan to reach those goals. Clients may receive employment services including job search, placement, coaching and follow-up services to help consumers find and keep work in their chosen careers.

## Assistive technology

Vocational Rehabilitation Assistive Technology Specialists complete a variety of assessments based on the counselor's referral and the consumer's needs. All assessments are focused on how the accommodation or assistive technology will aid the client in overcoming obstacles that interfere with obtaining employment or keeping a job.

Assessments can include home or vehicle modifications, personal mobility needs such as wheelchairs, computer access, worksite access or modification needs, and activities of daily living needs.

The AT assessment involves the initial visit, trial of equipment, follow-up and final inspection of equipment.



## Business Services Program

For more information,  
scan the QR code



# BSP opens door to rich pool of employees

DRS' Business Services Program works with Oklahoma businesses, meeting their employment needs by providing qualified candidates for employment.

BSP staff partners with businesses, offering candidates who are loyal and committed to long-term employment. DRS may share job training costs, and the businesses may qualify for tax credits.

The program's staff works with Workforce Centers, chambers of commerce, other state and federal

agencies and non-profit organizations to provide hiring events and disability consultations.

Benefits to employers through BSP can include:

- A variety of free training for businesses' staff;
- Support for job seekers with follow up and evaluation of any accommodation needs;
- Paid internships and paid work experiences;
- Increased profits by having a workforce that better reflects the customers served and lowers cost through their commitment to the employer.





**“Getting connected to vocational rehabilitation was the best thing to ever happen to me.”**

## DRS gets man back in the game after neck injury

Emeka Nnaka's life changed on an Arkansas football field in 2009.

The 6-foot, 5-inch Georgia native, originally arrived in Tulsa for college, but when he failed to gain traction in school, he began playing pro football for the Oklahoma Thunder as a defensive end and linebacker.

“That was going well until it wasn't,” Nnaka said. “I had an accident on the football field. I broke my neck, and it left me paralyzed.”

At first, Nnaka said seeing his path forward in life was almost impossible.

“The first few weeks is like a topical pain,” he said. “You grit your way through it. The deeper wound is when you get out of the hospital, and you are not better. You are not walking out. This is now long term. The next few months almost put me to my knees.”

Nnaka was advised to seek assistance from The Center for Individuals with Physical Challenges in Tulsa and from the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services' Vocational Rehabilitation division.

He met with a DRS counselor in 2010, but said he had no idea what was possible. In the meantime, he began volunteering with a local church's youth program.

“I started to have this desire to go back to school,” he said. “I still didn't know how to do it.”

Nnaka visited Langston University in Tulsa in April 2012, which led him to have a conversation with a professor there, who advised him to return to the classroom. He called DRS and spoke to a new counselor.

“I tell her I think I know what I want to do now,” he said. “I think I want to go to school for counseling so let's start



In their words



Scan the QR code to see Nnaka talk about his experience with DRS.

figuring out how to get things done.”

That fall, he was enrolled at both Tulsa Community College and at Langston University. DRS paid for his school, his books and provided him an iPad to assist in his coursework.

“My iPad got me through school,” Nnaka said. “It is as important to me as my keys and my phone. In 2012, my life started again. I was scared, but I had nothing to lose and everything to gain.”

He completed his bachelor's degree in rehabilitation counseling at Langston and earned his master's degree from OU in human relations with a focus in clinical mental health counseling.

“I remember telling my counselor, ‘I promise, if you invest in me, I will make it count. Every single day now, I am making it count,’” he said.

DRS also assisted him in getting the training he needed to drive again.

“That opened my life up,” he said. “That changed everything. I had come from this dark place, and now I had an education.”

Nnaka now works as a mental health therapist and motivational speaker.

“The life that I live now is one – I am very thankful for,” Nnaka said. “Getting connected to vocational rehabilitation was the best thing to ever happen to me.”



SBVI staff assist Oklahomans to **achieve independent lives, independent living skills** and obtaining economic freedom **through work.**

**\$4 to \$1** is the match in **federal dollars** Oklahoma receives **for state funding of VR and SBVI services.**



## DRS helps Oklahomans with disabilities achieve independence

Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired can live independently and pursue fulfilling careers with assistance from DRS' Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

SBVI staff assists Oklahomans in achieving their dreams through a spectrum of services including career counseling; vocational education and training; medical services required to become employable; and assistive technology geared to their specific needs and job placement.

Oklahomans are eligible for the vocational rehabilitation services if

their disability makes it difficult to work. They must be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services, which prepare clients for employment.

Legal blindness occurs when visual acuity with best correction is 20/200 or less or when side vision results in a field restriction of 20 degrees or less.

Many clients receive living skills training that allows them to navigate their environments, operate computers, manage money and much more. Empowered with these skills, people who are blind or visually impaired are ready to compete in the workplace and enjoy independence.

## SBVI fast facts

1,635

Cases served by SBVI staff in SFY 22.

317

SBVI applications for services taken by staff.

266

Employment plans completed for SBVI clients.

131

Employment outcomes achieved by SBVI clients.

\$29,873

Average yearly earnings of employed SBVI clients.

\$4,481

Average taxes paid by former employed SBVI clients (based on 15 percent tax rate.)

# SBVI services build self worth, taxpayers

## Orientation and mobility training

DRS' Orientation and Mobility Specialists provide instruction to blind individuals in using white canes and

other techniques for traveling independently in their communities.



## Deaf Blind Services

An individual may be referred for Deaf Blind Services if he or she has both of the following: Legal blindness or progressive visual disabilities that will result in legal blindness, and severe to profound hearing loss or significant difficulties communicating in home or community settings.

There are no age requirements for services; however, this program primarily serves adults.

Deaf-Blind services staff work closely with other DRS programs to ensure that Oklahomans with dual sensory loss have equal access to all services and programs.

## Older Blind

DRS' Older Blind Independent Living Program offers free independent living services to people who are 55-years-old or older and legally blind.

Rehabilitation teachers located in Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired offices throughout the state provide one-on-one assistance to individuals adjusting to blindness and regaining or maintaining maximum independence and self-sufficiency.

Legal blindness occurs when visual acuity with best correction is 20/200 or less or when side vision results in a field restriction of 20 degrees or less.

Oklahomans having problems dialing the phone, signing their names, cooking, identifying money, time telling, or matching clothing can get help from a rehabilitation teacher. The teacher will work with clients in learning how to perform these tasks safely, efficiently and independently.



## Business Enterprise Program

For more information,  
scan the QR code



Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired can move toward a new independent life with the assistance of a DRS program, offering them the chance to own their own businesses.

Through the federally enacted Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936 and Oklahoma State Statute Title 7, SBVI operates the Business Enterprise Program.

BEP's mission is to provide employment opportunities for people who at least are legally blind with best correction by establishing food service operations across the state.

These operations may consist of vending machine routes, cafeterias or a variety of different types of snack bars. To accomplish this, the BEP aids entrepreneurs by providing extensive business training, licensing business owners, locating and equipping locations, securing initial inventory and offering on-going business consultation services.

BEP entrepreneurs are educated in food safety, hospitality, marketing and business management. A portion of each business' proceeds is paid to DRS for the licensed vendors' retirement and insurance costs.



**Client need**

Woman diagnosed with condition that would leave her blind, led her to lose job.

**DRS action**

DRS services helped client learn how to live life and work again.

**Result**

Woman is employed and is now an active advocate for the blind.

**“My life is awesome now. I love being able to educate people that blind people can be independent.”**

# Young escaped ‘darkness’ for an ‘awesome life’

Dana Young struggled with her vision before being diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa in the summer of 2018. RP is a group of eye disorders that cause progressive vision loss.

A self-described workaholic, Young, who had already been diagnosed with leukemia, worried that losing her eyesight would mean her life was over.

“I was worried I was not going to be able to do anything,” Young said. “Here I am legally blind. I can’t work anymore. I am by myself. What am I going to do with my life? I went through a dark time. I dealt with depression.”

She turned to DRS, meeting with a counselor in December 2018 where she was placed on a waiting listing due to budget constraints. The following fall, Young attended VIBE, or DRS’ Visually Impaired and Blindness Empowerment program. It offers DRS clients an opportunity to receive an evaluation and training experience to develop skills necessary to living more independently with vision loss.

“That was a life changer, getting to meet with the teachers, counselors, the case workers and the O&M (orientation and mobility) people,” Young said. “A lot of them are blind and visually impaired and knew exactly what I was going through. They taught us that you can still do stuff. You can still cook. You can still go on walks. You can still have your independence. You can handle



In their words



Scan the QR code to see Young talk about her experience with DRS.

your medications. You can still go to work.”

They even let her know that one of her passions, crafting, was still very much on the table.

“I was so happy to hear that,” she said.

For most of her career, Young had worked in finance before becoming the financial aid director at a cosmetology and barbering school in Lawton. She had left that job due to her medical challenges, but with DRS counseling and assistive technology, Young is once again working at the school.

She has also become active as an advocate for the blind. She serves as the president of the Lawton Council for the Blind and serves on the statewide Oklahoma Council of the Blind Board. She also has worked with the City of Lawton Access Board, which helps educate people about the needs of people with disabilities.

“My life is awesome now,” Young said. “I love being able to educate people that blind people can be independent. People who have a disability need to contact DRS if they want to be independent.”



## Oklahomans with disabilities stay connected to world with library's help

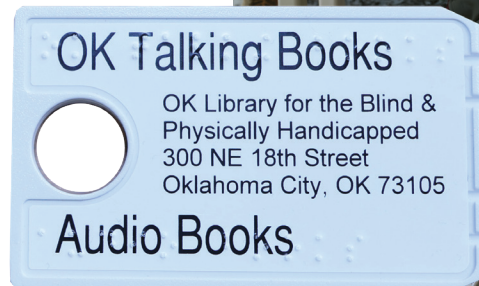
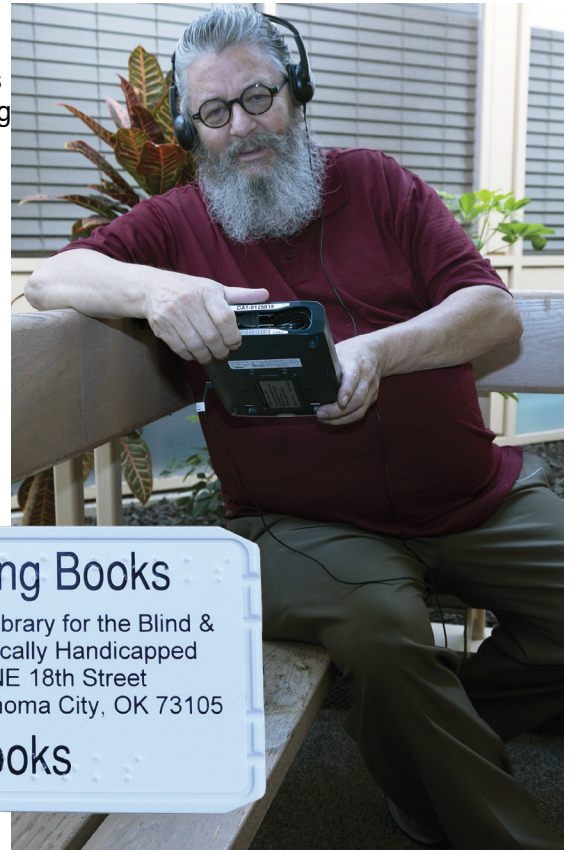
The **library**, which is operated by DRS' Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired Division, **is part of the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled.**

The **library** provides **services at no cost** to those with visual, physical or reading disabilities.

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped staff keep Oklahomans with disabilities connected to the world by fulfilling hundreds of audiobook orders daily.

The library makes it possible for Oklahomans to connect to thousands of books and periodicals available in audio recorded and Braille formats — all for free. The library provides services at no cost to those with visual, physical or reading disabilities.

Through its Accessible Instructional Materials Center, the library provides Braille and large-print textbooks and assistive devices for students with visual impairments in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade and earlier developmental years as



long as funds are available to meet the requests.

## OLBPH fast facts

4,510

Oklahomans with disabilities who are patrons of the OLBPH.

1,321

Books circulated by library daily to OLBPH patrons.

6,605

Books received weekly by library patrons.

1,301

Children who are served through Accessible Instructional Materials Center.

870

Children with disabilities who are eligible for textbooks through AIM Center.

\$407,807

Federal textbook funding for Oklahoma children with disabilities.



These services **assist youth and students with disabilities** in a **seamless transition** from high school to a **meaningful career** path.

VR and SBVI programs provide **career focused** preparation **activities** and services that are intended to help **achieve community integration** . . .

## Transition related services build foundation for youth to succeed

Oklahoma youth with disabilities can achieve their dreams of having a career and living independently through services from the DRS Transition program.

The services for these youth can include education, training and work experience. Counselors for Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired make access to these services possible by working with the youth. Counselors are assigned to high schools throughout the state.

VR and SBVI programs provide career focused preparation activities and services that are intended to help achieve community integration, independence, post-secondary education and/or competitive integrated employment.

These services assist youth and students with disabilities in a seamless transition from high school to a meaningful career path.

Transition students may participate in Pre-Employment Transition Services without having to apply to VR, or be



determined eligible for services.

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act every student with a disability has the opportunity to participate in Pre-ETS through VR, including job exploration counseling, work readiness training, work-based learning experiences, postsecondary educational counseling and self-advocacy training.

## Transition and Pre-ETS fast facts



3,974

Participants in Transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services.

2,561

Potentially eligible cases for Pre-Employment Transition Services in SFY 2022.

1,425

Total number of Vocational Rehabilitation cases in Transition services.

\$4.571 m

Total expenditures for Pre-Employment Transition Services.



**“I know if I need help,  
 DRS will be there to help me.”**

# Woman lassos her future with help from DRS staff

Brynn Roberts’ family members are tall. They range in height from 6-foot to 6-foot, 7-inches tall. Roberts, who has a genetic disorder known as achondroplasia, stands at just 4-foot, 4-inches tall, but her disability does not stop her from living her life to the fullest or pursuing her dreams.

Achondroplasia is a disorder of bone growth that prevents the changing of cartilage (particularly in the long bones of the arms and legs) to bone. It is a form of dwarfism.

Roberts is anything but a wallflower.

Almost any weekend, she can be found at a rodeo arena where she goes to watch her friends compete and help them get ready along the way. Then, she goes and takes photos of them in action to promote her photography business. If she isn’t at an arena, she is back home working with her horses, hoping to be back in the rodeo arena soon along with her friends.

On the weekdays, she is holding down a job at KC Supply in Thomas.

**In their words**



Scan the QR code to see Roberts talk about her experience with DRS.

DRS is also helping make it possible for the Okeene native to build a foundation for her independent future. Roberts is preparing in spring 2023 to continue her education at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, where she is pursuing a degree in radiologic technology. It will take her about 3.5 years to complete her education.

She first learned about DRS while at Okeene High School through a Transition counselor. DRS helped her get a computer to do her coursework and is helping her pay for her education.

“I know if I need help, DRS will be there to help me,” she said. “I never knew the options that were available to me because of my condition. DRS has been very helpful.”



Our schools provide early intervention services for children with visual or hearing impairments to empower them for success in life.

Outreach services help families and other schools to support Oklahomans with disabilities

OSB teaches Braille literacy to students who are blind or visually impaired.

OSB helps students improve their orientation and mobility skills so they feel confident in navigating the world.

OSD practices conscious discipline. The program supports first teaching ourselves about self-control and self-regulation, and then teaching children how to regulate themselves when they are upset.

OSD is a state deafness resource center. OSD collaborates with families, school districts, agencies, and communities throughout the state to address language, communication, and education needs of children and students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

OSD teaches American Sign Language and English literacy.

OSD provides online American Sign Language classes to people throughout the world.

## Our schools

The Oklahoma School for the Blind in Muskogee and the Oklahoma School for the Deaf in Sulphur provide rigorous educational curriculum that meet state standards.

The staff at the schools are dedicated to providing students opportunities to excel both inside and outside of the classroom and on the athletic field. Students also have the opportunity to enjoy a full range of social experiences.

Both OSB and OSD are language rich environments, where students are provided work-study opportunities to assist in making them ready to pursue careers.

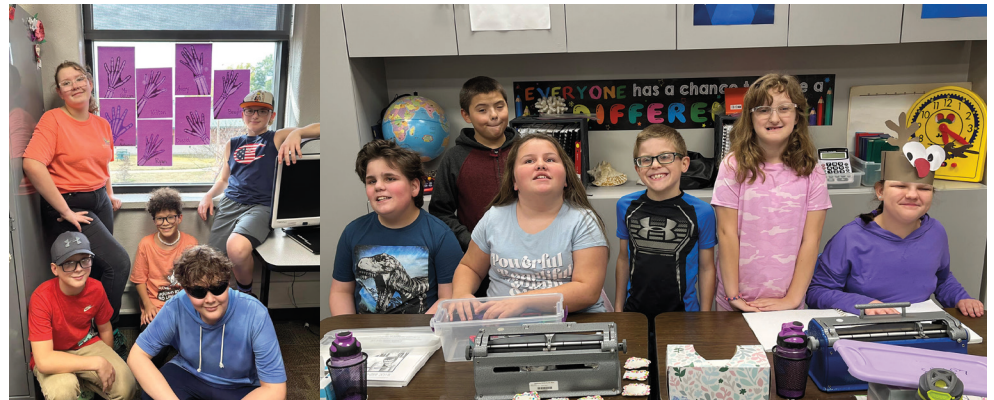
The schools' staff are committed to equipping each student for life-long learning, responsible citizenship and productive employment in an ever-changing society.





The **school serves all 77 state counties.** Regardless of the hometown, **OSB provides transportation at no cost.**

School offers **intensive specializations not readily available at other public schools** in the state.



## Comprehensive curriculum, social experiences sets OSB at forefront

Oklahoma School for the Blind's staff serve students preschool-age through 12th-grade, offering superior educational opportunities that empower students to pursue independence, education and a career. Tuition is free.

OSB staff provides students with specialized educational programs in coordination with their state-mandated educational requirements. Independent living skills and specialized accessible technology equipment assist

each student in developing their maximum potential.

Students wishing to pursue music can join the OSB Jazz Band, which is recognized for setting a high bar for excellence.

Specialized instruction includes Braille, orientation and mobility, optimum use of low vision adaptive equipment, technology and tactile graphic skills. These intensive specializations are not readily available at other public schools in the state.

## OSB fast facts

100%

Graduation rate for 2021-2022 school year.

85

Total number of students enrolled (day and residential). Five students with multiple disabilities.

1 to 4

OSB teacher to student ratio.

1 to 4

Direct Care specialist to student ratio.

4,505

Direct services from the school's outreach services.

144/412

Outreach services to families/schools.



**Client need**

Kaylie Minter wanted specialized educational opportunities to increase her independence.

**DRS action**

Minter was taught Braille and how to advocate for herself at school and on the job.

**Result**

Minter will graduate in May and is looking forward to pursuing a career.

**“Absolutely, this school and its staff have gone above and beyond. I have had opportunities here that I don’t think I would have gotten in a regular public-school setting!”**

# OSB readied senior to pursue dreams

Broken Bow’s Kaylie Minter is now more independent than she ever thought she would be.

The 17-year-old senior credits that empowerment to the Oklahoma School for the Blind staff who have helped guide her through high school and toward self-sufficiency.

Kaylie was born with optic nerve atrophy, a condition where the optic nerve never fully develops. She attended Lukfata Elementary School in Broken Bow but wanted to attend the Oklahoma School for the Blind so that she could take advantage of unique opportunities at the school and to become more successful with her disability.

“This school has made me more independent than I thought I could be,” Kaylie said. “They taught us how to advocate for ourselves. The staff members here are so nice. I have made a lot of great connections here both with students and staff that I will never forget.”

The school gave her the opportunity to learn Braille, which is invaluable to her because her visual acuity changes daily. Some days she needs to read Braille while the next day she may be able to read small print.

Recently, she returned from the week-long Space Camp, which is an educational camp in Huntsville, Ala., located on the grounds of the U.S. Space and Rocket Center Museum near NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center.



In their words



Scan the QR code to see Minter talk about her education at OSB.

“We got to do so much stuff,” she said. “It was a camp for visually-impaired students, and students came from all over the world. They came from Belgium and Romania. There were also kids from other states like Washington, Wyoming and Georgia. They taught us about NASA and space. It was a lot of fun.”

When Kaylie graduates in May, she will have completed a sports medicine program at Indian Capital Technology Center in Muskogee.

Kaylie said she may pursue a job in physical therapy or may opt for additional education in cosmetology. She said she hopes to live in Oklahoma City or Tulsa.

She credits her success to the support she has received at OSB.

“Absolutely, this school and its staff have gone above and beyond,” she said. “I have had opportunities here that I don’t think I would have gotten in a regular public-school setting.”



**OSD is a deaf education immersion school**, while other schools, public or private, are often only able to make basic accommodations. **Sign language classes are provided for all students and staff.**

**OSD has a strong vocational program** that offers business technology, family and consumer sciences and welding classes **on site.**



## Building communication, life skills at heart of OSD education

The Oklahoma School for the Deaf gives high school students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing the opportunity to pursue their career dreams.

Staff and students communicate with each other using both American Sign Language and English. Maximized bilingual development is the goal for each student. Many students utilize cochlear implants or hearing aids. For these students, spoken English is also a developmental focus.

Students who attend OSD must meet all state graduation requirements. All classes are taught in consideration of each

student's unique communication and educational needs. Students receive full educational and social experiences. They perform in school programs and dramas. They have prom and homecoming events for all sports. They compete with other schools on sports teams, leadership programs and academic teams.

OSD is a four-day-a-week program. Those who live close to campus commute back and forth to school. Students from greater distances live at the school free of charge and go home for three-day weekends, summers and holidays. OSD serves Oklahoma students from preschool to 12th grade.

## OSD fast facts

100%

Graduation rate for 2021-2022 school year.

95

Students enrolled (day and residential). Eleven students with multiple disabilities.

1 to 4

OSD teacher to student ratio.

1 to 4

Direct Care specialist to student ratio.

494

Total youth taking part in schools, programs, external services and camps.

114,754

Total number of people taking part in online ASL classes.



“I think that all people should know that **Deaf people are in this world**. Maybe they don’t need to learn sign (language) specifically, but (they should) at least **know about us as a community and as a culture**. Interpreters too.”

# OSD senior sets the pace for others

OSD senior Ashlei Miller was born in Oklahoma City and moved to Ardmore with her family when she was in 5th grade to benefit from better communication options at Oklahoma School for the Deaf in Sulphur.

“I think that all people should know that Deaf people are in this world,” Miller said. “Maybe they don’t need to learn sign (language) specifically, but (they should) at least know about us as a community and as a culture. Interpreters too.”

When she is not enjoying her favorite English class or playing basketball and soccer, Miller proudly represents OSD as the first official bison mascot at sports and community events. The new mascot was selected by a vote of students, staff and alumni in July 2021.

In April, Miller performed as the bison mascot at the Oklahoma City Thunder basketball game, distributed t-shirts and signed the national anthem with other OSD students.

Her favorite role model is Lauren Ridloff, a Deaf actress who portrayed Makkari, the first Deaf superhero in Marvel Studio’s 2021 film “Eternals.”

“She’s a wonderful role model Deaf character, and everyone knows her,” Miller said. “It just shows that if she can do it, we can do it.”

After graduating from OSD in May 2023, Miller plans to attend Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. She wants to become a basketball coach and teach sign language at a Deaf school or a public school. She is also interested in teaching about the Deaf community and culture.





**Disability Determination Services staff places a high priority on saving taxpayers money by investigating fraudulent claims.**

## DDS staff views work as critical

Disability Determination Services staff work to determine if Oklahomans are medically eligible for Social Security disability benefits. DDS staff understand how crucial their work is for people looking to build a secure financial foundation for their lives.

para-professionals, disability specialists and medical/psychological consultants review each applicant's medical and work history. The team determines whether applicants meet federal medical eligibility criteria for disability or blindness.

DDS processes applications made to the Social Security Administration for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income.

During Federal Fiscal Year 2022, DDS was on track to meet their budgeted workload, processing 94-percent of their allotted cases as of Sept. 8.

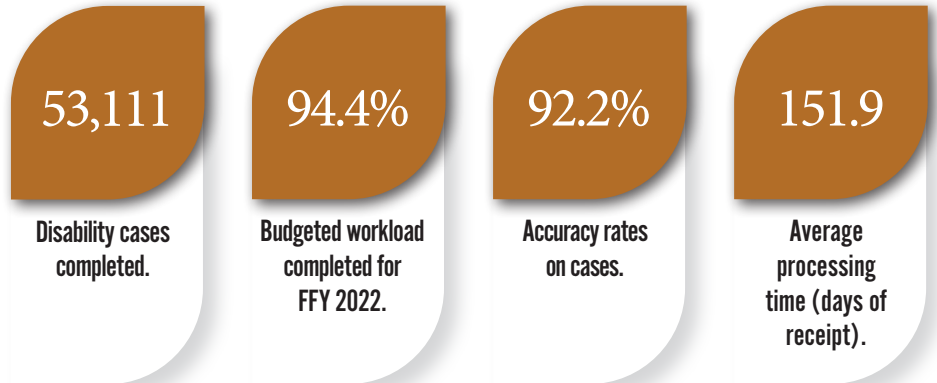
For each disability claim, a team of

DDS' budget is federally funded.

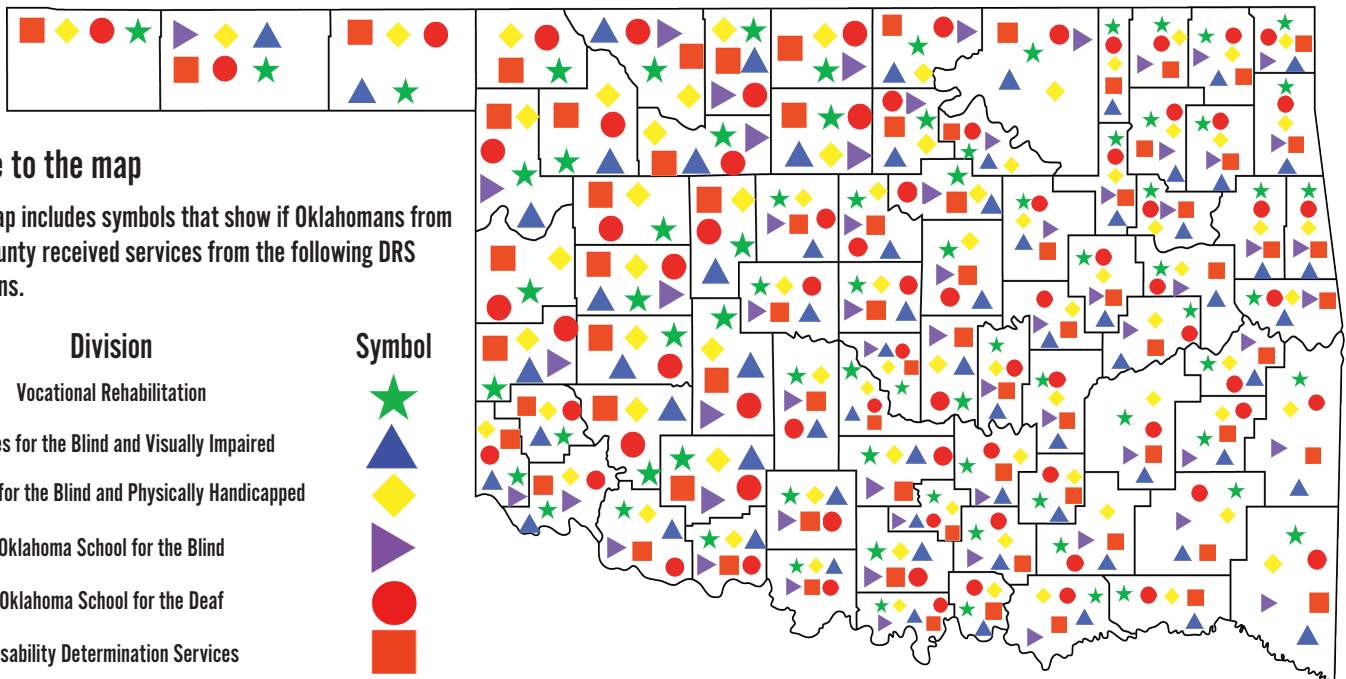
## Disability Determination Services fast facts



\*All data for DDS is as of Sept. 8.



## Oklahoma Rehabilitation Services Services across state



### Guide to the map

The map includes symbols that show if Oklahomans from the county received services from the following DRS divisions.



# Impact across state

County	VR	SBVI	OSB	OSD	DDS	OLBPH	Total by county
Adair	20	5	4	70	413	27	539
Alfalfa	11	1	1	18	45	23	99
Atoka	79	5	2	60	189	31	366
Beaver	4	6	0	19	31	5	65
Beckham	81	10	2	75	390	37	595
Blaine	19	3	0	39	130	14	205
Bryan	99	13	4	157	791	55	1,119
Caddo	58	9	1	120	526	38	752
Canadian	207	28	2	725	1,065	205	2,232
Carter	121	34	5	187	832	75	1,254
Cherokee	61	17	11	219	607	64	979
Choctaw	36	9	0	51	263	29	388
Cimarron	2	0	0	4	9	2	17
Cleveland	442	40	3	1,186	2,178	373	4,222
Coal	38	5	0	22	99	6	170
Comanche	350	34	6	624	1,845	138	2,997
Cotton	8	1	7	22	102	16	156
Craig	20	3	15	48	298	31	415
Creek	123	16	3	299	857	116	1,414
Custer	120	17	3	129	339	51	659
Delaware	36	9	11	135	636	67	894
Dewey	8	0	0	14	41	6	69
Ellis	7	3	1	10	42	4	67
Garfield	141	33	4	181	822	87	1,268
Garvin	47	18	1	144	371	45	626
Grady	93	10	3	332	657	57	1,152
Grant	8	0	1	18	42	8	77
Greer	33	1	0	12	114	7	167
Harmon	6	1	6	9	51	4	77
Harper	7	0	0	9	29	7	52
Haskell	72	2	4	38	225	14	355
Hughes	25	8	8	59	210	26	336
Jackson	83	8	4	147	355	25	622
Jefferson	9	3	1	26	95	7	141
Johnston	30	1	2	63	161	12	269
Kay	119	14	5	114	683	55	990
Kingfisher	19	5	2	47	121	24	218
Kiowa	79	4	0	39	164	14	300
Latimer	30	6	0	37	156	19	248
Leflore	113	17	7	207	991	48	1,383
Lincoln	67	6	1	153	486	60	773
Logan	67	7	1	147	393	64	679

County	VR	SBVI	OSB	OSD	DDS	OLBPH	Total by county
Love	20	5	4	50	148	10	237
Major	13	3	2	26	76	13	133
Marshall	42	7	0	49	242	17	357
Mayes	96	9	10	104	657	47	923
McClain	49	5	0	191	550	50	845
McCurtain	55	20	2	104	508	46	735
McIntosh	14	9	1	49	384	33	490
Murray	44	4	4	189	193	31	465
Muskogee	64	37	25	260	1,388	164	1,938
Noble	11	6	6	37	122	15	197
Nowata	27	0	3	47	149	14	240
Okfuskee	15	2	1	42	209	25	294
Oklahoma	1,658	155	18	2,817	10,333	1,059	16,040
Okmulgee	103	8	6	123	725	54	1,019
Osage	88	5	2	160	469	65	789
Ottawa	47	6	5	150	710	44	962
Pawnee	37	2	1	75	263	37	415
Payne	117	13	5	285	830	113	1,363
Pittsburgh	154	29	1	160	790	72	1,206
Pontotoc	142	31	4	238	461	64	940
Pottawatomie	140	14	6	333	1,205	116	1,814
Pushmataha	44	13	1	41	200	17	316
Roger Mills	6	0	0	16	41	5	68
Rogers	154	25	10	292	871	111	1,463
Seminole	67	8	2	102	470	27	676
Sequoyah	36	18	10	117	841	60	1,082
Stephens	94	28	2	221	669	56	1,070
Texas	11	1	3	65	93	6	179
Tillman	12	3	2	18	121	7	163
Tulsa	1,033	202	71	2,091	7,568	865	11,830
Wagoner	71	23	14	262	468	65	903
Washington	108	11	3	243	765	92	1,222
Washita	41	7	0	35	205	26	314
Woods	67	2	1	32	74	20	196
Woodward	58	7	0	48	274	35	422
Out of state	35	11	0	100,744	0	9	100,799
OK unknown**	2,546	0	0	25	0	0	2,571
<b>Total by program</b>	<b>10,317</b>	<b>1,141</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>115,856</b>	<b>50,926</b>	<b>5,486</b>	<b>184,082</b>

NOTES: The school counts include students at the physical locations, student outreach, and other training and equipment programs. OK Library for the Blind counts include library patrons and students served through the AIM Center. SBVI counts include job-seeking clients and participants in the Older Blind Independent Living Program.

\*OK School for the Deaf (OSD) continued to offer free ASL classes online. This has resulted in substantially higher service numbers for OSD since the online ASL classes became available. As a result, the overall DRS served number has been substantially higher.

\*\*Pre-ETS services are provided to potentially eligible students, as required under WIOA, throughout the state. The specific county of residence is not available, and they are counted under VR - OK Unknown.



A proud partner of the American Job Center network  
[www.oklahomaworks.gov](http://www.oklahomaworks.gov)



**OKLAHOMA**  
Rehabilitation  
Services

DRS Pub. #23-02

This publication is authorized by the Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services in accordance with state and federal regulations and printed by the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services at a cost of \$1,288.22 for 600 copies. This publication is available on the DRS website. DRS offices may request copies via IDRS. For additional copies, contact Cathy Martin by email at [cmartin@okdrs.gov](mailto:cmartin@okdrs.gov) or by phone at (405) 951-3478.

Date: February 2023