Oklahomans with Disabilities WANT to Work!

1 in 6 Oklahoma has a disability

632,400 Oklahomans have disabilities

73% of Oklahomans with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64 are unemployed

The mission of the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC) is to facilitate consumer education and empowerment, to assure services are of high quality and lead to employment of individuals with disabilities within Oklahoma.
Dear Colleagues,
This Annual Report represents the hard work and dedication of all the members of the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC) during 2019. It has been an honor and a privilege to experience firsthand the impact the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (OKDRS) has made in the lives of the Oklahoma citizens being provided assistance.

ORC continues to support and play an important role in various statewide initiatives such as Oklahoma Works and Access for All, both of which promote quality employment for all Oklahomans, including individuals with disabilities. On a national level, ORC continues to monitor the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to ensure services provided to Oklahoma citizens are of the highest quality.

In addition, ORC participated in the organization of the 2019 Disability Awareness Day, the 14th Annual Oklahoma Transition Institute, and the 2019 Oklahoma Works Conference.

ORC’s mission to advocate for a better future for individuals with disabilities continues, and we are honored to be a partner and supporter of OKDRS, its staff, and all Oklahoma citizens.

Sincerely,

Carolina Colclasure
ORC Program Manager

Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council
3535 NW 58th St., Suite 500
Oklahoma City, OK  73112
Phone: 405-951-3579
Toll Free: 1-800-569-7974
Fax: 405-951-3532
Email: carolina.colclasure@oksate.edu
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Council Structure
The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (OKDRS) contracts with the Department of Wellness at Oklahoma State University (OSU) for the provision of the staff support services for the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC) as set forth in Section 105 and Section 4.2 of the State Plan of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The Director of Sponsored Programs at the Department of Wellness hires, supervises, and evaluates a full-time Program Manager (PM) position for the daily operations of the Council and a part-time Administrative Assistant. In addition, OSU manages all contractual financial obligations of the Council. In turn, OKDRS provides in-kind services of office space, phone and computer access to the Council staff.

During 2019, the ORC fulfilled all membership requirements of Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act with appointments by the Governor. ORC had 18 members, 3 being ex-officio nonvoting members from the Designated State Agency (DSA). Of the voting members, 60% of the Council is represented by persons with disabilities. The Council members are a cross-section of individuals with disabilities who have a stake in vocational rehabilitation services. Members serve for two (2) consecutive terms of three (3) years each, with the exception of the Client Assistance Program representative and the Director of the Section 121 Projects.

ORC’s structure includes a Chair, Vice-Chair and three Members-at-Large as Executive Committee members. Each Member-at-Large of the Executive Committee holds the position of Chair on a Committee. At the request of ORC, the DSA has assigned a staff liaison to each ORC Committee that acts as a content specialist to that committee, and are identified as an Associate Member. The Associate Members are vital due to the importance of the work of each committee. See Council Member’s contact information on page 16.
Quarterly Meetings FFY19
In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act, the Council scheduled and held four quarterly meetings during FFY19 and held an annual Strategic Planning meeting. Meeting dates were:

- September 20, 2018 (FFY19 Strategic Planning Meeting)
- November 15, 2018
- February 21, 2019
- May 16, 2019
- August 15, 2019
- September 19, 2019 (FFY20 Strategic Planning Meeting)

All committees met at least once per quarter, to complete the Goals, Objectives and Activities outlined in the ORC Strategic Plan.

Strategic Plan for FFY19
The complete version of the FFY19 ORC Strategic Plan can be found on ORC’s website at: https://orc.okstate.edu/content/strategic-plan.

ORC complies with the federal Rehabilitation Act mandates through its strategic plan process utilizing the following functions and related tasks.

Program and Planning (P&P) Committee

Chairperson – Theresa Flannery

DRS Liaison – Tina Calloway

Review, analyze and advise the (DSA) on the performance measures as laid out by Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Active participation on the OKDRS State Plan meetings. Active participation on the OKDRS Statewide Assessment Development initiative. Analyze the trends of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) Open Case Survey.

Goal 1: In accordance with Section 105 (A)(c)(i), the Program and Planning Committee will quarterly or as necessary, review, analyze and advise the DSA on the performance measurements, customer satisfaction, statewide assessment, and other relevant data.

Goal 2: The Program and Planning Committee will support quality customer services, career planning and effective employment.
COMMITTEE REPORT

The FFY18 ORC Annual Report was submitted on December 17, 2018; all Committees had a chance to review it before submission to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

RSA’s reporting tool change for performance measures during FFY19 was a slow process; therefore, OKDRS has not been able to establish a baseline for the Common Core Measurements for FFY19. Since the new reporting format is not available yet, the P&P Committee requested a change to the quarterly 2019 Field Coordinator reports, and the reports now include an update on the waiting list, as well as the following:

- Current Case Status
- Service Activity
- Priority Group Assignment
- Transition vs Adult Participants
- Active Cases – Age Group Breakdown

The DRS Field Coordinators have participated in all of ORC’s Quarterly meetings and responded to the questions regarding the Common Core Measurements.

In addition, OKDRS continues to be under an Order of Selection and all three Priority Groups are closed. The DSA released clients monthly, based on the budget, and ORC was updated on the progress of the waiting list during each Quarterly meetings.

The P&P Committee collaborated with the OKDRS Process Improvement (PI) Unit to create a new Open Case Survey. The key findings of the 2019 Open Case Survey from OKDRS are:

- The 2019 VR/SBVI Open Case Survey was returned by 331 clients (from a random sample of 2,605 clients).
- The response level was sufficient for a confidence level of 95%, +/- a 5.0% margin of error, indicating a representative sample from the total population of 7,281. Because the majority of survey questions have an expected response distribution skewed at more than 70%, the sample is representative with fewer responses.
- Rates for the VR division are representative at 95%, +/- a 5.18% margin of error.
- Rates for the SBVI division are not representative.
- The overall combined valid satisfaction rate for VR and SBVI was 83.4%.
- The overall valid satisfaction rate for VR was 83%.
- The overall valid satisfaction rate for SBVI was 86%.
- The highest combined agreement rates were for statements regarding whether clients told counselors what job they wanted on the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) (93.2%), and whether the counselor gave the client contact information (91.9%).
- Also receiving high agreement rates were statements regarding whether clients felt the counselor explained paperwork and information in a way the client understood (88.0%), and whether DRS staff clearly answered the client’s questions and concerns (86.3%).
- The lowest combined agreement rate was for the statement: “I know how the Client Assistance Program (CAP) can help me” (69.5%). Only 51.3% of SBVI respondents agreed with the statement. The VR agreement rate was 72.2%.
- The second lowest agreement rate was for the statement: “My counselor discussed assistive technology (AT) with me” (72.0%).
• The majority of clients (79.8%) reported OKDRS staff returned phone calls or e-mails within three business days.
• Only 9.6% of clients reported they have no family and/or friend support in their search for a job.
• Only 29.3% of clients reported they had gone to a Workforce Center for help getting a job. The numbers were higher for respondent clients in VR (32.1%) than SBVI (11.6%).
• Less than half of respondents reported the counselor gave them information about Workforce Centers (41.1%). This was the highest rate for referral information.
• The majority of respondents who rated their job coach were happy with them (77.7%). For those who were not happy with their job coach, the most frequent complaints were lack of contact and lack of assistance in finding and keeping employment.
• Lack of money (23.3%) was the biggest reason respondents reported for missing job search or skills trainings, job evaluations or interviews, or other OKDRS events. Transportation was second at 19.9%.

**METHODOLOGY**

• The 2019 Open Case Survey is a survey of VR and SBVI clients age 18 or over in an active case status for whom an IPE has been completed. This survey is conducted annually for the administrators of VR and SBVI. Since most services do not begin until an IPE is signed, clients without an IPE are excluded. In January 2019, data was extracted from AWARE, the case management system used by OKDRS, for the 7,281 clients that met the requirements. This group was designated as the target population for the survey.

• Using IBM’s Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, a random selection of 2,605 clients (approximately 35%) was extracted from the target population and designated as the sample population. The survey used a mixed methodology to make it more accessible. The majority of the sample population were mailed survey packets during the week of February 11, 2019. The packets included a letter of intent, the survey, and a postage-paid return envelope. Contact via telephone was attempted with the remainder of the population based on client accessibility information in AWARE. The survey was also available in Spanish.

• This year’s survey underwent a major design and language revision. The new version utilized a lower Flesch-Kincaid grade level, making it more readable and easily understood. The FFY19 response rates, including the Overall Satisfaction rate, should not be compared to previous survey rates. The survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions that measured a variety of satisfaction and engagement areas. To calculate mean, median, and mode, the survey statements were recoded to a one to four scale, with one indicating strongly disagree and four indicating strongly agree. A copy of the survey is included as Appendix 1.

• Surveys were received from 331 clients, resulting in a response rate of 12.71%. The US Postal Service returned 172 surveys due to bad addresses. Because the majority of survey questions had an expected response distribution skewed at more than 70%, the sample is representative with fewer responses. Therefore, sufficient responses were received to allow application of the results to the target population at a confidence level of 95%, +/- a 5% margin of error. Frequency distributions and statistics were calculated. Only valid responses were included in the calculations; missing and ‘Not Applicable’ responses were excluded.

• It is important to note that when separated and analyzed by the OKDRS division, the response rate for SBVI was not high enough to be considered representative of the total SBVI client population, and should be considered as only the opinions of the respondents. The VR division population is representative at 95%, +/- a 5.18% margin of error.

Lastly, the Committee has been working with the PI Unit to create a pilot program for the 2020 Open Case survey. This new survey will be done during different benchmark stages of the life of the case, and will provide information regarding:

• The quality of the services provided both from the DSA and from external providers
• Counselor’s response to client inquiries, suggestions and concerns
• The time the Counselor spends with each client, and
• The overall satisfaction during the life of the case

ORC purchased five iPads to implement the new Open Case Survey statewide.
Executive Committee

Chairperson – Lori Chesnut

DRS Liaison – Melinda Fruendt - DRS Executive Director

The Executive Committee is comprised of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Chair, Vice-Chair, and 3 Members-at-Large. The Executive Committee also consists of the Associate Director and Director of Sponsored Programs of OSU’s Department of Wellness, who oversees the contractual administration of the ORC and the ORC PM. The Executive Committee ensures that all other ORC committees are assigned to meet the requirements of Section 105 of the Rehab Act with regard to Public Hearings, State Plan, Comprehensive Needs Assessment, Customer Satisfaction and the Annual Report.

Goal 3: Maintain standing committees that address the goals and objectives outlined by the ORC, the DSA State Plan, and the Rehabilitation Act (i.e., Policy and Legislative Committee, Program and Planning Committee, Transition Committee and Employment Committee). Every ORC member serves on a committee(s).

COMMITTEE REPORT

The Executive Committee has been working closely and in direct communication with the OKDRS Executive team; all the Goals, Objectives and Activities for this committee have been met for FFY19, starting with the FFY18 Annual Report, which was submitted on December 17, 2018 to the Governor and RSA.

The resources of the Council have been reviewed very carefully every month and a plan for the usage of it has been followed.

The OKDRS Executive Team including Director Fruendt, Mark Kinnison – VR Division Administrator and Tracy Brigham SBVI Division Administrator, have participated in all the Executive Committee meetings as well as ORC Quarterly meetings. The Council has received timely updates from OKDRS and all questions and comments from the Council have been addressed by the OKDRS Executive Team.

During FFY19, the Council had three resignations:

- Parent Center representative
- VR Counselor representative
- Workforce Board Member representative

The first two were submitted to the Governor’s office for reappointment of a new member; ORC is currently waiting for an internal restructure of the Governor’s Workforce Board to be completed before resubmitting the last one.

Aside from the resignations, ORC had five positions that expired on September 1, 2019. All five members were eligible for reappointment and have submitted an application; the positions are:

- Theresa Flannery – Representative of a Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider
- Shelley Gladden – Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group.
- Suzanne Williams - Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group
- Jeffrey Newton – Current or Former Applicant or Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Service
Lastly, in FFY19, the ORC PM has attended all ORC Committee meetings, ABLE Tech Advisory Council meetings, Oklahoma Transition Council (OTC) meetings, Statewide Independent Living Council (SiLC) meetings and the Oklahoma Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (OKTVR) meetings.

Policy and Legislative Committee

Chairperson – William Ginn

DRS Liaison – Kevin Nelson

Activities include, but are not limited to, advocacy and education, policy and State Plan review, State Plan Public Hearings and Success Stories. Also, responsible for the reviewing/monitoring of pending and current disability-related legislation, particularly with respect to impact on OKDRS funding; suggest/develop legislation as needed. Active participation on the OKDRS Policy Re-engineering Committee. Support DRS with both national and state efforts to enhance advocacy activities and services for VR/SBVI clientele.

Goal 4: ORC will build capacity for consumer education and empowerment to showcase awareness and education for both consumers and employers.

COMMITTEE REPORT

The ORC PM attended, on behalf of the P&L Committee, all the SiLC meetings, as well as the ABLE Tech Advisory Council meetings.

The P&L Committee created in a new Legislative Primer and a new Success Story flyer; both documents were disseminated across various opportunities including:

- Disability Awareness Day at the Capitol
- The DRS Hill visits in Washington DC during the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Spring Conference.
- ORC May Quarterly meeting
- DRS Academy
- ORC presentations at the Oklahoma Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (OKTVR) Quarterly meeting.
- The ORC continues to support the DSA during Disability Awareness Day, and had four ORC members present during the activity.

In FFY 19, the P&L Committee collaborated with the ORC Program and Planning (P&P) Committee; together they met with both OKDRS Division Administrators and reviewed the 2019 Policy changes. The meeting was very successful; the P&L Committee created a Letter of Support that was shared during all three DRS Public Hearings in February 2019.
The P&L Committee participated on the planning committee to assist with organization of the 2019 OKTVR Conference held at the Choctaw Casino and Resort in Durant on August 7-9, 2019. The focus of the conference was Transition Services; ORC collaborated with the Oklahoma Transition Council (OTC) to have three presenters during the first day of the conference. The conference included the following sessions:

- Transition 101
- Transition Roundtable
- Career Planning Center and Transition Outreach
- Department of Education Resources
- Poverty Simulation
- Southern Plains Tribal Health Board: Disabilities and Disparities and Cultural Aspects
- OKTVR Talking Circle

The conference was a success with over 50 attendees including DRS, tribal staff and tribal partners.

The Committee also collaborated with CAP, and helped with the accessibility review of CAP’s brochure as well as the creation of 10 braille copies for clients who are blind.

The P&L Committee created 4 Success Story posters; one for Tribal VR, one for VR, one for SBVI and one for the Business Enterprise Program (BEP).

**Transition Committee**

**Chairperson – Lori Chesnut**

**DRS Liaison – Renee Sansom**

Active participation on the Oklahoma Transition Council. Support DRS with statewide efforts to enhance transition activities and services for youth in secondary settings to increase successful employment outcomes.

**Goal 5:** Collaborate with the DSA to address the utilization of in-demand occupation information during the career planning process, as well as the enhancement of a job seeker page on the DSA website in accessible formats for all DSA consumers.

**Goal 6:** Develop and conduct a needs assessment of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, including services coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) with a Note of: This goal will satisfy the final requirement listed in the VR Services portion of the Unified State Plan – Description – Statewide Assessment.

**COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Transition Committee shared transition resources with OKDRS Counselors through the year including the Career Index Plus. This information was shared in the OKDRS Breaking Barriers newsletter on April 23, 2019.

The Committee continued to support the OTC and highlight work they are doing. ORC had the Central Oklahoma City Team present during the May Quarterly meeting and provide a summary of all activities and objectives for the year.
Lori Chesnut (ORC Chair/Transition Committee Chair) presented Special Education Child Count Data during the March Committee meeting; it will be used by the OKDRS PI Unit to compare with the OKDRS data for future work.

The Transition Committee assisted the P&L Committee with the planning and coordination of the OKTVR Conference. Lori Chesnut from the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), Renee Sansom from OKDRS and Kim Osmani from the (OTC) presented during the conference.

The Committee also advocated for the tribal partners to be included in the OKDRS Transition listserv in order to access the information DRS Transition Counselors receive.

During FFY19, the OKDRS PI Unit released the OKDRS Statewide Assessment 2017-2019. The executive summary included the following data in the Youth with Disabilities section:

- **During the 2018-2019 school year, there were 37,389 students between the ages of 14 and 21 on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in public school districts in Oklahoma. Statewide, OKDRS served 1,751 or 4.68% of students on an IEP as clients.**
- **Statewide, in February of 2019, OKDRS had contracts with 58.7% of public high school districts in Oklahoma.**
- **68.42% of African American or Black students age 14 to 21 on an IEP attend school in Oklahoma or Tulsa Counties.**
- **55.08% of Hispanic students age 14 to 21 on an IEP attend school in Oklahoma or Tulsa Counties.**
- **Only 20.76% of Native American or Alaska Native students age 14 to 21 attend school in Oklahoma or Tulsa Counties.**
- **In Adair, Cherokee, Delaware, Sequoyah, Mayes, and Pittsburg Counties, Native American or Alaska Native students account for 40.74% to 66.00% of the students on an IEP between the ages of 14 and 21.**
- **During the focus groups, it was noted that more Hispanic outreach is needed, especially for youth and parents.**
- **Annually for the last three federal fiscal years, OKDRS spent at least 24% of the federal grant funds on services to youth with disabilities under the age of 24.**
- **OKDRS is providing services to students and youth, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to potentially eligible youth in a number of ways including, via contracts with the University of Oklahoma and Central Technology Center, through Counselor outreach and instruction, Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) Camps, Working on the Wichitas Summer Job Camp, Project Search, Summer Transition Employment Program, and through Community Rehabilitation Providers.**
- **Counselors, partner agency staff, and parents are all concerned about the availability of current opportunities for work-related experiences for students with disabilities and other transition students.**
- **All of the OKDRS respondent staff reported three services as being of moderate or high need for youth with disabilities. The services were soft skills training, greater parental involvement and support, and development of independent living skills.**
- **90.6% of respondent parents or guardians of youth under age 18 in service status are satisfied with the services their child is receiving from OKDRS.**
- **52.3% of parents or guardians of OKDRS youth clients under age 18 (including those on the waitlist) expressed concerns regarding how their child may be treated in a work environment.**
- **Survey results revealed gaps in what respondent parents or guardians of youth with disabilities wanted for their children and/or believed their children may be capable of doing.**

The Transition Committee will use this information to continue its support of the OKDRS Transition Unit in FFY20.
Employment Committee

Chairperson – Jen Randle
DRS Liaison – Fatos Floyd

With an increased emphasis on employment under the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), this committee will work to strengthen coordination with employment and training services for individuals with disabilities who are job seekers.

Goal 7: The ORC will collaborate with DSA to proactively promote Job Readiness and evidence-based supported employment and education to increase employment and education rates.

COMMITTEE REPORT

Soft Skills
The Employment Committee worked to find solutions to support OKDRS clients with Soft Skills training. The Committee started with the idea of creating a one-page document that would be disseminated to OKDRS clients. Upon reviewing numerous existing resources, the Committee ultimately decided to use materials already available online to make sure every Soft Skill was explained and used.

The main resource selected was the Skills to Pay the Bills workbook from the US Department of Labor. The workbook has activities, information and videos explaining the soft skills concepts for clients to learn.

The workbook is available online at the Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy website at: https://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/.

The information was shared with OKDRS Counselors and Techs through OKDRS Breaking Barriers.

The Committee also reviewed the possibility of purchasing Conover Software for OKDRS; however, some accessibility issues were discovered during the testing process and the purchase of the software was put on hold until a fully accessible product is found.

DRS Business Services Program
The Employment Committee has supported the Business Services Program (BSP) since this new OKDRS initiative began in October 2019.

The Committee has helped BSP with the following:

- The creation of the Business Concierge Card both in English and Spanish
- Participation in the Business Advisory Council (BAC) in Oklahoma City and Tulsa
- Assistance in the planning of the 2020 Career Opportunity Expo on February 11, 2020
- Contribution with planning the 2019 Mock Interview Pilot in Tulsa on November 6, 2019
- Purchase of pens with BSP’s information to be distributed during activities in FFY2020
**Individual Placement and Supports (IPS) Model**

ORC continues to support the IPS model and is pleased the IPS-OKDRS pilot started during the summer of 2019. ORC will continue to provide support when needed.

**Galt Soft Skills Training**

As part of the Committee’s Soft Skills training initiative, the Committee assisted Galt with the recording of the “How Not to Get Fired” Soft Skills training in partnership with the OTC.

The final version of the webinar will be available at OTC’s website located on OU’s Zarrow Center website at: [www.ou.edu/educationcenters-and-partnerships/zarrow/oklahoma-transition-council](http://www.ou.edu/educationcenters-and-partnerships/zarrow/oklahoma-transition-council).
FFY19 in Numbers
The DSA reported the following information for FFY19:

- 1,236 cases had successful closures
- 2,145 cases were closed without employment after receiving services
- 1,973 new applications were received
- 4,067 plans were written in the year
- 9,857 total individuals with an open case
- 6,432 individuals were released from the Waiting List
- 4,020 individuals were determined Eligible

Successful Closures 1,236 vs. Unsuccessful Closures 6,562

- Average days in Application Status: 32 days
- Average months in Eligibility: 1.8 months
- Average months receiving Services: 28.9 months
- Average months in Delayed Status: 6.5 months
It was another great year of revenue for the Vocational Rehabilitation Reimbursement Program! In federal fiscal year 2019, (173) beneficiaries were connected to quality employment at a level of income that resulted in cessation of Social Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). This resulted in revenue of $1,631,927.67!

This was due to the DRS counselors statewide who remained steadfast throughout the year, showing commitment to Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level employment for people with severe disabilities. This is no easy task, as most know it takes at least nine months of this level of earnings to achieve benefit cessation on a case. This work has changed these individual’s lives forever.

**ORDER OF SELECTION INFORMATION**

The DSA was under an Order of Selection for the FFY19.
Appendix A: Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council Members

LEFT TO RIGHT, BACK ROW: Dawn Aaron, Kevin Randall, Tina Calloway, Melanie Berry, Wade Walters, Tim Yeahquo, Bill Dunham and William Ginn

LEFT TO RIGHT, MIDDLE ROW: Jen Randle, Suzanne Williams, Linda Jako, Theresa Flannery, Lori Chesnut and Audrey Farnum

LEFT TO RIGHT, FRONT ROW: Melinda Fruendt, Shelley Gladden and Carolina Colclasure

NOT PICTURED: Rick DeRennaux, Vikki Walls, Donna Sanders, Jeff Newton and Kelli Bates

ORC MEMBERS

Kelli Bates
Regional Staffing Manager
Galt Foundation
312 NW 13th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73103
(405) 235-4490
kbate@galtfoundation.org

Melanie Berry
Information & Training Specialist
Director of Youth & Family Outreach
Oklahoma Parents Center
PO Box 512
Holdenville, Oklahoma 74848
(405) 883-6046
mberry@oklahomaparentscenter.org

Lori Chesnut
Secondary Transition Specialist
Special Education Services
OK State Department of Education
2500 N. Lincoln Boulevard, OK 73105
(405) 521-4802
Lori.Chesnut@sde.ok.gov

Rick DeRennaux
President / CEO
Tech-Now Inc.
621 Brookwood Dr.
Oklahoma City, OK 73139
(405) 640-7606
derennaux@hotmail.com

Bill Dunham
Area Clinic Manager, Amputee
Empowerment Regional Coordinator
Hanger Clinic, Oklahoma Clinics
6052 South Sheridan Road
Tulsa, OK 74145
(405) 761-0346
BDunham@Hanger.com

Audrey Farnum
Staff Attorney / Administrative Hearing Office
Oklahoma Tax Commission
3700 N. Classen Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73118
(405) 319-8507
Theresa Flannery  
Community Resources and Compliance Director  
Dale Rogers Training Center  
2501 North Utah, Oklahoma City, OK 73107  
(405) 946-4489 x 1409  
tflannery@drtc.or

Melinda Freundt  
Director  
Department of Rehabilitation Services  
3535 WN 58th Street, Ste 500  
Oklahoma City, OK 73112-4824  
(405) 951-3400  
MFriendt@okdrs.gov

William Ginn  
CAP Director  
Office of Disability Concerns  
2712 Villa Prom  
Oklahoma City, OK 73107-2414  
(405) 521-3756  800-522-8224  
William.Ginn@odc.ok.gov

Shelley Gladden  
Program Manager  
Oklahoma ABLE Tech  
1514 W Hall of Fame  
Stillwater, OK 74078  
(405) 744-4254  
shelley.gladden@okstate.edu

Jeff Newton  
Transition Specialist  
Oklahoma City Public Schools  
900 N Martin Luther King Blvd.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73117  
(405) 819-8817  
jnewton@okcps.org

Kevin Randall  
VR Specialist  
Department of Rehabilitation Services  
Hispanic Unit, Oklahoma City  
405-522-7973  
krandall@okdrs.gov

Jen Randle  
Youth Advocacy & Training Coordinator  
Oklahoma Developmental Disability Council  
2401 NW 23rd St., Suite 74  
Oklahoma City, OK 73107  
(405) 521-4964  
jenifer.randle@okdhs.org

Donna Sanders  
Brookwood Center Manager  
Oklahoma Employment Security Commission  
9210 S. Western Ave., Suite 9-A  
Oklahoma City, OK 73139  
(405) 234-5001  
Donna.sanders@oesc.state.ok.us

Vikki Walls  
Chair of the Oklahoma Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)  
3535 NW 58th St., Suite 480  
Oklahoma City, OK 73112  
(405) 951-3581

Wade Walters  
SBVI Specialist  
Department of Rehabilitation  
321 S. Third, Suite 2B  
McAlester, OK. 74501-5410  
(918) 302-4213  
Wwalters@okdrs.gov

Suzanne Williams  
Program Manager  
Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS)  
1200 NE 13th Street  
PO Box 53277  
Oklahoma City, OK. 73152  
(405) 522-1438  
Suzanne.williams@odmhsas.org

Tim Yeahquo  
Director  
Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes Vocational Rehabilitation  
100 Red Moon Circle  
Concho, OK 73022  
(405) 422-7617  
tyeahquo@c-a-tribes.org

OKLAHOMA REHABILITATION STAFF

Carolina Colclasure  
Program Manager  
Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council  
3535 NW 58th St., Suite 500  
Oklahoma City, OK 73112  
Phone : (405) 951-3579  
Fax : (405) 951-3515  
carolina.colclasure@okstate.edu

Linda Jaco, MS  
Associate Director and Director of Sponsored Programs  
Department of Wellness, Oklahoma State University  
1514 W. Hall of Fame  
Stillwater, OK 74078  
Phone : (405) 744-9864 (800) 257-1705 (v/tty)  
Fax : (405) 744-2487  
linda.jaco@okstate.edu

Dawn Aaron  
Administrative Assistant  
Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council  
1514 W. Hall of Fame  
Stillwater, OK 74078  
Phone : (405) 744-9748  
Fax : (405) 744-2487  
dmaaron@okstate.edu
## Appendix B: Cost Breakdown by County

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Elaine Boykin (VS Program Manager) played a large role in where I am today and she fought for me to get my Masters. I credit my success to Elaine as she pushed me and has been a great mentor.

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Appendix C: Legislative Primer

Did You Know?

1 in 6 Oklahomans has a disability

632,400 Working age Oklahomans have disabilities

That's equal to the population of Oklahoma City

Oklahomans with disabilities make an average of $7,000 less than Oklahomans without disabilities

27% of Oklahomans with disabilities live in poverty

72.9% of Oklahomans with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64 are unemployed

People with disabilities WANT to work!

In 2018 with the help of ORC and DRS 1,227 Oklahomans found employment

There are a number of challenges in finding and maintaining successful employment for an individual with a disability. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports significant barriers as: lack of education or training; lack of transportation; the need for special features (accommodations) at the job; the disability itself; and difficulty completing work duties because of their disability.

Yet, people with disabilities unanimously report they WANT to work and be independent, productive citizens who can make a meaningful contribution to society!

What is the solution?

Naturally, the solution will be different for each individual. However, many options do exist in today’s society to overcome employment-related barriers – thereby providing a career opportunity for ALL. Successful solutions include: new or modified equipment; physical access changes to the workplace; technological access changes to the workplace; policy changes to the workplace; changes in work tasks; job structure; access to bus routes; changes in communication or information sharing; training; additional education; work from home; flexible work schedule; temporary and/or part time employment.

In FY 2018, DRS successfully placed 1,227 clients in employment by individually overcoming work-related barriers. This unique partnership strives to provide Access for ALL under the Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the OK Workforce System, increasing household wealth and independence for Oklahomans with disabilities.

We would like to remind you of the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC) efforts to lead their clients to have successful careers. ORC’s mission, as a partner with the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (OKDRS), is to assure the services of OKDRS are of high quality leading to employment of individuals with disabilities. Additionally, ORC facilitates consumer education and empowerment.

Carolina Colclasure, Program Manager
3535 NW 58th Street, Suite 500
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
(405) 951-3579
carolina.colclasure@okstate.edu
ORC@okstate.edu
The Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC) partners with the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation (DRS) to serve Oklahoma citizens with disabilities through information sharing and advocacy efforts which promote employment. ORC’s mission is to provide true consumer involvement into the current and future vocational rehabilitation process.

Successful employment of these individuals with disabilities levels the playing field by allowing them to become tax-paying citizens and function independently. In FFY 2018, DRS successfully placed 1,227 clients in employment.

Legislative support would advance services and programs that ensure high quality and the employment of more Oklahomans with disabilities.

### Success Stories

**Vicky**

At 17 years old, Vicky had a stroke that left her with amnesia and nearly blind. She had a very difficult recovery but with the help of her mother she graduated high school and got a job. She worked for many years but, in 2008 her health issues had become worse and had to rely on Social Security.

Vicky applied for DRS services and during her initial interview, they discovered that she could turn what she thought was a just a hobby into a business. She has been crocheting and knitting as a form of therapy from her first stroke and fell in love with it. Turning her knitting designs into a business, Vicky started her own business called Softies and Tweed Designs.

ORC has assisted Vicky with the Oklahoma Business Enterprise Program (BEP) after she visited a former classmate who worked in the program. The BEP operates facilities in federal, state and county buildings servicing vending machines, snack bars, and dining facilities.

After completing her training, Rhonda was awarded her first office as an independent contractor to service vending machines. Her business soon expanded to include the Oklahoma State Penitentiary, as well as, Jackie Brannon Correctional Center, Pittsburg County Courthouse, Sallisaw DHS, Sallisaw Tourist Center, Tulsa County Courthouse and Talihina Veterans Center Canteen.

**Mary**

Mary reached out to the Cheyenne Arapaho VR Program after applying to various job positions and not having any luck finding a job. Her counselor, Tim Yeahqui, helped her find a receptionist position. She now passes on related information to her community services and she now passes on related information to others in need.

Mary states that her new job has been a positive step in her life, she has learned a lot about education, employment, and community services, and she now possesses a new reality through DRS. She has served as a model for others in her community who are looking for work.

**Rhonda**

Rhonda was diagnosed with an acute case of Retinitis Pigmentosa at birth that causes loss of vision. She struggled in public school until 5th grade when she transferred to the Oklahoma School for the Blind in Muskogee, OK. With the help of her skilled teachers, she graduated a year early in 1977 and went to the Muskegon Vo-Tech acquiring secretarial skills. Rhonda also attended Northeastern State University with the help of the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS).

Fast forward to 2005 Rhonda contacted DRS to enroll in the Oklahoma Business Enterprise Program (BEP) after she visited a former classmate who worked in the program. The BEP operates facilities in federal, state and county buildings servicing vending machines, snack bars, and dining facilities. She has beencrocheting and knitting as a form of therapy from her first stroke and fell in love with it. Turning her knitting designs into a business, Vicky started her own business called Softies and Tweed Designs.

**Garret**

Garret was a senior at Norman High School when he started Project SEARCH at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Norman. He was selected as one of the first students to participate in the program. Project SEARCH helped Garret get a job at the Embassy Suites in 2005 as a Banquet Set-Up Assistant, a job he likes and works 25 hours each week. His responsibilities include setting up the rooms according to the conference or activity scheduled at the hotel. The conference rooms could hold from 25 to 1000 people at once, so the workload varies from week to week, but he is always busy.

Since Garret started Project SEARCH, Garret has become more independent and mature according to his mom, he even got his driver’s license and is giving his coworkers rides to work.

Garret loves sports and enjoys talking to everyone at the hotel, including the out-of-state teams that stay at the hotel during the football season.
October 21, 2019

On behalf of the members of the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC), we proudly present you with this 2019 Annual Report. It is the intent of the Council to have this annual report be a summary of the activities undertaken by the ORC during the past year. Council members are extremely proud to work with and advise the Department of Rehabilitation Services and to represent the voice of the consumer.

During FFY19, the Department of Rehabilitation Services received 4,485 new applications and 1,236 people completed Individual Plans for Employment and were successfully rehabilitated. The ORC would like to congratulate Oklahoma’s Department of Rehabilitation Services (which includes both Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired) in providing superior services statewide to individuals with disabilities. These accomplishments would not have been achieved without the dedication of the entire DRS staff who worked diligently to provide quality services that enhance Oklahomans with disabilities excellent career opportunities.

The ORC’s five standing committees (Program and Planning, Executive, Employment, Policy & Legislative and Transition) continue to work with DRS on major program issues as has been expressed in this report. Several members of the ORC continue to grow their understanding of disability concerns by attending national training and education opportunities, which increases the knowledge, skills, and abilities to improve the overall effectiveness of the Council. This effectiveness was brought to bear over the past few years, throughout Oklahoma and while in Washington D.C., when the Council in partnership with DRS actively provided critical information and support to Oklahoma’s federal legislators. ORC and DRS provided them with the concerns and policy options related to the reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act and advised on issues related to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The council continues to focus on understanding the law and appreciates all the support DRS is providing to ensure we are more aware how this law will impact consumers.

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as Chair of the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council and I am excited to continue to serve in this capacity through 2019. The ORC members are a diverse and dedicated group who take their advocacy role seriously and are honored to partner and provide leadership to the Department Rehabilitation Services and its consumers.

Respectfully,

Lori Chesnut, Chair
October 21, 2019

Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council
3535 NW 58th Street Suite 300
Oklahoma City, OK 73112

Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council Members:

As another year of partnership with the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council comes to a close, it is a pleasure to submit this letter of support that reflects the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services continued commitment to our long-standing partnership with the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council.

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (OKDRS) expands opportunities for employment, independent life and economic self-sufficiency by helping Oklahomans with disabilities bridge barriers to success in the workplace, school and at home. The partnership and commitment of the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council remains critical to our agency mission by providing guidance, input and recommendations to vocational rehabilitation services that maximize employment opportunities and reflect the needs of consumers with disabilities.

On behalf of the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, thank you to the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council for your collaboration, continued support and advocacy for Oklahoma consumers with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Melinda Fruendt
Executive Director

Empowering Oklahomans with Disabilities
3535 NW 58th Street, Suite 500, Oklahoma City, OK 73112 | Office: 405-951-3400 | Fax: 405-951-3529

Executive Director Melinda Fruendt
Commissioners Emily Cheng, Wes Hilliard and Jace Wolfe
Dear Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council Members,

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC) for its outstanding collaboration, and partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (OKDRS).

During the past year, ORC has been actively involved in participating in our Policy and Reengineering Committee, which is improving and streamlining OKDRS Policy and Procedures. The ORC is involved in many activities including Job Seekers Success Stories, Statewide Assessment, implementation of WIOA, and development of the State Plan and Workforce Initiatives for OKDRS.

The ORC continues to be involved in Projects such as Disability Awareness Day and various activities involving youth in transition services and activities. The ORC partners with OKDRS to continuously improve relations with consumers as well as other groups that provide services to Oklahomans with disabilities.

I would like to thank Carolina Colclasure for her work and increased involvement with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. I look forward to working with the ORC next year and for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Mark Kinnison, Division Administrator
Vocational Rehabilitation
Attn: Carolina Colclasure
Dear Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council Members:
It is a pleasure to submit this letter of support for the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council. The strong partnership between the Council and the Department of Rehabilitation has been and remains highly valued.

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Visual Services Division, soon to be named the Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (November 1, 2019) is excited to work alongside ORC on projects such as Statewide Assessment, development of the State Plan, Workforce and Tribal Initiatives, WIOA Implementation and continuing education on this legislation for clients and the community, Job Seeker Success Stories, Disability Awareness Day, job fairs and much more! It is vital to have a partnership that expands public awareness of disability issues, disability related events and the services DRS can provide. Advocacy and awareness takes a concerted effort on all of our parts to reach as many people as possible in a year. It’s only through these activities that we impact Oklahoman’s with disabilities in the most positive way and bring an understanding to all citizens about how quality vocational rehabilitation services also impact their communities and state as a whole.

ORC is instrumental in our work in Washington, D. C. as well. We strive to build good relationships with Senators and Representatives each year and visits to the hill are more effective and impactful with our partners working and speaking on behalf of the services we provide to Oklahomans with disabilities.

Please accept my sincere gratitude for the work the ORC does in support of Oklahomans with disabilities alongside DRS. Together, we are able to enhance the lives of blind and visually impaired individuals throughout Oklahoma and assist them in attaining quality employment outcomes and greater independence.

Sincerely,

Tracy Brigham, MES, LPC
Division Administrator, Visual Services