Improving the quality of life for Oklahomans with disabilities

The Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC) was established in 1993 as mandated by the 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act.
Dear Colleagues,

This Annual Report represents all the Members’ of the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC) dedication during FFY23. It was a challenging year as the Council had several vacancies, so I want to thank all the members for their support, commitment, and hard work.

The ORC continues to support and play an essential role in various initiatives, promoting quality employment for all Oklahomans, including Individuals with Disabilities. Initiatives highlighted this year include the DRS Business Services Program (BSP) activities, the Oklahoma Transition Institute (OTI), and People with Disabilities Awareness Day (PWDAD).

ORC’s mission to advocate and lead Individuals with Disabilities to a better future continues, and we are honored to be a partner and supporter of the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), its staff, and all Oklahoma Residents.

Sincerely,

Carolina Colclasure
ORC Program Manager
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Mission

The Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council's (ORC) mission is to facilitate consumer education and empowerment, to assure services are of high quality, and lead to the employment of individuals with disabilities within Oklahoma.

Council Structure

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) contracts Oklahoma State University (OSU) for the provision of the staff support services for the 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 Accessibility Programs at the OSU Department of Wellness, Allyson Robinson, hires, supervises, and evaluates a full-time Program Manager (PM), Carolina Colclasure, for the daily operations of the Council. In addition, OSU manages all contractual financial obligations of the Council. In turn, DRS provides in-kind services of storage space, phone, and computer access to the Council staff.

During FFY23, the ORC had four vacant positions, including the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), the Workforce Development Board, and two Business Industry and Labor (BIL). These positions are requirements of Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act with appointments by the Governor. ORC had 16 members, 3 being ex-officio nonvoting members from the Designated State Agency (DSA). Of the voting members, 68% 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 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 who acts as a content specialist to that committee and is identified as an Associate Member. The Associate Members are vital due to the importance of the work of each committee.

Quarterly Meetings FFY23

In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act, the Council scheduled four Quarterly Meetings in FFY23 and held an annual strategic planning meeting. The meeting dates were:

- November 17, 2022
- February 16, 2023
- May 18, 2023
- August 17, 2023
- September 7, 2022 (FFY24 Strategic Planning Meeting)
This year, the Subcommittees met in January, March, and June to complete the Goals, Objectives, and Activities outlined in the ORC Strategic Plan.

**Strategic Plan for FFY23**

The 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** – Shelley Gladden

**DRS Liaisons** – Tiffany Davis and Stephanie Roe

Review, analyze, and advise the DSA on the performance measures as laid out by Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Actively participate in the DRS State Plan meetings. Actively participate in the DRS 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 P&P 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 P&P Committee will support quality customer services, career planning, and effective employment.

**COMMITTEE REPORT**

During FFY23, the DRS Field Coordinators provided reports to the entire Council during the Quarterly Meetings. The information included an update on DRS's waiting list, current case statuses, service activities, transition clients served, and active cases.

On February 15, 2023, DRS opened Priority Group 1. The DRS Performance Review Team met monthly before this date and reviewed consumer services activities based on budget, staffing, and vendor resources. And even as the budget remained flat for DRS, sufficient funds were available to serve all the clients in Priority Group 1. The Council congratulates DRS's Executive Team for their excellent work!

Priority Groups 2 and 3 continued under the Order of Selection on FFY23. The monthly budget meetings continued to release clients from the waitlist, and the Council was informed about the progress during each quarterly meeting.

During FFY23, the Committee received and reviewed the final report of the DRS 2020-2022 Statewide Needs Assessment and the 2023 DRS Open Case Client Satisfaction Survey.

The Committee assisted the DRS Process Improvement (PI) Unit in gathering information for the Statewide Needs assessment in 2022 through focus groups and sharing data the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) provided to the Transition Committee. Some of the most significant findings included in the report are:
• Service needs of those with the Most Significant Disabilities, including Supported Employment
• The need to establish, develop, or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs)
• Service needs of minorities
• Service needs of those who are unserved or underserved

The 2023 DRS Customer Satisfaction Survey

The 2023 Open Case Survey is a survey of VR and SBVI clients aged 18 or over in an active case status for whom an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) has been completed. Clients without an IPE are excluded because most services do not begin until an IPE is signed.

In the fall of 2022, planning began for a survey of open-case adult clients in the VR and SBVI divisions of DRS. The PI research staff worked with agency leadership to design the survey. The final version included a mix of questions/statements that have been used historically and new questions to address current issues and concerns.

In January of 2023, data was extracted from Aware, the case management system used by DRS, for the 6,133 clients that who 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 598 clients, approximately 10%, was made from the target population and designated as the sample population. The survey distribution was split into two phases: an initial online distribution and then a mail/phone distribution.

The summary and key findings of the report include:

• The 2023 Open Case Survey was returned by 113 out of 598 clients (18.9%). The response level is not sufficient for a confidence level; therefore, the survey responses are the opinions of the respondents only and should not be generalized to the total population. In addition, the findings may suffer from response bias due to the small percentage of surveys that were completed.

• Despite the low response rate, some useful information can be gleaned from the responses. In addition, many response rates were comparable to past findings.

• The overall combined valid satisfaction rate for VR and SBVI is 85.5%.
• The overall valid satisfaction rate for VR is 83.1%.
• The overall valid satisfaction rate for SBVI is 95.2%.
• The highest combined agreement rates were for statements regarding whether DRS staff treat the client with respect (95.5%), whether clients told counselors what they wanted in their employment plan (91.3%), and whether clients felt their counselor offered paperwork and information in a way they could understand (89.8%).
• The lowest combined agreement rate was for the statement: “I understand how the Client Assistance Program (CAP) can help me if needed” (65.7%).
• 79.8% of respondents reported they knew at the time of application that DRS services were to help them find or keep a job.

• Most clients reported they learned about DRS services from school staff (40.9%) or from family or friends (27.3%).

• The majority of clients (80.6%) reported staff returned phone calls or e-mails within three business days (52.8% reported within one business day).

• 75.2% of clients reported they sometimes meet with their counselor in person, 61.5% reported that a DRS office is where they most commonly meet with their counselor in person, and 43.0% reported that their preference for meeting their counselor was in person at a DRS office.

Executive Committee

Chairperson – Shelley Gladden

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 includes Director of Accessibility Services, Allyson Robinson, and the ORC PM, Carolina Colclasure. The Executive Committee ensures all other ORC committees are assigned to meet the requirements of Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act with regard to the following: 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 the Employment Committee). Every ORC member serves on a committee(s).

COMMITTEE REPORT

The Executive Committee met quarterly and collaborated with the DRS Executive Team during FFY23. This committee’s goals, objectives, and activities were met, starting with the Annual Report submitted to the Governor and Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) on December 21, 2022.

The staff reviewed the Council’s resources monthly, and followed a plan.

The DRS Executive Team participated in all Executive Committee meetings and ORC Quarterly Meetings, including Director Fruendt, Mark Kinnison – VR Division Administrator, and Tracy Brigham – SBVI Division Administrator. The Council received timely updates from DRS, and the DRS Executive Team addressed all questions and comments from the Council.

In FFY23, the Council had two resignations:

• One from the Workforce Development Board
• One from the Advocacy Group
Three positions continued to be vacant during FFY23:

- Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
- Two from Business, Industry and Labor (BIL)

Aside from the resignations, ORC had three positions that expired on September 1, 2023:

- Lori Chesnut – Representative of the State Education Board. Lori was reappointed for a second term.
- Sharon Harrison – Representative of Business, Industry and Labor. Sharon was reappointed for a second term.
- Scott Mullins – Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor. Scott was reappointed for a second term.

Carolina Colclasure attended the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) 2023 Mid-Year Conference on June 5-9 at the Seneca Niagara Resort & Casino in Niagara Falls, NY, as a guest of the Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma.

The theme for the conference was “Weaving Ways of Healing,” and it focused on providing information, tools, and resources to assist the Tribes facing challenges due to COVID. Sessions focused on aiding the tribal communities and consumers in finding success, independence, health, and wellness.

On the first day, the group split into three groups and attended the talking circles based on the role, which included Directors, VR Counselors, and staff. In these groups, the participants could share best practices and ask questions about specific situations they were dealing with in their programs.

Corinne Wiedenthal was the Keynote speaker on the second day, and she provided an update from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). There were various breakout sessions, including the Provision of Holistic, Cultural Appropriate & Responsive Tribal VR Services, Protection & Advocacy Systems for Individuals with Disabilities, and Provision of Transition Services for Tribal Youth.

On the last day, the keynote presentation was a very impactful presentation on Indian Residential Boarding Schools by Dr. Lori Quigley. It included pictures and a description of the trauma the Indian Boarding Schools represented in the lives of the kids forced to live there. The breakout sessions included topics like Grant Writing, American Indian Job Development and Placement Guide, and Ethics and Culture.

*Four representatives from Oklahoma attended the CANAR conference. From left to right: Gina Bundy, Ron Baker, Carolina Colclasure, and Adrian Smith.*
Carolina Colclasure also attended the following Oklahoma Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation (OKTVR) Council meetings on behalf of the Council:

- October 2022 in Shawnee, OK
- March 2023 in Oklahoma City via Zoom
- May 2023 in Sulphur, OK
- July 2023 in Kingfisher, OK
- September 2023 in Shawnee, OK

Lastly, in FFY23, Carolina Colclasure attended all ORC Committee meetings, ABLE Tech Advisory Council meetings, Oklahoma Transition Council (OTC) meetings, and the Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development meetings on behalf of the Council.

The Executive Committee reviewed the ORC FFY24 Strategic Plan and it was approved on September 28, 2023.

**Policy and Legislative (P&L) Committee**

**Chairperson** – Jeff Newton  

**DRS Liaisons** – Tina Calloway, Tonya Garman, and Jennifer Hardin

Activities include, but are not limited to, advocacy and education, policy and State Plan review, State Plan Public Hearings and Success Stories. The P&L Committee is also responsible for reviewing/monitoring pending and current disability-related legislation, particularly with respect to the impact on DRS funding. The committee also assists in suggesting/developing legislation as needed. The P&L Committee actively participates on the DRS Policy Re-engineering Committee and supports 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 Committee continued participating in various Council meetings during FFY23. William Ginn, the Client Assistance Program (CAP) member, represented ORC during the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) meetings and shared updates. On behalf of the P&L Committee, the ORC PM participated in the Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development meetings, the ABLE Tech Advisory Council meetings, and the Behavioral Health Advisory Council meetings.

The P&L Committee reviewed the 2023 policy changes provided by DRS. DRS and ORC hosted a partner meeting on October 4, 2022 to share details about the changes and answer questions about them. William Ginn and the ORC PM attended the meeting and shared the questions from the Committee. The Public Hearing occurred on February 6, 2023, at the DRS State Office, and the PM read ORC’s letter of support.
The DRS People with Disabilities Awareness Day (PWDAD) took place at the Oklahoma History Center on March 7, 2023. This year, the ORC sponsored the event by paying entrance fees for attendees to see the History Center exhibits and was recognized in the official DRS event program for the sponsorship.

Jeff Newton, Tim Yeahquo, William Ginn, Lori Chesnut, Julie Lackey, Allyson Robinson, and Carolina Colclasure attended the event on behalf of the Council. ORC had a table and shared flyers and information with the attendees during the event. DRS also coordinated Legislative visits during the event, and William and Jeff participated in them.

The Committee developed content for the 2023 ORC Legislative Primer that showcases the DRS indicators. The Legislative Primer and the DRS Programs and Services Flyers were disseminated to all State Legislators and the State District Staff of the Oklahoma Congressional members.

Front page of the 2023 ORC Legislative Primer.
During FFY23, the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) had both its Fall and Spring Conferences in person.

The Fall Conference was held in San Antonio, TX, on October 29-30, and the sessions included:

- State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) basics
- SRC business practices
- Developing a resource plan
- SRC role in policy making
- Implementation of responsibilities
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) updates and how to use the website

Shelley Gladden, Allyson Robinson, and Carolina Colclasure attended the conference on behalf of the Council.

The Spring Conference took place in Bethesda, MD, on April 15 and 16, and the sessions included:

- SRC Public comments and engagement
- Legislative advocacy
- Getting ready for SRC meetings
- Resource plan and budget development
- By-laws and committee structure
- State Plan recommendations
- Benefits of the NCSRC

Jeff Newton and Carolina Colclasure attended the conference on behalf of the Council.

**Transition Committee**

**Chairperson** – Lori Chesnut

**DRS Liaisons** – Renee Sansom Briscoe, Stacy Dutton, Kevin Randall, and Chris Compton

This Committee actively participates in the Oklahoma Transition Council (OTC). The Committee also supports DRS with statewide efforts to enhance transition activities and services for youth in secondary settings to increase successful employment outcomes.

**Goal 5:** Facilitate the communication of transition services information and the growth of partnerships between Tribal VR, DRS, Developmental Disability Services (DDS), Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS), CareerTech, and other agencies/partners.
**Goal 6:** Continue to work with the DSA on the needs assessment of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS). This goal will satisfy the final requirement listed in the VR Services portion of the Unified State Plan, and the Statewide Needs Assessment.

**Goal 7:** Promote self-advocacy and self-determination resources for youth and their families to increase future opportunities for success.

**COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Transition Committee supported the DRS Transition Unit and OSDE in promoting self-advocacy and self-determination resources in FFY23. The focus was for youth and their families to increase future opportunities for success with these valuable resources during their transition process. There were over thirty resources shared with the Council that included invitations to webinars and conferences such as:

- DRS Transition Newsletter
- OSDE Special Education Newsletter
- OK Inclusive Post Secondary Education (OKIPSE) Conference
- Transition Resource Fair information:
  - Lawton
  - Moore
  - Oklahoma City
  - Jenks
- DRS Summer STEM Camps
- Best Buddies Oklahoma
- Pre-ETS Highlights Newsletters
- DRS Best Camps Newsletters
- Oklahoma STABLE trainings
- The Down Syndrome Association of Central Oklahoma Newsletter

Also, during the May Committee Meeting, Julie Lackey, the Director of OKIPSE and ORC Member, invited Gregory Connick and Elizabeth Connick, a parent and student of the RiverHawks Scholar Program. They talked to the Committee members and shared their stories and experiences about the program.

OKIPSE’s mission is to ensure that Oklahoma students with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the opportunity to achieve higher education goals and participate fully in campus life. This means that programs are fully integrated in the Institutions of Higher Education where they reside and that students in these programs have the same access to all opportunities other students have on campus.
Oklahoma currently has four IPSE programs, and they are:

- The RiverHawks Scholar Program at the Northeastern State University
- Sooner Works at the University of Oklahoma
- Neill-Wint Center for Neurodiversity at the University of Science & Arts of Oklahoma
- Opportunity Orange Scholars at Oklahoma State University

The Committee will invite Mr. Connor and Elizabeth again for a follow-up meeting next year.

Lori Chesnut presented Special Education Child Count Data during the March Committee meeting. The DRS PI Unit compares this data with DRS data to make informed programmatic decisions for supporting transitioning youth.

The Committee continued to support the OTC. Carolina Colclasure and various Committee members assisted with planning the 17th Annual Oklahoma Transition Institute (OTI), which occurred on November 1-2, 2022, and the theme was You + Us = IMPACT. It was a hybrid event, and the in-person sessions were held at the Metro Tech Business Conference Center on the Spriglake Campus in Oklahoma City.

During FFY23, the Council reprinted an updated second edition of the Transition Folders, which includes 18,000 folders in Spanish and English, for DRS Counselors and OSDE staff to distribute and use during the 2024 school year.

Employment Committee

**Chairperson** – Sharon Harrison

**DRS Liaison** – Yasmin Avila

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

**Goal 8:** The ORC will collaborate with the DSA to proactively promote job readiness and evidence-based supported employment and education to increase employment and education rates.

**COMMITTEE REPORT**

The Employment Committee supported the DRS Business Services Program (BSP) and the Business Advisory Council (BAC) objectives and activities during FFY23.

Carolina Colclasure participated in the DRS Facts and Snacks Critical Occupations in Healthcare event with Mercy Hospital on January 24 via Zoom. It was a great event, where participants received information about all the positions available at Mercy, the requirements, and some information about what a “day in the life of” that career would look like.

FFY23 was a planning year for the ORC Employment Committee. The objectives and activities created for this year are projects that require continuous work by several parties, and although
a lot of progress has been made, work will continue on these in FFY24. Some of the projects include:

- Developing an accessible website that will have employment resources for all stakeholders, including DRS clients, employers, companies and service providers.
- Providing professional development to DRS Staff and clients on workforce topics. The committee is planning webinars and training sessions dedicated to the new On-Demand Occupations for DRS Counselors, staff, and clients. These sessions will provide more information on the emerging workforce fields with the most hires in the near future.
- Expanding workplace learning, including apprenticeships and internships for youth and adults.
- Creating a plan for accessibility and accommodations training for key business stakeholders.
- Planning a Disability Awareness Event for Businesses to take place in Oklahoma City in March of 2024.

The Committee also assisted in the dissemination of hiring events information, such as:
- Workforce Green Country Hiring event in February of 2023
- Central Oklahoma Workforce Innovation Board (COWIB) hiring events
- The Mercy Disability Resource Council Inclusive hiring event in Oklahoma City

**DRS FFY23 in Numbers**

The DSA reported the following information for FFY23:

- 1,071 cases had successful closures
- 4,262 new applications were received
- 2,212 plans were written in the year
- 13,311 total Individuals with an open case during FFY23
- 2,371 individuals were released from the Waiting List
- 3,639 individuals were determined Eligible

Successful Closures: 1,071

- Average days in Application Status: 33 days
- Average months in eligibility: 2 months
- Average months receiving services: 28.7 months until successful closure occurs
- Average months in Delayed Status: 3.5 months waiting to be released from the waitlist
**Savings to Oklahoma**

Federal Fiscal Year 2023 was a continuation of the familiar momentum between DRS and Oklahomans who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

For the third consecutive year, revenue exceeded $3 million in program revenue as 283 Oklahomans earned wages high enough to initiate a reimbursement for the cost of VR services. The Social Security Administration (SSA) reimburses VR when a beneficiary earns at or above a substantial gainful activity level for at least 9 out of 12 months. SSA estimates that they receive a 7 to 1 savings in benefits that would have been paid over the lifetime of every beneficiary that is able to work enough at this earning's level.

The $3,082,508.58 is a direct result of the focus DRS has in serving this population, designated by the Social Security Act to have disabilities so significant that work is impossible.

It continues to be a collective effort between statewide VR counseling staff, in-house SSA work incentive counselors (a.k.a. benefit planners), coupled with an unwavering commitment from agency leadership!

**ORDER OF SELECTION INFORMATION**

The DSA opened Priority Group 1 on February 15, 2023. Priority Groups 2 and 3 continued under an Order of Selection for the FFY23.

**DRS Transition Data**

The DRS Transition Unit continues to reach more students each year, and here are some of the program highlights for FFY23:

**BEST - BUILDING EMPLOYMENT SKILLS FOR TODAY SUMMER PROGRAM**

BEST is one week of instruction and provides opportunities to prepare students with disabilities, both DRS clients and potentially eligible students ages 16-21, for real-life jobs, careers, and situations. BEST engages youth in job search activities, work readiness, access to employment and vocational opportunities, making networking/social connections, and developing pre-employment transition skills (pre-ETS).

DRS had 22 BEST STEP camps in FFY23. Students are required to attend BEST in order to do STEP, and STEP is optional depending on 1) the school's needs in the area and 2) student participation. DRS served 336 students with BEST camp, and 262 students utilized STEP, where they worked in the community. Eight students were gainfully employed after STEP was completed.

BEST hosted guest speakers including Joe Strechay, a Blind Producer for Apple TV, an OSB graduate who is blind from Durant, an Oklahoma graduate who was injured last year in a baseball accident, peers of students with disabilities, and a few others to motivate and encourage student participants.
STEP - SUMMER TRANSITION EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

STEP is four weeks of paid work experience and the employment piece of the summer program. Teachers are hired to 1) assist with the development of this component and 2) be job skills trainers to ensure students get the help needed in the community while on the job. Students working during the summer got wages paid through Central Oklahoma Workforce Board (COWIB) and Southern Workforce Board (SWB) Workforce partners.

In FFY23, there were seven in-person camps in Atoka, Ada, Enid, Talequah/Kansas, Tulsa, Muskogee Oklahoma School for the Blind, with one camp held in OKC at the Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC). This last offering was only for students with autism.

During the STEP portion of the camps, DRS had 194 partner employers, and interns worked 17,132 hours in June, July, and the first week of August.

OU CAMP WORKS PROGRAM

Camp Works is a residential summer college experience for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) on the University of Oklahoma (OU) campus, and DRS supported the participation of 15 students. They were current high school students who had completed the 10th grade (estimated ages 15-20) and were DRS clients or potentially eligible students with disabilities (“participating students”) interested in attending a postsecondary education program.

VISUALLY IMPAIRED BLINDNESS EMPOWERMENT (VIBE)

DRS had eight students participate this year in the Transitional VIBE Program. The program provides assessment and career/higher education exploration. This two-week program is designed to prepare the individual for higher education, competitive workforce, and independent living to the best of their ability. Students learn independent living skills, communication skills, team building, travel/transportation, career and job exploration, interviews, technology, resume skills, and exploration of college/career and tech/workforce. The Pre-ETS specialists continue to be involved in this as well.

TOTAL FOR ALL SUMMER CAMPS:

- 431 youth participated in camps statewide
- 31 camps total
- 19 counties impacted
Appendix A: Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council Members

**Lezley Bell**
Advocacy Group Member

**Lori Chesnut**
Oklahoma State Department of Education Member

**Fatos Floyd**
Advocacy Group Member

**Melinda Fruendt**
Department of Rehabilitation Services Executive Director

**William Ginn**
Client Assistance Program Member

**Shelley Gladden**
Advocacy Group Member

**Jerod Gleason**
DRS SBVI Counselor

**Sharon Harrison**
Business, Industry and Labor Member

**Lindsay Horn**
Advocacy Group Member

**Angelamarie Jaworski**
DRS VR Counselor

**Julie Lackey**
Advocacy Group Member

**Scott Mullins**
Business, Industry and Labor Member

**Jeff Newton**
Former Recipient of VR Services

**Shelly Rentz**
Community Rehabilitation Program Member

**Steven Shepelwich**
Workforce Development Board Member

**Amy Synar**
Parent Training and Information Center Member

**Tim Yeahquo**
Section 121 Project Director Member

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**Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council Staff**

**Carolina Colclasure**
Program Manager
Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council

**Allyson Robinson**
Director of Accessibility Programs
Oklahoma State University
November 22, 2022

On behalf of the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC), we proudly present this 2023 Annual Report. The Council intends 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 Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and represent the consumer’s voice.

The ORC would like to congratulate DRS (which includes both Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired) for providing superior services statewide to individuals with disabilities. During FFY23, the DRS had 4,262 new applications, and 1,071 people completed Individual Plans for Employment and were successfully rehabilitated. These accomplishments would not have been achieved without the dedication of the entire DRS staff, who worked diligently to provide quality services that enhanced Oklahomans with disabilities’ excellent career opportunities.

The Council continues to focus on understanding the law and appreciates all the support DRS provides to ensure Council members are more aware of how this law will impact consumers. The ORC’s five standing committees (Program and Planning, Executive, Employment, Policy & Legislative, and Transition) continue to work with DRS on major program activities and objectives included in this report. Several ORC members 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.

Serving as Chair of the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council in the past year has been an honor and privilege. 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 DRS and its consumers.

Respectfully,

Shelley Gladden, Chair
November 6, 2023

To the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council,

I am pleased to write this letter of support for the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council (ORC) annual report. The ORC members are very committed to advocating and serving Oklahomans with disabilities. The critical role this council has must affect change in policy, rules, services, and overall activities provided by our agency is immense. Our agency staff and consumers depend on the work of the ORC. The partnership between the ORC and our agency demonstrates an unparalleled commitment to empowering individuals with disabilities. Together we embrace the vision of DRS “the journey in our belief in service to others so that they can improve their lives.”

I want to give a great big thank you to all ORC members in their dedication to embrace a better Oklahoma for all individuals with disabilities.

Congratulations on another successful year!!!

Sincerely,

Melinda Fruendt, Executive Director

3535 N.W. 58th Street, Suite 500, Oklahoma City, OK 73112
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Executive Director Melinda Fruendt
Commissioners Theresa Flannery, Wes Hilliard and Vacant
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 Oklahoma Rehabilitation Services (ORS). I truly believe this partnership is one of the best in the nation among Vocational Rehabilitation Programs.

During the past year, the ORC has been actively involved in the promotion of Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Oklahomans with Disabilities. This includes policy implementation, outreach and recruitment, transition services, and employment just to name a few.

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

Sincerely,

Mark Kinnison, Division Administrator
Vocational Rehabilitation Services

3535 N.W. 58th Street, Suite 500, Oklahoma City, OK 73112
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Executive Director Melinda Freundt
Commissioners Janet C. Barresi, DDS, Theresa Flannery, and Wes Hilliard
Dear Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council Members,

As we approach the end of 2023, it is again my honor to provide a letter in support of the Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council. I fully believe in the power of the partnership between the Council and the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services. While the ORC is a federal requirement, the Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired recognizes the value the Council provides in support of our mission to serve Oklahomans with blindness and low vision toward independence and employment.

The ORC is active in many areas to include:

- holding forums to ensure the public are apprised of and allowed input on current changes to DRS Administrative Rules
- providing input and support of DRS by sitting in sessions with RSA throughout the DRS federal monitoring period
- providing advocacy to countless clients and support to DRS staff in assisting clients in obtaining successful employment outcomes
- supporting DRS initiatives by providing information to partners and employers
- advocating for funding for individuals with disabilities and services through DRS with Oklahoma legislators

These are just a few of the notable areas of support over the past year that help contribute to the many successes of DRS and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Most importantly, together we are better able to help empower blind and visually impaired Oklahomans.

In Service,

Tracy Brigham, MBS, LPC
Division Administrator
Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

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Executive Director Melinda Fruendt
Commissioners Theresa Flannery and Wes Hilliard