State of Alabama
Governor’s Office on Disability
FY 2021

It’s All GOOD
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Executive Director

Marlene Word  
Deputy Director

The Governor’s Office on Disability

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The work contained in this annual report shows how the Governor’s Office on Disability (GOOD) is successfully helping the more than 776,991 people in Alabama living with a disability (Annual Disability Statistics Compendium: 2020). I rely on GOOD to provide reliable and helpful information on disability resources and the unmet needs of affected Alabamians. My administration is committed to increasing opportunities for people with disabilities in Alabama as well as increasing employment opportunities through the Governor’s Job Fair for People with Disabilities. GOOD is an excellent resource. If you need assistance with disability-related issues, please do not hesitate to contact the Governor’s Office on Disability.
Dr. Graham L. Sisson, Jr., Executive Director

Graham was appointed as Executive Director of the Governor’s Office on Disability in October 2007 and was reappointed in January 2011. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of North Alabama in Accounting in 1987. Graham also attended Vanderbilt University and was awarded his Juris Doctorate in 1990. He was admitted to the Alabama State Bar in 1990. He received a certificate in Rehabilitation Leadership and Management from Auburn University in May, 2009. Graham served as an adjunct law professor teaching a disability law course at the Birmingham School of Law and taught a doctoral course in disability law and history at Auburn University. Graham is a 2016 graduate of Auburn University with a PhD in Rehabilitation, Counseling, and Leadership. He has lived with a disability since 1982.

Letter from Dr. Sisson

I would like to thank the Governor and the Alabama Legislature for their continuing support of GOOD.

Fiscal Year 2021 has been another year of positive growth and change for the office. GOOD continues to maintain nine local advisory committees around the state which provide grassroots input about unmet needs of Alabamians with disabilities and increases the visibility of the office. GOOD partners with these local advisory groups to facilitate the GOOD mission statement and strategic plan and obtain information at the grassroots level. GOOD will continue to monitor the unmet needs of Alabamians with disabilities as related to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The GOOD website has been revised to be even more user-friendly and includes additional resources.

GOOD is still available to do training, accessibility surveying, and speaking at meetings or seminars at no cost. To schedule training, speaking engagements, or surveying, call GOOD’s Toll Free Number at 888-879-3582. Meetings continue to be held with other state agencies to foster collaboration and maximize state resources for people with disabilities. A special thanks is again given to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services for its close partnership with GOOD.

Information about disability issues and training continues to be disseminated throughout the state. Awareness is a powerful tool which leads to greater access for individuals with disabilities. GOOD continues its role of dispensing accurate information. Join the GOOD list by accessing the appropriate icon on GOOD’s website at www.good.alabama.gov.

GOOD’s Toll-Free Number is 888-879-3582 for consumers or anyone interested in information, referrals, and resources for people with disabilities in Alabama.

We look forward to the progression and inclusion of Alabamians with disabilities in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Dr. Graham L. Sisson, Jr.
GOOD Overview

The Governor’s Office on Disability was created by Executive Order Number 43 in 1999. It was formed to serve as a statewide clearing house for information on disability and resources in Alabama. Its other major function is to act as a liaison to the Governor’s Office on disability issues.

The Governor’s Office on Disability’s mission statement was revised in 2008 as follows:

“Facilitate the inclusion of Alabamians with disabilities in education, employment, housing, transportation, healthcare, and leisure.”

Executive Order 15 in 2011 re-established the Governor’s Office on Disability under the new administration. Because resources are scarce in Alabama, the Governor’s Office on Disability seeks to maximize disability resources by identifying existing ones and fostering collaboration among public and private entities that serve people with disabilities.

The Governor’s Office on Disability actively seeks to engage communication between individuals with disabilities and their families and entities that provide services to them. GOOD’s website, www.good.alabama.gov, is one tool that is being expanded to facilitate open dialogue and access on disability resources and issues. To foster communication even more, GOOD developed a list serve. Anyone interested in issues affecting people with disabilities can join the GOOD list by accessing the website at www.good.alabama.gov, clicking the “Join the GOOD List” icon and entering in personal contact and email information. Periodically, cutting edge information on disability will be shared with list members.

(1) Legislation Initiative
Monitor Alabama’s disability related legislation and policies and provide policy analysis to the Governor.

Objective 1: Monitor constituent issues with regard to policy formulation and recommendations for legislation.

Objective 2: Serve as a liaison to the Governor on all necessary matters of interest related to the GOOD mission.

(2) Collaboration Initiative
Establish a united voice to determine and meet the needs of the GOOD mission.

Objective 1: Utilize local advisory committees to determine the unmet needs of Alabamians with disabilities.

Objective 2: Partner with public and private entities, inclusive of state agencies, that advance the achievement of the GOOD mission.

Objective 3: To accept and resolve referrals regarding disability issues from the Governor’s Constituent Affairs Office and other referral resources.

(3) Consultation Initiative
Serve as advisor on public disability-related issues in Alabama.

Objective 1: Provide informal legal opinions on disability issues to the Governor’s Legal Office.

Objective 2: Provide analytical information to the Governor’s Legal Office relative to the GOOD mission.

Objective 3: Act as an expert resource regarding the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act and related laws.

(4) Dissemination Initiative
Promote public awareness of actions and activities in fulfilling GOOD’s mission.

Objective 1: Increase effective utilization of available resources for Alabamians with disabilities.

Objective 2: Establish a website as the primary dissemination method of GOOD actions, activities and publications.

Objective 3: Promote local and/or statewide media coverage of GOOD’s actions and activities when possible.
Governor’s Office on Disability

Goals and Accomplishments for FY 2021

I. Disability Recognition, Summits, Conferences, and Job Fairs

- GOOD attended the United Ability Disability Hiring Expo on 9/23/21 at the United Ability campus. There were approximately 20 businesses and local community providers and their clients. Dr. Graham Sisson provided opening remarks and is pictured on page 7.

II. Convening Disability Consumer Advisory Councils

- 9 Regional Council Meetings held twice during each fiscal year

III. Trainings/Disability Awareness

ADA

- In collaboration with the Alabama’s ADA toll free information services conducted in FY 2021:
  - 19 ADA Trainings
  - 17 Accessibility Reviews/Consultations

IV. Information and Referral

- Number of inquiries on disability issues FY 2021
  - 925 inquiries

V. Website

- Continuously updating website, resources, and corresponding with members on the GOOD list.

VI. Legislation Initiative

- GOOD continued to work on legislation to address unmet needs of Alabamians with disabilities.
  - GOOD worked on Act No. 2021-519 - Schools, public, Seizure Safe Schools Act, students with seizure disorders, admin. of medication by school personnel procedures, Secs. 16-30C-1 to 16-30C-6, inclusive, added.
  - GOOD tracked Act No. 2021-444 - Colleges, state four-year, veterans, children of deceased and disabled veterans, comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for children of disabled veterans with intellectual disabilities, tuition reimbursement provided for, Sec. 31-6-2.1 added; Secs. 31-6-2 am'd.

VII. FAND—Functional and Access Needs in Disasters Task Force

- GOOD took a leadership role in this statewide taskforce in 2013 and continued through 2021. Originally named the Special Populations Taskforce, it was renamed Functional and Access Needs in Disaster to accurately reflect its purpose of ensuring Alabamians with functional and accessible needs are not only considered, but included in all phases of emergency management. Dr. Sisson chairs this group and continues to serve as liaison between FAND and the Governor’s Mass Care and Sheltering Taskforce. Those interested in joining this effort should contact Dr. Sisson at 800-441-7607 extension 7189.

FY 2021 Budget

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Number of Inquiries—Projected 800, Actual 925

Number responded to within 72 hours—Projected 100%, Actual 100%
Governor’s Office on Disability
Goals and Accomplishments for FY 2021

- Hiring Expo - United Ability - 9/23/21—Dr. Graham Sisson provides welcoming remarks

“The rate of unemployment for individuals with significant disabilities is unacceptably high. Without full employment, these individuals cannot achieve the American dream. People with disabilities are a largely untapped part of the labor force that must be utilized to meet today’s workforce shortages.

I applaud United Ability and all of its partners for sponsoring the disability hiring expo to meet the need of employment for individuals with disabilities.”

- Dr. Graham Sisson

- ALEA / GOOD planning meeting for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Sensitivity Training - 9/7/21

- UPS - 5/6/21—Dr. Graham Sisson provides welcoming remarks

UPS partnered with Down Syndrome of Alabama and provided them a $25,000 grant to establish a scholarship fund in Jake Pratt’s name (pictured above). It was announced at this event that Jake was welcomed back as a permanent employee of UPS.
Governor’s Office on Disability
Partnerships

VIII. Partnerships

Amarex Corporation
Alabama Association of Regional Councils Conference
Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities
Alabama Community College Association
Alabama Counseling Association
Alabama Department of Corrections
Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
Alabama Department of Public Health
Alabama Department of Human Resources
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
Alabama Disability Advocacy Program
Alabama Easter Seals
Alabama Emergency Management Agency
Alabama Fire College Medical Needs Shelter
Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund
Alabama Governor’s Office
Alabama Governor’s Youth Leadership Forum
Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council
Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind
Alabama Legislature
Alabama Lifespan Respite Coalition
Alabama Multiagency Feeding Plan
Alabama Statewide Assistive Technology Advisory Council
Alabama State Interagency Transition Team
Alabama State University
Alabama Tax Tribunal
Alabama Transit Coalition
Alabaster Career Centers
Anniston Career Center
Auburn University
Birmingham Career Center

Birmingham Committee on ADA
Blind Advisory Committee
Brewton Career Center
Calhoun Community College
Camp ASCCA
Camp McDowell, Jasper
Central Alabama Community College
Cheaha State Park
Child Care Resources, Inc.
City of Auburn
City of Gulf Shores
City of Hamilton
City of Huntsville
Cullman Career Center
Dallas County EMA
Deaf/Blind Coalition
Demopolis Career Center
Dothan Career Center
Disabilities Rights & Resources
Disability Resource Network
Family Voices of Alabama
Flagg Mountain Trail and Tower
Foley Career Center
Guntersville State Park
Gulf State Park
Home Medical Equipment Licensure Board
Huntsville Career Center
Is Able Center
Jacksonville State University
Jasper Career Center
Jefferson County Personnel Board
VIII. Partnerships (Continued)

Jefferson County Workforce Development
Joe Wheeler State Park
Lakeshore Foundation
Lee County Board of Education
Limestone County DHR
Mass Care and Sheltering Taskforce
Maxwell Air Force Base
Medicaid Infrastructure Grant
Mobile Center for Independent Living
Montevallo University
Montgomery Career Center
Montgomery Center for Independent Living
Montgomery Library for the Blind Advisory Committee
National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils
North Alabama Fair Housing Center
Northeast Alabama Community College
OASIS Advisory Council
Oneonta Career Center
People First
Pell City Career Center
Phenix City Career Center
Roanoke Career Center
Sheffield Towne Plaza
Shelton State Community College
Southeast ADA Network Training Team
Sparks Clinic
Special Education Advisory Panel
State of Alabama Independent Living Council
State Rehabilitation Council
Trenholm State
Troy University, Montgomery and Troy Campuses
Tuskegee Blind Veterans Group
Tuscaloosa Career Center
UAB Birmingham
UAB/Civitan-Spark Consumer Advisory Council
United Ability
United Way of Birmingham
University of South Alabama
UPS of Birmingham
Valley Career Center
Vaughn Park Church of Christ
World Games, Birmingham
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Join The GOOD List
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