State of Alabama
Governor’s Office on Disability
FY 2020

It’s All GOOD
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Dr. Graham L. Sisson, Jr.
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 550,000 people in Alabama living with a disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). 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 2020 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 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.
I. Disability Recognition, Summits, Conferences, and Job Fairs

- GOOD partnered with the Governor’s Office and other agencies in the Governor’s Job Fair for People with Disabilities held in Montgomery 10/3/2019. Approximately 1,100 jobseekers attended the Montgomery event. This marked the third year for the Governor’s Disability Employment Summit. The first was held in Mobile and the second in Huntsville.

II. Convening Disability Consumer Advisory Councils

- 9 Regional Council Meetings during each fiscal year
  - Because of the COVID 19 pandemic, we surveyed the members of the local advisory groups to seek their input on the following:
    - Would you be able to participate in a telephone conference call or Zoom meeting?
    - How has the pandemic affected you personally and if so, how?
    - Is there anything you think GOOD can do to assist you during this time?
    - What items would you like to see on the next meeting’s agenda?
    - Are there any specific topics / speakers you would like to present at the next or future meetings?
  - Based on the survey responses, we held our meetings via Zoom and conference call and had excellent attendance and outstanding participation. We are incorporating the responses in GOOD’s day to day operations. We will use the comments and suggestions in the format of our future meetings and incorporate the suggestions for meeting topics and speakers.

III. Trainings/Disability Awareness

- ADA
  - In collaboration with the Alabama’s ADA toll free information services conducted in FY 2020:
    - 29 ADA Trainings
    - 20 Accessibility Reviews/Consultations
  - Dr. Graham Sisson’s contributions to the renovation of the Vulcan in Birmingham was featured in the magazine Capitol Ideas in their edition dedicated to Celebrating 30 years of the ADA. Dr. Sisson’s article is below:
III. Trainings/Disability Awareness (Continued)

- Dr. Graham Sisson is chair of the Alabama Trails Commission and was a presenter at the 2020 Alabama Recreational Trails Conference. He was featured in and narrated an ‘Accessible Parks make Inclusive Parks’ YouTube video produced by the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD). Click on the YouTube link below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_h52u6LXJM&fbclid=IwAR2-EhsNTl1BrVj5RHsOmIfHUNiuO1lt8J6QCxl7FeGh2ypWf1KYQrhXoY

- “My goal and my dream is that you can go to any major public attraction like a park and not have to worry about accessibility. You just show up like everybody else does.”

IV. Information and Referral

- Number of inquiries on disability issues FY 2020
  - 701 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. One such piece of legislation is the Alabama Work Opportunity Tax Credit for hiring individuals with disabilities. This bill was not introduced in the 2020 legislative session, but plans are being made to introduce in an upcoming legislative session.

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

GOOD took a leadership role in this statewide taskforce in 2013 and continued through 2020. 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 co-chairs this group along with Gretchen Richards, Ph.D. from Jacksonville State University. Dr. Sisson 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 2020 Budget

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Number of Inquiries—Projected 1100, Actual 701

Number responded to within 72 hours—Projected 100%, Actual 100%
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 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
Dallas County EMA
Deaf/Blind Coalition
Demopolis Career Center
Dothan Career Center
Disabilities Rights & Resources
Disability Resource Network
Family Voices of Alabama
Foley Career Center
Governor's Preparedness Conference
Governor's Summit on Disability Employment
Guntersville State Park
Gulf State Park
Home Medical Equipment Licensure Board
Huntsville Career Center
Is Able Center
Jacksonville State University
Jefferson County Personnel Board
Jefferson County Workforce Development
Joe Wheeler State Park
Lakeshore Foundation
Lee County Board of Education
VIII. Partnerships (Continued)

Long-term Care Rebalancing Committee (Medicaid Agency)
Limestone County DHR
Mass Care and Sheltering Taskforce
Maxwell Air Force Base
Medicaid Infrastructure Grant
Mobile Army Corp of Engineers
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
Oakville Indian Mounds
OASIS Advisory Council
People First
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-Sparks Consumer Advisory Council
United Ability
United Way of Birmingham
University of South Alabama
Valley Career Center
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