



Robert Bentley
Governor

State of Alabama
Governor's Office on Disability
FY 2013
Annual Report



Graham L. Sisson, Jr.
Executive Director





**The Honorable
Robert Bentley
Governor
State of Alabama**

“My Administration is committed to increasing opportunities for those with disabilities and to tearing down any remaining barriers to equality they may face.”

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROBERT BENTLEY
GOVERNOR



STATE OF ALABAMA

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LETTER FROM GOVERNOR ROBERT BENTLEY

This annual report documents some of the work done by the Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD) to make life better for our fellow Alabamians with disabilities. Alabama has approximately 945,705 citizens with disabilities, comprising 23.2% of the state's total population. My administration is committed to increasing opportunities for those with disabilities and to tearing down any remaining barriers to equality they may face.

I depend on GOOD to provide reliable and helpful information on disability resources and the unmet needs of affected Alabamians. 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Robert Bentley in black ink.

Robert Bentley
Governor

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Staff

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 by Governor Bentley 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 received a certificate in Rehabilitation Leadership and Management from Auburn University in May, 2009. He was admitted to the Alabama State Bar in 1990. Mr. Sisson has lived with a disability since 1982.

Marlene Word, Executive Assistant

Marlene joined the Governor's Office on Disability in July 2013. Marlene attended Huntingdon College in Montgomery. She previously worked for Carr, Riggs and Ingram, Fire Guard Protection Systems, Legislative Reference Service, and Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM). At AUM, Marlene was an adjunct professor in the Communications Department for 12 years. During this time, she also served as a Senior Manager and the Communication Director of the third largest home health agency in the state. Marlene was the CEO and President of her publishing company and advertising agency, Dispatch Publishers, Inc. Her company published the weekly local military newspaper, *Maxwell-Gunter Dispatch*, and the monthly national newspaper, *Civil Air Patrol News*.





“Awareness is a powerful tool which leads to greater access for individuals with disabilities. GOOD continues its role of dispensing accurate information.”

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I would like to thank the Governor and the Alabama Legislature for their continuing support of GOOD. Fiscal Year 2013 has been a year of positive growth and change for the office. In order to maintain contact with individuals with disabilities and their families, GOOD continues to have nine local advisory committees around the state which also provide grassroots input about their unmet needs and increases the visibility of the office. Likewise, a State Advisory Committee continues to provide overall input to GOOD from different persons with disabilities and disability organizations.

The GOOD website has been updated to be more user-friendly and include additional resources. Meetings continue to be held with other state agencies to foster collaboration and maximize state resources for people with disabilities. A special thanks is given to the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Department of Mental Health for their close partnership with GOOD.

Information about disability issues and training has been 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. In FY 2013, 53 people joined the GOOD list and that number is increasing as we continue to add more resources.

In 2009, GOOD held its Inaugural Disability Summit. This Summit was held consecutively until 2013. Due to scheduling issues and conflicts with other organizations' events, we made the determination to hold the Summit & Expo in the early part of 2014 to increase its size and attendance.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Graham L. Sisson, Jr.".

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.

Governor Bentley's Executive Order 15 in 2011 re-established the Governor's Office on Disability under his administration. 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.

Strategic Plan

(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 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 actions and activities when possible.

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE ON DISABILITY GOALS ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR 2013

I. Convening Disability Consumer Advisory Councils

- 9 regional council meetings during each fiscal year
- State Advisory Council meetings quarterly

II. Trainings/Disability Awareness

ADA

- In collaboration with the Alabama's ADA toll free information services conducted: FY2013 – 31 ADA Trainings and 22 Accessibility Reviews/Consultations

Emergency Preparedness

- Partnership with Alabama Department of Public Health on "Improving the Health of People with Disabilities through State Based Public Health Programs" grant.

III. Information and Referral

- Number of inquiries on disability issues:
FY 2013 791 inquiries

IV. Website

- Continuously updating website
- Continuously updating resources

V. Legislation Initiative

GOOD worked on legislation to address some of the unmet needs of Alabamians with disabilities. This legislation included the following:

- Accessible Parking
 - ◊ Removal of minimum fine requirements
 - ◊ Enabling language to deputize trained persons to issue tickets to accessible parking violators.
 - ◊ Requiring some form of identification on accessible parking placards
- New Assistive Devices Warrant Act
 - ◊ Extend Lemon Law protection to purchasers of assistive devices including but not limited to wheel chairs and hearing aids
- Service Animal Legislation
 - ◊ This legislation passed in 2011. It is now codified at 21-7-4. It ensures the right of people with disabilities to be accompanied by the service animal. It basically substituted the term 'service animal' for 'guide dog' in the Code of Alabama.

VI. FAND

The Governor's Office on Disability took a leadership role in this statewide taskforce in 2012. 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.

Mr. Sisson co-chairs this group along with Elena Parker-Merriweather from the Alabama Department of Public Health. FAND is developing a strategic plan and subcommittees to create a statewide infrastructure to meet the needs of Alabamians with disabilities in disasters. Mr. Sisson also serves as liaison between FAND and the Governor's Mass Care and Sheltering Taskforce. Those interested in joining this effort should contact Mr. Sisson at 800-441-7607 extension 7189.

VII. Partnerships

Alabama Accessible Parking Coalition
Alabama Council for Developmental Disabilities
Alabama Department of Public Health
Alabama Disability Advocacy Network
Alabama Disability Advocacy Program
Alabama Emergency Management Agency
Alabama Head Injury Taskforce
Alabama Medicaid Advisory Commission
Alabama Respite Coalition
Alabama Statewide Assistive Technology Advisory Council
Alabama State Interagency Transition Team
Alabama State Rehab. Advisory Council
Alabama State University
Alabama Transit Coalition
Auburn Rehab. Advisory Council
Auburn University
Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council
Birmingham Committee on ADA
Blind Advisory Committee
Camp ASCCA
Deaf/Blind Coalition
Disabilities Rights & Resources
Epilepsy Foundation
Help America Vote
Home Medical Equipment Licensure Board
Huntingdon Disabled Sports Program Network
Individual & Family Support Counsel Region 1
Impaired Drivers Trust Fund Advisory Board
Lakeshore Foundation
Long-term Care Rebalancing Committee (Medicaid Agency)
Mass Care and Sheltering Taskforce
Medicaid Infrastructure Grant
Mobile Center for Independent Living
Montgomery Center for Independent Living
National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils
OASIS Advisory Council
State Interagency Transition Team
State of Alabama Independent Living Council
State Rehabilitation Council
United We Ride (transportation)
University of Alabama Birmingham/Civitan-Sparks Consumer Advisory Council
Youth Leadership Forum



EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 15

WHEREAS, passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") by the United States Congress imposed a requirement that employers not discriminate against people with disabilities in regard to any employment practices or terms, conditions, and privileges of employment;

WHEREAS, Congress specifically mandated that state government agencies be subject to the provisions of the ADA;

WHEREAS, Alabamians with disabilities and their families, may experience an economic impact due to their disabilities;

WHEREAS, people with disabilities have unmet needs in many areas, including but not limited to: transportation, education, employment, housing, transportation, recreation, health care, insurance, leisure and/or personal assistance;

WHEREAS, collaboration among public and private organizations serving individuals with disabilities is necessary to efficiently use available resources;

WHEREAS, a coordinated centralized effort will ensure all state agencies are in compliance with the terms of the ADA by the most efficient means possible; and,

WHEREAS, there is a need of coordination with consumers and consumer-driven organizations regarding state disability policies and services and a clearinghouse for disability-related information in one location.

NOW, THEREFORE, based upon these considerations, and for other good and valid reasons thereto, I, Robert Bentley, Governor of the State of Alabama, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the State of Alabama, do hereby establish the **Governor's Office on Disability**, hereinafter referred to as "GOOD," within the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services ("ADRS").

The purpose and duties of GOOD include:

1. To serve as point of contact for issues related to people with disabilities.
2. To collect and compile information on Alabama resources for individuals with disabilities and their families.
3. To remain current on matters of interest related to disability issues.
4. To monitor Alabama legislation and policies that affect people with disabilities.
5. To collaborate, where possible, with other Alabama public and private disability organizations and resources to increase efficiency in the use of available resources for Alabamians with disabilities.
6. To accept and handle referrals, regarding disability issues, from the Governor's Constituent Affairs Office.
7. To enter into inter-agency agreements or contracts with public and private entities, including state agencies, to further the purposes of GOOD.
8. To monitor disability constituent issues to the extent of developing, assisting in the development of, or recommending policies and/or legislation to address such issues in coordination with the Governor's Policy and Legislative Affairs offices.
9. To maintain local advisory committees around the state for the purpose of determining the unmet needs of persons with disabilities and otherwise soliciting their input.
10. To provide informal legal opinions on disability issues to the Governor's Legal Office and otherwise assist such office on legal matters related to individuals with disabilities.
11. To serve as the statewide clearinghouse for information on disability issues.
12. To prepare an Annual Report of GOOD's activities and send a copy of said report to the Governor, Alabama Legislature, and the Commissioner of ADRS, and provide quarterly reports on GOOD activities to the Governor.

BE IT ORDERED that GOOD shall be managed by a Director who shall be appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the Governor.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that the Director shall be assisted by a Deputy Director, who shall be appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the Governor.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that all employees of GOOD, present or future, be supervised, managed and answerable to the GOOD Executive Director.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that GOOD be housed and located within ADRS and subject to its personnel policies, rules, and regulations to the extent applicable, yet remain a separate agency.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that if a conflict arises with regard to any previous or existing Executive Order, the provisions of this Executive Order shall prevail.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED that this Executive Order shall become effective immediately upon the Governor's signature and shall remain in effect until amended or modified by the Governor.



Robert Bentley
Robert Bentley
Governor

Attested

Beth Chapman
Beth Chapman
Secretary of State

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE ON DISABILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Dr. Dave Martin, Chairman

Auburn, Alabama

Parent Advocate

Shannon Weston Byrd

Montgomery, Alabama

State Agency/Mental Health Advocate

Kent Crenshaw*

Montgomery, Alabama

Person with a disability

Michael Davis*

Mobile, Alabama

Person with a disability

Carl Flemons

Somerville, Alabama

Veteran with a disability

Steve Hamerdinger

Montgomery, Alabama

Person with a disability

Dan Kessler

Birmingham, Alabama

Independent Living Center representative

Phil Klebine

Birmingham, Alabama

Person with a disability

Scott Renner

Auburn, Alabama

Person with a disability

John Stephenson

Jackson Gap, Alabama

Recreational Access representative

James Tucker

Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Statewide Disability Advocacy Program

Karl Wade

Prattville, Alabama

Person with blindness

*Minority representative

LOCAL CONSUMER ADVISORY COUNCILS

Councils serve as an opportunity for grassroots input from people with disabilities and their families and are located in the following areas:

- Anniston
- Birmingham
- Dothan
- Gadsden
- Huntsville/Decatur
- Mobile
- Montgomery
- Muscle Shoals
- Tuscaloosa

FY 2013 Budget

Personnel Costs.....	\$45,000.00
Employee Benefits.....	\$16,854.00
Travel-in-State.....	0
Travel Out-of-State.....	0
Repairs & Maintenance.....	0
Rentals & Leases.....	\$94.80
Utilities & Communications.....	0
Professional Services.....	\$759.10
Supplies, Materials & Operating Expenses.....	\$5,490.28
Grants & Benefits.....	\$48,922.00
Other Equipment Purchases.....	0
Total	<u>\$117,120.33</u>

FY 2013 SMART BUDGET

<u>Number of Inquiries</u>	<u>FY 2013</u>
Projected	1100
Actual	791
 <u>Number responded to within 72 hours</u>	
Projected	100%
Actual	100%

Unmet Needs

Top ten unmet needs* based upon the results from the 2012 Disability Summit & Expo

Transportation	Education
Accessibility	Housing
Attitude toward people with disabilities	Medical Access
Home and Community Based Waivers	Employment
Funding & Assistive Technology	Public Awareness, Information & Training

** It does not appear that these needs have changed in the past 4 years*

2012 Disability Status Report *— Alabama Summary

Age: In 2012, the prevalence of disability in Alabama was:

- 16.5% for persons of all ages

Disability Type: In 2012, the prevalence of the six disability types among persons of all ages in AL was:

- 3.1% reported a Visual Disability
- 4.5% reported a Hearing Disability
- 10.3% reported an Ambulatory Disability
- 6.8% reported a Cognitive Disability
- 3.7% reported a Self-Care Disability
- 7.7% reported an Independent Living Disability

Gender: in 2012, 16.6% of females of all ages and 16.3% of males of all ages in AL reported a disability.

Hispanic/Latino: In 2012, the prevalence of disability among persons of all ages of Hispanic or Latino origin in AL was 6.9%.

Race: In AL in 2012, the prevalence of disability for working-age people (ages 21 to 64) was:

- 14.4% among Whites
- 18.7% among Black/African Americans
- 2.6% among Asians
- 26.0% among Native Americans
- 15.6% among persons of some other race(s)

Employment: in 2012, the employment rate of working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities in AL was 29.4%.

Looking for Work: in AL in 2012, the percentage actively looking for work among people with disabilities who were not working was 7.8%.

Full-Time/Full-Year Employment: In AL in 2012, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities working full-time/full-year was 19.5%.

Annual Earnings: In 2012, the median annual earnings of working-age people with disabilities working full-time/full-year in AL was \$35,600.

Annual Household Income: In AL in 2012, the median annual income of households with working-age people with disabilities was \$31,600.

Poverty: In AL in 2012, the poverty rate of working-age people with disabilities was 29.2%.

Supplemental Security Income: In 2012, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities receiving SSI payments in AL was 19.7%.

Educational Attainment: In 2012, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities in AL:

- With only a high school diploma or equivalent was 35.8%
- With only some college or an associate degree was 28.0%
- With a bachelor's degree or more was 9.7%

Veterans Service-Connected Disability: In 2012, the percentage of working-age civilian veterans with a VA determined Service-Connected Disability was 22.0%.

Health Insurance Coverage: In 2012 in AL, 83.1 percent of working-age people with disabilities had health insurance.

** Status Report is from the Cornell Report Released in 2013*



Join The GOOD List

www.good.alabama.gov

The Governor's Office on Disability

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