

# EMPOWERING OKLAHOMANS WITH DISABILITIES



Oklahoma Department  
of Rehabilitation Services

Annual Report  
2019

# 2019

## Agency highlights

**82,787**

Total number of Oklahomans served by DRS in State Fiscal Year 2019 (DDS data is for Federal Fiscal Year 2019).

**89,997**

Total number of cases cleared by Disability Determination Services in FFY 2019.

**\$4 to \$1**

Federal to state match for VR and SBVI employment programs in SFY 2019.

**15,225**

Oklahomans who received assistance from DRS' Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired in State FY 2019.

**\$10,145**

Average cost of services clients of DRS' VR and SBVI clients in FY 2019.

**31,918**

Total number of outreach direct services delivered by OSB and OSD in SFY 2019.

**\$23,409**

Annual average yearly earnings in SFY 2019 of clients who received VR and SBVI services.

**4,798**

Oklahomans served by the state's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in FY 2019.

**\$11.9 m**

Estimated DDS Fraud Unit savings to taxpayers for FFY 2019.



# DRS helps Oklahomans go to work

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services expands opportunities for work, independent living and economic self-sufficiency by helping Oklahomans with disabilities overcome barriers to success in the workplace, school and at home.

One in six Oklahomans has a disability, and DRS' Vocational Rehabilitation programs introduce or reinstate people with disabilities back into the work force, creating taxpayers and reducing dependence on disability benefits and social assistance.

DRS clients exercise informed choice to achieve goals that promote equality of opportunity, full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, and economic and social self-sufficiency.

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services is comprised of eight divisions highlighted below that work to serve the 1-in-6 Oklahomans who have a disability.



# Commission for Rehabilitation Services



## Chairman Jace Wolfe

Commission Chairman Jace Wolfe, of Edmond, is the director of audiology and research at the Hearts for Hearing Foundation in Oklahoma City.

He is also an adjunct professor in the audiology department at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City and Salus University in Elkins Park, Pa.

Wolfe's areas of interest are pediatric amplification and cochlear implantation, personal remote microphone technology and signal processing for children.

He provides clinical services for children and adults with hearing loss and is actively engaged in research pertaining to hearing aids, cochlear

implants, hybrid cochlear implants and personal remote microphone systems.

Wolfe has authored and co-authored textbooks and many publications and articles in professional journals and has presented at state, national and international conferences and symposiums.



## Vice Chairman Wes Hilliard

Vice Chairman Wes Hilliard is a Sulphur banker and former Oklahoma state representative.

Oklahoma House of Representatives Speaker Charles McCall, R-Atoka, appointed Hilliard to the Commission in July.

Hilliard is president of Landmark Bank in Sulphur and Davis. He

served in the Oklahoma House of Representatives from 2004 to 2012. He has a bachelor's degree in political science from Oklahoma State University and a master's in education from East Central University in Ada.

"I am definitely excited about serving in the role as vice chair," Hilliard said. "I was impressed with

the number of people who attend meetings and engage with the Commission. There are a lot of positive things happening at the Department of Rehabilitation Services, and I am proud to be a part of it."

Hilliard and his wife Melissa have three children, Weston, Jaxson and Blake.



## Commissioner Emily Cheng

Commissioner Emily Cheng is director of disability services and diversity at Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City. She had previously served 12 1/2 years as an academic advisor and disabilities services coordinator at the school.

Cheng, who herself has cerebral palsy, began advocating for those with

disabilities while in college. She said she finds fulfillment in helping Oklahomans with disabilities accomplish their goals and reach their full potential.

Cheng has a degree in psychology and sociology from Tulane University as well as a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center.

After college, Cheng worked as a counselor at a nonprofit, which served those suffering from compulsive gambling. Less than two years later, she became a rehabilitation counselor for Louisiana Rehabilitation Services, that state's DRS counterpart.

Cheng is married to Neil Cambre and lives in Oklahoma City.

# Message from the director

## DRS focused on helping Oklahomans with disabilities live independently, go to work

Oklahomans,

I am pleased to present the 2019 Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services Annual Report, reflecting our work to deliver access and quality services to Oklahomans with disabilities. The cornerstone of DRS' work is to make a difference in someone's life. We achieve this through accountability for quality results.

Our dedication is reflected in the 2019 program outcomes including:

DRS' Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Vocational Rehabilitation divisions served 15,225 Oklahomans on their path to find employment. This resulted in 100 Visual Services (as of Nov. 1 renamed



***DRS employees strive to be an integral component in the lives and successes of each Oklahoman with a disability. We are committed to ensuring Oklahomans with disabilities have opportunities to attain their goals.***

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melinda Freundt".

**DRS Executive Director  
Melinda Freundt**



Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired) clients and 1,015 Vocational Rehabilitation clients returning to the work force and once again becoming proud taxpayers.

Our DRS schools continue to set high standards for academic success. The Oklahoma School for the Blind achieved a 100-percent graduation rate for their Class of 2019.

DRS' Disability Determination Services again performed at an extraordinary level, completing 100-percent of its allotted cases.

DRS employees strive to be an integral component in the lives and successes of each Oklahoman with a disability. We are committed to ensuring Oklahomans with disabilities have opportunities to attain their goals.

Our agency employees work every day to ensure people with disabilities have the freedom to live independent lives and pursue meaningful careers. We are dedicated to the mission that each client realizes the future they pursue.

# Federal investment helps put Oklahomans back to work



The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services maximizes state and federal resources in its mission to see Oklahomans pursue lives of independence through careers and training.

The motto for the agency is “Empowering Oklahomans with Disabilities,” and agency staff work every day to achieve that goal.

The majority of funding for Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired is eligible for a federal/state match of 78.7 percent/21.3 percent. The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is state-funded.

The majority of funding for Oklahoma School for the Blind and the Oklahoma School for the Deaf is state appropriations. Other OSD funding is primarily the Equipment Distribution Program, which provides telecommunications and other equipment to deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind and severely speech-impaired individuals.

In support services, DRS utilizes an indirect cost rate as the standardized method for individual programs to pay a fair share of support service (general administration) costs.

Statistical information is based on State Fiscal Year 2019.

## FY 2019 Expenditures

	Vocational Rehabilitation/ Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired	Oklahoma School for the Blind	Oklahoma School for the Deaf	Disability Determination Services	Support Services	Total
State	\$13,639,000	\$6,833,000	\$8,277,000	\$109,000	\$2,192,000	<b>\$31,050,000</b>
Federal	\$38,776,000	\$0	\$0	\$41,134,000	\$6,038,000	<b>\$85,948,000</b>
Inter-agency	\$115,000	\$450,000	\$327,000	\$0	\$503,000	<b>\$1,395,000</b>
Other	\$598,000	\$61,000	\$317,000	\$0	\$9,000	<b>\$985,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$53,128,000</b>	<b>\$7,344,000</b>	<b>\$8,921,000</b>	<b>\$41,243,000</b>	<b>\$8,742,000</b>	<b>\$119,378,000</b>

# Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation services help Oklahomans with disabilities live independently, get jobs and become taxpayers. Thousands of people whose disabilities were barriers to employment become taxpayers every year, eliminating or reducing the need for disability benefits and social assistance.



Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator Mark Kinnison

## Impact on Oklahomans in FY 2019

**13,936** Total number of Oklahomans who received Vocational Rehabilitation Services in FY 2019

**4,102** Program applications made for VR services

**3,644** Employment plans completed

**1,015** Employment outcomes achieved

**\$22,910** VR clients annual average yearly earnings

**\$9,854** Average cost of services per VR client

**\$3,437** Average yearly taxes paid by employed client (15% tax rate)

## VR program helps Oklahomans move back into work force, become contributing taxpayers

Vocational Rehabilitation staff empower Oklahomans with disabilities to pursue achieving goals for an independent life through employment. Agency clients can become Oklahoma taxpayers, contributing to their state and reinforcing their own self-worth.

VR staff members are committed to removing barriers that prevent a person from working. They guide and counsel clients on employment goals and network with employers on behalf of people with disabilities.

In State Fiscal Year 2019, VR served 13,936 clients. This year, DRS saw 1,015 Oklahomans with physical or mental disabilities become employed with the average yearly earnings reaching \$22,910.

These achievements are possible because of DRS services

that include career counseling, vocational education and training, and medical services if it is determined it will help a client find employment. They may also receive assistive technology, job placement and coaching.

When DRS clients who are former Social Security benefit recipients reach the nine-month work anniversary, the Social Security Administration reimburses DRS a portion of the cost of the services to get that person into the work force. These services build both people's self-respect and the state's available work force.



# Vocational Rehabilitation

## DRS helped man build playbook for independent future

Vocational Rehabilitation staff helped Linden Robertson tackle life.

Robertson's future was once uncertain. He and his family fled from New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

His family settled in Arlington, Texas, but he traveled north of the Red River when he received a full-ride football scholarship to Oklahoma Panhandle State University in Goodwell.

Robertson, 25, has dyslexia and was referred to DRS as a college sophomore. His mother, Linda Robertson, was familiar with the Oklahoma agency's work through her job with Disability Rights Texas, an agency that serves children, adults and families with disabilities and partners with Texas Department of Rehabilitative Services.

His VR counselor, Carol Holland, provided career planning and assisted with education expenses not paid by his scholarship, including tuition, books, fees, supplies, housing and meal tickets. She arranged appointments with a specialist for an evaluation and follow-up to a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan for a knee impairment.

"Carol Holland from VR focused on my skill development and utilized all the assistance available to me through VR like academic



assistance, reading comprehension skills and meeting with professional educators to help develop my academic competence and my confidence," Robertson said.

"And thanks to DRS, I will end up finishing school and not have much debt, thanks to the help I received."

The path mapped out for him led to a job with DHL, a logistics company specializing in international shipping, courier services and transportation. He began training as an

inbound and outbound shipping lead.

Robertson's experience with DRS led him to encourage others with disabilities to seek out its services.

"I would tell them if you are sulking in your struggles, reach out," he said. "Someone is there to help you and would like to see you do better for yourself. Don't think you are in this alone. There's always fun to be had, lots of adventures, new challenges, and there's always a new day."

# Transition: School to Work

## Program paves way for Oklahoma youth to successfully reach their career, life goals

DRS' Transition program can help Oklahoma youth with disabilities begin building a foundation for a fulfilling life after high school, offering opportunities including education, training and work experience.

Transition services are available through counselors in the Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. They are assigned to high schools across the state, and counseling services they offer may include:

**Vocational counseling and guidance:** DRS counselors assist teachers, parents and students in developing appropriate career goals.

**Vocational assessment and evaluation:** DRS' staff help to determine students' employment-related strengths and interests, and provide recommended career fields to investigate.

**School Work-Study:** Through contracts with the schools, DRS Transition provides job readiness skills training through work experience at the school district or in the community, while earning a minimum wage and school credits.

**Work Adjustment Training:** This training is



provided through contracts with the schools or from community-based facilities, and provides students with foundational employment skills to help them prepare for competitive, integrated employment after high school.

**On-the-Job Training:** This program

**919** Oklahoma students served in Fiscal Year 2019

**\$1,528,098** Cost of DRS Transition services

**436** State youth receiving pre-employment Transition services

provides students the opportunity (during the second semester of their senior year) to obtain community employment in their career of choice with permanent employment as a goal.

**Supported Employment:** This program helps students in their senior year transition into permanent employment with supports from a job coach to search for employment, apply, prepare for the interview, learn the job and work toward independence on the job.

Job development and placement specialists help students make job searches more successful by helping them identify their interests and strengths, and finding possible businesses with job openings.

After graduation, DRS counselors and students continue to work toward vocational and employment goals. Some services are available to all eligible individuals without charge. At this point, individuals may be asked to share the cost of some services, depending on income and financial resources.

# Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired staff work each day to open doors to employment and independence. Oklahomans are eligible for services if their disability makes it difficult to work and must be able to benefit from services that will help them return to work.



SBVI  
Administrator  
Tracy Brigham

## Impact on Oklahomans in FY 2019

**1,289** Total number of Oklahomans who received SBVI Services in FY 2019

**322** Program applications made for SBVI services

**320** Employment plans completed

**100** Employment outcomes achieved

**\$28,478** SBVI clients annual average yearly earnings

**\$13,089** Average cost of services per SBVI client

**\$4,272** Average yearly taxes paid by employed client (15% tax rate)



## SBVI services offers training that allows Oklahomans to navigate home, workplace

Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired can lead independent lives, pursue careers and become contributing taxpayers through programs provided by DRS' Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

SBVI's vocational rehabilitation process puts clients on the path to employment through career counseling; vocational education and training; medical services required to become employable; and assistive technology geared to their specific needs and job placement.

Clients are eligible for the vocational rehabilitation program if their disability makes it difficult to work. They must be able to benefit

from vocational rehabilitation services, which prepare clients for employment.

Legal blindness occurs when visual acuity with best correction is 20/200 or less or when side vision results in a field restriction of 20 degrees or less.

Many clients receive living skills training that allows them to navigate their environments, operate computers, manage money and much more. With these skills, people who are blind or visually impaired often feel ready to compete in the work place.

SBVI, Continued Page 11

# Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

SBVI, From Page 10

SBVI services can include, but are not limited to:

- Physical or mental restoration;
- Mobility training;
- Vocational, college or other training;
- Assistive technology evaluations, equipment and training;
- Information on disability resources;
- Personal assistance services while receiving vocational rehabilitation services;
- Transportation in connection with VR services being provided;
- Supported employment;
- Self-employment assistance;
- Transition School-to-Work services for youth with disabilities; and
- Other services based on individual needs.

An Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) determines what services a client receives. It outlines a person's employment goal and the assistance needed to enable the person to achieve that goal. An IPE is developed in one of two ways — a client and their counselor can work together to develop it, or it can be written by the client according to guidelines the counselor will explain.



# Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

## OLBPH services open world to thousands in state

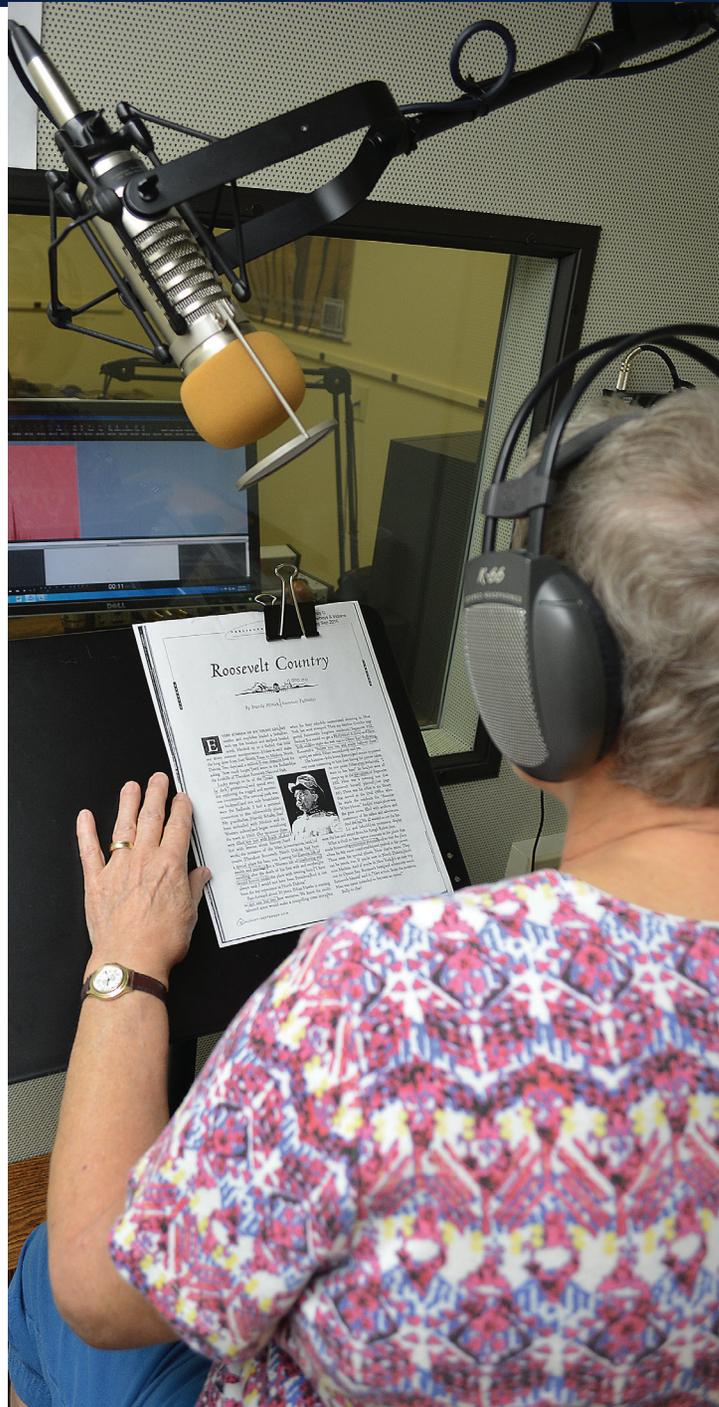
Oklahomans with disabilities can reach out to the world through thousands of books, textbooks and periodicals available in audio recorded and Braille formats — all for free.

The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped provides library services at no cost to those with visual or physical disabilities.

The library provides Braille and large-print textbooks and assistive devices for students with visual impairments in kindergarten through 12th grade and earlier developmental years as long as funds are available to meet the requests.

For more information on all library services, go to the library's web site at [www.olbph.org](http://www.olbph.org). The library, which is operated by DRS' Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired Division, is part of the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Oklahomans for Special Library Services is the library's friends group supporting the work of the library.



**4,798** Patrons of the library in Fiscal Year 2019

**34,246** Number of audio book titles in collection

**2,913** Books received weekly by patrons

**1,158** Children served through the Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center in FY 19

**13,522** Learning aids, equipment and books available for students

**2,810** Number of items circulated per month



# Business Enterprise Program

## BEP offers business starts to clients

Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired can be back on the road to an independent life with the assistance of a DRS program that offers them the chance to own their own businesses.

Through the federally enacted Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936 and Oklahoma State Statute Title 7, SBVI operates the Business Enterprise Program. BEP's mission is to provide employment opportunities for people who at least are legally blind with best correction by establishing food service operations across the state.

These operations may consist of vending machine routes, cafeterias or a variety of different types of snack bars. To accomplish this, the BEP aids entrepreneurs by providing extensive business training, licensing business owners, locating and equipping locations, securing initial inventory and offering ongoing business consultation services.

BEP entrepreneurs are educated in food safety, hospitality, marketing and business management. A portion of each business' proceeds is paid to DRS to help support the program.



## Older Blind Program

### DRS program helps keep seniors with disabilities living independent life

Dialing a phone and cooking are just a couple of the skills Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired need to master to live independently.

DRS' Older Blind Independent Living Program offers free independent living services to people who are 55 years old or older, legally blind and not currently interested in employment.

Rehabilitation teachers located in Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired offices throughout the state provide one-on-one assistance to individuals adjusting to blindness and regaining or maintaining maximum independence and self-sufficiency.

Staff present training for businesses, organizations and others to develop greater awareness of the abilities and needs of older Oklahomans who are blind. Legal blindness

occurs when visual acuity with best correction is 20/200 or less or when side vision results in a field restriction of 20 degrees or less.

Oklahomans having problems dialing the phone, signing their names, cooking, identifying money, time telling, or matching clothing can get help from a rehabilitation teacher. The teacher will work with clients in learning how to perform these tasks safely, efficiently and independently.

# Oklahoma School for the Blind

The Oklahoma School for the Blind serves students pre school through 12th-grade, offering superior educational opportunities that empower students to pursue independence, education and a lifetime career. Tuition is free.



OSB  
Superintendent  
Rita Echelle

## Impact on Oklahomans in FY 2019

# 100%

Graduation rate for students attending the Oklahoma School for the Blind

**1 to 4** OSB teacher to student ratio

**1 to 4** Direct-care specialists to students ratio

**94** Total number of students enrolled in 2019

**5** Number of OSB students who have multiple disabilities

**4,522** Direct services offered through school's Outreach Services

**1,472** Outreach Services offered to other school districts

## OSB staff empowers students to prepare for independent lives

Oklahoma children who are blind or visually impaired can achieve their dreams for an independent life by building on the foundation that the Oklahoma School for the Blind teachers and staff help them build.

OSB serves students preschool-age through 12th-grade, offering superior educational opportunities that empower students to pursue independence, education and a career. Tuition is free.

OSB staff provide students with specialized educational programs in coordination with their state-mandated educational requirements. Independent living skills and specialized accessible technology equipment assist each student in developing their maximum potential.

School staff play a critical role in each student's success by setting high standards for achievement. The school offers a comprehensive curriculum of reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, physical education, music and computer science for both residential and day students.

OSB offers a robotics program that is fully accessible to blind/visually impaired students and introduces the students to the exciting world of math and engineering.

Students wishing to pursue music can take part in the OSB Jazz Band, which routinely is recognized in the state for setting a high bar for musical excellence.

Specialized instruction includes Braille, orientation and mobility, optimum use of low vision, adaptive equipment, technology and tactile graphic skills. These intensive specializations are not readily available at other public schools in the state.

The school serves all 77 Oklahoma counties. Regardless of the hometown, OSB provides transportation at no cost to the parents or guardians to designated stops throughout the state.

OSB is a four-day-a-week program. Students who live near the school commute daily. Those who live farther away stay on campus during

OSB, Continued Page 15

## Youth sees bright forecast for independent future

Julio Valdez's career goals are gaining strength at the Oklahoma School for the Blind, and his career dream may one day make him the go-to source for weather forecasting in Oklahoma.

Valdez, who is a ninth-grader and legally blind, began his education at OSB in November 2016 after struggling to make his way in an Oklahoma City public school.

"They (the public school) weren't as equipped for special needs as they are here," Valdez said. "I didn't really learn much in public school, if anything."

His reading teacher Cassie Shelton said she met Valdez, who was then in the sixth-grade, when they were both new to school. She gave him his first reading assessment at OSB, and she said his reading comprehension at that time was at a first-grade level



**Julio Valdez**

(1.5). By the end of his seventh-grade year at OSB, he was reading at grade level (7.5). In the most

recent assessment, his reading comprehension and vocabulary ranged from sophomore to junior grade levels.

"I could tell this kid had really great phonics skills," Shelton said. "He is a very motivated student. He is not one you have to drag along to learn. He is sprinting academically."

The path to his academic success was not always certain. He said it was only after one of his friends went to OSB and told him about their experience, that he began considering the opportunity.

"I wasn't sure I wanted to come here, but my mom told me to 'give it a try,'" he said. "At first, it is a little hard. You get homesick, and you miss your parents. But it is worth it. You can learn a lot of things here."

His favorite part of his OSB education is developing skills that make him more independent such as learning to navigate the world with the use of a cane. The school's unique focus also allows him to be part of activities that were never available to him before such as Boy Scouts.

"We go camping and really like it," he said. "I also have had the opportunity to go to the National Weather Festival in Norman. I am really interested in weather."

At OSB, Valdez no longer feels on the sideline of life. He is now mapping out plans for his life after high school that includes college and a career in weather.

"I really think I am going to leave here prepared," Valdez said. "I feel supported here."

### OSB, From Page 14

the school week. OSB transports residential students to and from OSB for three-day weekends, summers and holidays at home.

OSB staff is committed to motivating

students to overcome any challenges they face and develop the skills to self-advocate for their future.

School officials offer thousands of free outreach services each year for students

attending local public schools. Qualified staff offer free student evaluations, in-service training for teachers and recommendations for classroom modifications and special equipment that help students reach their full potential.

# Oklahoma School for the Deaf

The Oklahoma School for the Deaf staff strive to offer a top-notch learning environment for deaf and hard-of-hearing students without any barriers to communication. The goal is to empower each student to build an independent future and pursue a career.



OSD  
Superintendent  
Chris Dvorak

## Impact on Oklahomans in FY 2019

**27,396** Direct services offered to Oklahomans through OSD's Outreach Services

**1 to 4** OSD teacher to student ratio

**1 to 4** Direct-care specialists to students ratio

**137** Total number of students enrolled in 2019

**9** Number of OSD students who have multiple disabilities

**8,219** Outreach Services offered to other school districts

## Next generation of leaders can build a strong foundation at OSD

High school students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing can pursue their educational and career dreams in an environment of excellence at the Oklahoma School for the Deaf.

Staff and students communicate with each other using both American Sign Language and English. Maximized bilingual development is the goal for each student. Many students utilize cochlear implants or hearing aids. For these students, spoken English is also a developmental focus.

OSD is a deaf education immersion

school, while other schools, public or private, are often only able to make basic accommodations. Sign language classes are provided for all students and staff.

Classes for parents and the community are also offered. Staff members are required to obtain sign language proficiency that is measured by a Sign Language Proficiency Interview.

Students who attend OSD must meet all graduation requirements set forth by the

OSD, Continued Page 17





**Gage Cole**

## School helped Oklahoma man go from the sideline to end zone

Gage Cole had a hard time talking with his public school classmates or teachers in Purcell. It left him on the outside of activities such as his school's sports teams.

A camp he attended at the Oklahoma School for the Deaf in the summer before seventh grade though would open up his world.

Cole said the camp made him want to leave public school because he met fellow teens from OSD who were freely communicating using American Sign Language.

Cole dove deep into activities at OSD, playing football, basketball and golf. His

favorite class was math. Public schools had been a place where he never got into the game, but at OSD, he played both offense and defense on the football team, including being a running back.

Since graduating in 2018, Cole has worked at the Chickasaw National Recreation Area in maintenance. He said he loves the job that offers him the chance to work outdoors.

College or trade school may still be in his future, but Cole said he hopes to one day use his hands to be creative, building items including furniture.

### OSD, From Page 16

Oklahoma Department of Education. All classes are taught in consideration of each student's unique communication and education needs. This includes not only the use of American Sign Language but also the use of other adaptive technology.

Students receive full educational and social experiences. They perform in school programs

and dramas. They have prom and homecoming events for all sports. They compete with other schools on sports teams, leadership programs and academic teams.

OSD has a strong vocational program that offers business technology, family and consumer sciences and welding classes on site. OSD also offers a school-to-work program, Occupational Training Opportunities for the Deaf. Students gain valuable work experience and a paycheck at

various businesses in the community, which gives them a competitive resume after graduation.

OSD is a four-day-a-week program. Students attend classes Monday through Thursday. Those who live close to campus commute back and forth to school. Students from greater distances live at the school free of charge and go home for three-day weekends, summers and holidays. OSD serves any Oklahoma student from preschool to 12th grade.

# Disability Determination

DDS processes applications made to the Social Security Administration for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income.



Disability  
Determination  
Administrator  
Brian Nickles

## Impact on Oklahomans in FFY 2019

**89,997** Total number of cases cleared by Disability Determination Services staff in FFY 2019

**89.9** Numbers of days that DDS takes on average to process a case

**95.6%** DDS accuracy rate on cases. Among the highest regional rates

**100%** Percent of budgeted workload processed

**1 of 3** DDS is one of three states that provides support to other states

**\$11.9** DDS's fraud unit savings for American taxpayers



## Division committed to quality, serving taxpayers

Decisions on whether Oklahomans are eligible for Social Security disability benefits are crucial for people looking to build a secure foundation for their lives. Staff at DRS' Disability Determination Services understand those needs and place a priority on quickly processing cases as well as delivering accurate decisions.

DDS processes applications made to the Social Security Administration for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income.

For each disability claim, a team of para-professionals, disability specialists and medical/psychological consultants review each applicant's medical and work history. The team determines whether applicants meet federal medical eligibility criteria for disability or blindness.

Oklahoma's DDS claim processing time averages of 89.9 days. They are in the upper tier of units in the country with their accuracy rate of 95.6 percent.

During Federal Fiscal Year 2019, DDS met their budgeted workload, processing 100-percent of their allotted cases. DDS cleared 75,023 Oklahoma cases and 14,974 cases for other states. That brings the total to 89,997 cleared cases in FFY 2019.

The clearing of cases for other states is a particular point of pride for DRS. DDS continues to be a national resource as one of three Extended



***The fraud savings this year through the CDI Unit's work totaled an estimated \$11.9 million on a federal budget of \$452,000.***

Service Team sites that assists other states with their backlog of disability claims. Since its inception, Oklahoma EST has provided assistance to multiple states including Arizona, California, Kansas, Louisiana and New Mexico.

DDS has also placed a priority on saving taxpayers money by investigating fraudulent claims.

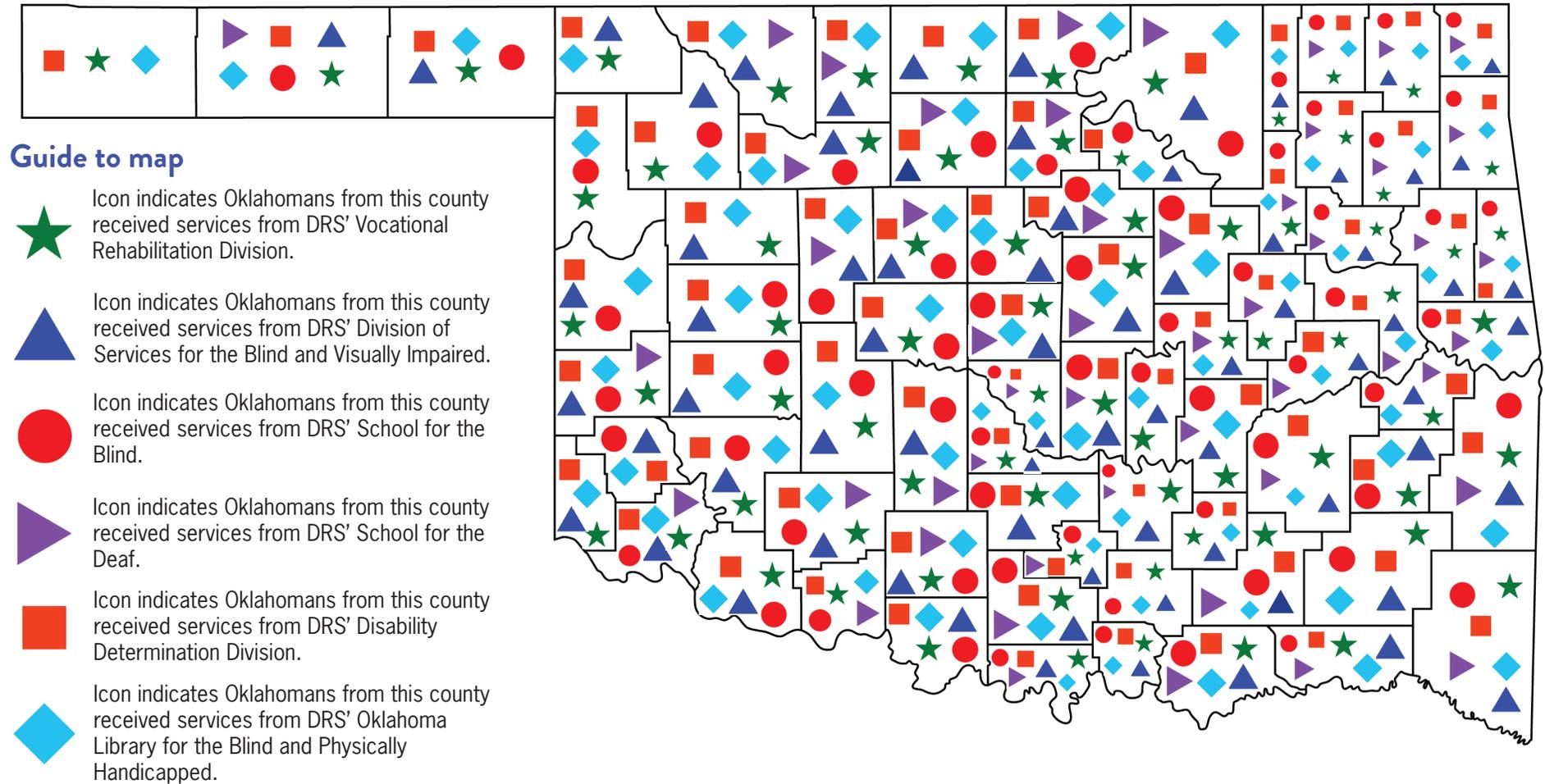
The Cooperative Disability Investigations unit investigates individual disability claims and identifies third parties to prevent fraud in SSA's SSDI and SSI disability programs and related federal and state programs.

The CDI unit opened 111 cases during FFY 2019, closed 124 and denied or ceased benefits to 114.

The fraud savings this year through the CDI Unit's work totaled an estimated \$11.9 million on a federal budget of \$452,000.

DDS' budget is federally funded.

# Agency's impact by county



## EMPOWERING OKLAHOMANS WITH DISABILITIES.

<b>County</b>	<b>Vocational Rehabilitation</b>	<b>Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired**</b>	<b>School for the Blind*</b>	<b>School for the Deaf*</b>	<b>Disability Determination</b>	<b>Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped</b>	<b>Total by County</b>
Adair	13	6	8	9	497	20	605
Alfalfa	13	6	2	0	49	15	106
Atoka	79	10	7	6	213	21	339
Beaver	2	2	0	1	31	5	49
Beckham	57	17	12	6	386	36	573
Blaine	16	6	11	8	147	15	215
Bryan	122	21	19	24	832	47	1,178
Caddo	63	14	0	6	575	23	767
Canadian	236	29	2	21	1,078	128	1,524
Carter	106	28	49	34	947	68	1,331
Cherokee	82	27	26	19	756	51	1,050
Choctaw	52	13	6	5	355	28	508
Cimarron	1	0	0	0	15	1	19
Cleveland	446	56	8	45	2,465	285	3,525
Coal	61	6	0	1	83	6	159
Comanche	325	50	8	11	2,658	95	3,299
Cotton	5	1	15	1	121	14	172
Craig	26	6	29	10	314	15	442
Creek	138	26	5	17	969	98	1,407
Custer	101	24	0	8	359	42	596
Delaware	41	6	20	3	681	58	866
Dewey	19	3	0	0	37	6	65
Ellis	7	0	0	2	45	4	70
Garfield	194	33	3	19	849	87	1,190
Garvin	102	19	0	33	424	31	678
Grady	104	22	13	24	701	44	999
Grant	7	2	0	0	43	8	67
Greer	21	2	0	1	102	8	157
Harmon	5	1	0	0	53	2	78
Harper	3	1	0	0	25	7	58
Haskell	107	8	11	7	256	12	384

<b>County</b>	<b>Vocational Rehabilitation</b>	<b>Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired**</b>	<b>School for the Blind*</b>	<b>School for the Deaf*</b>	<b>Disability Determination</b>	<b>Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped</b>	<b>Total by County</b>
Hughes	63	11	14	13	252	21	411
Jackson	53	6	26	11	427	23	629
Jefferson	6	3	0	4	89	5	115
Johnston	27	9	0	3	203	6	259
Kay	152	22	16	9	728	53	1,004
Kingfisher	22	8	12	6	133	23	203
Kiowa	46	8	0	2	163	14	241
Latimer	48	9	0	2	187	21	282
LeFlore	160	38	86	13	1,133	37	1,473
Lincoln	99	6	1	7	540	50	716
Logan	89	4	0	8	420	52	597
Love	13	3	1	1	176	8	216
Major	21	3	29	4	72	9	165
Marshall	36	7	0	4	291	18	392
Mayes	117	19	21	16	682	41	959
McClain	49	13	5	7	502	45	672
McCurtain	72	33	1	2	634	52	810
McIntosh	60	19	17	4	445	30	593
Murray	58	9	1	44	226	30	386
Muskogee	122	77	291	9	1,634	116	2,562
Noble	18	2	16	1	168	18	244
Nowata	30	0	11	2	154	18	243
Okfuskee	33	8	5	2	273	22	364
Oklahoma	2,300	241	65	140	12,225	870	16,939
Okmulgee	161	16	10	7	822	57	1,195
Osage	124	14	17	7	445	55	668
Ottawa	31	10	11	5	789	35	935
Pawnee	41	6	0	2	265	26	377
Payne	128	19	20	5	787	92	1,224
Pittsburg	222	40	10	29	984	64	1,442
Pontotoc	153	36	1	32	688	39	1,079

County	Vocational Rehabilitation	Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired**	School for the Blind*	School for the Deaf*	Disability Determination	Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped	Total by County
Pottawatomie	200	22	5	39	1,399	79	1,794
Pushmataha	59	9	0	4	285	20	444
Roger Mills	8	2	0	1	29	6	52
Rogers	178	20	13	12	860	107	1,374
Seminole	93	12	0	16	555	20	669
Sequoyah	71	26	68	9	948	52	1,356
Stephens	53	24	1	47	847	46	1,035
Texas	12	2	73	2	114	4	217
Tillman	8	9	0	4	156	6	196
Tulsa	1,689	268	206	100	9,099	702	13,217
Wagoner	89	29	18	5	541	58	798
Washington	128	16	0	7	790	69	1,027
Washita	37	10	0	8	167	15	264
Woods	55	3	0	0	77	17	167
Woodward	51	16	2	1	206	25	323
Out of state	64	12	1	8	0	0	10
<b>Total by program</b>	<b>9,904</b>	<b>1,624</b>	<b>1,238</b>	<b>975</b>	<b>58,878</b>	<b>4,456</b>	<b>82,787</b>

\* The number includes students at the school and outreach clients.

\*\* The numbers for services provided to the Older Blind Independent Living program population were included in the Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired totals.



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