In Step

People with Disabilities Awareness Day 2013 beats expections with 701 in attendance

New Executive Director Leads DRS Team

VR Reimbursement program exceeded $4 million in revenue from SSA on 318 cases

The Art of Living Blind

Meet Jay Doudna and Elaine Boykin, and learn their take on being blind.

Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services

Annual Report 2013

"Opening Doors to Independence and Quality Jobs with Benefits for People With Disabilities."

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Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services

Commissioner Lynda Collins

Commissioner Steve Shelton

Commissioner Jack Tucker

The Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services meets monthly to discuss agency activities and plan for the future. Commission Chair Lynda Collins led the meetings and the commission through another successful year.

Commission Chair Lynda Collins is a former DRS client who worked her way up through the ranks to Vocational Rehabilitation administrator, retiring after 33 years in 2005. Her previous DRS positions included field service coordinator, program manager, vocational rehabilitation counselor and vocational rehabilitation evaluator. She was appointed to the commission by Gov. Mary Fallin.

Commission Vice Chair Steve Shelton devotes his time to the agency while working full-time as a senior application programmer and consultant with Fidelity National Information Services. Shelton has great empathy for our clients as a former client himself. He was appointed to the commission by the speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

Commissioner Jack Tucker, retired principal from the Oklahoma School for the Deaf, knows from his 40 years of experience in working with children with disabilities of the importance of services provided by DRS. He was appointed to the commission by the president pro tempore of the Oklahoma State Senate.

Working directly with the commissioners is the agency Executive Director Joe Cordova. He leads approximately 970 employees. In state fiscal year 2012, Cordova's staff assisted 84,844 Oklahomans with disabilities. He directs the agency, which is comprised of six program divisions, Vocational Rehabilitation, Visual Services, Oklahoma School for the Blind, Oklahoma School for the Deaf, Disability Determination and Support Services. Each division has its own goals along with the collective mission of opening doors to independence and quality jobs with benefits for Oklahomans with disabilities.

Dear Oklahoma Stakeholder,

Let me introduce myself. I am Joe Cordova, executive director for the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services. I recently took up the reins of this great agency and found an agency in, not just good standing, but great standing.

Last year, during a year of transition in leadership, our staff stepped up and continued to serve our fellow citizens with disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation and Visual Services divisions closed 2,241 client cases. That means 2,241 Oklahomans found gainful employment, became taxpayers and achieved individual independence. Not many public schools can boast about having a graduation rate of 100 percent, but our Oklahoma School for the Blind and Oklahoma School for the Deaf both achieved that outstanding distinction. In an age of public dissatisfaction with government workers, our Disability Determination Division has the unbelievable track record of 103 percent for processed budgeted workload.

I could not be more proud of the hard work and perseverance in the DRS staff. Through this report you will find many more reasons for my excitement as we look back on an awesome year.

For those who are learning about this agency, I hope you learn that we are more than just our legal mandate. Our staff is committed to the disability community and its members, on and off the clock. You will read about staff who gave up Memorial Day weekend to help tornado victims. You will meet Jay and Elaine who talk about life with blindness. This is something that I definitely can relate to, being blind myself. I have been underestimated many times in my life, and look at me now, I am leading one of the best agencies in the state.

I hope you learn through this report that people with disabilities are a force to reckon with as well as assets in the workforce. I am confident that you will find that DRS has had an awesome 2013 and hope that you will join us in celebrating our successes.

Sincerely,

Joe Cordova
Executive Director

Commissioner Ray F. Kirk

Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services loses friend and advocate

Muskogee thoroughbred and cattle rancher, and community leader Ray F. Kirk died suddenly March 14 in Muskogee after a brief illness.

Commissioner Kirk was the first Muskogee citizen ever appointed to the Commission for Rehabilitation Services.

At the time he was appointed, Kirk said, "Muskogee is very fortunate to have the school (for the blind) because of the outstanding work the staff does to educate visually impaired students, bringing attention to our community from all over the state. DRS also does a great job for people with disabilities in Oklahoma, and I'm proud to accept an appointment that will allow me to work closely with citizens who receive services, as well as disability advocates and agency staff."

Kirk joined the Commission in 2006, serving twice as chair in 2007 and 2010. He was reappointed in June 2012 by Senate President Pro Tempore Brian Bingman.

"Ray Kirk was not only an advocate for the school, he was a friend to every staff member and many of the students – he was the best friend I've got in Muskogee," said Oklahoma School for the Blind Superintendent Jim Adams. "He supported us 150 percent in making improvements and was the best champion for this school in the Muskogee community and across the state that we have ever had."

"One thing for sure, he had strong convictions about that school and those convictions evolved to all divisions of the agency," Commissioner Lynda Collins said. "From the onset, I could tell he was dedicated, but I also saw the fun side, his sense of humor and the way he enjoyed the camaraderie that was developing between the three of us (on the Commission)."

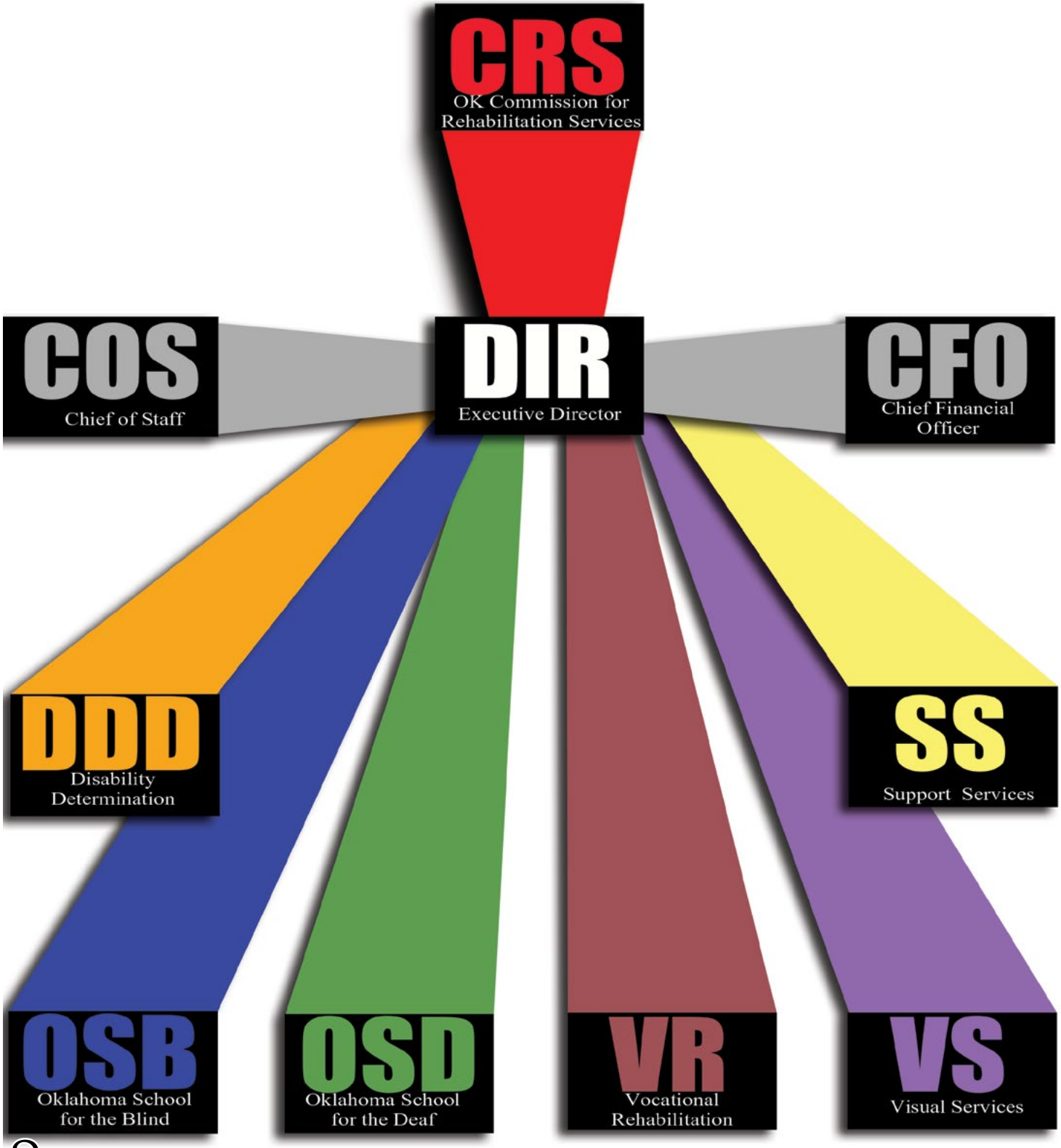
"We've lost a true friend with a passion for the Oklahoma School for the Blind and School for the Deaf and the whole agency," said Sen. Earl Garrison, from Muskogee. "He enjoyed helping those schools so much – if there was a meeting at the school, he was there to offer input — and he believed in their mission and what they were doing. We just need a lot more Commissioners like him with that kind of passion as public servants today."

> "We've lost a true friend with a passion for the Oklahoma School for the Blind and School for the Deaf and the whole agency."
>
> **Sen. Earl Garrison**
> **Oklahoma State District 9, Cherokee and Muskogee**

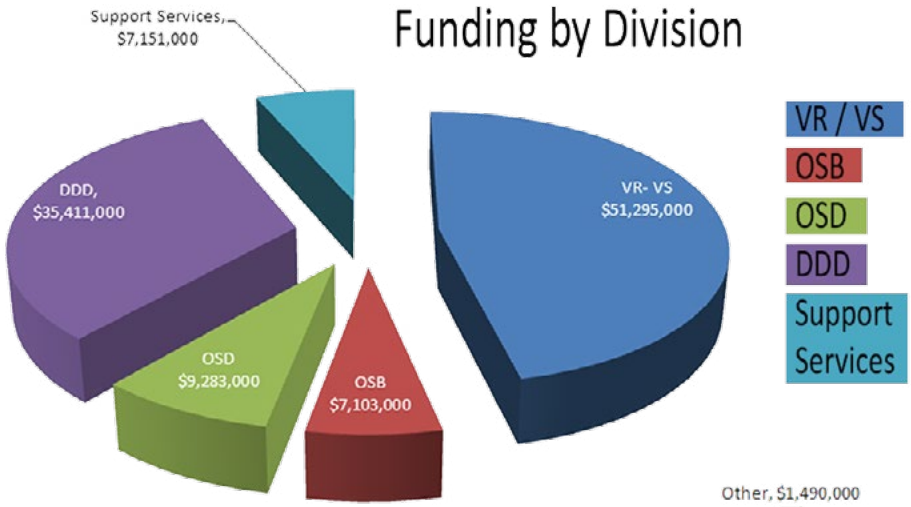
Kirk owned and operated a 585-acre cattle and thoroughbred horse ranch southeast of Muskogee with his wife Elada. He had one daughter, Kim Stotts, and two granddaughters. He was employed as a State Farm Insurance Companies agent for 32 years before his recent retirement.

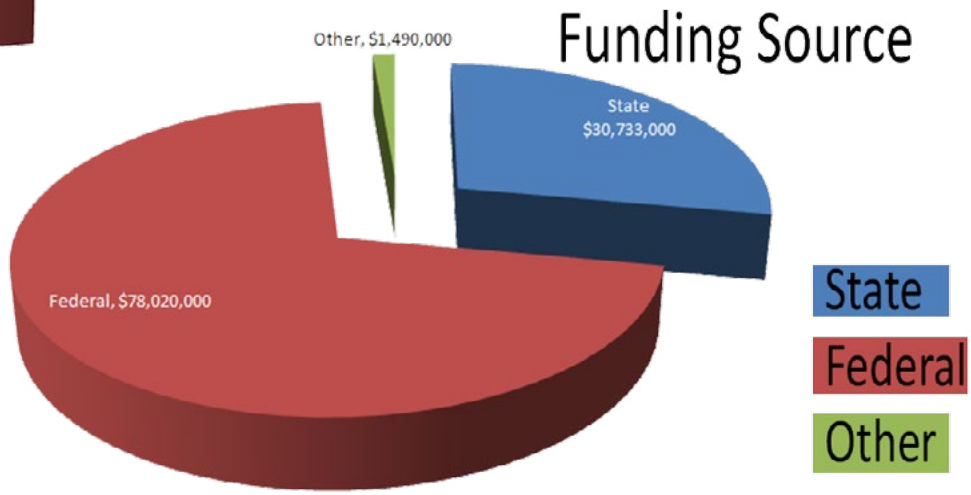
He graduated from Tahlequah High School and Northeastern State University with a bachelor's degree in education. He completed graduate studies at Wichita State University while teaching in a private business college and coaching. He also taught classes in public schools for several years.

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services has six divisions, employing approximately 970 employees dedicated to assisting people with disabilities across the state.



2013 Actual Expenditures





	VR/VS	OSB	OSD	DDD	Support Services	Total
State	$13,657,000	$6,866,000	$8,102,000	$0	$2,108,000	$30,733,000
Federal	36,988,000	215,000	363,000	35,411,000	5,043,000	$78,020,000
Other	650,000	22,000	818,000	0	0	$1,490,000
Total	$51,295,000	$7,103,000	$9,283,000	$35,411,000	$7,151,000	$110,243,000

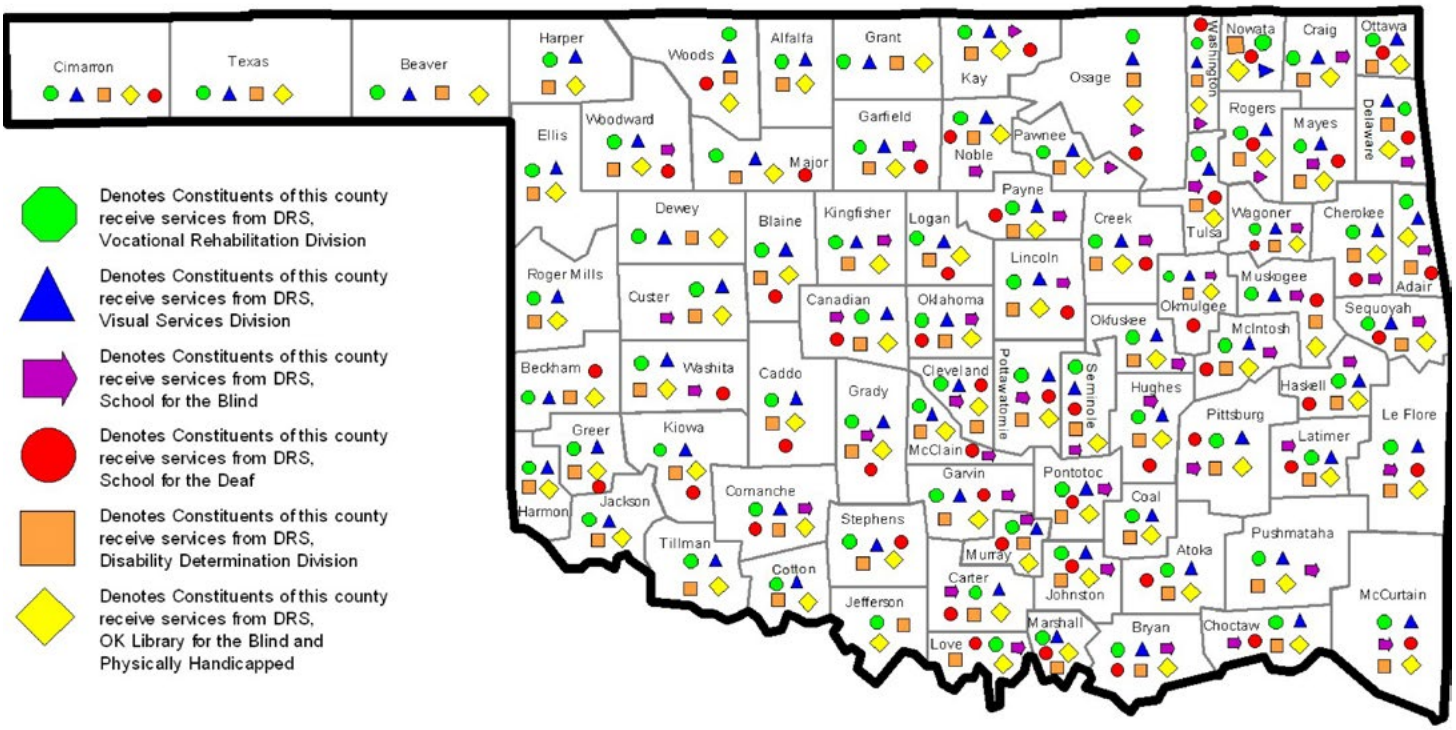
The majority of funding for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) / Visual Services (VS) is eligible for a federal/state match of 78.7 percent /21.3 percent. VS' Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is state funded.

The majority of funding for Oklahoma School for the Blind (OSB) and Oklahoma School for the Deaf (OSD) 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.

Disability Determination Division (DDD) is 100 percent federally funded.

In the Support Services division, 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 2013



84,844 Oklahoma constituents were served by DRS during State Fiscal Year 13 (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013).

County	Vocational Rehabilitation	Visual Services	School for the Blind*	School for the Deaf*	Disability Determination	OK Library for the Blind	Total by County
Adair	44	10	7	3	570	23	657
Alfalfa	20	7	0	0	43	18	88
Atoka	74	9	0	3	305	15	406
Beaver	6	3	0	0	29	6	44
Beckham	38	13	0	1	310	27	389
Blaine	15	12	0	1	157	13	198
Bryan	168	46	4	12	1,023	34	1,287
Caddo	93	25	0	2	690	22	832
Canadian	221	36	3	4	1,096	130	1,490
Carter	111	38	4	34	1,142	69	1,398
Cherokee	105	54	6	3	836	44	1,048
Choctaw	74	11	1	1	480	23	590
Cimarron	1	1	0	1	17	6	26
Cleveland	419	84	3	21	2,298	250	3,075
Coal	56	4	0	0	136	5	201
Comanche	329	48	19	12	2,280	114	2,802
Cotton	12	1	0	0	217	11	241
Craig	43	5	2	0	315	21	386
Creek	224	40	4	9	1,267	99	1,643
Custer	63	29	3	0	361	53	509
Delaware	59	11	2	2	772	55	901
Dewey	11	4	0	0	60	11	86
Ellis	10	4	0	0	30	9	53
Garfield	162	37	5	10	940	93	1,247
Garvin	114	22	4	9	594	39	782
Grady	149	23	1	11	769	59	1,012
Grant	4	7	0	0	40	11	62

County	Vocational Rehabilitation	Visual Services	School for the Blind*	School for the Deaf*	Disability Determination	OK Library for the Blind	Total by County
Greer	31	2	0	1	125	20	179
Harmon	18	1	0	0	66	5	90
Harper	10	4	0	0	28	8	50
Haskell	67	11	2	2	307	16	405
Hughes	66	5	2	3	284	12	372
Jackson	82	9	0	0	366	34	491
Jefferson	14	0	0	0	141	6	161
Johnston	31	12	1	3	260	11	318
Kay	150	21	6	5	806	79	1,067
Kingfisher	17	6	1	0	172	33	229
Kiowa	48	2	0	1	177	26	254
Latimer	42	7	1	2	206	19	277
LeFlore	144	24	6	3	1,263	48	1,488
Lincoln	85	5	3	6	704	46	849
Logan	59	10	0	1	474	46	590
Love	10	0	1	1	217	14	243
McClain	63	17	1	5	516	50	652
McCurtain	71	23	2	3	837	48	984
McIntosh	64	18	5	1	546	29	663
Major	26	6	0	2	69	10	113
Marshall	48	15	0	9	732	22	826
Mayes	105	29	7	2	861	41	1,045
Murray	45	7	2	48	242	19	363
Muskogee	334	94	38	4	1,847	118	2,435
Noble	29	6	2	3	128	15	183
Nowata	44	3	0	4	174	14	239
Okfuskee	45	3	1	0	264	16	329
Oklahoma	2,498	277	23	90	13,397	959	17,244
Okmulgee	169	54	10	2	928	62	1,225
Osage	101	11	2	6	582	66	768
Ottawa	60	17	0	6	1,035	49	1,167
Pawnee	61	4	2	0	348	28	443
Payne	200	32	3	5	883	85	1,208
Pittsburg	214	44	12	4	1,032	48	1,354
Pontotoc	187	57	1	22	778	50	1,095
Pottawatomie	168	37	6	12	1,472	82	1,777
Pushmataha	83	7	2	0	304	15	411
Roger Mills	6	3	0	0	46	7	62
Rogers	259	28	6	2	1,146	101	1,542
Seminole	32	13	2	5	565	26	643
Sequoyah	252	44	9	1	1,138	41	1,485
Stephens	63	17	0	27	725	60	892
Texas	16	9	0	0	137	7	169
Tillman	16	2	0	0	162	8	188
Tulsa	2,130	452	32	56	10,776	729	14,175
Wagoner	100	29	6	3	701	47	886
Washington	88	18	1	4	819	70	1,000
Washita	27	2	1	1	163	14	208
Woods	55	11	0	1	59	19	145
Woodward	46	20	3	2	193	25	289
Out of State	102	18	0	0	0	0	120
Total by Program:	11,306	2,130	270	497	65,978	4,663	84,844

Vocational

DRS' Vocation Rehabilitation division provides Oklahomans with disabilities with the opportunity to become employed members of society. We help those who want to work but need a little assistance in breaking through any barriers that may hinder him or her from being employed.

This year, VR began or continued services to 11,185 Oklahomans with physical or mental disabilities and concluded services for 1,900 clients who obtain gainful employment.

Our clients receive career counseling, vocational education and training, or medical services if it is determined it will help them find employment. They may also receive assistive technology and job placement and coaching. Our counselors help clients find their own path to employment success and independence.

When our clients become members of the workforce, we helped them depend on themselves instead of the government. They support our state by paying income taxes on the wages they now earn. They also begin supporting their hometowns by spending their earnings locally.

The VR Reimbursement program exceeded $4 million in revenue through Social Security Administration reimbursements on 318 individuals who maintained wages high enough to completely leave the SSA's Disability and Supplemental Security Income programs. SSA reimburses DRS for every dollar spent to help clients get off disability benefits and go to work.

For young adults with disabilities, VR has the Transition: School to Work program that prepares high school students for the work world. Transition counselors provide advice and training that often include summer jobs or workshops that teach interview skills and resume writing.

The deaf community benefits from our services through the VR process, but also through our Interpreter Certification and Resource Center. Not only do we help clients find work, we help the deaf by evaluating and certifying the proficiency of sign language interpreters.

To qualify for VR services, a person must have a physical or mental disability that is a substantial barrier to employment and he or she must be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in ways that lead to finding and obtaining employment.

Rehabilitation

Over Memorial Day weekend, VR and VS staff gave up their holiday to work at the disaster relief location at St. Andrews Methodist Church to take applications from people whose disabilities are barriers to employment. VR Programs Manager Jan Hatch and VS Field Coordinator Susan Hawkins worked the table to help tornado victims put their lives back together.

iJobs Summer Work Experience

How many high school students' first job was serving pizza at the local pizzeria? A lot would be a safe guess, so why shouldn't the same be true for students with disabilities? This year, Mazzio's pizza in Norman, partnered with DRS and other local business for our Transition School to Work iJobs Summer Work Experience. This three-month work odyssey taught students about the application and interview process. They would meet every Friday with the iJobs planning team to discuss their experiences on the job.

Pictured left is Conner Bruce performing his summer job duties at Mazzio's.

Vocational Rehabilitation Clients Served

11,185 Clients Served
4,978 Program Applications
3,113 Employment Plans

Visual Services Clients Served

1,999 Clients Served
808 Program Applications
555 Employment Plans

Total Clients Served

13,184 Clients Served
5,786 Program Applications
3,668 Employment Plans

Vocational Rehabilitation Clients Employed

1,900 Employment Outcomes
$19,741 Average Yearly Earnings
$10,480 Average Cost of Services Per Client
$2,961 Average Taxes Paid

Visual Services Clients Employed

341 Employment Outcomes
$13,914 Average Yearly Earnings
$10,830 Average Cost of Services Per Client
$2,087 Average Taxes Paid

Total Clients Employed

2,241 Employment Outcomes
$18,854 Average Yearly Earnings
$10,533 Average Cost of Services Per Client
$2,828 Average Taxes Paid

All data reported on the federal FY-2013.

VISUAL

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

Services Circulation based on State FY-2013

4,915 library patrons
892 books circulated daily to patrons
4,458 books received weekly by patrons
165 daily inquiries

Federal Quota Funds (Previous School Year) State FY-2013

760 children eligible for textbooks
$258,619 funding

Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center State FY-2013

919 children Served
One average day for a child to receive an in-house book
60 average days for a child to receive an ordered braille book
10 average days for a child to receive an ordered large print book
23,653 Total Books/Items in collection

15 new braille books purchased
569 new large print books purchased
3,497 new instructional aids and equipment*

*Books and instructional aids/equipment, such as talking globes and tactile maps, are ordered during one fiscal/school year and received the next fiscal/school year.

DRS' Visual Services provides services that make it possible for people who are blind, visually impaired or diabetic to reach their employment or life goals. Clients are provided the opportunity to become employed through the vocational rehabilitation process of:

- career counseling,
- vocational education and training,
- medical services required to become employable,
- 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 are required to prepare for and find jobs.

Many clients receive individualized living skills training to allow them to navigate their environments, operate computers, manage money and their household and much more.

The Business Enterprise Program trains and assists people who are blind in establishing and operating food service businesses in public and private facilities across the state. BEP equips locations, provides initial inventory and offers ongoing technical support to licensed BEP entrepreneurs.

BEP entrepreneurs must complete vending facility training courses and must pay a percentage of net proceeds to DRS, which matches federal funds to support the program.

For our young adults with disabilities, we have the Transition: School to Work program that helps high school

SERVICES

Father Cyril Axelrod of London, attended the Oklahoma-based organization, Sight-Hearing Encouragement Program (SHEP) conference for the deaf/blind. Father Axelrod is the only known deaf/blind Catholic priest in the world. Father Axelrod participated in the international conference in Oklahoma City. for individuals with vision and hearing loss. DRS is a partner in SHEP. Father Axelrod listens to the conversation around him by feeling the signs the interpreter is making.

(Left) The NFB Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning Summer Camp was held at the Oklahoma Library for the Blind. BELL is designed to provide intensive braille instruction to children who are blind and visually impaired during the summer months. OLBPH hosts many such programs with partners and independently.

students prepare for the work world. Transition counselors provide advice and training that often include summer jobs or workshops that teach interview and resume writing.

The Older Blind Independent Living Services gives Oklahomans, aged 55 and older, the ability to remain independent after becoming visually impaired. The program teaches living skills with special magnifying equipment, talking gadgets and tips on staying safe when performing household duties.

The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is the source for talking books for those who cannot read the written word due to visual impairments or physical disabilities. The library mails thousands of free recorded books to patrons all across the state. The Accessible Instructional Material Center provides free braille and large print textbooks and classroom materials to public school students.

We are Okla

ahoma TOO

Beating Expectations

People with Disabilities Awareness Day 2013

Forty degrees and rainy weather threatened our hopes for a great turnout for the 19th People with Disabilities Awareness Day. This is a great day for the public and organizations to meet legislators and tell them their stories. It's not a requirement for people to come, so bad weather could have been a deal breaker.

State Rep. Bob Cleveland shakes hands with a student from the Oklahoma School for the Deaf after a visiting with the student.

Yet, 701 individuals came to volunteer, to host an exhibit or to experience the event. With the theme "We are Oklahoma TOO," many donned their green and their button to show legislators that the community of people with disabilities is large and needs to be heard.

DRS organizes the exhibitors and volunteers, but participants tell their own stories. They let decision-makers know what is important to them.

Exhibitors are there to show off their programs and be a source of information to anyone who may need their services. This event boasts nearly 70 exhibitors that support a wide variety of disability needs and services in Oklahoma.

People with Disabilities Awareness Day State Agency Partner of the Year Award was given to Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth's Brandy Smith and Gary Theilen, director of the Oklahoma Center for Community-Based Initiatives. Rep. Kay Floyd joined the celebration by giving a proclamation in their honor.

Governor Mary Fallin Addresses Guests at Awareness Day

At People with Disabilities Awareness Day, Gov. Mary Fallin accepted the Disability Leadership award from DRS for her support for the National Governors Association's initiative to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. After accepting the award, she stayed and spoke with many at the event.

Shown in the photos on this page are:

1. Gov. Fallin accepts the leadership award. 2.Gov. Fallin speaks with a young man and his father in the hall. 3. Oklahoma School for the Blind student and Jazz Band member, Charity Pickup shares a few words with Gov. Fallin. 4. Gov. Fallin takes a moment to greet DRS' Legislative Liaison Kevin Nelson. 5. DRS Commissioner Steve Shelton talks with the Governor. 6. Oklahoma School for the Deaf Superintendent KaAnn Varner with the Governor.

Oklahoma School for the Deaf preschool students and their teachers wave to the House members as they are recognized on the House floor by Representative Charles McCall. Afterwards, they show the bags of goodies they delivered to the legislators.

Oklahoma School for the Deaf students on the Junior Senior Council visited every senator and representative and gave them handmade gifts. They also told them about their school and their educational experiences. Above left: Representative James Lockhart talks with two council members. Above right: Representative Steve Kouplen listens to the students.

Joint Efforts

Enhancing our ability to serve, DRS partners with many other organizations

DRS partners with many state groups, organizations and companies to provide Oklahomans with disabilities better services. These partnerships are priceless in the services for the clients, but also strengthen DRS as an agency.

We are an active member of the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development initiatives with DRS Executive Director Joe Cordova being the agency representative. Other key staff serves on various committees of this council.

DRS also works with the Workforce Solutions Staff Team. Overcoming barriers and better serving clients across various state programs is this team's purpose.

DRS also has a representative serving as a liaison on the State Youth Council.

Specific results from these efforts include:

- Oklahoma Workforce system partners, including DRS, have committed to focus all education and training partners toward the wealth creation goal for the workforce and it's employers through "Oklahoma Works! A New Day, New Way Regional 'system' Certification."
- Local DRS representatives are more involved in individual Workforce Investment Board and Youth Council activities in their areas. Staff understands their role is a key part of the Workforce system.
- DRS actively participates as a co-located partner in several of the workforce centers around the state.
- DRS continues its progress on ensuring the Workforce system is accessible to all.
- Agency personnel are pioneering work in the area of accommodations used in the Career Readiness Certification Process.

DRS also partners with the Office of Juvenile Affairs on a project that outreaches to juvenile delinquent and youthful offenders with disabilities at the Central Oklahoma Juvenile Center in Tecumseh and Southwest Oklahoma Juvenile Center in Manitou. This project is a part of a multi-agency comprehensive effort to improve transitioning juveniles from custody to community, based on study recommendations from OJA, Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth and the Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

DRS counselors and the youth develop individualized employment plans, which connect to the paid School to Work programs offered at the centers. Youth have been able to work up to ten hours per week within COJC through Gordon Cooper Technology Center and will begin at SWOJC in 2014 through Tipton Public Schools.

DRS' Transition: School to Work program works closely with other organizations and large businesses across the state to give high school students internships through the Project SEARCH program. Mercy Health Systems, Chesapeake Energy Center, Integris Baptist Health Center in Oklahoma City and Integris Bass Baptist Health Center in Enid have all opened their doors to help students with disabilities learn about holding down a job. Because of the joint cooperation with these businesses and DRS, Canadian Valley Technology Center, Dale Rogers Training Center, Enid Public Schools, Francis Tuttle Technology Center, the University of Oklahoma National Center for Disability Education and Training Metro Technology Centers, 73 percent of the participants have been successfully placed in competitive employment.

These are only three of the many partnerships that this agency works with to better serve our clients. DRS greatly appreciates all of our many partners who enhance and improve the lives of our citizens with disabilities.

The Art of Living Blind

For most of the general public, the idea of being blind or going blind is unimaginable and scary. For Elaine Boykin being visual impaired is her norm. "I don't know what it's like to not to be [blind]," Boykin said.

Boykin and her husband, Jay Doudna are both visually impaired and happily married. They both work fulltime for DRS. They both are active with the Oklahoma Council of the Blind.

"A sighted person cannot understand how anybody who is visually impaired actually functions until they start thinking about it," Doudna said.

There is a tendency by the general public to lump everyone into one category.

"Not everyone is the same. There are going to be visually impaired people who have difficulty doing a lot of things and yet there are people who think that every blind person has to be a good cane traveler," Doudna said. "Well, how many sighted people do you know who don't know left from right, or don't know west to east?"

"We're all different," Boykin said. "The thing to understand is if you don't know what a blind person can or cannot do, the best thing is to ask them.

"Every time we go out it's an educational moment for someone who meets us," Boykin said laughing. "Hopefully we will help somebody understand what having a visual disability means and what we can do."

Boykin is a Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist and Programs Manager for the Visual Services unit in Oklahoma City that is responsible for rehabilitation teaching whether its new technology with electronic devices or life skills on how to prepare food safely. She is also an adjunct professor at Langston University in the OKC Vision Rehabilitation Master's Program. She teaches the Braille and Methods of Teaching Independent Skills to Low Vision and Blind Individuals.

Doudna recently left the Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia, Pa., where he was assistant to the director in charge of alumni relations and special projects. He is now employed at the Oklahoma Library for the Blind as a Library Technician where he is responsible for the programming on OTIS, an internet radio service for people who are blind, have difficulty reading standard print, or have a physical disability that makes it difficult for them to hold a book, newspaper or magazine.

They are natural teachers. "It's all in your attitude," Doudna said. "If somebody approaches you and says, 'do you need help?' and you respond (mocking an aggressive tone) 'No, I am fine!' and push their hand away and snap or yell at them, that's not good. Instead you should say (mocking a soft friendly tone) 'No, I am okay, I appreciate the help' because possibly they will encounter another blind person who really does need that help. If you snapped at them or yelled at them, they may think twice about approaching that person."

For Boykin and Doudna, being blind is what you make it. Yes, it is a bother. Yes, it can be frustrating. No it does not define who they are.

"To me attitude is the key and how you look on life," Doudna said. "You can have a chip on your shoulder and be mad about it."

Boykin interjects "...and that's not saying we don't get mad about it, or that I don't get frustrated. When we're waiting for cabs to show up or we're waiting for someone that's frustrating... if I had a penny for every minute I have waited, I could retire," both laugh.

"I can say sometimes it's a real pain in the neck, like this morning when I couldn't remember where I put my

Characteristics of Persons Rehabilitated in 2013 in VR and VS Programs

Gender

	Rehabilitated	Severe Disabilities Rehabilitated
Male	1,188	1,087
Female	1,053	971

Race

	Rehabilitated	Severe Disabilities Rehabilitated
White	1,651	1,519
African American	326	305
Asian	18	18
American Indian or Alaska Native	329	291
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	6	6
Hispanic Ethnicity	107	96

Clients may indicate up to six races/ethnicities.

Age at Application

	Rehabilitated	Severe Disabilities Rehabilitated
Younger than 20	826	739
20 to 21	119	99
22 to 34	446	413
35 to 44	291	272
45 to 64	452	428
65 and older	107	107

Education Level at Application

	Rehabilitated	Severe Disabilities Rehabilitated
No formal schooling	4	4
Elementary education (Grades 1 through 8)	46	42
Secondary education, no diploma (Grades 1 through 12)	781	708
Special education certificate of completion/diploma or in attendance	102	94
High school graduate or equivalency certificate (regular education students)	684	635
Post-secondary education, no degree	307	277
Associate degree or vocational/ technical certificate	185	171
Bachelor's degree	108	104
Master's degree or higher	24	23

Primary Disability

	Rehabilitated	Severe Disabilities Rehabilitated
Blind/Visual Impairment	246	231
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	177	166
Deaf-Blindness	7	7
Communicative Impairments	40	37
Orthopedic Impairment	268	241
Respiratory Impairments	29	18
General Physical Debilitation	62	57
Other Physical Impairments	222	207
Cognitive Impairments	707	635
Psychosocial Impairments	257	246
Other Mental Impairments	226	213

wallet and my keys, and we're all over the house looking for them. You really have to be organized," Doudna said.

When you bring up the things every person wants to experience in life, they give the normal responses. Boykin beams when telling their story of meeting when she was just 15, and he was the older student giving tours at his school and how life separated them through years but brought them back together in 2002.

Doudna was working in Philadelphia at Overbrook School for the Blind and actively involved with the American Council of the Blind. Boykin was working at DRS. They both attended the ACB conference.

Doudna told a friend that he thought he knew her but didn't get around to Boykin's booth. So he emailed her after the conference. "Everyone in the office probably heard me scream," Boykin said grinning really big.

After five years of long distance dating, emails and many phone calls, they tied the knot. Boykin was preparing to pull up stakes and move to be with her new husband. But instead, he decided to move here for her.

According to Doudna and Boykin, there are advantages and disadvantages to both being blind in the marriage.

"I think we're more understanding of each other because we're both in that situation," Boykin said.

Doudna recounts what a friend would say, "There's an old philosophy that you ought to have windows on one side of the house, meaning one person in the relationship should be able to see, but that's not true. Two blind people can live together just fine. We agree with that."

When asked what myth's they would like to dispel, Boykin said "We're people, just regular people. We're just like everybody else. We just have to do things a little bit differently."

Disability Determination

Performance

Based on Federal FY-2013
80,707 Budgeted Workload
83,229 Completed Workload

97.6 % Oklahoma Decision Accuracy Rate
96 % National Decision Accuracy Rate
95.2 days Processing Time

Cooperative Disability Investigations Unit

FY 2011 (June-Sept. 2011) CDI Opened 72 cases SSA and Non-SSA Savings $4.5 million.
FY 2012 (Oct. 2011 – Sept. 2012) CDI Opened 175 cases SSA and Non-SSA Savings $16.9 million.
FY 2013 (Oct. 2012 - Sept. 2013) CDI Opened 179 cases SSA and Non-SSA Savings $23.3 million.

Often exceeding federal, state and local expectations, the Disability Determination Division provides high quality, responsive service that assists Oklahomans with disabilities in receiving critical financial assistance.

DDD processes applications made to Social Security for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income. Accuracy, timeliness and expert opinions are critical in the evaluation of all disability claims.

For each disability claim, a team of paraprofessionals, disability reviewers and medical or psychological consultants review each applicant's medical and vocational evidence. The team decides whether applicants qualify as disabled or blind according to federal guidelines. Children may qualify for SSI benefits and are evaluated based on their ability to perform age-appropriate activities as documented in their medical records.

DDD staff, when not excelling at their normal duties, can often be found spreading their talents throughout the agency. DDD's own, Malcolm Stoughtenborough was the emcee for the 2012 DRS Expo.

DDD personnel understand that each Social Security claim is a person needing benefits to live. Therefore, timeliness and accuracy are crucial. Staff receives quality training and mentoring that focuses on accuracy, security, consistency and efficiency.

Oklahoma continues to be a national resource as an Extended Service Team site — one of only four in the country — that assist other states with their backlog of disability claims. The EST's accuracy rate for FY 2013 was 94.3 percent, including 100 percent accuracy on allowance decisions from January thru September.

The Oklahoma City Cooperative Disability Investigations Unit is a joint effort consisting of staff from DDD, Social Security Administration, Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General and SSA Office of Inspector General. This program effectively pools resources to prevent fraud in Social Security's SSDI and SSI disability programs and related federal and state programs.

CDI Units investigate individual disability claims and identify third parties who engage in disability fraud.

Claims and post-entitlement actions are referred to the CDI Units by DDD examiners and SSA field office personnel who suspect fraudulent activity based on suspicious behavior or other indicators of high risk for fraud or similar fault. The investigation results are presented to the DDD staff for their use in making timely and accurate disability determinations and to federal and state prosecutors for consideration of prosecution.

Since inception, the CDI unit has saved $44.7 million in SSA and Non-SSA savings (Medicare and Medicaid) and opened 426 case investigations.

DDD is 100-percent federally funded. In 2001, DDD had 183 employees with a federal budget of $14.7 million. In 2013, the division employed 328 Oklahomans with a federal budget of $36.9 million.

Federal fiscal year 2013 was very challenging; however, their dedication and commitment led the DDD through another remarkable year, providing outstanding service to disability applicants in the State of Oklahoma.

OKLAHOMA SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

100% GRADUATION RATE

OSB Census

100% Graduation Rate
49 Residential Students
43 Day Students
92 Students Attending All or Part of the Year
55 Counties Served
15 Students with Multiple Disabilities
1 to 4 Teacher to Student Ratio
1 to 6 Direct-Care Specialist to Student Ratio
62 Summer School Students
15 Days for Summer School

OSB Outreach Programs

2,552 Direct Services
283 Consultations and Evaluations
446 Services to Families
636 Services to Schools
1,556 Services to Organizations

All data reported on the school year 2012-2013.

Oklahoma School for the Deaf

OSD Census

100% Graduation Rate
83 Residential Students
101 Day Students
184 Students Attending All or Part of the Year
57 Counties Served
3 Students with Multiple Disabilities
1 to 6 Teacher to Student Ratio
1 to 9 Direct-Care Specialist to Student Ratio
111 Summer School Students
18 Days for Summer School

OSD Outreach Programs

27,959 Direct Services
2,842 Consultations and Evaluations
11,368 Services to Families
10,436 Services to Schools
3,313 Services to Organizations

All data reported on the school year 2012-2013.

OSB

Oklahoma School for the Blind

Oklahoma students who are blind or visually impaired may attend the Oklahoma School for the Blind. At OSB they will receive specialized education along with their state-mandated educational requirements. They will learn valuable independent living skills, and use specialized accessible technology equipment.

OSB students learn to excel at OSB because school staff expects them to do so. All state-mandated education requirements are taught at OSB. The school offers a comprehensive curriculum of reading, language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, physical education, music and computer science for residential and day students.

Specialized instruction includes Braille, orientation and mobility, optimum use of low vision, adaptive equipment, technology and tactile graphic skills. This specialization is not readily available at every public school in the state.

Even though OSB is located in Muskogee, its boundaries are statewide. Regardless of the hometown, the school will transport students at no cost to the parents or guardians. Students who live close commute daily. Others are transported to and from OSB on the weekends.

OSB also has a Summer Enrichment Program for students who attend public schools during the regular school year but still need training specific to people who are visually impaired.

The school provides special events and activities to bring the public and students together. Each year, OSB hosts Future Shock where the high-school-aged students visit with workplace professionals and college recruiters to prepare the students for life after high school.

This year 48 students traded their year-end field trip to volunteer for the school's second annual "OSB Gives Back Day."

Four groups of students and sponsors participated in the annual Give Back Day. One group brightened up the entrance to Kids' Space Child Advocacy Center with flowers. Another group walked and brushed dogs at Muskogee Animal Shelter. Another entertained residents and played games at Eastgate Village Retirement Community in Muskogee.

Finally, the Tahlequah group waded in and pulled trash out of the Illinois River and picked up litter on the river bank. Such activities teach the students to care about their community, and it builds character.

OSB provides thousands of free outreach service hours each year for students attending local public schools, their families and local school systems. 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.

For more information about the school contact call 918.781.8200 or 877.229.7136 toll free in Oklahoma or visit their website at osb.k12.ok.us

OSID

Oklahoma School for the Deaf

Oklahoma School for the Deaf is the statewide resource center on deafness. OSD offers the ultimate learning environment for deaf and hard of hearing students because there are no communication barriers. All staff and students communicate directly with each other using American Sign Language, voice or any other communication mode preferred by students. Communication at OSD is not limited to only a few people who can sign. Other schools may have accommodations, but OSD is a deaf education emersion school.

Students who attend OSD must still meet all graduation requirements that are set forth by the state. 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 beneficial to students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Courses such as Chemistry, Algebra I, Geometry are offered as in any other school.

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. In this program, students work at various places in the community gaining valuable work experience that enables students to have a working resume upon graduation from high school.

OSD is a four day week program with classes Monday through Thursday. Students who live close to the Sulphur campus can commute back and forth to school. Those from greater distances live at the school Sunday through Thursday, free of charge, and go home for three-day weekends. OSD serves any Oklahoma student from age 3 to 12th grade.

Students receive the full educational and social experiences that are available to most of Oklahoma's students. They perform in school programs and dramas. They have prom and homecoming for all sports. They compete with other schools on academic teams, sports teams and leadership programs.

SD has an expanded educational reach with two satellite preschools strategically placed throughout the state, one at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond and one at the University of Arts and Sciences of Oklahoma in Chickasha. These satellite preschools help to educate children at home during their early childhood years and provide the needed education in communication that is critical for young students.

The school is also active in the community, which includes adults who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Equipment Distribution Program provides adaptive equipment for telephone and communication access for those of any age. Also, the Hearing Aid Program for senior adults provides assistance for those needing hearing aids who meet eligibility guidelines.

OSD hosted a number of events geared to the deaf community or to foster a better understanding of people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

For more information about the school call 580.622.4900 voice or TTY or visit their website at www.osd.k12.ok.us.

State senators tour Oklahoma School for the Blind in Muskogee

State Senate leaders from the Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services toured the Oklahoma School for the Blind in Muskogee in January 2013.

The senators included Subcommittee Chair Kim David (R-District 18); Vice Chair Greg Treat (R-District 47) and committee member Sen. Frank Simpson (R–District 14).

The School for the Blind is a statewide resource for the education of blind and visually impaired students.

The senators toured the school where they observed and interacted with students in elementary and high school classes. OSB was honored to have the senators come and learn about the specialize education OSB provides.

Students demonstrated the use of Braille, iPads with specialize computer software and other adaptive technology and equipment that are part of the expanded curriculum to help students with visual disabilities succeed in class.

Above: Sen. Kim David listens as Mykel Eagle, third grader, tells how he uses a notetaker for his homework.

Superintendent James Adams and Sen. Greg Treat listen as Teacher Faye Miller explains how students use standardized testing materials in braille.