# Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council

# **2023 Annual Report**

In partnership with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Workforce Services, Department of Commerce.

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# A Message from the Chair

November 30, 2023

On behalf of the entire Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and by Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, please accept this as our FY 2022 Annual Report. We are pleased to share the multiple achievements of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) and the SRC.

The most recent Disability Statistics Compendium reports that Arkansas has the *fourth-highest* percentage of people with disabilities in the nation: **17.4%**. That's nearly **one out of six** Arkansans – roughly 557,000 people.

When it comes to employment, Arkansas lags behind the rest of the nation when it comes to the participation of Arkansans with disabilities in the general workforce. This year's Disability Statistics Compendium reported that Arkansas had the *second lowest* percentage of people with disabilities of working age (18-64) in the workforce: **30.5% versus the national average of 37%**. This year, that same report revealed that the state moved up to **35.3% versus the national average of 40.7%**. That's a 4.8% improvement in one year. And ARS played a significant role in that improvement.

In 2023 ARS led the nation in three critical employment outcomes for its clients. ARS was number seven in the United States for vocational rehab participants employed at exit: 63.5% of ARS clients were employed after using their services. The national average is 56%. The median average earnings after exit were \$6,767 versus the national average of \$5,130. And the employment rate was 61.7% versus the rest of the nation at 53%.

Once again, when the ARS team can fully serve Arkansans with disabilities, they put them to work. And putting people with disabilities to work is more important than ever. In July of this year, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported Arkansas' unemployment rate as 2.6% - one of the lowest in the nation. For our state's economy to keep growing, businesses need access to every available talent pool. ARS is uniquely poised to help employers tap into the willing and able pool of workers with disabilities.

As SRC Chair, I am grateful for the privilege of serving the people of Arkansas. On behalf of the entire Council, we are all grateful to continue working towards the inclusion, integration, and independence of Arkansans with disabilities.

Respectfully,

Jonathan Taylor Chair Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council

# **Greetings from Commissioner**

December 8, 2023

Greetings,

As we approach the end of 2023, Chairman Jon Taylor and I are proud to provide the Annual Report of the State of Arkansas Rehabilitation Council. The importance of the State Rehabilitation Council's partnership extends beyond federal compliance; their input is valuable in ensuring that the efforts of ARS are strategically aligned with achieving successful vocational outcomes for Arkansans. Their input helps us incorporate stakeholders' viewpoints while guiding us in prioritizing the best and most efficient use of our resources. A few of the notable high points of this past year include:

Arkansas scored the following recently submitted results for the federal reporting year 2022:

- Employment Rate 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter after program exit 7<sup>th</sup> in the Nation at 63.5%
- Median Earnings 6<sup>th</sup> in the Nation at \$6,767.00
- Employment Rate 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter after program exit 6<sup>th</sup> in the Nation at 61.7%

We constantly strive to see how we can better serve our clients, and one of the best ways of doing this is through our client satisfaction survey. We recently decided to update our survey, and we appreciate the SRC's work on developing the new client satisfaction survey system. This new system is currently being piloted by ARS before implementation.

This year also saw the initiation of a draft of the next WIOA state plan, due for implementation in 2024. We thank the SRC for their input in helping ARS design and develop goals and objectives for this new WIOA state plan.

These are only a few highlights that Arkansas Rehabilitation Services has completed or has ongoing in the previous year. We look forward to each new year and all the possibilities it provides to improve our services and provide a valuable resource for the people of Arkansas.

Sincerely,

Joseph Baxter, Commissioner Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

# Responsibilities of the Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council

- Reviews, analyzes, and advises Arkansas Rehabilitation Services regarding the performance of its responsibilities under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act as it relates to program eligibility (including order of selection) and the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided;
- In partnership with the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services helps develop the Arkansas State Plan for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program;
- Submits an annual report to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) commissioner and Governor that highlights vocational rehabilitation services goals and achievements and make the report available to the public;
- Helps coordinate working relationships between Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, the State Independent Living Council (SILC) and centers for independent living;
- Coordinates activities with other councils to avoid duplication of effort and help increase the number of individuals served;
- Performs other functions consistent with the Title I of the Rehabilitation Act as the Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council determines to be appropriate; and
- To the extent feasible, reviews and analyzes Arkansas Rehabilitation Services' vocational rehabilitation program effectiveness including an assessment of consumer satisfaction with rehabilitation services provided.

# **Meeting Dates**

### FY 2023 Meeting Dates

December 15, 2022 March 16, 2023 June 15, 2023 September 21, 2023

### Proposed FY 2023 Meeting Dates

December 21, 2023 March 21, 2024 June 20, 2024 September 19, 2024

During the December 15, 2022, State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) meeting, the survey currently used to measure client satisfaction was discussed. Following discussion, a workgroup of Council members and select Arkansas Rehabilitation Services staff was formed to review the existing survey and make recommendations regarding any needed changes. Following multiple meetings, the workgroup presented a new client satisfaction survey process to the Council at its March 16, 2023, meeting.

The four-step process would include measuring client satisfaction after application, after plan development, at annual review/during/after service provision, and after closure. Following discussion, the SRC voted to adopt the new survey process, with ARS agreeing to implementation on a pilot basis. The four surveys are as follows:

### **Survey for After Application**

- 1) Once I turned my application in, I was able to schedule an appointment to meet with my counselor within: 1 Day 2-3 Days 4-7 Days 7+ Days If longer, please explain: 2) Staff at Arkansas Rehabilitation Services were nice to me during the application process. Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree 3) It was explained to me that Arkansas Rehabilitation Services helps Arkansans with disabilities get and or keep a job. Yes No Unsure 4) My counselor told me about the Client Assistance Program Yes No Unsure 5) The office was accessible; it was easy to move around in. Strongly Agree
  - Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

6) Overall, I am with my experience at Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

Happy Neutral Not Happy

7) Comments

# Survey for after Plan Development

- 1) I was able to reach my counselor or another Arkansas Rehabilitation Services staff member any time I had a question about my case within:
  - 0-3 Days
  - 4-5 Days
  - 6-7 Days
  - 7+ Days

If longer, please explain:

2) I feel I was able to partner with my Counselor in choosing a work goal, services I would need, and the people providing those services.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

 I feel like my counselor listened to what I had to say including what I liked and didn't like.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

### Disagree

Strongly Disagree

4) I feel like my counselor understands my disability, what I need and what I am unsure about.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

5) My counselor gave me all the information I needed to make the best decision for me and reminded me of the Client Assistance Program (CAP) if there was a disagreement or concern.

Yes

No

Unsure

6) I am \_\_\_\_\_\_ with the plan my counselor and I came up with to meet my work goal. Happy

Neutral

Unhappy

7) Overall, I am \_\_\_\_\_\_ with my experience at Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

Нарру

Neutral

Not Happy

8) Comments

# Survey for Annual Review/During/After Service Provision

1) I felt my counselor contacted me enough during and after services were provided and I was happy with the talks.

Yes

No

2) I am \_\_\_\_\_ with the services provided to me from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

Happy

Neutral

Not Happy

3) I feel like my counselor understands my disability, what I need and what I am unsure about.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

4) Each service/equipment I needed was provided to support me in a timely manner.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

5) I am \_\_\_\_\_ with the services provided to me from my service provider.

Happy Neutral Not Happy

6) My Counselor reminded me about the Client Assistance Program.

Yes No Unsure

7) Overall, I am \_\_\_\_\_\_ with my experience at Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

Happy Neutral Not Happy

8) Comment

# Survey for after Closure

1) I was able to tell my counselor what I needed and wanted.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2) I was \_\_\_\_\_\_ in planning my goal for getting and/or keeping a job.

Very Involved

Somewhat Involved

Not At All Involved

3) I feel like Arkansas Rehabilitation Services wanted to help me reach my goal.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

4) I was advised of my right to contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) at each stage?

Yes

No

Unsure

5) Overall, I am \_\_\_\_\_\_ with my experience at Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

Happy

Neutral

Not Happy

2-14-23

6) My counselor explained to me any programs/services that can support me at work, if needed.

Yes

No

Unsure

7) Comment

# **State Rehabilitation Council Membership**

**Jonathan Taylor** Chair Conway

> Kesha Pilot Co-Chair Hot Springs

Dr. Charles Green Benton

> Alex Scott Arkadelphia

Kelley Sharp Farmington

Tom Masseau Maumelle

Carol McDearmon Greenbrier

Dr. James Grover Little Rock

Wensday Kraemer Conway Kobe Roy North Little Rock

Benjamin (Ted) Scallion Little Rock

> Addie Edwards Camden

> > Leah Garvin Sherwood

Christopher Balos Springdale

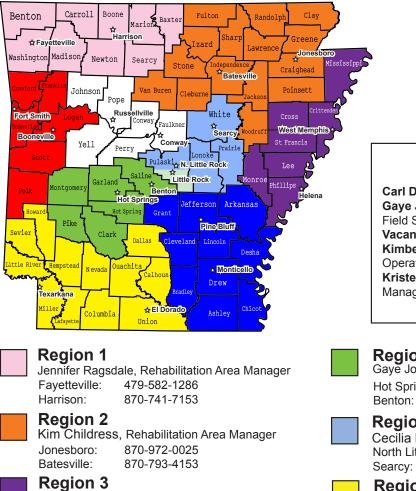
> Matt Sewell Vilonia

Kimberly Clayborn Jonesboro

Joseph Baxter ARS Commissioner (Ex-Officio)

The Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a citizens' advisory council, appointed by the Governor, to provide guidance to the state's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program. Its members help shape policy, engage in strategic planning, and provide guidance to promote increased employment for individuals with disabilities. Members report annually to the Governor and the U.S. Department of Education on the status of the VR program. The SRC spearheads customer satisfaction surveys, participates in the preparation and review of the comprehensive needs assessment, and co-hosts public hearings and forums. The council includes individuals with disabilities, community rehabilitation program employees, vocational rehabilitation counselors, advocates, and representatives of the business community.

# **Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Field Office Map**



Everett Adamson, Rehabilitation Area Manager West Memphis: 870-735-4725 Helena: 870-338-2753



### Region 4

Dana Byrum, Rehabilitation Area Manager Fort Smith: 479-755-3300 Booneville: 479-675-3835



# **Region 5**

Andrea Gilliam, Rehabilitation Area Manager Russellville: 479-890-5751 501-730-9725 Conway:

Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

### **Field Services Leadership**

Carl Daughtery, Chief of Field Services Gaye Jones-Washington, Deputy Chief of **Field Services** Vacant, Deputy of Field Operations Kimberly Clayborn, Deputy of Field Operations Kristen Sutterfield, Rehabilitation Program Manager



Gave Jones-Washington, Interim Rehabilitation Manger 501-623-4479 Hot Springs: 501-317-1390

### Region 7

Cecilia Brunson, Interim Rehabilitation Area Manager North Little Rock: 501-833-1490 Searcy: 501-268-4542

### **Region 8**

LaVennier Brown, Rehabilitation Area Manager 870-773-2807 Texarkana: El Dorado: 870-862-5451

### Region 9

Sterling Hughes, Rehabilitation Area Manager Pine Bluff: 870-534-2404 Monticello: 870-367-9669

### Region 10

Darlene Owens, Rehabilitation Area Manager Little Rock: 501-686-2800

### Field Offices: Counties Served

Batesville: Independence, Cleburne, Van Buren, Stone, Izard, Jackson, Sharp, Woodruff, Fulton Benton: Saline Booneville: Logan, Franklin, Polk, Scott Conway: Conway, Faulkner, Perry El Dorado: Ouachita. Calhoun. Dallas. Union. Columbia Fayetteville: Benton, Washington, Madison Fort Smith: Crawford, Sebastian Harrison: Baxter, Boone, Marion, Newton, Searcy, Carroll Helena: Lee, Phillips, Monroe

Hot Springs: Clark, Hot Spring, Montgomery, Garland, Pike Jonesboro: Clay, Craighead, Greene, Lawrence, Poinsett, Randolph Little Rock: Pulaski [south] Monticello: Ashley, Desha, Bradley, Lincoln, Chicot, Drew North Little Rock: Pulaski [north], Lonoke, Prairie Pine Bluff: Jefferson. Cleveland. Grant. Arkansas Russellville: Johnson, Yell, Pope Searcy: White Texarkana: Howard, Lafayette, Nevada, Hempstead, Miller, Sevier, Little River West Memphis: St. Francis, Crittenden, Cross, Mississippi

# **Goals and Priorities**

As required by the **Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act** (WIOA), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) submitted its portion of the Arkansas combined State Plan in FY2022. Within that State Plan are specific goals and priorities for ARS that were developed in partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council to address both WIOA requirements and ARS's ability to better serve its customers.

# Our goals and priorities are as follows:

# Goal 1: ARS will meet performance accountability measures as outlined in WIOA.

Priorities:

- ARS will monitor established performance accountability measures.
- ARS will provide career counseling to 14(c) program participants to meet Section 511 requirements.
- ARS will strengthen data verification requirements.

# Goal 2: ARS provide pre-employment transition and transition services as outlined in WIOA.

Priorities:

- ARS will expand and improve Pre-ETS.
- ARS will provide Pre-ETS and ensure students with employment and training goals are moved into Vocational Rehabilitation prior to the second semester of the senior year of high school.
- ARS will expand and improve Pre-ETS utilizing the resources of the Arkansas Career Development Center (ACDC). The new model focuses resources to serve students with disabilities to prepare and guide them toward achieving competitive integrated employment.
- ARS will increase the number of Transition students that enter employment by having students work-ready upon graduation from high school or postsecondary training.

# Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities.

# **Goals and Priorities**

Priorities:

- ARS will focus on public and private sector employers and increase business and industry awareness of ARS's services.
- ARS will develop and strengthen partnerships with business, workforce development partners, economic development agencies, and community organizations to meet the needs of existing and new business customers.
- ARS will increase services provided to public and private sector employers by leveraging Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs to assist employers in keeping the employees with disabilities on the job.

# Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priorities:

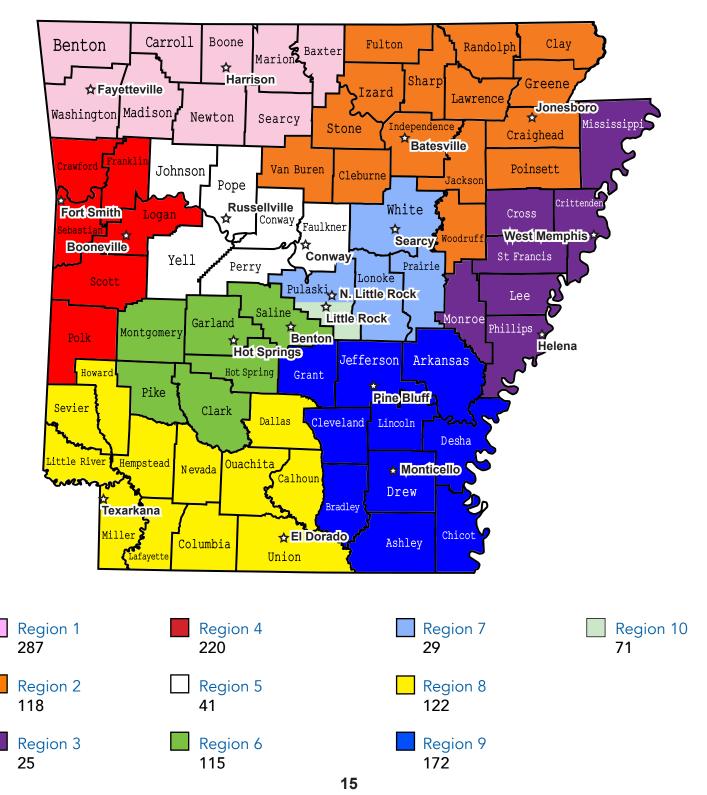
- ARS will determine effective methods to serve the under-served/unserved populations.
- ARS will strengthen relationships with WIOA partners and business and industry.
- ARS will improve service delivery to job seekers and businesses by consistently providing services that meet individual needs.
- Staff will receive comprehensive training to improve service delivery.
- ARS will ensure clients have access to assistive technology services by evaluating the need for assistive technology throughout the rehabilitation process, and by making the proper referrals when assistive technology is appropriate.

# Goal 5: ARS will increase the utilization of Community Rehabilitation and Supported Employment providers to achieve employment outcomes.

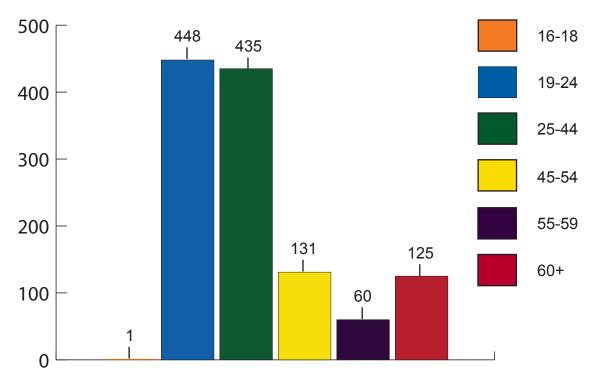
Priorities:

- ARS will increase the effectiveness of current and new external Employment/ Supported Employment providers.
- ARS will expand the availability of community employment providers and partner services that meet the needs of Arkansans with disabilities, including those requiring supported employment.
- ARS transformed the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) to a new service delivery model, ACDC. This model focuses as a hub for training and services to support vocational rehabilitation consumers and/or students with disabilities to successfully reach the milestones of their individual plans for employment.

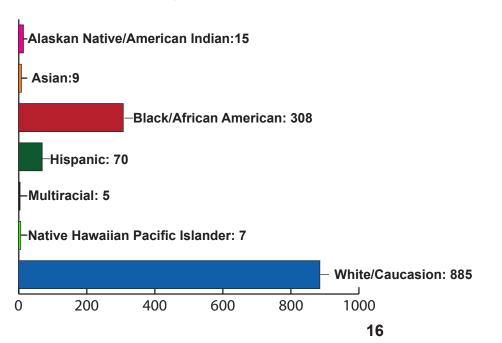
# **Successful Closures by Region**



# Age Range of Successful Closures

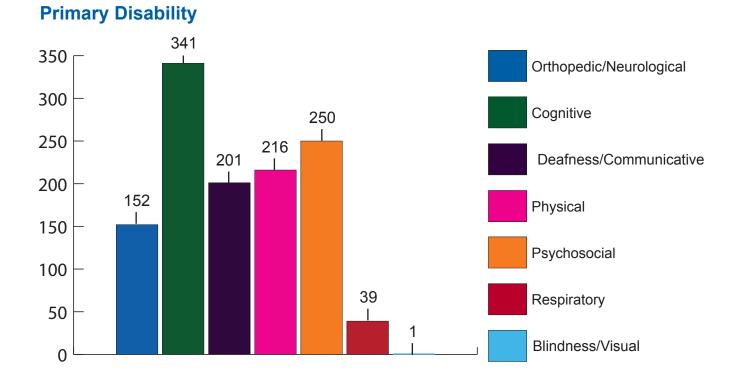


### **Race and Ethnicity**

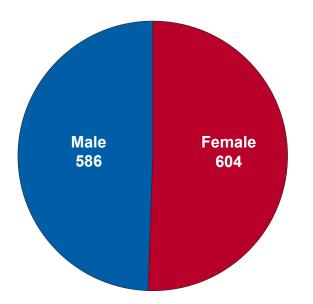


# FY 2023

# **26 Closures Fast Facts**



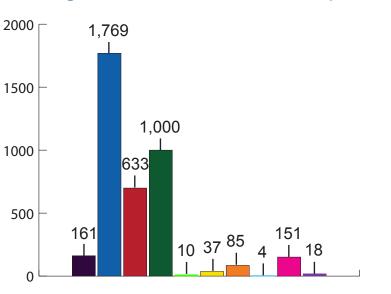
# Successful Closures by Gender



# Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Groups of Successful Closures

SOC Group	Number	Median Hourly Earnings
Management	54	\$14.00
Business & Financial	39	\$12.24
Computer & Mathematical	9	\$13.76
Architecture & Engineering	12	\$13.12
Life, Physical & Social Science	13	\$13.76
Legal	2	\$11.25
Community & Social Service	38	\$14.33
Education, Training & Library	76	\$11.50
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports & Media	31	\$13.97
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Support	130	\$17.50
Healthcare Support	60	\$10.45
Protective Service Occupations	10	\$12.50
Food Preparation, Serving & Related	97	\$9.00
Building & Grounds Cleaning/Maintenance	57	\$9.29
Personal Care Service	69	\$10.00
Sales & Related	78	\$9.95
Office & Administrative Support	163	\$10.98
Farming, Fishing & Forestry	3	\$12.00
Construction & Extraction	12	\$12.00
Installation, Maintenance & Repair	49	\$13.00
Production	85	\$10.50
Transportation & Material Moving	112	\$11.00
Military	1	\$13.13

# **26 Closures Fast Facts**



### **Training Services Provided to Participants**



# **Career Services Provided to Participants**

Type of Service	Number of Participants
Job Exploration Counseling	40
Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities	36
Workplace Readiness Training	51
Instruction in Self-Advocacy	45
Assessment	2,801
Diagnosis & Treatment	230
VR Counseling & Guidance	3,291
Job Search Assistance	148
Job Placement Assistance	1,814
Short Term Job Supports	33
Supported Employment	313
Information and Referral	7
Benefits Counseling	8

# Measurable Skill Gains Rate - PY 2022 (National = 49%)

Virginia	87.7%	Vermont	56.7%	Texas	51.6%	Florida	38.7%
Mississippi	76.4%	Michigan	56.3%	Minnesota	50.6%	Hawaii	38.3%
Missouri	73.6%	New Jersey	56.1%	Maryland	50.4%	Maine	38.2%
Oklahoma	71.6%	Idaho	56.1%	South Carolina	49.8%	Pennsylvania	36.5%
Illinois	67.8%	Montana	55.3%	South Dakota	49.8%	Dist. of Columbia	35.6%
North Dakota	67.5%	Utah	55.2%	Delaware	49.3%	Oregon	33.1%
Ohio	67.5%	New York	54.5%	West Virginia	46.3%	Kentucky	30.7%
Indiana	65.2%	Alabama	53.8%	Georgia	46.3%	Wyoming	29.6%
Alaska	63.3%	Louisiana	53.0%	Connecticut	44.6%	North Carolina	29.3%
Wisconsin	60.1%	New Mexico	52.9%	Nevada	42.2%	California	28.6%
New Hampshire	58.1%	Puerto Rico	52.5%	Nebraska	40.3%	Kansas	26.0%
Tennessee*	57.6%	lowa	51.8%	Massachusetts	39.9%	Colorado	24.9%
Arkansas	57.5%	Washington	51.8%	Rhode Island	39.5%	Arizona	23.4%

RSA REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation

# Employment Rate Q2 – PY 2022 (National = 56%)

West Virginia	72.8%	Indiana	60.4%	Wisconsin	56.8%	New York	49.3%
Michigan	71.0%	Tennessee	60.2%	Massachusetts	56.1%	North Carolina	49.1%
North Dakota	69.6%	Illinois	60.2%	Vermont	56.0%	Maryland	47.9%
South Carolina	65.6%	Mississippi	60.2%	Nevada	55.6%	Arizona	47.1%
Missouri	65.6%	Oregon	59.9%	Florida	55.2%	Rhode Island	46.6%
Idaho	64.9%	lowa	59.6%	Louisiana	54.9%	Maine	46.0%
Arkansas	63.5%	Connecticut	59.5%	Montana	54.6%	Washington	45.3%
Ohio	62.5%	Kentucky*	59.0%	New Jersey	54.1%	Georgia	44.9%
Nebraska	62.2%	Texas	58.9%	Alaska	53.9%	Delaware	42.0%
Alabama	62.0%	Oklahoma	58.5%	Utah	53.7%	New Mexico	41.3%
Pennsylvania	61.8%	Virginia	58.1%	California	51.6%	Puerto Rico	40.9%
South Dakota	61.8%	Minnesota	57.8%	Wyoming	50.5%	Hawaii	39.8%
New Hampshire	61.8%	Colorado	57.5%	Kansas	50.1%	Dist. of Columbia	31.4%

RSA REHAbilitation Services Administration

# **Arkansas National Standing in PY2022**

# Median Earnings Q2 - PY 2022 (National = \$5,130)

Michigan	\$8,885	Pennsylvania	\$5,814	Idaho	\$4,950	Virginia	\$4,123
Kentucky	\$7,768	Missouri	\$5,620	Alabama	\$4,799	Oregon	\$4,035
Mississippi	\$7,158	Alaska	\$5,450	Utah	\$4,726	Washington	\$3,915
West Virginia	\$7,063	Hawaii*	\$5,447	Florida	\$4,708	Minnesota	\$3,723
Connecticut	\$6,858	New York	\$5,388	Puerto Rico	\$4,590	South Dakota	\$3,599
Arkansas	\$6,767	Oklahoma	\$5,330	lowa	\$4,541	Indiana	\$3,562
California	\$6,698	Massachusetts	\$5,304	Delaware	\$4,494	Nebraska	\$3,542
Texas	\$6,351	North Dakota	\$5,205	Maine	\$4,433	North Carolina	\$3,542
New Jersey	\$6,330	Dist. of Columbia	\$5,200	Maryland	\$4,421	Kansas	\$3,502
Vermont	\$6,153	Colorado	\$5,144	Illinois	\$4,207	Rhode Island	\$3,481
Nevada	\$6,008	Louisiana	\$5,085	New Hampshire	\$4,199	Montana	\$3,456
Wyoming	\$5,950	New Mexico	\$5,033	Tennessee	\$4,193	Wisconsin	\$3,437
South Carolina	\$5,875	Arizona	\$4,978	Georgia	\$4,159	Ohio	\$3,411

RSA REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

# Employment Rate Q4 – PY 2022 (National = 53%)

West Virginia	70.1%	Minnesota	57.8%	Colorado	53.8%	Kansas	43.9%
Michigan	68.0%	Mississippi	57.8%	Utah	52.7%	Maine	43.8%
Missouri	63.3%	Pennsylvania*	56.8%	Massachusetts	51.7%	Georgia	43.5%
Idaho	62.7%	Texas	56.7%	Oklahoma	51.5%	Rhode Island	43.1%
North Dakota	62.0%	South Dakota	56.0%	Alaska	49.8%	Connecticut	42.2%
Arkansas	61.7%	Louisiana	55.9%	California	49.7%	Puerto Rico	41.6%
South Carolina	61.6%	Virginia	55.7%	Illinois	48.7%	Delaware	40.9%
Nebraska	61.5%	Vermont	55.4%	New York	48.1%	New Mexico	40.8%
Ohio	60.4%	Nevada	55.2%	Kentucky	46.9%	Arizona	40.5%
New Hampshire	60.3%	Oregon	55.1%	Wyoming	46.8%	North Carolina	35.8%
Alabama	59.5%	Tennessee	54.5%	New Jersey	46.4%	Washington	34.4%
lowa	58.3%	Wisconsin	53.9%	Maryland	45.2%	Hawaii	30.2%
Indiana	57.9%	Florida	53.8%	Montana	44.3%	Dist. of Columbia	29.2%

RSA REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION



# Arkansas Career Development Center

Total Participation (individuals may have	
participated in multiple programs)	3109
Total Exiting Programs (individuals may have	
participated and exited multiple programs)	743
Total Employed (individuals may have	
participated and exited multiple programs)	93

Types of Service	Participation
All Services at ACDC	3109
Career and Technical Training Programs	56
Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-	
Apprenticeship	3
Pre-Employment Transition Services	572
Career Counseling and Information Referral	
Services	2366
Out Reach Services	45

Program	# of Participants	# Exiters
Auto Servic Tech 1		
Construction Tech 1	5	5
Construction Tech 2		
Certified Nursing Asst.	5	5
Culinary	6	6
Welding 1	8	8
Welding 2		
Certified Logistics Tech	9	9
NRFF Retail Fundamentals	8	8
Forklift Operation	14	14
Security	1	. 1
Total	56	56

# Arkansas Career Development Center

Pre-Employment Transition Service	Number of Participants	Number of Exiters
Customer service & Sales-Work Readiness	1	1
Professional Guest Service - Work Readiness	168	168
OSHA- Work Readiness	224	224
Retail Fundamentals-Work Readiness	6	6
ServSafe Food Handler-Work Readiness	173	173
Subtotal Work Readiness	572	572
Total	572	572

Service Provided	Number of Participants	Number Employed
Cleaning/ Janitorial Technology	6	
Driver's Education	109	48
Total	115	48

Career Counseling Information and Referral	Number of Participants	Number Referred to ARS
Totals for time period	2366	457

# **Business Engagement**

In support of people with disabilities, the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services-Business Engagement Unit bridges the gap between employers and people with disabilities seeking substantially gainful employment. This is achieved by considering the business needs and the needs of our clients to form the best fit for both, and through the knowledge of our Business Engagement Representatives, 2,070 business leaders learned of ARS services, disability inclusion best practices, or known of hiring incentives of people with disabilities.

- In April 2023, BER Harris and VRC Chalese Anderson celebrated with a client on her successful employment at DHS.
- Another successful client is now employed by Super 1 Foods in Pine Bluff. The client's case recently closed successfully, and he loves his job with Super 1 Foods.
- BER Bouvier Battles worked with Sam's Club to maintain the employment of a client who has successfully been on his job for over a year at Sam's Club and has received his certificate in Forklift training.
- A client with a criminal record was able to obtain and maintain employment after six weeks of working with ARS Business Engagement Representative Trenton Cowling.
- A client from 2019 reached out to BER Teara Lindholm to find sustainable employment opportunities. Their case closed successfully, and the client is extremely happy with the job.

### **Business Summit 2023**

The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services- Business Engagement partnered to hold a Business Inclusion Summit in Northwest Arkansas. The summit was a huge success, with over 65 businesses and supportive employment vendors in attendance. As Karla Yochum, VRC from Fayetteville, stated, "This was a great conference. It was very exciting to see how businesses can work with others to fulfill clients' needs." The event was held at the Graduate Hotel in Fayetteville;



attendees heard from Beth Butler Fadel, Disability: IN North Carolina.

Our keynote speaker Executive Director of the Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, Jonathan Taylor, provided insight into working with ARS on hiring people with disabilities and how to get involved with building bridges between vendors and ARS to change the lives of people with disabilities. Jon explained, "All it takes is open communication between the hiring managers, a person with a disability, and the Business Engagement Representative." Many of the attendees have reached out through our survey asking how to become more involved with ARS and Disability: IN Arkansas. This is a testament to the need for ARS services to businesses. As one small business owner put it, "I never knew ARS had so much to offer."

# **Business Engagement**

### Partnerships

### Cintas

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Business Engagement Director Gretchen Newton recognized Cintas store location 507 for its strong commitment to hiring people with disabilities. "Cintas has continuously supported people with disabilities for numerous years, " said Joe Baxter, Commissioner of ARS. "Cintas' relationship with ARS has allowed our clients to find long-lasting, sustainable employment opportunities," as he and ADWS Director Dr. Clarisse Childers presented the Distinguished Business Award to Matthew Hoppis, General Manager of the Little Rock location.

### Zebra

Zebra Technologies is an international organization located in Bentonville, Arkansas. They take great pride in "Calling all changemakers," which creates a culture of respect, collaboration, inclusion, and innovation. Zebra Changemakers, LaDonna Williams, Operations Supervisor, and Brett Tubbs, Building Maintenance Supervisor, called upon ARS staff members Elizabeth Reed, Corporate Diversity Inclusion Manager-Western Arkansas, Trenton Cowling, Fayetteville Business Engagement Representative, Adam White, Fayetteville Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Access and Accommodations team members, Bradley Marsh and Lauren Satterfield to tour the facility and provide ADA guidance for parking, doorways, and entrance ramps. The collaborating members of the team were given a plant tour to see Zebra Technology's operations. This empowered Access and Accommodations to understand the needs of both the employer and the employees, which resulted in ADA-compliant recommendations on accessibility for people with mobility concerns. 25% of this workforce's employees work with a known disability. Zebra Technologies wants to increase those numbers. Elizabeth spoke with LaDonna about the services ARS can provide to Zebra. These services included Disability Etiquette Training, Self ID campaign, and placement of ARS clients through the BER. The Business Engagement Unit looks forward to more collaboration opportunities with both Access and Accommodations and Field Services.

Partnering with Financial Institutions to Provide Financial Literacy to ARS Transition Clients at CHS Business Engagement Corporate Diversity and Inclusion Managers Fred Harris and Gretchen Newton traveled to Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Set an initiative that ARS, Simmons Bank, and Disability: IN Arkansas would partner together to improve the economic outlook of ARS clients after high school while promoting financial education in unserved and underserved populations throughout Arkansas. ARS Business Engagement Team will support assisting clients in achieving competitive and integrated employment while supporting them with pathways that enhance a healthy financial understanding of money and credit.

### Lowes Donation to ARS

The Pine Bluff Office suffered damage from burst pipes and leaks due to the recent severe weather and cold. The staff overcame water damage to furniture and equipment while being displaced. Senior management worked closely with the office in finding temporary housing. Business Engagement Representative- Ariel Barnes reached out to the business customer, Lowes #1628, securing a generous donation with a pallet of boxes to aid ARS in the transition to their temporary location. ARS prioritizes developing and strengthening partnerships with businesses and community organizations to meet the needs of existing and new business customers. ARS is much appreciative of the relationship developed by Lowes #1628 and Business Engagement Representative- Ariel Barnes. ARS will continue to serve the partners and citizens of the Pine Bluff community as they have been of service to ARS.

# **Project SEARCH®**

**Project SEARCH**<sup>®</sup> Arkansas sites are developed in partnership with ACCESS Group, Inc., and Friendship Community Cares, Inc., schools, and other stakeholders. Ten local businesses volunteer to provide nine months of training to ARS clients. The training is provided in the business, by the business. There are over 50 local businesses on the Business Advisory Councils (BACs). The highest wage earner to date earns \$18.08/hr. (\$37,064/year) with full benefits. Several graduates earn \$17.00/hr. (\$35,360/year) with full benefits. 100% of Project SEARCH participants have the opportunity to receive benefits counseling and receive ACDC trainings OSHA, Professional Guest Services, Drivers Permit training, and ServSafe.

### **Employment Outcomes**

# **Project SEARCH® Arkansas: ACCESS Initiative**



# 91% of graduates found employment

**Employers include:** LR Zoo, Clinton Library, City of Maumelle, Cintas, City of Jonesboro, Arkansas Hospice, Mercy Fort Smith, Hocott's Nursey, Embassy Suites, Dillard's Distribution Center, Community School for the Arts, FedEx Ground

# **Project SEARCH® Arkansas: Friendship**

Total Clients Served 2022 -2023

# 71% of graduates found employment

**Employers include:** McDonald's, Springdale Schools, Whataburger, Krispy Kreme Donuts, Papa John's Pizza, Embassy Suites (2), Aramark-Wal-Mart Campus (2), Whattaburger in Russellville

# **Access and Accommodations**

Access and Accommodations (A&A) consists of assessment, assistive technology (AT), and work-related programs that provide direct support to vocational rehabilitation clients, counselors, and employers to improve and facilitate competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities or act as a resource with regards assessment and diagnosis, assistive technology, or accommodations. These programs are Assistive Technology at Work (AT@Work), which provides direct support to vocational rehabilitation clients by providing AT assessments and consultation services; the Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) program, which is designed to assist the employee and employer to either keep an existing employee on the job or successfully return an employee back to work as guickly and effectively as possible, the Psychological Services team which consists of individuals in both the Rehabilitation Initial Diagnostic and Assessment for Clients (RIDAC) and the Learning and Evaluation Center (LEC). The goal of these individuals is to provide diagnostic services to counselors working with clients during the initial stages of case development and planning or if more detailed psychological information is necessary during case development. Also, the Medical Services team consists of 1 general physician and one nurse practitioner to cover the state of Arkansas. These individuals provide general medical examinations and medical consultations to aid rehabilitation counselors in determining eligibility or during case development. Access and Accommodations also houses the Community Service Programs (CSPs) that provide varying services regarding assistive technology to Arkansans across the state. These programs are the Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN) allows a client to try out a piece of assistive technology prior to purchase, and its equipment reutilization program can be a no-cost solution for needed equipment, the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) is utilized to address a client's telecommunication needs at home or work, and the Alternative Financing Program (AFP) which can be another funding source for assistive technology not purchased by ARS.

### Stay at Work/Return to Work

The Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) program is designed to assist the employee and employer in either keeping an existing employee on the job or successfully returning an employee back to work as quickly and effectively as possible. Staff assists in the interactive process of accommodation, serving both the employee and the employer in this process. SAW/RTW staff participated in this process with 24 different employers. Last fiscal year, the SAW/RTW program closed 27 cases in status 26 and are all still employed at the time of this report.

### **Psychological Services**

The Psychological Services team consists of individuals in the Rehabilitation Initial Diagnostic and Assessment for Clients (RIDAC) and the Learning and Evaluation Center (LEC). The goal of these individuals is to provide diagnostic services to counselors working with clients during the initial stages of case development and planning or if more detailed psychological information is necessary during case development. Services provided include mental health assessments, psychoeducational and vocational evaluations, neuropsychological evaluations, and case consultation. All evaluations are completed by individuals who are Arkansas licensed physicians, psychologists, or psychological examiners. During this reporting period, staff performed 1403 mental health assessments and psychoeducational and/or vocational evaluations.

### **Medical Services**

The Medical Services team consists of 1 general physician and one nurse practitioner to cover the state of Arkansas. These individuals provide general medical examinations and medical consultations to aid rehabilitation counselors in determining eligibility or during case development. During this reporting period, medical services staff completed 1879 general medical examinations or case consultations for ARS clients.

### **Assistive Technology at Work**

The Assistive Technology at Work (AT@Work) directly supports vocational rehabilitation clients by providing AT assessments and consultation services. AT@Work staff provided these services to 313 individuals during the last federal fiscal year, up from 290 individuals served last year. These individuals required services in the areas of students requiring accommodations for school, clients actively seeking employment, and those seeking workplace accommodations to remain at work through the Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) program. The occupational therapists within AT@Work have provided 51 AROAD (Arkansas Rehabilitation Occupational Abilities Determination) assessments, which continue to rise year over year. These assessments are specifically designed to aid counselors and clients in the determination or viability of a vocational goal on a functional basis. They also provided 355 incidences of technical assistance, helping clients problem solve various issues in dealing with assistive technology or accommodation implementation.

### **Community Service Programs**

Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN) allows a client to try out a piece of assistive technology before purchase, and its equipment reutilization program can be a no-cost solution for needed equipment. ICAN has saved Arkansans \$2,068,694.46 this year through their services; this money otherwise would have been charged to Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance, or the individual themselves. This past year ICAN has served 18 ARS clients in various aspects of providing assistive technology services such as AT loans and donations. These numbers are down from the last reporting period, but staffing shortages have led to a decrease in services in some areas. ICAN also supports VR through its relationship with the AT@Work and SAW/RTW programs, where they allow ARS evaluators to utilize ICAN equipment during their client evaluations prior to making their recommendations. The Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) had some difficulty in reporting data this year due to a server failure. However, this program is utilized to address a client's telecommunication needs at home or work. This past guarter TAP served 67 Arkansans with disabilities. 1 being an ARS client. We hope to have additional reporting data as we reconcile our database and hopefully migrate to a more secure solution moving forward. The goal is to provide Arkansans with disabilities with the technology they need, which will increase their independence with distance communications. The Alternative Financing Program (AFP) can be another funding source for assistive technology not purchased by ARS. During this reporting period, the AFP provided eight loans totaling \$366,992.50 to individuals with disabilities in Arkansas to use in the purchase of assistive technology. This is an increase from \$128,000.00 last year.

# **Transition Services**

ARS **Transition Services** continues to serve the needs of students in high school throughout the state as they transition into post-secondary education and competitive integrated employment. ARS works directly with students through summer camps: Youth Leadership Forum, Film School, and Transition Employment Program. ARS continues to work with our local school districts to implement Pre-ETS through our WOLF & WIN! programs as well as our contracted vendor services. Pre-Employment Transition Services has helped provide a wide range of opportunities for students with disabilities to ensure they have a strong foundation to continue their education or move into the workforce.

### Youth Leadership Forum (Hendrix College)

The Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) is a vital part of Pre-ETS services. It allows students with disabilities to experience career exploration, peer mentoring, and work-based learning while on a college campus. Over time, this has continued to develop and focus on the required core services listed in WIOA for Pre-Employment Transition.

Some of the experiences students had at YLF include:

- Career Training and exploration- at ACDC
- · Activities related to Culture and the Arts
- Participation in Employability & Life Skills with ARS Business Engagement Representatives
- Learned Self-Advocacy skills and information from guest speakers
- · Leadership/Teamwork training with Epiphany Morrow

### Film School (SAU Technical College)

Film School is an overnight, six-day, five-night camp specializing in and teaching the art of filmmaking to students with disabilities in Camden, Arkansas. Students worked with an SAU Tech instructor and current students to learn the behind-the-scenes basics of film and media. The students produced short films to get to know the professional equipment and were responsible for writing a script, filming, and editing. Students had the opportunity to show their short films at the closing ceremonies of Film School. ARS partnered with Lights Camera Access to add an employment component to the camp allowing students to engage with celebrities active in the industry, such as RJ Mitte from breaking bad and Nick Novicki, the voice behind Spider-Man Across the Spider-Verse.

### **Transition Employment Program (TEP)**

Transition Employment Program (TEP) is a comprehensive pre-employment training service designed to prepare 11th-grade students with disabilities for future employment. TEP meets all mandated cores of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA): Job Exploration, Work-Based Learning, Workplace Readiness, Post-Secondary Counseling, and Instruction on Self-Advocacy.

TEP 2022 was held at the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts (ASMSA) in Hot Springs. Forty-four students applied, and 34 participated. All students gained work-readiness skills through their WBLE at TEP, and some (not in Pre-Ets schools) received additional hours in the fall. They had the opportunity to receive ACDC training in OSHA, ServSafe, Drivers Permit training, and Professional Guest Services. TEP students and their families on benefits received Benefits Counseling. The Transition Services team also provided post-secondary counseling to the students and connected them and their parents to other essential resources. According to the initial follow-along services: 30% received additional ARS services, and 100% graduated from high school.

### WOLF & WIN!

ServSafe Completer

CPR

ARS partners with our local school districts to directly implement Pre-ETS through two school-based programs: WOLF & WIN!. We currently have 46 schools participating in the Work-based Learning Opportunities Leading to Future Employment program and 17 schools participating in our Working for Independence Now program. WOLF & WIN! are Work-Based Learning programs that allow students across the state to participate in work experiences throughout the school year. Pre-ETS has partnered with Arkansas Career Development Center to increase student success by offering students enrolled in our school-based programming the opportunity to obtain short-term certificates such as OSHA, Serve Safe, & Customer Service. The WOLF & WIN! programs have allowed ARS to work directly with our school districts and teachers to increase post-school outcomes for our high school students with disabilities through work experiences and opportunities to gain short-term certificates.

Number of Students Number of students Work-Based Learning Fall Semester (on campus, off campus, student led enterprise) Spring Semester Number of students Participating WOLF 451 434 Number of students Participating WIN! 142 122 Combined Work-Based Learning Total # of students Work-based Learning 573 576 Total # of students doing On Campus WBL 433 439 WBL On-Campus Hours 30.460 19,137 Total # of Students doing Off Campus WBL 84 79 WBL Off-Campus Hours 6.447 6.688 Total # of students participating in SLE 175 135 WBL Student-Led Enterprises Hours 6.783 2.015 Combined ACDC Short Term Certificates OSHA Completer 219 2 Customer Services Completer

The number of students and hours worked through WOLF & WIN! school year 2021-2022 program is listed below:

19

31

0

# **Transition Services**

### **Community Rehabilitation Programs**

ARS also works with our Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) to implement Pre-Employment Transition Services during school, after school, and through summer programming. For the school year 2022-2023, ARS had 14 vendors providing services in 100 schools across the state. Our vendors allow students to participate in Work-Based Learning activities throughout the school year. This benefits students by increasing their knowledge and skills in the workplace before graduating from high school. Students spent their Fall Semester (Q1 & Q2) focusing on Job Exploration, Work Readiness, Counseling on Post-Secondary Training Opportunities, and Self-Advocacy. Students spent the Spring Semester (Q3 & Q4) participating in Work-Based Learning.

Vendor Data School Year 2022 – 2023							
Quarter	# of Students Served	Job Exploration Hours	Work Readiness Hours	Counseling on Post Secondary Hours	Self- Advocacy Hours	Work- Based Learning Hours	
Q1 (July - Sep)	789	2,136	2,232	608	3,823	0	
Q2 (Oct – Dec)	817	4,722	11,417	1,727	6,344	0	
Q3 (Jan – Mar)	692	0	1,252	58	0	24,724	
Q4 (Apr – June)	658	0	0	0	0	21,880	

Shown below is a comprehensive list of students served and hours spent on each core service:

All Pre-ETS students receiving services can receive Benefits Counseling through Project AWIN. Project AWIN assists people currently enrolled in SSI/SSDI with information on how employment affects their benefits, such as cash payments and medical coverage. In assisting the Pre-ETS program, Project AWIN helps those students and parents on SSI understand and sign up for Student Earned Income Exclusion. This work incentive allows students aged 14-22 to work and earn money and not lower their SSI cash payment.

Benefits Counseling				
# of Referrals	680			
# of Students Served	559			
# of Hours Spent 1 on 1	1462			
with Students	Average = 2.75			
	Hours per Student			

### Melina Rivera, SDHH

After serving as a paraprofessional aide at the Arkansas School for the Deaf for 4 ½ years, Melina Rivera aspired to become a Deaf Interpreter (DI). Recognizing the absence of DIs in Arkansas, Melina sought assistance from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services in 2019. She enrolled in the interpreter program at Western Oregon University, graduating in May 2022 as the sole Deaf Interpreter in the state. Melina now works at a mental health facility, aiding deaf and hard-of-hearing children with behavioral issues, and engages in freelance DI work with educators, police, hospitals, and more. Expressing gratitude for the support received from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Melina acknowledges their role in helping her achieve her educational and professional goals.

### Sa'Neisia McCullough, Field Services

In 2018, Sa'Neisia McCullough faced challenges in her CNA job due to a disability, but with ARS's support, she pursued her dream of becoming an esthetician. ARS facilitated her training, leading to her esthetician license in 2019. Landing a position at Sacred Treasure salon, Sa'Neisia honed her skills, but her entrepreneurial spirit persisted. Returning to ARS in 2021, she aspired to open her own business. In 2022, Sa'Neisia achieved her dream with the successful launch of *Rejuve*, her Fort Smith salon, where she not only runs a thriving business but also rents booths to others in the industry.

### Jerry Weston, Access and Accommodations

Jerry Weston, an assembler at Tractor Supply Co., faced significant challenges due to moderate to severe hearing loss, impacting his workplace communication. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) became the solution to his problem. Through a prompt consultation, Jerry connected with a compassionate counselor who assessed the extent of his hearing loss and devised a plan. They addressed work-related challenges and collaborated with a vendor to identify suitable hearing aid devices. The counselor efficiently authorized the purchase, enabling Jerry to acquire the aids swiftly. With his new hearing aids, Jerry not only maintained fulltime employment but also experienced a transformative impact on both work and home life. Grateful for ARS's support, Jerry credits the staff for making a substantial difference in his overall well-being.







# **Success Stories**

### Kaitlyn Hawkins, Field Services

Kaitlyn Hawkins' journey to becoming a Registered Nurse showcases her remarkable determination. Despite facing Scoliosis and ADHD, she turned to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services in 2014 to pursue higher education. With the support of her counselor, Kaitlyn overcame her challenges and secured successful employment as an LPN in June 2019. After two years, she decided to pursue her RN licensure, overcoming an additional anxiety disorder during her training at North Arkansas Community College, which she completed in December 2022. On January 4, 2023, Kaitlyn passed her NCLEX examination on the first attempt, officially attaining the status of a Registered Nurse. Now employed at Mercy Hospital in Booneville, Arkansas, Kaitlyn has not only expanded her knowledge but also doubled her hourly wage with this new credential.

### William Traylor, Small Business Program

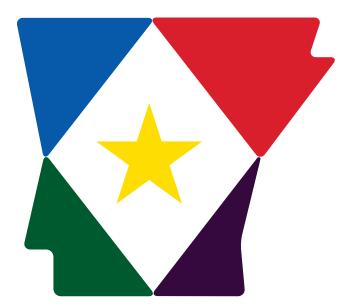
Despite facing significant physical and respiratory challenges, William Traylor not only overcame these obstacles but also became the owner of 3 in1 Pressure Washing and Detailing. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services played a pivotal role in his journey. Upon discovering ARS, Mr. Traylor partnered with a counselor who assisted him in determining eligibility and navigating the steps for support. Together, they addressed his challenges and devised solutions, enabling him to maintain full-time employment despite physical limitations. Aspiring to be an entrepreneur, William pursued small business ownership, and with the counselor's backing, developed a comprehensive business plan. After a positive review by a small business program manager, the plan was deemed feasible. With the aid of a selected vendor, the necessary equipment for starting his pressure washing and



detailing business was swiftly acquired, ensuring the success of his entrepreneurial endeavor.

# Notes

# Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is under the Division of Workforce Services within the Department of Commerce



# Arkansas Division of **Workforce Services**

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

