

INFORMATION FOR INTERIM STUDY: IS-2021-33



OKLAHOMA Rehabilitation Services

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES
EMPOWERING OKLAHOMANS WITH DISABILITIES
SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

OKDRS Direct Employment Service Divisions

- The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (OKDRS) expands opportunities for employment, independent life, and economic self-sufficiency by helping Oklahomans with disabilities bridge barriers to success in the workplace, school, and at home.
- Two divisions within the agency provide direct employment services to clients.
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff serve clients with a wide variety of communicative, physical, mental, and cognitive impairments.
- Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) staff specialize in assisting clients with visual impairments.

Statewide Needs Assessment

- OKDRS conducts a statewide needs assessment report every three years focused on the needs of individuals in Oklahoma with disabilities. (2017-2019)
- We are in the data collection phase and the next Statewide Needs Assessment set to be released September, 2022.
- According to the 2017 American Community Survey, Oklahoma has an estimated disability population of 606,072 and a disability rate of 15.9%.
 - The employment rate of working-age people (ages 21-64) with disabilities in Oklahoma was 36.6 percent (Erickson and Von Schrader, 2019).

Transportation needs and barriers for individuals with disabilities

- Transportation is a significant service need of those with the most significant disabilities. Specific problems include lack of transportation service statewide, expense, inconsistency in services, and drivers not waiting the allotted time for client pickup.
- Focus group attendees also noted transportation as a significant need. Transportation problems are not limited to vehicle service issues, attendees reported that in some areas of the state there is also a lack of sidewalks.
- Clients were asked if a series of factors have kept them from going to job search or skills trainings, job evaluations, or other events offered by OKDRS. Responses included transportation, health needs, life events, lack of money, or lack of support from family and/or friends. Clients reported that transportation was one of their biggest problems with getting and keeping a job.
- Transportation is the largest barrier to social services, education, healthcare, and employment across all Oklahoma communities.
- Identified barriers above lead to overall negative mental well being and quality of life for Oklahoman's with disabilities. To reach a workforce goal of employment, a sustainable transit system is critical.

OKDRS Supports Oklahoma Transit

- The Governor's Oklahoma United We Ride Council was to assess transportation services in Oklahoma. Upon inception of the council in 2006, OKDRS was responsible for coordination of the Council. However, Council members had no authority.
- Upon the passing the HB1365 in April 2019, authority was moved to ODOT to establish the Office of Mobility and Public Transit (OMPT). Through a partnership with ODOT, OKDRS ensured individuals with disabilities were included during the planning of the final Oklahoma Transit Plan.



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