

ANNUAL REPORT 2018



Highlights of Fiscal Year 2018



83,540

Total number of Oklahomans served by DRS in Fiscal Year 2018



10,082

Oklahomans who received VR and VS services in 2018



\$22,146

VR clients annual average yearly earnings



\$23,846

VS clients annual average yearly earnings



\$4 TO \$1

Federal to State ratio funding for VR and VS employment programs



31,522

Total number of outreach direct services being delivered by OSB and OSD



\$12.5 million

Estimated DDS Fraud Unit savings to taxpayers

DRS committed to helping Oklahomans return to work

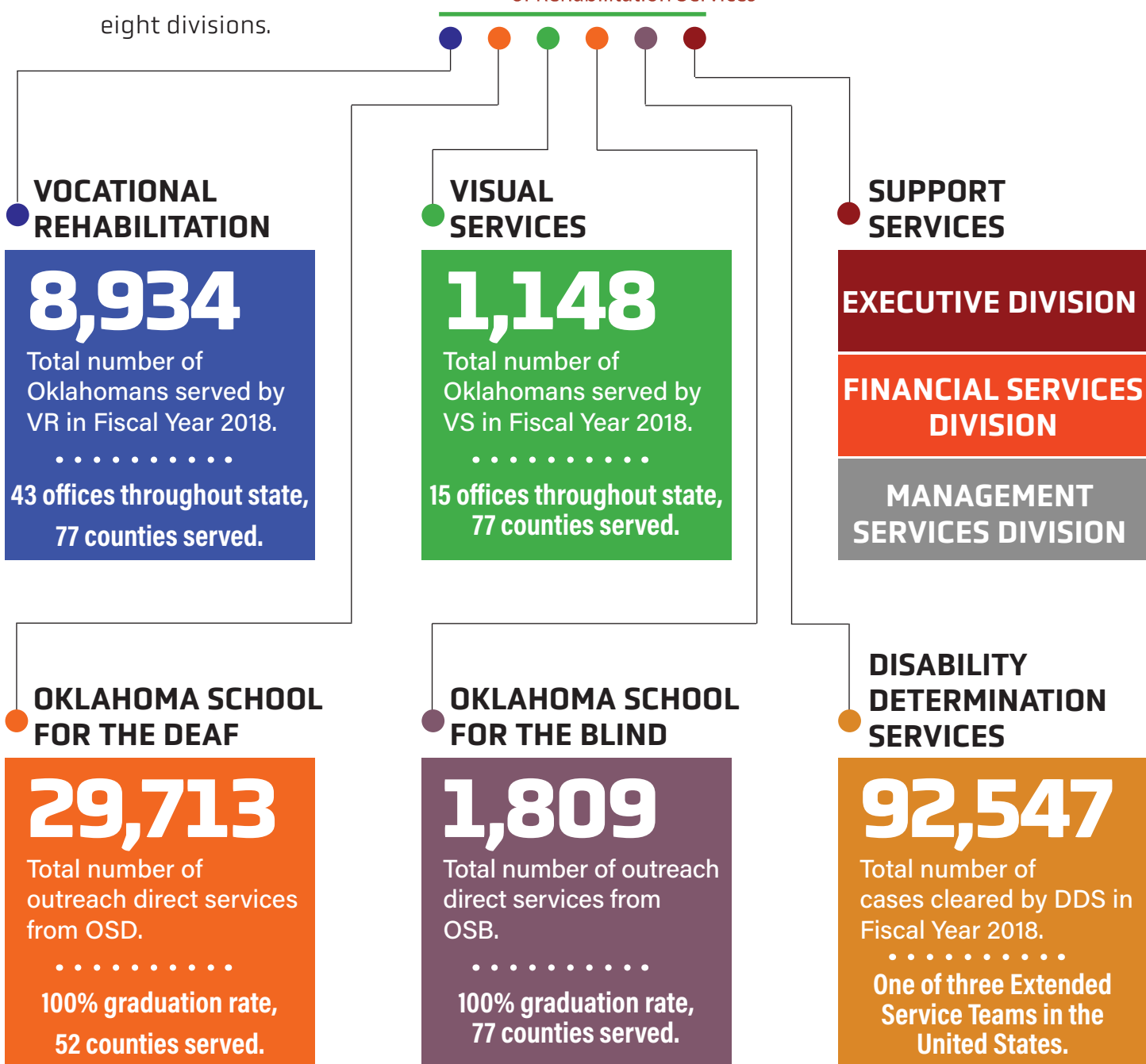
The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services expands opportunities for work, independent living and economic self-sufficiency by helping Oklahomans with disabilities overcome barriers to success in the workplace, school and at home.

One in six Oklahomans has a disability, and DRS' Vocational Rehabilitation programs introduce or

reinstate people with disabilities back into the work force, creating taxpayers and reducing dependence on disability benefits and social assistance.

DRS clients exercise informed choice with the goals that each achieves equality of opportunity, full inclusion and integration into society, employment, independent living, and economic and social self-sufficiency.

★ The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services has eight divisions.



Commission for Rehabilitation Services



Chairwoman April Danahy

Commissioner April Danahy has 17 years of radio experience and is vice president of human resources and corporate communications at the Security National Bank of Enid.

Danahy is active in the Enid community and holds positions on numerous nonprofit boards including United Way of Enid and Northwest Oklahoma, Loaves and Fishes, Northwest Oklahoma Blood Institute Board of Directors, Enid Police

Civil Service Commission and the Community Development Support Association.

Danahy's recognitions include Enid YWCA Woman of the Year, Enid News and Eagle Pillar of the Plains, Journal Record Woman of the Year "50 Making a Difference" honoree, Greater Enid Chamber of Commerce Business Person of the Year and Greater Enid Chamber of Commerce Volunteer of the Year.



Vice Chairwoman Emily Cheng

Vice Chairwoman Emily Cheng is Director of Disability Services and Diversity at Oklahoma State University - Oklahoma City. She had previously served 12 ½ years as an academic advisor and disabilities services coordinator at the school.

Cheng, who herself has cerebral palsy, began advocating for those with disabilities while in college.

She has a degree in psychology

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

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



Commissioner Jack Tucker

Jack Tucker is a retired teacher and principal from DRS' Oklahoma School for the Deaf.

A former DRS client with a visual disability himself, Tucker began his OSD career as a science and driver education instructor. He later became an assistant principal and assistant director of education. Tucker served as kindergarten through 12th-grade principal from 1985 until his retirement in 2009. Tucker designed and

developed award-winning programs at OSD including the Occupational Training Opportunities for the Deaf.

He earned an associate's degree from Connors State College, a bachelor's degree in natural science and education from Southeastern State University, a master's in public school administration from East Central University and a master's in special education from the University of Oklahoma.

Message from the Director

DRS committed to helping Oklahomans pursue their dreams

Fellow Oklahomans,

Every Oklahoman should have a voice in their future and an opportunity for success regardless of their circumstance.

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services employees work every day to ensure people with disabilities have the freedom to live independent lives and pursue meaningful careers. We are dedicated to the mission that each client realize the future they pursue. We do this by providing services including education, training and career counseling.

I am pleased to present the 2018 Annual Report, reflecting our work to support Oklahomans with disabilities who are achieving employment goals and attaining independence.

The cornerstone of DRS' work is to make a difference in someone's life. We achieve this through promoting access for all, fostering self-sufficiency and assisting consumers to seize opportunities that are before them.

Clients of DRS are active decision makers and full partners in the vocational rehabilitation process, including choosing their employment goal and the development of an Individualized

Clients of DRS are active decision makers and full partners in the vocational rehabilitation process, including choosing their employment goal and the development of an Individualized Plan for Employment.



**DRS Executive Director
Melinda Fruendt**



Plan for Employment.

Our dedication is reflected in the 2018 program outcomes including:

DRS Visual Services and Vocational Rehabilitation divisions served 10,082 Oklahomans on their path to find employment. This resulted in 131 Visual Services clients and 1,329 Vocational Rehabilitation clients returning to the work force and once again becoming proud taxpayers.

Our DRS schools, the Oklahoma School for the Blind and the Oklahoma School for the Deaf, both achieved 100-percent graduation rates for their Classes of 2018.

DRS' Disability Determination Services again performed at an extraordinary level, exceeding the budgeted workload and completing 101.3-percent of its allotted cases.

DDS continues to be a national resource as one of three Extended Service Team sites that assist other states with their backlog of disability claims. Since its inception, Oklahoma EST has provided assistance to multiple states including Arizona, California, Kansas, Louisiana and New Mexico.

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

Federal investment helps Oklahomans get back to work

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

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

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

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

Statistical information is based on State Fiscal Year 2018.



FY 2018 Total Expenditures

| Vocational Rehabilitation/ Visual Services | | Oklahoma School for the Blind | | Oklahoma School for the Deaf | |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| State | \$13,291,000 | State | \$6,003,000 | State | \$7,600,000 |
| Federal | \$37,577,000 | Federal | \$0 | Federal | \$0 |
| Inter-agency | \$56,000 | Inter-agency | \$575,000 | Inter-agency | \$137,000 |
| Other: | \$529,000 | Other: | \$51,000 | Other: | \$315,000 |
| Total: | \$51,453,000 | Total: | \$6,629,000 | Total: | \$8,052,000 |
| Disability Determination Services | | Support Services | | Total Expenditures | |
| State | \$0 | State | \$1,852,000 | State | \$28,746,000 |
| Federal | \$40,058,000 | Federal | \$5,759,000 | Federal | \$83,394,000 |
| Inter-agency | \$0 | Inter-agency | \$0 | Inter-agency | \$768,000 |
| Other: | \$0 | Other: | \$8,000 | Other: | \$903,000 |
| Total: | \$40,058,000 | Total: | \$7,619,000 | Total: | \$113,811,000 |

Vocational Rehabilitation

Woman starts new chapter after mental health challenges

Katie Wehmeyer's diagnosis of mental illness threatened to spin her life out of control.

A college graduate, Wehmeyer had enjoyed a successful insurance sales career in Tulsa. It was a fast-paced, high-pressure life, and it was slipping away.

"I knew that old way of life and career wouldn't work for me anymore because of the stress levels," she said. "I knew I couldn't maintain that pressure and those hours."

Diagnosed as being bipolar and suffering psychosis, she sought treatment to keep her on track, but inconsistent care and prescribed medicines failed her.

"From 2012 to 2015, I had dozens of hospitalizations," she said. "I wasn't able to work."

Eventually, she was forced to seek inpatient treatment at a Chicago-area care center.

"Throughout my illness, I had been overmedicated and undermedicated," she said. "They (Chicago care center) worked with me in a safe area and took me off my medications. They slowly worked with me to get me on a good balance where I could function."

Back home in Oklahoma after the treatment, Wehmeyer's personal courage was evident, never

"The main thing that DRS has given me is my dignity back and my self-esteem with work."



wavering in the fact she had to have a career and be able to take care of herself and her three children.

"I went in to meet with Melissa (Newton) feeling pretty defeated, really scared," Wehmeyer said. "I knew I wanted to work and be a contributing citizen. But I did not know where to begin."

Newton, a vocational rehabilitation specialist III in Bartlesville's VR office, gave her tests to see where her interests and skills lay.

"I have a bachelor's degree from Northeastern State
Wehmeyer continues on Page 8

Oklahomans going back to work with VR support

Oklahomans with disabilities can pursue their dreams for an independent life through work with the support of the Vocational Rehabilitation staff.

VR staff is committed to removing barriers that prevent a person from working, to guide and

counsel clients on career paths of their choice and network with employers on behalf of people with disabilities.

In fiscal year 2018, VR served 8,934 clients. This
VR continues on Page 8

Wehmeyer from Page 7

University, but this was kind of like starting over all over again," she said.

After the testing was completed, Newton asked Wehmeyer what she had always wanted to do. Wehmeyer said she had always thought about a career in the medical field but thought it did not play to her strengths.

"I never felt like I excelled at math and science, and she said my testing showed I excelled at math and science," Wehmeyer said.

Buoyed by that information, she said she had always considered being a phlebotomist — a medical professional who draws blood for testing. Newton told her DRS had a strong partnership with Tri-County Tech in Bartlesville. The next opening in a phlebotomy class was only a week away, and Newton got her in the class and DRS paid the associated costs because Wehmeyer's finances had been devastated by her illness.

"I went to those classes and began to feel good about myself," Wehmeyer said. "I was able to retain knowledge and apply a skill. And I felt comfort in knowing this type of position was a clock-in and clock-out kind of position. I didn't have to take it home with me. I could be by the patient's bedside and meet people and care for people."

Wehmeyer first visited with DRS in August 2016, and by the end of October 2016, she had completed her phlebotomy class and was ready to pursue her new career. She was hired to work at an Oklahoma State teaching hospital in Tulsa. She said she loves her job but knew she had to make more money so that she could financially support her family.

That was when Newton helped her apply for a respiratory therapy program, and she was accepted. Wehmeyer, who continues to work, will graduate in May from that program.

"I feel in my heart I am meant for greater things," Wehmeyer said. "DRS has helped me get to where I am. I am optimistic about my future. The main thing that DRS has given me is my dignity back and my self-esteem with work. With mental illness, you have days or weeks that you struggle."

She said she has shared her DRS experiences with her therapist, and that therapist would like to see more of her patients make the transition to work.

For her, Wehmeyer said each day is a challenge but she feels hopeful about the future.

"I appreciate each day, even the hard ones," she said.

Impact on Oklahomans in 2018

8,934 Oklahomans served

4,286 Program applications

971 Employment plans completed

1,329 Employment outcomes achieved

\$22,146 VR clients annual average yearly earnings

\$9,341 Average cost of services per VR client

\$3,322 Average yearly taxes paid by employed client (based on 15% tax rate)

VR from Page 7

year, DRS saw 1,329 Oklahomans with physical or mental disabilities become employed with the average yearly earnings reaching an average of \$22,146.

These accomplishments are possible because of DRS services including career counseling, vocational education and training and medical

services if it is determined it will help a client find employment. They may also receive assistive technology, job placement and coaching.

When DRS clients who are former recipients of Social Security benefits reach their nine-month work anniversary, the Social Security Administration reimburses DRS a portion of the cost of the services to get that person into the work force.



Transition puts youth on track to career

Oklahoma youth with disabilities are preparing for a life of independence and employment with the support of DRS' Transition program.

Transition services available through counselors in the Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and Visual Services assigned to each high school include:

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

Vocational assessment and evaluation: DRS work helps determine students' employment-related strengths and interests, and provides recommended career fields to investigate

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

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

On-the-Job Training: This program provides students the opportunity (during the second semester of their senior year) to obtain community employment in their career of choice with permanent employment as a goal.

"Job Development and Placement specialists help students make job searches more successful by helping them identify their interests and strengths and finding possible businesses with job openings."



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

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

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

Impact on Oklahomans in 2018

928 Oklahoma Transition students served
\$1,758,412 Total cost of client Transition Services



Visual Services

Oklahoman excited about future with support of DRS

Trey Lewis repeats the words of a hockey legend when he explains his passion for pursuing his dream career.

“You have to take your shots in life,” Lewis said. “You will be let down and rejected at times but try to not let that affect you. Because in the words of Wayne Gretzky, ‘you miss 100-percent of the shots you don’t take.’”

Lewis credits DRS with helping him build a foundation for his life that is helping him work toward a life of employment, one that hopefully will one day land him the career he has always wanted.

Lewis has always loved music, and he wants to be involved in the entertainment field, especially in its public relations and marketing arenas. Lewis received help from DRS’ Visual Services to attend college at the University of Central Oklahoma after graduating from the Oklahoma School for the Blind in 2010.

Lewis said he loved college and pledged the [Lewis continues on Page 11](#)

“I would have been lost (without DRS).”



Visual Services offers skills, training for clients to succeed

Visual Services enables Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired to pursue their dreams and reach their employment and life goals.

Clients are provided the opportunity to become employed through the vocational rehabilitation process that can include career counseling; vocational education and training; medical services required to become employable; and assistive technology geared to their specific needs and job placement.

Clients are eligible for the vocational rehabilitation program if their disability makes it difficult to work. They must be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services, which are required to prepare for and find jobs.

Many clients receive living skills training that allows them to navigate their environments, operate computers, manage money and much more. With these skills, people who are blind or

[VS continues on Page 11](#)

Lewis from Page 10

Sigma Alpha fraternity. He pursued a degree in Technology Application Studies and graduated in December 2015.

Three years after graduation, Lewis has an apartment in downtown Tulsa, is working at his first job in sales for the Tulsa World and is accompanied to work each day by his service dog Shatner.

He said it is a good first job, and it is one he hopes is just a small step toward the bright future he envisions.

"I did internships during the summers at college," he said. "I worked for an online music publishing company and a talent agency. I also did a leadership internship at Life Church. The music publishing company was really enjoyable and my favorite."



Lewis said with his vision loss disability, life brings a lot of challenges, and it is the support from family, friends and organizations such as DRS have made him able to reach for his dreams.

"I would have been lost (without DRS)," he said.

Impact on Oklahomans in 2018

1,148 Oklahomans served

328 Program applications

143 Employment plans completed

131 Employment outcomes achieved

\$23,846 Visual Services clients annual average yearly earnings

\$10,852 Average cost of services per VS client

\$3,577 Average yearly taxes paid by employed client (based on 15% tax rate)

**VS from Page 10**

visually impaired often feel ready to compete in the work place.

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.

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, small appliances with audio and tips on staying safe when performing household duties.

BEP offers Oklahomans chance for career

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

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

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

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

"BEP's mission is to provide employment opportunities for people who are legally blind by establishing food service operations across the state."



OLBPH offers patrons access to the world

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

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

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



For more information on all library services, go to the library's web site at www.olbph.org. The library, operated by DRS' Visual Services Division, is part of the Library of Congress' National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

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



Impact on Oklahomans in 2018

5,000 OLBPH patrons

807 Number of books circulated daily

4,036 Number of books received weekly by patrons

120 Average number of daily inquiries by patrons

1,089 Accessible Instructional Materials Center (AIM):
Number of children served

3,045 AIM center total collection (books/items)

753 Federal Quota Funds: Children eligible for textbooks

\$250,000 Federal Quota Funding





Program keeps seniors living independent life

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

DRS' Older Blind Independent Living Program offers free independent living services to people who are 55 years old or older and legally blind.

Rehabilitation teachers located in Visual Services offices throughout the state provide one-on-one assistance to older people in adjusting to blindness and regaining or maintaining maximum independence and self-sufficiency.

Older Blind Program staff

present training for businesses, organizations and others to develop greater awareness of the abilities and needs of older Oklahomans who are blind. Legal blindness occurs when visual acuity with best correction is 20/200 or less or when side vision results in a field restriction of 20 degree or less.

If you are having problems with daily living (i.e. dialing the phone, signing your name, cooking, identifying money, time telling, matching your clothing), a Rehabilitation teacher will work with you in learning how to perform these tasks safely, efficiently and independently.



Oklahoma School for the Blind

Senior excited to pursue future built on solid foundation

Since age 4, Richelle Zampella has known one thing — her teachers at the Oklahoma School for the Blind were going to make sure she was successful in life.

Now a senior and on the cusp of graduation, Zampella sees a future with a college education that will ready her for a career as a professional jazz performer and music teacher.

“This school (OSB) has been a blessing,” she said. “Everyone here is so supportive. If there is a challenge, it’s not “you won’t be able to do this.” It’s “we will find a way that you can do it, and we are going to accommodate you, making sure you can reach your full potential.”

Zampella began attending the school at age 4 after being born with Leber’s congenital amaurosis, which is the earliest and most severe form of all inherited retinal dystrophies responsible for congenital blindness.

“My vision has stayed pretty much the same since birth,” she said. “I can only see light and shadow, and some colors. I can see vague images but not enough that I could get around without a cane. I do read Braille.”

Despite her challenges, Zampella said she has always felt empowered from both the support of her family and the school staff who have become a second family to her.

“We have so many resources here at OSB,” she

“What am I not involved in here? I am in the jazz band, I am captain of the academic team. I am in the FCCLA program. I am a cheerleader and I co-founded the OSB Book Club . . .”



said. “We have the technology, and pretty much any accommodation a student needs is here for them to be successful.”

Zampella recommends any Oklahoman with a child who is blind or visually impaired to send their child to OSB because he or she will have the opportunity to be fully engaged in the opportunities a vibrant school offers.

“What am I not involved in here?” she said. “I am in the jazz band. I am captain of the academic team. I am in the FCCLA program. I am a cheerleader, and I co-founded the OSB Book Club, which is a new thing we started this year.”

Zampella continues on Page 16

OSB staff works to empower every student

Oklahoma children who are blind or visually impaired can weave a solid foundation for their independent future, building on a strong academic curriculum designed to reach them, no matter their disability.

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

OSB offers students specialized education in coordination with their state-mandated educational requirements. They learn valuable independent living skills and how to use specialized accessible technology equipment.

OSB staff play a critical role in student success by setting high standards for student achievement. 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.

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

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

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

OSB is a four-day-a-week program. Students who live close commute daily. Those who live farther away stay on campus during the school week. Residential students are transported to and from OSB for three-day weekends, summers and holidays at home.

OSB staff is committed to motivating students to overcome any challenges they face while working toward leading lives of independence and a successful career.

OSB staff provides thousands of free outreach services each year for students attending local public schools. Qualified staff offer free student evaluations, in-service training for teachers and recommendations for classroom modifications and special equipment that help students reach their full potential.

Impact on Oklahomans in 2018

- 1 to 4 OSB teacher to student ratio**
- 100% OSB graduation rate**
- 1 to 6 Direct-care specialists to students ratio**
- 97 Total number of students enrolled in 2018**
- 4 Students with multiple disabilities**
- 1,809 Outreach program direct services**
- 754 Outreach services to other schools**

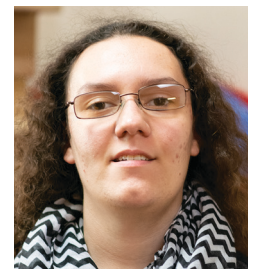


Zampella from Page 15

Zampella's sister, Katelynn, is a seventh-grader at the Oklahoma School for the Blind.

"Anyone who is considering sending their kids here definitely should," she said. "Anyone who knows someone with

a blind or visually impaired child – let them know this is the best place for them to go because the environment here is so great. They are going to be more prepared for their futures because they have all the accommodations and the support they need here. We are like a big family."



Oklahoma School for the Deaf

OSD gave graduate confidence to take on the world of science

Diagnosed at age 1 as being hard of hearing, Ty Brady was the youngest student to ever attend the Oklahoma School for the Deaf, starting as a preschooler at 18-months old.

He even served as the school's "Baby New Year" in 2000.

"I guess, I'm actually deaf, according to my audiogram, but I've always thought of myself as half deaf because I do have some hearing," he said.

For some of his elementary school years, Brady attended public school where he said he was able to keep up as long as class sizes were small and he had access to his teacher.

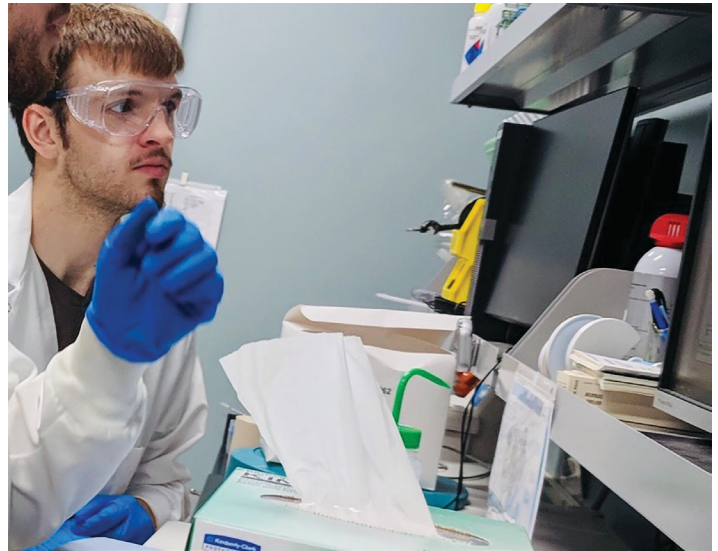
"When I transitioned into the Intermediate school, I started struggling with getting information from my teachers," he said. "My grades suffered, and I started to feel bad about myself in general."

"I didn't have a sense of pride or confidence in myself before attending (OSD). When you feel useless, there's a strong chance that you will turn out that way. So, confidence is what changed my life."

OSD removes communications barriers to educate youth

Oklahoma School for the Deaf staff offer a leading-edge learning environment for students who are deaf and hard of hearing without any barriers to communication.

Staff and students communicate directly with each other using American Sign Language, voice or any other communication mode preferred by the



Returning to OSD, Brady reconnected with the school's support system that he continues to this day to rely on.

"When I was in public school, I was just surviving," he said. "At OSD, I started thriving and developing future goals."

Brady was able to begin taking part in school activities at OSD, unlike his years in public school. He became part of the football, basketball and golf teams as well as the academic team and student government.

"I didn't have a sense of pride or confidence in myself before attending (OSD)," he said. "When you feel useless, there's a strong chance that you will turn out that way. So, confidence is what changed my life."

At his graduation in 2016, Brady was the school's valedictorian.

Brady continues on Page 18

students. Many students utilize cochlear implants or hearing aids.

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

OSD continues on Page 18

Brady from Page 17

He has gone on to pursue a biology degree at the Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, N.Y., where he received the prestigious Maguire Scholarship. He is a junior at the school and works in a laboratory.



The school is an internationally recognized leader in preparing deaf and hard-of-hearing students for successful careers

in professional and technical fields. The university provides access and support services for the more than 1,000 deaf and hard-of-hearing students who live, study and work with hearing students on the RIT campus. The school has more than 15,000 undergraduate students and more than 3,000 graduate students.

"I've always been interested in the medical field," Brady said. "I still plan a career that involves science. I have so many interests within science such as: medicine, research, botany, chemistry and anatomy. Ultimately, I see myself as a physician and/or a science professor. Either way I'd be a doctor, wouldn't I?"

He credits OSD for giving

him the foundation and opportunities he needed to build an independent and successful future.

"My future is bright because of my education at the Oklahoma School for the Deaf and the Rochester Institute of Technology, and the support I am still receiving from the Department of Rehabilitation Services."

Parents who have a child with a hearing disability should consider sending their child to the school.

"If you want your child to have a fair opportunity in learning and being involved in sports during their school years, it would absolutely be the right decision," Brady said.

Impact on Oklahomans in 2018

1 to 5 OSD teacher to student ratio

100% OSD graduation rate

1 to 4 Direct-care specialists to students ratio

137 Total number of students enrolled in 2018

4 Students with multiple disabilities

29,713 Outreach program direct services

9,917 Outreach services to other schools

**OSD from Page 17**

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

Students who attend OSD must meet all graduation requirements set forth by the Oklahoma Department of Education. All classes are taught in consideration of each student's unique communication and education needs. This includes not only the use of American Sign Language but also the use of other adaptive technology.

Students receive full educational and social experiences. They perform in school programs and dramas. They have prom and homecoming events for all sports. They compete with other schools on sports

teams, leadership programs and academic teams.

OSD has a strong vocational program that offers business technology, family and consumer sciences and welding classes on site. OSD also offers a school-to-work program, Occupational Training Opportunities for the Deaf. Students gain valuable work experience and a paycheck at various businesses in the community, which gives them a competitive resume after graduation.

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

Disability Determination Services

DDS case processing time, accuracy rate among nation's best

Oklahomans waiting on SSA decisions need the best assistance possible so that they can move forward with their lives. DRS' Disability Determination Services prides itself on both quickly processing cases as well as delivering accurate decisions.

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

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

Oklahoma's DDS leads the region with the lowest claim processing time with an average of 81.2 days. They are also among the top tier in the country with their accuracy rate of 97.7 percent.

Through the third quarter of federal FY18, DDS exceeded their budgeted workload, processing 101.3 percent of their work. In the past fiscal year, DDS cleared 64,532 Oklahoma cases and 28,015 cases for



other states. That brings the total to 92,547 cleared cases in 2018.

The clearing of cases for other states is a particular point of pride for DRS. DDS continues to be a national resource as one of three Extended Service Team sites that assists other states with their backlog of disability claims. Since its inception, Oklahoma EST has provided assistance to multiple states including Arizona, California, Kansas, Louisiana and New Mexico.

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

The fraud savings this year through the CDI Unit totaled an estimated \$12.5 million. That included more than \$6.2 million in SSA savings and more than \$6.3 million in non-SSA savings (Medicare/Medicaid).

DDS is 100-percent federally funded.

Impact on Oklahomans in 2018

101.3% Percentage of processed budgeted workload

97.7% Case decision accuracy rate

\$12.5 million Fraud unit savings to taxpayers



DRS is a proud partner in Oklahoma Works

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services is an official State Workforce Partner to Oklahoma Works, the employment-focused initiative launched by former Gov. Mary Fallin in 2015.

The mission of Oklahoma Works is to increase the wealth of all Oklahomans through opening doors to quality employment. The goal is to develop a pool



**OKLAHOMA
WORKS**

A proud partner of the AmericanJobCenter network

of highly skilled workers that will be increasingly needed for Oklahoma businesses.

DRS OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

25 YEARS OF SERVING OKLAHOMANS WITH DISABILITIES

