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Vision

All people with developmental disabilities should have the opportunity to be contributing members of their communities; to make real choices; to have confidence to strive; to have freedom to excel; to have supports to achieve individual goals; to influence policy; to determine services that affect their lives; and to recognize that they have the same rights, privileges, and power to make a difference in their own lives and the lives of others.

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  + Dr. Rebekah Young

+ Agency Representative
* Person with a disability or family member

Staff

Charles Hughes, Jr., Executive Director
Christy Ashley, Program Coordinator
Comma McDuffey, Administrative Assistant
**FY2021 Areas of Emphasis Grants**

**Read-Up** was an initiative that involved selecting students with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) of any age that have never been taught to read or are reading below grade level due to their disability. Read-Up completed its fourth year of reading classes and had another successful year. During the year, it continued to provide group tutoring to assist students with IDD who needed improvements in their ability to read. Classes were taught every Monday. Teaching materials included Hooked on Phonics and Rock-n-Learn/Let’s Learn to Read software that included music, games, stories, books, comic books, flash cards, workbooks, word bingo, and other hands-on materials. This year, approximately 230 total people were involved with the project. Due to continued COVID restrictions, program staff have worked with other staff at day centers to establish a system of working through emails and dropped off reading materials at the centers for participants. Every two weeks, reading materials and other items were sent to each center and books were sent to the homes of those who could not attend the day centers. **Grantee:** Disability Connections, Gulfport, $15,000

The purpose of **Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) Adaptations for Anxiety** was to address significant concerns in children with developmental delays, with a focus on social anxiety and selective mutism. It promoted social well-being to improve outcomes and developmental trajectories in children ages two to 17 years of age. It increased access to specialized behavioral health care through evidence-based treatment for children with DD and co-occurring anxiety disorders, piloted the delivery of intensive group treatments, and increased the clinical workforce in Mississippi equipped to treat children with developmental disorders and anxiety. Approximately 175 people received some type of service from this grant. Basic Anxiety and Selective Mutism training was completed for staff and trainees which continued weekly through patient consultations and team meetings. The project offered trainings for providers throughout the state on how to treat selective mutism. They collaborated directly with teachers, graduate schools, pediatricians, therapists, and board members about the services of this program and the treatment of anxiety disorders. Children also benefited through group intensive treatment which occurred weekly with 2-3 groups with 3-4 children per group. **Grantee:** University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson, $68,572

**Grassroots Network for Self-Advocacy** was developed to assist individuals with developmental disabilities (ages 14-22) in transitioning from parentally guided youth to self-advocating adults. Activities will focus on support of policies and practices that promote systems change and other activities that further advance self-determination and inclusion. During its second year, it continued to ensure inclusiveness and bring awareness to challenges people with developmental disabilities are confronted with during early stages of development. As advocates, the advocacy council ensured individuals received the services and supports and practices in which they were entitled. The project focused on eligibility, reinstatement, and continuations for individuals to receive entitled benefits; forming a collaborative network of partners with other organizations sensitive to the needs of those with DD; and developing and/or creating a data base of individuals with DD to develop a plan for emergency preparedness and readiness. Approximately 102 total people participated in the project. Trainings were held and focused on the criteria to receive and maintain benefits such as disability and social security and
covered topics including documentation needed, keeping appointments, and general knowledge and understanding of the process on how to receive/continue benefits. The advocacy council continued the process of developing a plan of action in-conjunction with the Holmes County e-911 coordinator. Advocacy council members continued to access ways to enhance community efforts in relation to economic and community development projects to enhance the quality of life and ensure inclusiveness for individuals with DD and other vulnerable citizens.

**Grantee:** Mileston Cooperative, Tchula, $62,600

**Higher Education for All** was established to increase the number of individuals with intellectual and other disabilities that attend postsecondary education and receive needed supports and services. This project’s goal was to increase the number of individuals with intellectual and other disabilities that attend postsecondary education and receive needed supports and services. In its second year, the project continued to target up to ten young adults and participants to attend a two-semester pilot program which consisted of undergraduate classes, independent living skills development, community service, extracurricular activities and employment internships. It offered weekly socialization groups and peer mentoring opportunities for up to 20 university students and community citizens with a diagnosis of autism or related disability. Approximately 418 total people participated in the project. The second-year pilot program for adult learners ages 21 and older began for the fall semester 2020 with four students participating, three as adult learners and one as full-time student needing extra assistance. Virtual orientations took place. Individualized person-centered plans were developed and updated with the assistance of each student before classes began. Undergraduate classes included Academic Mentoring, University Studies, and Introduction to English Composition. One student began taking a full-time load of 12 hours with a variety of classes. Due to COVID-19, classes began completely virtual August 17th for the first three weeks. Independent living skills development was completed through one-on-one weekly virtual and in-person peer mentoring and through weekly socializations groups. The full-time student receiving extra assistance lived in the dorm and the other three were commuters as they lived at home.

**Grantee:** The University of Southern Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies, Hattiesburg, $70,000

**Enhancing Support Structures for Students with ASD in the Classroom** served students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), their parents, and their teachers through providing a dedicated ASD Specialist to create and implement programming. The ASD Specialist served as an instructional coach by providing just in time guidance for teachers within the Corinth School District. This project was in its second year and had an overall goal of supporting students with ASD through developing high-quality instructional supports, peer and caregiver support programs, and creating a sustainable model for the support of PK-12 students with ASD. During the second year of funding, approximately 205 people received some type of service from this project. Throughout the year, they held mandatory state-wide training sessions on incorporating Social, Emotion, Learning Strategies and curriculum materials into the classroom. Students continued using sensory rooms as calming strategies. The ASD specialist continued to meet with parents and provide support, complete classroom observations, and help to implement or revise behavior plans. The specialist provided consultation to other school districts on implementing this same program in their district. At the end of the year, five superintendents from Alabama conducted a site visit for the sensory room and talked with the ASD Specialist about the protocols, processes, and success from replication and implementation in their schools.

**Grantee:** Corinth School District, Corinth, $55,270
Future Planning Resources guided individuals and families in the future planning process for individuals with developmental disabilities. This curriculum and program support will equip families and their adult relative with a disability with the communication skills and information to jointly plan for their future. Future Planning Resources was in its second year and approximately 322 people with disabilities received some type of service from the program this year. Once vaccinations were available, she assisted those with disabilities by scheduling appointments and arranging transportation. As COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, the coordinator held more face-to-face meetings with individuals and their families. Multiple training materials and outreach resources were created that could be mailed to families. She helped individuals with issues related to housing, Medicaid, Medicare, community services, healthcare needs, and food/clothing issues, and even learning about burial insurance.

Grantee: Warren Yazoo Behavioral Health, Vicksburg, $37,746

Pocket Park is on its way to become an all-inclusive park featuring swings and other equipment that children with and without disabilities could access. Ripley is a small town in need of recreational offerings. The city planner and landscape architect developed the park layout. The land was surveyed, and trees were cut. Concrete was poured for the walking track. All playground equipment was ordered including fences for safety for the park. All equipment, lighting, benches, and fences were installed. This project was phase one and two of three. The third phase would include a dog park, garden that the children can help with, and an iron tree with dog tags hanging from it for specific purposes.

Grantee: Ripley Main Street Association, Ripley, $43,620

Family Financial Fun Nights was a new project that worked with the families of students with developmental disabilities to increase financial literacy knowledge. It allowed the Mississippi Council on Economic Education (MCEE) to train community leaders (which may be special education teachers, caregivers/advocates at the community level or other educators) on planning and executing Family Financial Fun Nights in their communities. In addition, the project provided support for these community leaders in offering the events around the state of Mississippi. Goals and outcomes included financial education professional development on using the Family Financial Fun Night kit which was provided to 25 community leaders who impacted 250 students with developmental disabilities plus at least 250 family members. Once community leaders received professional development, they were expected to offer a Family Financial Fun Night in their community. Students with developmental disabilities and their caregivers/parents learned about financial literacy. Parents and caregivers received knowledge on how to better teach their children about personal finance. Ultimately, this helped families their children become more self-sufficient as they grow into adults. Approximately 723 total people were involved with the project. Since the schools were operating virtually, the platform changed. Instead of the train-the-trainer, the events were offered virtually and facilitated by MCEE staff. Families were encouraged to register, then a Family Financial Fun Night box was mailed to them containing needed activities and supplies. Arrangements were also made for a representative from Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services to be part of the events and present on the Mississippi ABLE accounts. Representatives from 41 schools, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, and United Healthcare participated.

Grantee: Mississippi Council on Economic Education, Jackson, $62,751
Cool Down Areas for Sudduth Elementary School was a new project which provided safe spaces for students with disabilities to visit who needed a place to cool down and regulate behaviors. The areas are located inside the general education classroom. In Sudduth Elementary, there were 900 kids with 70 of them being IEP eligible. This project allowed students to be successful in practicing techniques as calming and self-regulation activities. This area prevented the child from having to leave the classroom and avoided having to be transitioned back in after calming down. Approximately 36 students used these areas inside the classroom. Teachers and therapists were involved in setting up the areas in each classroom and were taught how to implement use of the areas through the Tools for Life Curriculum. This was a curriculum that taught the teacher how to allow students the opportunity to work through their emotions as well as learn problem solving techniques. 

Grantee: Starkville Consolidated School District, Starkville, $24,990

Group Music Therapy was a new project that integrated music therapy activities into the individualized service plans of people with developmental disabilities who attended day programs. It offered music interventions that promoted health and wellness of the targeted population. Approximately 822 total people were involved in the project. During this year, 104 music therapy group facilitations took place.

Grantee: William Carey College, Hattiesburg, $43,432

Transition Resource Guide TRACK was a one-year project to develop a resource guide to provide information needed as individuals 18 years of age and older prepare to transition out of the school system by the age of 21. TRACK did not only assist students through transition to learn about and locate the assistance they needed, but also helped area nonprofits, government agencies, and churches raise the number of clients they served. Sources were drawn from thorough research and cooperative partnerships with several important Gulf Coast organizations. The guide contains a step-by-step organized approach to prepare for the transition process from school to community engagement. It includes an educational section to explain the government services available that may need to be applied for, who qualifies, and how to apply and a section on community services with two simple, detailed tables of contents. Information covered included conservatorship/guardianship/durable power of attorney, service providers, SS/SSI, Medicaid/Medicaid Waivers, advocacy, financial information, rights, employment, education, transportation, emergency, voting, extracurricular activities, and volunteering.

Grantee: Disability Connections, Gulfport, $20,889

Superable Fitness is an exercise program designed to motivate individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families to become fit, strong, and healthy. The goal was to create a fitness program that encouraged exercise and healthy choices through a dedicated webpage that would hold recorded exercise sessions, exercise ideas for at-home exercise, and healthy living tips. It held exciting live exercise opportunities that could be experienced in person or on the Zoom platform. Approximately 219 total people participated in this project. Exercise sessions were held live, as well as virtual, for those who could not attend live sessions due to COVID. Later in the
program, “track time” was added after the initial exercise to extend the workout and add a more social component. Participants gained strength and began to be able to work out for the entire session without breaks and coordination and understanding of the program improved significantly throughout the project. Modifications were made for those that continued to struggle with coordination of the workouts.

**Grantee:** The Arc of Northwest Mississippi, Southaven, $22,830

**Education and E-Commerce for Our Ever-Changing World** was a short-term project for Madison County School District. It was a district wide new e-commerce enterprise that promoted the teaching and learning of life skills, vocational skills and employment readiness of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The development and operation of an online store provided learning opportunities to students regardless of the school method, distance, or school-based learning available. Approximately 283 total people participated in some portion of the project. Of these, 146 were people with developmental disabilities. The students voted to name their school store “Bridge Market.” Students met, discussed, and voted on what items to sell in the store and online. Items included wooden Christmas or holiday trees, personalized coasters, seasonal tea towels, peg board games, personalized door mats, etc. Quicken software was purchased and students were taught how to manage revenue, make purchases of product supplies and goods. As the sales grew, a Facebook page and website were created, and purchases were made from the website. Through the online bridge market, students learned about cost, profit/loss and salesmanship.

**Grantee:** Madison County School District, Ridgeland, $25,000

**Project PAC** was short-term project with a goal to enhance the quality of life for individuals with developmental and other disabilities by improving their owner-pet experience through professional dog training. The objective was to provide customized obedience training for up to eight companion dogs and their owners, to include training for emotional support or service dogs, and create a more contrastive and enjoyable partnership between owners with a disability and their dogs. A total of ten people with disabilities and thirteen dogs participated with all goals being met for all participants and significant progress being made on the few goals not mastered by the dogs. Two of the owners have begun the process of their pet becoming service dogs in the future.

**Grantee:** Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, Jackson, $24,827

**Seizure Safety** was a short-term project which provided Seizure First Aid through trainings to proactively care for the community of 35,700 Mississippians with epilepsy. With this certification, people learned how to recognize signs of a seizure and how to use the basic first aid steps in different settings, for different seizure types, and when medical help may be needed. The trainings were for the community of people surrounding and supporting people with developmental disabilities caused or impacted by epilepsy. Approximately 160 people in Mississippi received the training.

**Grantee:** Epilepsy Foundation of Mississippi, Jackson, $14,780
Fiscal Year 2021 Grants Funded by Congressional District

Total $592,308

District 1 - $121,720
- Enhancing Supports for Students with ASD (Corinth School District) $55,270
- Pocket Park (Ripley Main St. Association) $43,620
- SuperABLE Fitness (The Arc of NW MS) $22,830

District 2 - $208,525
- Grassroots Network for Self-Advocacy (Milestone Cooperative) $62,600
- Future Planning Resources (Warren-Yazoo Behavioral Health) $37,746
- PCIT Adaptations for Anxiety (University of Mississippi Medical Center) $68,572
- Seizure Safety Training (Epilepsy Foundation) $14,780
- Project PAC (Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities) $24,827

District 3 - $112,742
- Family Financial Fun Nights (Mississippi Council on Economic Education) $62,752
- Cool Down Areas (Starkville Oktibbeha School District) $24,990
- Education and e-Commerce (Madison Co. Schools) $25,000

District 4 - $149,321
- Higher Education for All (The University of Southern Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies) $70,000
- Read Up (Disability Connection) $15,000
- Music Therapy for IDD (William Carey Univ.) $43,432
- Transition Resources (Disability Connection) $20,889

Total federal funding received for FY2021 was $945,089.
Other Community Supports and Collaborations

- Mississippi disAbility MegaConference, Conference/Training
- Mississippi Coalition for Citizens with Disabilities, Special Education Law Conference/Training
- Disability Connection, Art Ability Fair/Recreation/Resources
- The Arc of Northwest Mississippi, Camp BOLD/Recreation/Self-Advocacy
- Brain Injury Association, Salute to Heroes Event, Awareness/Training
- Gallant Hearts Guide Dog Center, Community Awareness Event/Resources
- King Therapies, Autism and Law Enforcement Workshop/Training
- Metro Area Community Empowerment, World Series Wheelchair Softball Event/Resources
- Mississippi State University, Summer Academic and Behavior Camp/Training
- The MIND Center, Alzheimer’s and Other Dementias Conference/Training
- Rehabilitation Association of Mississippi, Conference/Training
- Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, Mississippi ABLE, Awareness/Resources

Developmental Disabilities Network Collaborations

Mississippi’s Developmental Disabilities Network includes the Mississippi Council on Developmental Disabilities, Disability Rights Mississippi, and The University of Southern Mississippi Institute for Disability Studies. Each year, they collaborate on various activities such as the following:

DD Network News

Winter 2021
MSCDD continues to maintain the Mississippi Community Resource Directory. This is an online, searchable database of resources for people with developmental and other disabilities, family members, providers, professionals, and others in the community. Technical assistance is provided through the Institute for Disability Studies. Over 6,800 unique viewers used the directory in FY2021.

www.mscrdd.org
The DD Network Partners and seven disability and community-based organizations plan the Mississippi disAbility MegaConference each year. Due to Covid-19, the 2021 MegaConference was held virtually on June 17, 2021. Over 150 people with disabilities, family members, professionals, and others participated.

Speakers included:

Gabe Adams  
*The Best Part of You*

Dr. Thomas Dobbs  
*Covid-19 Update and the Path Forward*

Julio Cespedes  
*Healthcare’s Promising Frontier: Telehealth*

Rachel Daniels  
*Supporting Resilience During Uncertain Times*