EMPOWERING OKLAHOMANS WITH DISABILITIES

INTRODUCTION TO
OKLAHOMA Rehabilitation Services
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Available In Accessible Formats
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About Oklahoma Rehabilitation Services

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services 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.

DRS serves more than 70,000 Oklahomans with disabilities each year through vocational rehabilitation, employment, independent living, educational programs and the determination of medical eligibility for disability benefits.

DRS is comprised of five program divisions — Vocational Rehabilitation, Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Disability Determination, Oklahoma School for the Blind and Oklahoma School for the Deaf. These divisions operate dozens of programs that help Oklahomans lead more independent and productive lives.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: Employment services for people with any disability, except blindness or visual impairments.

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired: Employment and independent living services for people who are blind or visually impaired.


Oklahoma School for the Deaf: Educational programs for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Oklahoma School for the Blind: Educational programs for children who are blind or visually impaired.

For access to additional information about DRS, including information about disability etiquette, interpreters for the deaf, legislative updates, media releases, latest news, policies, publications, video links, other links, success stories and how to access DRS social media, visit our web site at www.okdrs.gov or call 800-845-8476.

Commission for Rehabilitation Services

The Commission for Rehabilitation Services is the governing board for the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services. The Commission meets monthly to review and discuss reports, and agency activities and approve policy changes and donations.

It also reviews current plans, as well as plans for the future. The Commission chair leads the meetings, which are open to the public. The contact person for Commission meetings and other information is the DRS Commission Assistant, available at 405-951-3472.

For additional information about the Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services, including information about meeting schedules, agendas and resolutions, visit our web site at www.okdrs.gov/comm/home or call 800-845-8476.
The main thing that DRS has given me is my dignity back and my self-esteem with work.

— Katie Wehmeyer

Taking control
Oklahoman found new career with DRS services

Katie Wehmeyer’s medical diagnosis threatened to spin her life out of control. Wehmeyer had enjoyed a successful insurance sales career in Tulsa. It was a fast-paced, high-pressure life, but 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.

Wehmeyer remained committed to working again so that she would be able to take care of herself and her three children.

“I went in to meet with (DRS’) 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.

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. Newton also helped her apply for a respiratory therapy program.

Wehmeyer completed the program and was hired as a respiratory therapist at a higher salary with a signing bonus.

“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.”
Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired staff provide vocational rehabilitation services to help eligible individuals with disabilities prepare for work and become gainfully employed.

A person may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services if he or she has a physical or mental disability that is a barrier to employment and requires VR or SBVI services to prepare for, find, keep or return to work.

The primary services are counseling and guidance with job placement. However, other services may include physical or mental restoration; vocational, college or other training; assistive technology evaluations, equipment and training; information on disability resources; personal assistance services while receiving VR or SBVI services; transportation in connection with VR or SBVI services; supported employment; self-employment assistance; Transition: School-to-Work services for youth with disabilities; and other services based on individual needs.

The services provided to a client are determined by the person's Individualized Plan for Employment. This plan outlines a person's employment goal and the services needed to enable the person to achieve that goal.

Business Services Program

Many Oklahoma employers are saving time and money by working with DRS to recruit qualified employees who really want to work. These businesses are discovering dependability, commitment and lower employee turnover. These employers are getting a return on their state and federal tax dollars invested in vocational rehabilitation programs.

When an individual is served through Oklahoma Vocational Rehabilitation or Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired is typically still working after two years — the highest job retention rate of any workforce program.

If you want to save time and money, hire and retain capable, well-prepared employees and build a diverse workforce, we can help you free of charge.

For more information about employment services for businesses, visit our website at www.okdrs.org/bsp.
Jennifer Pellat-Finet could have surrendered to her disability and to the depression that all too often comes with it.

More than a decade ago, complications from a sepsis diagnosis forced Pellat-Finet to suffer a double amputation below her knees while she was living in France. She had always been an active person, enjoying working out and gardening. All of that now was at risk.

“You are in such a place of shock and disbelief when it happens (the diagnosis),” she said. “You don’t think your life will go on, but it does.”

It is not easy though.

Pellat-Finet returned to the United States in 2011 and said her decade of living in Europe meant she did not qualify for many government services. DRS though, gave her hope.

She received counseling; tuition to complete her degree at the University of Central Oklahoma; modifications to her car so she could drive again and bilateral prosthetics for her legs.

“Without DRS, I would not have these prosthetics, not finished my degree or been able to afford the handheld devices for my vehicle,” she said. “They gave me independence. I could not have done any of this without vocational rehabilitation. I am very grateful.”

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— Jennifer Pellat-Finet
Ticket to Work gives increased options to those receiving SSA benefits

The Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program is a voluntary employment program administered by the Social Security Administration.

It offers Oklahomans with disabilities who are receiving Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income increased choices in obtaining services and support to engage in work and attain self-supporting employment.

The Ticket Program is part of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 — legislation designed to remove many of the barriers that previously influenced people's decisions about going to work because of concerns over losing health care coverage. The goal of the Ticket to Work Program is to increase opportunities and choices for Social Security disability beneficiaries to obtain employment, vocational rehabilitation, and other support services from public and private providers, employers and other organizations.

If you are interested in working, the Ticket to Work Program may be your key to accessing vocational rehabilitation, training, and placement services, as well as other services and supports to help you reach your employment goals. The program is available for people with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 64 who are receiving Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income benefits.

While participating in the Ticket to Work Program, you may be able to use a combination of other work incentives that can assist you in finding a job that is right for you. Using the Ticket to Work does not make you ineligible for other work incentives. If your work attempt is unsuccessful, the Ticket to Work Program makes it easy for you to get back on benefits when and if needed.

Please contact the DRS Ticket to Work Outreach office if you would like additional information — www.okdrs.gov/job-seekers/ticket.
Transition services

DRS’ Transition program helps students with disabilities, who are eligible for VR services, develop skills for a successful career, gain skills for an independent future and prepare for employment and life after high school. Services are available through counselors in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, such as vocational counseling and guidance; vocational assessments and evaluations, work study and on-the-job training. After graduation, DRS counselors and students continue to work toward vocational and employment goals.

Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology Specialists evaluate how accommodations or recommended assistive technology will aid clients in overcoming obstacles that interfere with obtaining employment or keeping a job. Potential solutions include home or vehicle modifications; personal mobility needs, such as wheelchairs; computer access; worksite access or modification needs and activities of daily living needs.

The Assistive Technology Lab provides evaluations and free demonstrations using adaptive equipment and assistive technology. The lab is outfitted with various types of assistive or adaptive technology including computer software that allows users to hear text through speech synthesizers, screen magnification software and video magnifiers that increase the size of text.
Community-based employment services

The Employment Support Services Unit (ESS) oversees specialized job placement programs and projects serving individuals categorized as having significant or most significant disabilities.

ESS oversees the supported employment program, a specialized type of job placement for people with the most significant disabilities, providing intensive, on- or off-site training that assists the individuals to choose jobs, learn the tasks and keep the jobs.

Employment and Retention Services is a job placement program designed for individuals with significant disabilities who require short term on- and off-site training beyond what is available in typical job placement programs.

The Job Placement contract provides services to DRS customers who require some assistance in finding employment in the community.

The Support Services for Employment contract provides employment support assessment, life skills management, community integration and housing modifications. It may be provided to DRS customers with significant disabilities to augment other traditional case services — www.okdrs.org/job-seekers/ess.
Challenge accepted

Man is sharpening his dreams with help of DRS

"It was very tough being in that mainstream environment, trying to find your bearings ... around people that were not always understanding and aware of my deaf culture. It was a challenge, but when I moved to OSD, things greatly improved."
— Norman ‘Buddy’ Thomas

Two jobs are not enough for Tulsa native Norman “Buddy” Thomas. He said he hopes to someday add a third job helping others who are deaf “chase their own passions and dreams.”
Thomas owns Tree of Liberty Bladecraft and Forge, a professional grade knife-making business recently featured in national Blade magazine.
He has made 200 knives or other weapons, but Thomas considers himself an apprentice.
Thomas, who uses a hearing aid, also communicates effectively with speech.
Thomas first attended public school in his hometown.
“It was very tough being in that mainstream environment, trying to find your bearings ... around people that were not always understanding and aware of my deaf culture,” he said. “It was a challenge, but when I moved to OSD, things greatly improved.”
Thomas, who received vocational rehabilitation services from DRS, is working toward his Journeyman Smith and Master Smith ratings established by the American Bladesmith Society, which require passing a set of stringent tests to document that the knife-maker’s ability is among the best in the world.
Thomas is a 1999 graduate of DRS’ Oklahoma School for the Deaf.”
Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation provides job placement and employment services to people with any type of disability, except those with blindness, or visual impairments, who are served by Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Counselors arrange for and coordinate services, such as medical and psychological assessments, training, assistive technology, job placement assistance, and worksite job training and follow up. All of the services provided are employment-related, focusing on assisting Oklahomans with disabilities to obtain or maintain employment. The ultimate outcome is jobs with benefits and increased independence.

Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

DRS offers a variety of programs and informational services for individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, Deaf-Blind and those with speech impairments. In addition to information and referral about community services and resources, DRS provides VR employment services and interpreter services to eligible consumers and operates the Quality Assurance Screening Test program, which certifies interpreters in Oklahoma.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing vocational rehabilitation

Our counselors have specialized training and are able to provide direct communication with clients with hearing loss by using sign language or other techniques to effectively communicate.

For additional information about DRS' vocational rehabilitation services, visit our web site at www.okdrs.gov/job-seekers/home or call 800-833-8973.
Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired helps people who have visual impairments pursue careers. Those with other types of disabilities are served by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Counselors arrange for and coordinate, education and training, career exploration, employment assistance, worksite training and follow up.

Legal blindness occurs when visual acuity with best correction is 20/200 or less or when the field of vision is restricted to 20 degrees or less.

Instructional services for people who are blind

Instructional Services help Department of Rehabilitation Services’ clients regain or maintain maximum independence and self-sufficiency. Services include instruction in cooking or banking, adjustment counseling, personal and home management, communication methods, adaptive techniques or devices and recreation activities. Individuals may also learn skills in preparation for employment.

Rehabilitation teaching

Rehabilitation counseling and instruction help clients adjust to loss of sight while maximizing use of remaining vision and developing practical skills designed to maintain independence.

The Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired’s rehabilitation teachers help individuals learn daily living skills in their homes, such as telephone dialing, time telling, basic meal preparation, clothing identification and care, grooming tips, home safety, teaching others how to guide, locating dropped objects and much more.

Orientation and Mobility

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired’s orientation and mobility specialists provide instruction on a one-on-one basis to help individuals with visual impairments learn to travel safely and efficiently through their environment, using white canes and other independent travel techniques. The instruction may include street crossing, bus travel and evaluation of distance mobility aids to ensure safe and independent travel.
Visually Impaired and Blindness Empowerment

Visually Impaired and Blindness Empowerment, or VIBE, is an evaluation and training program developed to provide Oklahomans who are legally blind an opportunity to develop skills necessary to function more independently with vision loss. The training covers the same skills listed in the SBVI section, but in a group environment. This program allows consumers to build confidence and to meet other individuals with similar vision loss.

Older Blind Living program

The Older Blind Independent Living Program offers independent living services for people who are 55 years old or older and legally blind. Rehabilitation teachers located in Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired 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.

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped provides free services to Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired, and those with learning disabilities or physical limitations that make it difficult to read standard print. Thousands of books, textbooks and periodicals in recorded and braille formats, and playback equipment are mailed to library patrons at no charge.

The library operates the Oklahoma Telephone Reader service, which provides recorded information including various weekly ads, newspaper articles and other publications. The statewide, toll free number is 855-887-6397. The local number in Oklahoma City is 405-522-1896.

The library’s Accessible Instructional Materials Center provides textbooks and other instructional materials in braille and other accessible formats for public school and private school students with visual impairments in kindergarten through grade 12.

The Talking Books and Magazines Studio within the OLBPH is a state-of-the-art digital recording studio, nationally recognized for its excellence in providing quality publications for our Oklahoma patrons as well as for the National Library Service collection. The talented staff and their generous and equally talented roster of volunteers spend endless hours recording, editing and producing publications with Oklahoma connections, whether it might be "Oklahoma Today" magazine or books written by Oklahoma authors.

The library is part of the national network of libraries affiliated with the Library of Congress National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled.

For additional information, visit our web site at www.olbph.org or call 800-523-0288.
Business Enterprise Program (Vending Facilities)

The Business Enterprise Program trains and assists people who are blind or visually impaired in establishing and operating food service businesses in public and private facilities across the state. Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired equips locations, provides initial inventory and offers on-going technical support.

Licensed BEP managers must complete vending facility training courses. They must also pay a percentage of net proceeds to the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, which matches federal funds to support the program. Total sales generated by BEP managers average more than $30 million each year.

Disability Determination Services

Disability Determination Division Services makes the medical eligibility determination on applications for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income for the Social Security Administration. These determinations are based on federal rules and regulations. All applications for benefits must be submitted through the SSA offices.

SSDI pays disability benefits to blind or disabled individuals who are insured due to contributions to the Social Security trust fund through Social Security tax on their earnings. SSDI also makes payments to certain people with disabilities who are dependents of insured individuals.

SSI provides for payments to persons, including children under the age of 18, who have disabilities, limited income and resources.

The SSA, which makes decisions about eligibility for disability benefits, defines disability as the inability to engage in substantial gainful activity because of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months or is expected to result in death. DDS operations are fully funded with federal dollars by the SSA.

For more information, including information about the Social Security topics, and an application and a video about the disability determination process, visit our web site at www.okdrs.gov/independence/dds

Oklahoma School for the Blind

Located in Muskogee, the Oklahoma School for the Blind provides residential and day education, and outreach programs at no charge for Oklahoma children who are blind or visually impaired from infancy through 12th grade. OSB's goal is to help students reach their maximum potential.

Residential and Day School Education

OSB offers a fully accredited academic program with specific skill training, remediation and reinforcement of academic proficiency as well as access to specialized equipment and recreational activities for residential and day students.

Specialized instruction includes braille, orientation and mobility, optimum use of low vision, adaptive equipment and technology, and tactile graphic skills.
The secondary school program includes college preparation, vocational training and a work-study program. In addition, eligible students may receive assessment, counseling, physical therapy and health-care services. Recreational activities include student organizations and interscholastic athletics.

Teaching materials and instructional styles are adapted to meet the needs of each student. Students learn independent living skills to enable each student to attain maximum independence and strengthen social skills and self-esteem. OSB transports students home for weekends and holidays.

Outreach
The school serves as a resource center for young children statewide with visual impairments who do not attend OSB. Outreach staff provide consultation, curriculum assistance, classroom modifications and assistance with technical equipment. Students receive free evaluations on academic achievement, orientation and mobility, low vision, psychological profiles and living skills. Early intervention services are provided to young students to help them prepare for school.

For additional information about Oklahoma School for the Blind, visit our web site at www.osb.k12.ok.us or call 877-229-7136.

Oklahoma School for the Deaf
The Oklahoma School for the Deaf is a statewide resource providing early development and traditional education programs for Deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to high school graduation, family education and networking opportunities, American Sign Language courses offered both on campus and online, recreational camps open to students statewide, developmental assessments, and professional training and consultation to ensure quality instruction and educational sign language interpreting for Deaf and hard of hearing students enrolled in schools throughout the State of Oklahoma at no cost.

The foundation of OSD’s comprehensive services is an ASL/English bilingual program that guides its early development, educational, athletic and recreational programs. OSD’s aim is that all Deaf and hard of hearing youth concurrently develop mastery in both ASL and English.

OSD provides an infant and preschool program for children who are Deaf or hard of hearing on the University of Central Oklahoma (Edmond) campus, a preschool and early elementary on the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (Chickasha) campus, and a residential early childhood through high school program is offered at its Sulphur campus.

OSD is also home to the Oklahoma Educational Interpreter Training Institute, which provides Oklahoma’s certification, registry and continuing education program for all state educational interpreters, and the Equipment Distribution Program providing free equipment designed to meet the various needs of qualifying individuals all across the state.

Residential and Day School Education
OSD offers educational, vocational and campus life programs for residential and day students at its Sulphur campus, from toddlers to 12th grade.

Educational programs and support services address students’ intellectual, physical, social and emotional needs through curriculum, extracurricular activities, transition programs, counseling, physical and occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, psycho-educational and audiological assessments, and health-care services.

Secondary school students receive vocational and technical training and work experience through Occupational Training Opportunities for the Deaf and other vocational programs.

Students are transported home by the school for 3-day weekends and holidays.
Statewide Resource

OSD is a resource center for the needs of Oklahoma's children who are Deaf or hard of hearing but do not attend classes at the residential campus. OSD staff administer speech and language, psycho-educational and audiological assessments to children across the state. Families of preschool children who are Deaf or hard of hearing receive comprehensive early development assistance including home visits, Deaf mentors, day programs, assessments, parent-infant-toddler classes, and the opportunity to network with other families of Deaf and hard of hearing children.

OSD also provides on-site consultation to public school districts, in-service training for teachers and special cultural, academic and social programs, including those offered in the summer.

DRS is a proud partner to Oklahoma Works

The Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services is an official State Workforce partner to Oklahoma Works, the state's employment-focused initiative.

Oklahoma Works' vision is to align resources, education, training and job opportunities to build Oklahoma's workforce. Workforce development, recruitment and retention play an essential role in Gov. Kevin Stitt's goal to propel Oklahoma into a Top 10 State. In support of this effort, a comprehensive strategic framework recognized as "Oklahoma Works Together" compliments the foundation of Oklahoma Works.

DRS continues to focus on accessibility for both job-seekers and business customers at all levels of the Oklahoma Works system and remains committed to developing and supporting increased employment opportunities for Oklahomans with disabilities. By removing barriers to employment, thousands of Oklahomans with disabilities retain their current employment, return to work or enter the workforce for the first time as a result of our efforts.
Contacts

Note: for additional information about or from any listed DRS office, please send an e-mail to info@okdrs.gov unless otherwise specified.

Oklahoma Commission for Rehabilitation Services
3535 NW 58th Street, Suite 500
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405-951-3472 Office
www.okdrs.org/comm/home

Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services
3535 NW 58th St.
Suite 500
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405-951-3400
800-845-8476 Toll Free
www.okdrs.gov

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
3535 NW 58th St.
Suite 500
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405-951-3400
800-845-8476 Toll Free
www.okdrs.org/job-seekers/dvr

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
3535 NW 58th St.
Suite 500
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405-951-3400
800-845-8476 Toll Free
www.okdrs.org/job-seekers/sbvi

Oklahoma School for the Blind
3300 Gibson St.
Muskogee, OK 74403
918-781-8200
877-229-7136 Toll Free in Oklahoma
www.osb.k12.ok.us

Oklahoma School for the Deaf
1100 E Oklahoma St.
Sulphur, OK 73086
580-622-4900 V/TTY
888-685-3323 Toll Free
www.osd.k12.ok.us

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
300 NE 18th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
405-521-3514 Voice
800-523-0288 Toll Free
405-521-4672 TTY/TDD
405-521-4582 Fax
E-mail: OLBPH@okdrs.gov
www.olbph.org

Visually Impaired and Blindness Empowerment (VIBE)
405-522-3333 Voice
918-551-4908 Voice

Assistive Technology Lab
2401 N.W. 23rd St., Ste. 91
Oklahoma City, OK 73107
405-522-3418 Voice
www.okdrs.org/job-seekers/assistive

Business Enterprise Program
3325 N. Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
405-523-4800 Voice
www.okdrs.org/job-seekers/bep

Business Services Team
3535 NW 58th Street, Suite 500
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
833-653-7748
www.okdrs.gov/business-services
Contacts

Employment Support Services
300 NE 18th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
405-522-2123 Voice
800-523-0288 Toll Free
www.okdrs.org/job-seekers/ess

Older Blind Independent Living Services Program
918-551-4900
Telephone Information Line:
800-845-8476 Toll Free

Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing — Oklahoma City Office
2401 NW 23rd Street
Suite 51
Oklahoma City, OK 73107
405-522-7930 Voice
800-833-8973
405-522-7948 Fax
www.okdrs.org/job-seekers/sdhh-vr

Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing — Tulsa Office:
8740 E 11th Street, Suite F
Tulsa, OK 74112
918-836-5556 Voice
918-835-2358 Fax
www.okdrs.org/job-seekers/sdhh-vr

Online Resources

Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services
www.okdrs.gov

Application for DRS Services
www.okdrs.gov/app-for-service

Commission Meeting Schedules
www.okdrs.gov/comm/home

Disability Resource Guide
www.okdrs.gov/guide/home

DRS State Plan
www.okdrs.gov/node/5483

Transition: School-to-Work
3535 NW 58th Street, Suite 500
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405-951-3488 Voice
(405) 951-3529 Fax
www.okdrs.org/students/transition

Ticket to Work Outreach
1500 Hoppe Blvd.,
Suite 2
Ada, OK 74820
405-777-3078
866-882-4515
Fax 580-421-9265
www.okdrs.org/job-seekers/ticket

Oklahoma Disability Statistics
www.okdrs.gov/OK-statistics

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
www.olbph.org

Oklahoma School for the Blind
www.osb.k12.ok.us

Oklahoma School for the Deaf
www.osd.k12.ok.us

Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
www.okdrs.gov/job-seekers/sdhh-vr