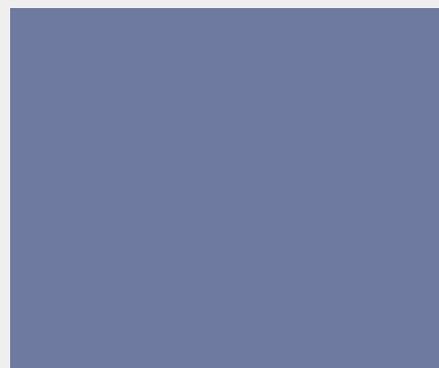
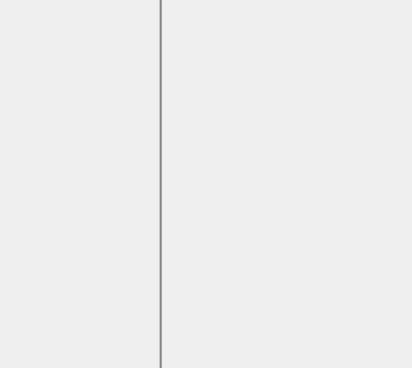
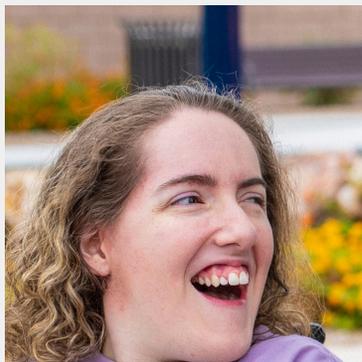
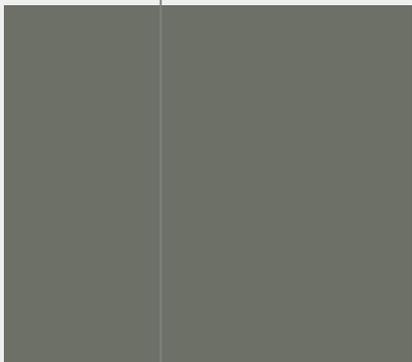
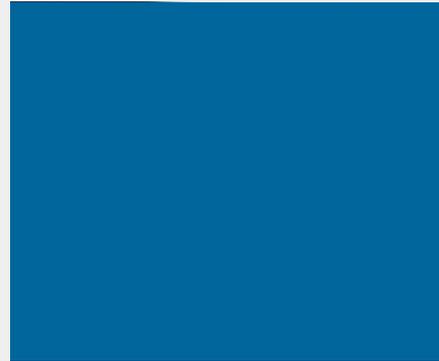




Annual Report

2025



2025: A Year of Ups, Downs, and Advocacy

“This has never happened before.” If only I had a dollar for each time we said this over the past year...

2025 tested us in ways none of us could have anticipated, from funding uncertainties to the growing needs of the people we serve. Like many organizations across the country, Disability Rights Mississippi faced unprecedented challenges that threatened our ability to carry out our work.

Yet through it all, our team remained steadfast in our mission: to protect and advocate for the rights of people with disabilities across our state.

I could not be prouder of how our staff responded. They adapted, problem-solved, and went above and beyond to ensure our clients continued to receive the support and advocacy they deserve. From the courtroom and throughout communities, or the halls of government, DRMS remained a voice for safety, health, dignity, and equality for those we serve.

While the year was not without hardship, it also reaffirmed the strength, resilience, and heart of our organization. The work we do matters — and it’s because of our dedicated team, partners, and supporters that DRMS continues to make a lasting impact.

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we will keep building a Mississippi where every person with a disability can live, work, and thrive with dignity and independence.



Polly Tribble

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Board of Directors

As we reflect on a challenging but impactful year, we want to extend our sincere gratitude to the Disability Rights Mississippi Board of Directors. Your leadership, guidance, and unwavering commitment to our mission have been instrumental in helping us navigate obstacles and stay focused on what matters most — protecting and advancing the rights of people with disabilities in our state.

Thank you for your dedication, insight, and continued support of our work and our team.

Alicia Creel

Kevin Frye

Gwendolyn Gray

Charlene Gressett

Gwen Hardaway

Hal Holbrook

Akwete Muhammad

Beverly Pettigew

Dr. Tiffany Ross

Kristie Speights

LaToye Sullivan-Zinn

Wendy Wilson-White

Lawerance Williams



FY 2025 IN REVIEW

662 Individuals Helped

Includes instances in which DRMS provided information and referrals, technical assistance, or case services, individual advocacy, or investigations

159 Service Requests

Includes instances in which issues went beyond technical assistance or referral and a case was opened.

117,818

individuals Impacted by
DRMS's systemic and legal
advocacy and monitoring,



37

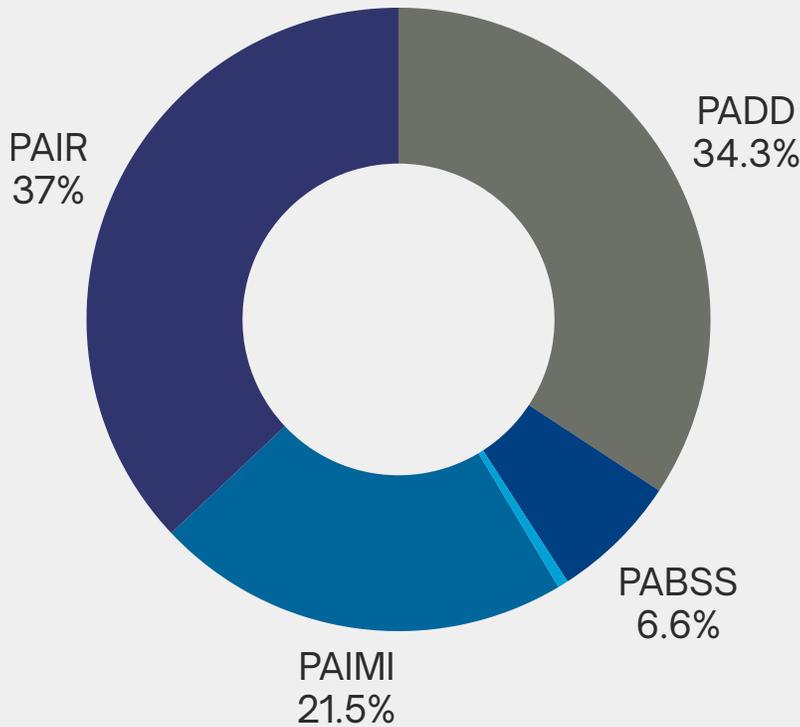
Students who stayed
in school and
received appropriate
services



18

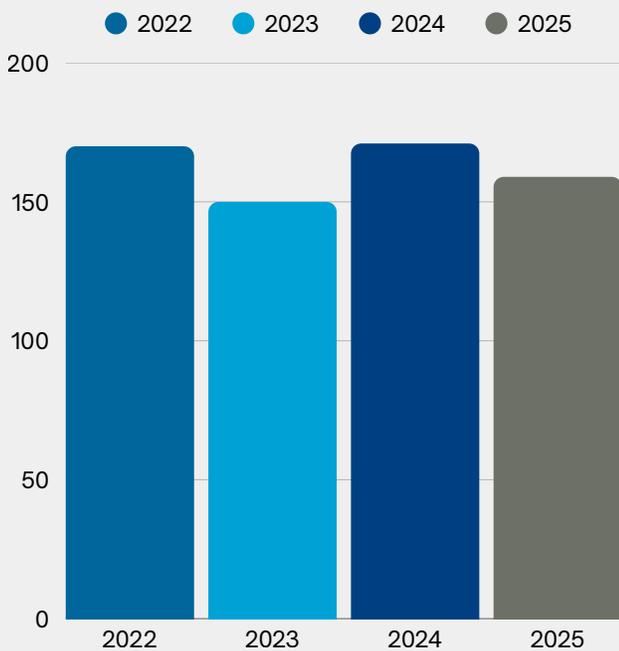
Group Projects
Advocating for People
with Developmental
Disabilities

Cases by Program



The Rep Payee Team completed 78 payee reviews and 450 beneficiary interviews. During the course of FY2025 the team went beyond their targeted goal and completed 108% of reviews assigned.

Year vs. Year



A NOTE ON FUNDING

The FY25 year was marked by unprecedented funding challenges for our agency. Our appropriations were withheld for months, forcing DRMS to make difficult decisions to maintain operations. For the first time in agency history, all programs ceased taking new cases for a period of time. Funding issues required a pause on travel as well, limiting our ability to monitor with typical frequency. Additionally, DRMS was forced to close or decline litigation in several instances due to funding issues. Despite these challenges, DRMS is proud to have maintained respectable case numbers in comparison to previous years.

OUR IMPACT

Ensuring No Student Is Left Behind

A 5th grade student with a learning disability and behavioral disorder was expelled for “aggressive behavior” and **had been left without access to any instruction**. Our team quickly identified that the district had failed to recognize his documented disabilities and moved to secure the evaluations and supports he was entitled to under the law.

DRMS successfully **negotiated a comprehensive evaluation**, which confirmed his diagnoses and revealed that he was also performing below grade level in reading. As a result of our advocacy, the student **now receives special education services** three times a week, along with targeted behavior support designed to **help him transition back to school** safely and successfully.

Because these services are now in place, this **student is on track to remain with his peers** and is no longer at risk of being held back due to the district’s earlier actions.

A 10th grade student with ADHD had struggled for years without the special education services he needed. Despite ongoing behavior challenges, failing multiple classes, and repeatedly not passing state tests, **the district continued to deny him support**. When DRMS became involved, we worked to ensure that his needs were finally taken seriously.

Through our advocacy, the district agreed to conduct a comprehensive special education evaluation, which confirmed that he qualified for services. With this finding, **he is now receiving the individualized supports he should have had all along**.

With appropriate services finally in place, this student now has the **opportunity to stabilize academically, build confidence, and stay on track for graduation**.

OUR IMPACT

A high school student was told she could not return to her home school after a short-term stay in a residential mental health facility. Instead, the district insisted she attend the alternative school for an entire semester before they would even consider letting her come back. Despite knowing she had been hospitalized and having documentation of her anxiety diagnosis, the school had never evaluated her or explored whether she needed additional support.

When DRMS stepped in, we advocated for her right to learn in the least restrictive, most supportive environment. We pushed the district to fulfill its legal responsibilities, complete a comprehensive evaluation, and recognize her needs rather than punish her for seeking mental health treatment.

As a result of our advocacy, she was evaluated appropriately and reinstated in her home school, where she belongs. With the correct supports now being put in place, she can continue her education in a setting that honors her progress, her resilience, and her right to thrive.

Protecting Educational Access in Juvenile Detention

DRMS intervened when youth in detention were denied academic instruction due to behavioral or security concerns. In one case, **a student had been detained for 11 months without any access to education**. Through advocacy, the student is now receiving instruction and support, **ensuring they do not fall further behind academically**. Efforts continue to assist additional youth in similar situations.

DRMS ensured that detained students with disabilities **received overdue evaluations, updated Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and are being considered for compensatory services**. Staff were guided to recognize the importance of **transition planning and behavior support services**, helping students in detention maintain their educational progress and prepare for reintegration into school.

Through monitoring juvenile detention facilities, DRMS highlighted systemic trends, including the lack of certified special educators, missing IEPs, and inadequate instruction. These findings contributed to broader discussions and corrective actions, including a **revised monitoring and reporting system** for educational services in juvenile justice settings.

OUR IMPACT

Strengthening Partnerships for Continuity of Education

DRMS is fostering **stronger collaboration** between the agency, the Mississippi Department of Education, and the Department of Public Safety to **ensure continuity of education** for students as they enter or leave detention facilities. This partnership helps **create a safer, more supportive educational environment** for youth with disabilities who have entered the juvenile justice system, and potentially improve outcomes when they return to their communities..

Protecting Health and Safety for Individuals with Disabilities in All Settings

An incarcerated **veteran with a traumatic brain injury** and severe mental health needs was housed in a standard facility that could not provide adequate psychiatric or rehabilitative care. DRMS intervened, documenting deficiencies and advocating directly with facility officials and the Department of Corrections. As a result, he was **transferred to a specialized mental health treatment facility**, where he now receives consistent psychiatric care, medication, and therapeutic support. This advocacy **stabilized his condition, improved his quality of life, and ensured his rights were protected.**

Two incarcerated individuals with serious medical conditions were being denied essential care. One, with end-stage renal disease and diabetes, was not receiving regular dialysis, leading to life-threatening infections. The other, who uses a nephrostomy bag, suffered from chronic infection and inadequate wound care. DRMS intervened, **ensuring both received emergency and ongoing medical treatment, proper supplies**, and necessary specialist referrals. These actions **restored their health and dignity** and prompted the facilities to **improve medical care procedures** for all residents.

OUR IMPACT

Monitoring Serious Incidents in Residential Care

Monitoring of psychiatric residential treatment facilities revealed **inconsistencies in reporting serious occurrences** via incident reports as required under the Code of Federal Regulations. Some facilities submitted very few reports over the review period, while others submitted none. Data was collected and analyzed to identify trends in reporting frequency. Facilities identified as deficient were contacted, and subsequent discussions with administrators indicated that some were unaware of reporting requirements. Following these interventions, psychiatric residential treatment facilities in Mississippi are **now submitting incident reports as required**, improving oversight and ensuring that serious occurrences, particularly those involved safety, health, abuse, and neglect, are communicated timely and appropriately.

Ending Dangerous Conditions at Unlicensed Personal Care Home

A significant rights-protection outcome occurred following a report from the Olive Branch Police Department regarding conditions at the unlicensed Purple Heart Personal Care Home. Law enforcement located **a missing resident who had been trapped** for several hours in a cavity between the attic floor and the living room ceiling. This incident prompted a DRMS monitoring visit that **uncovered serious concerns about the facility's operations and living conditions**.

Upon review, the home was found to be **severely neglectful**. The residence lacked basic necessities, including a functioning refrigerator. Beds were outfitted with arm and leg restraints, and residents were confined to their rooms in violation of their rights and safety. **The environment posed immediate health, safety, and welfare risks to all individuals living there**.

Collaboration with the Olive Branch Police Department led to a comprehensive investigation of the home. As a result of the findings, **the facility was shut down**, ensuring that residents were **removed from dangerous conditions** and that the operator could no longer continue these harmful practices.

This is only one instance: over the course of the year, DRMS helped **shut down multiple unsafe unlicensed personal care homes** throughout the state. Additionally, in one instance, DRMS identified a home that provided attentive, high-quality care for its residents despite being unlicensed. DRMS assisted the owner in beginning the licensing process and **ensuring residents continue to receive safe, compliant care**.

In the News

Disability Rights Mississippi wants to see serious change

Group gathers at state capitol to plead with lawmakers to act fast



Holding unlicensed personal care homes accountable, Disability Rights Mississippi calls for new legislation



In the News



JUSTICE

Civil rights organizations ask Secretary Watson to explain mail-in ballot 'confusion'

Representatives from Disability Rights Mississippi, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and the state conference of the NAACP said that Watson's office, which oversees state elections, unilaterally counted Friday, November 29, as a business day, even though the state government considered that day a holiday.



In Legal Terms

In Legal Terms: Special Education

We're very proud to have members of the Mississippi Special Education Coalition as our guests today to discuss the education rights for your student and the [report the Coalition published](#). Joining us are Julian Miller from the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#), Cassie Tolliver from [Disability Rights Mississippi](#), and Ayanna Hill from [American Civil Liberties of Mississippi](#).



NEWS

Mississippi Nonprofits Help Prepare Voters for the Elections



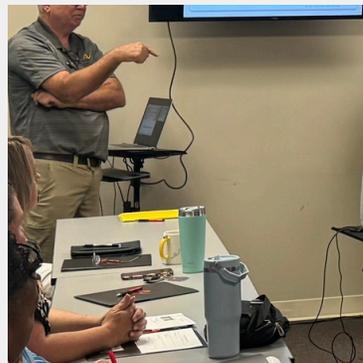
HEALTH

After funding delays, disability rights organization resumes services

A state organization tasked with advocating for and providing legal services to Mississippians with disabilities received its delayed federal funding Wednesday – two weeks after [it was forced to stop taking new cases](#) for the first time in its history.

Team DRMS

In the Office and in the Community: Continuing to Learn, Educate, and Advocate







Thank You!

Your support makes a difference. Together, we are making Mississippi a place where people with disabilities can live safely, work confidently, and thrive with independence.

To donate to our agency, scan the code or visit www.drms.ms/donate.



Financial documents are available on our website at www.drms.ms/policies-and-legal. If you would like a copy emailed to you, contact info@drms.ms.

-  601-968-0600
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-  www.drms.ms