



NEWSLETTER



WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER!

We recently asked state agencies to submit employees who have gone above and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout this newsletter, we are excited to recognize the state employees whose names were submitted to us. We appreciate all the hard work these individuals have done for their agencies and the State during this time!



We have recently joined Instagram and LinkedIn! Follow us on all of our social media platforms for updates on testing, job announcements, and more! Search for "State of Alabama Personnel Department."



The State Personnel Board will meet on August 19, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. in the Board Room on the 3rd Floor of the Folsom Administrative Building in Montgomery.



06

Empower Retirement

People don't see retirement as the end of something - they think of it as the beginning of something new. For more in-depth information regarding the Deferred Compensation Plan with Empower please visit www.AlabamaRetire.com.



07

Ask Personnel

We are excited to introduce our new Ask Personnel Column! Get the latest answers to state employees' most asked questions. If you have any questions you would like to be featured in our next Ask Column, please email them to newsletter@personnel.alabama.gov.

Back to School

04 Alabama State Department of Education Feature

ADPH's Hotline and Email Response Team

The COVID-19 Hotline and Call Center Team can be found working 7 days a week answering telephone and email questions from the public about COVID-19 for the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH). They respond promptly, research for the latest guidance as it evolves, and offer a willing ear or comforting words when Alabamians reach out to them. Team leader Ken Harrison takes pride in these professionals as they respond to a variety of questions from healthcare providers, to business owners, to parents concerned about summer camp safety. Mr. Harrison states, "They are offering a vital service by providing information and resources that inform, protect, and preserve the health and safety of fellow Alabamians. People are coming to us because they need advice, they need information, and sometimes, they are afraid and need someone to talk to in a supporting role."

For more information regarding COVID-19 you can visit ADPH's website at www.alabamapublichealth.gov/covid19. For general COVID-19 questions, call 1-800-270-7268, or email covid19info@adph.state.al.us. Telephone calls are answered from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. For information regarding testing sites, call the Alabama COVID-19 24/7 Hotline at 1-888-264-2256 for testing sites and hours of operation near you. For frequently asked questions and to check your symptoms, visit the Alabama.gov COVID-19 Information Hub at covid19.alabama.gov.

Thank you to ADPH and especially the COVID-19 Hotline Team for all your continued hard work during the COVID-19 pandemic!



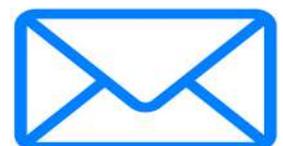
Alabama Department of Labor

Unemployment Compensation Division

The Unemployment Compensation (UC) Division of ADOL has seen unprecedented unemployment claims since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. UC Specialists have been assisting claimants through the phone system, online portal, career centers, two outside vendors, and in person. ADOL established in-person claims assistance locations in Montgomery, first at the Multiplex at Cramton Bowl, then on the campus of Alabama State University, and currently at the Crump Senior Community Center. These in-person services have been offered for more than thirteen weeks and have assisted over 25,000 people. Thank you to the UC Division for all their hard work assisting the citizens of Alabama!

Printshop and Mailroom Team

On the front line of this Unemployment Compensation (UC) challenge is the ADOL's print shop and mailroom. WSFA visited ADOL's Central Office in May to tour the print shop and mail facilities and speak with some of the employees handling the thousands of pieces of UC mail being produced and processed. It has been a monumental task to handle all of the logistics and challenges associated with the historical amount of UC claims as a result of the virus and subsequent shutdowns. Thank you to the print shop and mailroom team at ADOL for all your hard work!



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH



Dr. Mark Woods is the Medical Director at the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH). Dr. Woods was instrumental from the beginning in developing and implementing processes within ADMH hospitals to minimize the possibility of widespread exposure of COVID-19. Dr. Woods continuously consults with the Infectious Control Specialist in Tuscaloosa and with Public Health to ensure all possible precautions are followed. In addition, he works tirelessly to skillfully manage ADMH's supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as well as overseeing the treatment of COVID-19 positive patients housed in the newly established quarantine unit. Dr. Woods' exemplary service during this time remains the steady and trustworthy source of guidance for ADMH senior staff and thus for the ADMH system of care - both in ADMH hospitals and for staff working with our community providers. Thank you Dr. Woods for your dedicated service to ADMH, as well as, the patients within ADMH's care!



Marguerite Walker is a RN Supervisor at Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center for ADMH. Ms. Walker is known as being a team player and having a strong commitment to patient care even if it means a long work day. Ms. Walker steps in and works overtime and will adjust her schedule to ensure adequate nursing coverage when needed. Ms. Walker volunteered to work the COVID Unit, tested all the patients without any hesitation, ensured the unit was properly set up for PPE usage, and took the initiative to clean and organize the unit without being asked and without complaint. She is an asset to not only the Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center but also to ADMH. Thank you, Ms. Walker!



ADMH's Harper Heroes



The Harper Heroes are employees at the Mary Starke Harper State Mental Facility that provides mental health services for individuals in the State that have a severe mental illness and are 65 and over. ADMH opened an alternative care site away from the facility to assist ADMH in providing care to COVID-19 patients. The Harper Heroes work in direct care with COVID-19 patients, caring for these patients by providing assistance needed to care for them and going above and beyond in their care of these patients. The Harper Heroes are Mental Health Workers I and II and include: Joyce Norwood, Sarah Hurst, Vera Milton, Jackie Humphries, Raymond Hendrix, Diane Patton, Earlie Jones, Willie Jackson, Mary Anderson, Gabriel Watson, Cynthia Pruitt, Alexis Small, Shandra Zanders, Chiquita McCoy, Shawanna Porter, Rose Thompson, Kimberly Tubbs, Aleah Smith, Debra Richardson, Briana Finch, Diykhembe Bishop, Janie Burns, Candace Cochran, Gayle Duncan, Brittany Mullenix, Latija Cochran, and Megan Moore. Thank you to the Harper Heroes for their hard work during the COVID-19 pandemic!

Roadmap to Reopening Schools

On June 26th, State Superintendent Dr. Eric Mackey released Alabama State Department of Education's (ALSDE) [Roadmap to Reopening Schools](#). The health and well-being of our students, teachers, and staff is a vital part of being able to deliver high-quality instruction to our students and this has been a key priority of the State Board of Education. Additionally, ALSDE created a [Roadmap FAQ](#) which highlights various aspects of the Roadmap including our guiding principles, focus areas to assist school systems in navigating the status of campus availability, recommendations for school systems, and more.

Governor Ivey has continued to support local school systems in Alabama by designating and awarding Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) to ALSDE and local school systems to support safe, in-person instruction and remote learning. These funds will enhance quality instruction by providing and maintaining Internet-enabled digital devices for Alabama students, expanding local school system's remote learning plan, increasing teacher proficiency and professional development, and improving access and connectivity for students.

The CRF designated for healthcare supports and allows ALSDE and local school systems to implement recommendations in the Roadmap and in the Enhanced Screening and Wellness Addendum. Specifically, local school systems can use these funds to fund salary or wages for nurses or aides, upgrade nursing facilities with designated isolated spaces, and improve or create work areas, screening or thermography equipment, contract with the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) or another provider for COVID-19 testing, and enhancement or modifications to school buses.

In Alabama's model, local school systems are responsible for developing and implementing policies and procedures around each of the three instructional scenarios - traditional, remote, and blended. The State secured a state-wide digital curriculum and expanded the high school ACCESS program to all school systems. It is the recommendation of ALSDE that all school systems provide access to both traditional in-person and remote learning options throughout the 2020-2021 school year. Further details about remote learning can be found in the full Roadmap.

Local Boards of Education, upon the recommendation of their superintendents and in consultation with the ADPH and/or local public health officials, will make determinations about specific changes in campus status throughout the year. Local school systems set day-to-day policies and procedures. Key considerations include

transmission rates in local communities. ADPH has developed a color-coded system guide and [Risk Indicator Dashboard](#) which assists superintendents in determining the risk alert level for their respective community. ADPH's Toolkit will further expound and provide scenario-based recommendations for school systems.

Based on the latest science on transmission risk, on July 23, 2020, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) updated its guidance on the return to school and issued [The Importance of Reopening America's Schools this Fall](#). Schools play a critical role in supporting the whole child, not just academic growth and achievement. Further, the lack of in-person educational options disproportionately harms low-income and minority children and those living with disabilities. These students are far less likely to have access to private instruction and care are far more likely to rely on key school-supported resources like food programs, special education services, counseling, and after-school programs to meet basic developmental needs.

The guidance outlines [preparations for K-12 school administrators](#) as students return to school this fall for on-campus instruction. It is vital that when school campuses open for in-person instruction, critical considerations are made on how to protect the health and well-being of our students, teachers, and staff to enable schools to open and remain open. The CDC [provides considerations](#) for schools to help keep schools operating

during COVID-19. Detailed in the considerations are promoting behaviors that reduce spread, maintaining healthy environments, maintaining healthy operations, and preparing for when someone gets sick.

On July 29, 2020, Governor Ivey extended the mask order through August 31. As it relates specifically to schools, employees and students in 2nd grade and above should wear facial coverings as much as practicable. See the Order, [Section 14, Educational Institutions for exact wording](#). Visitors to school events, such as ballgames, fall under the regular provisions for gathering in indoor or outdoor spaces (See Section 2) as well as [athletic activities 11b\(i\)](#). This order is applicable to all public indoor and outdoor spaces on P-12 campuses including transportation vehicles such as buses. ALSDE has ordered 2.5 million masks that will be delivered directly to school systems in August.

The facial-covering requirement does not apply to students in grades P-1, any person with a medical condition or disability that prevents him or her from wearing a facial covering, or persons in a classroom who are able to maintain six-foot distance between seating. To review the Public Health Order in its entirety and review a list of other possible exceptions, please visit the [ADPH website](#).

*Thank you to ALSDE for writing and submitting this feature for the Personnel Newsletter!



EMPLOYEES' SUGGESTION INCENTIVE PROGRAM REMINDER

Don't forget to submit your cost-saving ideas to the Employees' Suggestion Incentive Board for the opportunity to earn a CASH AWARD up to \$5,000! You can find the rules and submission form on the State Personnel Department website, www.personnel.alabama.gov.

under the "Employees" button, then "Online Options."

Please remember that your completed submission form must include approval from your appointing authority in order for your suggestion to be considered for an award.



Alabama Securities Commission

Bonnie Traphan is an Information Technology Network Associate with the Alabama Securities Commission (ASC). Ms. Traphan has exemplified adaptability and has a stalwart commitment to ensuring ASC's network remains secure. She has gone above and beyond in fulfilling the duties outlined in her job description. When Ms. Traphan was notified that a large portion of the staff would be teleworking, she diligently worked with managers to analyze their department's technology needs and adapted her strategy to fit each unique need. Ms. Traphan also updated numerous staff laptops so they would include the latest web applications to mitigate security risk that allowed for ASC to continue to license thousands of financial professionals and that the process remained streamlined. Ms. Traphan has gone above and beyond in her role at the ASC and we are thankful for her service!

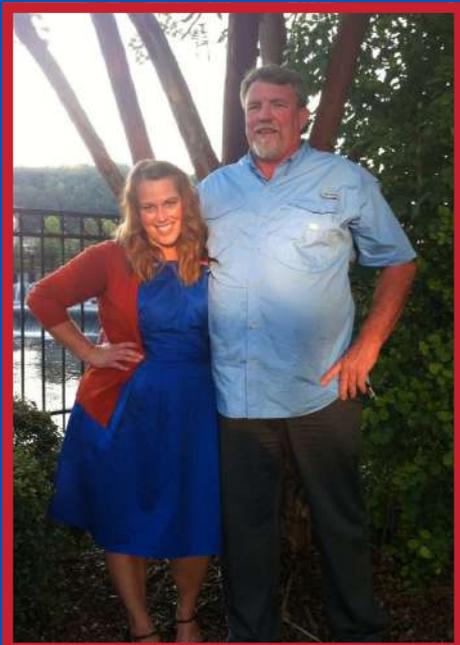


Alabama Department of Revenue

Client Services is part of the Information Technology Division at the Department of Revenue (ADOR). When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the State, one huge transition for ADOR was transitioning to remote work for a large portion of ADOR employees. Most of the employees were not equipped for remote work, but Client Services rose to the challenge and worked around the clock, including on the weekends to update and prepare 200 laptops for remote work. Client Services has continued throughout the pandemic to obtain equipment and setup even more employees to work remotely, all while providing ongoing support to those

employees. These employees have worked tirelessly to help ensure that ADOR continues to serve the citizens of Alabama. Other ADOR employees have praised Client Services employees, not only for the quality of work, but the efficiency, kindness, and overall willingness to do whatever it takes to get the job done. Client Services employees include: Pam Williamson, Kim Burch, Greg Crawford, Derek Garvin, Amy Fincher, Kristina Grier, Joseph Hooper, Matthew Hunter, Joseph Perry, Robert McConnell, Erik Ranstead, Keri Stephens, and Bill Stewart. Thank you to the staff at Client Services for all your hard work!

Alabama Forestry Commission



David and Marti Davis both work in the Alabama Forestry Commission's (AFC) Protection Division and have stepped up to play key roles in AFC's COVID-19 support efforts. Their leadership has helped make AFC's efforts run seamlessly. Mr. Davis ran the warehouse operation for about a month, which meant that he worked seven days a week from early in the morning, until late at night. He was responsible for arranging drivers to haul PPE around the State and determined their routes to make sure the proper supplies were getting to hospitals, nursing homes, and other facilities that needed PPE. Mrs. Davis is responsible for making sure AFC's drivers and other employees have what they need to do their jobs. This includes food, lodging, travel reimbursements, adequate transportation, and other necessary items. Mrs. Davis arranged a contract to pay for hotel rooms for the AFC team, which alleviated the burden of travel reimbursements for employees. They have both been key leaders in AFC's efforts to help the State, and AFC thanks them for their service!

EMPOWER RETIREMENT

PEOPLE DON'T SEE RETIREMENT AS THE END OF SOMETHING - THEY THINK OF IT AS THE BEGINNING OF SOMETHING NEW.

That's the finding of a survey by the Empower Institute, the research arm of Empower Retirement. The survey respondents who have retired and those who are still planning to retire said that, compared to their counterparts of 20 years ago, today's retirees have more opportunities to enjoy a second career, start a business, or work in the gig economy. Also, more than 60% of pre-retirees said they plan to continue to work. But the future isn't all work and no play. A total of 44% of pre-retirees said their top advice to their younger selves would be to save enough to have fun, as well as to pay for necessities.

The survey also found that:

-83% of pre-retirees said they expect to live their best life in retirement.

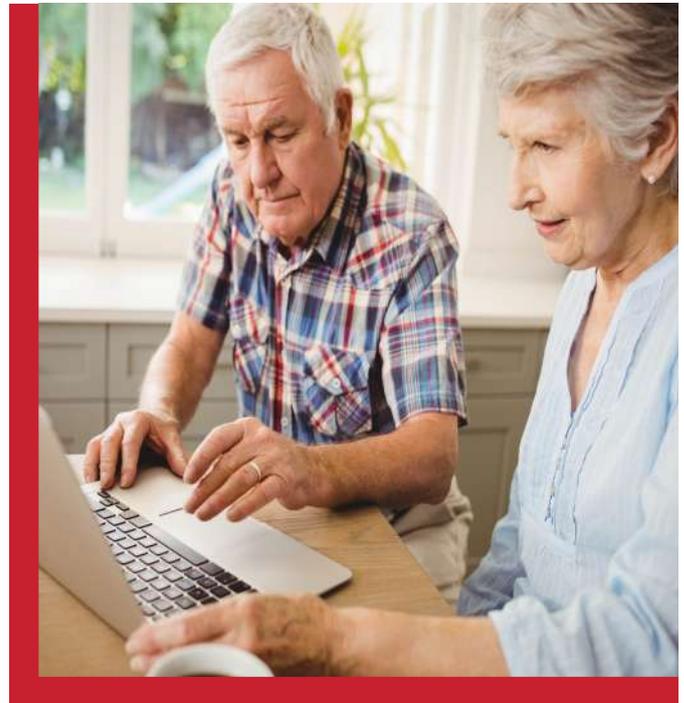
-83% of pre-retirees said they would rather save more

money today so they don't have to cut back in retirement.

-86% of retirees and pre-retirees said retirement today is less about slowing down than it used to be.

In other words, pre-retirees are optimistic about what the future has in store, and they're looking forward to retirement as an active, rewarding, and fulfilling time of their lives. As Empower Retirement's President and CEO Edmund F. Murphy III has put it, "Planning for retirement now means planning for a new chapter in life, and we think that's pretty exciting."

You can find an in-depth discussion of the survey on the [Empower Institute website](#). For more information, visit [AlabamaRetire.com](#), or call 877-313-2262. Remember, you can also talk with your Retirement Plan Advisor.



Securities offered by GWFS Equities, Inc. Member FINRA/SIPC, marketed under the Empower brand. GWFS is affiliated with Great-West Funds, Inc. Great-West Trust Company, LLC; and registered investment advisers Advised Assets Group, LLC and Great-West Capital Management, LLC, marketed under the Great-West Investments™ brand. ©2020 Great-West Life & Annuity Insurance Company. All rights reserved 98954-01-ESFE-WF-289129-0120 ROXXXXXX-0120



Department of Finance



Adrian Perry works for Finance located in the Capitol Complex. Mr. Perry has gone above and beyond in his efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic and to reduce possible contamination, Mr. Perry deep cleans and sanitizes all offices and common areas each Wednesday at noon to keep us safe. Although taking care of this facility is a huge job, Mr. Perry still has time to handle any small items that may pop up during the day. As you arrive in the morning, you may see him out and about inspecting the grounds and surrounding area. His attitude is refreshing, and the quality of his work is remarkable. We thank Mr. Perry for his service during the COVID-19 pandemic!

ASK PERSONNEL



We hope you find our new Ask Personnel column helpful and informative! We are answering State employees' most asked questions and would love your feedback. To submit a question to be featured in our next Ask Personnel column, please email newsletter@personnel.alabama.gov.

01

With COVID-19, I realize State Personnel testing has a limited capacity. What do I need to do if I want to schedule testing? Is State-wide testing currently available? I called to schedule testing, but have not received a testing card yet, what should I do?

State Personnel is continuing to administer statewide testing. However, due to temporary closures of many of our statewide testing facilities, statewide testing is being conducted with limited capacity. We anticipate an increase in statewide testing capacity as these testing facilities are once again available. In the meantime, State Personnel is offering bi-monthly weekday testing for all job classifications requiring a written exam at our new testing facility, located at 60 Commerce Street in Montgomery. Please check our website for information regarding the scheduling of written examinations and directions to our Commerce Street facility. Test cards will be mailed to applicants once they have been scheduled for a test date and time. Please note that until further notice, all individuals attending State Personnel testing or training must wear a mask or other facial covering.

02

I recently received a notice in the mail regarding exam results, but I didn't take a test. What does this mean?

The State Personnel Department utilizes various types of employment testing methods. The type of test you take depends on the type of examination being administered for a particular job. The job announcement will provide this information under the section titled "Type of Examination." For Training and Experience evaluations, applicants are given an exam score based on the training and experience listed on their application. If you received a notice regarding exam results and did not take a written examination, it is likely that your results were based on a Training and Experience evaluation.



Did you know?

Recent changes to the State Personnel Board Rules could positively impact many state employees:

Rule 670-X-13-.06(2)

Normally, when a state employee retires from state service they must be separated for at least the same number of hours as they were paid for their annual leave before returning to work for the state. However, due to the pandemic, that rule has been temporarily modified. As of now, an employee could retire and return to work as a Retired State Employee after being separated from state service for at least one pay period (as required by the IRS), ensuring continuity of operations and helping to fill gaps in essential services during the State of Emergency. This change expires on December 31, 2020. Beginning January 1, 2021, employees will again have to wait until the time equivalent to the amount of annual leave for which they were paid expires.

Rule 670-X-14-.01(1)

Before the amendment to this rule, any sick leave earned over 1,200 hours was automatically rolled into excess sick leave each pay period. However, this rule now provides that any sick leave over 1,200 hours will roll into excess only at the end of the calendar year. In addition, an appointing authority may now approve an employee to use his or her excess sick leave; the approval of the State Personnel Board is no longer required. The changes to this rule are permanent.



Alabama Law Enforcement Agency



Debbie Bryant is the Driver License Supervisor from the North Region for ALEA. Ms. Bryant has the busiest office in the North Region and has the most employees in the ALEA Driver License Division. Ms. Bryant worked every day to ensure all issues with the closure of offices were addressed in an efficient manner. As offices began to re-open, Ms. Bryant assisted with issues at these offices and implemented procedures that made these offices run smoothly, along with addressing challenges faced by employees and the general public due to COVID-19. Ms. Bryant worked closely with local officials to ensure that ALEA's Driver's License offices were operating in line with the safety and requirements of these county facilities. Ms. Bryant has had many compliments and accolades during her short tenure as the leader of the Birmingham District. Thank you, Ms. Bryant!



Joshua Williams is a Driver License Examiner from the Central/South Region for ALEA. Mr. Williams is compassionate, considerate, kind, hardworking, and diligent in his efforts to help others daily. To date, Mr. Williams has processed nearly 8,000 applications. During the COVID-19 shutdown, Mr. Williams continued to work rather than remain at home. He worked numerous details at the ALEA Headquarters, as well as checking in with his immediate supervisors to accommodate any other needed task. He has received numerous accolades for his assistance during these difficult times. Mr. Williams does not leave the office each workday before ensuring that his duties and responsibilities are met, which includes, checking on his supervisor and co-workers before leaving for the day. Thank you, Mr. Williams!

COST SAVINGS

PerksConnect



The State of Alabama and PerksConnect have teamed up to provide you with exclusive deals and discounts in your neighborhood. We are always updating our offers so there are constantly more ways to save.

In addition to discounts from local merchants, you can save on national deals from thousands of partners:

- Online Discounts: Click the National Deals tab and find over 300 web-based savings from retailers. Plus **Shop Now, Pay Over Time with Zebit**.

- Discounted Gift Cards: Access exclusive discounted gift cards from companies such as Belk, Lands' End, Cabela's, and Macy's.

Registration is simple and FREE. Simply go to alabama.perksconnection.com, pick the region closest to you and complete the short form. You can start saving immediately!

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ABOUT US

The Alabama Merit System law created the Personnel Department to be administered by a Personnel Director who answers to an independent board. The Board currently consists of five members who serve staggered six-year terms. Two members are appointed by the Governor, one by the Lieutenant Governor, one by the Speaker of the House, and one member is an elected classified State employee who is subject to all Merit System rules and regulations.

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