



# Annual Report 2023

*New Mexico  
State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)*

*in partnership with NM  
Division of Vocational  
Rehabilitation (NMDVR)*





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## **What is the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)?**

**The New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was established under Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and authorized in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. WIOA linked the state Workforce Development Board into the collaborative effort.**

**As a partner with the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR), the SRC is involved in developing policies and goals, planning activities, evaluating the program effectiveness and other related functions. The primary goal is to ensure that people with disabilities are provided with an equal opportunity to receive the programs, services and supports needed for integrated competitive employment.**

**The SRC acts as the external, community-oriented voice in the consideration and development of services, working closely with the NMDVR. The goal is to remain informed on those issues most pertinent to the provision of services to the disability community within New Mexico and to express concerns, ideas or support regarding those issues and initiatives. The required SRC membership brings the consumer voice from varied perspectives as a result of their work and interactions with individuals with disabilities.**



## Letter from the SRC Chair



The Honorable Michelle Lujan-Grisham and Secretary Arsenio Romero:

It is my great pleasure submit to you the 2023 Annual Report for the New Mexico DVR State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The members of the SRC are dedicated to understanding the specific needs of people with disabilities within our state, to helping track and increase satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services, and to expanding partnerships with businesses, schools, and state partners to assist the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) in maintaining a standard of excellence in its work with individuals with disabilities throughout the state.

This report summarizes the efforts of the SRC membership and NMDVR leadership to maintain our collaboration over the past year. It is our hope that it will provide readers with a clear understanding of the role the SRC plays in supporting NMDVR as well as the critical work the agency does. We are pleased to note the many successes achieved through this partnership, including a review and approval of changes to the agency Manual of Operating Procedures, planning and facilitation of a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment for VR consumers and partner agencies, and ongoing reviews of fair hearings requests and outcomes to track trends around VR services. Additionally, the SRC extends our thanks to the agency for their support of council members in attending National Coalition of SRC conferences to expand their knowledge of SRC responsibilities and network with other SRC members across the country.

Together with NMDVR, the SRC recognizes the importance of building bridges with employers, educational agencies, and other disability service providers to meet the needs of people with disabilities within our state. This year's annual report offers excellent examples of the work the SRC has done in partnership with NMDVR to promote the provision of services for people with disabilities statewide.

The Council is pleased to continue to support the agency in the important work that they do. We look forward to continuing our partnership and building on these successes as we move forward into FY 2024.

Sincerely,

*Sarah Michaud*  
Sarah Michaud  
SRC Chair





## Letter from the NMDVR Director

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM,  
*Governor*

ARSENIO ROMERO, Ph.D.,  
*Secretary of Education*

CASEY STONE-ROMERO,  
*Director*

Dear Honorable Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, Secretary Romero, Participants, and Partners,

It continues to be an honor to work with the New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). Our partnership has become even stronger over the last year. SRC members continue to be valuable partners providing input and recommendations for vocational rehabilitation services through quarterly meetings, public meetings, and review of policies and procedures.

With the SRC's support, NMDVR eliminated the waitlist for vocational rehabilitation services in October 2022. The SRC was instrumental in its support of agency staff and practices to ensure every New Mexican with a disability could access valuable services to gain, maintain, or advance in employment.

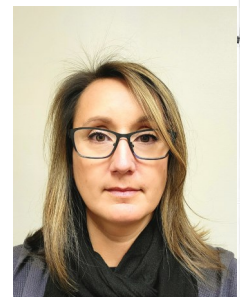
SRC members also emphasized partnership and commitment to vocational rehabilitation services this past year by representing New Mexico at the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) meeting and joining NMDVR staff at the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Fall Conference.

The SRC also strongly supports and provides feedback on the medical adjudication work and process of New Mexico Disability Determination Services (NM DDS). As an agency, NMDVR takes pride in the fact that NM DDS exceeded all workload targets set by the Social Security Administration (SSA).

The SRC is an invaluable resource and support for NMDVR and we greatly appreciate its recommendations, encouragement, and acknowledgement of our achievements each year. We look forward to continued collaboration with the SRC and even greater success in providing quality customer-oriented vocational rehabilitation services that result in successful employment outcomes and access to valuable resources for New Mexicans with disabilities.

Respectfully submitted,

Casey Stone-Romero  
Director





## ***SRC Mission***

The New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council is responsible for assisting with the operation of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation program through advisement, evaluation and partnership to support access to employment and promotion of a diverse workforce statewide.

## **SRC Accomplishments**

- SRC resumed in-person council meetings this year with the lifting of COVID pandemic restrictions! While a minor thing, the return to in-person discussions was extremely satisfying for our membership.
- With NMDVR support, the SRC once again sent two members to NCSRC and CSAVR this year in Savannah, GA.
- SRC reviewed and provided feedback on several NMDVR Program Policy Information updates at the request of the NMDVR Director.
- SRC updated its committee structure to improve input for services, and successfully recruited several new members.
- SRC members partnered with NMDVR staff to plan and coordinate the necessary activities to facilitate the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. Weekly planning meetings were hosted by NMDVR, and the SRC coordinated a joint focus group session with the NM Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) to provide input on disability and employment concerns impacting NM. The final report is expected in early 2024.
- SRC received routine updates on DDS and NMDVR services including regular notifications regarding fair hearing requests and outcomes.
- SRC ensured member inclusion in all planning and scheduling of public hearings for policy changes, updates on the monitoring process, and finalization of the Manual of Operating Procedures (MOP).
- SRC continued to request and receive updates regarding expansion of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) into communities across the state.
- SRC provided group and individual trainings for members to increase understanding of their roles and responsibilities as well as our federal mandates.
- SRC continued to request and receive updates regarding Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring and Technical Assistance recommendations and the NMDVR responses.





## ***SRC Functions per the Rehabilitation Act and WIOA:***

Working in partnership with NMDVR and in consultation of the state Workforce Development Board, the SRC must:

- (1)** Review, analyze, and advise the designated State unit regarding the performance of the State unit's responsibilities under this part, particularly responsibilities related to -
  - (i)** Eligibility, including Order of Selection;
  - (ii)** The extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided; and
  - (iii)** Functions performed by State agencies that affect or potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes under this part;
- (2)** In partnership with the designated State unit -
  - (i)** Develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities in accordance with § 361.29(c); and
  - (ii)** Evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and submit reports of progress to the Secretary in accordance with § 361.29(e);
- (3)** Advise the designated State agency and the designated State unit regarding activities carried out under this part and assist in the preparation of the vocational rehabilitation services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations required by this part;
- (4)** To the extent feasible, conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with -
  - (i)** The functions performed by the designated State agency;
  - (ii)** The vocational rehabilitation services provided by State agencies and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under the Act; and
  - (iii)** The employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services under this part, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with those employment outcomes;



(5) Prepare and submit to the Governor and to the Secretary no later than 90 days after the end of the Federal fiscal year an annual report on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the State and make the report available to the public through appropriate modes of communication;

(6) To avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served, coordinate activities with the activities of other councils within the State, including the Statewide Independent Living Council established under chapter 1, title VII of the Act, the advisory panel established under section 612(a)(21) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council described in section 124 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, the State Mental Health Planning Council established under section 1914(a) of the Public Health Service Act, and the State Workforce Development Board, and with the activities of entities carrying out programs under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

(7) Provide for coordination and the establishment of working relationships between the designated State agency and the Statewide Independent Living Council and centers for independent living within the State; and

(8) Perform other comparable functions, consistent with the purpose of this part, as the Council determines to be appropriate, that are comparable to the other functions performed by the Council.

## **NMDVR - Wait List Action!!**

**There is no longer a wait list for services! “Our doors are open...to assist any person in NM with a disability who is seeking employment,”** says Director Casey Stone-Romero. For several years NMDVR has been on Order of Selection (OOS), in which services are provided in order of categorizations. The categories are defined by the federal government as “Most Significant Disability,” “Significant Disability,” and “Not Significantly Disabled.” Only those in the most significant category are served under OOS.

In November 2021, the wait list for services had 1,300 individuals. NMDVR has worked tirelessly to reduce the wait list and was successful! Since October 2022, there are no individuals on the Wait List!

Apply at <https://referral.dvr.nm.gov>



# SUCCESSFUL CAREERS!

## A WIN FOR BOTH EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE

Personalized Paper Manufacturing Group was in a bind: the Albuquerque-based maker of custom notepads, spiral notebooks, sticky notes, and receipt books was getting so successful that the company couldn't hire enough quality employees to keep up with its growth.

So in early 2022, Vice President and General Manager Jereme Metzger took a chance. Working with the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR), he took on a participant in the agency's On-the-Job Training (OJT) Program. Since then, Personalized Paper Manufacturing hasn't looked back. The partnership has worked out so well that Metzger has accepted four more trainees and has hired three permanently.

OJT is a three-month process. The trainees start by practicing their skills and getting to know the operation.

As they get more comfortable, their workload and responsibility grow.

"Once we get the people here and they work with us, they tend to really flourish," Metzger says. "If people want a chance, let's give it a shot and see if we can make things work."

There is no risk for the employer. Candidates are provided with a stipend from NMDVR during the 90 days. Both the business and the trainee have the opportunity to see if the job is a good fit, and there is no obligation to hire the trainee at the end. "There has been no better place to find quality people. It may take time to train, but that's the case with everybody today."



For what's now North America's largest maker of custom stationery, it has been a good fit more often than not. "They're some of our best employees," he adds. "I've been very happy with the quality of candidates DVR sends me," says Metzger.

One new employee, Jared Raborn, already oversees quality control. "He's got great attention to detail," says Metzger. Since Jared has been in charge of reviewing each of the tens of thousands of items that get shipped every day, errors have been reduced by a whopping 40 percent! "He probably wasn't given too much of a chance to use his strengths before he came here."

Raborn is glad for the chance to work at Personalized Paper Manufacturing. "I got an opportunity to showcase skills I don't get a chance to showcase often and do something I'm good at," the Rio Rancho resident says.

Raborn has autism spectrum disorder, which affects his ability to move quickly. He was always anxious in previous jobs because his bosses didn't think he was working fast enough. "I was expected to move faster, so I couldn't pay attention to detail," he says. "Here, I can go the speed I'm comfortable with. I've always felt like I have a skill for attention to detail and here I'm allowed to do that."

Partnering with NMDVR on this program has been a boon for both the workers with disabilities and for the company. "It gets them in the door and gives them good quality experience. And it gets us quality employees," Metzger says, advising other businesses to take the leap that he did. "It's worth your time.

You're going to be surprised with their work ethic and abilities, and how thankful they are to be given a shot... It makes the world a little bit of a better place because people are willing to help other people."



# SUCCESSFUL CAREERS!

## HE'S WALKED IN THEIR SHOES: FROM CLIENT TO COUNSELOR

Alex Herrera once needed the services of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR). Now the 38-year-old Albuquerque native is an employee of the state agency, serving as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

“We facilitate people with disabilities into making their way into the work force,” says Herrera about the responsibilities of his position. “If they need training or accommodations, we help them. We arrange for job coaches, stuff like that.”

Herrera joined NMDVR in early 2022, based out of the South Valley office in his hometown. Working there had become a goal of his during his time as a participant in the agency’s program. “DVR did so much for me. I saw the abilities of this place—how it helped me and could help others,” Herrera says. “My original idea was to have a career in psychology, something working with people. And this fit. It felt like a perfect fit at the time, and it still does.”

His former counselor, Anthony Harkness, talked with Alex about potentially working in the office at least five years ago. Harkness is now the program manager for the area and Herrera’s boss. “Alex is passionate about his community. He has the ability to be a source of hope for the South Valley,” Harkness says. “He’s an awesome addition to the team. This is his first professional job and he’s so excited to be here.”

While Herrera helps arrange workplace accommodations so people with disabilities can find meaningful work, he needs some of those accommodations himself. He suffers from ankylosing spondylitis, which he says is “like The Hulk version of arthritis; it’s arthritis on steroids.” Because of that, both sitting and standing for extended periods of time can be painful. Arrangements have been made so he can either sit or stand when he needs to, along with other details like an ergonomic keyboard.

The respectful way he was treated when he was a participant is the main reason he considered joining NMDVR as an employee. “I saw how my counselors were. It was important to me that they saw me as a person instead of just a number,” recalls Herrera. “Anthony always seemed to care. You can’t fake that. I thought, ‘Wow, this place is phenomenal!’”

For a while, Alex was homeless, living in his van. Now he holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of New Mexico, earning his diploma in 2020. “Without DVR’s help, I don’t think I would have been able to do it. It was a monumental feat, but giving up was not a choice. I just had to work every day. I couldn’t let up.”

Says Harkness, “I was impressed as his counselor with his perseverance, his resilience, and his pit-bull grip on what he wanted to accomplish.” Looking ahead, Herrera would like to eventually pursue a master’s degree, but for now he’s enjoying his role in helping others who are in a situation similar to what he once faced.

“If you really want to get work, if you want to achieve something, this place will help you do it. You just have to put in the work and DVR will get you across the goal line.” Continuing with the football metaphor, Herrera concludes, “All you have to do is run the ball. DVR will create that nice little hole. And it’s up to you to make it through.”





# SUCCESSFUL CAREERS!

## EMMA'S ART TALKS FOR HER

"I don't like talking about myself much," says Emma Sandlin. It may be difficult to believe that the gregarious 23-year-old was nonverbal as a child, but she still prefers to speak through her art.

"I mainly like doing anime-type or anime-adjacent art," she says. Some of the figures she draws are based on characters developed for the role-playing game Dungeons & Dragons. Working more with digital art than hand-drawing, Sandlin is hoping to turn her creations into stickers she can market. She also wants to get back into embroidery, something she dabbled in when she was younger.

One of her college professors told Emma she could take her sketches to Santa Fe to sell and come back with a new car. Being a perfectionist, she doesn't see that happening yet. But the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is working with the Springer resident to build a self-employment plan so she can make a career of her art.

"I don't think into the future too much. I want to start my little business and get that off the ground," she says. She'll soon be meeting with a business planner arranged by NMDVR. "It's about figuring out funds, how to build a start-up, get myself out there at first. Then we'll get more into getting the equipment and where I'm going to place said equipment."

Sandlin graduated at the top of her high school class and is a member of the Phi Kappa Phi collegiate honor society. She graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in fine arts with an emphasis in visual arts from Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, and a minor in history, focusing on World War I & II naval history. She also holds an associate



degree in general studies. NMDVR helped pay for Emma's college textbooks and fees.

"College was pretty fun. I didn't go out a lot, like most college students do, but I did make a few friends," Sandlin recalls, adding that she also became more independent. "I learned digital editing and digital illustration, and how to brand myself—how to make business cards, how to make a website, and be able to promote myself to become successful."

According to her mother Janette, Emma was the first student officially diagnosed with autism in her school, and she was low functioning. Through therapy, a lot of effort, and self-motivation, "she has come a long way," Janette says. "She has learned to be more patient with people and more structured in her day, which helps her."

Listening to her mother recount those difficult early school days, Emma says, "Most of that I don't remember. It's interesting hearing how much hard work was put into me." Emma credits her older sister Chloe, among others, with helping her through her journey. "Thinking of the different outcomes, if they hadn't pushed as hard, where would I be? Would I be cooped up and silent all the time? Would I be low functioning for the rest of my life?"

The Sandlins originally reached out to NMDVR because "the route we took when she was little and got her first diagnosis was to try any and every program possible," Janette says. "It's a great resource. I'm surprised more people don't know about DVR."



# SUCCESSFUL CAREERS!

## MOBILITY MEANS INDEPENDENCE FOR JERAMIAH GOUIN

Rodeo was in Jeramiah Gouin's blood. Generations of his family participated in it, and so did he from a young age until a catastrophic injury during a bull riding event as a junior in high school. His future changed in an instant. But thanks to support from his family, his community, and the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR), the Sapello, NM resident now has plenty to look forward to.

The 2016 accident resulted in an ASIA A C5-C6 spinal cord injury. Not only was Gouin unable to walk, he had lost all motor movement in hands and fingers. He spent four months at Craig Hospital in Colorado—renowned for its specialization in spinal cord injury rehab—where he had to relearn basic skills, including how to eat.

When he returned home, he found that family, neighbors, friends, and lots of people he didn't know had come together to provide support. "The roping family and rodeo family put on a benefit to help pay for medical bills," Gouin recalls. "There was a lot of organization from the community to raise money. It was a blessing that the community came together as one to do something like that."

Casilda Gallegos, NMDVR Program Manager for the Las Vegas area, has two sons who went to school with Gouin. She reached out to provide assistance from the agency, including career counseling and paying for expenses like a temporary personal assistant, modifying his vehicle with hand controls so he could drive on his own, and college tuition not covered by other financial aid.

At first, his family needed convincing that NMDVR could help in his situation. He's glad they took Gallegos up on the offer. "For sure, I'd recommend it for anybody in any kind of need that DVR can help with," says Gouin.

He graduated from Robertson High School and then from Luna Community College with a degree in Computer Science/Information Technology (IT). Gouin is now back at Robertson as a staff member, working as an IT Help Desk Technician and basketball coach

at Memorial Middle School. He has an Action Track-chair that allows him to get around in the mud and dirt of rodeo arenas. "I do see myself riding again. It's just a matter of patience," the ever-optimistic Gouin says.



*Partners working  
together*





# NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

## Statistical Year At-A-Glance

<b>FY2023</b>	
<b>7708</b>	<b>New Mexicans engaged in vocational rehabilitation services</b>
<b>1357</b>	<b>Individuals served through Pre-Employment Training Services with NMDVR</b>
<b>7013</b>	<b>New Mexicans received vocational rehabilitation services including: medical treatment, guidance and counseling, training and job seeking skills</b>
<b>449</b>	<b>New Mexicans completed services with a status of Successfully Rehabilitated</b>
<b>688</b>	<b>Job-ready or employed but not yet closed</b>
<b>\$24,123</b>	<b>Average yearly employee wage</b>
<b>131%</b>	<b>Percent wage increase after rehabilitation</b>
<b>53%</b>	<b>Applicants served from the Most Significantly Disabled service category</b>
<b>42%</b>	<b>Applicants served from the Significantly Disabled service category</b>
<b>\$10,807,032</b>	<b>Total wages for successfully rehabilitated individuals ( i.e. those individuals who successfully gained employment and maintained for at least 90 days) during FY23</b>

<b>SUCCESSFUL REHABILITATION CLOSURES BY OCCUPATION</b>	
<b>CATEGORY OCCUPATION DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>FY23 Closures</b>
Office and Administrative Support	75
Food Preparation Serving, and Related	48
Personal Care and Service	44
Transportation and Material Moving	42
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	41
Sales and Related	29
Community and Social Service	26
Education, Training and Library	24
Installation, Maintenance and Repair	22
Healthcare Support	14
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	12
Computer and Mathematical	12
Production	11
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	11
Management	9
Construction and Extraction	9
Protective Services	6
Business and Financial Operations	5
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	3
Life, Physical and Social Science	3
Legal	2
Architecture and Engineering	1
<b>TOTAL REHABILITATED CLOSURES</b>	<b>449</b>

<b>FY 2023 Eligible Participants by Major Disabling Conditions</b>	
<b>Categories of Disabilities</b>	<b>Count</b>
Cognitive Impairment	2246
Psychosocial Impairment	1435
Other Impairment - Mental	951
Other Impairment - Physical	576
Hearing Loss - Primary Communication Auditory	314
General Physical Debilitation	181
Deafness - Primary Communication Visual	158
Mobility Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	154
Other Impairment - Orthopedic	141
Cognitive Impairments (learning, thinking, etc.)	113
Communicative Impairment (expressive/receptive)	111
Mobility Impairment	109
Mobility and Manipulation/Dexterity Impairment	79
Deafness - Primary Communication Auditory	66
Combination of Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	49
Psychosocial Impairments (interpersonal/behavioral, etc)	46
Hearing Loss—Primary Communication Visual	46
Other Impairment - Visual	34
Respiratory Impairment	31
Other impairment - hearing	28
Manipulation Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	26
Manipulation/Dexterity Impairment	21
Blindness	21
Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	18
Mobility and manipulation/dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological	17
General physical debilitation (fatigue, pain, etc.)	13
Deaf - Blindness	10
Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	9
Other orthopedic impairments (e.g. limited range of motion)	9
Other Hearing Impairments (Tinnitus, Meniere's etc.)	1



# SRC Recommendations for 2024

Using the prior Consumer Satisfaction Report results and considering input from consumers and council members, these following recommendations were developed for NMDVR during the September 21, 2023 SRC meeting. Responses from NMDVR are included here:

- The SRC recommends that NMDVR staff and leadership continue to focus on enhancing communication with consumers to ensure that consumers understand where they are in the VR process as well as their status when receiving services under the IPE. Given feedback from consumers in the previous consumer satisfaction survey, this will be an area highlighted in the 2024 survey.
- *NMDVR Response: NMDVR continues to prioritize staff training to ensure enhanced and effective communication techniques through all steps of the vocational rehabilitation process. The agency will continue to emphasize individualized communication that best meets the consumer's needs in the coming year. The Rehabilitation Services Unit (RSU) has a Program Policy Instruction (PPI) on Case and Caseload Management, where field staff are instructed to maintain contact with everyone on a caseload at least monthly. This is reinforced through the case review process, where program managers audit random cases on each caseload each month to ensure proper follow-up is occurring throughout the entire VR process. Finally, RSU has partnered with technical assistance centers, including Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM) and Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment Outcomes (VRTAC-QE), to provide training to management and field staff on how to succeed in transitioning from the "employment outcome" focus of the Workforce Investment Act to the "career pathway" paradigm required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.*
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR enhances the partnership with NMTAP to ensure ongoing training on assistance technology (AT) needs and AT use is emphasized with agency job coaches and employers. The council further recommends that NMDVR continue to emphasize education of consumers on AT costs, resources, and accessibility so that they can more easily transition when, for example, school-provided tools are no longer available, or reasonable accommodation needs to be requested.
- *NMDVR Response: NMDVR will educate consumers, job coaches/developers, and employers on AT costs, resources, accessibility, and reasonable accommodations. NMDVR will continue to foster the agency's relationship with the NM Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) and utilize its services as a valuable resource. RSU has identified staff in each of the nine areas across the state to specialize their knowledge and professional development in assistive technology. These staff members are designated "AT liaisons," which means they are the point of contact in their area for all things AT. They are charged with sharing AT information and resources with their fellow field staff and, at a basic level, guide VRCs and participants when making AT purchase decisions. These AT liaisons typically attend the annual NMTAP conference to stay in the know on the latest AT trends and resources. NMDVR will continue to support RSU staff to attend the NMTAP*



# SRC Recommendations for 2024



*Conference each year.*

- The SRC recommends that all NMDVR services maintain a disability focus, and all new hires at NMDVR continue to participate in comprehensive training on topics including disability awareness and sensitivity, VR services and delivery options including consumer choice regarding employment outcomes, assistive technology and the needs of specific disability populations.
- *NMDVR Response: NMDVR has created and hired a Staff Development Coordinator in 2023. An additional Staff Development Training Coordinator is also in the hiring process. This position will coordinate the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) for NMDVR, ensuring that personnel have a 21st-century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities. NMDVR personnel will then have the specialized training and experience enabling them to assist individuals with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment and to work effectively with employers who hire such individuals. NMDVR has invested in a subscription to YESLMS. This learning management system is developed from the VR Development Group. Professionals in the vocational rehabilitation industry create these trainings to include PhDs and experts in vocational rehabilitation with content created from various universities and Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) staff. The learning management platform provides a library of training, including a five-part series on medical aspects of disability, encompassing mental health, body systems, and disorders. This resource provides an immediacy to training, learning and understanding concepts in vocational rehabilitation for new and existing VR Counselors.*
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue discussions on trauma-informed care for VR field staff resulting from pandemics, natural disasters and other traumatic events that staff or consumers may experience. It continues to be the council's belief that such training and discussions will help the agency staff better address self-care and better assist consumers in navigating challenges and establishing effective natural supports.
- *NMDVR Response: NMDVR will explore options for staff training on trauma-informed care to better address employment-related issues due to COVID-19 and other traumatic effects individuals may have experienced. NMDVR has, during the past several years, provided staff access to training resources through the pandemic. The vocational rehabilitation industry has created and offered numerous valuable training courses to support VR professionals. These resources have focused curriculum on many aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including professional care for VR professionals. NMDVR utilizes many of these trainings through VRTAC-QE, National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Counseling, VRTAC-QM, the YESLMS platform and others.*
- The SRC continues to encourage NMDVR to move out of Order of Selection fully as soon as possible. Until the required steps for this can be completed, however, the SRC continues to recommend that NMDVR continue to keep the OOS lists clear and to serve individuals in all categories.



# SRC Recommendations for 2024

- *NMDVR Response: NMDVR has successfully eliminated the waitlist for services in 2022. NMDVR will remain on an Order of Selection - with all categories open - to ensure a strong foundation is built related to budget and staffing.*
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to maximize efforts to utilize available funding sources to ensure positive outcomes for consumers.
- *NMDVR Response: The agency will be initiating a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which will provide a critical assessment of the program related to strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. Data obtained from this endeavor will provide the agency with a unique lens related to where funding can be strategically invested to ensure quality service delivery, shore up service gaps and better serve underserved populations.*
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to give attention to establishment of career ladder opportunities within the agency to increase retention of knowledgeable employees.
- *NMDVR Response: NMDVR has made significant strides in reducing the vacancy rate within the agency. Leadership will strongly consider and explore options for retention pay for all staff to enhance consistency, communication and confidence in services. NMDVR will explore a mentorship program where senior staff are paired up with new staff to provide guidance and relationships as new staff onboard. This will cultivate a sense of “belonging” and encourage staff to stay at NMDVR as they are building long-lasting relationships. Additionally, the agency strives to appropriately compensate NMDVR employees for education and experience, based on budget availability.*
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue its ongoing efforts to increase the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing VR training and counseling designed to enhance and improve job-seeking skills for NMDVR participants. The SRC further recommends that NMDVR continue to track and share this data with community partners, legislators and other interested parties to reflect the true impact of agency services.
- *NMDVR Response: NMDVR has entered into technical assistance agreements with VRTAC-QM, VRTAC-QE, and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTAC:C) to develop long-term training platforms. This will support and increase in, and better quality of, employment outcomes by training RSU staff and management on how accurate and complete data correlates to quality employment outcomes for NMDVR participants. NMDVR will focus on data reporting and validation in 2024, emphasizing streamlining and improving processes.*

# SRC Recommendations for 2024



- The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to explore expanding Pre-ETS throughout the state.
- *NMDVR Response: NMDVR will again partner with all American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation programs in New Mexico to implement Pre-ETS. Jemez VR will work with NMDVR to reinstate Project Hope Transition work-based training program. This model will be explored for other tribal agencies across the state. Discussions with Jemez VR, Laguna Acoma VR and Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (NNOSERS) have already begun in efforts to rebuild engagement by all vested parties after the pandemic. Other school districts within the Jemez Valley have been contacted to inquire about their interest in re-engaging Project HOPE. NMDVR has been in collaboration with National Project SEARCH and Molina Healthcare to bring Project SEARCH to rural areas in NM. Tribal land in San Juan County is being explored and NMDVR is working with Kirtland Central School district to start a new site during FY2024-25 in Shiprock. The following counties and schools are being explored for Project SEARCH in FY25 -26: Luna, Deming School District; Eddy, Carlsbad School District; and Curry, Clovis/Portales School Districts. In addition, NMDVR is increasing the Transition unit to have a total of 12 transition counselors to deliver Pre-Employment Transition Services 100% in the school districts assigned across the state. NMDVR will continue to review additional Pre-ETS contract proposals to provide the five core Pre-Employment Transition Services through 2024.*
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue their ongoing efforts to upgrade and update technology within all agency offices statewide to best support agency staff and consumers.
- *NMDVR Response: NMDVR has already begun efforts to upgrade and update technology in all 24 offices in the agency for 2024. The budget continues to be available for these upgrades. NMDVR will continue researching and discovering new technology items to better support the agency staff and participants.*

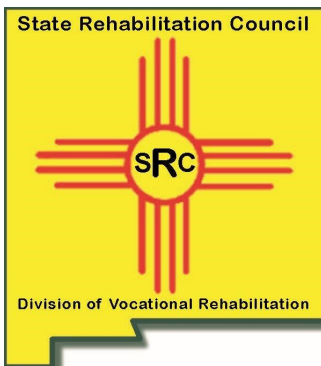
## **SRC Members Needed!**

You can make a difference in employment for individuals with disabilities as a SRC Council Member. There are 3 vacant positions for “**representatives of business, industry or labor**” and 1 vacant position for “**veterans with a disability.**”

Appointments are by the Governor. To inquire or apply contact:

- Sarah Michaud, (SRC Chair)  
[smichaud@newvistas.org](mailto:smichaud@newvistas.org)
- Tracy Agiovlasis (SRC Vice Chair)  
[tracy.agiovlasis@gcd.nm.gov](mailto:tracy.agiovlasis@gcd.nm.gov)
- Melissa Salazar (NM Boards and Commissions) (please use this website link to apply)  
[Boards and Commissions | Office of the Governor - Michelle Lujan Grisham \(state.nm.us\)](https://www.state.nm.us/gov/boards-commissions/)





# SRC Membership

## **Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)**

*Sarah Michaud, SRC Chair, (New Vistas) Santa Fe*

## **Parent Training and Information Center**

*Delores Harden, (Parents Reaching Out) Albuquerque*

## **Client Assistance Program (CAP)**

*Bernadine Chavez, (Disability Rights New Mexico) Albuquerque*

## **Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (ex-officio, non-voting member)**

*Lisa Jones, (NMDVR) Alamogordo*

## **Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider**

*Jennifer Gelhardt, (Best Buddies International) Albuquerque*

## **Business, Industry and Labor**

*Rebecca Sanford, (Adelante Development Center) Albuquerque*

*3 Vacant Positions*

## **Disability Advocacy Groups**

*Tracy Agiovlasitis, SRC Vice-Chair, (Governor's Commission on Disability) Albuquerque*

## **Representatives of Individuals with Disabilities**

*TJ Chester, (Independent Living Resource Center) Socorro*

## **Current or Former NMDVR Participants and Disabled Veteran**

*Kendra Garcia, Santa Fe*

*Vacant, Disabled Veteran*

## **Section 121 or American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

*Paula Seanez, SRC Sergeant at Arms, (Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services) Four Corners Area*

*Marlencia Chee, (Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program) Jemez Pueblo*

## **State Workforce Investment Board**

*Veronica Alonzo, (Department of Workforce Solutions) Albuquerque*

## **State Educational Agency Representative**

*Sbicca Brodeur, (NM Public Education Department, Special Education Parent Liaison and Autism Support) Santa Fe*

## **Director of NMDVR (ex-officio, non-voting member)**

*Casey Stone-Romero, Director of NMDVR*

## **Employees of NMDVR (ex-officio, non-voting members)**

*Nash Sisneros, RSU Administrator*

*Charles Alan Hamlin, DDS Administrator*

*Angelina Montoya, SRC Liaison*





# NMDVR OFFICE LOCATIONS

*(Offices are Statewide —\*\*Albuquerque Offices on next page)*

## **Alamogordo**

2300 Indian Wells Rd  
Alamogordo, NM 88310  
Fax: 575-205-1716  
Phone: 575-437-6550  
Toll-free: 888-901-7868

## **Carlsbad**

3605 National Parks Hwy  
Carlsbad, NM 88220-1448  
Fax: 575-205-7718  
Phone: 575-885-8821  
Toll-free: 800-645-0258

## **Clovis**

100 E. Manana Blvd. #17  
Clovis, NM 88101  
Fax: 575-215-2478  
Phone: 575-763-3437  
Toll-free: 800-645-2143

## **Española**

710 B La Joya St  
Española, NM 87532  
Fax: 505-207-5268  
Phone: 505-753-2908  
Toll-free: 888-901-3647

## **Farmington**

3401 E. 30th St. Suite B  
Farmington, NM 87402  
Fax: 505-207-5272  
Phone: 505-327-5123  
Toll-free: 888-901-7901

## **Gallup**

312 East Nizhoni Blvd  
Gallup, NM 87301  
Fax: 505-207-5274  
Phone: 505-726-1429  
Toll-free: 800-279-5681

## **Hobbs**

2120 North Alto #109  
Hobbs, NM 88240  
Fax: 575-205-1719  
Phone: 575-393-3330  
Toll-free: 888-201-5859

## **Las Cruces**

3381 Del Rey Blvd.  
Las Cruces, NM 88012  
Fax: 575-205-1715  
Phone: 575-524-6135  
Toll-free: 888-901-7866

## **Las Cruces**

Loretto Towne Center  
505 South Main Street,  
Suite 142  
Las Cruces, NM 88001  
Phone: 575-888-3753

## **Las Vegas**

32 NM 65 Hot Springs Blvd.  
Las Vegas, NM 87701  
Fax: 505-207-5269  
Phone: 505-425-9365  
Toll-free: 888-901-7865

## **Los Lunas**

445 Camino Del Rey SW,  
Suite D  
Los Lunas, NM 87031  
Fax: 505-207-5281  
Phone: 505-864-1617  
Toll-free: 888-901-7902

## **Rio Rancho**

3791 Southern Blvd. SE, Suite  
210 (Physical Address)  
PO Box 15430 (Mailing  
Address)  
Rio Rancho, NM 87124  
Fax: 505-207-5271  
Phone: 505-896-4500  
Toll-free: 866-585-5446

## **Roswell**

1014 S. Atkinson Ave.  
Roswell, NM 88203  
Fax: 575-213-1097  
Phone: 575-624-6024  
Toll-free: 800-644-7732

## **Santa Fe**

525 Camino De Los Marquez,  
Ste 200  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
Fax: 505-207-2313  
Phone: 505-827-3526  
Toll-free: 800-773-4072

## **Santa Fe – Administration**

2935 Rodeo Park Drive East  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
Fax: 505-207-2307  
Phone: 505-954-8500  
Toll-free: 800-224-7005

## **Silver City**

3088 32nd St. Bypass Ste A  
Silver City, NM 88061  
Fax: 575-205-1717  
Phone: 575-538-5351  
Toll-free: 888-901-7861

## **Socorro**

1014 N. California  
Socorro, NM 87801  
Fax: 575-205-1720  
Phone: 575-835-4243  
Toll-free: 888-901-7903

## **Taos**

145 Roy Road, Suite C  
Taos, NM 87571  
Fax: 575-215-2479  
Phone: 575-758-4348  
Toll-free: 888-901-7869

## **Disability Determination Services**

7421 Bartlett Dr. NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87107  
Fax: 505-841-5724  
Phone: 505-841-5600  
Toll-free: 800-432-5868

## **Albuquerque Research Office**

10510 Research Rd. SE  
Suite 800  
Albuquerque, NM 87123  
Fax: 505-841-6451  
Phone: 505-841-6450  
Toll-free: 866-526-0863



## **Albuquerque Lomas Office**

111 Lomas Blvd NW,  
Suite 422  
Albuquerque, NM 87102  
Fax: 505-383-2529  
Phone: 505-383-2500  
Toll-free: 888-818-3259

## **Albuquerque Oakland Administration Office**

5200 Oakland Ave NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87113

## **Albuquerque Quail Office**

5205 Quail NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87120  
Fax: 505-836-5674  
Phone: 505-836-1774  
Toll-free: 888-818-3263

## **Albuquerque South Valley Office**

1710 Rio Bravo SW  
Albuquerque, NM 87105  
Fax: 505-877-0961  
Phone: 505-877-7673  
Toll-free: 888-815-2981

