

## State Rehabilitation Council

Quarterly Meeting

February 29, 2024

NM DVR Research Office

10510 Research Rd SE, Suite 800

Albuquerque, NM 87123

SRC Meeting 10 am

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### I. Call to Order/Introductions/Roll Call

Meeting called to order by Chair at 10:14 am

Sarah Michaud, Present

Dolores Harden, Absent

Bernadine Chavez, Present

Jennifer Gelhardt, Absent

Rebecca Sanford, Present

Tracy Agiovlasis, Present

TJ Chester, Present

Kendra Garcia, Present

Marlencia Chee, Absent

Lisa Jones, Present

Paula Seanez, Present, arrived at 10:21am

Veronica Alonzo, Present, left at 11:50 am

Casey Stone-Romero, Present, arrived at 11:54 am

#### Guests:

Angelina Montoya, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR)

Jeff Levine, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR)

Alan Hamlin, Disability Determination Services (DDS)

Pedro Del Solar, Disability Determination Services (DDS)

Kristopher Murrey, Disability Determination Services (DDS)

### II. Action Items

#### A. Approval of Agenda

Tracy Agiovlasis approved agenda with flexibility of order as needed

TJ Chester seconds motion

Approved unanimously

#### B. Approval of Minutes

Casey and Lisa to be moved to members and update Rebecca's last name

Unanimously approved with minor updates to minutes

### III. DVR Directors Reports

#### A. Agency Director – Casey Stone-Romero

a. WIOA Combined State Plan was completed on 02/27/2024

a. Waiting on RSA comments

b. 5 Core Performance Indicators were submitted in partnership with CFB:

a. Employment Rate, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter

i. PY 24, 43.0%

ii. PY 25, 44.0%

b. Employment Rate, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter

i. PY 24, 40.5%

ii. PY 25, 41.0%

- c. Median Earning
  - i. PY 24, \$4,808.90
  - ii. PY 25, \$4,900.00
- d. Credential Attainment
  - i. PY 24, 38.1%
  - ii. PY 25, 38.5%
- e. MSG
  - i. PY 24, 29.4%
  - ii. PY 25, 50%
- f. PY 24 statistical guidance, still negotiating with RSA indicators
- c. State Plan public meetings had minimal attendance
  - a. No public comments were received
- d. House Bill 2
  - a. Passed and waiting on the Governor's signature
  - b. Our total budget for FY25 will be approximately \$55.69 million
  - c. VR and IL approved at LFC recommendation, VR 1 million less than Executive recommendation
- e. Closely tracking funding for VR Program
  - a. Fiscal forecasting and strategic spending
  - b. Pre-ETS spending
- f. SILC is developing their State Plan for IL
  - a. Drafting session scheduled for Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024
- g. CSAVR Spring 2024, Bethesda, MD
  - a. Nash Sisneros
  - b. Rudy Grano
  - c. Casey Stone-Romero
  - d. Jeremy Bangs
  - e. Michelle Bowdon
  - f. Dominique Nunez
  - g. NMDVR has been asked to participate with VRTAC-QM on the fiscal work we have done in New Mexico
    - i. CSAVR is reviewing proposal
  - h. CSAVR Fall 2024 is in Seattle October 19 – 25, 2024
    - i. 2 SRC members are invited
- h. Nash Sisneros and Jeff Levine are partnering with the Governor's Commission on Disability and Department of Workforce Solutions to discuss National Disability Employment Awareness Months (NDEAM) events for October 2024
- i. Working with CFB on our Pre-ETS CAP Response
  - a. Submitted first response on 01/30/2024
- j. 9<sup>th</sup> Quarterly NMDVR 2018 Monitoring CAP submitted on 01/30/2024
  - a. Requested consideration of resolution of remaining items in the CAP
  - b. To date approximately 57 documents have been submitted to RSA and have been reviewed and approved
    - i. Documents included the MOP rewrite and Program Policy Instructions and Internal Policies
  - c. Working with VRTAC-QM, VRACT-QE, and NTACT in improving the VR Program
- k. Nash Sisneros and Charlene Chavez presented on VR, Transition and Pre-ETS at IDEA Panel meeting on 02/23/2024
  - a. Pending area 4 Program Manager, Larry Melendez to be appointed to the IDEA Panel as the VR Representative
- l. Crystal Pena and Casey Stone-Romero presented at the Office of Special Ed Directors on VR, Transition, and Pre-ETS
  - a. Two sessions on February 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>
- m. VR Staff exploring Technology options

- a. Demo of VR headsets that allow participants an opportunity for work-based learning to help determine career paths
- b. Sara works is an online artificial intelligence (AI) that works alongside AWARE to communicate with participants via text message and email to increase consistent communication
- c. Also looked into wireless signatures and a Wex Flex card for participant purchases
- d. Strategic Fiscal planning meeting to determine next large project
- n. NMDVR reconnected with PRO
  - a. Will be participating in their annual conference as well as continuing consistent communication
- o. Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS) is hosting an Aligned Case Management project
  - a. DVR will be represented by Nash Sisneros, Rose Lucero, and Kendra Karp
- p. Project SEARCH 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 2024
  - a. Albuquerque, NM
  - b. Conference: July 15 - 19, 2024
  - c. Registration open: <https://projectsearch.us/conference/>
- q. Partners for Employment Reaching New Heights
  - a. Bernalillo, NM
  - b. Conference: April 18 – 19, 2024
  - c. Registration open: [https://reg.learningstream.com/reg/event\\_page.aspx?ek=0033-0021-fa571b503fe24084b16460623f3d783c](https://reg.learningstream.com/reg/event_page.aspx?ek=0033-0021-fa571b503fe24084b16460623f3d783c)
- r. Working with NTACT to update our intensive Technical Assistance Agreement with PED
  - a. Also reviewing and updating our MOA with PED
- B. RSU Update – Casey Stone-Romero
  - a. Rehab Academy
    - i. 30 staff members in attendance this week at the workforce training center
  - b. Charlene Chavez will be representing New Mexico at the Capacity Building Institute in May with NTACT
  - c. Rudy sent out email to SRC members who participated in the CSNA to provide feedback on the process
    - i. Creating a process document and a list of lessons learned for the next CSNA
  - d. October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 – December 31, 2023
    - i. Days to Eligibility: 33 days
    - ii. Days to Plan 45.6597 days
      - 1. Vacancy Rates
      - 2. ASU, 18%
      - 3. RSU 17%
      - 4. DDS 19%
      - 5. Overall, 18%
    - iii. VR Counselors
      - 1. Vocational Rehab Counselors, 23%
      - 2. Vocational Rehab Supervisors, 0%
      - 3. VR Techs-A, 11%
      - 4. VR Techs-O, 8%
      - 5. VR Tech Supervisors, 0%
      - 6. Disability Adjudicator I, 21%
      - 7. Disability Adjudicator II, 30%
      - 8. Disability Adjudicator III, 15%
      - 9. Disability Adjudicators Supervisors, 10%
    - iv. 2023 Turnover Rate by Quarter
      - 1. Q1, 4.8000%

2. Q2, 5.6180%
  3. Q3, 9.7378%
  4. Q4, 8.8435%
  5. Overall, 28.9993%
- e. Jeff continues to keep our social media presence alive and thriving
  - f. LeadVR 2024, San Antonio, TX
    - i. April Baca, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Supervisor
    - ii. Hotona Secatero, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Supervisor
  - g. National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute (NRLI) 2024
    - i. Anthony Harkness, Program Manager
    - ii. Charlene Chavez, Transition Director
  - h. Pay study and increases on RSU positions has been completed

C. DDS Administrator – Alan Hamlin

- a. Continuing Resolution (CR) to budget for operations and continue to wait or final appropriations
  - i. DDS is budgeted on the State Fiscal Year, which helps to maintain funding when they are funded with the CRs
  - ii. Small allocation of OT
- b. SSA recommendation for out of state DDS to help process claims
  - i. San Francisco site
  - ii. Adjudicator error rate does not affect NM DDS
- c. Switchboard Operator hired to provide better service to our customers internally and externally
- d. Predevelopment Unit
  - i. 1 supervisor, 6 staff
  - ii. Predevelopment of files
  - iii. Exam confirmation calls
  - iv. Claimant questionnaire calls and forms completed over the phone
  - v. Processing Time
    1. Days to case closure, 19
    2. Fastest, 0 days
    3. Longest, 72 days
    4. Compared to the average DDS Processing time of 146 days
    5. NM DDS has the second lowest processing time of the 7 sites in the Dallas region and performing better than the national average process time for all DDS nationwide
  - vi. Claims Accuracy
    1. NM DDS recognized by SSA as being one of the top 15 States in the nation from 2021-2023
      - a. We been asked to participate in a study/focus group for SSA
- e. Staff
  - i. Filling vacancies internally
    1. Career ladder opportunities
    2. Reclassing positions
  - ii. On the job training
    1. 34% of staff has less than 1 year experience
- f. Culture
  - i. DDS Leadership continues to prioritize staff retention efforts
  - ii. Our Focus is on being actively engaged with our staff, listen, and support them so they can better support our constituents

D. Update on Fair Hearings – Casey Stone-Romero on behalf of Michelle Bowdon

- a. 4 Fair Hearing requests in the last quarter

- i. 3 of the 4 resolved prior to FH
- ii. 2 were closures that were reopened
- iii. 1 tuition payment- internal policy misapplied
- iv. 1 FH request that was dismissed for failure to indicate a contested decision

IV. 121 Report – Paula Seanez

- a. Programs in 5<sup>th</sup> year of funding need to submit their applications for the competitive grant
  - a. CANAR is meeting weekly to provide grant writing workshops
    - i. They are also looking into permanent funding / formula funding
    - ii. Every Wednesday meeting with folks to review for proposals
    - iii. Grant are due March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024, will find out June- July
  - b. Jemez is having their Disability Conference on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024; 9:00am - 3:00pm
    - a. Location at the Walatowa Youth Center
    - b. Local vendors booths will be set up
  - c. Rehab act is written, tribes are allotted a percentage of the VR dollar
  - d. Project SEARCH- National Conference in Albuquerque, NM; July 15-19<sup>th</sup>, 2024
    - a. Working with DVR to develop a Project SEARCH in Shiprock area, meeting scheduled next month

V. SRC Chairperson’s Report – Sarah Michaud

- a. CSNA Report
  - a. 300-page report of useful information
  - b. Training for counselors in regard to Mental and Behavioral Health supports and services
    - i. Population was not listed in the statistics
  - c. 25% consumers were listed as ‘No longer Interested’
    - i. COVID impact, waiting list, change in customer service
      - 1. Engaged response from DVR
- b. Satisfaction Survey
  - a. Start up in March 2024

VII. Old Business

VIII. New Business

A. Strategic Planning – Sarah Michaud

a. SWOT Analysis

i. Strengths

Top Six

1. Increased public presence and awareness
2. No order of selection
3. MOU’s with tribes and VR
4. No waiting lists
5. More Robust SRC membership
6. DVR Admin level engaging more
  - a. DVR Leadership
7. Looking and open improving services
8. Ingoing focus to improve and expand services
9. Caring staff
10. Partnerships with WIOA core partners
11. Co-located @ Workforce connection offices (SF and Farmington)
12. DDS team performance is phenomenal and getting federal notice
13. Stability in agency leadership has improved
14. Completed needs assessment and looking to use results
15. Consumers generally report satisfactions wither services and staff providing support

16. Staff retention in the right directions

**ii. Weakness**

Top Five

1. Rural consumers have difficulty accessing DVR Programs
2. Mental Health/ Behavioral Health support
3. Needs to work on supporting the youth services
4. Offices keep closing/opening
  - a. Relocating- Detrimental effect on consumers
  - b. Office accessibility
5. Need for condensed information for SRC members
  - a. Written reports
6. Need more outreach
  - a. Consumers not aware of NMDVR Programs and resources
  - b. Inconsistent practices between offices
7. Need more stability within DVR
  - a. Less turnover
  - b. More opportunities for employees
8. Specialized caseloads no longer exist
  - a. TBI / MI

**iii. Opportunities**

Top Six

1. Partnerships with SILC, SRC, CFB, NMTAP, GCD, and 121 Programs – WIOA
2. DVR Employees
  - a. Opportunities for Advancement
  - b. Better pay
  - c. Employee Training
  - d. Recruitment and retention needs (4-day workweek)
  - e. Look at how to make changes to positions, pay bands, and internal measures
3. Rural Areas
4. Pre-ETS
  - a. Work closely with schools
5. Leverage resources
  - a. Funding shared between agencies
  - b. Co-Enrollment
  - c. Youth Programs
6. Business engagement
7. Make better use of Technology
  - a. More efficient use of resources
  - b. Specialized Caseloads
8. Financial Literacy training
9. Partner with centers for Independent Living
10. More participant education / support in process
11. Explore more out of ordinary- Self entrepreneurs, Assistive technology (AT) options
12. Partners / State agencies to address needs related to transportation, internet, etc

**iv. Threats**

Top Four

1. Barriers in rural areas
2. State vs. Federal
3. Be prepared for unexpected threats
  - a. COVID-19 Substantially disturbed operations

- b. Took a long time to address pandemic problems
    - 4. DVR Budget dependent on state budget
      - a. Reduction in budget funds
      - b. Loss, Reductions Gas / Oil
    - 5. Funding – MOE
      - a. Staffing vacancy rate
    - 6. Consumer benefit loss
    - 7. Employers
      - a. Lack of knowledge
      - b. Lack of options presented to Employees/Consumers
    - 8. Do not return federal money
    - 9. DVR not competitive with Private employers- Wages
    - 10. Re-establish OOS + waiting list
    - 11. Changes with State leadership an impact fiscal + policy focuses
  - b. Goals:
    - i. Maintain engagement with DVR leadership
    - ii. Monitor rural services
    - iii. Monitor State / Federal budgets requirements
      - 1. Waiting list
    - iv. Support DVR efforts to increase employee training opportunities and retention / satisfaction
    - v. Advocate for expansion / strengthening of NMDVR collaboration and partnerships with those that impact employment as an outcome (SRC, CFB, GCD, CAP, WIOA, SILC, CIL's, Pre-ETS)
- B. Consumer Satisfaction Survey – Sarah Michaud
  - a. Every 3 years, survey the population has how satisfied they are with the services they have been provided
  - b. Alix (DVR), Sarah, Bernadine, and Jenn will start planning and crafting
  - c. June 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for quotes
- C. Next Meeting
  - a. Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024
  - b. Location: DDS 7421 Bartlett Dr. NE Albuquerque, NM 87107
- IX. Comments from Audience
- a. No comments from the audience
- X. Adjournment
- b. Meeting adjourned at 1:46 pm

*If you need a language translator or you are an individual with a disability who is in need of a reader, amplifier or any other form of auxiliary aid or service to participate in this meeting, please contact NM DVR at the telephone number(s) listed below. Public documents, including the agenda or minutes can be provided in various accessible forms. For additional information, contact NM DVR. Telephone numbers: 1-800-224-7005 or 505-954-8500.*

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(Note: the SRC attempts to follow the order of items listed on the agenda; however, it should be noted that the order of specific items is tentative and may vary from the date of the printed agenda.)