State Rehabilitation Council

Quarterly Meeting February 20, 2025 NMDVR Santa Fe Office 525 Camino de Los Marquez, Suite 200 Santa Fe, NM 87505 SRC Meeting 10 am



I. Call to Order/Introductions/Roll Call Meeting called to order at 10:02am

Roll Call:

Tracy Agiovlasitis, Present
TJ Chester, Present
Bernadine Chavez, Present
Rebecca Sanford, Present
Breezy Gutierrez, Present
Marlencia Chee, Present
Kendra Garcia, Present
Jennifer Gelhardt, Present
Paula Seanez, Present arrived at 10:16am

Guests:

Angelina Montoya, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Raven Macias, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Kendra Karp, Interim Director Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Alan Hamlin, Disability Determination Services (DDS)
Antoinette Holmes, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Lisa McNiven, Governors Commission for Disability (GCD)

II. Action Items

A. Approval of Agenda (action item)
TJ Chester motions to approve agenda
Bernadine Chavez seconds motion
Unanimously approved

B. Approval of Minutes (action item)
Bernadine Chavez motions to approve minutes as is
Rebecca Sanford Seconds motion
Unanimously approved

III. DVR Directors Reports

- A. Agency Interim Director Kendra Karp
 - a. Presented at the House of Appropriations and Finance Committee on 01/30/2025
 - i. Differences between appropriations
 - 1. General funds were a focus
 - ii. State funds match request
 - 1. Asked for 250k more
 - 2. Still pending whether or not that its going to be supported by LFC
 - b. SRC and NMDVR annual report were completed and posted on DVR website
 - c. Corrective Action Plan (CAP)
 - i. We are in compliance
 - ii. Casey Stone-Romero was super instrumental and the NMDVR team helped push us over the finish line

- iii. Working with PED to ensure that our MOA gets completed
- iv. RSU team working on policies to ensure we stay in compliance
- d. Rehab Academy in March
 - i. Weeklong training hosted by our RSU leadership and training team
 - 1. New VRCs and VRTs will be in attendance
- e. CSAVR Spring 2025
 - i. Bethesda, Maryland in April
 - ii. 8 Attendees
 - 1. Kendra Garcia, SRC
 - 2. Kendra Karp, DVR
 - 3. Antoinette Holmes, DVR
 - 4. Devin Varela, DVR
 - 5. Erik Padilla, DVR
 - 6. Elizabeth Burks, DVR
 - 7. Kathy Abernathy, DVR
 - 8. Charlene Chavez, DVR
- f. HR 3 staff members
 - i. Received scholarships from the GCD for ADA coordinator cert program
- g. MOU with Highlands University to accept Interns
- h. Partners for Employment
 - i. Reaching New Heights on April 10th -11th
 - ii. Advanced employment
- i. Pilot Program with Workforce partners
 - i. Begins March 4th
 - ii. Espanola, Santa Fe, and Toas
- j. DVR IT Department
 - i. Hired a new Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) at our Oakland office
 - ii. Welcome Paul Herrera
- k. Vacancy Rates as of 02/14/2025
 - i. ASU 7%
 - ii. RSU 10%
 - iii. DDS 32%
 - 1. 44 vacancies at DDS which require SSA authority to fill
- B. RSU Update Antoinette Holmes
 - a. Transition Team
 - i. Virtual Reality (VR) headsets were purchased by NMDVR
 - 1. Training was provided and the equipment is now being utilized with students across the state as a career exploration tool set
 - ii. Transition Program Manager, Jennifer Saavedra has started her new position this week
 - 1. She was previously a former supervising VRC and Program Manager for Area 6 and now is in the role with the transition team
 - iii. Offer was sent out for a new Rehabilitation Technician that will begin on March 3rd
 - Necessary addition to the transition team as the Fee-for-Service Pre-ETS sites are running with the potential to add more in the coming fiscal year
 - 2. The Transition Team supported over 150 students for work experience this past month alone
 - iv. Collecting needs assessments and collaborations forms for the current school year
 - 1. Actual Services (October December 2024) totaled 1,328
 - 2. New Referrals went to general VR (October December 2024) totaled 41
 - 3. Attendance to IEPs by the transition team from (October December 2024) accounted for 758 work hours

b. RSU Financials

- i. RSU is currently reviewing funding needs for the remainder of the fiscal Year for client services
- ii. To date DVR has issued
 - 1. 10,607 authorizations for client services in the current FY
 - 2. 5,633 Authorizations issued from October 1 Present
 - 3. The Administrative Services Unit (ASU) has advised that budget considerations may impact the annual Statewide Staff meeting for 2025

c. RSU Training

- i. Rehabilitation Academy- Week 1 is scheduled for March 10-14th for all new VRC's and VRT's to the unit
- ii. Training Team is planning a VRC professional day for April 2025
 - 1. Specific dates and location are still being worked
- iii. RSU Leadership Training
 - 1. This training is being led by VRTACT-QM team and is also slated for April, potential dates are the 21st or the week of the 28th
 - 2. Curriculum is built around John Kotter studies on Change Management
 - a. Casey implemented before her retirement
 - b. RSU will also be working through Succession Planning through this leadership training support
- iv. Vacancy Rates for the Rehabilitation Services Unit is holding at 10%
- v. ACRE Cohort has commenced 02/14/2025
 - 15 new DVR staff working through the 15-week course and certification in partnership with the UNM College of Employment Services
- vi. Overview of training accomplishments and support for 2024
 - 1. MOP Revisions trainings
 - a. 3 Sessions
 - 2. Financials academy (3 training courses) including Area visits for specific financials training
 - 3. Rehab Academy
 - a. Weeks 1/2 and 16 hours online training
 - 4. Regional Trainings
 - 5. Fair Hearing Trainings for VR Staff
 - 6. De-Escalation Training
 - 7. VRTACT-QM regional training on-site
 - a. Included management specific training in VR and Fiscal Forecasting for management
 - 8. Shared multiple training and training resources with all our tribal VR Programs including access to the VRTAC-QE, invites to Statewide Staff meeting, and provided on-site training to Jemez VR

vii. PED VRC Licenses

- 1. 45 Staff members received initial or renewed certifications in 2024
- 2. 29 New VRCs and VRTs completed background checking in 2024
- 3. 40 New VRCs, VRTs, Business Operations, and Admins were onboarded in 2024

viii. RSU National Conference Supports:

- 1. NRLI, 2 participants complete December 2024 and 2 additional participants attending in 2025
- 2. Consortia of Administrators for National American Rehabilitation (CANAR)
 - a. 5 Staff members attended, 2 in December and 3 for Mid-year
 - b. DVR is committed to continue to support staff attendance at the Annual conference moving forward
- 3. LeadVR, University of Arkansas currents, Supervision Academy 2 participants

- 4. CSAVR, 8 participants, a total of 1 being an SRC member
- 5. National Employment Network Association (NENA), 4 staff members to attend
- 6. NET Summit, Business Outreach team attended and will continue to support the Business Outreach team to attend slated for November 2025

ix. Business Outreach Team

- 1. Monthly representation at the Region VI meeting the NET (CSAVR)
- 2. Employment recruitment notification system statewide is active
- 3. Fully staffed and waiting for final HR paperwork to be reviewed and routed for PM position to be filled but a person has been selected

x. Benefits Advisement

- 1. Services provided January 2025- Present
 - a. 67 Initial individuals
 - b. 84 Intensive Individuals
 - c. 187 SSA information for others
- 2. Outreach and Informational Presentations included:
 - a. Roswell Independent School District
 - b. Presbyterian Rust Medical Project SEARCH
 - c. Unidas case management
 - d. UNMH & Embassy Suites Project SEARCH

xi. Data

- 1. AWARE
 - a. New Adaptions, training and implantation are tentatively set for March 2025
 - b. RSA-911 report submitted for PY24Q2
 - c. Current Stats for RSU
 - i. Students currently being served by the agency
 - 1. Total 2,302
 - 2. Application 1,544
 - 3. Eligibility 61
 - 4. Service 688
 - Students being served specifically by the Transition Team
 - 1. Total 1,057
 - iii. New cases in AWARE for the last quarter
 - 1. Total 1,188
 - iv. Cases in AWARE to date
 - 1. Total 7,515
 - v. Actual Services provided by RSU (03/08/2019 Current)
 - 1. Total 42,700
 - vi. As of January 2025, RSU Performance Measures
 - 1. Application Goal 58%
 - 2. Eligible Goal 52%
 - 3. Service Goal 68%
 - 4. Closed Rehab 39%
 - vii. Referrals to NMDVR (07/01/2024 Present)
 - 1. Total 4,970
 - 2. Quarter 1: 2,164
 - 3. Quarter 2: 1,727
 - 4. Quarter 3: 1,079
 - viii. Timeliness from RSA reporting
 - 1. Eligibility 99.9%
 - 2. IPE 99.8%
 - 3. We are doing well on our response to applications

- 1. Intensive TA Agreements with the Technical Assistance Centers are slated to end September 30th, 2025, due to the TA centers funding coming to an end
 - a. RSU is prioritizing the remaining projects and support needed from the centers before the grant expires
- Job Development / Job Coaching and extended services agreement template has been approved and NMDVR will be notifying current vendors and publishing for others interested in doing this work for individuals with disabilities to be responsive to the scope of work
- 3. NMDVR currently has established MOUs to accept interns from the following training programs
 - a. New Mexico Highlands University, Department of Counseling
 - b. Eastern New Mexico University, School of Social Work
 - c. Western New Mexico University, Department of Counseling
 - d. FOD, Mario Lucero is working on establishing new MOUs with the University of Pheonix
 - e. Area 4 welcome s2 interns for the Carlsbad office just this week
- 4. Program Manager, Cara Benta secured the Isotopes Park as an Onthe-Job Training (OJT) site for DVR participants this summer
- 5. Project SEARCH has held information nights for the upcoming school year for several locations around the state
 - a. Albuquerque and Rio Rancho both have more than 10 applicants already
- 6. UPIN Pilot Project
 - a. DWS contracted with Unite Us to develop a universal referral for workforce partners and community resource providers in NM to align a referral system
 - b. NMDVR Santa Fe, Espanola, and Clovis offices will be participating in the pilot project
- 7. SE Coordinator, Shannon O'Quinn has been hired and she will begin shadowing Christine Fuller who will be retiring this summer
- C. DDS Administrator Alan Hamlin
 - a. NM DDS Federal Fiscal Year 2025, YTD 19 weeks
 - i. Total Receipts 7,467
 - ii. Total Dispositions (All Claim types) 7,509
 - 1. Closed more cases than we are getting in
 - 2. Exceeding goal on our 6-month target
 - iii. Over 5,700 cases assigned
 - 1. Below target due to work coming in not because of output
 - a. Very low workload target from SSA
 - 2. Reconsiderations / Appeals
 - a. 1,260 appeal level claims that will be assigned
 - b. Should be right at PAR by end of year
 - iv. Initial Claim Mean Processing Time
 - 1. SSA Target is less than 215 days
 - 2. FY25 Performance 207 days
 - a. Dallas Region 328 days
 - b. Nation 231 days
 - c. NM DDS only performance 142 days
 - d. Dallas Region 278 days
 - e. Nation 192 days
 - v. FY25 Allowance Rate 37.4%
 - 1. Initial applications only 38.5%

- vi. Compassionate Allowances (Terminal Illness / Quick Decision)
 - a. DDS has a dedicated Adjudicator Specialist that works just these claims
 - 7 Senior Adjudicators total that can assist in these cases
 - b. Disability Examiner Decision Allowance (DEDA)
 - Allows examiners to complete the medical portion of a disability claim without the use of a medical consultant
 - ii. NM was the first adopter in the region
 - c. UNM Pediatric Center
 - i. Prepped for turnaround time
 - ii. Case workers have partnership with DDS as they submit the application
- vii. NMDDS has a new stat: Average production per examiner per week
 - 1. As of last fiscal week
 - a. New Mexico 35 examiners, average 10.7
 - b. Arkansas 154 examiners, average 6.8
 - c. Louisiana 96 examiners, average 10
 - d. Oklahoma 180 examiners, average 11
 - e. Texas 284 examiners, average 12.7

viii. NM DDS Accuracy

- 1. FY24 finished #1 in the Dallas Region and #3 Nationally in decisional accuracy
- ix. NM DDS supporting SSA
 - 1. Medical Consultants continues to go Above and Beyond reviewing and completing cases for the NM DDS and are completing additional reviews supporting national efforts
- x. Challenges
 - 1. Limited Experience of staff
 - The management team continues to look for ways to increase staff retention with no expectation of hiring authority from SSA
 - 2. Complexity of the SSA Program
 - a. DDS Leadership Team is supporting more informal, peer-topeer support accompanied by larger agency support such as desk aids and written business process.
 - b. Established a Leadership Huddle in 11/2024 to expand communication efforts of agency leadership
 - c. Instituted "did you know" trainings, held monthly peer to peer to expand knowledge
 - 3. SSA Field Office impacts examiner workload and quality
 - a. DDS Administrator has re-engaged in SSA Area Work Incentive Coordinator (AWIC) to identify and resolve SSA FO training issues
 - I have attempted to re-engage with SSA Regional Leadership to coordinate meeting with SSA Leadership and NM DDS Leadership- No response as of this time from SSA
 - 4. Adaption to change
 - a. Continued changes in federal mandates and staffing changes on the federal side continue to impact us at the state level
- D. Update on Fair Hearings Michelle Bowdon
 - a. No Fair Hearing updates

IV. 121 Report – Paula Seanez

a. American Indian VR Programs (AIVRS)

- a. 23 Tribal nations in NM
- b. 3 AIVRS programs in NM
 - i. Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation
 - ii. Laguna-Acoma Connections
 - iii. Navajo Nation
- c. 88 Across the country
- d. MOUs are required under the Rehabilitation Act
 - i. Agreements with Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico
- e. 4th year of funding- Discretionary Competitive Grant Program
 - i. Grant cycle, will be re-applying in 2026
 - ii. Will reach out for letters of support from NMDVR and the Pueblo of Laguna previous commissioner for support
 - iii. Renew MOUs
- f. Navajo Nation met with Lorie Sandaine, CESP, CWIC with Sonoran Center for excellence in Disability regarding customized employment
 - i. Asked to participate in a webinar at the Arizona Employment First sessions
 - ii. Difficulty filling 2 Job Development Specialist positions but continue to recruit for both JD and JC
 - iii. The Webinar session was Monday, February 10, 2025, at 10:00 am
- g. Amplifying Employment through Tribal VR
 - Our tactic is to explore the role of Tribal VR (TVR) programs in supporting Native Americans with disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment and identify strategies for effective collaboration
 - 1. Understand the purpose and impact of TVR programs in Arizona
 - 2. Learn how TVR services integrate cultural understanding with employment support
 - 3. Identify actionable steps to partner with TVR programs to enhance employment outcome
- b. Regional Training will be provided in Albuquerque, NM on March 24th -25th, 2025 for AIVRS programs to implement the self-employment tool kit at Isleta
 - a. The University of Montana Rural Institute will provide the training
 - b. The toolkit can be found at https://tvrselfemployment.org/
- c. Project SEARCH
 - a. Gallup Project SEARCH is going strong
 - i. Central consolidated schools are having some challenges
 - 1. Our Program Manager is working closely with Charlene Chavez at DVR
 - 2. Charlene is always open to providing updates regarding transition services
 - ii. Staff vacancies at our Shiprock and Farmington offices
 - 1. Limited in engaging in that process
 - iii. Gallup received an award at the Project SEARCH National Conference
- d. Consortia on Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR)
 - a. June 2025 in Spokane, WA and Phoenix area in December 2025
 - b. Navajo Nation OSERS will be celebrating 50 years in American Indian VR in 2025
 - i. We will be planning this celebration to be included in the CANAR, December 2025
 - ii. This history is important because services were not reaching tribes, pueblos and nations
- e. Jemez Program
 - a. Senora Center
 - i. Working with the University of Arizona
 - 1. Employment First Initiative

- 2. Customized employment
 - a. State is funding state work-based learning
 - i. Work experience
 - ii. The more hands on they are the more successful they will be
- ii. Tribal programs not funded for Pre-ETS
- b. Waiting for guidance from the Federal RSA regarding our grants
 - i. The last meeting was cancelled
 - ii. Haven't received any other notifications
 - iii. RFP pending for funding for 8 additional programs
 - iv. SIPI Western Institute (rural area of Indian education postsecondary)
 - 1. They let go of the president and several instructors
 - 2. Concerned about some of our clients that are attending these post-secondary colleges
- f. Marlencia Chee
 - a. Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation (JVR)
 - i. 3 communities served previously
 - 1. Now we serve an 80-mile radius
 - a. I-25 Corridor, Santa Fe, Taos, Sandia, Isleta, and Cuba Area
 - 2. If any applicants in Laguna or Navajo Nation reside in the area
 - a. They are referred back to their respective communities
 - 3. Working with the following schools
 - a. Walatowa Charter High School
 - b. Jemez Valley High School
 - c. Clevland High School
 - d. Rio Rancho High School
 - e. Bernalillo High School
 - f. Santa Fe Indian School
 - g. Starting collab with La Cueva High School
 - h. NMDVR Rio Rancho Office Partnership
 - i. Hotona, Stephanie, and Penelope
 - 1. Met with Walatowa high school
 - 2. Possibility of 6 students added to transition services
 - 3. 12 transition students total with the additional 6
 - i. Project HOPE
 - Program coordinator that works with all the students
 - ii. Job Fair
 - 1. College Career Fair March 12th at the Santa Ana Star Casino from 10:00am 3:00pm
 - a. 50 tables, 2 are reserved for DVR, there are 15 tables remaining
 - i. No cost for tables and open to the public
 - iii. Business Success Education with the NM Community Capital (NMCC)
 - 1. Self-employment plans (Homemade Items)
 - a. 10 individuals
 - b. Assists with business plans, quick books, provided with a laptop, advertising, webpages
 - c. Clothing seamstress, Potters, Moccasin making, Silversmithing, Leathering, etc

- 2. The 10-week program must be completed prior to putting it into plan
- b. Jemez Pueblo lost their traditional basket making
 - i. Been using other tribes to assist
 - ii. Want to bring back culture to the community and will reimplement in the spring
- c. Several dual cases with the state
 - i. NMDVR and Jemez
 - 1. Strong relationship with Stephanie and Penelope
 - 2. Kuddos to both as they come out every two weeks to make sure that files are in order
- V. SRC Chairperson's Report Tracy Agiovlasitis, Incoming Chair
 - A. NMDVR Stay Survey
 - a. Effort to maintain employment with VR staff
 - b. I would like to hear more about this
 - B. NMDVR Director
 - a. Message was sent out to PED
 - b. There is no current update regarding the new director or when one will be hired

VII. Old Business

- A. Consumer Satisfaction Survey Paula Seanez (action item)
 - a. Scope of Work to be prepared
 - b. Mandates to be completed every 3 years
 - i. This next year is due before the beginning of the new Federal Fiscal Year
 - c. Having a couple of Councilors look at it as well before a final version goes out
 - i. Different formats to engage in
 - d. Suggestion to have Bryan B. to do the contract and present to the council what the findings are
 - i. He is a vendor and has completed this before
 - e. Kendra Garcia and Jennifer Gelhardt to join the Executive Committee to help with the survey

Executive committee to draft the survey, send it out to the council, and have an update by next meeting

TJ Chester motions to approve plan above Jennifers Gelhardt seconds motion Unanimously approved

- B. Bylaws Update to include Resource Budget Bernadine Chavez (action item)
 - i. Prepare, in conjunction with the NMDVR, a resource plan for the provision of such resources, including such staff and other personnel, as may be necessary and sufficient funds to carry out the functions of the Council; The budget of the SRC Resource Plan should be maintained at a minimum of \$80,000 per federal fiscal year and reviewed by the Executive Committee and the DVR Director every state fiscal year. These funds will be utilized to support projects and initiatives that contribute to the mission of NMDVR.
 - 1. Make this item E in Bylaws

Paula Seanez motions changes in language and to make this letter E in the Bylaws as its own section

Jennifer Gelhardt seconds motion Unanimously approved

- b. Proxy vote clarification
 - i. Proxy votes shall be allowed with prior written notice to the Chair. Proxy votes shall be designated only to appointed members.

- c. Terms of Appointments
 - i. Each member of the Council must be appointed for a term of no more than three (3) years, and each member of the Council, other than a representative identified in paragraph (B)(1)(c) or (B)(1)(i) in Article V, may serve for no more than two (2) consecutive full terms. Once the appointed term has expired the council member may attend meetings, but is not considered a voting member. The agency (NMDVR) cannot provide reimbursement for a council member who's term has expired. The council member may reapply for a new term of service, after a lapse in service to the council of three months after their appointed term expires. After the three (3) months lapse in service the member is eligible for two (2) new appointed full consecutive terms. A written resignation, provided to the Chair and Governor's office, is required by any appointed member who may become unable to continue serving on the council.

Jennifer Gelhardt motions to approve Rebecca Sanford second motion Unanimously approved

- d. Page 6 "There shall be four (3) standing committees."
 - A. Change language to three instead of four, "There shall be three (3) standing committees."

TJ Chester motions to approve changes Paula Seanez seconds motion Unanimously approved

VIII. New Business

- A. SRC Membership and Committees Review
 - a. 11 members
 - i. 6 open spots
 - 1. 1 for the SILC
 - 2. 1 VR Councilor, non-voting
 - 3. 3 Businesses
 - 4. 1 Veteran
 - ii. Can contact Tracy or Interim Director Kendra Karp if interested
 - b. Committees
 - i. Employment and Community Partnership's Committee:
 - 1. Kendra Garcia
 - 2. TJ Chester
 - 3. Jennifer Gelhardt
 - 4. Jeff Levine (Awards)
 - 5. Angelina Montoya and Raven Macias for Admin support
 - ii. Program Review Committee
 - 1. Tracy Agiovlasitis
 - 2. Bernadine Chavez
 - 3. Marlencia Chee
 - 4. Nash Sisneros
 - 5. Paula Seanez
 - 6. Angelina Montoya or Raven Macias for Admin Support
 - iii. If anyone would like to refer someone for those open slots and or volunteer for a committee please let us know
 - c. Tracy Agiovlasitis and Kendra Garcia's terms both end in August 2025
- B. Election of Chair, Vice-Chair and Sargeant at Arms (action item)
 - a. TJ Chesters motions to elect Tracy Agiovlasitis as SRC Chair Jennifer Gelhardt seconds nomination

Paula Seanez motions to close nominations
Bernadine Chavez seconds motion to close nominations
Unanimously approved to have Tracy Agiovlasitis as SRC Chair

- Paula Seanez nominates Jennifer Gelhardt as SRC Vice Chair Marlencia Chee seconds nomination
 Paula Seanez motions to close nominations
 Bernadine Chavez seconds motion to close nominations
 Unanimously approved to have Jennifer Gelhardt as SRC Vice Chair
- c. Paula Seanez nominates TJ Chester as Sargeant in Arms
 Breezy Gutierrez seconds nomination
 Bernadine Chavez motions to close nominations
 Rebecca Sanford seconds motion to close nominations
 Unanimously approved to have TJ Chester as Sergeants in Arms
- C. Update regarding New Director and SRC comments to PED
 - a. No update
- D. Next Meeting
 - a. 05/15/2025 from 10:00am -2:00pm
 - DVR Oakland Office located at 5200 Oakland Ave. NE Albuquerque, NM 87113

IX. Comments from Audience

- a. Lisa McNiven
 - a. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today and all the good work
 - b. We will be hosting another DEAM event this year in the month of October 2025
 - i. Jeff Levine will be able to help with this
 - ii. Ideas needed for a place to host this event
 - iii. Meeting to discuss planning will be 02/28/2025 from 10:00 11:00 via zoom
 - c. DWS hiring event
 - i. 28^{th} at 10:00 invite will be sent to Kendra Karp to attend

X. Adjournment

a. Meeting adjourned at 1:43 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 NMDVR. Telephone numbers: 1-800-224-7005 or 505-954-8500.

(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.)