

New Mexico

State Rehabilitation Council



2016

Annual Report

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
435 St. Michael's Drive, Building D  
Santa Fe, NM 87505



# 2016 Annual Report

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. Tasked with partnering with the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) to ensure the highest quality services are made available to those seeking support and services, the SRC acts as the external, community-oriented voice in the consideration and development of NMDVR policy. To achieve this goal, the SRC works closely with the NMDVR to remain informed on those issues most pertinent to the provision of services to the disability community within New Mexico and to express concerns or support regarding those issues and initiatives.

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**State Rehabilitation  
Council**



**SUSANA MARTINEZ**  
GOVERNOR

**HANNA SKANDERA**  
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

**JOE D. CORDOVA**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR  
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Honorable Governor Susana Martinez, Secretary Skandera and to all who live in the Great State of New Mexico,

On behalf of The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), for New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) it is a privilege to submit the 2016 Annual Report. Each member of the SRC has a long standing commitment to work on behalf of all New Mexicans with disabilities. With the passage of the Work Force Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) we were given a mandate to increase supports and services to more youth. There are other initiatives identified by WIOA, but youth transition is one that has New Mexico's SRC and NMDVR's attention as partners with Public Education Department and the Work Force Solutions Department as well.

Several important lessons were learned this last year: one was that having a Director of DVR is key to stabilizing the leadership at NMDVR and the relationship with the SRC, the second lesson was that having a fully appointed SRC is critical to successfully carrying out the duties of this appointed body (and we do not have full membership at this time).

This report summarizes the collaborative efforts of the SRC and NMDVR over the past year and we hope all who read this report have a clear understanding of the partnership between NMDVR and the State Rehabilitation Council. The council members work hard to meet the federally mandated activities to maintain the standard of service to New Mexicans with disabilities in the area of vocational rehabilitation. The members of the SRC continue to work diligently to support the mission of the NMDVR.

The work we have attempted to do together is all for New Mexicans with disabilities whose primary desire is to become a contributing member of New Mexico's workforce. Most want a career not just employment, most want a clear path with appropriate supports along the way, and most want to make their own way to provide for themselves, and their families.

As a state we are fortunate to have the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation whose expertise is in the field of disability and whose well thought out work can provide those supports New Mexicans with disabilities need to succeed.

Sincerely,  
  
Ronald L. Garcia  
New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council Chair



**SUSANA MARTINEZ,**  
Governor

**HANNA SKANDERA,**  
Secretary of Education

**JOE D. CORDOVA,**  
Executive Director of Vocational Rehabilitation

It has been an honor to work in partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). Our collaborative efforts have been important to the work of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) and to the disability community at large. With membership from all parts of the state representing different stakeholders, the SRC has been instrumental in helping to shape Division priorities and practices.

While the agency is experiencing numerous challenges with the implementation of WIOA during the past year, I'm happy to report that the Division has been able to continue to serve all eligible participants and does not currently have a waiting list even though we remain in order of selection.

The Agency has made great strides in the last year, including stabilizing vacancy rates to around 14%, down from an all-time high of 38%. The Agency has successfully sent 28 employees through Virginia Commonwealth University Supportive Employment training, with 8 individuals receiving the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) certification. A second cohort of 32 individuals is currently going through this training for the agency. NMDVR has incorporated Adobe e-sign, WI-FI access, and soon will be implementing instant messaging and Share Point to improve access for individuals with disabilities and services to them.

Currently NMDVR staff will begin working with SRC members in planning, policy review, and Manual of Operating Procedures for WIOA implementation. This along with the valuable input that NMDVR has received from the Council has been very beneficial to agency activities in 2016. With my recent appointment as the NMDVR Director, it is my hope that NMDVR's relationship with SRC members strengthens to help NMDVR successfully navigate the implementation of WIOA Final Regulations.

NMDVR, in partnership with the SRC, remains committed to providing the highest quality of vocational rehabilitation services, in spite of the challenging economic conditions. This collaborative effort will continue to benefit New Mexicans with disabilities, the business community, and the overall economy.

I thank the SRC for its continued support, and I look forward to our joint efforts in moving the agency forward in a positive and meaningful direction.

Sincerely,

Joe D. Cordova  
Director for Vocational Rehabilitation

# SRC At-A-Glance

## **Mission**

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) provides assessment, advice and recommendations to the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) and others regarding coordination and effectiveness of programs and strategies which promote competitive employment for individuals with disabilities.

## **Vision**

The State Rehabilitation Council will endeavor to ensure the highest quality services are made available to New Mexico individuals with disabilities seeking employment and support services.

## **SRC Goals:**

- To encourage all SRC Members to complete SRC Orientation training in order to ensure membership is aware of their roles and responsibilities under the Rehab Act as amended.
- To assess the effectiveness and delivery of vocational services provided by the NMDVR to individuals with disabilities.
- To improve the coordination of vocational services among the NMDVR, state agencies and public and private entities for the benefit of individuals with disabilities.
- To recognize DVR staff and local business partners that go beyond their day to day activities on behalf of individuals with disabilities.

# SRC At-A-Glance

## **SRC Functions:**

Working in partnership with NMDVR, the SRC strives to accomplish the following tasks:

- To review, analyze and advise the NMDVR regarding its performance in carrying out its responsibilities as the state agency designated to administer the public Vocational Rehabilitation program.
- To provide input to NMDVR in preparing the State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment, as well as other plans, reports, needs assessments and evaluations.
- To review the effectiveness of and consumer satisfaction with the performance of the NMDVR and other public and private agencies in providing vocational rehabilitation services to New Mexico individuals with disabilities
- To prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor of New Mexico and the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services Administration.
- To coordinate with other advisory councils in the state which oversee services to individuals with disabilities.
- To provide input to the NMDVR regarding coordination of activities with the New Mexico workforce investment system.
- To perform other functions as appropriate to the mission of the SRC.

# SRC Committees and Accomplishments

## Executive Committee

### **Purpose:**

To direct the work of the State Rehabilitation Council and ensure the council meets its charge of representing the voice of the consumer with the NMDVR. To represent the SRC on a state and national level. To ensure membership remain aware of legislative trends that might impact the charge of the council or of NMDVR. To ensure that the council addresses the federal requirements including the recruitment of membership to fill all required openings, the facilitation of public forums to gather input regarding disability and employment services with the state, and the coordination of council activities.

### **Chairperson:**

Ron Garcia

### **Committee Members:**

Melinda Garcia, Richard Dennis Jirón

### **2017 Goals:**

1. Collaborate with the NMDVR in developing and conducting a Needs Assessment combined with a Consumer Satisfaction Survey at least tri-annually;
2. Advocate for all council membership positions to be appointed.

### **Plan for Accomplishment of Goals:**

1. Partnering with NMDVR the Legislative and Outreach Committee will in its regularly scheduled meetings explore Needs Assessment combined with Consumer Satisfaction Survey options for the next tri-annual Needs Assessment/Consumer Satisfaction Survey Process;
2. Continue to attempt to discover how best to encourage all council member positions to filled through appointment by the governor.



# SRC Committees and Accomplishments

## Transition, State Plan and Outcomes Committee

### **Purpose:**

To advise the New Mexico Public Education Department and the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) regarding activities authorized to be carried out in accordance with Public Law 105-220, and assist in the preparation of the State Plan and any amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments and evaluations required. The committee assists in the preparation and submission of an Annual Report to the Governor and the RSA Administrator on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated in the State. The committee collaborates with the Legislative Committee to conduct a statewide needs assessment and also ensures the widest distribution of any report developed on behalf of individuals with disabilities.

### **Chairperson:**

Melinda Garcia

### **Members:**

Paula Seanz, Mariella Pijem, Hermila Ortega, Barbara Ibanez, Rebecca Holland

### **2017 Goals:**

1. Development of a Transition Review and Advisement Process;
2. Review MOP sections that deal with Transition and be advised regarding when and where Public Hearings are planned to be held;
3. The SRC should have a clear understanding of how the Transition process is planned to function in NMDVR's system through New Mexico;
4. Review of State Plan in regard to New Mexico's progress in completing it;
5. Review the By-Laws for any potential revisions or updates;
6. Begin to plan for the next Needs Assessment in conjunction with NMDVR;
7. Track outcomes and include them in the SRC Annual Report.

### **Plan for Accomplishment of Goals:**

1. In partnership with NMDVR per the discussion of a formal meeting agenda item establish the parameters of a Transition review process for the SRC where the SRC shall articulate through an Advisement Process concerns, praise and advice regarding the Transition process in New Mexico through DVR;
2. Bernadine Chavez was the SRC member tasked to participate in the review of NMDVR's MOP. As part of this process the schedules for Public Hearings regarding Transition need to be provided to the SRC by NMDVR;
3. NMDVR to provide the SRC with a flow chart of how Transition should work;
4. At least once a year the SRC should receive a status report in regard to the State Plan through the NMDVR Director's report at an SRC quarterly meeting;

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# SRC Committees and Accomplishments

## Transition, State Plan and Outcomes Committee

### **Plan for Accomplishment of Goals Continued:**

5. The review of SRC By-Laws shall occur during a regularly scheduled meeting of the Transition/State Plan/Outcomes Committee meeting with recommendations to be reported to the full body of the SRC at a scheduled SRC quarterly meeting;
6. The Transition/State Plan/Outcomes Committee will review the outcomes data provided by NMDVR to be included in the;
7. The Transition/State Plan/Outcomes Committee is responsible for compiling the data, assembling, organizing and writing the SRC Annual Report with the assistance of the NMDVR Liaison.

***“New Mexico needs and deserves a strong Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in order to continue to assist New Mexicans with disabilities in finding and pursuing their career path, becoming employed after a period of unemployment, and for individuals seeking their first employment or career opportunity.” ~ Ron Garcia, SRC Chair***

# SRC Committees and Accomplishments

## Legislative and Outreach Committee

### **Purpose:**

To educate legislators and legislative staff on both the State and National level about the efforts and success of the NMDVR in New Mexico. To conduct public forums to solicit input from participants on their experiences with NMDVR and the services they receive. To coordinate with the State Plan and Outcomes Committee to complete the Customer Satisfaction and Statewide Needs Assessment Survey and to develop an outreach plan to promote the NMDVR.

### **Chairperson:**

Ronald I. Garcia

### **Members:**

Joe D. Cordova, DVR, Sandy Sandoval

### **2017 Goals:**

1. Collaborate with NMDVR in developing and conducting a Needs Assessment combined with a Consumer Satisfaction Survey at least tri-annually.

### **Plan for Accomplishment of Goals:**

2. Partnering with NMDVR the Legislative and Outreach Committee will in its regularly scheduled meetings explore Needs Assessment combined with Consumer Satisfaction Survey options for the next tri-annual Needs Assessment/Consumer Satisfaction Survey Process.

# SRC Committees and Accomplishments

## Membership and Awards Committee

### **Purpose:**

To recruit potential candidates for membership on the SRC, per Title I, Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. To provide new members with an orientation about the work of the SRC and ongoing learning opportunities. To recognize NMDVR staff and business partners that go over and beyond on behalf of individuals with disabilities.

### **Chairperson:**

Richard D. Jiron

### **Members:**

Melinda Garcia, Larry Rodriguez

### **2017 Goals:**

1. Update award nomination form, determine dates when nominations are due, after review have it sent to all NMDVR staff by email, Determine date for reviewing nominations. Collect nominations for review and decision by the Awards Committee for presentation of awards at December 2017 quarterly meeting;
2. Follow up with Governor's Office with regard to pending member applications: Rebecca Holland, Barbara Ibanez, Hermila Ortega, Mariela Pijem, and Pauls Seanez;
3. Solicit members for:
  - a. Representative of Statewide Independent Living Council;
  - b. Four representatives of business and labor;
  - c. Former recipient of NMDVR services;
  - d. Should any of the pending members not be appointment, their position would be to be included for recruitment.
4. Follow up with SRC training video from University of San Diego. It was available online but then was taken off-line due to pending changes in the Rehabilitation Act. Make this video available to all members. Put link to video on SRC web page. Encourage all new members to complete the training for certification;
5. Review / update communications with prospective members, the Welcome Letter to prospective member providing application instructions, various web links, with an attachment of the SRC By-Laws; stay current with their application status, ex: when application was submitted to Governor, date of telephone interview with Governor's Office, member's receipt of appointment letter; Other follow-up necessary;
6. With regard to appointments of prospective members, a letter from the NMDVR Director to the Governor's Office approving / accepting the nominations;
7. Request from SRC members any training needs.

# SRC Annual Awards

## *SRC Presents Employer Award to:*



I am nominating Fast Park of Albuquerque for Community Employer SRC Award. Fast Park of New Mexico has been incredible of their support of Project Search and the hiring of NMDVR participants. Fast Park of New Mexico has been wonderful in their support of participants referred to them for employment. They embrace inclusivity and diversity in their workforce and appreciate developing talent locally. Fast Park is an incredible employer.

*Nominated by Kathryn Murphy*

## *Fast Park of Albuquerque*

# SRC Annual Awards

## *SRC Presents Counselor Award to:*



Mario Lucero has worked for DVR as a VR counselor for over four years. Prior to working as a VR counselor, he worked for NM TAP for several years. His experience and skills with assistive technology is a valuable resource for the participants we serve as well as his peers.

Mario is always willing to share his thoughts and suggested recommendations that will assist our participants with technology required to provide needed accommodations that will enable our participants to succeed in the workplace. He has conducted presentations at various events within the state of New Mexico as well as DVR's Rehab Academy which is the foundation from which new staff will understand the benefits and impact Assistive Technology may have in the lives of our participants.

*Nominated by Casilda Gallegos, Alice King and Lucinda Garcia*

## *Mario Lucero*

# SRC Annual Awards

## *SRC Presents Employee Award to:*



Ramona has been working for DVR for over 20 years. She began her career as a secretary and was promoted to rehab tech in 2002. She is an exceptional tech due to her years of experience, excellent work ethics, passion for people with disabilities and great initiative. She took the lead in supporting caseload 307 while the counselor was on FMLA. Simultaneously, she supported vacant caseload 321, and continues to support this caseload in it's current vacancy. Ramona is a joy to work with. She is pro-active and self motivated. Her biggest strengths are her strong work ethic and her great initiative. She has an infectious laugh that reverberates throughout the office and exemplifies team work daily.

*Nominated by Shirley Gonzales*

## *Ramona Contreras*

# SRC Annual Awards

## *SRC Presents Employee Award to:*



Robert has been a refreshing asset to our agency. Thanks to Robert's progressive thinking and initiative, wifi is now available in all offices. All main offices have video conference capabilities, resulting in less travel.

This in turn, leads to enhanced productivity for all counselors and staff. Robert quickly takes action for every office when he is informed about any IT problems or concerns that arise. Robert provides counselors the tools they need to perform their job at a high level. Robert's biggest work goals and initiatives have been in promoting, directing, developing, and implementing ongoing enhancements to processes and infrastructure. His biggest strength is his "can do" attitude. This is accompanied with a great personal integrity, skills and initiative to get things accomplished that are and will be of direct benefit to the agency, resulting in excellent customer service.

*Nominated by RSU Managers*

## *Robert Alirez*



# SRC Annual Awards

## *SRC Presents an Appreciation Award*



My two terms of membership on the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, State Rehabilitation Council have ended. It's most fitting to express gratitude to the SRC and the Division for a great run. I was appointed to the SRC to represent individuals who received NMDVR vocational rehabilitation services, a statutory requirement. I became a client of the Division due to three brain surgeries for four brain aneurysms. At the time I was employed by the Division. Never did I think I would become a recipient of DVR services.

In the mid 80's of the last century, early in my career as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, I vividly recall participating in a brain injury training for DVR counselors. The University of Arkansas, RECP 5, sent Skip Cochrane, Ph.D., to Albuquerque to do the training. Brain injury training continued and has served me well. What I recall most was learning how devastating brain injury can be resulting in changes and losses in neuropsychological functioning affecting cognition, language, mental status, and nerve functions in the body's muscles and organs. I recall learning that no two brain injuries are the same, even if medically they appear similar and diagnosed as the same. I also recall learning how difficult rehabilitation is for people with brain injuries and the difficulty accessing medical and psychological services to restore brain functioning.

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## *Richard D. Jiron - SRC Member*

# SRC - DVR Success Story

I recall expressing my concerns to fellow counselors. Apparently, I must have shown sufficient alarm that one of the counselors prophetically stated, "Richard, if something were to happen to you, DVR would be there." Sure enough, 20 years later I'm diagnosed with four aneurysms and had two surgeries at the Barrow Neurological Institute, St. Joseph's Hospital, Phoenix, Arizona. Dr. Robert F. Spetzler, neurosurgeon, took my case. He is world renown for his excellence. One of his assistants, Dr. Felipe C. Albuquerque, now Vice-Chair AANS/CNS CV Section, Editor JNIS also took my case. I was so blessed. After a third emergency brain surgery in Albuquerque, I returned to work at the Division and was able to retire after 25.5 years of service. In the meantime, my DVR case was successfully closed. I also received post-employment services to help me maintain employment when I ran into significant "bumps in the road." My retirement lasted five days. I was fortunate to take a position with the Disability Resource Center at Central New Mexico Community College in Albuquerque where I now work. Had it not been for the vocational rehabilitation services received from the Division, I would not have been able to return and maintain employment and eventually retire. It was after retiring from the Division that I applied and was appointed as a voting member to the Council. With gratitude and humility, I want to thank NMDVR, the counselors, and staff who worked on my case, for making my return to employment possible. I remain blessed with support from my family, especially my wife. I know that without everyone's contribution to my rehabilitation, I would not have been able to maintain employment and independence. I have been honored to serve New Mexicans with disabilities both as an employee of NMDVR and later as a member of the New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council.

Thank you and God bless the work of the State Rehabilitation Council and VR.

Richard Dennis. Jirón, M.S., CRC

# Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment (2015)

## **Purpose:**

Every three years the State Rehabilitation Council conducts a consumer satisfaction survey and Needs Assessment to assist NMDVR staff in gathering consumer feedback and assessing consumer perceptions of the vocational rehabilitation program. NMDVR recognizes the significance of improving their services to ensure the best possible outcomes.

## **Process:**

The survey instrument for the 2015 Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment was developed by the SRC with a focus on participants at various stages of the rehabilitation process. The NMDVR then contracted with Davis Innovations, Inc.™ (DI) to perform the 2015 Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Survey of randomly selected participants with an “active program status.”

## **Findings:**

- Overall, the NMDVR Consumer Satisfaction Survey findings demonstrate that the NMDVR staff is providing program participants with an extremely satisfying level of service. The high number of consumers that reported being satisfied with the NMDVR services supports this finding. The results show that 86.2% of the respondents reported being either extremely satisfied or satisfied. Compared to the 2012 Consumer Satisfaction survey, which showed 63.0% of the respondents stated being satisfied with NMDVR's services, this represents a 23.2% increase in overall consumer satisfaction since 2012.
- Similarly, almost 100% of the respondents reported being treated with courtesy and respect by their counselors (97.7% said “Yes”). Likewise, when asked if the other NMDVR staff treated them with courtesy and respect, 96.6% said “Yes.” Compared to the 2012 Consumer Satisfaction survey, which showed 83.2% stating NMDVR staff were courteous, this represents an increase of 14.5% in staff courteousness.

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# Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment (2015)

- The NMDVR counselors also received high customer satisfaction ratings for their responsiveness. Respondents stated being very satisfied or satisfied with their counselor's response to emails and phone calls (86.9%). Likewise, when asked if their counselor was responsive to their requests for service, 95.2% stated "Yes." The majority of respondents also reported they feel NMDVR understands their disability (86.0% stated "Yes"). Of the respondents' reported barriers to employment, education and training was reported to be the biggest challenge with 58.7% of the consumers citing this as a barrier. The respondents' desire for education and training is further exemplified by the areas with which they identified needing assistance (job development 43.1%; education 41.7%; training 43.1%). Medical services was cited as the second most common barrier to employment at 33.3%, with transportation and mental health services being cited equally as the third and fourth most common barrier (27.0%).
- Ultimately, the goal of DVR is the employment of individuals with disabilities. In general, the employment rates of people with disabilities in the United States after receiving vocational rehabilitation services are consistently found to be around 60%. The fact that NMDVR clients exhibited a 53.6% employment rate shows that services provided to clients by NMDVR staff are approaching national average performance.

***"The State Rehabilitation Council has an important opportunity to recognize all that the State of New Mexico's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation personnel do for, and with, the individuals that receive services. Their dedication to the people of our State, and their employment outcomes, is amazing. I am beholden for their level of excellence and the commitment to seeing the abilities that we all have!" ~ Melinda Garcia, Vice***

***Chair***

# NMDVR Response to 2015 Recommendations

In 2015, the SRC continues to recommend that consistency be achieved in the top administrative positions of NMDVR to provide continuity of management and oversight, and to facilitate continuous staff development and effectiveness.

**Response:** NMDVR has worked to recruit talented individuals to all executive level positions within the agency. Currently NMDVR has filled the Director position with Joe Cordova, and all Deputy Director positions are filled as well (RSU, ASU, and CIO). NMDVR currently has four field operations directors filled and a fifth field operation director position being created.

In 2015, the SRC recommends that a designated SRC member be involved as a liaison with the NMDVR committee that works on the MOP that will be updated to ensure compliance with WIOA.

**Response:** NMDVR has committed to involving the SRC board with MOP revisions around WIOA implementation. NMDVR field operations directors will be starting MOP revisions January 1st, 2017. Once these revisions are complete, the board will be allowed a review period for any recommendations they will have.

In 2015, the SRC recommends that counselor training or the "Rehab Academy" be re-implemented by NMDVR to ensure new counselors have a good foundation in the rehabilitation process.

**Response:** NMDVR is currently in the process of not only revamping the curriculum at "Rehab Academy" but also re-organizing the training department to add more training staff.

In 2015, the SRC strongly recommends that NMDVR follow federal requirements for SRC members to review potential Independent Fair Hearing Officer candidates prior to implementing a contract for services. The SRC further recommends that any new Fair Hearing Officer receive routine training on VR processes and protocols to ensure understanding of the issues presented during the Fair Hearing process.

**Response:** NMDVR has committed to the SRC Board that all future RFP's for Independent Fair Hearing officers will follow federal requirements for SRC to review and approve all contracted Hearing officers. NMDVR is currently going out for RFP for Fair Hearing Officers and will all the SRC to review the applicants.

# NMDVR Response to 2015 Recommendations

The SRC recommends that NMDVR enhance advertisement of SRC Quarterly Meetings and Public Forums to include the DVR website (the SRC Section and perhaps on the Hot Topics), as well as the Governor's website, websites of local collaboratives, and sister State Agencies. These efforts would be in line with the public notices that must be published in advance of each meeting/public forum per the State's Open Meetings Act.

**Response:** NMDVR will advertise Quarterly Meeting on our website as requested and the CIO is looking in to the requirements to advertise on the Governor's website and other collaborative agencies or organizations.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR place additional emphasis on the facilitation of public forms to collect feedback regarding NMDVR services. The SRC strongly recommends that NMDVR re-evaluate its advertising process for the public forums to ensure the widest possible pool of participants are aware and can attend these events in order to gather feedback regarding services.

**Response:** NMDVR always widely advertises public forums as required by federal law and is open to suggestion on how we can further advertise public hearings, particularly for the Public Hearings we will be holding around MOP revisions sometime in the spring of 2017.

The SRC recommends the continuation of annual SRC awards for outstanding NMDVR staff and business partners. Additionally, the SRC recommends that NMDVR prepare and disseminate information on its achievements to build community and legislative awareness of the impact of services and NMDVR staff.

**Response:** NMDVR agrees with this recommendation and will continue supporting annual SRC awards and annual reports for information dissemination.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR enhance advertisement of the SRC meetings with posters at the local NMDVR offices so that participants can see the posters. Along these lines, the SRC further recommends that NMDVR staff be invited to local SRC meetings in order to increase the partnership between the two entities.

**Response:** NMDVR agrees with both of these recommendations and will have the CIO and administration support work on getting posters produced and distributed to DVR offices starting in Spring of 2017. NMDVR will encourage local staff to attend SRC meetings as well.

# NMDVR Response to 2015 Recommendations

The SRC recommends that due to the transition requirements specified under WIOA, that NMDVR look into methods to increase partnerships statewide with service providers of youth transition.

**Response:** NMDVR has been working diligently since WIOA was signed into law to increase partnerships to provide youth transition services. NMDVR and NMCFB are in the final stages of implementing an Inter-Governmental Agreement with Region Education Center 5 to provide Pre-Employment Transition services across the state. NMDVR's Transition and Business Outreach Specialists work to build NMDVR's relationships with schools, businesses, and providers to develop quality transition services.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR investigate how best to assure timely application periods for NMDVR clients who re-apply for services after case closure or where a previous case has existed. This action would be especially helpful for cases for which post-employment status is not feasible.

**Response:** NMDVR's application process is federally regulated and requires 60-day eligibility determination and 90 day IPE development. NMDVR is striving to meet these requirements. In addition, NMDVR is working to develop an online application process, and recently has implemented adobe E-sign to remove barriers for rural New Mexicans who have to travel long distances to sign documentation.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR investigate consumer claims in regard to excessive documentation to justify services and purchases in order to facilitate timely delivery of necessary services.

**Response:** NMDVR's RSU deputy Director and 4 Field Operations Directors investigate every consumer complaint and take appropriate action as necessary to facilitate timely delivery of services. RSU senior leadership also work very closely with Disability Rights New Mexico to address any concern that they bring to our attention regarding client services.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR consider the development of a self-employment primer to assist participants in developing sound business plans and business practices in order to increase long term successes with self-employment plans.

**Response:** One of the initiatives in 2017 will to bring national self-employment training to NMDVR staff to help improve our ability to help individuals with self-Employment plans. NMDVR's Business outreach specialist will work with our training department to implement this training in 2017.

# NMDVR Response to 2015 Recommendations

The SRC recommends that NMDVR consider the development of a self-employment primer to assist participants in developing sound business plans and business practices in order to increase long term successes with self-employment plans.

**Response:** One of the initiatives in 2017 will to bring national self-employment training to NMDVR staff to help improve our ability to help individuals with self-Employment plans. NMDVR's Business outreach specialist will work with our training department to implement this training in 2017.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR develop a response plan in order to address common complaints and/or case reviews specific to an Area Office.

**Response:** As stated above NMDVR already has this in place, RSU senior management investigate all consumer complaints and Disability Rights concerns and make appropriate changes to address if necessary.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR develop a best practice for service provision for consumers living with AIDS or HIV.

**Response:** Currently NMDVR is not seeing a large service population in this category. Current priority is will providing staff appropriate nationally recognized Supportive Employment training to improve services in this category. However, NMDVR can look at such training in the future.



# SRC Recommendations for 2017

The SRC continues to recommend that consistency be achieved in the top administrative positions of NMDVR to provide continuity of management and oversight, and to facilitate continuous staff development and effectiveness.

The SRC recommends that a designated SRC member be involved as a liaison with the NMDVR committee that works on the MOP that will be updated to ensure compliance with WIOA.

The SRC recommends that counselor training or the “Rehab Academy” be re-implemented by NMDVR to ensure new counselors have a good foundation in the rehabilitation process.

The SRC strongly recommends that NMDVR follow federal requirements for SRC members to review potential Independent Fair Hearing Officer candidates prior to implementing a contract for services. The SRC further recommends that any new Fair Hearing Officer receive routine training on VR processes and protocols to ensure understanding of the issues presented during the Fair Hearing process.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR enhance advertisement of SRC Quarterly Meetings and Public Forums to include the DVR website (the SRC Section and perhaps on the Hot Topics), as well as the Governor’s website, websites of local collaborative, and sister State Agencies. These efforts would be in line with the public notices that must be published in advance of each meeting/public forum per the State’s Open Meetings Act.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR place additional emphasis on the facilitation of public forums to collect feedback regarding NMDVR services. The SRC strongly recommends that NMDVR re-evaluate its advertising process for the public forums to ensure the widest possible pool of participants are aware and can attend these events in order to gather feedback regarding services. In addition, SRC recommends that DVR inform the SRC of all Public Hearings, in advance, so that the SRC may assist with advertisement of such.

The SRC recommends the continuation of annual SRC awards for outstanding NMDVR staff and business partners. Additionally, the SRC recommends that NMDVR prepare and disseminate information on its achievements to build community and legislative awareness of the impact of services and NMDVR staff.

# SRC Recommendations for 2017

The SRC recommends that NMDVR enhance advertisement of the SRC meetings with posters at the local NMDVR offices so that participants can see the posters. Along these lines, the SRC further recommends that NMDVR staff be invited to local SRC meetings in order to increase the partnership between the two entities.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR investigate how best to assure timely application periods for NMDVR clients who re-apply for services after case closure or where a previous case has existed. This action would be especially helpful for cases for which post-employment status is not feasible. In addition, SRC recommends and supports the development of the online application process.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR investigate consumer claims in regard to excessive documentation to justify services and purchases in order to facilitate timely delivery of necessary services.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR consider the development of a self-employment primer to assist participants in developing sound business plans and business practices in order to increase long term successes with self-employment plans.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR develop a response plan in order to address common complaints and/or case reviews specific to an Area Office.

The SRC recommends that NMDVR develop a best practice for service provision for consumers living with AIDS or HIV.

The SRC recommends that due to the transition requirements specified under WIOA, that NMDVR look into methods to increase partnerships statewide with service providers of youth transition.

The SRC recommends that DVR provide a flow chart outlining the Transition process, including a definition of "Student" vs. "Youth".

The SRC recommends that DVR Director assist with communication to the Governor's office on the importance of maintaining SRC memberships.

# NM DVR At-A-Glance

| Statistical Year At-A-Glance |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 9,624                        | New Mexicans sought and received direct vocational rehabilitation services   |
| 8,568                        | New Mexicans received vocational rehabilitation services including: medical treatment, guidance and counseling, training, and job seeking skills |
| 827                          | Successfully rehabilitated   |
| 715                          | Job ready or employed but not yet closed   |
| \$18,869                     | Average yearly employee wage   |
| 176%                         | Percent wage increase after rehabilitation   |
| 37%                          | Most significantly disabled  |
| 54%                          | Significantly disabled   |
| \$15,604,940                 | Total wages for successfully rehabilitated individuals   |

# NM DVR At-A-Glance

## Participants by Major Disabling Conditions

| Major Disabling Condition                     | Count |
|---|-------|
| Cognitive Impairment                          | 2,394 |
| Psychosocial Impairment                       | 1,752 |
| Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment  | 1,309 |
| Other Impairment - Mental                     | 1,029 |
| Other Impairment - Physical                   | 639   |
| Hearing Loss - Primary Communication Auditory | 544   |
| Deafness - Primary Communication Auditory     | 345   |
| General Physical Debilitation                 | 263   |
| Communicative Impairment                      | 136   |
| Other Impairment - Visual                     | 64    |
| Respiratory Impairment                        | 53    |
| Blindness                                     | 27    |
| Deaf-Blindness                                | 11    |
| Respiratory Impairment                        | 53    |
| TOTAL   | 8,568 |

# NM DVR At-A-Glance

| Rehabilitated Closures by Occupation               |       |
|--|-------|
| Occupation   | Count |
| Service Occupations                                | 363   |
| Professional, Paraprofessional and Technical       | 164   |
| Prod, Const, Operating, Maint & Material Handling  | 116   |
| Clerical and Administrative Support                | 87    |
| Sales and Related Occupations                      | 44    |
| Managerial and Administrative                      | 22    |
| Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing and Related        | 9     |
| Community and Social Service Occupations           | 6     |
| Computer and Mathematical Occupations              | 5     |
| Education, Training, and Library Occupations       | 3     |
| Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations | 2     |
| Healthcare Support Occupations                     | 2     |
| Production Occupations                             | 2     |
| Protective Service Occupations                     | 2     |
| TOTAL  | 827   |

# NM DVR At-A-Glance

| Income Reliance Before and After Return to Work    |                |            |
|--|----------------|------------|
| Primary Source of Support                          | At Application | At Closure |
| Employment earnings                                | 144            | 590        |
| Public Assist, partly w/ Fed Funds(SSI,TANF/AFDC)  | 126            | 83         |
| Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)        | 92             | 82         |
| Family and Friends                                 | 366            | 48         |
| Client Income                                      | 25             | 7          |
| Personal Income-retirement,interest,dividends,rent | 13             | 6          |
| All Other Public Sources                           | 26             | 4          |
| All Other Sources of Support                       | 14             | 3          |
| Annuity or Other Non-disability Insurance Benefits | 5              | 3          |
| Public Assistance without Federal Funds (GA Only)  | 11             | 1          |
| Public Institution - Tax Supported                 | 1              | -          |
| Worker's Compensation                              | 4              | -          |
| TOTAL  | 827            | 827        |

# DVR Success Stories

## **REBECCA:**

Rebecca opened her case with DVR a few years ago working towards her degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Throughout her time with DVR, she worked diligently to achieve her goal and successfully completed her goal of achieve her Bachelor's Degree. She has set a goal for herself to achieve her Master's Degree as well. Due to some complications with some vehicle modifications, she was forced to deal with some health problems. During this time she had the potential to lose her job – she had not been in her employment within enough time to be covered by FMLA. However, she advocated for herself in her place of employment as well as with the vendor to receive the appropriate modifications necessary for transportation to and from work. Rebecca received a successful closure a few months ago and at this time is still competitively employed.

## **AARON GARZA:**

Aaron Garza is a client who came to me early 2016. He has had severe struggles all his life with mental health diagnoses and consistent limitations. Through all these struggles he has maintained the support of his mother who has been a rock in his life.

In coming to DVR, after being hospitalized several times, he has successfully completed an intensive computer coding program and obtained his certificate of completion. Although, Aaron has not yet achieved a successful case closure, completing this “coding boot camp” has allowed him to have the confidence that he needs to continue on with his education. He is now working on enrolling in a higher education training program to further his skills in order to reach his goal.

Aaron is so motivated and an intensely hard worker. His dedication and his passion towards being successful shines. Watching Aaron continue to make successes in his life is a motivation for me to continue working hard for all DVR clients.

# SRC Membership

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC): Larry Rodriguez

Parent Training and Information Center: Mariela Pijem (pending member)

Client Assistance Program: Bernadine Chavez

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor: Hermila Ortega

Representative of Community Rehabilitation Program: Melinda Garcia

Representative of Business, Industry and Labor: Jeffery Diamond

Representative of Disability Advocacy Group: Barbara Ibanez (pending member)

Representative of Individuals with Disabilities: Ronald Garcia

Current or Former NMDVR Participant and SRC Sargent at Arms: Richard Dennis Jiron  
Section 121 or American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Paula Seanez (pending member)

Representative of State Education Agency: Vacant

Representative of the State Workforce Investment Board: Sandy Sandoval

Director of NMDVR (ex-officio, non-voting member): Joe D. Cordova

Ad Hoc Member: Hanna Skandera, Secretary for Public Education Department

Employee of NMDVR (ex-officio, non-voting member): Kasha Suina, Administrative Assistant



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2300 Indian Wells Rd.  
Alamogordo, NM 88310  
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(575) 437-1582 (Fax)

Belen  
911 Castillo Avenue  
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(505) 864-1617  
(888) 901-7902 (Toll-Free)  
(505) 864-6292 (Fax)

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3605 National Parks Highway  
Carlsbad, NM 88220-1448  
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(800) 645-0258 (Toll-Free)  
(575) 887-7312 (Fax)

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Clovis, NM 88101  
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(575) 769-2794 (Fax)

Disability Determination Services  
7421 Barlett Dr. NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87107  
(505) 841-5600  
(800) 432-5868 (Toll-Free)  
(505) 841-5724

Edgewood  
3 George Court Suite B  
Edgewood, NM 87015  
(505) 281-9946  
(505) 287-9947  
(505) 281-9400 (Fax)

Espanola  
706-B La Joya St.  
Espanola, NM 87532  
(505) 753-2908  
(888) 901-3647 (Toll-Free)  
(505) 753-7303 (Fax)

Farmington  
2901 Hulton  
Farmington, NM 87402  
(505) 327-5123  
(888) 901-7901 (Toll-Free)

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1014 S. Atkinson Ave.  
Roswell, NM 88203  
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(505) 841-6450  
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(505) 841-6451 (Fax)

Santa Fe  
2540 Camino Edward Ortiz, Ste B  
Santa Fe, NM 87507  
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(800) 644-7732 (Toll-Free)  
(505) 827-3564 (Fax)

Santa Fe - Admin. Office  
435 St. Michael's Dr., Bldg. D  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
(505) 954-8500  
(800) 224-7005 (Toll-Free)  
(505) 954-8562 (Fax)

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Silver City, NM 88061  
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(575) 835-4468 (Fax)

South Valley  
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145 Roy Road, Suite C  
Taos, NM 87571  
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(888) 901-7869 (Toll-Free)  
(575) 758-7485 (Fax)

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312 East Nizhoni Boulevard  
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(505) 726-1429  
(800) 279-5681 (Toll-Free)  
(505) 726-1431 (Fax)

Hobbs  
726 E. Michigan, Suite 160  
Hobbs, NM 88240  
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(575) 393-3630 (Fax)

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3381 Del Rey Blvd.  
Las Cruces, NM 88012  
(575) 524-6135  
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(575) 524-6139 (Fax)

Las Vegas  
32 NM 65 Hot Springs Blvd.  
Las Vegas, NM 87701  
(505) 425-9365  
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(505) 383-2529 (Fax)

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5205 Quail NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87120  
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