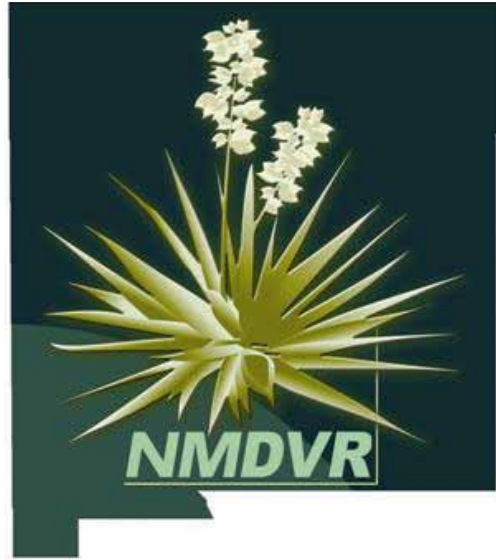


NEW MEXICO DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION



ANNUAL REPORT 2006



**New Mexico
Public Education Department
Division of**

Vocational Rehabilitation

2006 Annual Report

**State Fiscal Year
July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006**

To obtain additional information or projects described in this report, call
NMDVR toll free at 1-800-224-7005.

www.dvrgetsjobs.com



Dear Governor Richardson,

On this occasion, I am honored to present the New Mexico Public Education Department Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) Annual Report for the fiscal year 2006. Unquestionably, I am proud of the entire NMDVR staff. Each works hard in their way to advocate for jobs for New Mexicans with disabilities. Staff provides the occasion for expression, understanding, choice, and opportunity for people yearning to improve their quality of life. Each path taken becomes a unique journey. They strive to reach new goals, and grow as individuals. With the assistance of NMDVR and our communities, they seek personal and economic self-determination.

Entrusted with offering every child a quality education, The Public Education Department works attentively to benefit children, families, and New Mexico. Similarly, our Division of Vocational Rehabilitation shares the lives of people with disabilities, and commits to help each person secure quality employment.

NMDVR proudly collaborates with state and federal partners, employer networks, the State Rehabilitation Council, the State Independent Living Council and community-based providers, to provide quality services. Such efforts clearly benefit from the vision to enhance disability goals set by the Governor's office. With unmistakable support, a caring team of professionals strives to make New Mexico, more prosperous, more diverse, with more wide-ranging opportunities for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Veronica C. Garcia".

Dr. Veronica C. Garcia
Secretary of Education





Citizens of New Mexico:

In FY 2006, the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assisted 1872 individuals with disabilities achieve their vocational goals. Those individuals increased their income by 172%. They will return to the state treasury \$5.63 for every \$1.00 in state general fund appropriation spent on vocational rehabilitation services.

As remarkable as this return on investment is, it would be an erroneous to assume that the \$5.63/\$1.00 benefit/cost ratio tells the story of working persons with disabilities. Sometime ago I was in a mall and I saw a very cute 5 year old girl just bouncing with glee in a shoe store. I eased over by the door and watched as she climbed on her father's lap and squeezed him around the neck saying, "I jus' love my new shoes, Daddy!" As the father spun his wheelchair out into the mall he saw me watching and with his daughter still riding high on his lap, he gave me a furtive wink and rolled away down the mall with an air of pride so thick you could cut it with a knife.

That little girl will wear-out and out-grow many pairs of shoes, and he will always remember the day when he was able to buy his beautiful little daughter just exactly the pair of shoes she wanted. He will always remember her delight and how it made him feel. He will never know how that scene made me feel.

Our counselors have daily interaction with individuals with disabilities when they come to us for assistance. What are they looking for? Most want a semblance of the pride this father felt. Many are looking for something new. Like the little girl, individuals are looking for jobs that seem to be just right for them. They want to try something new and feel that it is a perfect "fit."

"I jus' love my new shoes, Daddy!" ... that is a metaphor for what we do at the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and what our counselors work to hear. When an individual with a disability achieves their vocational goal, the counselor experiences the professional pride of accomplishment that makes vocational rehabilitation such a special public service.

I am proud to present this annual report as a tribute to the 1872 individuals with disabilities who made great strides toward their career aspirations in 2006. Our lives are all enriched because of their efforts and the efforts of the vocational rehabilitation staff that have assisted them in this journey.

Sincerely,

Gary Beene
Assistant Secretary for Vocational Rehabilitation

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Every New Mexican with a disability has the opportunity to contribute to the quality of life and the economic prosperity of the state.

Mission:

The mission of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is to encourage and assist the efforts of New Mexicans with disabilities to reach their goals for working and living in their communities.

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ABOUT US

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) has been assisting New Mexicans with disabilities work and live in their communities for over 82 years. Administratively attached to the New Mexico Public Education Department, NMDVR is involved in four primary areas of endeavor:

- Assisting individuals with disabilities achieve their career goals through the vocational rehabilitation process;
- Determination of eligibility for social security disability benefits programs through administration of the Disability Determination Services;
- Facilitating the delivery of Independent Living services through partnerships with the State Independent Living Council, the New Mexico Commission for the Blind, and seven Centers for Independent Living around the state; and,
- Administration of system change grants through the agency's Program Development and Support efforts.

The Assistant Secretary for Vocational Rehabilitation, appointed by the Secretary

of Education, directs the Agency. Over 315 full-time staff provide services in 24 offices located throughout the entire state.

All service efforts are supported by the highly qualified staff in the agency's Administrative Services and Information Technology Units located in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The New Mexico Legislature, the United States Rehabilitation Services Administration, and the Social Security Administration establish annual performance goals for the agency. During 2006, New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation met or exceeded all established performance goals, standards, and indicators.

This annual report details the remarkable success of New Mexicans with disabilities with the assistance of the NMDVR team in 2006.

**1,872 New
Mexicans with
Disabilities
achieved their
employment
goals in 2006.
More people
found or
retained jobs
than in any
prior year in
the agency's
history.**

NEW MEXICO DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Strategic Planning Framework for 2004-2010

The Core Beliefs, Values, Vision, Mission, Goal Areas and Key Strategies together comprise the Strategic Planning Framework of our Agency. The Framework is considered one whole, not separate parts. The commonly shared Core Beliefs represent the driving force of Agency purpose, coupled with the Values that mold the context of our work. The Vision is how our organization sees the possibilities for our participants. The Mission sets the roadmap for attaining the vision, while the Goals are what we expect to attain in three to five years. Key Strategies are how the work is organized to ensure that Goals are reached.

Core Beliefs:

- Service Excellence
- Improved Quality Of Life For Participants
- Individuality In Case Management
- Flexibility Of Decision-Making
- Informed Choice
- Quality Outcomes

Values:

- Teamwork
- Innovation
- Continuous Improvement
- Respectful, Professional Environment
- Commitment to Employees
- Effective Leadership
- Partnering with Participants

Vision:

Every New Mexican with a disability has the opportunity to contribute to the quality of life and the economic prosperity of the state.

Mission:

The mission of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is to encourage and assist the efforts of New Mexicans with disabilities to reach their goals for working and living in their communities.

Goal Areas:

- Successful Participant Outcomes
- Comprehensive Employment Networks
- Positive Organizational Climate
- Effective Use of Resources
- Participant and Stakeholder Satisfaction

Key Strategies:

- Expand Business Connections and Partnerships
- Emphasize Highly Skilled Professional Staff
- Engage Participants and Stakeholders
- Align Resources
- Develop Communication Systems
- Stream line Business Processes



**NEW MEXICO
DIVISION OF
VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION**

Public Education Department

Gary Beene
Assistant Secretary for Vocational Rehabilitation

REHABILITATION = VOICE + CHOICE + OPPORTUNITY

The most important process within NMDVR arguably may be the counseling relationship established with each participant. This relationship includes many factors that become the bedrock to build upon and progress. Among these is empathy, active listening for understanding, positive regard, and the ability to establish a trusting environment where unique individuals may successfully reach their goals.

This report includes three major themes, **voice**, **choice**, and **opportunity**. The rehabilitation process requires individuals with disabilities to make their **voice heard**. No substantive progress toward one's goals occurs without understanding that good decisions require knowing the range of **choices available**.

NMDVR professionals offer guidance and counseling, but ultimately the individual becomes responsible for their success. Counselors and other professionals are accountable for **advocating opportunity**. These three concepts when made available help guide an individual to attain their goals.

REHABILITATION PROCESS

The basic rehabilitation process consists of listening, understanding, and evaluating the participant's needs and goals, providing the services necessary to realize those goals, and assistance with finding or retaining work.

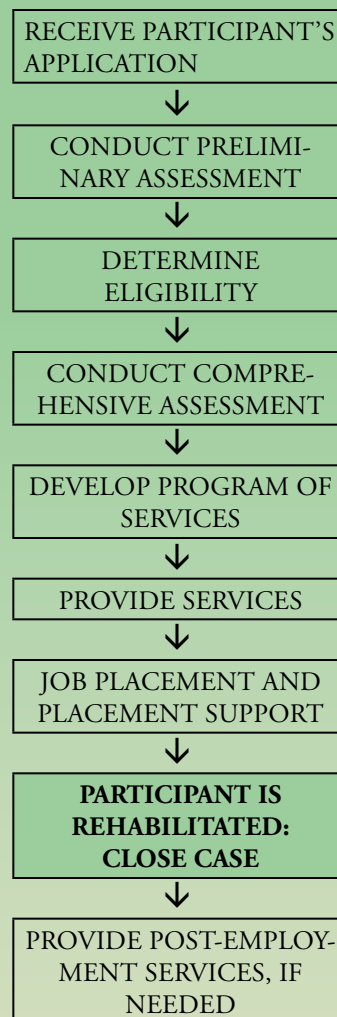
At the decision-making core, the participant and counselor, work together to develop and implement an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Specific services that may be provided include:

- Evaluations, to include, medical, psychological, vocational, and other specialist exams as necessary
- School-to-Work Transition planning
- Counseling and guidance
- Medical and psychological treatment
- Rehabilitation engineering, ergonomics and assistive technology
- Job training
- Job coaching

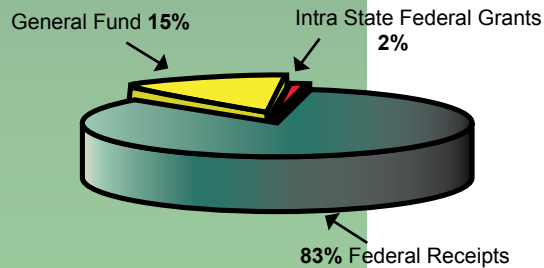
"It is important that persons with disabilities are offered an array of services like those developed by the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. One size does not fit all. We need to focus on innovative programs and projects outside of the traditional... RSA needs to fund these innovative programs so that other states may emulate New Mexico."

Bobby Silverstein, Director of the Center for the Study and Advancement of Disability Policy, April 2005



FUNDING SOURCES & EXPENDITURE

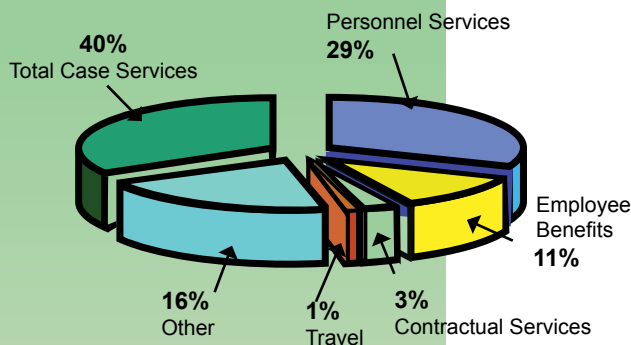
Revenues by Source



NMDVR Federal Receipts	\$ 24,791,000
DDS Federal Receipts	10,172,900
	<u>34,963,900</u>
NMDVR General Fund	6,147,200
DDS General Fund	0
	<u>6,147,200</u>
NMDVR Intra-State Federal Grants	\$ 894,300
DDS Intra-State Federal Grants	0
	<u>894,300</u>
NMDVR other Revenue	248,700
DDS other revenue	12,500
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 42,266,600

*Revenues are based on actual expenditures; therefore, expenditures will not always equal receipts. This factor is due to federal receivables at the end of the year.

Expenditures by Category



Personnel Services	\$12,786,700
Employee Benefits	\$ 4,915,100
Contractual Services	\$ 1,262,200
In-state Travel & Transportation	\$ 404,100
Out-of-State Travel	\$ 114,900
Other Expenditures:	
Maintenance	\$ 49,100
Supplies	\$ 319,700
Other Operating Costs	\$ 4,934,200
Other Costs	\$ 1,723,400*
Capital Outlay	\$ 14,500
Other Financing Uses	\$ 0
Total Other Expenditures	<u>\$ 7,040,900</u>
Total Case services for Participants)	<u>\$17,250,300</u>

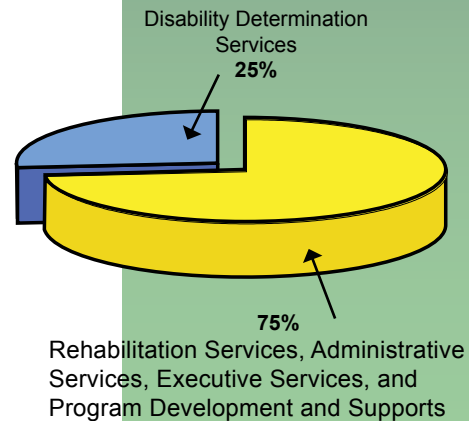
GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURES . . . \$43,255,200

*Significant Increase Due to one - time Special Appropriation

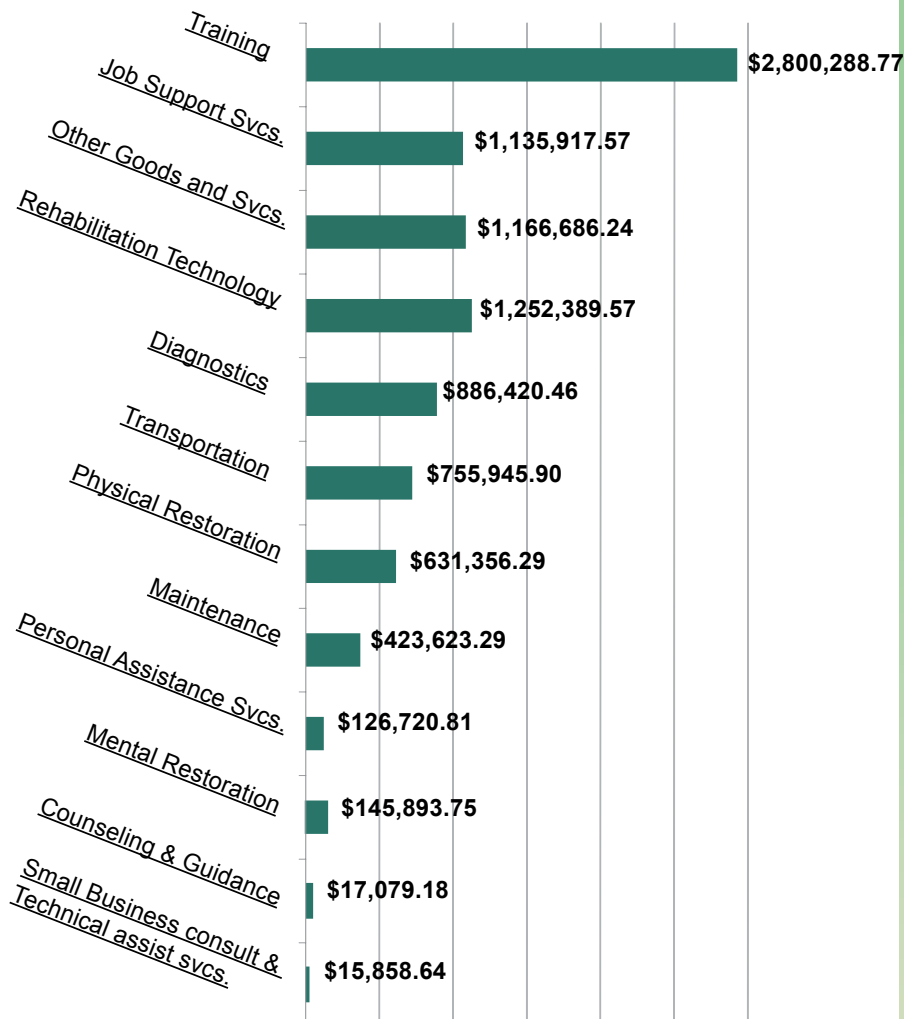
2006 Expenditures by Activity

Rehabilitation, Administrative, Executive and Program Development .	\$32,632,800
Disability Determination Services.	<u>\$10,632,400</u>
TOTAL	\$43,255,200

Actual expenditures as of June 30, 2006



Case Services Expenditures



NMDVR LISTENS TO PARTICIPANT VOICE

11,044	N ew Mexicans sought and received direct vocational rehabilitation services, including post-employment services.
8,767	N ew Mexicans received pre-employment vocational rehabilitation services including, medical treatment, guidance and counseling, training, and job seeking skills training.
5,480	P articipants continue to receive ongoing, individualized services, based on their strengths, skills, abilities, informed choice, and desired vocational goal.
1,872	N ew Mexicans found and retained jobs consistent with their career goals, that contribute to their quality of life, and the economic prosperity of the state.
94%	P ercentage of rehabilitated participants with significant physical or mental disabilities (which prevents the performance of at least one major life function, such as walking or hearing).
97%	P ercentage of rehabilitated clients who entered competitive or self-employment

From the recently published report, *“The Economic Impact of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (FY06)”* by Dr. Bob Grassberger of New Mexico State University:

- Weekly earnings of the 1872 individuals successfully served increased by 172%
- Estimated lifetime earnings for these 1872 persons calculates to \$172.526 million

Combining all of the state’s benefits from NMDVR operations produces a total benefit/cost ratio of \$5.63 to \$1.00 for the state of New Mexico.

- \$19.151 million in state taxes will be paid on lifetime earnings of these 1872 rehabilitated persons
- Expenditures for services in 2006 equaled \$28.838 million (\$24.063 million federal funds and \$4.775 million state funds) positively impact the state economy
- \$2.366 million in states taxes result from expenditure of federal funds due to vocational rehabilitation service

ABOUT OUR CLIENTS

MAJOR DISABLING CONDITIONS OF CLIENTS

Disabling Condition	Count	%
Orthopedic/ Neurological Impairment	1806	20.6%
Mental Illness (incl. Psychotic/ Neurotic/ Behavior Disorders)	1767	20.2%
Learning Disabled	2084	23.8%
Alcohol/ Substance Abuse	402	4.6%
Mental Retardation	374	4.3%
TBI	260	3.0%
Spinal Cord Injury	80	0.9%
Deafness	355	4.0%
Hearing Impairments	613	7.0%
Epilepsy	90	1.0%
Cardiac/ Circulatory Disorders	92	1.0%
Blindness/ Visual Impairments	52	0.6%
Deaf-Blind	7	.08%
Other	785	9.0%
Total:	8767	100%

Includes all persons determined eligible and receiving services, not including clients returning for post-employment services.

REHABILITATED CLIENTS PRIMARY SOURCE OF SUPPORT AT ACCEPTANCE AND AT CLOSURE

PRIMARY SOURCE OF SUPPORT	At Application	At Closure
Earnings, Interest, Dividends, Rent (Client Income)	480	1494
Family and Friends	768	75
Public Assistance including General Assistance, SSI and AFDC (Public Assistance, without Federal Funds (GA Only); Public Assistance, partly w/Federal Funds (SSI, TANF, AFDC))	284	141
Social Security Disability Insurance Benefits	183	136
Workers Compensation	28	1
Other Sources, including but not limited to Private Relief Agency (All Other Public Sources; All Other Sources of Support; Public Institution – Tax Supported; Annuity or other non-disability insurance Benefits; Private Relief Agency)	129	25
Totals:	1872	1872

OFFICE DISTRIBUTION



AREA 1

Santa Fe Field Office
Supervisor: Phil Perkins
505-827-3526
800-773-4072

Satellite offices:

- Espanola
- Farmington
- Taos

AREA 2

Marble Field Office, Albuquerque East
Supervisor: John Fullinwider
505-232-8701
866-877-3216

Satellite Offices:

- Las Vegas
- Moriarty
- Raton

AREA 3

Las Cruces Field Office
Supervisor: Shirley Gonzales
505-524-6135
888-901-7866

Satellite Offices:

- Alamogordo
- Anthony
- Silver City

AREA 4

Roswell Field Office
Supervisor: Terri Douglass
505-624-6024
800-644-7732

Satellite Offices:

- Carlsbad
- Clovis
- Hobbs

Santa Fe Administrative Office
505-954-8500
fax 505-954-8562
800-224-7005

AREA 5

Amherst Field Office, Albuquerque North
Supervisor: Reyes Gonzales
505-841-5750
888-818-3259

Satellite Office:

- Albuquerque South Valley

AREA 6

Quail Field Office, Albuquerque West
Supervisor: Lee Martinez
505-836-1774
888-818-3263

Satellite Offices:

- Belen
- Rio Rancho
- Socorro

AREA 7

Psychological Services Units
Supervisor: Kathryn Spiering, PhD
(offers professional support services)

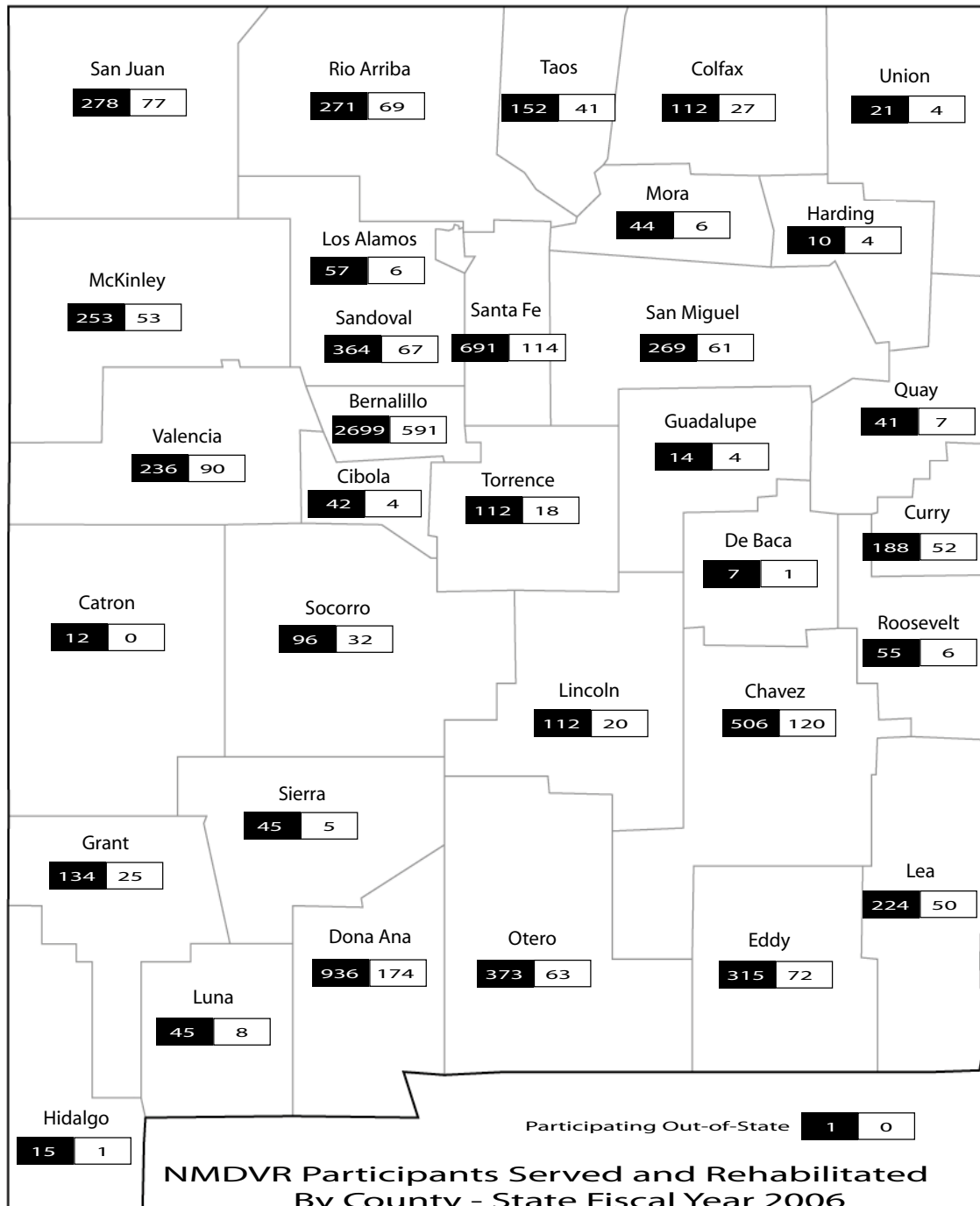
AREA 8

Central Field Office,
Albuquerque Central
Supervisor: Nancy Schneider
505-841-6450
866-524-6598

Satellite Office:

- Gallup

COUNTY DISTRIBUTION



**NMDVR Participants Served and Rehabilitated
By County - State Fiscal Year 2006**

Number of participants ELIGIBLE black box Participants REHABILITATED white box

5,480 people continue to receive on-going individually planned services

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL



Mike O'Brien, New Mexico Highland University; Gary Beene NMDVR; Mark Cornet, Kentah Group; Larry Alflen Zuni VR; and Rebecca Holland, Jemez VR discusses SRC business.

The federal Rehabilitation Act mandates that the SRC, in conjunction with NMDVR, develop and agree to the State's annual goals and priorities in carrying out the VR program, and annually evaluate the State's performance relative to its goals. Together, the SRC (consisting of at least 15 members) and the NMDVR collaborate to assure that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely, and effective vocational rehabilitation services.

New Mexico SRC includes members representing: the Statewide Independent Living Council; a parent training and information group; the Client Assistance Program; vocational rehabilitation counselors; community rehabilitation service providers; current or former NMDVR applicants or participants; state Special Education; disability advocacy groups; the Workforce Development Board; and business, industry and labor. New Mexico also includes Native American representation, the Cabinet Secretary for the Public Education Department, and the Assistant Secretary for the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

One of the most effective instruments providing a voice for New Mexicans with disabilities is the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), which works in partnership with NMDVR to develop and review state goals for vocational rehabilitation. Appointed by the Governor to three-year terms, SRC members represent a cross-section of New Mexicans with a stake in vocational rehabilitation programs. More than half of New Mexico's SRC are people with disabilities. To achieve their federally mandated goal (Sec. 105 of the Rehabilitation Act) to evaluate the effectiveness of New Mexico Vocational rehabilitation

programs, the Council meets at least four times a year in public forum and conducts public hearings to identify areas of concern.

In 2006, the New Mexico SRC identified lack of transportation as the major obstacle to employment in the state, and announced a series of public transportation summits will continue in cities during SFY 2007. In addition, the SRC showed its support of NMDVR goals in recognizing exemplary service delivery in 2006 by outstanding NMDVR counselors.

SRC MEMBERS

Larry Alflen, Chair
American Indian VR Services
Zuni Vocational Rehabilitation, Zuni

Rebecca Holland
American Indian VR Services
Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation, Jemez

Treva Roanhorse
American Indian VR Services
Navajo Voc Rehab, Window Rock, AZ

Larry Rodriguez
VR participant. Espanola

Bernadine Chavez
Protection & Advocacy, Albuquerque

Rose Marie Sanchez
Disability Community, Albuquerque

Martin De La Garza
Disability Community, Los Lunas

Len Malry
Office of Workforce Development & Training, Santa Fe

Jack Osborne
VR counselor non-voting, Albuquerque

Vince Montano
Client Assistance Program, Albuquerque

Ivie Vigil
DDPC, Santa Fe

Jane Townsend

R. Sue Gronewold
Public Education Dept
Special Education Unit, Santa Fe

Marilyn Johnson
American Indian VR Services
Laguna/Acoma Vocational, New Laguna

Larry Auer
Statewide Independent Living Council
Los Alamos

Linda Pedro
VR participant, Chimayo

Ron Garcia
Program service provider, Santa Fe

Richard Kaminski
VR participant, Roswell

Mary Beresford, GCD
Program service provider, Santa Fe

Heather Williams
Business, industry, labor rep, Organ

Mark Allen Cornett
Business, industry, labor rep, Albuquerque

Joseph E. Misquez
Business, industry, labor rep, Mesilla Park

Dr. Veronica Garcia
Cabinet Secretary PED (ad hoc), Santa Fe

Gary Beene
Assistant Cabinet Secretary
NMDVR (ad hoc), Santa Fe

UNDERSERVED POPULATION OUTREACH

In state fiscal year 2006, NMDVR continued to reach out to remote and under-served populations. The New Vistas Native American Liaison Program continues with success. The School to Work program added specialists. Program Development and Supports Unit programs offer unique programs and services. NMDVR also renewed its commitment to on-going programs and partnerships that have proven successful.



Ms. Lori Gully assists with technology solutions through the NMTAP Program, helping people across the state.

Native American Liaison Program

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation contracts with New Vistas Native American Liaison Program (NVNALP) to provide vocational rehabilitation liaison service to the 19 Pueblos and the two Apache nations since 1985.

The NVNALP program facilitates service delivery to Native Americans living in their communities through educational outreach and culturally appropriate service delivery.

Challenges include lack of transportation, inadequate community services, and high unemployment. These are similar challenges faced by NMDVR counselors serving rural populations.

However, NVNALP rehabilitation technicians help the NMDVR counselors understand cultural factors that may affect relationships with Native Americans.

The association with New Vistas continues to help NMDVR meet its goals of culturally appropriate service delivery for Native Americans with disabilities.

Computer and Accommodations Resources in Entrepreneurship and Rehabilitation Sites (CAREERS)

CAREERS was created with a federal grant in 2000 to increase self-employment for Native American (and others) with disabilities. Though it ended during 2006, its legacy continues. Services included provision of assistive technology, small business plan development, peer mentoring, help with marketing, and in some cases, start-up funds. The CAREERS grant program was highly successful, accountable and made a real impact on New Mexico entrepreneurship.

Migrant Assistance Program (MAP)

MAP has been providing services to migrant and seasonal farm workers with disabilities since 2002. Services include educational opportunities, translation or interpretive services, help with job readiness and job search, client follow-up, and advocacy to an often-marginalized population. MAP targets a broad range

of agriculture-related activities, including food processing, ranching, produce delivery, dairy, orchard, and field work. MAP is a federally funded project. For information call MAP staff at 1-888-901-7866 or visit the website at www.dvrgetsjobs.com.

NMDVR/Office of African American Affairs

NMDVR continues to collaborate with the State Office of African American Affairs (OAAA) across the state to educate the African American Community about NMDVR services. The Community Outreach Coordinator (COC) maintains efforts and rapport with various state and government agencies, businesses, and faith-based organizations to support and market NMDVR services.

Working with schools, churches, social and civic groups, as well as other organizations and agencies, the COC assumes a team role in efforts to overcome obstacles to employment of people with disabilities. Call Lanthia Gillespie for information at 1-800-841-6450.

UNDERSERVED POPULATION OUTREACH

IMPROVING UNDERSERVED POPULATION OUTREACH

NMDVR updates programs, and begins new ones, to meet the evolving challenges of individuals with disabilities. Particularly sensitive to the needs of underserved individuals with disabilities, NMDVR emphasizes a highly skilled professional staff sensitive to participant and stakeholder needs.

However, it is the individual counseling relationship with each participant that provides the most effective means of communication and understanding. An integral part of the guidance and counseling at NMDVR is the concept of participant choice. This process assures that the participant's voice is heard from the first day forward to successful closure.

New Mexico NMDVR and Behavioral Health Services

NMDVR is a member of New Mexico's Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative. During the 2006 fiscal year, work continued toward intra-agency collaboration specifically dealing with behavioral health services among all 17 agencies/divisions of the BHPC.

Under the terms of an agreement reached with the state Behavioral Health Services Division, NMDVR continues to facilitate and monitor employment services for people within the BHSD system and to assist others in making connections with that system.

Coordination of services among BHSD, NMDVR, regional employment providers, and mental health providers can increase successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Youth Services School-to-Work Transition

NMDVR continues to expand its School-to-Work Transition Program efforts to provide services to youth with disabilities across the state. In 2006, NMDVR opened additional school-to-work transition caseloads, in Las Cruces and Santa Fe.

A member of the Statewide Transition Coordinating Council, NMDVR participates in efforts to transition students successfully from high school into the workplace or into specialized or advanced education programs. Emphasis is placed on early identification and referral of high school seniors.

The agency strives to determine eligibility for services and to implement Individualized Plans for Employment for these students before they graduate or leave the school system. Most students with disabilities are referred early in their senior year. Participation in Special Education classes is not a requirement. NMDVR staff outreach efforts include education of families, school personnel, service providers, and students. Counselors review and modify Memorandum of Agreement documents with each school as needed. The agency's Supported Employment and Transition Coordinator provides training and consultation services statewide.

Mentoring Diverse Abilities

High School-age Hispanic and Native American youth with disabilities benefit from mentorships helping them identify and work toward future professional goals. Mentoring Diverse Abilities encourages and assists students at Bernalillo High School, Gadsden School District and Tohajiilee Schools through mentoring, paid work experience, introduction to post-secondary educational opportunities, youth leadership training, parent education, job development and job coaching. Mentoring Diverse Abilities is made possible through a federal grant. For more information, call 1-800-964-3798.

Improving the Process for our Clients

Psychological Services staff is integral to the success of the Rehabilitation Services Unit. They perform client assessments and evaluations used to create Individualized Plans for Employment, and they provide invaluable consultation and training services to RSU field staff.

In this reporting year, the four-member team improved processes, making

NMDVR services more accessible to clients. Staff has initiated group in-house testing for the five Albuquerque area offices. Test results and interpretive reports assure early participation in the rehabilitation process and provide valuable information for assisting participants with vocational planning.

New assessment techniques for evaluating substance abuse, neuropsychological impairment, adaptive functioning, and learning disabilities have been added. Maintenance of a database exceeding 10,000 reports provides a historical context for client disability that could alter the nature and course of current services and/or avoid the necessity of further evaluation of disability.

Psychological Services staff provided training in various areas, including vocational disabling mental disorders, counseling techniques for working with clients whose disability affects interpersonal functioning, adjustment to disability, interpretation of test results for vocational rehabilitation planning, learning disabilities, and the prevention and management of violence in the workplace.

Ticket to Work

The Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program is designed to provide a network of providers for Social Security beneficiaries to obtain employment outcome services. NMDVR is an Employment Network under the Ticket to Work program, and received 182 ticket assignments total at the end of fiscal year 2006.



NMDVR STATE PLAN

Federal law, specifically the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, is the basic set of regulations that guide the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services. The Act also calls for the development of a state plan each year that reports how NMDVR administers the plan, the scope of rehabilitation services, the administration and provision of services, supported employment, and financial administration. This plan makes the public vocational rehabilitation program one of the most accountable in the nation. It requires accountable, effective, and collaborative efforts, to meet stringent standards and indicators documenting effective service delivery.

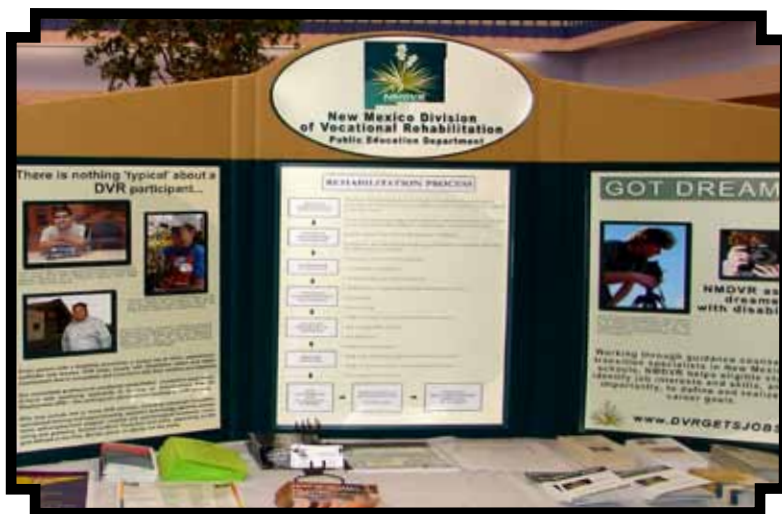
Our partner in developing the plan is the independent State Rehabilitation Council. They are responsible for completing the “Survey of Statewide Need Assessment” by surveying individuals with disabilities and presenting this to NMDVR. As well, an extensive “Customer Satisfaction Survey” is presented to NMDVR.

Each of these reports addresses the needs and concerns expressed by individuals with disabilities, and others. NMDVR holds annual public hearings, and invites the public, NMDVR participants and their representatives, NMDVR staff, and anyone interested in disability issues to attend. In 2006, four meetings were held; the sites were in Roswell, Las Cruces, Farmington, and Albuquerque.

The disability community’s voice is heard clearly through these methods, and more importantly, they all work in concert to affect the state plan. NMDVR is very sensitive to the concerns of disabled individuals, and wants to assure that the voice is not merely heard, but made a part of the planning, administration and delivery of effective services. This yearly process provides for continuous quality improvement.



Gilberto Romero has been on the radio for 15 years with his program, “Public Health Updates.” Gilberto helps keep the public informed regarding NMDVR issues through 26 broadcasts yearly.



Each NMDVR office is equipped with a professional display and program information booklets, pamphlets and brochures for keeping the disability community informed. It provides an excellent venue for open dialog.



Daniel



Daniel is an 18-year-old Capitol High School graduate currently working in a building material location. He enjoys his work. As Daniel has excellent mechanical skills and this type of work is a good job fit, for now. Job fit is the key to a good worker and a satisfied employer.

Daniel wants to enhance his mechanical aptitudes, and considers an apprenticeship in one of the skilled trades. He wants to move to Albuquerque where opportunities for apprenticeships abound. Daniel and his counselor feel his skills and abilities will help him make the right decision.

The building trades interest him most. Daniel is grateful for his counselor's guidance. He discovered that he would not be satisfied until he has a highly skilled career.

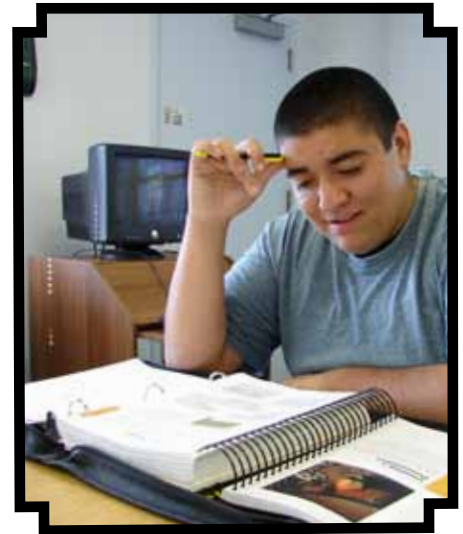
Benton



Benton is a young Navajo man with a gift for art. He has honed his talents, but remains humble. Benton recalled growing up with his brothers and that they would compete to see who could draw best. Well years later, the skills he began, as a youth, became his passion and career. Benton knew what he wanted and dreamed of success.

A CAREERS project employee worked closely with Benton and his counselor. It was a classic win-win situation for everyone. Recently he won second prize at the Gallup Indian Ceremonial for his pen and pencil artwork. He completed the illustrations to highlight an author's book, and they are collaborating to complete another. Benton sold his art at a booth at the 2006 Indian Market in Santa Fe.

He has sold his art both locally and out-of-state. Currently Benton is looking for the opportunity to show more people his artwork, and is looking for a gallery to feature his talents in Santa Fe.



Jose

Jose is a 19-year-old student who is working with his NMDVR counselor while completing his first semester of school. He is a very intelligent person with outstanding auditory, visual, and mechanical skills.

While in high school, he applied his mechanical skills and discovered that he had a high level of ability. He excelled in welding and went far beyond conventional "stick" welding to more complex oxyacetylene and TIG welding with aluminum. Copper is quite tricky but he can handle that as well.

At first, he was a little surprised that he also excelled with computers, a skill that requires fine motor skills. However, he can assemble a computer, install, and configure the software necessary to make one hum with efficiency.

Jose had the benefit of encouragement and hands-on training while in high school. He benefits from the encouragement of his NMDVR counselor. Jose wants an associate's degree in welding and metallurgy. This skill set is in demand and pays well. He looks forward to using computer-monitored equipment for high-tech work. What an appropriate fit for his talents and interests.

Sam



John

John is Dine of the Mexican clan, born of the Meadow People, and lives in Twin Lakes on the Navajo reservation. He is fluent in Dine, English, and Spanish. In follow-up with John a year after last year's report, he is doing well; his health is good, and he remains very busy.

After high school, John attended NMSU and graduated from UNM in '88 with a BS in Social Science. His education serves him well. John serves on the New Mexico Technology Assistance Board and is President of the Statewide Indian Council. Using his education and particular insights John has spoken to groups locally and at the national level.

Since the automobile accident that almost took his life at the age of 17, this former silversmith and rodeo rider sought vocational rehabilitation services. Initially evaluated as too severely disabled to work, John persevered and began working with his counselor. Thanks to NMDVR's CAREERS and NMDVR programs, John uses a specialized computer that has "opened up the world" for him.

At 47, John continues to write his book about his life and plans to join a consulting business to bring information about vocational rehabilitation services to others especially in remote areas.

Sam, a year after last year's report, is doing extremely well. NMDVR helped Sam, an Albuquerque student achieve his dream of becoming a professional photographer. Following an internship in the photo department of the Albuquerque Journal, Sam began school at the Brooks Institute of Photography program in California, one of the premier schools in the nation.

Sam said, "I spent a lot of time on this (considering his future), it is my life." By the time that Sam packed his photography gear and headed for California, he knew exactly what he wanted. He is at the top of his class. He works on assignment for the Associated Press and freelances for the Ventura Star and some of his work has been seen internationally.

What is his ultimate goal? Working as an independent photojournalist, where his portfolio will be known and will be in demand. One might say his future could be picture perfect.

Antoinette

Antoinette has been working since June 26, 2006, and loves her job. She is a 29-year-old single mother who is profoundly deaf. Antoinette and her counselor put together an inter-disciplinary team to make her career goal a reality. The team included Manpower who sponsored training, an employer, a tutor, and a job coach.

This was not the first class of trainees, but it was the first where everyone graduated! Antoinette remains so proud for having overcome many barriers!

Antoinette works in a Sennheiser manufacturing plant and her work is reported to be excellent. She enjoys her work; it appears to be an excellent job fit. Antoinette is proud of her career in a technical field, because deaf children often lag scholastically behind their hearing counterparts.



Fabiola

Fabiola worked with her NMDVR counselor to overcome very significant barriers to employment. Fabiola and he worked together for a year or more, without real success. However, Fabiola was determined to succeed and refused to believe that she could not work. With further career exploration, she decided upon a career as a bus driver.

Training had to be arranged, and it was. She had to learn and deal with some difficult circumstances and she did. An employer was needed and one was found. Mr. Sorenson, the Director of Pecos Trails Transit, is very pleased with her attitude, her work ethic, timeliness (after all this is a bus route!), and hard work.

Fabiola loves her job. She really sets an example for everyone who works. She was determined to succeed, and no set of circumstances was going to keep her from succeeding.

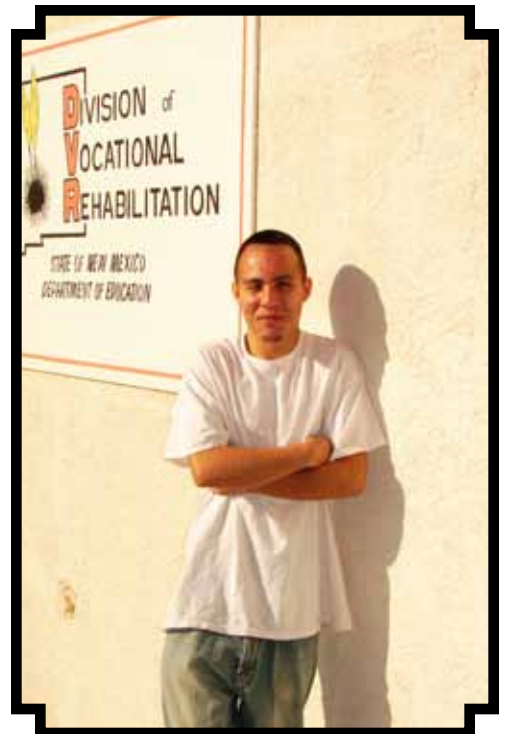
Besides being a hard worker, through her success she enriches the lives of her co-workers. She takes pride in providing her riders a clean bus, so she likes to come in a little early each shift to clean up. She greets her passengers with a broad smile, just another part of the service she gladly provides.



Julian

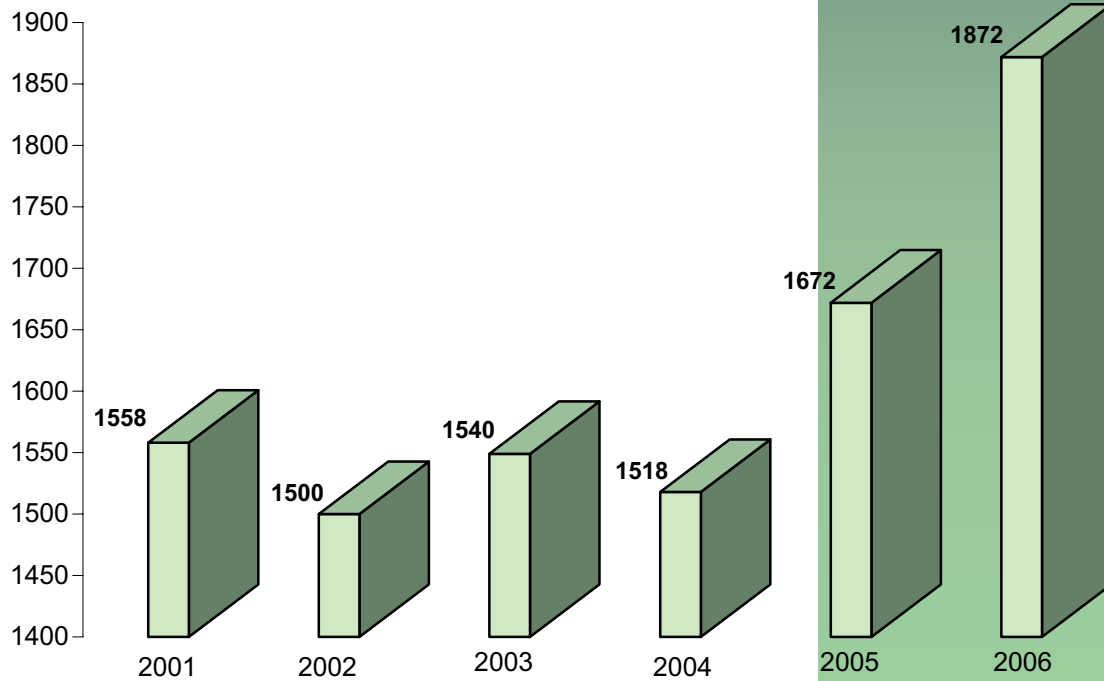
Julian is a native of Roswell and lives with his mom and dad and one older brother. Julian was working at the Roswell NMDVR office in cooperation with the local Workforce Investment office; working with our partners is always rewarding. His plan included a series of job experiences where he gained valuable insight that helped define his thoughts for his future, while gaining valuable references. He has tried jobs that he did not feel were a good fit for him. Knowing what you do not like is part of deciding what really does work.

Julian decided to enroll at ENMU's Roswell campus and took basic courses like most freshmen. At the same time he is taking advantage of working for local employers and the experience that work offers. Julian is considering the Emergency Medical Technician program, an intense 3 year study. Julian believes he has the skills and abilities to act and react appropriately, and perform the work of an EMT.



RESULTS

CLIENTS SUCCESSFULLY REHABILITATED



REHABILITATED CLIENTS BY MAJOR OCCUPATION

OCCUPATIONS	Count
Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing and Related	20
Clerical and Administrative Support	202
Managerial and Administrative Support	91
Prod., Const., Operating, Maintenance And Material Handling	353
Professional, Paraprofessional and Technical	497
RSA Special Occupations and Miscellaneous	17
Sales and Related Occupations	123
Service Occupations	569
Total:	1872

DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES



Dana Dominguez, Lesley Elkins-Gomez (at podium), Nadine McGuiness and William Reich discuss DDS service delivery.

At Disability Determination Services (DDS), a skilled team adjudicated 27,500 cases for Social Security disability benefits in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2006. This reflects the steady increase in the number of New Mexicans served over the past five years.

This team consistently ranks among the highest in the nation for the quality and accuracy of its decisions, and allowance rate for initial claims. The DDS's accuracy rate ranks ninth in the nation at 97.9 %. The allowance percentage of 43.9% ranks as one of the highest in the U.S. and exceeds national standards

Background

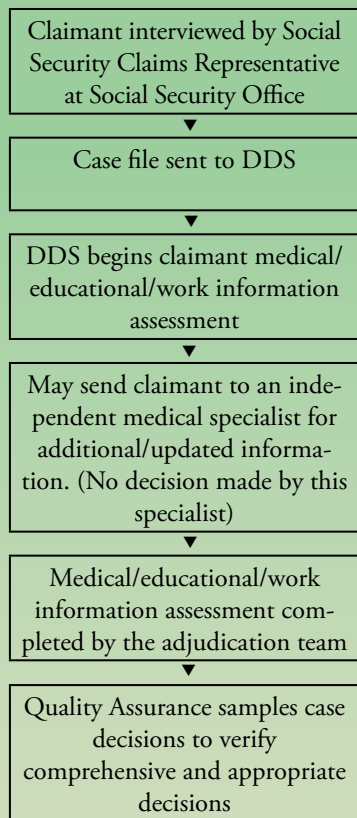
Nationally, the Social Security Administration (SSA) contracts with individual States to provide disability determination services for eligible recipients

of Title II (includes the Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance) and Title XVI (includes the Supplemental Security Income) program benefits. SSA contracts with the New Mexico Division of Rehabilitation for DDS to adjudicate cases for New Mexicans.

SSA provides 100% funding for NMDDS operations, to include NMDVR administrative costs. As a result, SSA maintains extensive control over the day-to-day operations at the NMDDS.

Oversight by SSA includes federal ownership of the majority of hardware and software, data entry and data proprietorship, approval to replace or hire additional full-time staff, training requirements for staff, etc. In addition, SSA carefully monitors NMDDS performance. Currently NMDDS employs 95 staff, and 15 contract Medical Consultants.

DISABILITY DETERMINATION PROCESS



Performance Measures

Initial Claims:

The disability determination process consists of an objective assessment of the claimant's physical and mental impairments that restrict a claimant's ability to perform substantial gainful employment. The adjudication team consists of a DDS adjudicator and a staff medical consultant. The team evaluates the claimant's records according to Social Security regulations as mandated by the United States Congress.

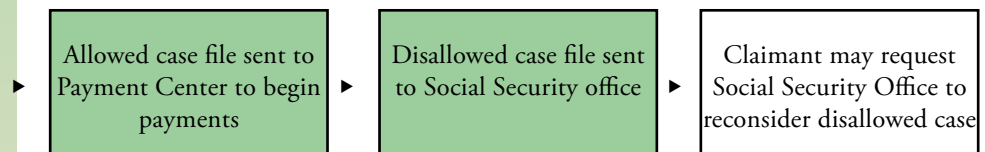
Benefits to the claimant, if allowed:

Social Security Beneficiary and Dependents

1. Monthly Social Security payments
2. Medicare after two years of disability

Supplemental Security Recipients

1. Supplemental Security payments
2. Medicaid



DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

Benefits Payments

DDS adjudicated 27,500 cases during the federal fiscal year 2006.

In New Mexico, disability beneficiaries received average monthly SSI payments of \$380 and in most cases, immediately qualified for Medicaid benefits.

The SSA currently pays \$57.5 million per month in disability benefits to 96,500 Title II and Title XVI beneficiaries and dependents in New Mexico, or \$690 million annually.

Case Production and Clearances

Over the past five years, DDS (with the exception of Federal Fiscal Year 03) has progressively increased the number of cases adjudicated. From 23,148 in 2001 adjudicated cases increased to 27,500 in 2006.

In 2006, DDS set and important target for processing initial cases and keeping pending cases below 3500. DDS finished the year with 3,323 claims pending, 177 below their target. New Mexico's efforts helped the Dallas Region and the nation meet this important goal.

Productivity Per Work Year (PPWY)

SSA monitors productivity through a cost-based formula that compares cases received and cases completed, versus the cost of full time employees. NM DDS led the region in productivity at 277.8. New Mexico had the seventh highest PPWY in the nation, far above the national average of 257.0.

Mean Processing Time (MPT)

SSA prioritizes and tracks accurate and timely case processing. The New Mexico DDS had outstanding MPT during FFY 2006. The Title II MPT was 76.1 days, and Title XVI was 74.7. The New Mexico DDS ranked second in the Dallas region in this category.

Accuracy of Adjudication (Accuracy Rate)

SSA measures and considers adjudication accuracy, a key quality measure. The NM DDS internal quality assurance program, a SSA mandate, reviews a percentage of the adjudicated cases.

Additionally, the SSA regional office Disability Quality Branch and the Central Social Security Administration office also review a statistical sample of all adjudicated cases.

Findings are closely tracked and monitored with very specific performance expectations.

The New Mexico DDS also ranked second in the Region in initial claims allowance accuracy at 97.3 percent. The combined net accuracy for Title II and Title XVI initial claims, after adjustment for successful error rebuttals, was 97.9%. This success exceeds national quality and accuracy performance figures.

Allowance Rate

The public generally believes NMDDS routinely denies initial claims. In fact, SSA considers allowance rates an important performance measure. The NMDDS prides itself on its initial allowance rate.

During FFY 2006, the NMDDS allowed 40.6%, above the nation target of 36.2%. More impressively, New Mexico DDS simultaneously implemented and became certified to process all SSA claims in a fully electronic environment during July 2006.



Ramona Schuenemeyer, Regional Commissioner, Social Security Administration commends DDS employee Bernice Garcia for performance excellence during the 2006 NMDVR Statewide meeting.

New Mexico Independent Living Centers

Choices Center for Independent Living
Roswell, New Mexico

Independent Living Resource Center
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Satellite offices in Moriarty
and Alamogordo

New Vistas
Santa Fe, New Mexico
Satellite office Las Vegas

San Juan Center for Independence
Farmington, New Mexico
Satellite office in Gallup

The Ability Center For Independent Living
Las Cruces, New Mexico

INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

Independent living service and philosophy enhance voice, choice and opportunity for New Mexicans with disabilities. In partnership with the State Independent Living Council, the New Mexico Commission for the Blind, and the United States Rehabilitation Services Administration, the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation shares responsibility for the development and implementation of the State Plan for Independent Living. This Plan details how Rehabilitation Act Title VII and New Mexico General Fund Appropriations are used to assist individuals with disabilities access and

benefit from the services of the state's Centers for Independent Living.

Additionally, NMDVR administers the service contracts funding operations at three of the state's five consumer-controlled Centers: The Independent Living Resource Center in Albuquerque (branches in Moriarty & Alamogordo); CHOICES in Roswell; and San Juan Center for Independence in Farmington (with a branch in Gallup). In Fiscal Year 2006, the Centers for Independent Living provided independence related services to 564 New Mexicans and developed 365 Individualized Independent Living Plans. This represents a 63% increase in individuals served over FY 2005.

The Statewide Independent Living Council, Centers for Independent Living and Independent Living Services Contracts

The State Plan for Independent Living details the "Core Services" provided by New Mexico's Centers for Independent living to individuals and groups of individuals with significant disabilities:

- 1. Information and referral;**
- 2. Independent Living skills training;**
- 3. Peer counseling (including cross disability peer counseling); and**
- 4. Individual and systems advocacy.**

SILC REPORT

The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires that governors in every state appoint a Statewide Independent Living Council. It supports the integration and full inclusion of people with disabilities into the mainstream of community life.

The priority is to help people with significant disabilities live independently in the homes of their choice. The New Mexico SILC advocates for changes that reinforce that goal, such as systemic change, peer support, and consumer equality.

The State Plan for Independent Living remains in effect through June 30, 2007. The SILC monitors and assists in securing independent living services necessary for its implementation.

SILC SUCCESSES - 2006

In FY 2006, the SILC worked in a number of areas to improve consumer choice and control. During the 2006 legislative session, the SILC

supported Money Follows the Person legislation and advised the Governor to sign the bill that passed. SILC members have been active in the Money Follows the Person committee established by the Aging and Long Term Services Division and other groups that are rebalancing New Mexico's long-term care system.

The Native American Independent Living (NAIL) Committee worked with consumers to seek federal funds for removing architectural barriers and provide assistive technology. In 2006, the NAIL Committee held numerous meetings with persons with disabilities and elected officials regarding improving services to Native Americans.

The SILC's Training and Development Fund co-sponsored the Southwest Conference on Disability, Freedom Days in Santa Fe and the Jemez Disability Conference. Funds were used for scholarships, travel costs for consumers and speakers. In addition, Independent Living Center staff, consumers, and Board Members were provided individual training opportunities through the fund.

SILC MEMBERS

Vince Montañño, chair
McIntosh, NM

Rebecca Holland
Albuquerque, NM

Gilbert John
Gamerco, NM

Michael Murphy
Alamogordo, NM

Gil Yildez
Director, Independent Living Resource
Center
Albuquerque, NM

Susan Lewis
Albuquerque, NM

Michael Newman
Albuquerque, NM

Cesar Rodriquez
Las Cruces, NM

Debbie Ellenburg
Santa Fe, NM

Greg Trapp (ex-officio)
Director, NM Commission for the
Blind
Albuquerque, NM

Jennifer Ward
Rio Rancho, NM

H. Felix Vigil
Villanueva, NM

Suzanne Anderson-Ruble
Rio Ranch, NM

Juana Valencia.
San Felipe Pueblo, NM

Gary Beene (ex-officio)
Assistant Cabinet Secretary for
NMDVR
Santa Fe, NM

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORTS UNIT

Program Development and Supports (PDS) assumes a leadership role in the development and supervision of federally funded grant projects and partnerships that expand opportunities for people with disabilities, whether or not they qualify for Title I vocational rehabilitation services.

NMDVR's shared belief is that people who are encouraged and helped to live independently, to raise families and to contribute to the civic and economic viability of their communities, make better employees and citizens. Inclusion of people with disabilities in all facets of life helps secure vocational rehabilitation objectives in the end, and improve life for all New Mexicans.

PDS staff strives to identify evolving challenges and opportunities within the disability population, creating new programs. Unique programs utilize new assistive technologies, reach out to help the under-served, provide education and counseling, help secure low-interest loans, seek transportation and other solutions to problems facing New Mexicans with disabilities.

New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP)

The Purpose:

To help New Mexicans with disabilities enhance the overall quality of their lives using assistive technology devices such as wheelchair lifts or specialized communication devices.

Eligibility:

Individuals with disabilities, family members, services providers and anyone else who is in need of assistive technology services.

Since 1990, the NMTAP has provided easy access to assistive technology devices for New Mexicans with disabilities. Their assistive Loan Bank (ABLE) provided technology loans to assure that the device meets the individual's needs.

The staff offers frequent demonstrations for free hands-on experiences. Additionally they have a certified ergonomist who can adapt the workplace to fit an individual's specific needs.

For assistance call NMTAP staff at 1-800-866-2253 or visit the Website at www.nmtap.com.

TTY number 800-659-4915

Whatever It Takes (WIT) Program New Solutions in Transportation

The Purpose:

To create a consumer-supported transportation solutions and network for persons with mental or physical disabilities who are of working age.

Eligibility:

To become eligible, a disabled person must be unable to retain or secure work due to transportation barriers. WIT provides individualized services to achieve success. The WIT, with federal funds, provides advice and assistance to solve transportation challenges.

For assistance call WIT staff at 1-800-866-2253, or visit the Website at www.dvrwit.org.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORTS

Transition into Registered Apprenticeship, Careers and Employment (TRACE)

This federally funded program existed for several years and ended in 2006. It helped people with disabilities understand apprenticeships, and enter Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship employment.

The TRACE program exceeded its placement goals for the life of the grant and provided services to hundreds of clients. TRACE assisted in the development of two new apprenticeships, the Disability Adjudicator, and Computer Specialist programs.

TRACE promoted apprenticeship at the local, state, and national levels. While this program has ended, it has profoundly enhanced apprenticeship programs throughout the state. It leaves a sound legacy that will continue to assist New Mexicans with disabilities.

Leveraged Integrated Networks of Consumer Supports-LINCS

Purpose:

To provide vocational rehabilitation services for people with disabilities who are receiving public assistance. Staff evaluates services relative to the quality and duration of employment achieved, and identifies and promotes needed changes in service delivery.

Eligibility:

Individuals with mental/physical disability who receive public assistance LINCS provides motivation workshops, non-paid work experiences, and job placement services for individuals with barriers to employment.

Designed as an interagency consortium, LINCS includes the New Mexico departments of Labor, Human Services, Health, Education (NMDVR), and the NM Commission for the Blind. The consortium appoints a state advisory

board that includes 21 consumers representing the diverse ethnic and regional interests of the state.

Referrals are made through the New Mexico Works program to LINCS by calling 1-800-318-1469.

Benefits Information Center

The Purpose:

The BIC supports people with disabilities who want to work and need Social Security work incentive information to make informed decisions. Staff provides information about how employment may affect benefits such as food stamps, HUD housing, TANF, and Medicaid. Trained advisors at five Benefits Information Centers and other locations statewide provide this public service.

Eligibility:

Consumers already receiving SSI/SSDI

For assistance, call benefits advisors at 1-800-318-1469, or visit the Website at www.dvrgetsjobs.com.

Working Individual's Medicaid Program (WDI)

The Purpose:

WDI provides education and outreach regarding the benefits of the program. BIC designed the program to allow a person receiving Social Security benefits to work and retain full Medicaid coverage, as an incentive for people with disabilities.

Eligibility:

- Persons with disabilities (excluding Significant Gainful Activity earning limits);
- Ages 18 and above;
- Monthly unearned income under \$1,178;
- Less than \$10,000 (\$15,000 couple) excluding one home, one car, & retirement accounts;
- Medigap recipient.

A collaborative effort between NMDVR and the Medical Assistance Division of the human Service Department, WDI benefits may allow an individual to earn annually up to \$48,600 and retain Medicaid benefits. For assistance call WDI staff at 1-800-318-1469, or visit the Website at www.dvrgetsjobs.com.



Kelly Davis - PDS Supervisor receives NMDVR "Award of Merit" from Carl Suter, Executive Director, CSAVR

Social Security Reimbursement

Social Security Administration (SSA) Payment Activities support NMDVR by recovery of a portion of the rehabilitation costs for successful closures. During 2006, case review activities resulted in payments of \$237,718.50 from SSA. Call staff at 1-505-954-8589.

Medicaid Adjudication Services

Adjudication provides decisions regarding eligibility for SSA medical assistance. Medicaid Buy-in offers the incentive of employment without losing Medicaid.

In 2006, an agreement between Human Services Department, Income Support Division, and NMDVR was established for adjudication services.

Two adjudicators completed reviews of 803 Medicaid claims, of which 301 were Medicaid Buy-in. In addition, an apprenticeship program for disability adjudicators was presented to and approved by the U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship.

CREATING OPPORTUNITY

"We must look at market trends and project our future human resource needs. Then we must help persons with disabilities acquire the training and skills necessary to qualify for those future jobs."

Gary Beene, Assistant Secretary,
Vocational Rehabilitation.

NMDVR participates in the Governor's Executive Task Force on Employment of Persons with Disabilities in State Government. Launched in 2005 as an interagency workgroup, the committee includes: The Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons; Commission for the Blind; Department of Health Long Term Services Division; Department of Labor; Developmental Disabilities Planning Council; Governor's Commission on Disability; Office of Workforce Training and Development; Public Education Department Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; Public Education Department Special Education Bureau; and State Personnel Office.

As an agency that "walks the talk," New Mexico NMDVR has been at the forefront of efforts to predict workplace needs and to create the educational opportunities that will allow people with disabilities to meet them.

New Mexico NMDVR counselors are required to have a master's degree in VR counseling or a closely related field (or be working toward one), as well as certification by the Public Education Dept. Finding qualified job candidates presents a challenge, especially in the Western U.S., where few degreed programs exist. About 1994, NMDVR approached New Mexico Highlands University with a plan to help meet projected hiring needs.

NMDVR funded the first director's position for the master's degree in VR counseling, making NMHU



New Mexico NMDVR was instrumental in creating a master's degree in VR counseling program at New Mexico Highlands University. The program values recruiting people with disabilities. Here program Director Mike O'Brien interacts with NMDVR Assistant Secretary Gary Beene.

one of two, historically Hispanic colleges in the U.S.—and the only one in the state—to offer the program. Recruiting people with disabilities as master's degree candidates, including NMDVR clients, remains a priority goal. NMHU remains the primary source of new recruits for staff counselors and intern positions at NMDVR.

The Navigators

This specially trained NMDVR team advises and advocates for people with disabilities who are seeking employment at New Mexico Workforce Connection One Stop Career Centers. These Centers are government-funded job placement offices located statewide.

The Navigator Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Social Security Administration through the Governor's Office of Workforce Training and Development, and

administered by NMDVR. In 2006, there were nine Navigators in place at area One Stops across the state.

Designed to increase employment for Social Security beneficiaries and others with disabilities, the Navigators facilitate, seamless and comprehensive services to persons with disabilities, access to programs and services, and linkage to the employer community.

Navigator services are broad in range to meet diverse needs. Examples of their duties include, but are not limited to, being systems change agents, problem solvers, relationship builders, to help individuals, One Stop staff, employers, and providers. Navigators offer guidance and implementation of the following: ADA workplace policies and procedures; physical and programmatic accessibility issues; reasonable accommodations; collaboration with One Stop staff; bridging gaps between the business and human service communities; training One Stop staff regarding disability issues; and interagency sharing of resources, to improve outcomes for people with disabilities.

You can reach the Navigators and get more information by calling 1-866-524-6598.



NMDVR Navigator Fanny Pearce works with David Borrego, the Program Coordinator at Jobs for Progress, Senior Community Service Employment Program at the One-Stop Center in Santa Fe. Collaborating is good business!

NEW MEXICO BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Executive Director Leah Rhule and Program Director Tessah Latson guide the NM BLN efforts. A strong and committed Board of Directors represents large and small businesses. Board stakeholders from NMDVR, NM DOL-Veterans Employment Services and DDPC offer their expertise.

One exciting development included the Board's decision to add "Employers' Disability Resource" to the BLN name. This new moniker represents the NM BLN mission, "to serve as an employer resource for the purpose of recruiting, hiring, promoting, and retaining employees with disabilities...because it's good business."

A few of the highlights of the NM BLN's efforts in SFY 2006 include:

- 2006 Recognition of Excellence Award from the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration for its involvement with the collaborative workforce development program, TechReach Albuquerque. EDR/NM BLN won its award in the "e3" partnership category, which acknowledges public-private

partnerships facilitating employment, education, and economic development.

- A second café location opened in partnership with the VA Veterans' Industries Program and NM BLN's subsidiary, The NM Opportunity Group, LLC. It will increase placement and training opportunities for homeless individuals, or those who are at risk of being homeless, due to mental illness.

- The Society of Human Resource Managers and the Human Resource Managers Association awarded the EDR/NM the Human Resource Excellence Award for "Most Innovative HR Department, Small Size Company" for efforts within the business community to promote disability employment initiatives and strong relationships within the HR community.

- The U.S. Forest Service will bring over 1,200 jobs to New Mexico over the next few years. The EDR/NM BLN distributes job postings, as they occur, to NMDVR.

Managers of NMDVR's Area Offices are recognized and respected members of their communities. Each leads his or her field staff to develop partnerships with business. NMDVR provides support services and participates at business outreach events. These and other activities spread the word that hiring people with disabilities is good business, and good for business. A 2006 study revealed that customers were significantly more loyal to companies who reached out and hired individuals with disabilities.



A meeting of the EDR/NM BLN includes Bob Walton, Albuquerque Economic Development; Anna Ortiz, PNM; Jeff Parker, Manpower; Julie Ballinger, Disability Consultant, StarReach Enterprises; Leah Rhule Tessah Latson, BLN, Mark Cornett, Kemtah Group, and Kim Singleton, Boeing. Not pictured is Whitney Warner, of Moody and Warner.

MEETING CHALLENGES

Administrative Services Unit

Challenges: On July 4, 2006, the State of New Mexico launched phase I of a new financial accounting and human capital system called SHARE, replacing 70 separate systems in use by 114 state agencies. The Administrative Services Unit (ASU) continues to work towards creating stability in processes effecting financial and personnel functions that have changed significantly due to the SHARE implementation. The ASU will be challenged to assure, that staff, vendors and clients are paid in a timely manner, that changes to processes are documented and streamlined to be in agreement with state, federal and agency needs and that staff are informed and trained as processes change.

**Sherry Garcia, ASU
Deputy Director**

Program Development and Supports Unit Challenges:

(PDS) extends the reach of the NMDVR to populations that do not receive services through traditional NMDVR programs. PDS addresses the challenge of providing valuable services to people with disabilities, through a variety of programs and services. PDS uses quality improvement techniques such as baseline mapping, customer feedback, examining processes, and redesigning strategies to meet individual needs. Challenges exist with increasing access for people with disabilities to resources such as; vocational rehabilitation, higher education, disability adjudication, Medicaid, assistive technology, benefit counseling, job training, and employment.

**Andy Winnegar, PDS
Deputy Director**

Rehabilitation Services Unit Challenges: Riding on the heels of its most successful year ever, the Rehabilitation Services Unit (RSU) continues to face many challenges on the road to meeting the diverse needs of a growing population of persons with disabilities. One of the primary aims of the unit is to maximize employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, while effectively managing agency resources. This begins with recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff. To achieve this end, the Rehabilitation Services Unit has launched a number of initiatives such as addressing appropriate compensation and employee recognition. These and other related initiatives continue into the next year. RSU considers maintaining a top-notch professional staff the main ingredient to continuing with the creation of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, while focusing on quality service delivery and participant satisfaction.

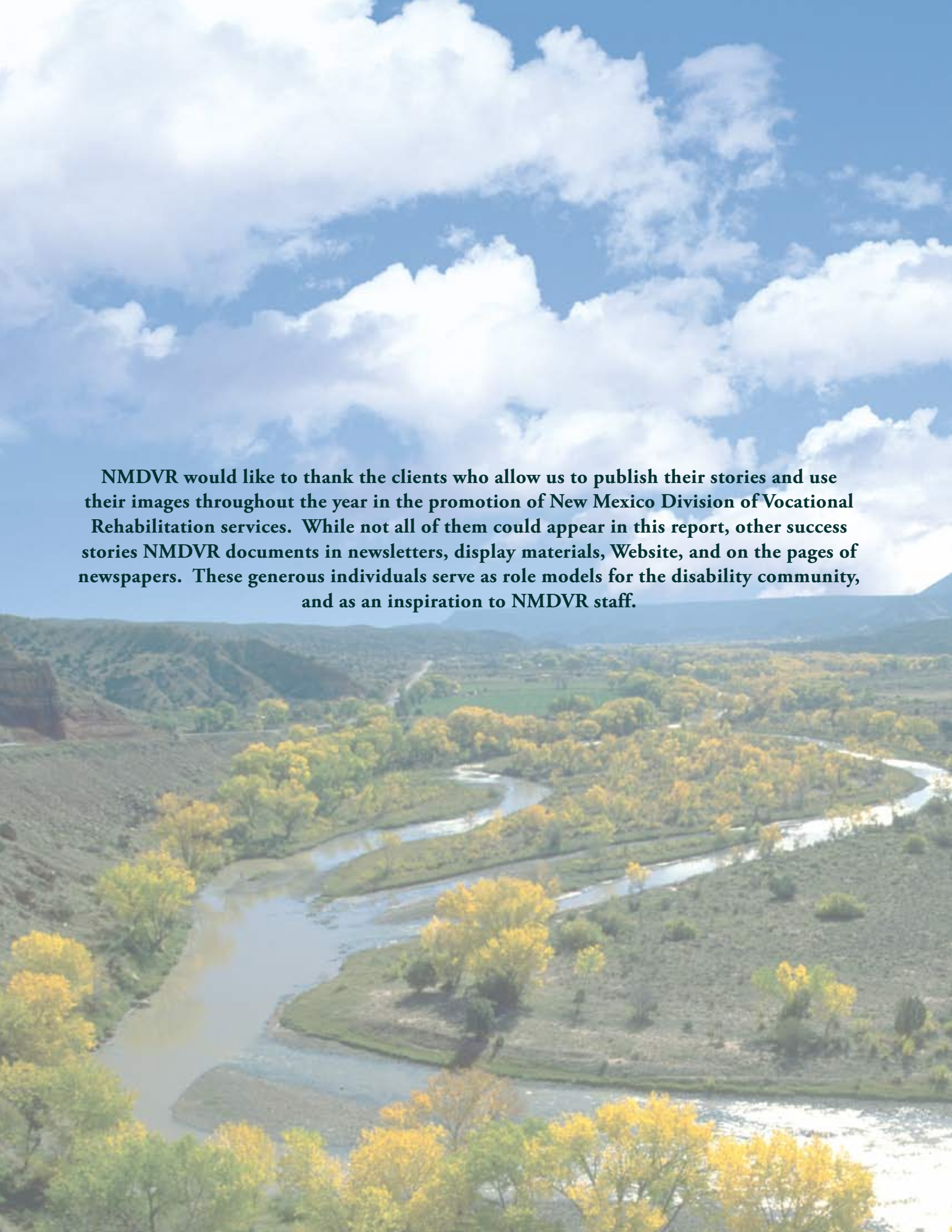
Last year, the Division was successful in creating two School-to-Work Transition caseloads, bringing the total to three. This has resulted in improved services to youth transitioning from high school to the world of work, and an increased service delivery capacity in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Cruces. It has also enabled the Division to collaborate more closely with local school districts in those communities. Having already created momentum, we expect greater success in the year to come maintaining employment opportunities for persons with disabilities while focusing on quality service delivery and participant satisfaction.

The Rehabilitation Services Unit has taken the first steps towards co-locating and integrating services within one-stop workforce centers. During fiscal year 2007, NMDVR will continue on the path of working closely with the various Workforce Investment partners to facilitate closer collaboration and one-stop service delivery for job seekers with disabilities. Some of the agencies that the Division collaborates with include the Department of Labor, one-stop providers, youth service providers, and other workforce delivery programs. One of the major activities planned for this year is the co-location of offices and staff in various communities throughout the state. This is a major undertaking that will require a significant investment on the part of NMDVR and workforce partners. NMDVR expects this investment to result in a more efficient use of resources, improvement in the workforce service delivery system, and in the creation of a more user-friendly job matching system for employers and job seekers. The concept of an integrated one-stop system also aligns with Governor Richardson's vision of creating greater economic prosperity for the state.

The outlook for next year is very positive, and the Rehabilitation Services Unit looks forward to meeting the challenges of providing world-class services to New Mexicans with disabilities.

Ralph Vigil, RSU Deputy Director

Disability Determination Services (DDS) Challenges: The electronic disability process continues to be a challenge as there are some lingering issues with system slow downs, imaging problems, user/training issues, etc. The electronic and business processes continue to be adjusted and refined. A significant challenge in the coming FY for the NMDDS is an exodus of a number of highly skilled, experienced, and dedicated staff due to retirement. As a result, the NMDDS is in the process of interviewing and hiring 14 new disability adjudicators, approximately 30% of the total adjudicative staff. The training of an adjudicator is an intense process and new adjudicators only work a small caseload during their first six months of training, which will have adverse impact on most if not all of the NMDDS performance measures. The NMDDS staff has consistently demonstrated their ability to deal with challenges and expects that the coming year will not be any different. The agency looks forward to yet another exceptional year because of the skill and dedication of its staff. **Daniel Roper, DDS Deputy Director**

A scenic landscape featuring a winding river through a valley. The river flows from the upper right towards the lower left, curving around a central island. The banks are lined with trees that have turned a vibrant yellow, suggesting autumn. The surrounding hills are covered in sparse vegetation and some green fields. In the background, more hills and mountains are visible under a bright blue sky filled with large, fluffy white clouds.

NMDVR would like to thank the clients who allow us to publish their stories and use their images throughout the year in the promotion of New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation services. While not all of them could appear in this report, other success stories NMDVR documents in newsletters, display materials, Website, and on the pages of newspapers. These generous individuals serve as role models for the disability community, and as an inspiration to NMDVR staff.