

PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



NEW MEXICO DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

*ANNUAL
REPORT
2007*



New Mexico Public Education Department Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

2007 Annual Report

State Fiscal Year
July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007

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

richard.smith@state.nm.us

www.dvrgetsjobs.com



The Honorable Bill Richardson
Governor of New Mexico
490 Old Santa Fe Trail
Room 400
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Governor Richardson:

It is my privilege to present the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) Annual Report for the 2007 fiscal year. The division acts to achieve the mission of encouraging and assisting the efforts of New Mexicans with disabilities reach their goals for working and living in their communities. This report details the outstanding results produced by all NMDVR staff.

The Public Education Department is committed to educational excellence for all New Mexico students. Similarly, the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation works so "Every New Mexican with a disability has the opportunity to contribute to the quality of life and the economic prosperity of the state."

Toward this vision, NMDVR works with state and federal partners, employers, the State Rehabilitation Council, State Independent Living Council, and community-based providers to provide excellent service. Your strong commitment to individuals with disabilities, a strong economy, and quality of life make a difference. Together we are creating opportunities for improving the lives and independence of all New Mexicans.

Truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Veronica C. García".

Veronica C. García, Ed.D.
Secretary of Education





Citizens of New Mexico:

In FY 2007 the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assisted 1,833 individuals with disabilities achieve their vocational goals. Notably 97.8% of these individuals were either competitively or self employed. In other words, they became tax paying members of our state and communities. Research tells us that working persons with disabilities will return to the state treasury \$5.63 for every \$1.00 in state general fund appropriation spent on vocational rehabilitation services.

More important than the return on investment, though, are the many, many stories of how the opportunity to work has changed lives of our participants for the better. Work is one of the most important expressions of human sentience. Much of our self esteem is predicated upon the work that we do. It gives our lives meaning.

Teilhard de Chardin once said, "The value and interest of life is not so much to do conspicuous things as to do ordinary things with the perception of their enormous value." Helping people go to work is one of those "ordinary things" with "enormous value." I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for their efforts in this regard.

I am proud to present this annual report as a tribute to the 1,833 individuals with disabilities who made great strides toward their career aspirations in 2007. 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
Director for Vocational Rehabilitation

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ABOUT US

Attached administratively to the New Mexico Public Education Department, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) has assisted individuals with disabilities with employment and other beneficial services for over 83 years.

It is important that officials, rehabilitation professionals and policy-makers assess success beyond counting just the number of individuals rehabilitated yearly. Other valuable benefits to individuals with disabilities must be emphasized including employment benefits, improved self-esteem, personal growth, increased opportunities for socialization and improved quality of life.

While the Rehabilitation Act places an emphasis on work, NMDVR delivers five broad categories of services:

- Guidance, counseling and other services to assist individuals to reach their individual employment goals through the vocational rehabilitation process provided by the Rehabilitation Services Unit;
- Determination of eligibility for Social Security Administration disability benefits programs administered by the Disability Determination Services Unit;
- Delivery of services to NMDVR participants and the public with a dozen federal grant

programs through the Program Development and Supports Unit;

- Working with the State Independent Living Council, the New Mexico Commission for the Blind and others to deliver independent living services; and,
- Partnering with many state and public organizations to help meet the needs of New Mexicans with disabilities.

Guided by the Director for Vocational Rehabilitation, approximately 330 staff provides services in 24 offices located across the state. Service delivery efforts are supported by the professional staff working in the agency's Administrative Services Unit and Information Technology Unit.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Social Security Administration and the New Mexico Legislature set performance and quality measure goals for the agency. The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation realized significant accomplishments.

NMDVR exceeded rehabilitation goals and the Disability Determination Services Unit continued to meet or exceed national productivity goals. This report details the success of the division in providing high quality, accountable services to New Mexicans with disabilities during fiscal year 2007.

RETURN TO WORK, INCREASE INDEPENDENCE

Toward that end 1,833 New Mexicans with Disabilities achieved their employment goals in 2007.

Rehabilitated participants' annual income increased 157% and contributed \$20,477,047 to New Mexico communities.

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
- Streamline Business Processes



**NEW MEXICO
DIVISION OF
VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION**

Public Education Department

Gary Beene

Director for Vocational Rehabilitation

REHABILITATION = VOICE + CHOICE + OPPORTUNITY

A Nobel Peace Prize nominee, Dr. Carl Rogers, developed the principles behind the people-centered counseling theory to facilitate the natural growth process of individuals and thereby perpetuate the nature and destiny of people and thus society. Arguably the most important process within NMDVR may be the counseling relationship. The Strategic Planning Framework guides delivery of service provision goals to assist individuals with disabilities who strive for greater autonomy and quality of life.

The Annual Report includes three major themes toward this end: voice; choice; and opportunity. These themes are central to NMDVR's professional delivery of guidance and counseling. NMDVR's "Core Beliefs" represent opportunities for individuals with disabilities. These include: service excellence; improved quality of life; individualized case services; flexible decision-making; informed choice and quality outcomes.

The rehabilitation process is different for every individual. Advocating opportunity for individuals with disabilities requires a broad spectrum of services. NMDVR continues to strive to alleviate barriers resultant from disabling conditions.

REHABILITATION PROCESS

The rehabilitation process consists of listening, understanding and evaluating participant needs and goals, providing the services necessary to reach those goals and assistance with finding or retaining work. The participant and counselor work together to develop and implement an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

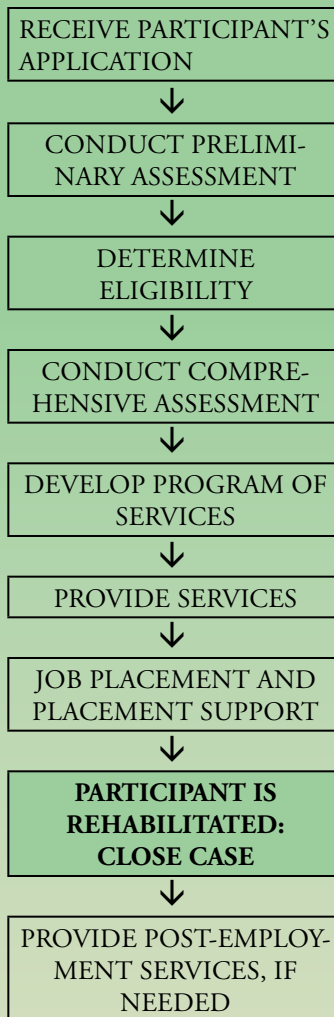
Specific services that may be provided include:

- Evaluations, e.g., medical, psychological, vocational and other exams as required
- School-To-Work Transition planning
- Counseling and Guidance
- Medical and psychological treatment
- Rehabilitation engineering and assistive technology
- Evaluation of financial needs
- Job training
- Job coaching
- Job placement
- Supported employment
- Help obtaining job required equipment and services
- On-the-job help to assure satisfactory placement
- Post-employment services

Forty Years Ago...

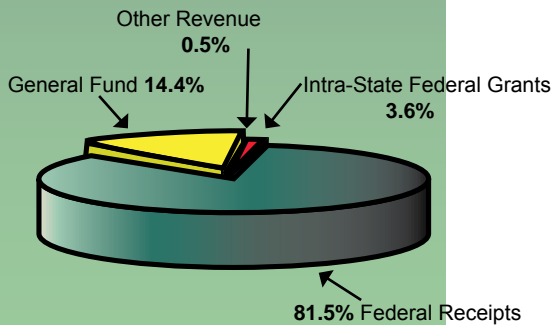
"Rehabilitation, in fact, has become a basic idea in our country. We act on the belief that every man -- no matter what his color, no matter what his bank account, no matter what his handicap - has abilities which America needs. That is a new idea. But it is a great idea. It is like discovering a new country right in our midst -- the territory of human promise."

President Lyndon B. Johnson
Remarks upon signing the Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1967. (October 3, 1967)



FUNDING SOURCES & EXPENDITURE

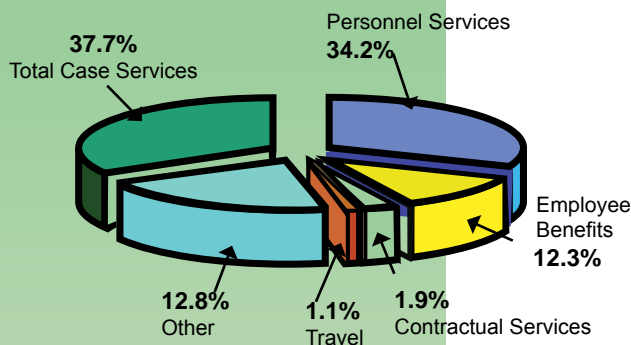
Revenues by Source



NMDVR Federal Receipts	\$ 23,231,300
DDS Federal Receipts.	10,322,300
	<u>33,553,600</u>
NMDVR General Fund	5,924,300
DDS General Fund	0
	<u>5,924,300</u>
NMDVR Intra-State Federal Grants.	\$ 1,483,600
DDS Intra-State Federal Grants	0
	<u>1,483,600</u>
NMDVR other Revenue	220,300
DDS other revenue	0
	<u>220,300</u>
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 41,181,800

*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

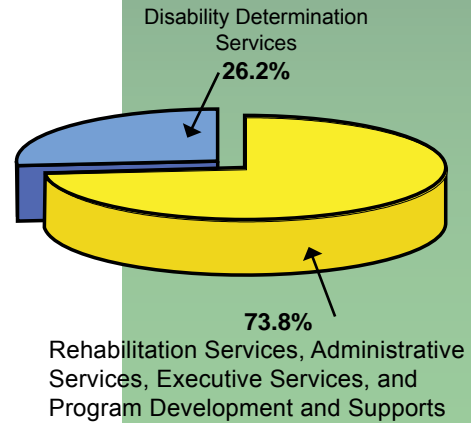


Personnel Services	\$13,484,300
Employee Benefits	\$ 4,844,500
	<u>18,328,800</u>
Contractual Services	\$ 764,800
In-state Travel & Transportation.	\$ 375,000
Out-of-State Travel.	\$ 63,000
	<u>438,000</u>
Other Expenditures:	
Maintenance	\$ 22,600
Supplies.	\$ 395,900
Other Operating Costs.	\$ 4,392,000
Other Costs	\$ 0
Capital Outlay	\$ 239,900
Other Financing Uses	\$ 0
	<u>5,050,400</u>
Total Other Expenditures	\$ 5,050,400
Total Case services for Participants	<u>\$14,877,900</u>
GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURES. . . .	\$39,459,900

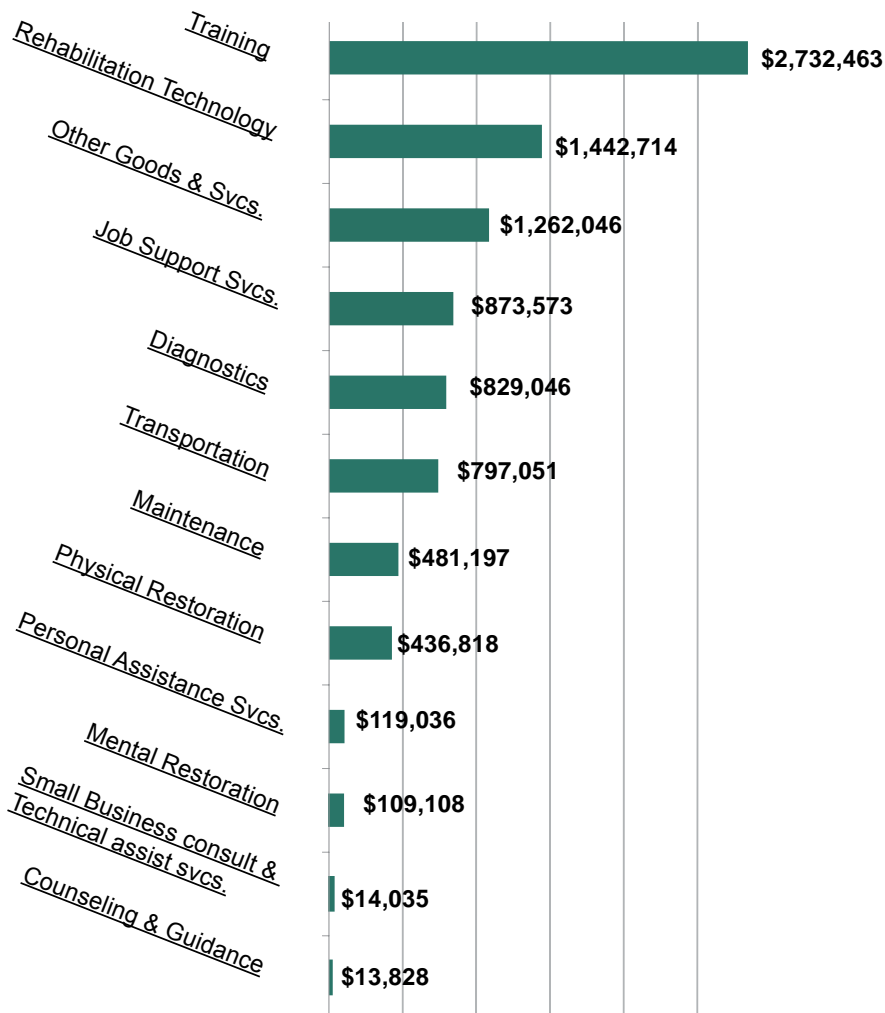
2006 Expenditures by Activity

Rehabilitation, Administrative, Executive and Program Development	\$29,137,600
Disability Determination Services.	\$10,322,300
TOTAL	\$39,459,900

Actual expenditures as of June 30, 2007



Case Services Expenditures



NMDVR LISTENS TO INDIVIDUAL VOICES

10,943	N ew Mexicans sought and received direct vocational rehabilitation services, including post-employment services.
8,684	N ew Mexicans received vocational rehabilitation services including, medical treatment, guidance and counseling, training and job seeking skills training.
5,526	P articipants continue to receive ongoing, individualized services based on their strengths, skills, abilities, informed choice and desired vocational goal.
1,833	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.
96%	P ercentage of rehabilitated participants with significant physical or mental disabilities (that prevent the performance of at least one major life function, such as walking or hearing).
98%	P ercentage of rehabilitated clients who entered competitive or self-employment

The Division provides a forum for individuals with disabilities to express their feelings regarding disabilities, their independence and their future. NMDVR provides a far-reaching array of services to the disability community through innovative programs and professional staff. Individualized assistance makes these efforts successful. Conceptually the individual's choice acts as the bedrock for service delivery.

The cultural diversity and large rural nature of New Mexico presents additional challenges in helping people with disabilities. NMDVR takes active steps to hear, understand and respond to New Mexicans with disabilities. These steps include educational activities, satisfaction surveys, internal audits, economic studies, public hearings and our outreach through the radio and print media.

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation staffs 24 offices across the state with counselors and support staff that live where they work and support local communities and residents.

NMDVR PROVIDES A VOICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES BY:

Staffing 24 offices across the state;

Supporting the efforts of the Statewide Independent Living Council and State Rehabilitation Council;

Providing special programs for underserved populations;

Engaging participants and stakeholders;

Studies of participant satisfaction and the economic impact of NMDVR services; and

Collaborating with the Client Assistance Program.

ABOUT OUR PARTICIPANTS

MAJOR DISABLING CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

Disabling Condition	Count	%
Orthopedic/ Neurological Impairment	1684	19.4%
Mental Illness (incl. Psychotic/ Neurotic/ Behavior Disorders)	1788	20.6%
Learning Disabled	1985	22.9%
Alcohol/ Substance Abuse	409	4.7%
Mental Retardation	390	4.5%
TBI	279	3.2%
Spinal Cord Injury	86	1.0%
Deafness	354	4.1%
Hearing Impairments	586	6.7%
Epilepsy	93	1.1%
Cardiac/ Circulatory Disorders	91	1.0%
Blindness/ Visual Impairments	59	0.7%
Deaf-Blind	6	1.0%
Other	874	10.0%
Total:	8684	100%

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

REHABILITATED PARTICIPANTS PRIMARY SOURCE OF SUPPORT AT ACCEPTANCE AND AT CLOSURE

PRIMARY SOURCE OF SUPPORT	At Application	At Closure
Earnings, Interest, Dividends, Rent (Client Income)	445	1419
Family and Friends	777	102
Public Assistance including General Assistance, SSI and AFDC (Public Assistance, without Federal Funds (GA Only); Public Assistance, partly w/Federal Funds (SSI, TANF, AFDC))	283	159
Social Security Disability Insurance Benefits	157	123
Workers Compensation	31	3
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)	140	25
Totals:	1833	1833

OFFICE DISTRIBUTION



Area 5

Amherst Field Office, Albuquerque North

Supervisor: Reyes Gonzales

505-841-5750

888-818-3259

Satellite Office:

Albuquerque South Valley

888-815-2981

AREA 6

Quail Field Office, Albuquerque West

Supervisor: Lee Martinez

505-836-1774

888-818-3263

Satellite Offices:

• Belen 888-901-7902

• Rio Rancho 866-585-5446

• Socorro 888-901-7903

• 888-201-5859

AREA 7

Psychological Services Units

Supervisor: Christina Vento, PsyD

(offers professional support services)

AREA 8

Central Field Office,

Albuquerque Central

Supervisor: Nancy Schneider

505-841-6450

866-524-6598

Satellite Office:

• Gallup 800-279-5681

Santa Fe Administrative Office

505-954-8500

Fax 505-954-8562

800-224-7005

AREA 1

Santa Fe Field Office

Supervisor: Phil Perkins

505-827-3526

800-773-4072

Satellite offices:

• Espanola 888-901-3647

• Farmington 888-901-7901

• Taos 888-901-7869

AREA 2

Marble Field Office, Albuquerque East

Supervisor: John Fullinwider

505-232-8701

866-877-3216

Satellite Offices:

• Las Vegas 888-901-7865

• Moriarty 888-901-7864

• Raton 888-901-7863

AREA 3

Las Cruces Field Office

Supervisor: Shirley Gonzales

505-524-6135

888-901-7866

Satellite Offices:

• Alamogordo 888-901-7868

• Anthony 866-883-8693

• Silver City 888-901-7861

AREA 4

Roswell Field Office

Supervisor: Terri Douglass

505-624-6024

800-644-7732

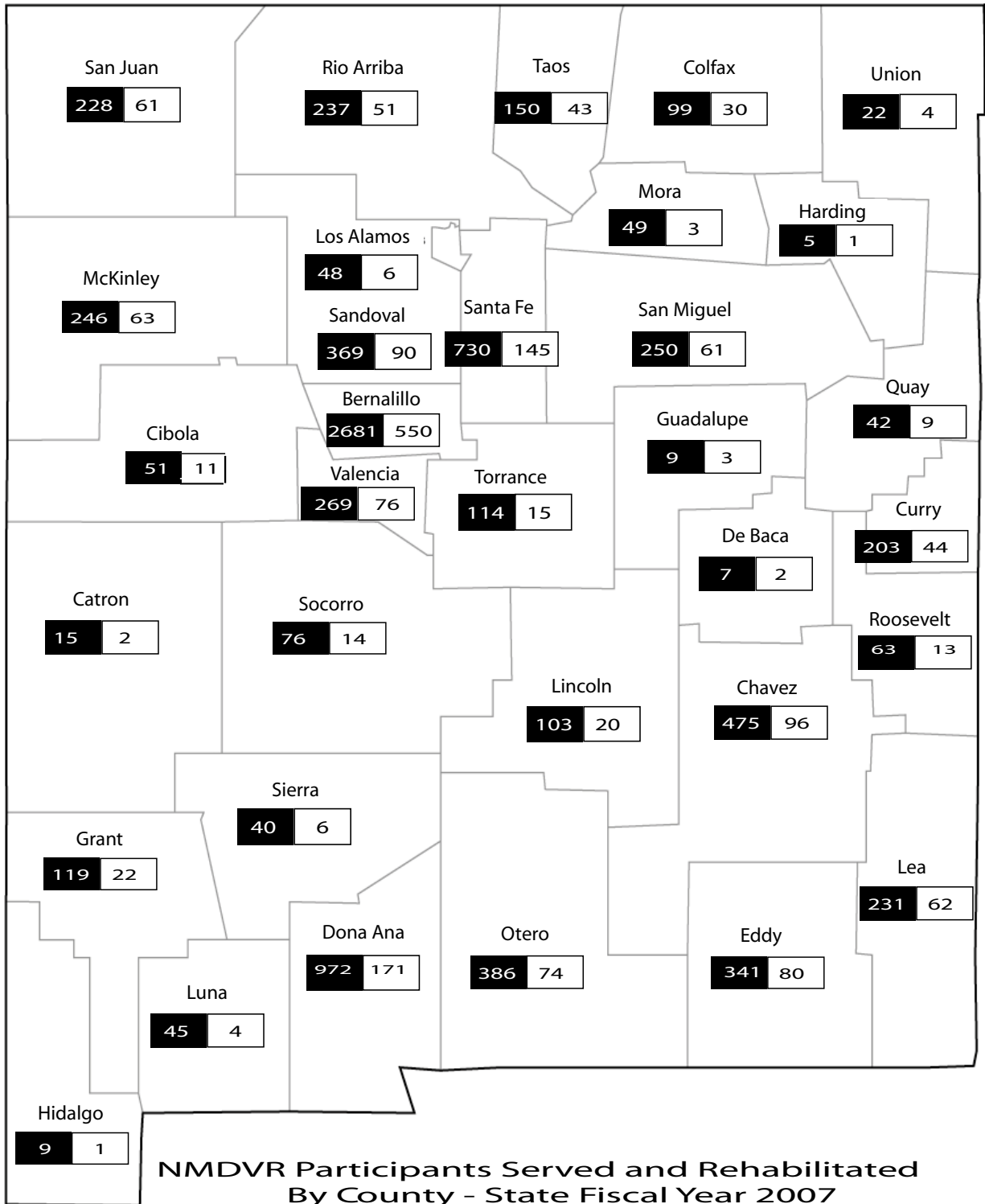
Satellite Offices:

• Carlsbad 800-654-0258

• Clovis 800-645-2143

• Hobbs 888-201-5859

COUNTY DISTRIBUTION



Number of participants ELIGIBLE black box Participants REHABILITATED white box

5,526 people continue to receive on-going individually planned services

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

This year has been one of profound and significant change for the State Rehabilitation Council. In April, the members of the council participated in a strategic planning session to look at the functionality of the council. The impetus of this planning was to address the issues that we had faced in the past of limited participation by the membership. The steps involved in our review included:

- The review and categorization of mandated functions of the council as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act.
- The review of the committee structure and assigned duties.
- An analysis of our meetings and productivity of those meetings.

The result of this planning session was a complete reorganization of council committees that was more closely aligned with the mandates of the council as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act. This process lead to a rewriting and approval of the council by-laws to reflect the changes as developed in the strategic planning process. The final product of our strategic planning was a complete revamping of our quarterly meeting schedules, with committees meeting in the morning and an abbreviated business meeting conducted in the afternoon.

This revised structure and meeting strategy has been in place for several months. We will conduct a follow-up meeting to fine tune the activities of the State Rehabilitation Council. The changes implemented will be more responsive to all stakeholders impacted by and involved in the business of the State Rehabilitation Council.

Larry E. Alflen, Chairperson



State Rehabilitation Council Members and Friends
(Back row L - R) Heather Williams, Sarah Michaud, Gilberto Romero, Missy Pugh, Linda Garza, Ron Garcia, (Front row L - R) Rebecca Holland, Bernadine Chavez, Larry Alflen, Gary Beene, Larry Rodriguez

SRC MEMBERS

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

Rebecca Holland
NM Marriages First
Rio Rancho

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

Larry Rodriguez
VR Participant, Espanola

Bernadine Chavez
Client Assistance Program, Albuquerque

Rose Marie Sanchez
Disability Community, Albuquerque

Martin De La Garza
Disability Community, Los Lunas

Ron Garcia
Program Service Provider, Santa Fe

Gilberto Romero
VR Participant, Santa Cruz

Sarah Michaud
American Indian VR Services
Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation, Jemez

Marilyn Johnson
American Indian VR Services
Laguna/Acoma Voc Rehab, New Laguna

Len Malry
Office of Workforce Development and
Training, Santa Fe

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
Director, NMDVR (ad hoc), Santa Fe

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 under-served individuals with disabilities, NMDVR emphasizes a highly skilled professional staff. 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.

Native American Liaison Program

The primary mission of the Native American Liaison Program (NALP) is to provide vocational rehabilitation liaison services to the 19 Pueblos and the two Apache nations. Improving access to vocational rehabilitation services to Native Americans residing in their communities remains a major goal. NMDVR contracts with New Vistas Independent Living Center. Their Native American rehabilitation technicians provide outreach and information services to reach the goal of increased access.

NMDVR counselors face barriers in providing services to rural Indian communities. Barriers include inadequate transportation and community services, high unemployment, cultural differences and language barriers. The use of Native American techs has helped develop trust between NMDVR and Native American disabled individuals. NALP rehabilitation technicians serve as the conduit.

Rehab Techs serve Native Americans and help NMDVR counselors provide culturally appropriate services. NALP technicians currently work with 15 NMDVR counselors in 8 offices across the state. Meetings with tribal Governors, the two Apache Presidents and the NALP Manager help maintain relationships.

New Mexico Reutilization and Acquisition Model

The New Mexico Reutilization and Acquisition Model Program (NMRAM) is a three year grant (October 2006 – October 2009) whose priority is to establish an assistive technology recycling program for all New Mexicans with disabilities. New technologies for individuals are more available than ever, but can be quite expensive.

Finding used assistive technology can be difficult. There is a need to address the technology needs and issues for people who leave nursing homes, hospitals, transfer to in-home supports or when students leave high school to post secondary and employment settings. NMRAM plans to expand the reutilization of assistive technology devices for home access, recreation, durable medical equipment and transportation by locating and advertising the available technology to New Mexicans of all ages who have a disability.

Rehabilitation Services Administration, U. S. Department of Education awarded the grant to NMDVR. NMRAM, along with Adelante Development Center Inc., will establish an interactive website (www.backinuse.com) that will allow individuals to transfer, sell, and purchase available assistive technology on-line. This website will be up and running soon.

Migrant Assistance Program

The Migrant Assistance Program (MAP) provides outreach and placement services to migrant and seasonal farm workers with disabilities and their family members. It works on a peer model to provide one-on-one service with bilingual and bi-cultural staff that have vocational rehabilitation experience. Outreach services include: understanding NMDVR programs; educational opportunities; translation or interpretive services; help with job readiness and

job search; client follow-up; and advocacy to an often marginalized population. Staffs provide job development and job coaching, translation and training services for NMDVR. MAP recruits and trains four Peer Business Associates per year to help individuals locate permanent employment related to their employment goals.

MAP collaborates with other programs throughout the state and has recruited 701 migrant and seasonal farm workers and 100 family members. It served 524 workers and 66 family members. The program has placed 113 workers and 14 family members and has successfully rehabilitated 87 workers and 14 family members.

NMDVR/African American Affairs Community Outreach

The Community Outreach Coordinator received 40 referrals from various sources during FY07 of which 15 were referred to NMDVR and 27 were referred to other agencies. The Coordinator receives referrals for youths and adults from a variety of community sources.

The Coordinator built or maintained partnerships with 26 agencies, businesses, non-profits and service organizations during FY07. Through these relationships NMDVR assisted individuals and disseminated information regarding vocational rehabilitation services. This program continues to be a valuable resource to the community offering assistance with employment opportunities, scholarships, housing, legal assistance, dental assistance and a variety of other services statewide.

UNDERSERVED POPULATION OUTREACH

New Mexico NMDVR and Behavioral Health Services

NMDVR is a member of New Mexico's Behavioral Health Collaborative. During the 2007 fiscal year, the interagency collaborative completed their strategic plan draft. At the heart of the Collaborative's vision is the expectation that the lives of individuals with mental illness and substance abuse disorders will improve. Family members will have an equal voice in the decisions that affect them and their loved ones. Those most affected by mental illness and substance abuse can recover to lead full, meaningful lives within their communities. Coordination of services among the regional and local members can increase NMDVR's successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Youth Services School-to-Work Transition

School-to-Work Transition provides services to high school students with disabilities. NMDVR continues to expand its specialized school-to-work transition caseloads with counselors assigned specific to this population.

Numerous studies reveal that, upon graduation, many students are neither prepared for continued education nor connected to employment opportunities. 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.

NMDVR counselors strive to work with assigned high schools for outreach efforts with the goal of determining eligibility for services and to implement Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) for these students prior to graduation or leaving the education system. Most students with disabilities are referred early in their senior year. Participation in Special Education

classes is not a requirement. 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.

Improving the Process for our Participants

Psychological Services Unit (PSU) staff provides services integral to the success of the Rehabilitation Services Unit. They perform participant diagnostic assessments and evaluations used to assist in the development of IPEs for participants. PSU provides consultation and training services to RSU field staff through personal interaction, phone consultation, mentoring, reviews of participant records, and participation in Rehabilitation Academy.

During the year, PSU provided 4,311 hours of diagnostic and consultative assessment of participants. Additionally 137 hours were spent in presenting information on various topics ranging from mood disorders, learning disabilities, personality disorders, adjustment to disability, cognitive testing at Rehab Academy and pre-doctoral student supervision. PSU continued to broaden its services to the field staff and their participants with the expansion of the group testing services to all offices in the greater Albuquerque area.

The test results and interpretive reports from the group testing do not take the place of clinical-diagnostic evaluations. Reports do assist in timely rehabilitation plan development and service provision by providing measures of general learning capacity, academic skill levels and vocational interests.

PSU continues to maintain and update a database exceeding 10,500 diagnostic and consultative reports on past and current NMDVR participants. The psychological reports contained in the directory save the time and expense of

additional diagnostics, expediting participant plan development. The PSU also helps participants who require records when applying for other helpful programs such as Social Security Disability, the Developmental Disability Waiver, etc.

Ticket to Work

The Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work Program is designed to provide a choice 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 in 2007.

Mentoring Diverse Abilities

The Mentoring Diverse Abilities Project, an RSA Youth and Young Adult Transition Project, is currently in its third year of operation. The final two years will focus on high school students with paid work experience. Mentoring, and Youth Leadership Training are provided. Recent satisfaction surveys indicate that students, parents, teachers and mentors at each site are happy with project services.



Jose Alfredo Garcia, MDA staff in Las Cruces

To date, the project has served 113 students at four sites. Despite challenges during this school year, staffs recruited 46 additional students to the program and 62

NMDVR OUTREACH

students have participated in paid work experience. Twenty-one students have been placed in permanent employment and eight students are currently attending post-secondary schools. In 2007-2008, MDA plans to recruit 100 more students. During the past two years 14 students have completed Youth Leadership Training at Highlands University in Las Vegas, New Mexico and two at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe.

Eight students have completed Peer Mentor Training to assist other students as they complete high school or post secondary courses. The MDA Project started with three sites; Bernalillo High School, Tohajiilee Community School and Gadsden Independent School District, and a fourth site in Las Vegas was included in 2006.

State Plan

Federal law, specifically the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, mandates that the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) submit a State Plan each year. Rehabilitation Services Administration provides guidelines for the plan. It serves as an opportunity to report results of the rehabilitation program, qualifications of agency staff and the training needs of agency staff. Consequently the State Plan includes the methods to address

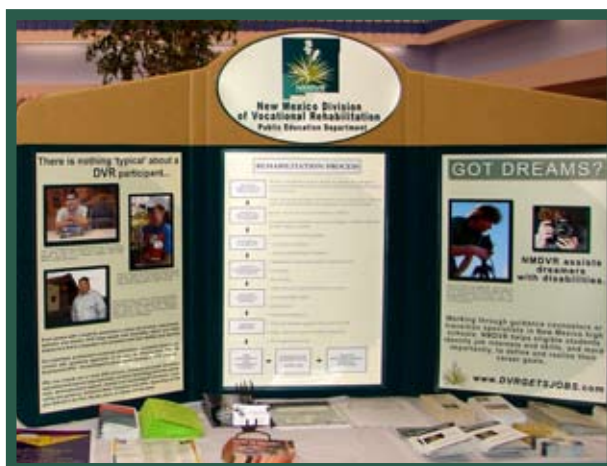
any needed quality improvements.

The submission of the State Plan to the Rehabilitation Services Administration also includes required certificates of assurances both at the federal and state level. The State Rehabilitation Council is required by law to “review, analyze, and advise the designated State unit regarding the performance of the State unit’s responsibilities,” – Code of Federal Regulations Section 361.17(h)(1), as further specified in the law. This responsibility of the State Rehabilitation Council is critical to the State Plan making coordination of this effort with the SRC imperative and vital to the update of the State Plan. Federal law also requires that NMDVR report implemented changes to basic rehabilitation programs.

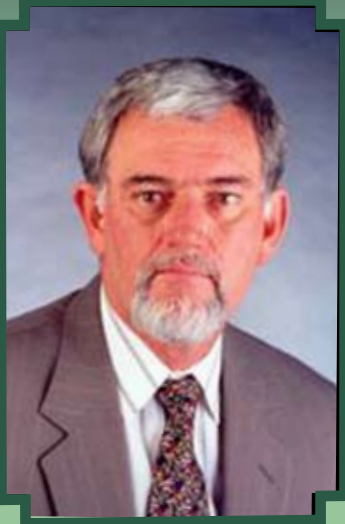
The NMDVR carries the responsibility that any change to the basic rehabilitation programs conforms to the law and that changes are reported in the State Plan. Prior to submission of any proposed changes to the State Plan, the NMDVR conducts public hearings in various parts of the state. The public hearings provide a means for the public to provide comments on the State Plan. For many, the public hearings serve as an introduction to the framework of the activities and responsibilities of the NMDVR. Public comments are welcome at any time.



Gilberto Romero presents “Public Health Updates” through radio broadcasts. Now in his 16th year, Gilberto helps keep the public informed. He includes information regarding NMDVR on six radio stations across the state.



Every NMDVR office has a display for use at workshops and seminars. Staff uses these opportunities to interact with the public.



Professor Carlton N. Britton's letter begins, "After 40 years, I am finally doing something that should have been done so many years ago." A devastating car wreck in August, 1965 left Dr. Britton "crippled with little chance to work." With NMDVR support, Dr. Britton earned a degree in Range Management.

He went on to earn his PhD, as part of a remarkable university career spanning 27 years. Straightening up his office, Dr. Britton discovered that first letter approving services from NMDVR. Dr. Britton wrote, "I was able to continue my education because of your help and I am enclosing my Vita so you might see what I have done over the years."

Dr. Britton's life serves as a testament to the work accomplished by a determined individual with a disability in partnership with a NMDVR counselor.



Diana Radford wrote to NMDVR to express her gratitude for the work and support she received from her counselor. Prior to coming to NMDVR, Diana worked as an interior decorator.

Due to medical complications, she felt that a career change was in order. NMDVR was able to help her with her new career. Diana, decided that pursuing a career as a real estate broker was a good decision and this proved to be true.

Indeed this proved to be true. NMDVR purchased needed supplies and an office computer. "Having a strong mentor like Elizabeth encourage me, meant the world to me as I have no family here in New Mexico."

At the time she wrote NMDVR, Diana reported that she had over \$1.5 million in home sales in the past nine months! Diane's love for her new career, and her determination to succeed, made her a success when real estate wasn't booming.



Fabiola Ruiz, a year after last year's report, continues to work and loves her job. Prior to this Fabiola had barriers to overcome.

She was determined to obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL), so she could drive a bus. The CDL required three specific qualifications: General Knowledge, Air Brakes and Transporting Passengers. These are technical tests which can be very difficult and she indeed experienced some difficulties with them.

Fabiola persevered. She studied and took practice tests. During this period she faced serious medical problems. Nonetheless, Fabiola would not give up. She earned her CDL and began working as a bus driver.

Now a year later Fabiola is a model employee, who never misses work and often coming in early. As her smile shows, Fabiola is happy with her job and the help she received through NMDVR.



Elena Tapia (L) works as a Vocational Rehabilitation Technician in a two-person office in Raton. After her injury, life was at a standstill until she came to NMDVR. "I had no office skills, no nothing." With encouragement she began to learn to type at a computer in the office.

Seeing her determination, her counselor, Mary Alice Arellano, (R) initiated an OJT program for Elena in the Raton office. Elena then worked in a "temp" position that leads to permanent employment. "DVR truly can save someone, not only financially, but emotionally also. It is a WONDERFUL feeling. With the help of Mary Alice, now together we can give others their wings to fly."



Loreto Acedo's story represents how collaboration between agencies is good government in action. NMDVR worked closely with Gadsden schools and the Mentoring Diverse Abilities program to help Loreto.

With the team's help, Loreto came to work at Mesquite Water. Initially Loreto performed relatively unskilled labor. Mesquite Water liked his work ethic and this is where Loreto's opportunity began.

Working with other Mesquite Water technicians, Loreto began to learn more complex tasks through on-the-job experience. With Mesquite Water's support, Loreto began studying to become a Certified Water Technician. With certification he has the opportunity to advance his career. Teamwork and Loreto's desire to succeed, made the future look bright.

Randy Mazur operates a successful organic gardening business in Carlsbad. Unable to work as a fiberglass technician, Randy needed work fitted to his capabilities. Thus began his organic gardening plan and his company, *Blessed from the Garden*.

NMDVR arranged for Randy to work with a professional to develop a business plan. While there were expenses for NMDVR to supply organic soil beds, the real story lies in hydroponics.

Researching the supplies, equipment and techniques, with NMDVR assistance, Randy began hydroponic gardening. Not only was this less physically demanding, but vegetables matured quickly. Randy added his blend of nutrients to produce flavors people love.

Being the sole organic gardener in Carlsbad, he has more regular customers than space can supply! NMDVR shared Randy's vision. Now if he can only find room for more hydroponics.





Al Baca is another NMDVR success story, telling his story gladly after many years of success. He still maintains contact with his counselor, now a Field Operations Director. A former Marine, Al was used to dedicated, hard work.

Using his Marine background, Al worked for many years in law enforcement. When he came to NMDVR, he was unsure of himself and his counselor helped guide him in the right direction.

Initially, Al worked in sales, in particular cabinetry. In time Al began to wonder if he could venture out on his own and he eventually established his own business, *Mesa Cabinets and Installations in Albuquerque*.

Knowing his physical limitations and how to “work smart,” Al continues to build his business. Primarily he works in custom homes and does not lack for referrals - “I take pride in my name.” Al gives credit for his success to NMDVR for giving him the confidence to be on his own.



Diane Brandt, successful psychiatric nurse, began to experience health problems and could no longer work as a nurse. It was extremely difficult for her to have lost her ability to nurse.

“You can’t breathe,” she said, discussing the difficulties that she experienced. “When you hear people tell you you’ll get better, you know it’s a lie. You know it’s a lie until you see someone who recovered.”



Photograph courtesy of Las Cruces Sun-News

Diane looked to NMDVR for services and with teamwork she successfully returned to work. Self-employed, she operates *The Empowerment Group* in Las Cruces.

She teaches the Wellness Recovery Action Plan, helping people achieve and maintain better mental health. Ms. Brandt’s story, in some ways, is not unusual. Health problems can offer multiple challenges. With the help of her counselor and her resolve she came to success.



Amy Tremaine, born into a Navajo family, worked hard to progress from an aide to a teacher. Medically, teaching was no longer suitable. Amy came to work with NMDVR with a plan for self-employment.

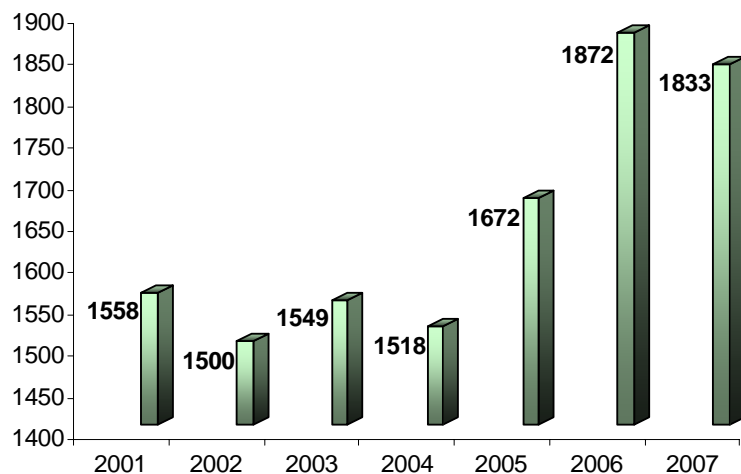
With NMDVR help, Amy turned her hobby, natural care products, into a business. She produces a line of natural

goat’s milk soaps, scented bath salts and more. Amy learned about packaging, bar codes and selling via the internet.

Her business, *L & TA Frank Natural Body Care Products*, continues to grow and she is happy creating the products she learned to make as a teenager. NMDVR was glad to be a part of her success.

RESULTS

CLIENTS SUCCESSFULLY REHABILITATED



During FY 2007 NMDVR assisted 1,833 participants with successful employment goals.

Rehabilitated participants' annual earnings increased 157%, from \$13,015,532 to \$33,492,579.

Importantly, 98% of these participants entered competitive employment or self-employment.

REHABILITATED CLIENTS BY MAJOR OCCUPATION

OCCUPATIONS	Count
Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing and Related	18
Clerical and Administrative Support	196
Managerial and Administrative Support	84
Prod., Const., Operating, Maintenance And Material Handling	334
Professional, Paraprofessional and Technical	484
RSA Special Occupations and Miscellaneous	15
Sales and Related Occupations	132
Service Occupations	570
Total:	1833

DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

At New Mexico Disability Determination Services (NMDDS), a skilled team expects to adjudicate 25,625 cases for Social Security disability benefits in federal fiscal year 2007. The Social Security Administration (SSA) currently pays \$690 million annually in New Mexico for disability benefits.

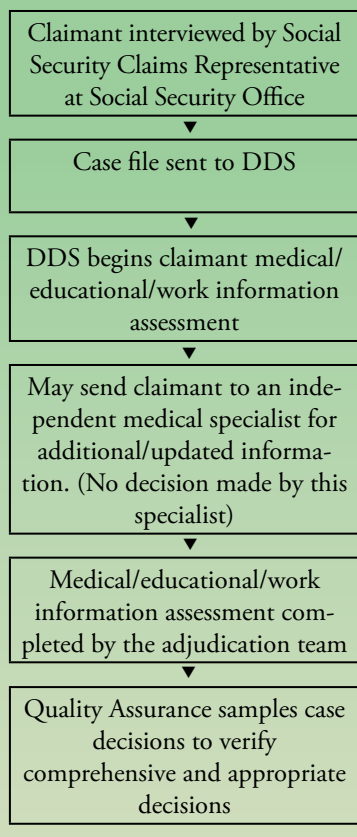
Nationally, the Social Security administration contracts to provide disability determination services. In New Mexico, SSA contracts with the NMDVR to adjudicate cases for the residents of New Mexico. SSA funds the NMDDS at 100% to include administrative overhead to the NMDVR. As a result of 100% funding, SSA maintains extensive

control over the day to day operation at the NMDDS.

Those controls include: federal ownership of data entry and data proprietorship, the ability to replace or hire additional staff, continuing education, and performance measures, etc. Currently, the NMDDS employs approximately 90 staff and contracts with 15 medical consultants.

NMDDS consistently ranks among the highest in the nation, and is currently 11th in the nation for productivity. SSA places a priority on the speed and allowance rates of decisions and NMDDS exceeds the national average in both respects.

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 restricts 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

Allowed case file sent to Payment Center to begin payments

Disallowed case file sent to Social Security office

Claimant may request Social Security Office to reconsider disallowed case

DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

Benefits Payments

NMDDS projects to adjudicate 25,625 cases in federal fiscal year 2007.

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

The Social Security Administration currently pays disabled workers an average Social Security payment of \$860 monthly.

Case Production and Clearances

SSA controls and monitors workloads for all DDS across the country. In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 07, through week 48, the NMDDS has adjudicated a total of 23,541 cases. While the number is down from previous years, the workload has decreased for budgetary reasons.

Currently, the NMDDS expects to receive 25,625 claims. SSA has established a goal of 3,800 initial cases pending; i.e.,

the NMDDS is expected to have no more than 3,800 initial cases pending a decision at the end of the fiscal year. The NMDDS expects to meet and exceed that goal.

Productivity Per Work Year (PPWY)

SSA monitors productivity per work year via a formula. The formula is cost based and compares cases received and cleared (closed) vs. the cost of staffing. In FFY 07, through week 48 the NMDDS' PPWY is 271 compared with 255.1 for the region and a PPWY of 247.7 for the nation. New Mexico currently ranks 11th in the nation in PPWY.

Mean Processing Time (MPT)

One of SSA's priorities is to assure that claims are processed in an accurate and timely manner. Toward that end, SSA actively tracks processing time for claims. Through week 48 of FFY 07, the NMDDS's MPT is 80.3 compared to 84.4 nationally and 72.9 for the region for Title II claims and 78.3, 85, and 72.2 respectively for Title XVI claims.

Accuracy of Adjudication (Accuracy Rate)

SSA measures and considers adjudication accuracy, a key quality measure. The NMDDS has an internal quality assurance program mandated by SSA that reviews a percentage of the cases adjudicated. In addition, the SSA regional office Disability Quality Branch and the central SSA office reviews a statistical sample of all adjudicated.

Findings are closely tracked and monitored with very specific performance expectations. During the first 48 weeks of FFY 07, the most recent data available indicates that the NMDDS accuracy rate is 94.9% (October 06 – August) which compares with the national accuracy rate of 93.9%. Quality and accuracy have suffered slightly because of a staff shortage in the NMDDS' quality assurance department.

Allowance Rate

There is a general perception that initial claims are routinely denied. In fact, allowance rates are an important performance measure for SSA and the NMDDS. During the first three quarters of FFY 07, the NMDDS's allowance rate is 35.7%, compared to 34.7 nationally and 38.6 regionally.

These accomplishments are even more impressive considering that during FFY 07, the NMDDS fully implemented electronic disability process (eDib) and excelled despite the challenges associated with such an implementation.

Nationally recognized for excellence, the New Mexico Disability Determination Services measures of quality consistently rank amongst the highest in the Region and in the nation.

New Mexico Independent Living Centers

**Choices Center for Independent Living
Roswell**

**Independent Living Resource Center
Albuquerque with satellite offices in
Alamogordo, Moriarity and Socorro**

**New Vistas
Santa Fe with a satellite
office in Las Vegas**

**San Juan Center for Independence
Farmington with a satellite
office in Gallup**

**The Ability Center For Independent Living
Las Cruces**

INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

Independent living services enhance voice, choice and opportunities for New Mexicans with disabilities. Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are private, nonprofit corporations that provide services to maximize the independence of individuals with disabilities and the accessibility of the services in the communities they live in.

The priority is to help people with significant disabilities live independently in the homes of their choice. The New Mexico Statewide Independent Living Council advocates for changes that reinforce that

goal. Advocacy includes systemic change, peer support, and consumer equality.

The Centers are funded in part by the Department of Education, Rehabilitation Administration Services (RSA) Independent Living Branch. CILs provide, among other things, several core services:

Advocacy,

Independent Living Skills,

Training,

Information and Referral and

Peer Counseling.

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

NMDVR shares responsibility for the development and implementation of the State Plan for Independent Living in partnership with the State Independent Living Council (SILC), and the New Mexico Commission for the Blind.

This Plan details how federal and state appropriations are used to assist individuals with disabilities to access and benefit from the services of the state's Centers for Independent Living.

Additionally, NMDVR administers the service contracts that fund operations at three of the state's five consumer-controlled Centers: The Independent Living Resource Center in Albuquerque (satellites in Alamogordo, Moriarity

and Socorro); CHOICES in Roswell and San Juan Center for Independence in Farmington (with a satellite in Gallup).

The SILC plays an important role in planning and overseeing independent living service delivery and improving working relationships. The SILC advocates for independent living services to include, physical and programmatic access to housing, employment, transportation, communities, recreational facilities and health and social services.

The Native American Independent Living Committee works with consumers to seek federal funds to remove architectural barriers and to provide assistive technology.

SILC MEMBERS

Suzanne Anderson-Ruble
Rio Ranch, NM

Rebecca Holland
Rio Rancho, NM

Gilbert John
Gamerco, NM

Susan Lewis
Albuquerque, NM

Michael Murphy
Alamogordo, NM

Cesar Rodriguez
Las Cruces, NM

Juanna Valencia
San Felipe Pueblo, NM

H. Felix Vigil
Villanueva, NM

Gil Yildez
Director, Independent Living Resource
Center
Albuquerque, NM

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

Gary Beene (ex-officio)
Director for NMDVR
Santa Fe, NM

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORTS UNIT

NMDVR's Program Development and Supports Unit (PDS) assumes a leadership role, in partnership with RSA, in the development and supervision of federally funded grant projects and partnerships that expand opportunities for people with disabilities.

New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP)

The New Mexico Assistance Technology Program (NMTAP) implements the Assistive Technology Act of 2004 in New Mexico to enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities. NMTAP provides loans and other financial help for assistive technology. In FY 07, PDS began the Disability Navigator Laptop Loan program. The program provides software such as screen readers and voice output to serve One Stop customers with disabilities. NMTAP also trained school personnel, as requested, on alternative assessment techniques. NMTAP staff provided over

920 equipment demonstrations across the State. Collaborating with the Santa Fe Community Foundation, staff began the Assistive Technology Community Fund to help purchase assistive technology not funded by private or public means.

Whatever It Takes (WIT)

In a six year period, the WIT Program assisted 836 (as of July 6, 2007) individuals with transportation assistance. The WIT Project initiated five accessible rural commuter services, developed school-to-work transportation, partnered successfully with Easter Seals, hosted transition summits and helped disabled individuals work.

WIT staff promoted and coordinated transportation development throughout the state. New Mexico has been fortunate to have received much needed assistance with rural transportation needs for individuals with disabilities.

Leveraged Integrated Networks of Consumer Supports (LINCS)

LINCS provides motivation workshops, non-paid work experiences and job placement services for individuals with mental or physical disabilities who receive public assistance. Staff evaluates services relative to the quality and duration of employment achieved, and identifies and promotes needed changes in service delivery.

LINCS includes the New Mexico departments of Labor, Human Services, Health, the NM Commission for the Blind, and NMDVR.



PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORTS

RAISE

Project RAISE, Reasonable Accommodation Intervention for Successful Employment began in FY 2007. RAISE identifies barriers to employment for persons with disabilities, provides technical assistance to employers, employment professionals and persons with disabilities and coordinates efforts in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and New Mexico. The current focus is early intervention for job accommodations. With the Executive Task Force, a survey gathered information about barriers to employment within state government.

Each agency has policies for job accommodations. However, not having written corresponding procedures to go with the policies was identified as a recurring issue. A telephone survey gathered information regarding the effect of state policies on providing reasonable job accommodations for applicants and employees with disabilities.

With this background information, Project RAISE and NMDVR's Human Resource and Staff Development units are working to create model policies and procedures. Their recommendations will address how to request, evaluate, identify, buy, train and evaluate the effectiveness of job accommodations.

The project has provided outreach and training to state entities including the State of New Mexico's ADA Coordinators Council, NMDVR's Administrative Services Unit and NMDVR Rehabilitation Academy.

Benefits Information Centers (BIC)

There are five certified Benefits Advisors across the state that are especially qualified to help individuals receiving Social Security benefits to manage

their benefits and plan for their financial futures. BIC staff helps people understand the Ticket to Work and Working Disabled Individual (WDI) programs. Benefits Advisors answer questions about health insurance, reporting income and other concerns. NMDVR has hired WDI individuals to serve as Peer Associates that provide statewide outreach services.

NMDVR was one of eight programs in the nation recognized in FY 2007 as "stellar performers." The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid presented staff the "Put your Money Where Your Mouth Is" award.

Telework Loan Program

The Telework Loan Program is a unique project for persons with disabilities who are looking for equipment loans to help them with a home-based business or self-employment. It provides loan guarantees and interest rate subsidies to help people with disabilities work independently. Terms of the loan are from 12 months to 60 months and can range from \$1,000 to \$30,000.

The rates of the loans vary and will be whatever the going business loan rate is at time of application. If the loan needs to be guaranteed by the NMTLP, the rate will be the current CD rate +2%.

Second Chance Program

Many companies and individuals need to keep abreast of improved technologies, and a five-year-old computer can become a serious production bottleneck. A used computer donated to NMDVR not only helps a person with a disability, but the environment as well. Technicians refurbish donated computers assuring that sensitive data on the hard drive stays

confidential. A technician "wipes clean" the hard drive and replaces parts that don't work. Through an agreement with Microsoft, a technician installs Windows 2000. Included is "Open Office" a software package similar to, and compatible with MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint. After testing, a computer has completed "rehab" and is ready for a proud new owner.

Social Security Reimbursement

The Social Security Reimbursement program is designed to support persons with disabilities that want to become employed. Social Security payment activities support NMDVR by providing a systematic review of NMDVR's open and closed Social Security Recipient client cases resulting in the recovery of a portion of the rehabilitation costs. The Ticket to Work Program is incorporated into the reimbursement program and encourages beneficiaries to seek services that will allow them to work. During 2007, case review activities resulted in payments of \$344,298 from SSA.

Medicaid Adjudication Services

Adjudication provides decisions regarding eligibility for SSA medical assistance. Working Disabled Individuals (WDI) Medicaid helps people who work to obtain Medicaid, if not covered by SSI.

The agreement continued between Human Services Department - Income Support Division, and NMDVR for adjudication services.

During the year, staff conducted reviews of 853 Medicaid claims and 312 were Medicaid Buy-in.

CREATING OPPORTUNITY

"As you know, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law 17 years ago. It was a landmark piece of legislation for people with disabilities. That is what we are about at New Mexico Vocational Rehabilitation. We are about helping individuals, one person at a time, realize the true potential of ADA."

Gary Beene, Director 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 and with its partners, NMDVR works to meet employers' needs and provide qualified applicants. Expanding business connections and partnerships is vital. This reflects a key strategy in the Strategic Framework.

NMDVR counselors are required to have a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or a closely related field (or be working toward one), as well as certification or licensure as a vocational rehabilitation counselor. Finding qualified job candidates presents a challenge. NMDVR works with New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU), and has taken proactive steps to recruit qualified counselors nationally.

NMDVR works with Dr. Michael O'Brien, the Program Director for the vocational rehabilitation department at NMHU. The NMDVR continues to accept and benefit from NMHU interns who gain valuable, practical experience. Recruiting people with disabilities for the master's program is a priority for NMHU.



NMHU Rehabilitation Counseling Program Director Mike O'Brien interacts with a class on-line.

Disability Navigators

This specially trained NMDVR team advises and advocates for people with disabilities that seek employment at New Mexico Workforce Connection Career Centers. Funded by federal and state monies the program is administered by NMDVR. In 2007, there were ten Navigators in place at area Centers statewide. Navigators increase job opportunities and reduce job barriers. They facilitate access to programs, resources and other services, but most importantly links to employers. Navigators offer numerous services to meet diverse needs. Navigators help as systems change agents, problem solvers and relationship builders. They help Center staff, employers, and community providers in response to individuals' needs. Navigators offer guidance and implementation of the following: ADA workplace policies and procedures; accessibility issues; reasonable accommodations; collaboration with Center staff; bridging gaps between

the business and human service communities; training Center staff regarding disability issues; interagency sharing of resources, to improve outcomes for people with disabilities. Navigators provided one of the above services to 4,149 individuals and 929 employers across the state. As a result of Navigator assistance, 712 individuals found employment - a notable achievement for a small staff. In addition, Navigators have been active with employer job fairs and transportation issues around the state. You can reach the Navigators and get more information by calling 866-524-6598.

CREATING OPPORTUNITY

NEW MEXICO BUSINESS LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Executive Director Leah Rhule and Program Director Tessah Latson guide the Employers' Disability Resource/NM Business Leadership Network (EDR/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.

The Employers' Disability Resource/NM Business Leadership Network establish collaborative relationships to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities. They do this by expanding the concept of workplace diversity to be one of true inclusion.

The EDR/NM BLN provides free consultations, referrals and ongoing education and awareness training for employers and their employees. Connecting to the business community occurs through developing and maintaining relationships with regional Chambers

of Commerce, Offices of Economic Development, local chapters of the Human Resource Managers Association, the Department of Workforce Solutions field offices and area offices of NMDVR.

Keeping their fingers on the pulse of workforce development initiatives and labor trends in New Mexico is a key reason for the Employers' Disability Resource/NM Business Leadership Network's success. Entering its sixth contract year with NMDVR, the EDR/NM BLN is finding its niche in the business and economic development communities to be the very best resource, in turn, to NMDVR.

Explore the EDR/NM BLN's website: www.newmexicoblbn.com for resources about and for employers in your community, useful tools for service providers and up to date information for job seekers and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Staff Development

The Staff Development Unit (SDU) provides a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) as required by the Rehabilitation Act. The CSPD assures that NMDVR rehabilitation personnel are highly qualified. SDU coordinates Rehabilitation Academy, a three week long, spaced learning program that teaches the basics of Vocational Rehabilitation to new VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Technicians. Fifteen new VRCs and Techs have completed the program in the last year.

Staff Development organized events to include "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People", "ADA and Employment" presented by nationally known Richard Pimentel and "Job Accommodation Network." New Employee Orientation is offered every other month and covers the mission, vision and "need to know" information for new agency employees. Attendees rated these presentations very highly.

SDU sponsors NMDVR employees to complete Bachelors and Masters Degrees. Staff Development also pays workshop fees for a wide variety of seminars and workshops designed to help employees continue to improve their skills.



A meeting of the EDR/NM BLN includes (Back row L - R) Randy Richardson, Jobing.Com; Mark Cornett, Disability Consultant; Anna Ortiz, PNM; Leah Rhule, BLN; Bob Walton, Albuquerque Economic Development; (Front L - R) Whitney Warner, Moody & Warner; Lisa McNiven, Governor's Commission on Disability; Kim Herron-Singleton, Northrop Grumman; Tessah Latson, BLN.



The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation would like to thank the participants who allow us to publish their stories and images. Each promotes the value of vocational rehabilitation services. Additional success stories appear 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.