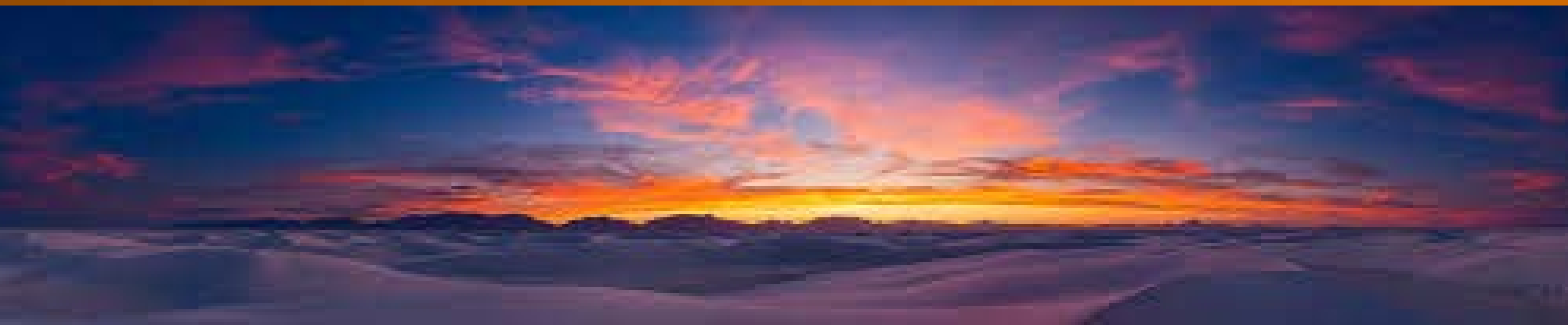




New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council

2015 Annual Report





State Rehabilitation Council 2015 Annual Report

The New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was established under Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and authorized in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Tasked with partnering with the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NM DVR) to ensure the highest quality services are made available to those seeking support and services, the SRC acts as the external, community-oriented voice in the consideration and development of NM DVR policy. To achieve this goal, the SRC works closely with the NM DVR to remain informed on those issues most pertinent to the provision of services to the disability community within New Mexico and to express concerns or support regarding those issues and initiatives.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
435 St. Michaels Drive, Building D
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(800) 224-7005
www.dvrgetsjobs.com

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“It is a pleasure to work with the SRC representing former NMDVR clients. In my current line of work many individuals disclose that they are current or were previous NMDVR clients. Most of these individuals are grateful for the assistance and the support NMDVR provides. Whether happy or not with NMDVR, some are critical but often don’t know what to do or who to speak with concerning their issues. Given my experiences with NMDVR, I am able to provide some general guidance and assurance that resolution of their concerns is important to NMDVR.” – Richard D. Jirón, SRC Sargent at Arms



Letter from SRC Chair



Honorable Governor Martinez and Secretary Skandera,

As the Chair of the New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) it is my great pleasure to submit the 2015 annual report. The members of the SRC have worked hard during this reporting period to understand the specific needs of people with disabilities within our state, the state of satisfaction with New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) services, and to partner together with NMDVR to maintain a standard of excellence on behalf of its participants.

This report summarizes efforts of the SRC to maintain collaboration with NMDVR over the past year. It is our hope that it will provide readers with a clear understanding of the role of the SRC in supporting NMDVR and the critical nature of the mutual partnership that should exist between our two entities in order to support the goal of excellence in service to people with disabilities within our state.

The SRC worked diligently this year to meet the council's federally mandated charges and to maintain the standard of service to New Mexicans with disabilities in the area of vocational rehabilitation. The members of the SRC have worked consistently to support the mission of NMDVR and to be the voice of the consumer as we advocate for a vocational rehabilitation program that provides efficient, effective, and results-oriented services for New Mexicans with disabilities seeking employment. It is extremely inspiring to watch both our council members and our NMDVR staff work together to make vocational rehabilitation successful within our state.

As I complete my term as Chair, I look forward to seeing the continued progress of the SRC and NMDVR as they move forward with services under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). I am proud of our accomplishments and look forward to future success.

Sincerely,

Sarah Michaud
SRC Chair



**NEW MEXICO
DIVISION OF
VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION**

Public Education Department

**SUSANA MARTINEZ
GOVERNOR**

**HANNA SKANDERA
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION**

**HIPOLITO "PAUL" AGUILAR
INTERIM DIRECTOR FOR
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

December 9, 2015

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

While the agency has experienced numerous challenges during the past year including a high vacancy rate for key field positions, I'm happy to report that the Division has been able to continue to serve all eligible participants and does not currently have a waiting list even though we remain in order of selection. It is anticipated that this will be the case for the short-term as the agency has worked hard to reduce the vacancy rate to below 14% in 2015.

During the past year, NMDVR staff worked with SRC members in planning, policy review, and legislative activities. This along with the valuable input that NMDVR has received from the Council has been very beneficial to agency activities in 2015. With the recent appointment of a New RSU Deputy Director, it is my hope that NMDVR's relationship with SRC members strengthens to help NMDVR successfully navigate the implementation of WIOA.

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

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

Sincerely,



Hipolito Aguilar
Acting Director for Vocational Rehabilitation



SRC At-A-Glance

Mission

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

Vision

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

SRC Goals:

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



SRC At-A-Glance

SRC Functions:

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

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



SRC Committees and Accomplishments

Executive Committee

Purpose:

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

Chairperson:

Sarah Michaud

Committee Members:

Alex A. Martinez, Richard Dennis Jirón

Review of 2015 Accomplishments:

- The SRC Chair attended the Council of Administrators for State Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) in April. As part of this process, the SRC Chair participated with the Acting Director for NMDVR in meetings with federal legislators to educate them about state VR services, the needs of people with disabilities within our state, and WIOA. Notes from each session attended were shared with the entire SRC to provide information on new regulations and guidance for VR services under WIOA as well as to educate the membership on the impact of WIOA on the charge of the council in the coming year.
- The committee facilitated the implementation of two public forums in conjunction with quarterly SRC meetings to gain input from the public in regard to VR needs, issues and concerns. This input was then shared with NMDVR, along with SRC recommendations for service enhancement.
- The committee worked in coordination with each of the other SRC standing committees to develop a survey instrument to evaluate and assess the services being provided to individuals with disabilities by the NMDVR. The committees then worked with a consultant to complete the Customer Satisfaction and Statewide Needs Assessment Survey for 2015.
- The committee was successful in attaining a dedicated employee of the NMDVR to support the work of the SRC, in addition to a dedicated operating budget.



SRC Committees and Accomplishments

State Plan and Outcomes Committee

Purpose:

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

Chairperson:

Bernadine Chavez

Members:

Sarah Michaud, Melinda Garcia

Review of 2015 Accomplishments:

- The committee worked diligently to ensure the SRC focused on their responsibilities as it relates to Title I, Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Public Law 105-220 under the Workforce Investment Act.
- The committee reviewed the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) that supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and amends the Wagner-Peyser Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Members were asked to review the legislation and provide comments as it relates to individuals with disabilities.
- The committee reviewed the recommendations in the 2014 SRC Annual Report and worked with the NMDVR to ensure that the recommendations had been addressed to the satisfaction of the SRC.
- The committee reviewed recent revisions to the Manual of Operations (MOP) and made recommendations that resulted in changes to the Consumer Financial Participation Assessment.



SRC Committees and Accomplishments

Legislative and Outreach Committee

Purpose:

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

Chairperson:

Alex A. Martinez

Members:

Bernadine Chavez, Jeff Diamond, Ron Garcia

Review of 2015 Accomplishments:

- The committee attended key Legislative Committee meetings when the NMDVR was presenting and voiced their support for adequate state funding to draw down the maximum federal allocation available to the state.
- The committee advocated for and implemented public forums prior to each quarterly meeting of the SRC in order to gain insight into the quality of services being provided to individuals with disabilities by the NMDVR and any concerns they may have.
- The committee in coordination with the State Plan and Outcomes Committee developed a survey instrument to evaluate and assess the services being provided to individuals with disabilities by the NMDVR. The committees then worked with a consultant to complete the Customer Satisfaction and Statewide Needs Assessment Survey for 2015.
- Committee member Jeff Diamond sponsored a forum entitled "Vocational Rehabilitation and Social Security." The speakers included representatives from NMDVR, the SRC, Disability Rights New Mexico, Adelante Development Center and the Jeff Diamond Law firm. The forum offered Continuing Legal Education and CEU credit to those in attendance.



SRC Committees and Accomplishments

Membership and Awards Committee

Purpose:

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

Chairperson:

Richard Dennis Jirón

Members:

Larry Rodriguez

Review of 2015 Accomplishments:

- The committee updated all SRC Member information to ensure compliance with Title I, Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- The committee identified SRC members with terms expiring in 2015 and have actively recruited new members to replace them.
- The committee has worked to formalize initial communications and document exchange with prospective SRC members to provide them with general application instructions to Boards and Commissions on the New Mexico Governor's Office website. Prospective members receive a copy of the SRC Bylaws for their review and dates of upcoming quarterly meetings.
- The committee solicited nominations from the NMDVR for the 2015 SRC Awards. Nomination forms were sent to all NMDVR employees who were able to nominate co-workers and business partners who have demonstrated outstanding performance or outcomes related to one or more of the following criteria:
 - *Creating unique and exciting partnerships with community providers and/or community services
 - *Empowering individuals with disabilities to live independently and/or becoming effective self-advocates
 - *Effecting Agency outcomes
 - *Educating and/or increasing community awareness of the NMDVR and what the Division does to benefit individuals with disabilities seeking employment, and
 - *This year, three NMDVR employees and one business partner were recognized with awards at the December quarterly meeting of the SRC in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

State Rehabilitation Council's
Recognition Award for Employer
presented to:

Las Cruces Public Schools



Superintendent Stan Rounds accepting award on behalf of the Las Cruces Public Schools
Also pictured SRC Membership and Awards Committee Chair Richard Dennis Jirón and SRC Chair Sarah Michaud

Excerpt from the nomination form:

The Las Cruces Public Schools have hired so many of our participants from service worker positions to professional positions, including a substitute teaching position. They've been very accommodating in working with many of our challenging participants. We had one participant that started in the kitchen and was transferred to the janitorial crew which was a better fit. She required intensive job coaching due to this participant having cognitive deficits. Another participant had anger issues and the school employees worked with him and allowed a job coach while working as a cafeteria cook. They hired a transition student as a janitor who is autistic and this is his first job and allowed a job coach to assist with learning job skills and proper work ethic. They also are providing job leads. Over the past two years, Las Cruces Public Schools also collaborated with us in sponsoring our first transition fair in April, a major undertaking that required weekly meetings to ensure all ran smoothly. Las Cruces Public Schools have also partnered with us in participating in our yearly job fair. LCPS has been a leading example of hiring individuals with disabilities.

State Rehabilitation Council's
Recognition Award for NM DVR Tech
presented to:

Chad Jackson



Chad Jackson, NM DVR Area 3 Tech accepting award.
Also pictured SRC Membership and Awards Committee Chair Richard Dennis Jirón and
SRC Chair Sarah Michaud

Excerpt from the nomination form:

Chad has been an employee of DVR for over 7 years. He epitomizes team work. A few examples include his willingness to meet with participants if a counselor or rehab tech asks him to do so. He also helps cover the reception area as needed and assists David, our Silver City VRC, with job development and job placement with those participants living in Las Cruces.

In addition to his great team work, Chad excels in his job as a VRT. He is effective with both our employers and participants. He has many employer contacts and is active in getting employers to participate in our yearly Disability Employment Awareness Job Fair. Chad coaches our participants before a local job fair takes place so that they may know how to dress appropriately, to bring their resumes and how to answer effectively any questions which a potential employer may ask them.

Other coworkers have observed how well Chad interacts with our participants. He is always willing to take the time to see or speak to those who drop-in, and is great at doing our Orientations. He makes sure that the participant has a clear understanding of what it being said. When it comes to co-workers, Chad is willing to stop what he is doing and make time to answer any questions they may have. Chad has a cheerful and upbeat personality, treats people respectfully and never makes either a DVR staff member or participant feel as if they are imposing on him to assist them with various matters. He is truly an awesome person!

State Rehabilitation Council's
Recognition Award for NM DVR Counselor
presented to:

Cheryl Burns



Cheryl Burns, NM DVR Area 6 VR Counselor accepting award.

Also pictured SRC Membership and Awards Committee Chair Richard Dennis Jirón and SRC Chair Sarah Michaud

Excerpt from the nomination form:

Cheryl has helped her clients by providing them with information about resources in the community and nationwide that aid our DVR participants. By connecting them to resource providers and support networks that they can benefit from, her clients have benefited in their understanding of their disorders and by being connected to those service providers they are more enabled to take control of their options for treatment, as well as understand their options for their vocational rehabilitation program.

Cheryl has an open door policy here at our office that the front desk utilizes often. When a client of her caseload comes in and asks for her, Cheryl wants to be notified that they are here so she can have them wait or she will go see them to address their concern. The availability she offers for clients that come into the office to see her, often because they do not have the ability to formulate their questions to her on the phone, allows our more functionally and cognitively impaired clients to have chance to discuss concerns in the mode of communication that suits them.

Cheryl often helps train new staff on the behaviors they should expect from the participants once they walk through the door. By promoting best office practices and communication methods, she helps to teach the OJT staff we have at our front desk how to behave when a client is not exhibiting appropriate work behavior. How to handle face-to-face issues of frustration and on the phone issues of confusion and frustration help our new staff learn the language that is most appropriate to use for people living with disability. When she overhears a phone conversation and feels redirection is needed, she quietly speaks with the staff member about why what they said was not the most appropriate and helps them understand how to address it better in the future.



Consumer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment

Purpose:

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

Process:

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

Findings:

- Overall, the NMDVR Consumer Satisfaction Survey findings demonstrate that the NMDVR staff is providing program participants with an extremely satisfying level of service. The high number of consumers that reported being satisfied with the NMDVR services supports this finding. The results show that 86.2% of the respondents reported being either extremely satisfied or satisfied. Compared to the 2012 Consumer Satisfaction survey, which showed 63.0% of the respondents stated being satisfied with NMDVR's services, this represents a 23.2% increase in overall consumer satisfaction since 2012.
- Similarly, almost 100% of the respondents reported being treated with courtesy and respect by their counselors (97.7% said "Yes"). Likewise, when asked if the other NMDVR staff treated them with courtesy and respect, 96.6% said "Yes." Compared to the 2012 Consumer Satisfaction survey, which showed 83.2% stating NMDVR staff were courteous, this represents an increase of 14.5% in staff courteousness.
- The NMDVR counselors also received high customer satisfaction ratings for their responsiveness. Respondents stated being very satisfied or satisfied with their counselor's response to emails and phone calls (86.9%). Likewise, when asked if their counselor was responsive to their requests for service, 95.2% stated "Yes." The majority of respondents also reported they feel NMDVR understands their disability (86.0% stated "Yes"). Of the respondents' reported barriers to employment, education and training was reported to be the biggest challenge with 58.7% of the consumers citing this as a barrier. The respondents' desire for education and training is further exemplified by the areas with which they identified needing assistance (job development 43.1%; education 41.7%; training 43.1%). Medical services was cited as the second most common barrier to employment at 33.3%, with transportation and mental health services being cited equally as the third and fourth most common barrier (27.0%).
- Ultimately, the goal of DVR is the employment of individuals with disabilities. In general, the employment rates of people with disabilities in the United States after receiving vocational rehabilitation services are consistently found to be around 60%. The fact that NMDVR clients exhibited a 53.6% employment rate shows that services provided to clients by NMDVR staff are approaching national average performance.



NMDVR Response to Recommendations

- In 2014, the SRC recommended that due to the retirement of the previous Director of NMDVR, the leadership of DVR and especially the new director, meet with the SRC to establish a positive working relationship and discuss the incumbent's priorities.

Agency Response: *Since the request was made, Interim Director, Paul Aguilar, has met with the SRC and shared his priorities for the agency and received feedback from the SRC. The agency has filled the positions of Administrative Services Unit Deputy Director and Rehabilitation Services Unit Deputy Director. The agency is actively seeking candidates for a Director. NMDVR has prioritized filling vacancies, which includes those in high-level administrative positions. New RSU Deputy Director will work to establish a positive relationship with SRC in the future.*

- In 2014, the SRC recommended that DVR staff assist the council to establish committee meetings for SRC Working Committees that are held outside quarterly meetings in order to further committee work to further both the SRC's charge and that of DVR.

Agency Response: *The agency recently has filled the position of Administrative Assistant, this position will work to assist the council to establish committee meetings for the SRC in the future.*

- In 2014, the SRC recommended that DVR provide the council with routine updates regarding OOS and the status of the waiting lists.

Agency Response: *The new RSU deputy Director will provide OOS and waiting list updates to SRC council during quarterly meetings.*

- In 2014, the SRC recommended that DVR ensure that the council remains apprised of the status of the Fair Hearing Officer pool, and that all Fair Hearing Officers receive routine training on VR processes and protocols to ensure understanding of the issues presented during the Fair Hearing process. The SRC additionally reminded the agency that the SRC should be involved in the selection of new hearing officers, since monitoring of the fair hearing process is part of the council's charge.

Agency Response: *the new RSU Deputy Director will ensure that the SRC is involved in all future RFP processes for Impartial Hearing Officers as per WIOA regulations.*



NMDVR Response to Recommendations (continued)

- In 2014, the SRC recommended that DVR provide the council with routine updates regarding Fair Hearing requests and their outcomes to ensure the SRC understands both the consumer concerns leading to the complaints and the disposition of the hearing requests.

Agency Response: *The new RSU Deputy Director will provide SRC committee a running report of Fair Hearing requests and their outcomes at quarterly SRC meetings.*

- In 2014, the SRC recommended that DVR enhance their facilitation of public forums to collect feedback regarding NMDVR services. The SRC strongly recommended that NMDVR re-evaluate its advertising process for the public forums to ensure the widest possible pool of participants to gather feedback from.

Agency Response: *The agency is willing to enhance promotion of SRC Quarterly Meetings and Public Forums. To the extent the other state agencies are willing, the agency welcomes their assistance.*

- In 2014, the SRC recommended that DVR provided continued support to assist the council to continue SRC awards for outstanding NMDVR staff and employers. Additionally, the SRC recommended that NMDVR prepare and disseminate information on its achievements to build community and legislative awareness of the impact of services and NMDVR staff. This public relations focus should be ongoing.

Agency Response: *The agency recently has filled the position of Administrative Assistant, this position will work to assist the council to promote SRC awards and disseminate information on DVR achievements.*

- In 2014, the SRC recommended that DVR work closely with the SRC to continue planning for State Plan activities and the Needs Assessment/Consumer Satisfaction Survey in 2015. The SRC further recommended that the council be apprised of and involved in the planning process due to the anticipated changes required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Agency Response: *The agency will ensure that the Administrative Field Operations Director that is responsible for the State plan will seek SRC input.*



NMDVR Response to Recommendations (continued)

- In 2014, the SRC recommended that the council and DVR begin and exploration of public hearings in conjunction with other boards and disability service agencies.

Agency Response: *The agency is willing to enhance cooperation with other boards and disability agencies to conduct Public Forums/Hearings. To the extent the other state agencies are willing, the agency welcomes their assistance. Under WIOA requirements for a Unified State Plan, it is a requirement for DVR to coordinate with mandated partner agencies*

- In 2014, the SRC recommended a review of SRC by-laws and responsibilities to ensure council members are fully aware of federal regulations.

Agency Response: *The agency supports this recommendation for a review of SRC by-laws and responsibilities by council members.*

“Serving on the State Rehabilitation Council has given me the opportunity to work with great colleagues who also view the importance of recognizing and acknowledging the critical work of our direct service staff members of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Their work assures that New Mexicans with disabilities have viable avenues to pursue and obtain meaningful employment in our great state through goal development and attainment.” -- Ron Garcia, Incoming SRC Chair



SRC Recommendations for 2016

- The SRC continues to recommend that consistency be achieved in the top administrative positions of NMDVR to provide continuity of management and oversight, and to facilitate continuous staff development and effectiveness.
- The SRC recommends that a designated SRC member be involved as a liaison with the NMDVR committee that works on the MOP that will be updated to ensure compliance with WIOA.
- The SRC recommends that counselor training or the “Rehab Academy” be re-implemented by NMDVR to ensure new counselors have a good foundation in the rehabilitation process.
- The SRC strongly recommends that NMDVR follow federal requirements for SRC members to review potential Independent Fair Hearing Officer candidates prior to implementing a contract for services. The SRC further recommends that any new Fair Hearing Officer receive routine training on VR processes and protocols to ensure understanding of the issues presented during the Fair Hearing process.
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR enhance advertisement of SRC Quarterly Meetings and Public Forums to include the DVR website (the SRC Section and perhaps on the Hot Topics), as well as the Governor’s website, websites of local collaborative, and sister State Agencies. These efforts would be in line with the public notices that must be published in advance of each meeting/public forum per the State’s Open Meetings Act.
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR place additional emphasis on the facilitation of public forms to collect feedback regarding NMDVR services. The SRC strongly recommends that NMDVR re-evaluate its advertising process for the public forums to ensure the widest possible pool of participants are aware and can attend these events in order to gather feedback regarding services.
- The SRC recommends the continuation of annual SRC awards for outstanding NMDVR staff and business partners. Additionally, the SRC recommends that NMDVR prepare and disseminate information on its achievements to build community and legislative awareness of the impact of services and NMDVR staff.



SRC Recommendations for 2016 (continued)

- The SRC recommends that NMDVR enhance advertisement of the SRC meetings with posters at the local NMDVR offices so that participants can see the posters. Along these lines, the SRC further recommends that NMDVR staff be invited to local SRC meetings in order to increase the partnership between the two entities.
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR investigate how best to assure timely application periods for NMDVR clients who re-apply for services after case closure or where a previous case has existed. This action would be especially helpful for cases for which post-employment status is not feasible.
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR investigate consumer claims in regard to excessive documentation to justify services and purchases in order to facilitate timely delivery of necessary services.
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR consider the development of a self-employment primer to assist participants in developing sound business plans and business practices in order to increase long term successes with self-employment plans.
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR develop a response plan in order to address common complaints and/or case reviews specific to an Area Office.
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR develop a best practice for service provision for consumers living with AIDS or HIV.
- The SRC recommends that due to the transition requirements specified under WIOA, that NMDVR look into methods to increase partnerships statewide with service providers of youth transition.

“Our mission, as set forth by the Congress is a critical one: to promote the rights of New Mexicans with disabilities to maximize employment, and have quality vocational rehabilitation services to accomplish this goal. The SRC takes this charge very seriously.” –Bernadine Chavez, SRC Member



NMDVR At-A-Glance

Statistical Year At-A-Glance	
9,367	New Mexicans sought and received direct vocational rehabilitation services
8,219	New Mexicans received vocational rehabilitation services including: medical guidance and counseling, training and job seeking skills
824	Successfully rehabilitated
629	Job ready or employed but not yet closed
\$18,192	Average yearly employee wage
182%	Percent wage increase after rehabilitation
29%	Most significantly disabled
63%	Significantly Disabled
\$14,990,444	Total Wages for successfully rehabilitated individuals



NMDVR At-A-Glance

FY 2015 Eligible Participants by Major Disabling Conditions

Primary Disability	Count
Mental Disability	2,574
Learning Disability	1,611
Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	1,254
Hearing Impairment	480
Alcohol and Substance Abuse	240
Developmentally Delayed/Mental Retardation	369
Deafness	351
Traumatic Brain Injury/Stroke	241
Cardiac and Circulatory Disease	97
Epilepsy	102
Blindness and Visual Impairments	85
Spinal Cord Injury	51
Deaf-Blind	7
Other Categories	757
Total Eligible	8,219



NMDVR At-A-Glance

FY 2015 Rehabilitated Closures by Occupation

Category Description	Closures
Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing and Related	10
Clerical and Administrative Support	57
Community and Social Service Occupations	4
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	3
Construction and Extraction Occupations	0
Education, Training and Library Occupations	1
Healthcare Support Occupations	3
Managerial and Administrative	27
Prod, Const, Operating, Maint & Material Handling	134
Professional, Paraprofessional and Technical	158
Protective Service Occupations	0
RSA Special Occupations and Miscellaneous (Homemaker and Unpaid Family Worker)	19
Sales and Related Occupations	59
Service Occupations	349
TOTAL REHABILITATED CLOSURES	824



NMDVR At-A-Glance

FY 2015 Participants Income Reliance Before and After Return to Work

Primary Source of Support	At Application	At Closure
All Other Public Sources	21	2
All Other Sources of Support	19	5
Annuity or Other Non-disability Insurance Benefits	6	4
Client Income/Employment earnings	168	581
Family and Friends	356	43
Private Relief Agency	3	0
Pub Assist, partly w/ Fed Funds(SSI, TANF/AFDC)	135	98
Public Assistance without Federal Funds (GA Only)	9	0
Public Institution - Tax Supported	2	1
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	99	90
Worker's Compensation	6	0
TOTAL REHABILITATED CLOSURES	824	824

DVR SUCCESS STORIES



Kristi Johnson

“As the chair of the SRC this year, I have had the privilege of representing the council on both a state and national level. I find myself inspired routinely by the dedication and commitment of both the NMDVR staff and the SRC membership as a whole. Each have embraced the goal of excellence in service and the importance of partnership to achieve that excellence. This is a pivotal time for VR, and my hope is that New Mexico can help to set the bar for quality of service.”
Sarah Michaud, SRC Chair

Kristi Johnson is a 61 year old female independent business owner. Kristi’s business is reforestation. Kristi has contracts with the US Forestry Department to assist with the natural restocking of existing forests and woodlands that have been depleted. She performs contract work to plant and grow trees for the US Forestry. Her role is important as it helps to rebuild natural habitat and ecosystem since forests facilitate the capture and storage of the atmospheric greenhouse carbon dioxide by biological processes, and harvest for resources, particularly timber. She has done this for the past 14+ years. Kristi enjoys her work and continues to maintain her employment. She is an important income producer to her family.

Kristi was referred to DVR in January 2014 after a horseback riding incident, where she sustained spinal cord injury at the T 7-8 level which resulted in complete paralysis. Kristi has magnificent family support and they made significant financial investments in making her greenhouses, work vehicles, and work areas accessible. They purchased a turning seat to enable independent access to get in and out of a pickup. Family purchased an ATV and added hand controls. They modified gates, buildings and doorways to increase ease of access to home and work areas. Kristi borrowed a used motorized wheelchair from friends, and her family built her a wheelchair accessible ramp. DVR assisted with the purchase of hand controls and stow away lift for her pickup.

DVR assisted to obtain a pro-bono evaluation from the UNM’s School of Medicine, and had an occupational therapist assess Kristi’s work site and work duties. The occupational therapist traveled from Albuquerque to Cuervo, NM at no cost to Kristi or DVR.

Kristi’s work duties were assessed, and it was determined Kristi could continue to conduct her duties to maintain self-employment with accommodations. It was recommended a standing wheelchair to increase participation in mobility related to works was required.

A standing wheelchair usually requires an individual have the capacity to maintain an erect posture that enables freedom of movement of the upper extremities. Kristi obtained postural support through physical therapy. She has attained a greatly improved level of postural control that supports functions of her arms. Kristi has the upper body strength to continue to perform tasks she was accustomed to without having to hire staff with the use of a stand up wheelchair.

Comparable benefits were sought. Kristi and VR Counselor researched comparable benefits, and medical necessity forms were obtained for prior approval from Kristi’s insurance. Independent Living Therapy Services provided the mobility evaluation and wheelchair assessment.

DVR assisted with costs secondary to Kristi’s primary insurance for the purchase of a standup motorized wheelchair with pressure relieving seat cushion, and power tilt. The power standing wheelchair allowed Kristi to continue to remain active in daily living and to continue with work activity including planting and transporting work equipment, which must be completed in a standing position.

During our last meeting; prior to case closure, Kristi and I discussed her accomplishments and the tremendous help from her family and husband. In her words, “he sure did step up to the plate, didn’t he”.

Riding horses and outdoors are her passion. Her husband bought her an accessible saddle and built a ramp for her to drive up and get on her horse. It is truly a pleasure, meeting and working with this genuine, non-stopping, optimistic individual.

“I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with a dynamic team of professionals on the SRC, who truly take their charge seriously in representing the interests of people with disabilities. Their desire, advice and support of the NMDVR ensures that high quality services continue to be provided to the disability community.”

Alex Martinez, SRC Vice-Chair

DVR Staff Recognition

(letter received from DVR Client)

As a client of NMDVR, I wish to highly commend three of our State government’s outstanding DVR-Clovis employees- George Ortiz, Kayla Damron and Alice King.

I was approved for DVR services last year. George’s professionalism and concern to help me was very impressive. I felt like I had an ally who cared about my future. Kayla was extremely supportive, smart and helpful and also very caring and concerned about helping me. Alice, who approved my DVR plan, was a joy to meet and discuss my plan. She is intelligent, caring and has great insight and concern to help DVR clients.

I appreciate George, Kayla and Alice working hard to approve my DVR plan. Even if my plan had not been approved, I would commend all three for hard work and excellent service. George, Kayla and Alice are exemplary workers and, what I believe, government working at its best.

Sincerely yours,

John Pritchett

“Embrace support from others because we all need it in order to be successful in our job and every day lives”

Melinda Garcia, Incoming SRC Vice Chair



2015 State Rehabilitation Council Members

Left to Right: Larry Rodriguez, Olga Alvara, Melinda Garcia, Ronald Garcia, Sarah Michaud, Bernadine Chavez, Richard Jirón
(not pictured: Alex Martinez and Jeff Diamond)

SRC Membership

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC): *Larry Rodriguez, Rio Rancho*

Client Assistance Program: *Bernadine Chavez, Albuquerque*

Business, Industry and Labor: *Jeffery Diamond, Carlsbad and Alex Martinez, Santa Fe*

Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider: *Melinda Garcia, Albuquerque*

Representatives of Individuals with Disabilities: *Ronald Garcia, Santa Fe*

Current or Former NMDVR Participant and SRC Sargent at Arms: *Richard Dennis Jirón, Albuquerque*

Section 121 or American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services: *Sarah Michaud, Santa Fe (SRC Chair)*

Director of NMDVR (ex-officio, non-voting member): *Hipolito "Paul" Aguilar, Interim Director, NMDVR*

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

Employees of NMDVR (ex-officio, non-voting members): *Kasha Suina, Admin Assistant, Santa Fe*



"I have trained our staff that every client for DIB or SSI must report to DVR for an orientation about the program and the services available." --Jeff Diamond, SRC Member



New Mexico Division of Rehabilitation Offices

Alamogordo
2300 Indian Wells Rd
Alamogordo, NM 88310
(888) 901-7868

Espanola
706-B La Joya St.
Espanola, NM 87532
(888) 901-3647

Santa Fe - Admin. Office
435 St. Michaels Dr., Bldg. D
Santa Fe, NM 87505
(800) 224-7005

Albuquerque (Central)
5301 Central, NE, Suite 1600
Albuquerque, NM 87108
(866) 526-0863

Farmington
2901 Hutton
Farmington, NM 87402
(888) 901-7901

Silver City
1622 E. Pine St.
Silver City, NM 88061
(888) 901-7861

Albuquerque (Lomas)
111 Lomas Blvd NW, Suite 422
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(888) 818-3259

Gallup
312 East Nizhoni Boulevard
Gallup, NM 87301
(800) 279-5681

Socorro
1014 N. California
Socorro, NM 87801
(888) 901-7903

Albuquerque (South Valley)
1710 Rio Bravo, SW
Albuquerque, NM 87105
(888) 815-2981

Hobbs
726 E. Michigan, Suite 160
Hobbs, NM 88240
(888) 201-5859

Taos
145 Roy Road, Suite C
Taos, NM 87571
(888) 901-7869

Albuquerque (Quail)
5205 Quail NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120
(888) 818-3263

Las Cruces
3381 Del Rey Blvd.
Las Cruces, NM 88012
(888) 901-7866

Belen
911 Castillo Avenue
Belen, NM 87002
(888) 901-7902

Las Vegas
32 NM 65 Hot Springs Blvd.
Las Vegas, NM 87701
(888) 901-7865

Carlsbad
3605 National Parks Highway
Carlsbad, NM 88220-1448
(800) 645-0258

Rio Rancho
3791 Southern Blvd. SE, Suite 210
Rio Rancho, NM 87174
(505) 896-4500

Clovis
100 E. Manana Blvd. #17
Clovis, NM 88101
(800) 645-2143 (Toll-Free)

Roswell
1014 S. Atkinson Ave.
Roswell, NM 88203
(800) 644-7732 (Toll-Free)

Edgewood
3 George Court Suite B
Edgewood, NM 87015
(505) 281-9947

Santa Fe
2540 Camino Edward Ortiz, Ste B
Santa Fe, NM 87507
(800) 773-4072



435 St. Michaels Drive
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505
(800) 224-7005
www.dvrgetsjobs.com

