

State Rehabilitation Council

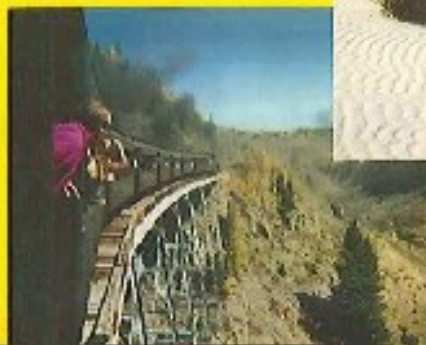
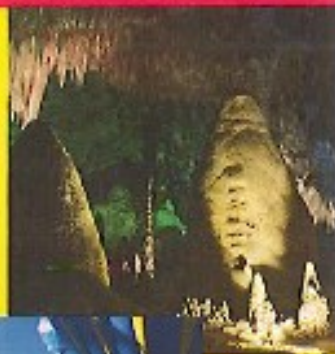


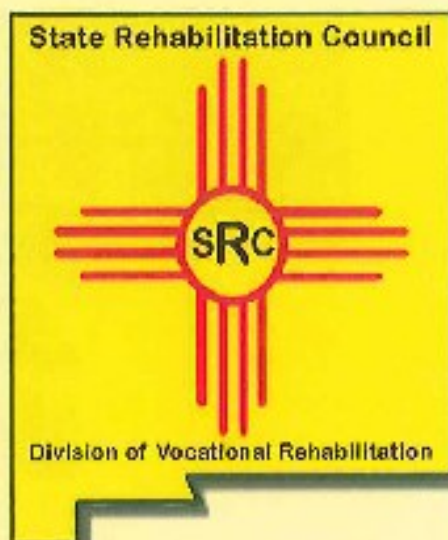
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

New Mexico

State Rehabilitation Council

Annual Report 2014





**New Mexico
State Rehabilitation Council**

**Annual Report
2014**



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Letter from SRC Chair



Honorable Governor Martinez and Secretary Skandera,

As the Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) of New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) it is my great pleasure to submit the 2014 annual report. The Council members, who are appointed by the Governor, have diligently worked to maintain a standard of excellence and move forward as one of the hardest working councils on behalf of the participants of NMDVR.

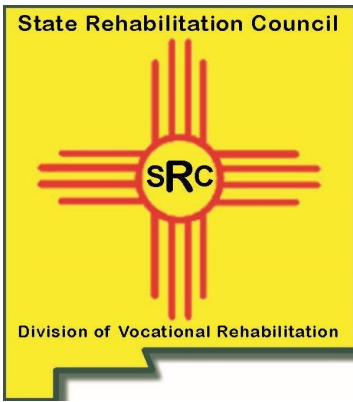
This report summarizes the collaborative efforts of the SRC and NMDVR over the past year and hopefully will provide its readers with a clear understanding of our mutual focus toward that primary goal. The partnership between NMDVR and the Rehabilitation Council continues to strengthen and grow. The council works hard to meet the federally mandated activities and maintain the standard of service to New Mexicans with disabilities in the area of vocational rehabilitation. The members of the SRC continue to work diligently to support the mission of the agency.

The Council remains committed to advocate for a vocational rehabilitation program that provides effective, results-oriented services for New Mexicans with disabilities seeking employment. It is extremely inspiring to watch our council members, and state staff work tirelessly together to make vocational rehabilitation be available and workable for New Mexicans.

As I complete my second term as Chair I look forward to continuing to work with the new SRC Chair to face upcoming challenges of the new Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA). I am proud of our accomplishments and look forward future success.

Sincerely,

Bernadine Chavez
SRC Chair



Letter from DVR Interim Director



Honorable Governor Martinez and Secretary Skandera,

The New Mexico Division of Vocation Rehabilitation (NMDVR) has had the honor of working with our State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), in partnership, to serve individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes.

The information and guidance provided by the SRC is invaluable to NMDVR as we work towards meeting the goals outlined in our state plan. This past year they have provided input regarding agency policies and procedures, public forums, and have provided general guidance to the agency.

At the annual awards ceremony, the SRC recognized a VR Counselor for her contribution to individuals with disabilities and for her exemplary work. They also recognized an employer for its collaborative work with DVR and the many hires they have made for our participants over the years.

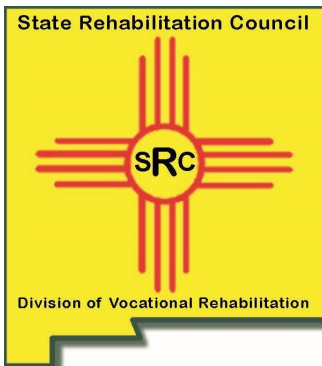
While NMDVR is still under an Order of Selection, there are no waiting lists. Even with very challenging staffing issues, the agency has pulled through to work with all participants who have applied for services. The work, persistence, and dedication of our staff have exemplified the commitment we have towards serving New Mexicans with Disabilities. As we move towards new challenges with Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), we look forward to a continued partnership with the SRC. This new challenge will determine if the agency still must remain under an Order of Selection. We will work with the SRC to evaluate this continued possibility.

Overall, NMDVR appreciates the hard work and loyalty of our SRC members. They work to learn more about the agency and challenge us to make the work we do better enhance the lives of people with disabilities in our state. Our collaboration has assisted with the employment of our participants which increases their self-esteem as they are better able to support themselves and contribute to their families. This collaborative effort also helps to benefit the general economy as a result of our participants' decreased need and use of social programs.

I thank the SRC and look forward to their continued support during our next year.

Sincerely,

Veronica A. De Leon-Dowd
Interim Director, NMDVR



SRC AT-A-GLANCE

Mission

The New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council is responsible for assisting with the operation of the New Mexico Division of Rehabilitation program through advisement, evaluation and partnership to support access to employment and promotion of a diverse workforce statewide.

As one of the newest members of the committee it is such an honor to be able to support our State Vocational Rehabilitation team in providing the best services available to the people of New Mexico who have a disability!

Melinda Garcia—SRC Member

Vision

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

SRC Goals:

- Request and receive continued updates from NMDVR regarding order of selection and the number of participants being served.
- Ongoing collaboration with NMDVR to look at revisions for the Manual of Operating Procedures (MOP) and discuss potential impact of these revisions on consumer access to and use of necessary VR services.
- Ongoing training for all SRC members to ensure the council remains aware of their responsibilities and works together to establish and pursue a common goal in keeping with the vision and responsibilities of the group.
- Establishment of a mentorship program for new SRC members to enhance council member participation in SRC activities and understanding of SRC mandates.
- Development of training goals for SRC members to keep current with disability issues impacting people with disabilities in New Mexico.
- Ensure that the SRC is in compliance with statutory requirements for membership by recruiting new members to fill vacancies.



- Ongoing training for all NMDVR incoming staff through the Rehab Academy and training for participants in the LIFT (Leadership Institute For Tomorrow) program, which prepare existing staff to assume leadership roles within NMDVR.
- Recognizing NMDVR staff that go above and beyond their day to day duties and responsibilities.
- Recognizing a local employer that goes above and beyond in working with people with disabilities and NMDVR.
- Assist NMDVR to assist agency administration to educate legislators regarding the services NMDVR provides to New Mexicans with disabilities and to endorse requests for maintenance of funding levels.

SRC Functions:

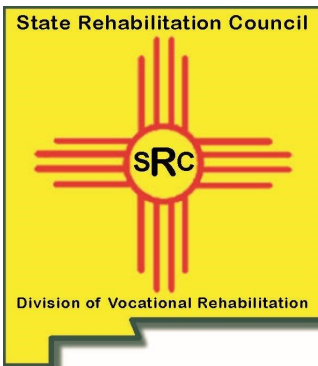
Working in partnership with NMDVR, the SRC strives to accomplish the following tasks:

Even a good idea, if not managed well, over time becomes a bad idea.

Ron Garcia, SRC Member

Review, analyze and advise NMDVR responsibilities as listed below:

1. Eligibility
2. Monitor Order of Selection and the waiting lists
 - In 2014, SRC received routine updates and continued to monitor the services being provided to all categories under OOS. It should be noted though, that as of September NMDVR reported the waiting lists for OOS were cleared and all categories are being served at this time.
3. Analyze functions performed by NMDVR that effect or potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes.
 - In 2014, the SRC worked with NMDVR to complete public hearings regarding the State Plan and in regard to revisions to the Manual of Operating Procedures for participant services. Due to low community turn out at these events, the SRC strongly recommended that NMDVR evaluate the advertisement methods for these events to ensure maximum public participation and input at the public hearings.
 - The SRC received routine updates on the MOP revisions, which were completed in 2013, throughout the year. Of particular interest to the



SRC was the Financial Needs Assessment used by NMDVR to determine participant's financial participation in their services, and the potential impact of this new service. Multiple updates were provided to the SRC on this topic; with the SRC expressing its concerns at the potential hardship imposed on consumers in certain situations. NMDVR has reviewed the policy as a result of these discussions, and has established some additional guidance on this issue for field staff.

- The SRC initiated a conversation with NMDVR in regard to a decision to re-classify counselors in several area offices in order to remove specialized caseload designations. The SRC expressed concern at the move and its possible impact on resources and referrals offered to the affected consumers with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Significantly Disabled Mentally Ill (SDMI) and the specialized services for these disability populations. NMDVR has taken the time to review its caseload statistics though, and based on existing trends remains committed to this decision as a way to increase competency of all VRC staff and encourage cross-training within offices. The SRC will continue to monitor this situation to ensure that no negative impacts result from the transition.
- The SRC Chair and Ex Officio VR Counselor provided training to new NMDVR staff during the Rehab Academy this year to highlight the SRC and its mission and to explore ways for both groups to more closely work together for the enhancement of consumer services across the state.

Sometimes you have to reach into someone else's world to find out what's going on in your own.

Larry Rodriguez, SRC Member

In partnership with NMDVR:

1. Develop, review and provide input into state goals and priorities.
 2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and submit reports of progress to the Secretary and the Office of the Governor.
- In 2014, the SRC members assisted with planning and attendance at public hearings to gather community comments for the State Plan to RSA. As noted previously, due to low attendance at these events, the SRC strongly encourages NMDVR to reconsider their



- advertisement strategy for these events and ensure that notice is given to the widest range of resources and partner agencies in order to gain feedback from the community.
- In 2014, SRC members worked with NMDVR staff to update language in the MOP regarding the participant financial contribution assessment. As a result, the policy was broadened to allow more consumers to qualify for financial assistance in pursuit of their service goals.
 - The SRC hosted a public hearing in Socorro on September 5, 2014 to gain public feedback regarding NMDVR services and evaluate the effectiveness of the services received by NMDVR participants.
3. Advise NMDVR regarding activities carried out to assist in the preparation of the State Plan and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations.
- In 2014, the SRC implemented a new committee structure, recruited new members, and increased invitations for public comment/participation at meetings to ensure that the council provided relevant feedback to NMDVR for these activities.
 - The SRC conducted training this year to educate all members about relevant portions of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as it pertains to VR services and SRC responsibilities. In addition, the SRC conducted new strategic planning activities to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the council and NMDVR in the coming year.
 - The SRC received updates from NMDVR regarding staffing trends in order to remain aware of the agency's efforts in regard to attrition planning. Based on these reports, NMDVR has identified 3 areas of the state for staffing focus in the new year, and the SRC has requested ongoing updates in regard to this issue, to ensure that consumers across the state have equal access to DVR staff. Additionally, the SRC continues to endorse the LIFT program training for incumbent staff as well.
4. Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with the functions performed by NMDVR and VR services.

Eight years ago New Mexico Division Vocational Rehabilitation services allowed me to maintain employment after my brain surgeries / injury. Without the assistance, I would not have maintained employment to retire from the state nor would I been able to secure employment with New Mexico Community College, Disability Resource Center. I look forward to many more years of providing disability accessibility services to CNM students with disabilities.

Richard Dennis Jiron, SRC Member



- The SRC began working with NMDVR this year to prepare for the consumer satisfaction survey and needs assessment, which is due to be implemented in 2015.
5. Prepare and submit to the Office of the Governor and to the Secretary an annual report on the status of NMDVR and to make the report available to the public.
 - In 2014, the SRC continued to work with NMDVR on the website portal for public access to SRC information. As a result of this collaboration, the website was updated to include current information for SRC activities and to comply with Open Meetings Act requirements. Additionally, the SRC worked with NMDVR to make recommendations regarding other forms of information dissemination to ensure that the reports reach the widest audience possible.
 6. Avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served, coordinate activities with other councils in the state including: Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), IDEA Advisory Panel, Development Disabilities Planning Council, State Mental Health Planning Council, and State Workforce Investment Board.
 - In 2014, the SRC continued to work to build membership for the council to ensure representation from all mandated participants. Membership has been slow to build, but the SRC developed a Membership Committee this year that has worked diligently with NMDVR and the Governor's Office to ensure that applicants are assessed in a timely manner to ensure ongoing coordination of effort. Through these efforts several appointments to the council were completed – including a representative from the SILC and from local businesses during the year.
 7. Perform other comparable functions as the Council determines to be appropriate.
 - In 2014, the SRC worked with NMDVR to organize its 2nd annual Awards Ceremony to honor outstanding DVR Staff. This year the ceremony was expanded to include partner agencies and businesses as well. The award ceremony was held at the SRC's fall meeting, and the SRC looks forward to this continuing into the future. Additionally, the SRC will initiate a public relations campaign to promote this activity as a method for enhancing the image of NMDVR and increasing awareness of vocational rehabilitation services in New Mexico.

IN MEMORIUM

It is with a heavy heart that the SRC recognizes the work of Mr. Peter Shams-Avari, who passed away this year. Mr. Shams-Avari was a dedicated member of the SRC and his commitment and participation will be greatly missed.

DEDICATION = JOBS



MIGUEL CHAVEZ

Miguel Chavez is 34 and was referred to NMDVR by his caseworker. He was unsure exactly what to expect and thought that he would "...most likely get a list of employers that might hire me." He is currently working as a heating, ventilation, and

air conditioning trainee (HVAC) for the past 6 months in Albuquerque. Miguel proved to have excellent mechanical and eye-hand coordination skills, and a strong visual learner. "My boss recognized my ability to learn. I'm a problem solver. I'm given a job and I get the job done. I work with a journeyman HVAC foreman and I'm learning real good."

"My counselor was very helpful and getting things done. It seemed right away after I was found eligible for the program, NMDVR helped me with clothes and tools, and made me feel good about myself. In fact I have more tools than a lot of people on the job, and they come to me to borrow tools. It makes me feel good. It's part of my job to show-up on time with my tools and ready to go to work, and I take pride in that.

"Miguel has proved to be an excellent worker, is never late, and always ready to learn something new," says his boss Aaron Soriano.

"My job is awesome and after two years I can study and take the test for a journeyman HVAC worker and earn "tons" of money. I work some overtime when it is needed."

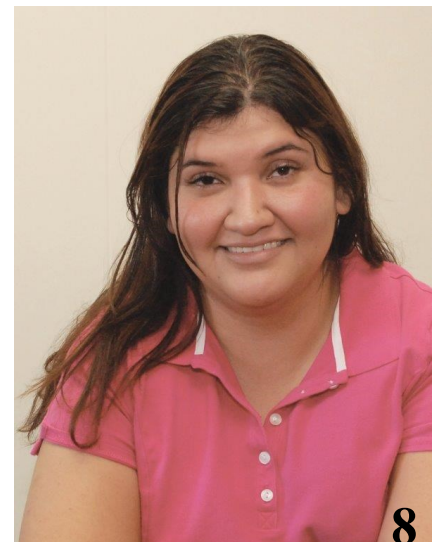
"I would say that there are tons of ways that NMDVR can help people. I refer people to go and apply sometimes. It is awesome, they know my name and even introduce me to other people, and I feel like a part of NMDVR. Also, my family and my boss are real proud of me."

STEPHANIE MONTOYA

Stephanie Montoya is a 27 year-old from Espanola, NM and has mild to moderate congenital hearing loss that has progressed to moderate to severe hearing loss. She began to use hearing aids at an early age. "By the 3rd grade I used a FM and speaker system for the teacher and I. Teachers were not used to this technology so there was always a learning curve."

"I had a lot of speech therapy up through high school, and it was there that I met Wilma Espinoza (Rehab Tech) who explained the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) to me. I started at NMDVR after high school." Stephanie began to work with her vocational rehabilitation counselor and Stephanie knew that she wanted to pursue something in the medical related field. "By my freshman year I had decided to become a pharmacist," said Stephanie. "At first I was unsure of what to expect from NMDVR, but this became more clear as I worked with my counselor. My counselor helped me with new hearing aids, and assistance to attend the University of New Mexico. She helped me with a note taker and technology that would allow me to hear my classmates in addition to my teachers. Finally, I was provided things for the activities of daily living like an alarm clock a phone and a doorbell flasher."

"I had high expectations for school, and first became a pharmacy technician where I gained valuable experience. Pharmacy school is very competitive and the experience was a definite advantage. In addition to taking the P-Cat entrance exam; my experience, GPA, essay, and an interview were necessary for admission. I am happy to say that I passed on my first attempt. Pharmacy school is very competitive and takes an additional 4 years to graduate, but I am very happy with my career. I would recommend anyone with a disability that presents a barrier to employment to apply for NMDVR. They have made a difference in my life."



DEDICATION = JOBS

GUY SURDI

“I owned a roofing business in Colorado, fell off a roof, and was injured. Prior to that, the good thing about being a boss was that my dyslexia was less of a problem. Because of my injuries, I was on SSDI, and there just came a time to make a new life for myself. I had attempted to work and it was too physically demanding for me. I was not sure how I found out about NMDVR. I really had no expectations of what kind of services or resources were available; I just took it as it unfolded, trying to figure out where to go with my life. I was very open and focused on getting a job.”

“My biggest first impression was how very positive it was to receive services; that there was support and a serious attitude toward assisting me in getting a job. It was comforting to get that support. In working with NMDVR skills training was a big plus to put on my resume. However, the real difference was on-the-job training, where I became a more desirable candidate. I was performing my job well and in the last week of my OJT I was offered a job! After some time I was able to return to school and earn a masters’ degree in social work, becoming more interested in the elderly and the disabled and wanted to make more of a difference. School was an important part of my life. With a lot of disability work experience, I began to work at the Governor’s Commission on the Disabilities. NMDVR gave me the opportunity to have a life – I could not have done

this without the support I received. It was far better than I could have imagined. I constantly recommend people to NMDVR as there are not services like these available. I don’t know anywhere where such are available, especially in one package. I was lucky enough to have a caseworker who was more interested in making a difference in



JOHN

PRITCHETT

“I have always been a creative kind of guy, working broadcasting, as a TV producer and as a photographer. I began photography as a business in Hawaii and returned to Clovis where I was born.

With my disability, I found myself unable to work and had to sell all my equipment. I learned about NMDVR

through a person who had been through the program himself, and I thought to apply. I considered some options of what I needed to do to return to work again, and hoped that NMDVR could give me some directions. I had considered returning to school, but I was really unsure which way to go.”

“My expectations for NMDVR were positive; I knew of my friends experience so I went in keeping my options open. I was initially really impressed with the staff and what I saw at the local NMDVR office in Clovis. There was a willingness to work and help me. I recall being impressed with the information that I was provided. Most importantly we worked and defined a goal for myself, and it turned out not to be schooling. My counselor discussed the year of experience that I had. We defined a goal of self-employment and he helped me accomplish that goal, as a photographer. I needed and prepared a business proposal and worked with my counselor on that. I was able to get the equipment that I needed. The staff was very professional counselors and helped me define a direction for my life. I have been very successful and busy. I photographed a young woman who went to the Ford Agency, and competed on the TV show “America’s Top Model”. I would tell people that there was real professionalism and cohesiveness with my counselors in Clovis. People with disabilities should apply for services at NMDVR. I had a very positive experience where I got professional services. Due to their help, I have exceeded my projections for my business. By the third month, I was very busy and business was very good.”



NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

Statistical Year At-A-Glance

9374

New Mexicans sought and received direct vocational rehabilitation services

4422

New Mexicans received vocational rehabilitation services, including medical, guidance & counseling training and job seeking skills training

720

Successfully Rehabilitated

510

Job ready or employed but not yet closed

\$17,735

Average yearly employee wage

240%

Percent wage increase after rehabilitation

32%

Most Significantly Disabled

61%

Significantly Disabled

\$12,769,136

Total wages for successfully rehabilitated individuals

\$3.08

Return on investment to State for every \$ appropriated

NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

FY 2014 PARTICIPANTS' INCOME RELIANCE BEFORE AND AFTER RETURN TO WORK		
PRIMARY SOURCE OF SUPPORT	AT APPLICATION	AT CLOSURE
All Other Public Sources	23	2
All Other Sources of Support	15	9
Annuity or Other Non-disability Insurance Benefits	3	3
Client Income/Employment earnings	127	505
Family and Friends	313	34
Private Relief Agency	1	0
Pub Assist, partly w/ Fed Funds (SSI, TANF/AFDC)	124	78
Public Assistance without Federal Funds (GA Only)	9	2
Public Institution - Tax Supported	4	0
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	96	87
Worker's Compensation	5	0
TOTAL REHABILITATED CLOSURES	720	720

NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

FY 2014 REHABILITATED CLOSURES BY OCCUPATION	
CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	CLOSURES
Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing and Related	7
Clerical and Administrative Support	52
Community and Social Service Occupations	2
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	3
Construction and Extraction Occupations	1
Education, Training and Library Occupations	1
Managerial and Administrative	19
Prod, Const, Operating, Maint & Material Handling	108
Professional, Paraprofessional and Technical	154
Protective Service Occupations	1
RSA Special Occupations and Miscellaneous (Homemaker and Unpaid Family Worker)	16
Sales and Related Occupations	42
Service Occupations	314
TOTAL REHABILITATED CLOSURES	720

NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

FY 2014 Eligible Participants by Major Disabling Conditions	
PRIMARY DISABILITY	COUNT
Mental Illness	2491
Learning Disabled	1667
Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	1336
Hearing Impairments	421
Alcohol and Substance Abuse	259
Developmentally Delayed/Mental Retardation	374
Deafness	286
Traumatic Brain Injury/Stroke	255
Cardiac and Circulatory Disorders	95
Epilepsy	95
Blindness and Visual Impairments	71
Spinal Cord Injury	51
Deaf-Blind	5
Other Categories	825
Total Eligible	8231



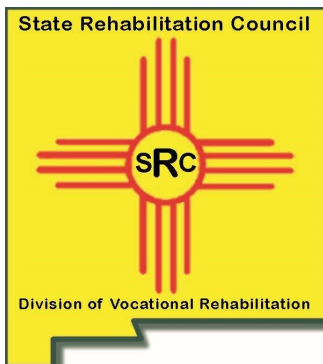
SRC Accomplishments

- The SRC reviewed the language of S.1356 and developed a position letter outlining the council's concerns regarding language in the proposed legislation, which could negatively impact vocational rehabilitation services for consumers in New Mexico. This letter was duly submitted, and denotes the first time the SRC has taken such a step to educate federal legislators.
- The SRC identified those membership vacancies that reflected statutory membership requirements, and implemented a plan to target recruitment of members to fill those vacancies. Coordinating efforts with NMDVR, the SRC identified potential members from the state Educational Agency, the state Workforce Investment Board, and business, industry and labor. Together, the SRC and the agency reached out to the Public Education Department (PED) and Workforce Investment Board to request assistance in filling these positions. However, despite the joint efforts of both groups, and despite successes in garnering applications and interest from representatives of business and industry, as of December 2014 the SRC still has not achieved appointment of membership from the Workforce Board or the PED.
- The SRC membership roster was updated with the most current contact information for each member, with maintenance of this task being ongoing.
- The SRC Membership Committee developed and distributed a detailed outline of the application process in the hopes of increasing the understanding of applicant regarding the process and timelines.

Honoring Exiting SRC Members



The SRC hosted a small ceremony to recognize the efforts of members that had termed out this year. Mr. Andrew MacRae is seen here receiving a certificate of appreciation for his contributions to the council. Mr. MacRae's accomplishments included spearheading the development of the SRC Outstanding DVR Staff Awards. Also pictured is Ms. Bernadine Chavez, the outgoing SRC Chair. Ms. Chavez was also recognized for her work leading the council over the past 4 years.



- The SRC developed a new member orientation process and implemented it this year. Under the new process, new members are provided orientation to the SRC before quarterly meetings on topics including how the SRC is organized, the by-laws, and the SRC strategic plan. Additionally, the SRC Membership Committee provides mentoring to new SRC members in order to help them orient to the charges and duties of the SRC.
- The SRC continued to facilitate a recognition process for outstanding DVR staff this year. This effort began last year, and was expanded in accordance with the SRC's 2013 goals to include an award for outstanding employer this year. The awards event was held on December 5th.
- The SRC provided feedback to NMDVR regarding the financial needs assessment process approved in the 2013 MOP. Based on consumer concerns and member review of the language, the SRC felt the process put an undue burden on consumers in some situations, which impeded their ability to benefit from VR services. Based on this input, NMDVR re-drafted the instrument to increase the number of consumers that could potentially qualify for assistance.
- The current wait lists under OOS have been cleared, and the SRC receives routine updates from NMDVR in regard to the status and future of the OOS policy in New Mexico.
- Two members of the SRC presented to NMDVR staff during the LIFT training to educate staff about the SRC, its mandates and its projects. This resulted in an increased awareness of field staff and management about the SRC.
- The SRC Chair, an NMDVR Counselor and NMDVR Director participated in a panel discussion on DVR interactions with Tribal VR programs in New Mexico at the Consortium of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation Conference, which was held in Albuquerque in April 2014.
- The SRC hosted two public forums this year, one in Carlsbad and one in Socorro, to gain input from the community about their experiences and satisfaction with VR services.
- The SRC completed a strategic planning activity in September to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the coming year. As part of the strategic planning process, the SRC also received training on WIOA and the current State Plan.

At best, Social Security Disability and SSI provide only temporary relief for seriously ill or severely injured people. Anyone who thinks he or she is so impaired as to be disabled, must report to the nearest DVR office, go through an orientation, and sign up for vocational rehabilitation services. Camp out on the doorstep of DVR, if necessary. Social Security benefits do not provide sufficient income to live on. SSI, for example, provides only slightly more than half the income of a full-time minimum wage job. Be persistent about both Social Security Disability benefits and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Your life depends on it.



- The SRC Chair presented as part of the Meet the Chair panel presentation for the National Coalition of SRCs in Bethesda in March 2014 and in Miami in November 2014.
- The SRC reviewed the pool of applicants for the Fair Hearing Officers and approved the current slate of providers. Additionally, the SRC recommended that the Hearing Officers receive ongoing training on VR processes and protocols.

SRC Awards for 2014

The New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council is pleased to award a DVR Counselor, DVR Staff Member, and an employer in southern New Mexico for their demonstrated outstanding performance or outcomes in providing services to New Mexicans with disabilities. Several nominations were received and reviewed. Nominating criteria were:

- 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 Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and what DVR does to benefit individuals with disabilities seeking employment.

Nominations were made by peers, peer/employer or supervisors nominating employees or employers.

CONGRATULATIONS to our awardees!!

Employer of the Year- Tresco Inc, Las Cruces, NM

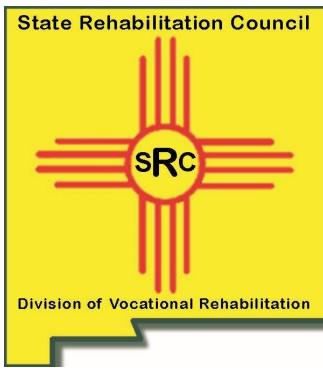
VR Counselor of the Year– Casilda Gallegos, Area 9

Administrative Assistant of the Year- Lori Marquez, Area 7



NMDVR Response to SRC Recommendations

1. In 2013, the SRC provided feedback to NMDVR regarding issues relating to the financial needs assessment used to determine participant financial contributions to their plan. The SRC strongly recommended this policy and practice be reviewed by NMDVR due to the adverse effect that it can have on consumers.
Agency response: Division staff agrees to review the policy in order to determine if it should be revised. The financial needs test was designed to create consistency and to ensure that participants contribute to their program as appropriate; however, staff wants to ensure that the criteria for requiring participants financial contribution does not create an undue hardship or prevent participants from receiving necessary services. In FFY 2014, the division has made revisions to the participant financial contribution form calculation that have allowed for increased exception of participant income considered. This is a benefit to all participants from which financial contribution is required.
2. In 2013, the SRC established criteria for an award honoring NMDVR staff. The award process was continued in 2014, and the SRC would like to see increased publicity surrounding these awards, since the Council feels that this was an underutilized resource by NMDVR in 2013 to promote services and increase collaboration with other entities. The SRC would like to see these awards and the award presentation utilized in the future to help build support of NMDVR goals and increase relationships with local businesses and disability service agencies with the goal of furthering services for NMDVR participants.
Agency Response: Division staff will look at ways to promote staff nominations and employer nominations. They will also identify ways to disseminate this information through internal publications and through external venues such as the State Employees newspaper-Round the Roundhouse and possibly through other newspaper and/or other publications.
3. Clearance of wait list for OOS for NMDVR, along with regular updates on this process.
Agency Response: OOS updates will continue to be provided at SRC meetings. The agency will continue to strive to prevent having to create a waiting list. This will be contingent on having the necessary budget and staff to serve all eligible participants. Any changes to OOS will also depend on reauthorization changes (WIOA).
4. SRC involvement in selection and training of hearing officers for New Mexico.
Agency Response: The agency is open to having SRC involvement in the



selection and training of hearing officers for the NMDVR; however, the agency must also comply with state procurement requirements when selecting and contracting with hearing officers. NMDVR has also traditionally included the Client Assistance Program (CAP) in this process.

5. The SRC would like to see increased efforts by NMDVR to involve the council in outreach and scheduling for public forums to collect feedback regarding DVR services. Additionally, the council recommends that NMDVR look at increased publicity for these events to increase attendance and participation. Based on feedback from the public and members, the SRC would further recommend that NMDVR look at the presentation language used in the public forum meetings to ensure that it is accessible and understandable by the largest possible cross-section of attendees.

Agency Response: The Division holds a series of annual public hearings to review the State Plan. This practice will continue. Other public hearings are held with policy revisions. Currently, none are planned, but the agency will hold hearings when anticipating any proposed policy changes. Revisions by the SRC to this recommendation were received by the agency on June 24, 2014. Further response by the Division is forthcoming, however the agency will continue to strive for improvement in publicity, presentation and understandability.

6. Continue planning for State Plan activities in 2014.

Agency Response: NMDVR agrees with this recommendation. It is also an annual requirement. Activities will commence during the late winter/early spring months.

7. Exploration of public hearings in conjunction with other boards and disability service agencies.

Agency Response: Division staff is open to exploring the possibility of holding public hearings with other boards and agencies such as the State Independent Living Council, the Commission for the Blind SRC, and other disability service agencies such as the Commission for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing, the Governor's Commission on Disability and the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. Currently, plans are underway to jointly hold a public hearing with the Commission for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

8. Review of SRC by-laws and responsibilities to ensure council members are fully aware of federal regulations.

“The level of dedication of the SRC members always inspires me. As the Chair I have been privileged and honored to work with such passionate colleagues that value the participants of DVR and support the notion of focusing on the abilities not just the disabilities.”

**Bernadine Chavez,
SRC Chair**



Agency Response: Division staff will provide technical assistance with regard to SRC functions as related to the federal regulations as appropriate. The agency can also contact the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) as necessary to gather relevant information.

9. Create a training program to ensure that SRC members are fully versed and aware of services throughout the state.

Agency Response: The agency agrees to this in principle; however, there would have to be some dialogue to explore what sort of content would be included in this training. The services offered by the agency and in the field of vocational rehabilitation are quite comprehensive and complex. Normally it takes a VR counselor at least a year to become comfortable with their understanding of VR. Drilling down to specifics would be necessary.

10. The SRC continues to support a policy of advanced education and training of vocational rehabilitation counselors currently employed by the Division so they can meet the highest requirements in the State applicable to that profession. Additionally, despite the reduction recommended in the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development under SR3156, the SRC would like to see the Division maintain its current standards for new hires to ensure the highest quality of services to its consumers.

Agency Response: The Division received this recommendation on June 24, 2014 and further response is forthcoming. The agency maintains the educational and other standards for vocational rehabilitation counselors as detailed in Attachment 4.10 of this State Plan.

11. The SRC would like to see an “openness” by NMDVR counselors to allow for job exploration activities under the Individualized Plan for Employment in order to facilitate Transition services for youth that lack exposure to employment and therefore need to build employability skills to increase their competitiveness in the job market.

Agency Response: The Division received this recommendation on June 24, 2014 and welcomes feedback from the SRC regarding Transition services. The agency will continue to support and provide services to students in Transition necessary to prepare for and enter competitive employment. Further response is forthcoming, based on WIOA regulation changes.

12. The SRC supports School-to-Work Transition services at the high school level, and would like to express concern that the Transition Specialist position has been vacant with NMDVR for some time since this position can help facilitate the previous recommendation. The Council recommends: A.) NMDVR have a

team of specialists with responsibility of reaching out to students, schools and school transition specialists within each school district to increase collaboration for student services, and B.) The NMDVR provide the council with regular updates as to the scope of these services and their outcome statewide.



Agency Response: The recommendation from the SRC was received by the Division on June 24, 2014 and further response is forthcoming. The agency assigns vocational rehabilitation counselors and rehabilitation technicians to each state school district to provide outreach and collaboration to the students, parents and faculty. A new Transition Specialist was hired in July 2014. This specialist will assist in providing updates to the council on statewide Transition activities.

15. The SRC continues to support the re-establishment of the Native American Liaison Program, which was previously funded through NMDVR and administered through New Vistas. The SRC would like to see the Native American Liaisons and the NMDVR Counselors and Technicians have the opportunity to interact in a more collaborative manner, which increasing the number of tribal members with disabilities accessing DVR services.

Agency Response: The Division received this recommendation from the Council on June 24, 2014. An RFP has been finalized and advertised to provide outreach and technical assistance services to Native Americans with disabilities in New Mexico and will connect them to DVR for VR services. The agency welcomes the Council's input regarding outreach and services to Native American's throughout the state.

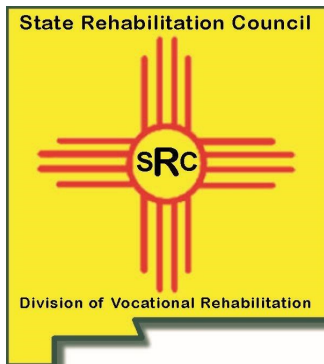


SRC Recommendations:

- Due to the retirement of the previous Director of NMDVR, the SRC recommends that the new director meet with the SRC to establish a positive working relationship and discuss the incumbent's priorities.
- Establish committee meetings for SRC Working Committees that are held outside quarterly meetings in order to further committee work.
- Routine updates regarding OOS and the status of the waiting lists.
- Fair Hearing Officers receive routine training on VR processes and protocols to ensure understanding of the issues presented during the Fair Hearing process.
- Routine updates regarding Fair Hearing requests and their outcomes.
- 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 to gather feedback from.
- Continue SRC awards for outstanding NMDVR staff and employers. 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. This public relations focus should be ongoing.
- Continue planning for State Plan activities and Needs Assessment/ Consumer Satisfaction Survey in 2015.
- Exploration of public hearings in conjunction with other boards and disability service agencies.
- Review of SRC by-laws and responsibilities to ensure council members are fully aware of federal regulations.

As the SRC's Vice Chair, I have had the opportunity to become involved in a wide variety of council activities including the annual report creation and the development of the consumer satisfaction and needs assessment. It has opened my eyes to the complexities of service coordination in our state. It has also helped me to take ownership of my role on the council as a 121-program representative. By knowing how important the work of the SRC actually is, I find that I become both more invested in my work on the council and more aware of my roll being a voice for the communities that I represent.

Sarah Michaud, SRC Vice-Chair



SRC Membership

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

Larry Rodriguez, Rio Rancho

Parent Training and Information Center

Andrew MacRae, Chapparral

Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Bernadine Chavez, Albuquerque (SRC Chair)

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (ex-officio, non-voting member)

Chandra Majumdar, Socorro

Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider

Melinda Garcia, Albuquerque

Business, Industry and Labor

Jeffery Diamond, Carlsbad

Alex Martinez, Santa Fe

Disability Advocacy Groups

Peter Shams-Avari, Albuquerque

Representatives of Individuals with Disabilities

Ron Garcia, Santa Fe

Current or Former NMDVR Participants

Richard Dennis Jiron, Albuquerque

Section 121 or American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Sarah Michaud, Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program (SRC Vice Chair)

Director of NMDVR (ex-officio, non-voting member)

Ralph Vigil, Acting Director of NMDVR, Santa Fe (Retired)

Veronica De Leon-Dowd, Interim Director of NMDVR, Santa Fe

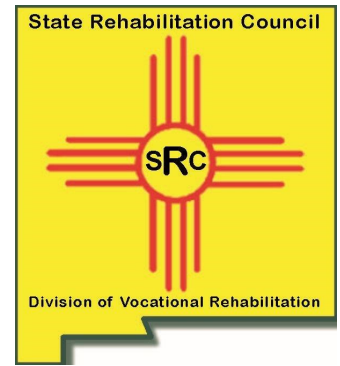
Employees of NMDVR (ex-officio, non-voting members)

Tracy Alcaraz, Administrator, Santa Fe

John Fullinwider, Field Operations Director, Albuquerque

Richard Smith, Public Information Officer, Santa Fe (Retired)

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Carlsbad 800-645-0258

Clovis 800-645-2143

Edgewood 505-281-9947

Espanola 888-901-3647

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Gallup 800-279-5681

Hobbs 888-201-5859

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Las Vegas 888-901-7865

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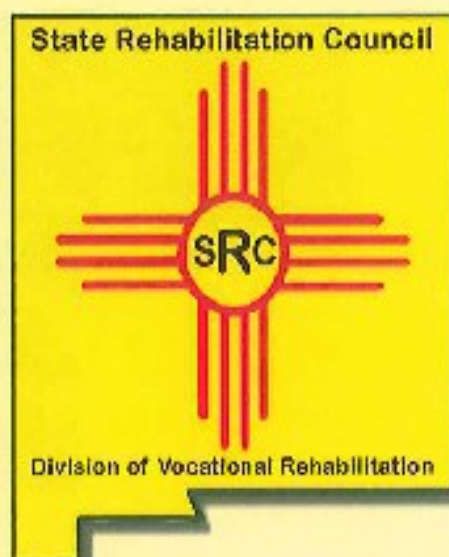
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NOTES



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State Rehabilitation Council**

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