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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### DVR employment services available to all people with disabilities

*New Mexicans with disabilities seeking work are encouraged to reach out to DVR counselors*

SANTA FE – Although all 26 field offices throughout New Mexico are closed, the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) strongly encourages people with disabilities in our state looking for employment to begin the application process on the DVR website, email or by phone.

“We are still providing all of the exact same employment services we did if when you visited our offices to apply in person,” said Michael O’Brien, DVR’s Rehabilitation Services Administrator, who oversees over 130 vocational rehabilitation counselors and staff throughout the state. “You can go on the referral page on our website, fill out that information and one of our counselors will reach out to you and help you start the process. All of our counselors are energetic and eager to partner with everyone who is ready to take the first steps toward fulfilling their career goals.”

“Ensuring DVR’s employment services continue throughout pandemic restrictions is our greatest priority,” said DVR Director Diane Mourning Brown. “From the moment pandemic restrictions were imposed last March, our counselors and staff statewide shifted gears and found new ways to provide employment services to current and prospective participants. While our counselors are unable to meet with participants in person, we are still able to provide each individual with the employment services and support required to succeed.”

Our services include:

- Providing qualified VR Counseling staff to help break through roadblocks in the workplace while guiding the participant through the employment process;
- Assisting in seeking out a career that fits the participant based on his/her interests, skills, and abilities;
- Preparing the participant for the entry-level job that will launch a career path;
- Providing guidance on how to access employment-related laws such as the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and accessing proper accommodations;
- Providing access to assistive technologies; and
- Providing basic information about Social Security and [Ticket to Work](#) benefits.

DVR’s Los Lunas office, which was relocated from Belen last summer, is currently staffed with a supervising counselor, two vocational counselors, one rehabilitation technician, and an administrative assistant. The office serves Bosque Farms, Los Lunas, Belen and Mountainair.

“The team at the Los Lunas office is excited to enhance relationships and contribute to our booming local economy,” said Anthony Harkness, the office’s program manager. “We look forward to exploring employment opportunities for those clients that are needing support returning to work, developing ‘on-the-job’ opportunities for high school students to obtain work experience, and enhancing our relationship with the supportive employment community.”

NMDVR would also like to remind high school students with disabilities and their parents that students can connect with a vocational rehabilitation counselor at school as part of their individualized educational program (IEP) or pre-employment transition services plan.

“I want students to remember they’re on this greater trajectory,” said Alix Dean, an Española-based vocational rehabilitation counselor with DVR, who offers counseling services to adults and youth ages 14 to 22 in Pojoaque and Espanola Valleys, and Rio Arriba and Los Alamos counties. Dean is currently offering Pojoaque Valley High School students with a disability career transition services via Webex. “We want these regular check-ins to keep students engaged with their longer-term goals and help them connect how skills learned in high school, college or other training programs, volunteering, and at entry level jobs lead to a rewarding career.”

Referrals can continue to be submitted on our website at <https://referral.dvr.nm.gov/>. Offices have posted signs indicating 800 numbers that can be accessed 24-hours-a-day. A list of these numbers is on our website at <http://www.dvr.state.nm.us/locations-contact-us.aspx>.

Additional information about services for individuals with disabilities and DVR is available on our website at <http://www.dvr.state.nm.us/>.

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