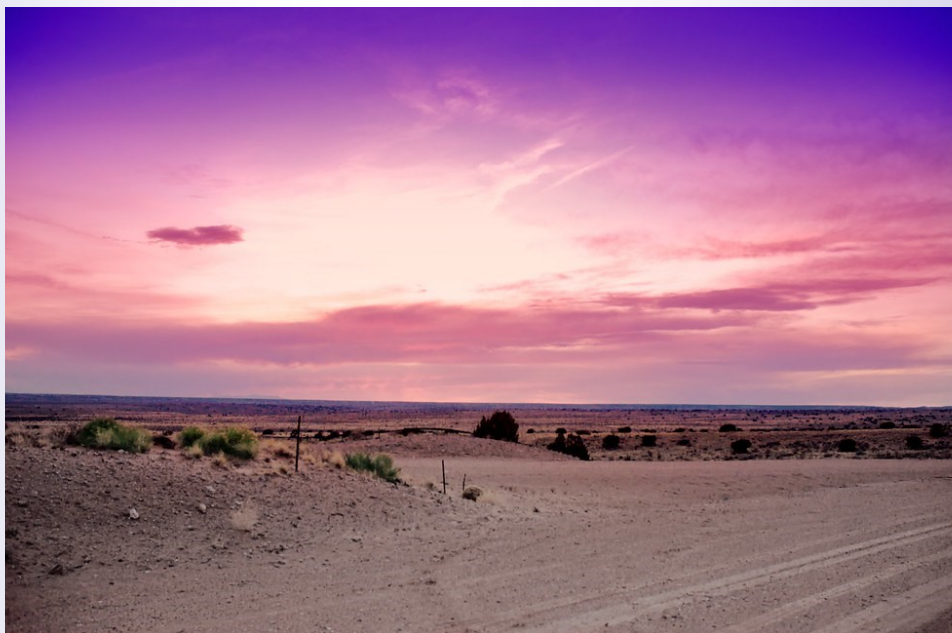




Annual Report 2021



New Mexico
State Rehabilitation Council





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 (NMDVR) 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 NMDVR policy. To achieve this goal, the SRC works closely with the NMDVR 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.



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Letter from SRC Chair



The Honorable Michelle Lujan-Grisham and Secretary Kurt Steinhaus,

It is my great pleasure to submit to you the 2021 annual report for the New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The SRC is charged with partnering with the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) to ensure that the highest quality of services and supports are provided to individuals seeking assistance. To that end, the SRC serves essentially as the voice of the consumer and provides input to NMDVR in a variety of ways including providing assistance with the establishment of a slate of Fair Hearing Officers to address concerns about NMDVR services, facilitating routine Consumer Satisfaction Surveys, and providing input/approval for proposed changes to the NMDVR Manual of Operating Procedures.

This report summarizes the efforts of the SRC to maintain collaboration with NMDVR over the past year. Due to the continuation of the COVID pandemic, this year has again been a challenging one. However, I am pleased to note that despite the challenges inherent in providing services during a pandemic, both the SRC and NMDVR have made considerable progress towards their federally mandated charges. Together, our mission has been to ensure that the vocational rehabilitation program continued to provide efficient, effective, and results-oriented services for New Mexicans with disabilities seeking employment despite the challenges of a global pandemic that necessitated the provision of services remotely for a majority of the year.

Working together, the SRC and NMDVR achieved several notable successes this year including the completion of a consumer satisfaction survey which the council must complete once every three years, the hosting of a SRC Awards ceremony to honor outstanding business partnerships and outstanding NMDVR staff, and the planning and facilitation of the NMDVR Boot Camp. It has been extremely inspiring to watch both our council members and our NMDVR staff work together to share the concerns, recommendations, and support necessary to make vocational rehabilitation successful within our state this year.

As I conclude my term as Chair for the SRC, 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 look forward to future success and even more to report in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Sarah Michaud
Sarah Michaud
SRC Chair

Letter from DVR Director



The Honorable Michelle Lujan-Grisham and Secretary Kurt Steinhaus,

The guidance and support provided by the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) has been invaluable to the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation this year. Our partnership assures that New Mexicans with disabilities have a path to meaningful employment.

Providing services to DVR participants has been a challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic. With state offices closed, DVR staff turned to a telework model to continue serving clients and employer partners. Business slow-downs and closures made job placement almost impossible but counselors continued to communicate with all parties so employment opportunities can resume as operations move back toward normal.

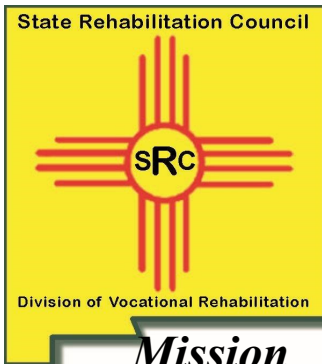
DVR staff have been able to move to a hybrid office re-entry; three days in the office and two days of telework each week. This allows counselors to better serve participants who struggle with virtual contact. Because we stagger these schedules it reduces the number of people in our offices at any one time and reduces the need to close an office if we experience a positive COVID test.

Over the summer DVR was able to license more than a dozen counselors to do pre-employment transition services (pre-ETs) in New Mexico high schools. This is important because these additional counselors will allow DVR to begin moving people from the Order of Selection wait list into services to gain employment.

The SRC encouraged DVR to continue working diligently toward our mission of enhancing the lives of New Mexicans with disabilities. They recognized DVR staff members and partners who did remarkable work, despite the current challenges, with SRC annual awards. This year awards were given to an exceptional vocational rehab tech, vocational rehab counselor and one of DVR's innovative employer partners. The value of this recognition is immeasurable in building the culture of service within DVR.

I thank the SRC for their dedicated support of DVR and our mission.

Dan Drury
Interim Executive 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 Vocational Rehabilitation program through advisement, evaluation and partnership to support access to employment and promotion of a diverse workforce statewide.

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:

- Monitor NMDVR's wait list of services under Order of Selection and related reductions in order to ensure VR services for New Mexicans with disabilities remain available on an ongoing basis.
- Monitor the provision of NMDVR services during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on NMDVR participants.
- Request and receive updates from NM DVR regarding the Combined State Plan for New Mexico.
- Ensure SRC inclusion in all planning and scheduling of public hearings for policy changes and finalization of the Manual of Operating Procedures (MOP).
- Continue to request and receive updates regarding expansion of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) services into communities across the state and encourage permanent funding for innovative transition services.
- Ensure that the SRC is informed of new and existing contracts for carrying out Pre-ETS services.
- Ensure the SRC is in compliance with statutory requirements for membership by recruiting new members to fill vacancies. Encourage and monitor applications and appointments for membership as needed.
- Ensure ongoing training for the SRC membership to increase understanding of their roles and responsibilities as well as our federal mandates.
- Recognize NMDVR staff that go above and beyond their day to day duties and responsibilities.
- Recognize local employers that go above and beyond in working with people with disabilities and NMDVR.

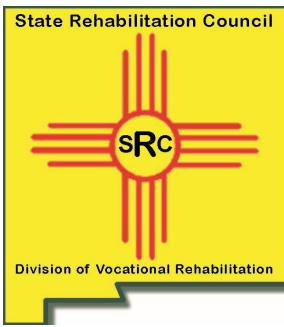


- Assist NMDVR administration to educate legislators regarding the services NMDVR provides to New Mexicans with disabilities and the positive impact on services of legislative efforts to fund NMDVR to the appropriate level to maximize New Mexico's federal allocation.
- The SRC will be informed of, and included in, the selection of independent hearing officers selected and contracted by the agency for the purposes of fair hearings. NMDVR will also inform the SRC of the number of hearings and the outcomes of those hearings.
- Maintain a dedicated point of contact staff for NMDVR and SRC liaison services to enhance communication and productivity.
- Receive routine updates from NMDVR on SRC budget for required outreach activities and council expenses.
- Receive advanced notice of LFC hearings in order to better advocate for NMDVR funding needs on a state level.

SRC Functions:

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

- Review, analyze and advise NMDVR on their responsibilities as listed below:
 1. Eligibility
 2. Monitor Order of Selection and the waiting lists
 - In 2021, the SRC requested and received routine updates on Order of Selection and the waiting lists.
 - As part of routine NMDVR updates, the SRC requested and received updates on the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on consumer service requests, NMDVR staffing, and fair hearing requests.
 3. Analyze functions performed by NMDVR that affect or potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes.
 - In early 2021, the SRC was notified of proposed legislation presented that would have established NMDVR as an independent commission. The council requested further information from NMDVR and shared questions about how such a move would impact functioning of the agency at all levels. The council monitored the progress of the proposal, which ultimately did not move to a floor vote.
 - In 2021, the majority of the leadership team of NMDVR was



replaced by the governor after the legislative session. The SRC shared its concerns with RSA and the governor's office in regard to this transition and how it might impact NMDVR staff as well as services to consumers. The SRC then worked closely with incoming leadership to educate individuals about the council and the SRC's federal charges and responsibilities, and together both worked to build open pathways of communication. While such transitions are always difficult, the SRC is pleased to share that we continue to have a strong relationship with this new leadership team.

- In 2021 SRC members requested and received updates on the RSA monitoring that occurred, and NMDVR's efforts to address issues highlighted by RSA for correction.
- NMDVR provided routine updates on the impacts of COVID-19 on agency services from the transition to telework to an increased focus on remote training.
- NMDVR provided routine updates on the issues the agency experienced regarding staff turnover as well as the training offered to new staff such as the DVR Boot Camp facilitated in conjunction with a local college.

In partnership with NMDVR:

1. Develop, review and provide input into state goals and priorities.
 - SRC members requested and received updates on the Combined State Plan as it impacts NMDVR services and agency 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.
 - The SRC conducted a Client Satisfaction Survey in partnership with NMDVR to assess consumer satisfaction with agency services. Information was also gathered about consumer perspectives regarding the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on services and placements.
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.
 - The SRC received updates from NMDVR regarding staffing trends in order to remain aware of the agency's efforts in regard to attrition planning. The SRC continues to endorse appropriate disability training and cultural sensitivity 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.
 - The SRC requested and received regular updates regarding all Fair Hearing requests and their outcomes.
 - The SRC worked with NMDVR to complete a Consumer Satisfaction Survey in 2021.



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.
 - The SRC provided copies of their 2020 annual report virtually to legislators and NMDVR partners. A copy of the report was also posted on the NMDVR website.
 - The SRC Membership, Awards and Training Committee worked diligently to follow up with the Governor's Boards and Commissions personnel as part of the council's effort to fill vacancies resulting in many new members joining the council in 2021.
 - The SRC Membership, Awards and Training Committee worked with NMDVR staff to identify and honor both staff and businesses who had gone above and beyond in their partnership with NMDVR to support placements for consumers. A virtual awards ceremony was held by the SRC during our June meeting to recognize the selected winners and honor their commitment to working with people with disabilities. NMDVR then ensured that notice of this event was shared through a variety of methods including an update in *Round the Roundhouse*, local newspapers, Governor's Commission social media and a KOB-TV news broadcast.
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, IDEA Advisory Panel, Development Disabilities Planning Council, State Mental Health Planning Council, and State Workforce Investment Board.
 - The SRC membership received routine updates on the work being done by State Workforce Boards, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Governor's Commission on Disability as a result of member reports.
 - The SRC Membership, Awards and Training Committee dedicated significant effort to filling open positions on the council this year. As a result, we are pleased to note that we have achieved success in fully meeting our federal mandated membership with representation from NM Public Education Department, the NM SILC, NM Workforce Solutions, local businesses, and NMDVR consumers.
7. Perform other comparable functions as the Council determines to be appropriate.
 - Due to COVID restrictions, the SRC opted to conduct virtual meetings through Zoom this year. All meetings links were posted in our public notice to facilitate community participation.
 - The SRC Membership, Awards and Training Committee planned and facilitated an awards ceremony to recognize outstanding VR Counselors, VR Support Staff and Businesses for their work supporting consumers this year. Due to COVID restrictions, the awards ceremony was held virtually as part of the SRC's June meeting and certificates were mailed to all awardees.

DEDICATION = JOBS

Susana

Ms. Susana Borchert applied for NM DVR services on 8/18/20. She qualified for services due to multiple disabilities which impacted her ability to work. According to Ms. Borchert, she struggles with learning or catching on to new tasks, has difficulty with comprehending complex instructions and has problems expressing herself effectively with others. She had worked with VR programs in California and Las Cruces prior to applying again in 2020 in Santa Fe. At the time she applied, Susana was working as a dog-handler with a local dog grooming facility, but lost that employment due to issues relating to her disability. Despite this setback, Ms. Borchert pursued her dream of becoming a dog groomer and was hired by another dog grooming facility in Santa Fe, again as a dog-handler. Her VRC had previously explained DVR's OJT program to Susana, who approached her employer with this idea. The program was accepted by the employer and on-the-job training was implemented in May 2021. Ms. Borchert successfully completed her OJT, and has been hired as a dog groomer with Zoomies Dog Spa of Santa Fe. She continues to work in that job and has expressed how much she enjoys her job; stating that she could not have done this without all the support from the NMDVR program.

Daniel

Daniel began participating with NMDVR in Taos as a Transition student while attending Taos High School. Upon graduating from Taos High in May 2016, Daniel enrolled at New Mexico Highlands University in Las Vegas, NM to pursue a degree in Forestry. NMDVR provided post-secondary educational supports and services to Daniel, and he wholeheartedly committed to his education/training program. Daniel participated in multiple internships with the US Forest Service in Las Vegas while attending college. He graduated from NMHU with a Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry in December 2020. Upon completing his degree, he returned to his hometown of Ranchos de Taos, and is now successfully employed as a Soil Conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service in Taos, New Mexico.



DEDICATION = JOBS

Jessie

Jessie Gonzales, 18, was referred to the WIOA Youth Program by DVR for services as he was identified as a youth with significant barriers. He was approaching his high school graduation and was excited for his future, however he was unsure of what his plans were for the future but was eager to enter the workforce. Through the initial assessment, his Career Coach discovered that Jessie was considering moving into post-secondary education, but he really did not know what he would study. Despite this, Jessie reiterated he was ready to look for work and learn new skills. In a conversation with Jessie's mom, it was brought to the Career Coach's attention that he was anxious and intimidated about work due to his disability. He was unsure of the tasks that would be required of him and if he would be able to complete them. He was also concerned about where he would fit in, which sparked insecurities of what his next steps would be. It was apparent that Jessie's smile was infectious, and his friendly demeanor would be an asset to any employer willing to hire him. Without a clear career path, conversations were focused on various avenues to continue education and learning new skill sets to aide in finding employment. Jessie stated that he thought he would love to learn to become a welder or work in an office where he can meet different types of people.

Jessie and his career coach created an individual employment and training plan that would not only allow Jessie to be successful, but also bring valuable skills to an employer once he found a job. Jessie was given a work experience opportunity with Monarch Properties/Lovington Trails Apartments. Sharon Young, Jessie's immediate supervisor was impressed by his enthusiasm to learn new skills and said that he became an amazing asset to the business. Sharon was always very complimentary of Jessie and stated to his career coach that she could not have picked a better work experience participant and he makes her job much easier. Sharon also stated that is an instrumental part of the team because he is bilingual in English and Spanish.



Jessie's growth throughout his work experience has given him the confidence he once lacked. During the work experience he learned; how to complete leases, basic building maintenance, operating office machines, and pool maintenance. This work experience has been a major success and had a positive impact on Jessie by boosting his employability skills and overall self-confidence. This opportunity gave Jessie the chance to engage in the work with an "I CAN" attitude and created a foundation for progress and success. Currently, Jessie anticipates continuing his work with Lovington Trails through an OJT where he can expand on his skills tied to a career in property management. He is instrumental in bringing a smile, not only to his career coach face, but also to the people he serves and helps at work every day. Jessie is an inspiration to everybody around him and does not let his disability stop him from doing what he loves. The sky is the limit for Jessie!



Xena

Xena knew early in life that she wanted to work in the field of mental health. She believes a lot of anger and sadness often result from poor communication between individuals and families that are struggling to cope with mental health challenges. Xena never gave up on her dream to become a therapist and completed her BA in Psychology and MA in Clinical Social Work with the support of her DVR counselors. Xena reports her "DVR counselors provided guidance to help me not give up on my dreams in addition to unconditional regard for my growth and well-being. I could openly talk to my counselor and ask for guidance with my goals." Xena worked part-time while attending NMHU to support herself and her infant son and managed to obtain her LMSW by age 25. She is now a therapist working with children, adolescents and their families to break the cycle of generational trauma.

NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

FY2021 Statistical Year At-A-Glance

7350

New Mexicans sought and received vocational rehabilitation services

6685

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

271

Successfully Rehabilitated

522

Job ready or employed but not yet closed

\$22,926.97

Average yearly employee wage

94%

Percent wage increase after rehabilitation

51%

Most Significantly Disabled

46%

Significantly Disabled

\$6,213,209

Total wages for successfully rehabilitated individuals (i.e. those individuals who successfully gained employment and maintained for at least 90 days)

NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

FY 2021 REHABILITATED CLOSURES BY OCCUPATION	
CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	CLOSURES
Office and Administrative Support	33
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	32
Personal Care and Service	26
Food Preparation, Serving and Related	22
Healthcare Support	19
Sales and Related	19
Transportation and Material Moving	17
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	17
Education, Training and Library	17
Management	12
Production	10
Installation, Maintenance and Repair	9
Community and Social Service	8
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media	8
Business and Financial Operations	6
Architecture and Engineering	4
Protective Service	3
Legal	3
Computer and Mathematical	3
Construction and Extraction	2
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	1
TOTAL REHABILITATED CLOSURES	271

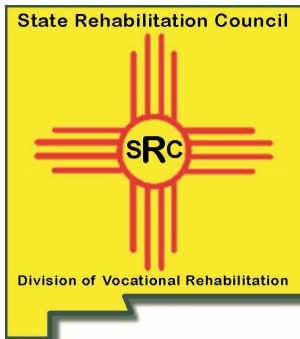
NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

FY 2021 Eligible Participants by Major Disabling Conditions	
Major Disabling Condition	COUNT
Cognitive Impairment	1863
Psychosocial Impairment	1333
Other Impairment - Mental	870
Other Impairment - Physical	607
Mobility Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	334
Hearing Loss - Primary Communication Auditory	307
Cognitive Impairments (learning, thinking, etc.)	221
General Physical Debilitation	154
Other Impairment - Orthopedic	138
Deafness—Primary Communication Visual	135
Commination of Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	103
Psychosocial Impairment (interpers/behavioral,etc.)	98
Communicative Impairment (expressive/receptive)	96
Deafness - Primary Communication Auditory	66
Manipulation Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	51
Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	39
Hearing Loss - Primary Communication Visual	34
Mobility and manipulation/dexterity Orthoped/neurolog	34
Respiratory Impairment	28
Mobility Impairment	28
Other Impairment - Visual	26
Blindness	26
General Physical Debilitation (fatigue, pain, etc.)	19
Mobility and Manipulation/Dexterity Impairment	19
Other Impairment - Hearing	18
Manipulation/Dexterity Orthoped/Neuro Impairment	14
Other orthopedic impairment (limited range of motion)	13
Deaf - Blindness	7
Manipulation/Dexterity Impairment	3
Other Hearing Imprmnts (Tinnitus, Meniere's etc.)	1
Total Eligible	6685



SRC Accomplishments

- ◆ *The SRC assisted in the review of candidates for Fair Hearing officers and provided recommendations for selection.*
- ◆ *The SRC prepared and submitted position statements to the New Mexico Legislature regarding the importance of DVR services for New Mexicans with disabilities and points of importance when considering a move of the agency into a stand alone commission in response to the proposal pending during the legislative session.*
- ◆ *The SRC prepared and submitted a position statement to the Governor's office in regard to the importance of consistency in agency leadership in response to the transition of agency leadership that occurred this year. NMDVR has, as an agency, had over 10 directors in the past 15 years - something that the SRC strongly believes contributes to challenges the agency has experienced with staff turnover, consumer satisfaction, and successful placement rates.*
- ◆ *The SRC met remotely throughout the year to conduct committee and council business and successfully coordinated and facilitated an awards ceremony to recognize outstanding work by NMDVR personnel and business partners who had gone above and beyond working with the agency. The SRC was pleased to note that we had triple the amount of nominations for this year's event when compared to last year.*
- ◆ *The SRC members were invited to assist with NMDVR interviews for several positions this year, and we extend our thanks to the NMDVR leadership for this opportunity.*
- ◆ *The SRC received routine updates on NMDVR and 121 American Indian VR Program efforts to provide services to New Mexican's with disabilities.*



SRC Consumer Satisfaction Survey

In partnership with NMDVR, the SRC completed a consumer satisfaction survey in 2021 to gather input on satisfaction with NMDVR services, the impact that COVID-19 has had on consumer service, and to gather consumer input on things that could improve their perception of service delivery. A final report was developed by the survey company, Research and Polling, Inc., which was then distributed to all SRC members. The following pages contain a summary of the results and the SRC’s goals as they relate to following up on the information gathered through this effort.

The SRC Consumer Satisfaction Survey was sent to all NMDVR clients who had an email address on file. The clients were given approximately two weeks to complete the survey online. 173 clients completed the survey online, and 328 clients completed the survey via telephone. All interviews were conducted between August 24-September 20, 2021. The survey team estimated a 95% confidence level and a maximum margin of error of 4.4% based on the response numbers to the survey efforts.

Overall Satisfaction with Services and Support Provided by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation						
	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Don't Know/ Wouldn't Say
The communication and response to questions by your counselor and/or DVR staff	25%	25%	12%	9%	9%	20%
The overall services provided to you	23%	24%	16%	8%	10%	19%
Being able to meet and discuss with your counselor or staff about your desired employment goal	22%	24%	15%	9%	9%	21%
The support provided by DVR through the Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE) and achieving your career goal	19%	20%	18%	8%	10%	25%
The technology available to you in order to research, communicate, or draft documents in order to achieve the desired employment goal	18%	24%	15%	8%	9%	27%
The services provided during the pandemic	18%	22%	16%	11%	10%	24%
The information about rights and responsibilities such as the CAP, DRNM, to further advocate for yourself as an individual with a disability	17%	24%	15%	7%	9%	28%



SRC Consumer Satisfaction Survey (continued)

Survey Results:

NMDVR clients were asked if they were very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with various services and support provided by NMDVR. For most of the services, less than half of clients express satisfaction, while many have a neutral opinion or were unable to form an opinion. Generally speaking, youth clients and clients with Pre-ETS cases are less likely to have formed an opinion, while adult clients and those with a VR case are more likely than others to be very dissatisfied.

We have not heard from our assigned staff. The 90-day period has come and gone, with no follow-up whatsoever.

My original case worker guy has not once tried reaching out to me about my plan. I got better service and help from the lady that took over his cases while he was away at training. But once he got back, I've had zero communication with DVR.

I applied for help from DVR in the beginning of June. I called at the end of June to find out the status of my application, they told me they were waiting on receiving information from my doctor and that it would take up to 60 days. It is now the middle of August with no help and I have given up.

I filled out the paperwork and expected a call back, but they never called back. I've called them so many times and they never helped me find a job. They told me they would get back to me and they never did.

Hardly any support and very little communication just plans for me to sign. I needed a DVR counselor to reach out on my behalf to a potential employer and sent her the information she said she would look into it and there was no further communication afterwards. I was frustrated. I gave up soon afterwards.

I am just getting started with DVR and my counselor, Emily Martin, is so kind, caring, compassionate, validating, patient, knowledgeable and helpful. I can tell that she is and will be a huge asset in my success.

Thank you so much for what you've already done Emily!

Half of NMDVR clients express satisfaction with the communication and response to questions by their counselor and/or DVR staff (25% are very satisfied), while 12% have neutral opinion, 9% are dissatisfied, and another 9% are very dissatisfied. Notably, one-fifth did not offer an opinion.

I was put on hold by a Rio Rancho agent and things have gone south since. I had a chance to talk with the Albuquerque office awhile back. It took months for that to happen. So I finally found a job on my own.

Nothing but good things to say about the folks at the DVR office in Las Cruces!

They have been very helpful to me. I feel when I do get a job or start driving they will provide what I need. I would love to get information on helping me get a vehicle that I have drive with hand controls.

SRC Consumer Satisfaction Survey (continued)



Forty-six percent of NMDVR clients express satisfaction with being able to meet and discuss with their counselor or staff about their desired employment goal (22% are very satisfied), while 15% have a neutral opinion, 9% are dissatisfied and another 9% are very dissatisfied. Twenty-one percent did not offer an opinion.

New to the system, have not been able to experience or be explained what services I get due to pandemic.

I am very satisfied for the goal and helped my counselor gives.

Forty-two percent of NMDVR clients express satisfaction with the technology available to them in order to research, communicate or draft documents in order to achieve the desired employment goal (18% are very satisfied), while 15% have a neutral opinion, 8% are dissatisfied, and 9% are very dissatisfied. Twenty-seven percent did not offer an opinion.

Laptop "fried" and Crystal is attempting to get me one. Just starting out getting my nursing license back, so not working yet. Crystal Hicks is wonderful!

The NMDVR services are the best I'm really thankful for my hearing aids.

He was supposed to receive a laptop, but he hasn't gotten it.

I haven't even made it to setting goals or having appointments with my counselor. This is taking way too long. Because of dragging their feet, I have actually missed employment opportunities because I don't have the tech and training that I need.

Forty-one percent of NMDVR's clients express satisfaction with the information about rights and responsibilities such as the Client Assistance Program (CAP), Disability Rights New Mexico (DRNM), to further advocate for themselves as an individual with a disability, while 15% have a neutral opinion, 7% are dissatisfied and 9% are very dissatisfied. Nearly three in ten (28%) did not offer an opinion.

Two-fifths of NMDVR clients express satisfaction with the services provided to them during the pandemic (18% are very satisfied), while 16% have a neutral opinion, 11% are dissatisfied and another 10% are very dissatisfied. One quarter did not offer an opinion.



SRC Consumer Satisfaction Survey (continued)

I wasn't able to meet in person with a VR Counselor because the office has been kept CLOSED. It was difficult to conduct business with offices constantly being closed. I know all state/government offices were closed or remote this year, so I imagine this impacted my application process.

The person I was contacted by was very professional and friendly. I have no complaints about him, but I do feel the pandemic put a lot of strain on DVR case workers due to the fact that they need to conduct all their interviews through the phone. Also due to the pandemic, I feel more people who were unaware of this program were drawn to it and cause a surge of applicants. This in turn created more work for the case workers and may have impacted their ability to help everyone to the best of their abilities.

Two-fifths (39%) of NMDVR clients express satisfaction with the support provided by DVR through the Individualized Plan of Employment and achieving their career goal, while 18% have a neutral opinion, 8% are dissatisfied and 10% are very dissatisfied. One-quarter did not offer an opinion.

I haven't talked to someone from DVR in a while and haven't been getting any services. I've been employed for the past 1.5 months with no help from DVR. I haven't received any emails either. I don't know if I should be talking to Ms. Hicks or not. Wish I could have gotten more help with getting a job.

Just one-third of NMDVR clients express satisfaction with DVR's help and support to achieve their employment goal. 16% have a neutral opinion, 9% are dis-satisfied and another 12% are very dissatisfied. Three-in-ten (31%) did not offer an opinion.

I just don't understand why they're not checking up or helping me more with the job process. I finally had my interview a week and a half ago and still no response. I haven't had any help with DVR since the program submitted my application.

My experience with NMDVR has been extremely positive through the years! Thank you for providing such incredible support!

A lot of the jobs they tried to get me set up with were far from home. I am epileptic and cannot drive. They need to understand each individual's needs when assisting with goals. We've applied for assistance from DVR and have received none. The last contact from DVR was a phone call to inform us that questionnaires were being sent to us that would help with job placement. This was a month ago and we still have not received these. I met with my DVR representative twice, But I have not received job specific training yet. I have not been employed yet so it's hard to answer a lot of these questions. The DVR will be working closely with my school in the STEP program I am in.



SRC Consumer Satisfaction Survey (continued)

As noted above, 39% of clients said their VR services were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. 44% did not offer an opinion.

Not being able to go into the office, I haven't had help with paperwork, and I don't think I even have a counselor.

I know all state/government offices were closed or remote most of this year, so I imagine this impacted my application process.

I was unable to visit with my case worker face-to-face.

Remote interactions with the counselor were fine but options to engage in the community to shadow job opportunities were not possible.

The whole program was put on hold and wait-listed.

It has been difficult for your staff to work from both home and reduced office hours. They have done a great job of it, but it was difficult none the less.

After a while of waiting, I'd lost track of myself as far as working with DVR, so it's more my own fault that both I've yet to receive results and don't really know where to proceed from here.

After all I have gone through this has been amazing in helping me rebuild my confidence.

Remote interactions with the counselor were fine but options to engage in the community to shadow job opportunities were not possible.

Services we greatly diminished by lack of technology and in person communication.

Socialization.

Some employees don't have computers and internet, so they can't work from home.

Some places and jobs are closed or not available.

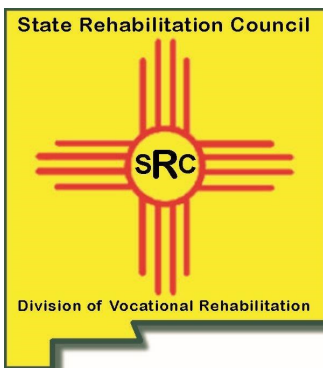
Yes, 110%! It greatly restricted what we could accomplish. My worker was very good but it's hard to complete everything when there's restrictions.

SRC Recommendations for 2022



After reviewing the Consumer Satisfaction Report results, and considering input from consumers and council members, the SRC established the following recommendations for NMDVR for calendar year 2022:

- **The SRC recommends that NMDVR staff and leadership focus attention on enhancing communication with consumers to ensure that they understand where they are in the eligibility determination process as well as their status when receiving services under the IPE. Consistency and clarity of communication were clearly highlighted as areas for improvement under the Consumer Satisfaction survey, and the SRC would recommend that NMDVR develop a communication plan to address this consumer concern and to track their progress in addressing the existing gaps.**
- **The SRC recommends that all DVR services maintain a disability focus, and all hires at NMDVR should participate in comprehensive training on topics including disability awareness and sensitivity, vocational rehabilitation services, assistive technology and the needs of specific disability populations. The SRC had previously noted that with the change in federal and state hiring requirements regarding minimum qualifications for VR Counselors, new agency hires can lack a foundation in vocational rehabilitation and the framework of rehabilitation service delivery. The SRC acknowledges that NMDVR did make progress in addressing this issue in 2021 with the VR Boot Camp facilitated in partnership with Western New Mexico University. However, based on consumer responses to the satisfaction survey, it appears that additional work is required in order to ensure consumers do not feel spoken down to and that their vocational placements recommended by counselors take individualized disability needs into consideration.**
- **The SRC continues to recommend that DVR needs to be funded to the maximum level allowed in order to allow the agency to move out from Order of Selection. The current status of Order of Selection for the agency has essentially created a situation where community perception is that no new consumers are receiving services due to lack of funding. This needs to be corrected as soon as possible.**



SRC Recommendations for 2022

- **The SRC recommends that NMDVR give attention to balancing counselor caseloads with required staff training. It appears from consumer comments in the Consumer Satisfaction Survey and from updates from NMDVR leadership about staffing, that one challenge specific to the past year has been that of consumers having multiple counselors for short periods of time, which impacts both their relationship with the agency and also the quality and consistency of their services.**
- **The SRC recommends that NMDVR increase the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing vocational rehabilitation training and counseling that is designed to enhance and improve job seeking skills of NMDVR participants, which are becoming an increasing barrier to participants obtaining and retaining successful employment.**
- **The SRC recommends that NMDVR increase the number and quality of employment outcomes by proactively recruiting qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors, by actively looking at NMDVR consumers and staff as potential hires and that hiring consideration include cultural competencies in order to provide for greater continuity and consistency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.**
- **The SRC recommends that NMDVR increase the number and quality of employment outcomes for participants that are “job ready” by following the “informed choice” provisions of the Rehabilitation Act, thereby maximizing the opportunity for success. According to the Consumer Satisfaction survey results, numerous consumers felt spoken down to and/or unheard during placement discussions with VR Counselors this year, and the SRC would like to see this trend reversed with the consumer placed back into a leadership role in consideration of placements, needs, etc.**
- **The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to explore expanding Pre-ETS services utilizing Project Hope (Jemez VR/NMDVR partnership) as a model.**

SRC Recommendations for 2022



- **The SRC recommends that NMDVR develop and maintain a disaster plan that outlines agency responses for issues including telework, work portability, technology, etc. to better facilitate transitions necessitated by future weather, health and/or safety disasters.**
- **The SRC that NMDVR track the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and related service restrictions on consumers; especially those residing in rural areas as they experience interruptions in access at a higher level than urban consumers due to differences in available, accessible and affordable infrastructure.**



SRC Membership

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

Sarah Michaud, SRC Chair, Santa Fe

Parent Training and Information Center

Delores Harden, Albuquerque

Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Bernadine Chavez, Albuquerque

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

Keith Maes, Las Vegas

Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider

Jennifer Gelhardt, Albuquerque

Business, Industry and Labor

Chris Boston, Las Cruces

Tara Spracklen, Albuquerque

Meta Hirschl, Albuquerque

Disability Advocacy Groups

Tracy Agiovlaitis, SRC Vice-Chair, Albuquerque

Representatives of Individuals with Disabilities

TJ Chester, Socorro

Current or Former NMDVR Participants

Joseph Cruz, Las Vegas

Section 121 or American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Paula Seanez, SRC Sergeant at Arms, Navajo Nation Department of Dine Education Administration/Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services

Marlencia Chee, Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program

State Workforce Investment Board

Yolanda Cordova, Department of Workforce Connections, Albuquerque

Educational Agency Representative

Sbicca Brodeur, Santa Fe

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

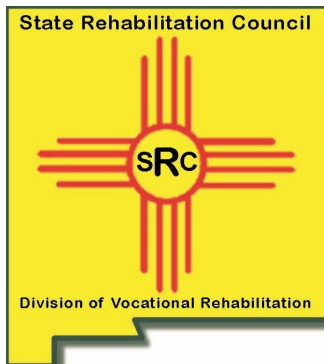
Dan Drury, Interim Director of NMDVR

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

Nash Sisneros, RSU Administrator

Charles Alan Hamlin, DDS Administrator

Alicia DeVargas, SRC Liaison



NMDVR OFFICE LOCATIONS

Alamogordo

2300 Indian Wells Rd
Alamogordo, NM 88310
Fax: 575-434-1582
Phone: 575-437-6550
Toll-free: 888-901-7868

Belen

911 Castillo Avenue
Belen, NM 87002
Fax: 505-864-6292
Phone: 505-864-1617
Toll-free: 888-901-7902

Carlsbad

3605 National Parks High-
way
Carlsbad, NM 88220-1448
Fax: 575-887-7312
Phone: 575-885-8821
Toll-free: 800-645-0258

Clovis

100 E. Manana Blvd. #17
Clovis, NM 88101
Fax: 575-769-2794
Phone: 575-763-3437
Toll-free: 800-645-2143

Edgewood

3 George Court, Suite B
Edgewood, NM 87015
Fax: 505-281-9400
Phone: 505-281-9946
Phone: 505-281-9947

Espanola

706-B La Joya St.
Espanola, NM 87532
Fax: 505-753-7303
Phone: 505-753-2908
Toll-free: 888-901-3647

Farmington

2901 Hutton
Farmington, NM 87402
Fax: 505-599-9720
Phone: 505-327-5123
Toll-free: 888-901-7901

Gallup

312 East Nizhoni Blvd
Gallup, NM 87301
Fax: 505-726-1431
Phone: 505-726-1429
Toll-free: 800-279-5681

Hobbs

2120 North Alto #109
Hobbs, NM 88240
Fax: 575-393-3630
Phone: 575-393-3330
Toll-free: 888-201-5859

Las Cruces

3381 Del Rey Blvd.
Las Cruces, NM 88012
Fax: 575-524-6139
Phone: 575-524-6135
Toll-free: 888-901-7866

Las Vegas

32 NM 65 Hot Springs Blvd.
Las Vegas, NM 87701
Fax: 505-454-6120
Phone: 505-425-9365
Toll-free: 888-901-7865

Rio Rancho

3791 Southern Blvd. SE, Suite
210 (Physical Address)
PO Box 15430 (Mailing Ad-
dress)
Rio Rancho, NM 87174
Fax: 505-896-4501
Phone: 505-896-4500

Roswell

1014 S. Atkinson Ave.
Roswell, NM 88203
Fax: 575-624-6198
Phone: 575-624-6024
Toll-free: 800-644-7732

Santa Fe

2540 Camino Edward Ortiz,
Ste B
Santa Fe, NM 87507
Fax: 505-827-3564
Phone: 505-827-3526
Toll-free: 800-773-4072

Santa Fe – Administration Office

2935 Rodeo Park Drive East
Santa Fe, NM 87505
Fax: 505-954-8562
Phone: 505-954-8500
Toll-free: 800-224-7005

Silver City

500 E. 18th St.
Silver City, NM 88061
Fax: 575-538-5537
Phone: 575-538-5351
Toll-free: 888-901-7861

Socorro

1014 N. California
Socorro, NM 87801
Fax: 575-835-4468
Phone: 575-835-4243
Toll-free: 888-901-7903

Taos

145 Roy Road, Suite C
Taos, NM 87571
Fax: 575-758-7485
Phone: 575-758-4348
Toll-free: 888-901-7869

Disability Determination Services

7421 Bartlett Dr. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87107
Fax: 505-841-5724
Phone: 505-841-5600
Toll-free: 800-432-5868

Albuquerque Gibson Office

Gibson Medical Center
5400 Gibson SE Box #6
Albuquerque, NM 87108
Fax: 505-841-6451
Phone: 505-841-6450
Toll-free: 866-526-0863

Albuquerque Lomas Office

111 Lomas Blvd NW,
Suite 422
Albuquerque, NM 87102
Fax: 505-383-2529
Phone: 505-383-2500
Toll-free: 888-818-3259

Albuquerque Mountain Office

501 Mountain Rd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
Phone: 505-843-1900

Albuquerque Oakland Administration Office

5200 Oakland Ave NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Albuquerque Quail Office

5205 Quail NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120
Fax: 505-836-5674
Phone: 505-836-1774
Toll-free: 888-818-3263

Albuquerque South Valley Office

1710 Rio Bravo SW
Albuquerque, NM 87105
Fax: 505-877-0961
Phone: 505-877-7673
Toll-free: 888-815-2981

