

State Rehabilitation Council

Quarterly Meeting

August 20, 2024

NMDVR Oakland Office

5200 Oakland Ave NE

Albuquerque, NM 87113

SRC Meeting 10 am



I. Call to Order/Introductions/Roll Call

Meeting called to order by Vice Chair at 10:04am

Roll Call:

Sarah Michaud, present

Bernadine Chavez, present, left at 12:16

Lisa Jones, absent, term has expired

Jennifer Gelhardt, present

Rebecca Sandford, absent

TJ Chester, present

Tracy Agiovlasitis, present

Kendra Garcia, present

Breezy Rodriguez, present

Veronica Alonzo, present, left at 12:44

Casey Stone-Romero, present

Guests:

Angelina Montoya, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Jeff Levine, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Charlene Chavez, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Alan Hamlin, Disability Determination Services (DDS)

Greg Duran, Disability Determination Services (DDS)

II. Action Items

A. Approval of Agenda

TJ Chester motions to approve

Jennifer Gelhardt seconds motion

Unanimously approved

B. Approval of Minutes

Bernadine Chavez motions to approve

TJ Chester Seconds motion

Unanimously approved

III. DVR Directors Reports

A. Agency Director – Casey Stone-Romero

a. State Plan was accepted by RSA and DOL

- i. Participating in a panel discussion tomorrow regarding VR Portion of the State Plan at the DWS Annual Conference

b. NMDVR will be holding an All Staff Meeting on Thursday November 14, 2024 at the Santa Ana Hotel & Conference Center

- i. SRC Awards will be presented

c. DVR reallocated approximately \$2.4 million to RSA

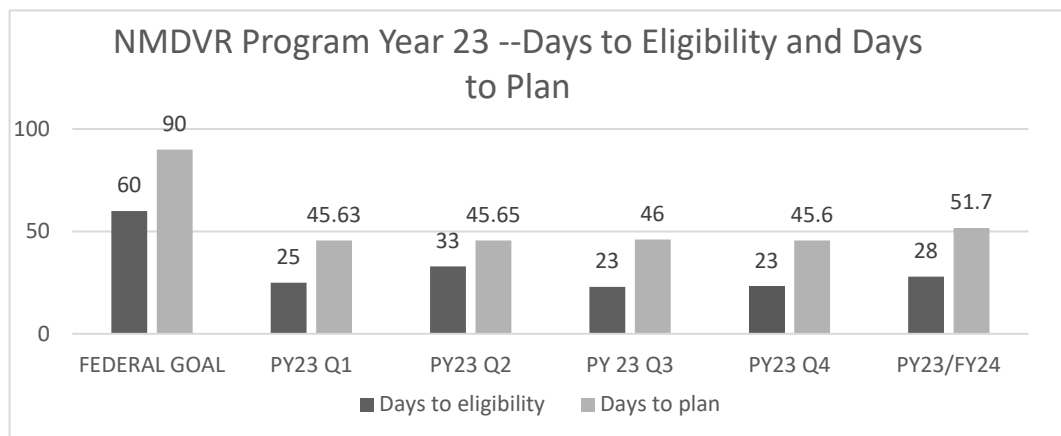
- i. These were all unmatched dollars

- ii. We will be in the same situation for our current VR Grant as we did not receive our full budget request from the state
 - iii. This year's focus is on emphasizing to the Legislature the loss of federal dollars when we are not fully matched
- d. State FY26 budget request
 - i. Submitting a request for state general funds to match our full anticipated federal award in the amount of \$24.5 million
 - ii. We will also request a 3% increase for anticipated personnel costs
 - iii. Working with the CIL's to determine budgetary needs
- e. CSAVR / NCSRC Seattle
 - i. 8 Attendees: Casey (DVR), Michelle (DVR), Nash (DVR), Mario (DVR), Rudy (DVR), Antoinette (DVR), Jennifer (SRC), Veronica (SRC)
- f. RSA
 - i. DVR received notice that we have resolved all findings for the 2021 Corrective Action Plan (CAP) in June
 - ii. We are continuing to work with VRTAC-QM to improve internal controls, policies and knowledge of federal regulations
 - iii. 2nd Quarterly response was submitted to our Pre-ETS CAP on 07/30/2024
 - 1. We must be in compliance with this CAP by 09/30/2024
 - 2. We are on target to effectively spend our Pre-ETS reserve
- g. Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis conducted
 - i. SWOT analysis with Rehabilitation Services Unit (RSU) field offices is complete
 - 1. Presented findings to the Field Operation Directors and Program Managers
 - 2. Good news is we are not far off in the work we have already doing to support and improve the program
- h. Financial Services focused on Program Support, Customer Service, Compliance and being Accountable and Reliable
- i. Public Relations
 - i. Articles in every Round the Roundhouse
 - ii. Stories featured in the Alamogordo News and Valencia County News Bulletin
 - iii. Worked with Albuquerque and Santa Fe to create official proclamations for NDEAM
 - iv. Created an In-house Annual Report
 - v. Presented during a CSAVR Customer Services for Adults Committee on Social Media and best practices to be an effective one-person Public Relations office
- j. AWARE Team
 - i. Created Multiple resources to assist the field offices with tracking data
 - ii. Updated Aware Financials to support the payment request process
 - iii. Implemented Case management system upgrades
 - iv. Coordinated NMDVR Summit focused on fiscal forecasting, strategic planning, and data alignment with the CSNA recommendations
- k. Information Technology
 - i. Increased RSU cell phone lines 27% between FY23 and FY24
 - 1. In FY25 all VRC's will be assigned cellphones
 - ii. New equipment for RSU
 - 1. UbiDuo's
 - 2. Laptops

- 3. Webcams
 - 4. Power banks, etc.
 - iii. Upgraded WIFI access and added WIFI to the DDS building
 - iv. Utilized DoIT resources to upgrade internal systems
 - v. Piloted broadband connection for public use and back up internet connectivity
 - l. Human Resources
 - i. Revised Policies
 - ii. Developed NMDVR Training Policy and corresponding Committee
 - iii. Sent policy re-acknowledgements to all staff
 - iv. Created Manager Toolbox to streamline recruitment through hire process
 - m. State Office
 - i. Employees are currently working out of multiple locations
 - ii. We had to vacate the building for an undetermined amount of time
 - 1. Working with GSD to find another worksite
 - 2. Main phones lines are transferred to our new receptionist, Raven Macias
- B. RSU Update – Casey Stone-Romero
 - a. RSU FY2024 by the numbers
 - i. 3.05 days improvement in moving participants into an Individual Plan For Employment (IPE)
 - ii. \$18.56 Hourly average wage of participants successfully rehabilitated, increased by \$2.87 from last year
 - iii. 28 average number of days to complete eligibility
 - iv. 93% of individuals applying were accepted, 4% increase
 - v. 698 applications in FY24, 259 more than last FY
 - vi. 523 New Mexicans with a disability were successfully rehabilitated
 - vii. 1,590 students received Pre-Employment Transition Services
 - viii. 8,338 New Mexicans engaged in VR Services
 - ix. \$15,297,250.80 total wages for successfully rehabilitated individuals with disabilities, increased by \$4,490,219.24
 - b. Business Outreach Unit
 - i. Created an External Training presentation approved by Jeff Levine
 - ii. Presenting at the Workforce Conference 08/21/2024 – 08/22/2024
 - iii. Business Outreach will be attending the NET Summit in North Carolina in September
 - iv. Ongoing Business relations and partnerships are being established
 - v. Support with Kathy West-Evans and Harley Engleman through VRTAC- QE
 - c. RSU Region A
 - i. 06/21/2024 DVR Las Vegas, NM experienced significant flooding
 - 1. Led to severe disruptions in the city’s water supply and forced the implementation of extreme water restrictions
 - 2. Despite challenges, the Las Vegas DVR office remained operational, ensuring continuity of services during the crisis
 - ii. Benefits Advisement Unit
 - 1. 3 new staff members are working towards certification as work incentive counselors
 - 2. 1 Benefits Advisor completing her first certification assignment and other making similar strides
 - iii. Area 1 Santa Fe and Espanola
 - 1. Building Relationships and Expanding service delivery

2. Espanola office now offers in-person Social Security Disability Benefits advisement for participants
3. New Connections established with Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS)
 - a. Successful implementation of warm handoffs
 - b. Enhancing collaboration and Participant support
- iv. Area 4 Roswell, Carlsbad, Hobbs, and Clovis
 1. Engagement with SPED Directors in southern NM has laid the groundwork for potential collaborations
 - a. Introductions of the Project Search program in smaller rural areas
 2. Ongoing efforts to strengthen connection with schools and workforce agencies across the regions
- v. Area 9 Las Vegas, Taos, and Raton
 1. Collaboration with the New Mexico Behavioral Health Institute (NMBHI)
 - a. Efforts to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students in treatment at NMBHI and support individuals discharging from the facility
- d. Region B, Deaf & Hard of Hearing, and SE
 - i. Area 3 Las Cruces, Silver City and Alamogordo
 1. Pilot Program titled “Meaningful and Sustained Engagement” was conducted 12/18/2023 – 07/08/2024
 - a. Led to enhanced speed and improved service quality with 78.2% of participants and 53% of employees observing faster processing times
 2. Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation Conference (CANAR), Chandler, AZ
 - a. Rudy Grano, Crystal Pena, and Monica Montoya represented the agency
 - b. Conference focused on enhancing VR Services for Native Americans and Alaska Natives with disabilities
 - c. Offering a platform for exchanging knowledge, strategies, and best practices
 3. Behavioral Health Support Division’s Supportive Housing Retreat
 - a. Presentation by Christine Fuller the Supported Employment & Deaf and Hard of Hearing Coordinator
 4. 2nd Annual National Symposium on Quality Employment
 - a. United stakeholders from various sectors to discuss and promote quality employment, fostering innovation and knowledge exchange through diverse presentations and workshops
- e. Region C
 - i. RSU Trainings
 1. Financial Trainings, Rehabilitation Academy, VRTAC-QMM Training, Fair Hearing, Handling Difficult Conversations and Frontline communication
 2. 67 new hires have been supported through the RSU training team from onboarding
 3. RSU also supported staff to attend
 - a. Partners for Employment Conference in April 2024
 - b. CANAR in June 2024

- c. APSE Conference in June 2024
- d. National Capacity Building Institute
- e. VRTACT-QE Symposium
- 4. Region C closed almost half of the successful rehabilitated case closures achieved in FY24
- ii. Area 5
 - 1. Caseloads met or exceeded individualized caseload performance for FY24, with 4 caseloads hitting over 100% in Service
 - 2. Caseloads hitting over 100% for applications and 3 caseloads hitting over 100% for rehabilitated case closures
 - 3. Support staff produced 1378 authorizations in FY24
- iii. Area 7
 - 1. Habitat, Bernalillo Co Open Space, HomeWorks and Mandy's farm provided job coaches
 - 2. Los Lunas referrals and caseload have grown, and outreach has impacted this uptick
 - 3. 5 caseloads hit over 100% of Service performance expectation and 3 caseloads hit over 100% of applications
- iv. Area 8
 - 1. Staff have visited with Turquoise Lodge, ABQ Treatment Center, VA, Juvenile Justice, New Day Youth Drop-In Center
 - 2. 2 caseloads exceed caseload performance expectations for rehabilitated closures, 3 caseloads exceed service expectation, 2 caseloads hit over 100% of their eligibility expectation, and 2 caseloads exceed their applicant expectations
- f. We do not yet have PY23 Q4 Performance Indicators available we do anticipate them by early September as the annual ETA-9169 is due
 - i. Days to eligibility from March – June: 23 days for all FY24: 28 days
 - ii. Days from eligibility to plan March – June: 45.6 days for all of FY24: 51.7 days. Well below the federal foals of 60 days to eligibility and 90 days to plan.



C. DDS Administrator – Alan Hamlin

- a. Last Summer hiring push
 - i. Quality is best in region
 - ii. Processing time best in region, one of the best in nation
 - iii. Workload management
 - 1. Given new goals
 - 2. Close to achieving the goals at the end of federal fiscal year in September

- iv. Focus on training
 - 1. Culture in the workplace
 - 2. Push Week (Office cometary and fun)
 - a. Corn hole tournament, hoola-hoop contest, and Friday there will be a food truck
 - b. Encouraging personal and work life balance
 - 3. Internal study of Allowance Rate
 - a. NM DDS is at 42% leading the region and nation
 - b. Allowance rate was in the mid 30's when Alan first became DDS Administrators
- b. Greg- Director of Special Programs at DDS
 - i. Professional Relations Unit
 - 1. Day travel Monday-Thursday to meet with Providers, Clinics, Medical Offices, Hospitals, etc.
 - 2. Electronic Records Express (ERE)
 - a. Helping set offices up with ERE
 - b. Will help to obtain records quickly and they will also allow providers to get paid quicker
 - 3. Focus on federal fiscal year that ends next month
 - ii. Consultative Exam Unit
 - 1. 800- 900 exams that were needing to be scheduled
 - a. Fully staffed as of last month
 - b. Scheduling queue is improving
 - i. As of this morning there was 340 in queue
 - c. Office in San Francisco, CA is helping with claims
 - i. Finishing the work that was given to them and no further work will be sent
 - 2. 21 Medical Consultants
 - a. Medical records
 - i. Relevant period
 - ii. Medical requests sent to facilities, if no response at the 14/15 day a reminder is sent to the provider
 - iii. They have 30 days to send us records
 - iv. Adjudicators do reach out and see if they can obtain those records as well
 - v. If we have enough medical records to make a decision, DDS will proceed
 - iii. Tribal Summit August 1st, 2024
 - 1. DDS hosts but put together by SSA
 - a. 30-35 people attended
 - b. Background in training in work history and proper completion to release medical evidence
 - i. Work history has been reduced to 5 years
 - iv. Terminal Cases
 - 1. One examiner at DDS that handles case loads
 - 2. Average processing time is 14 days
 - c. Congressional and Legislative Inquires
 - i. Support Services and Reduces client complaints
- D. Legal Update – Casey Stone-Romero
 - a. Drafted new Fair Hearing (FH) / Mediation Rules
 - i. Revised FH and Mediation request Forms, and Clients Rights and Responsibilities Form

- ii. Amended participants rights section of the MOP
 - b. Presented at the VR Attorney Network on consent for Pre-ETS to youth who are homeless or unaccompanied
 - c. Legal is overseeing newly formed Policy Committee
 - d. Implemented FH and IPRA training for staff
 - e. One Fair Hearing decision
 - i. Dismissed with prejudice
 - ii. Invoked FH but could not give us a reason why
 - iii. No district court claim has been made
- IV. 121 Report – Paula Seanez
 - a. No report from Paula
 - b. Update from Sarah
 - a. They hope to hear about their formal Grant Award Notices
 - i. Tribal VRs must apply for funding every 5 years
 - ii. Several programs did not get their applications in on time
- V. SRC Chairperson’s Report – Sarah Michaud
 - a. Leah Johnson from PRO will be joining the SRC Council
 - b. Attending all the SILC meetings
 - a. SILC next meeting is tomorrow 08/21/2024
 - c. Attended the CIL Quarterly meeting
 - a. Transparency and openness about funding and understanding funding need for the IL centers
 - b. New Vistas is not asking for anything at this time
 - i. 5 unserved counties in New Mexico
 - ii. CHOICES and IL centers and getting services statewide
 - d. Sarahs term expired as SRC Chair 08/19/2024
 - a. Tracy will be the Chair until further notice
 - b. Sarah will be re-applying
 - e. Planning of the Annual report will be ready by next meeting
 - f. Bylaws
 - a. Recruitment of SRC Members
 - i. A disabled veteran
 - 1. Veronica will reach out to the veterans group at DWS
 - ii. 3 businesses still needed
 - iii. Reach out to Jennifer Saavedra at DVR to replace Lisa Jones on the SRC
- VI. Old Business
 - A. International Project SEARCH Conference in Albuquerque – July 15-19
 - a. There were over 800 participants from the states
 - i. 30 folks Internationally
 - ii. NM was well presented
 - 1. 99 people from NM
 - a. 27 folks from DVR
 - b. 21 Health Care Authority
 - c. 25 School Districts
 - d. 10 Tribal
 - e. A few community providers and employers
 - b. Project Search helps other agencies work together, community providers, incorporate as many people as possible to work with Transition
 - c. Awards
 - i. Two sites were recognized for 100% placement
 - 1. UNM Hospital
 - 2. Embassy Suites

3. 2 other sites received a 70% and up
 - a. Farmington
 - b. Gallup
- ii. Presentations from Project SEARCH interns
 1. Jose spoke about his experience working with the school district after completing Project Search
 2. Tanya graduated working out of Embassy Suites, she is now auditing for one of the hotels in the metro
 3. Valerie started working in the kitchen and now she is a chef for the hotel in Gallup Hilton Garden Inn
 4. They represented NM well and gave hope to everyone before they left

VIII. New Business

A. Transition Update by Charlene Chavez

- a. School to work programs
 - i. Gather school districts, VR councilors, employers
 - ii. Meet 3 times a year and talk about transition and how we can make it better for the state of NM
- b. Four Corners Conference in Window Rock, AZ
 - i. Presentations about working with those that have disabilities
 - ii. How to incorporate tribal to get them more involved
- c. 11 transition councilors across the state
 - i. 100% dedicated
 - ii. Really engaging school districts and mending relationships
 1. Going out and reconnecting with schools
 - iii. Pre-ETS has 5,851 direct services to students with disabilities
 - iv. Hiring staff in rural communities has been a challenge
- d. Charlene attended the Career Technical meeting
 - i. Advocate for student with disabilities
- e. Center for Advancing Policy On Employment for Youth (CAPE- Youth)
 - i. Selected 4 to 5 states to be a part of CAPE, NEW Mexico was one
 - ii. Trying to see how to make a change for Transition
- f. Project SEARCH new Site in Shiprock, NM
 - i. 1st tribal Project SEARCH site Nationally
 - ii. A new site in Deming, NM will be opened FY25 / FY26
- g. Transition staff and CIL's collaboration
 - i. Charlene will get Sarah and Kendra's information from Casey
- h. Fee for service for Pre-ETS
 - i. Assisted Dogs of The West

B. SRC Employer Awards for DEAM event

- a. Need more nominations
 - i. Deadline September 17th
 1. Send to Jeff or Jennifer
 - ii. One nomination has been received
 1. Jeff has contact information
 - iii. Awards being presented at the DVR All-Staff meeting in November
 - iv. Employer and non-profit nominations need to be printed asap
 1. Start obtaining quotes
 - a. Angelina will create Purchase Order once obtained
 - b. \$75.00 limit per plaque
 - v. Tracy will present awards

C. SRC Awards for NMDVR November All Staff event

- a. Jeff will resend nomination form to DVR staff

- b.
- D. Customer Satisfaction Survey
 - a. Sent out previous CSS to SRC via email
 - i. Needs to be completed every 3 years
 - b. A group has volunteered to work on this
 - i. Will work with DVR to find a contractor
 - 1. Pull together a scope of work so we can request an RFA
 - 2. We need to come up with the questions
 - 3. This needs to be completed before the end of June 2025
 - 4. Thoughts on questions can be sent to Bernadine by the end of October
 - 5. Alix Dean from DVR will also be assisting
- E. CSAVR/NCSRC Fall Conferences – October 19-25, 2024
 - a. Jennifer and Veronica will be representing the SRC
 - i. DWS will cover her travel and DVR will cover registration cost
 - b. SRC member Kendra will attend the Spring CSAVR in Bethesda, MD 2025
- F. SRC Annual Report
 - a. Sarah and Tracy will draft the report
 - b. Nash remains as point of contact for data information
 - c. SRC members to give a quote
 - i. Deadline: End of October
 - d. Average number of hours worked in one week by participants
 - i. Part time vs part time
 - ii. RSA 911 reports on top 10 placement median hours worked
 - e. SRC Recommendations for 2025
 - i. Change verbiage
 - ii. Remove # 5- Order Of Selection
- G. SRC Budget request for FY26 and Discussion of Annual Review Process
 - a. 50K
 - b. Resource plan needed from SRC
 - i. Executive team will work on that
- H. Open Meeting Act Review and Acceptance
 - a. Tabled to next meeting
- I. Discussion on Public Comment Process – bylaws or agenda addition
 - a. Public comment is no more than 3-5 minutes
 - b. Accept in writing or verbally
 - c. No response at meeting, comment will be taken into consideration
 - i. Send proposed changes to council before November meeting
- J. Next Meeting
 - a. November 18, 2024, in Las Cruces DVR Office
- IX. Comments from Audience
 - a. No comments from audience
- X. Adjournment
 - a. Adjournment at 1:44pm

If you need a language translator or you are an individual with a disability who is in need of a reader, amplifier or any other form of auxiliary aid or service to participate in this meeting, please contact NMDVR at the telephone number(s) listed below. Public documents, including the agenda or minutes can be provided in various accessible forms. For additional information, contact NMDVR. Telephone numbers: 1-800-224-7005 or 505-954-8500.

(Note: the SRC attempts to follow the order of items listed on the agenda; however, it should be noted that the order of specific items is tentative and may vary from the date of the printed agenda.)