



NM Disability Employment Awareness Month Conference

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STATE AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS HOST FIRST-EVER DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH SYMPOSIUM AND HIRING EVENT

ALBUQUERQUE (October 1, 2024) – A coalition of state agencies and organizations committed to supporting New Mexicans with disabilities is hosting the inaugural **Disability Employment Awareness Month Conference** in Albuquerque on **Thursday, October 17**. The event takes place from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the University of New Mexico Continuing Education building, 1634 University Blvd NE.

This symposium brings together individuals, employers, and community leaders to raise awareness and promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. It provides a unique platform for employers to connect with potential candidates, share resources, and learn about the benefits of hiring and supporting employees with disabilities. Part of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the event aims to celebrate the contributions of workers with disabilities and highlight the importance of fostering inclusive workplaces. It is **open to the public and free of charge**.

Event Highlights:

- **Keynote Address** (9:15 a.m.): Former New Mexico Attorney General and current Northern New Mexico College President Hector Balderas will address how inclusive policies and practices benefit both employees and employers.
- **Awards Ceremony** (9:45 a.m.): Businesses and non-profit organizations that prioritize diversity and inclusion in their workforce will be recognized for their leadership.
- **Employment Panel Discussion** (10:15 a.m.): Dynamic conversation focused on best practices for disability employment, workplace accommodations, and strategies for building inclusive work environments.
- **Job Fair** (1:30 to 4 p.m.): Employers from various industries will meet with job seekers and recruit talented individuals with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are a huge untapped resource, as national statistics show a sizeable gap in the rate of workforce participation for persons with disabilities. Only about 25% of persons with disabilities participate in the labor force, compared to nearly two-thirds of those without disabilities.

“We are working hard to reduce that gap,” says Lisa McNiven, Deputy Director of the New Mexico Governor's Commission on Disability. “People with disabilities add value and talent to every workplace and community, and we are committed to increasing access and opportunities to all.”

To register for the conference and/or the hiring event, visit <https://bit.ly/4cRjoHV>.

Participating agencies and organizations include the Governor's Commission on Disability, Department of Workforce Solutions, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Commission for the Blind, Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Department of Veteran Services, Developmental Disability Supports Division, Healthcare Authority, Developmental Disabilities Council, Disability Pride New Mexico, UNM Center for Development and Disability, Horizons of New Mexico, Relay New Mexico, Willing to Work, and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

About National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

NDEAM is held each October to commemorate the many and varied contributions of people with disabilities to America's workplaces and economy. Led nationally by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), the observance also raises awareness about the importance of ensuring people with disabilities have full access to employment and community involvement.

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