



Annual Report 2024

New Mexico

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

*In partnership with the
New Mexico Division of
Vocational Rehabilitation
(NMDVR)*





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What is the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)?

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 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. WIOA linked the state Workforce Development Board into the collaborative effort.

As a partner with the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR), the SRC is involved in developing policies and goals, planning activities, evaluating the program effectiveness and other related functions. The primary goal is to ensure that people with disabilities are provided with an equal opportunity to receive the programs, services and supports needed for integrated competitive employment.

The SRC acts as the external, community-oriented voice in the consideration and development of services, working closely with the NMDVR. The goal is to remain informed on those issues most pertinent to the provision of services to the disability community within New Mexico and to express concerns, ideas or support regarding those issues and initiatives. The required SRC membership brings the consumer voice from varied perspectives as a result of their work and interactions with individuals with disabilities.

Letter from the SRC Chair



The Honorable Michelle Lujan-Grisham and Secretary Designate Mariana Padilla,

It is with great pleasure that I submit to you the 2024 Annual Report documenting the work of the New Mexico DVR State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) over the past year. The SRC's mission is to assist with the operations of NMDVR through advisement, evaluation and partnership to support access to employment and promotion of a diverse workforce statewide. The members of the SRC are dedicated to understanding the specific needs of people with disabilities within our state and sharing our expertise with NMDVR to improve services and outcomes for consumers utilizing agency services each year.

This report summarizes the ongoing work completed by SRC membership and NMDVR through our collaboration over the past year. It is our hope that it will provide readers with a clear understanding of the role the SRC plays in supporting NMDVR as well as the critical work the agency does. We are pleased to highlight the many successes achieved through this partnership including the completion of the State Plan and the Comprehensive Needs Assessment for New Mexico, the resolution of RSA Monitoring for the agency, statewide decreases in the timeframes from eligibility to service delivery for consumers so they move more seamlessly toward their educational and employment goals, and recognition of outstanding employers during New Mexico's first Disability Employment Awareness Month Conference in October. Additionally, the SRC extends our thanks to the agency for their ongoing support of council members in attending National Coalition of SRC conferences to expand their knowledge of SRC responsibilities and network with other SRC members across the country.

Together with NMDVR, the SRC recognizes the importance of building bridges with employers, educational agencies, and other disability service providers to meet the needs of people with disabilities within our state. This year's annual report offers excellent examples of the work the SRC has done in partnership with NMDVR to promote the provision of services for people with disabilities statewide.

The Council is pleased to continue to support the agency in the important work that they do. We look forward to continuing our partnership and building on these successes as we move forward into FY 2025.

Sincerely,

Sarah Michaud
Sarah Michaud
SRC Chair

Letter from the NMDVR Director



MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM,
Governor

MARIANA PADILLA,
*Secretary Designate of Public
Education*

CASEY STONE-ROMERO,
Director

Dear Honorable Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, Secretary Designate Padilla, Participants, and Partners,

The New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) plays a key role in supporting the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR). Our ongoing collaboration continues to advance NMDVR and its services for New Mexicans with disabilities. SRC members contribute valuable insights and annual recommendations to enhance the vocational rehabilitation program through quarterly meetings, public forums, and reports, including the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and their annual report.

With the SRC's support, NMDVR successfully completed a CSNA in 2024. The CSNA's recommendations were essential in shaping the 2024-2027 vocational rehabilitation section of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan.

Our partnership has proven so effective that NMDVR was invited to present at the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Fall 2024 Conference, where we highlighted the strong relationship between both entities. SRC members are supported by NMDVR to attend key national conferences, including NCSRC and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR).

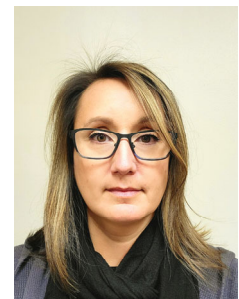
The SRC provides valuable guidance on both vocational rehabilitation services and disability determination services. A major achievement this year was the removal of the Order of Selection in the 2024-2027 VR section of the WIOA State Plan. The SRC has been instrumental in supporting the agency's efforts to eliminate a long-standing waitlist for vocational rehabilitation services.

It is a privilege to collaborate with such a dedicated group of individuals committed to removing barriers and increasing successes for people with disabilities.

Respectfully submitted,

Casey Stone-Romero

Casey Stone-Romero
Director
New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation





SRC 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.

SRC Accomplishments

- SRC participated in the planning and delivery of the first NM Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) Conference.
- SRC celebrated Assistance Dogs of the West, Carpenters Local Union 1319, and outstanding NMDVR staff with awards at the NM DEAM and NMDVR all-staff conferences.
- With NMDVR support, the SRC once again sent two members to NCSRC and CSAVR this year in Seattle, WA.
- SRC reviewed and provided feedback on several NMDVR Program Policy Information updates at the request of the NMDVR Director.
- SRC updated its committee structure to improve input for services, and successfully recruited several new members.
- SRC members reviewed information gathered during the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment to identify areas for ongoing support and monitoring.
- SRC members participated in strategic planning with NMDVR and DDS staff to establish priorities for the next few years.
- SRC received routine updates on Disability Determination Services (DDS) and NMDVR services including regular notifications regarding fair hearing requests and outcomes.
- SRC continued to request and receive updates regarding expansion of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) into communities across the state.
- SRC provided group and individual trainings for members to increase understanding of their roles and responsibilities as well as our federal mandates.
- SRC continued to request and receive updates regarding Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring and Technical Assistance recommendations and the NMDVR responses.
- SRC received updates on fair hearing results throughout the year and supported 6 NMDVR efforts to update NMAC to bring language into line with current agency procedures.



SRC Functions per the Rehabilitation Act and WIOA:

Working in partnership with NMDVR and in consultation of the state Workforce Development Board, the SRC must:

(1) Review, analyze, and advise the designated State unit regarding the performance of the State unit's responsibilities under this part, particularly responsibilities related to -

- (i)** Eligibility, including Order of Selection;
- (ii)** The extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided; and
- (iii)** Functions performed by State agencies that affect or potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes under this part;

(2) In partnership with the designated State unit -

- (i)** Develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities in accordance with § 361.29(c); and
- (ii)** Evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and submit reports of progress to the Secretary in accordance with § 361.29(e);

(3) Advise the designated State agency and the designated State unit regarding activities carried out under this part and assist in the preparation of the vocational rehabilitation services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations required by this part;

(4) To the extent feasible, conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with -

- (i)** The functions performed by the designated State agency;
- (ii)** The vocational rehabilitation services provided by State agencies and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under the Act; and
- (iii)** The employment outcomes achieved by eligible receiving services under this part, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with those employment outcomes;

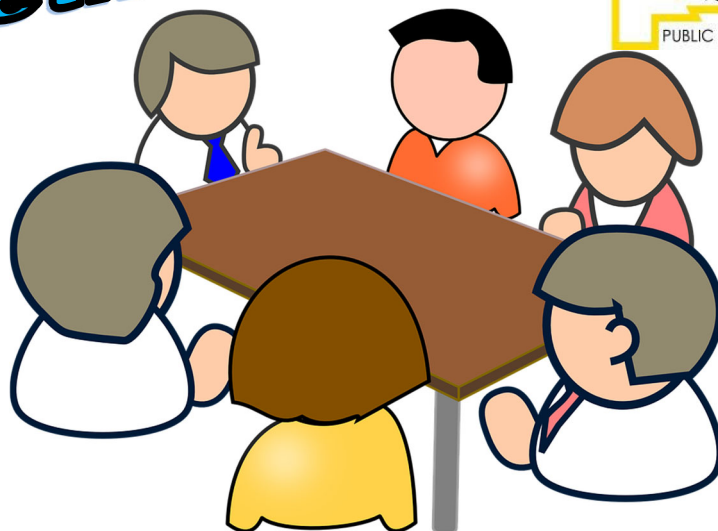
(5) Prepare and submit to the Governor and to the Secretary no later than 90 days after the end of the Federal fiscal year an annual report on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the State and make the report available to the public through appropriate modes of communication;

(6) To avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served, coordinate activities with the activities of other councils within the State, including the Statewide Independent Living Council established under chapter 1, title VII of the Act, the advisory panel established under section 612(a)(21) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council described in section 124 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act, the State mental health planning council established under section 1914(a) of the Public Health Service Act, and the State workforce development board, and with the activities of entities carrying out programs under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

(7) Provide for coordination and the establishment of working relationships between the designated State agency and the Statewide Independent Living Council and centers for independent living within the State; and

(8) Perform other comparable functions, consistent with the purpose of this part, as the Council determines to be appropriate, that are comparable to the other functions performed by the Council.

Partners working together



SUCCESSFUL CAREERS!

AD ASTRA: TO THE STARS... AND BEYOND!

At age 19, **Levi Heisinger** is a full-time educator at Alamogordo's [New Mexico Museum of Space History](#). He works in the Space Theater, makes social media videos, and teaches students about the constellations both at the museum and at their schools.



Through the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) Pre-Employment Transition Services, Heisinger secured an internship at the museum. He impressed the bosses so much that when the internship ended, they created a position just for him—one which was recently extended for another six months.

"It brings my spirits up and lets me know there's more to me than I initially thought," Heisinger says. "I don't have a lot of confidence. It made me believe in myself when they told me they wanted me back."

The native of Indiana became interested in astronomy from his grandfather, "a major astronomy nerd," according to Levi. "He started showing me the stars and pointed out constellations. It got me fascinated to the point where I studied it every single day and became obsessed." Levi considers it a lucky coincidence that his father is from Alamogordo, and he ended up in a town with a space museum.

In addition to his work at the museum, Heisinger is in his second year at New Mexico State University-Alamogordo. NMDVR also helped Heisinger—who has been diagnosed with autism and ADHD—with funding his college education. He's already giving back to fellow New Mexicans with disabilities. One of his current projects is

creating plates of all 88 major constellations for students at the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The stars are slightly raised so students can feel the outline of the star groups.

While enjoying teaching others, Heisinger also likes to learn—and his interests go beyond astronomy. "I want to get many fields of study in, so I have more opportunities," he reasons. He studies languages and would like to work in a hospital. Eventually, he hopes to live in Vermont. "That place is perfect for astronomy when it comes to night sky conditions." If he has a regret, it's not reaching out to NMDVR sooner. "I had a problem asking for help," he recalls. "They made the first move. From there everything went smoothly." So, he advises, "If there's anything somebody might want to do for a career or future job, and they don't know the process, DVR is the best place to go."

Levi Heisinger was honored by the SRC with the **Outstanding NMDVR Participant** award for 2024 due to his job success & creativity giving back.

Levi and his team are pictured below (left to right):



Adrianna Claussen (current VR Counselor), Levi Heisinger, Crystal Hicks (prior VR Counselor who coordinated the job), Lisa Jones (Alamogordo VR Counselor Supervisor).

SUCCESSFUL CAREERS!

REACHING NEW HIGHS AT LOWE'S

Working at a supermarket in Las Vegas, New Mexico is just perfect for **Nasaria Garcia**. The 25-year-old helps clean and bag groceries for 10 hours a week at Lowe's Super Save (not to be confused with the home improvement chain). "I like cleaning out the freezers, and I like earning my own money," says Garcia.

Nasaria was born with a rare genetic disorder: translocation of the ninth chromosome, which has also affected her older sister and aunt. "It does not have a syndrome name," says her mother, Isabel Abeyta. But it does result in developmental delay and affects Nasaria's hearing and speaking ability.



Abeyta says Nasaria has created her own version of sign language to make herself understood. "I talk to a lot of people and use my phone (for writing messages and in speech

therapy)," Garcia says. And once you get to know her, it gets easier to understand her speech. Most importantly, communication barriers did not stop her from singing in the choir and fitting in at West Las Vegas High School. "She has made friends with a lot of the 'regular ed' kids," her mother says. "They still remember her and say 'hi' when they see her."

Nasaria began working at Lowe's through a work-study program at West Las Vegas. When she was getting ready to graduate in 2020, she was referred to the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. NMDVR provided a stipend to Nasaria as well as a job coach while she participated in on-the-job training at Lowe's. When that stint was

over, Nasaria was brought on as a regular employee. She has since completed her time with NMDVR, and the state's Mi Via waiver program continues to provide for the job coach.

"She's a good young lady, with a great personality and great attitude," says store manager Ron Martinez. He adds Nasaria is a good worker who is learning to be more outgoing. "Most of the customers are friendly with her. But she's serious in her work, so she doesn't stop to socialize."

Garcia stays active by competing in track, volleyball, bowling, basketball, and softball in the Special Olympics. She has also been riding horses since age four, most recently through the New Mexico Center for Therapeutic Riding.

"It goes to show that if you have early intervention, it makes a big difference," Abeyta says of her daughter's success.

"Advocate. Advocate. Advocate," she advises. "You have to advocate for your kids and be persistent. The help is out there. Stay plugged in with resources (like NMDVR) to get what your kids need. And focus on their abilities, not the disability."

*Picture to the right:
Nasaria Garcia
on the job
happily cleaning
windows at
Lowe's*



SUCCESSFUL CAREERS!

FLYING HIGH—THANKS TO NMDVR

Becoming a commercial airline pilot was an achievable goal for **John O’Laughlin**, with help from the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

“I don’t think you truly understand the good work you do,” O’Laughlin says of NMDVR’s rehabilitation services. “You took something that was unattainable for me and made it attainable. It has allowed me to not only have a better life for myself, but it’s also made an impact on my family. You allowed me financial security. You took someone at a disadvantage and put them in a position to thrive by providing them with what they need to be successful. That’s an amazing thing.”



A military veteran, he qualified for NMVDR services due to his spinal stenosis, severe arthritis, and other musculoskeletal issues. His aunt and uncle are pilots, which sparked his interest in aviation. O’Laughlin logged some flight time while serving his country, and his wife suggested he pursue that as a post-military civilian career.

“The process is very time consuming and financially burdensome,” the Albuquerque resident says. “(NMDVR) allowed me to overcome the financial barrier that would have kept me from getting the certificates and ratings, and also the flight time I needed.” The agency helped him through the hours requirements as well as the Airline Transport Pilot Combined Training Program, consisting of ground school, simulators, and a knowledge test. Passing those earned him the certifications and ratings necessary to qualify as an airline pilot.

O’Laughlin flies for Envoy, a regional subsidiary of American Airlines. His routes take him throughout most of the United States and Canada, as well as parts of the Caribbean and Mexico. At age 32, his short-term goal is to be promoted to captain and join the parent American within the next few years.

His disability is not something that needed to be overcome, but rather managed. “Some days, it’s fine. Other days, I’ll roll out of bed the wrong way and it throws me off for the rest of the day,” says O’Laughlin. “Sitting in the cockpit doesn’t typically affect me.”

He adds he is not the type of person to reach out for help, and only came to NMDVR on the suggestion of a friend of a friend. “Don’t count yourself out before you even ask,” O’Laughlin advises. “Take a chance. They turned my life 180 degrees.”



Picture above of a plane cockpit

Any individual with a disability who wants to work can benefit from NMDVR empowerment. It is a voluntary program for persons who want to work, increase independence, and contribute to their community.

Apply at <https://referral.dvr.nm.gov>

SUCCESSFUL CAREERS!

ENTREPRENEUR OPENS HIS OWN BUSINESS—OR FIVE

Having been through 30 surgeries for his back, ankle, and hand—and the time away from work that entails—**Anthony LaBadie** knew he would have had difficulty keeping a job working for someone else. So, with assistance from NMDVR he was able to open his own electrical contracting company.

That one enterprise in his hometown of Deming has now expanded to five, with the addition of construction, landscaping, t-shirt design, and a disc jockey service. And that's

not all: LaBadie is looking to start a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) business. On top of all that, he has begun teaching at Western New Mexico University (WNMU).

"I always did a lot of things," the 52-year-old says. "Then I'd get bored and want to do something else. Most people focus on one thing. I focus on several. I guess I'm different."

When he was younger, he couldn't afford to go to school, so he worked in mines and did some construction and electrical work. "I just piddled around a little," LaBadie recalls. "When I could finally go to school, I took the electrical course at Western, then welding, then construction."

LaBadie participated in the vocational rehabilitation program from 2013 to 2020, graduating from WNMU in 2018. NMDVR assisted by paying for books and other educational materials, licensing exams, gas to get back and forth to college, and securing Pell Grants. "I'm so grateful. They carried me for years and got me to where I needed to



be. I probably couldn't have done it without them."

He is now teaching the same classes he once took. LaBadie had no previous experience in the front of a classroom, but he wishes he had started doing it earlier. "I like showing the students the stuff I know—the outcomes of what we start and finish."

"It's nice for them to see what they can build from nothing. The potential some of them have is amazing."

LaBadie also taught the eight people who work for him. "Most of them can do everything, so I can switch them around (between my companies). They're pretty good at learning."

Having been an underdog himself, he hires people who don't have experience. "It's difficult to get in with anybody unless you already have experience," says LaBadie. "I try to accommodate anyone who wants to work. Most learned everything here and they know what they're doing. I'm grateful to have them."

His main goal now is to be healthy so he can be in the field more with his team. But he has two more surgeries coming up, and all the medical issues have also contributed to depression. "I have my family and good friends who encourage me. They are pretty surprised at how far I've come," he says.

LaBadie advises others who have challenges to not give up. "Whatever you want to do, you can do it. If you have a dream, you can make it come true." For help in achieving that dream, people can take advantage of the services NMDVR offers. The agency provided resources to LaBadie that he didn't even know were available. "I was kind of embarrassed, because I was an adult. But they helped me get back into the workplace," he says. "I love what I do. I enjoy helping people, and I enjoy the work."

LaBadie's businesses are on social media at
www.facebook.com/deming.shirts

NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

Statistical Year At-A-Glance

FY23	FY24	Description of Activities and Results
7708	7997	New Mexicans engaged in direct vocational rehabilitation services
1357	1586	Individuals served through Pre-Employment Training Services with NMDVR
7013	7833	New Mexicans received vocational rehabilitation services including: medical treatment, guidance and counseling, training, and job seeking skills
449	542	New Mexicans completed services with a status of Successfully Rehabilitated
688	905	Job-ready or employed but not yet closed
\$24,123	\$28,540	Average yearly employee wage
131%	196%	Percent wage increase after rehabilitation
53%	49%	Applicants served from the Most Significantly Disabled service category
42%	47%	Applicants served from the Significantly Disabled service category
\$10,807,032	\$15,297,251	Total wages for successfully rehabilitated individuals (i.e. those individuals who successfully gained employment and maintained for at least 90 days) during the year

SUCCESSFUL REHABILITATION CLOSURES BY OCCUPATION		
CATEGORY OCCUPATION DESCRIPTION	FY23 Closures	FY24 Closures
Office and Administrative Support	75	76
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	41	68
Food Preparation, Serving, and Related	48	55
Transportation and Material Moving	42	53
Personal Care and Service	44	46
Sales and Related	29	33
Education, Training, and Library	24	28
Community and Social Service	26	27
Healthcare Support	14	20
Production	11	20
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	22	18
Management	9	17
Construction and Extraction	9	15
Business and Financial Operations	5	15
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	12	12
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	11	9
Computer and Mathematical	12	9
Protective Services	6	6
Life, Physical, and Social Science	3	5
Architecture and Engineering	1	4
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	3	3
Military	0	2
Legal	2	1
TOTAL REHABILITATED CLOSURES	449	542

Eligible Participants by Major Disabling Conditions		
Categories of Disabilities	Count FY23	Count FY24
Cognitive Impairment	2246	2552
Psychosocial Impairment	1435	1647
Other Impairment - Mental	951	1123
Other Impairment - Physical	576	679
Hearing Loss - Primary Communication Auditory	314	358
General Physical Debilitation	181	220
Deafness - Primary Communication Visual	158	158
Other Impairment - Orthopedic	141	131
Mobility Impairment	109	130
Mobility and Manipulation/Dexterity Impairment	79	126
Communicative Impairment (expressive/receptive)	111	113
Mobility Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	154	91
Cognitive Impairments (learning, thinking, etc.)	113	82
Deafness - Primary Communication Auditory	66	80
Hearing Loss—Primary Communication Visual	46	44
Other Impairment - Visual	34	44
Other impairment - Hearing	28	37
Psychosocial Impairments (interpersonal/behavioral, etc.)	46	34
Combination of Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	49	31
Manipulation/Dexterity Impairment	21	29
Respiratory Impairment	31	29
Blindness	21	21
Manipulation Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	26	19
Deaf - Blindness	10	14
Mobility and Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological	17	12
Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	18	9
Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	9	7
Other Orthopedic Impairments (e.g. limited range of motion)	9	6
General Physical Debilitation (fatigue, pain, etc.)	13	6
Other Hearing Impairments (Tinnitus, Meniere's etc.)	1	1



SRC Recommendations for 2025

Using the strategic planning completed in 2024, the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment report and considering input from consumers and council members, the following recommendations were developed for NMDVR during the August 2024 SRC meeting. Responses from NMDVR are included here:

- The SRC recommends that NMDVR staff and leadership continue to focus on enhancing communication with consumers to ensure that consumers understand where they are in the VR process as well as their status when receiving services under the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Given feedback in the previous consumer satisfaction survey, this will be an ongoing area of focus.

NMDVR Response: NMDVR continues to be committed to ensuring communication with participants is provided routinely and timely. To address this, NMDVR has implemented several measures to enhance communication. Recently, cell phones have been purchased for vocational rehabilitation counselors, providing an additional means of communication for participant interaction. This initiative allows counselors to communicate via text messages, an increasingly preferred method for many participants. Alongside this, NMDVR continues to offer in-office consultations, virtual appointments, email, and a web-based phone system, ensuring participants have multiple avenues for communication. Additionally, NMDVR will conduct periodic reviews and surveys to assess the effectiveness of these communication channels, ensuring that participants remain informed and engaged throughout their rehabilitation process.

- The SRC recommends that NMDVR enhances the partnership with the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) to ensure ongoing training on assistance technology (AT) needs and AT use is emphasized with agency job coaches and employers. The council further recommends that NMDVR continue to emphasize education of consumers on AT costs, resources, and accessibility so that they can more easily transition when, for example, school-provided tools are no longer available, or reasonable accommodation needs to be requested.

NMDVR Response: NMDVR has collaborated with NMTAP to draft a contract that outlines procedures and policies aimed at expanding AT offerings and access. This partnership will bolster training for job coaches and employers, focusing on practical applications of AT. To further empower consumers, NMDVR is developing educational workshops and informational materials to increase awareness of AT costs, funding resources, and accessibility options. These efforts will ensure that consumers, particularly transition-age youth, can navigate the loss of school-provided tools and confidently advocate for reasonable accommodations in the workplace or educational settings. NMDVR plans to assess these initiatives annually to ensure continued alignment with participant needs.

SRC Recommendations for 2025



- The SRC recommends that all NMDVR services maintain a disability focus, and all new hires at NMDVR continue to participate in comprehensive training on topics including disability awareness and sensitivity, VR services and delivery options including consumer choice regarding employment outcomes, assistive technology and the needs of specific disability populations.

NMDVR Response: NMDVR provides a robust training program for all staff, emphasizing disability awareness, sensitivity, and vocational rehabilitation services. The agency's learning management system hosts more than 100 training modules covering essential topics such as disability populations, ethics, case management, and assistive technology. Additionally, new field staff undergoes a three-week intensive training program that includes in-person and online instruction on specialized areas such as supported employment, self-employment, and services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. To further professional development, NMDVR supports enrollment in the Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) certification program and offers access to the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM) and the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE) training sessions. These efforts are continuously evaluated to enhance staff competency and service delivery.

- The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to develop and identify opportunities for trauma-informed care for agency staff resulting from pandemics, natural disasters and other traumatic events that staff or consumers may experience. The council believes that such training and discussions will help agency staff better address self-care and better assist consumers in navigating crises and/or challenges and establishing effective natural supports.

NMDVR Response: Recognizing the impact of pandemics, natural disasters, and other traumatic events on staff and consumers, NMDVR has prioritized trauma-informed care initiatives. The agency integrates wellness and self-care sessions into its annual statewide all-staff conference and encourages participation in training offered by VR Technical Assistance Centers. These sessions focus on self-awareness, resilience-building, and supporting consumers through crises. NMDVR is exploring partnerships with mental health professionals to provide additional resources and workshops tailored to staff needs, ensuring a supportive work environment that translates into empathetic, effective consumer interactions.

- The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to maximize efforts to utilize available funding sources to ensure positive outcomes for consumers.

NMDVR Response: To ensure optimal use of available funding, NMDVR will continue to initiate a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) to identify program strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for growth. This assessment will guide strategic investments to enhance service quality, address service gaps, and reach underserved populations. Additionally, NMDVR will continue to collaborate with VRTAC-QM to enhance fiscal forecasting skills among leadership, ensuring preparedness to navigate economic challenges. By leveraging data-driven insights and ongoing technical assistance, NMDVR aims to maintain financial efficiency while expanding its impact across New Mexico.



SRC Recommendations for 2025

- The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to give attention to establishment of career ladder opportunities within the agency to increase retention of knowledgeable employees.

NMDVR Response: NMDVR has created several full-time positions within the Rehabilitation Services Unit, offering career ladder opportunities to staff. A recent reorganization has introduced specialized roles, fostering professional growth and retention. These efforts are complemented by expanded training programs, conference participation, and mentorship initiatives. NMDVR is analyzing state and national data on retention trends to implement best practices and develop innovative strategies for retaining skilled staff. The agency remains committed to cultivating a workplace culture that supports long-term career development.

- The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue its ongoing efforts to increase the number and quality of employment outcomes by providing VR training and counseling designed to enhance and improve job-seeking skills for NMDVR participants. The SRC further recommends that NMDVR continue to track and share this data with community partners, legislators, and other interested parties to reflect the true impact of agency services.

NMDVR Response: NMDVR will continue to utilize technical assistance agreements with VRTAC-QM, VRTAC-QE, and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) to build comprehensive training platforms for staff. The agency will also continue to emphasize the importance of data accuracy and validation, linking it directly to the quality of employment outcomes. By sharing success metrics with community partners, legislators, and stakeholders, NMDVR highlights the transformative impact of its services, fostering greater support and collaboration. Success metrics may be found in the NMDVR Annual Report, NMDVR At-A-Glance, on social media platforms, and shared during state and national presentations.

- The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to maintain and expand Pre-ETS throughout the state.

NMDVR Response: NMDVR continues to prioritize Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities. Dedicated staff have been added to the Pre-ETS team to enhance outreach efforts, particularly in rural areas. The agency has fully utilized its reserve funds to provide work-based learning opportunities and is actively recruiting new providers to expand service availability. These initiatives ensure that students with disabilities gain valuable skills and experiences, bridging the gap to successful post-secondary transitions. In FY24, 233 more students across the state received Pre-Employment Transition Services than in the previous year.



SRC Recommendations for 2025

- The SRC recommends that NMDVR maintain access to up-to-date technology within all agency offices statewide to best support agency staff and consumers.

***NMDVR Response:** NMDVR is committed to maintaining state-of-the-art technology in all 24 offices. Recent budget allocations have been dedicated to upgrading office equipment and software, ensuring staff and participants access modern tools. The agency continuously evaluates emerging technologies to identify innovations that can improve service delivery. NMDVR is also enhancing its IT infrastructure to enable seamless communication and collaboration across the state. Regular feedback from staff and consumers will inform ongoing technology investments.*

NMDVR IMPROVEMENTS!!

The federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has fully resolved a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for non-compliance regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services dating back to 2020.

This CAP was the result of NMDVR not spending the required 15% of its federal grant on services for youths with disabilities during the height of the COVID pandemic.

NMDVR showed RSA that policies have been implemented and actions taken indicating the issue has not recurred and ensuring future compliance.

This is the second CAP resolution this year. Earlier corrective actions brought NMDVR into compliance with all relevant federal regulations and requirements after RSA had found past deficiencies in some internal controls and data.

The resolution of the Corrective Action Plans is a testament to the leadership of Casey Stone-Romero during her three years as NMDVR director. Thanks to her and her team, the agency is now officially “CAP Free!”

SRC Members Needed!

You can make a difference in employment for individuals with disabilities as an SRC Member. There are three vacant positions for “**representatives of business, industry or labor**” and one vacant position for “**veterans with a disability**.”

Appointments are by the Governor. To inquire or apply contact:

- *Melissa Salazar (NM Boards and Commissions)* (please use this website link to apply) [Boards and Commissions | Office of the Governor - Michelle Lujan Grisham \(state.nm.us\)](https://www.state.nm.us/gov/boards-commissions/)



SRC Membership

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

Sarah Michaud, Exiting Chair, (New Vistas) Santa Fe

Parent Training and Information Center

Leah Johnson, (Parents Reaching Out) Rio Rancho

Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Bernadine Chavez, (Disability Rights New Mexico) Albuquerque

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

Vacant

Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider

Jennifer Gelhardt, (Best Buddies International) Albuquerque

Business, Industry and Labor

Rebecca Sanford, (Adelante Development Center) Albuquerque

3 Vacant Positions

Disability Advocacy Groups

Tracy Agiovlaitis, SRC Chair, (Governor's Commission on Disability) Albuquerque

Representatives of Individuals with Disabilities

TJ Chester, (Independent Living Resource Center) Socorro

Current or Former NMDVR Participants and Disabled Veteran

Kendra Garcia, Santa Fe

Vacant Disabled Veteran

Section 121 or American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Paula Seanez, SRC Sergeant at Arms, (Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services) Four Corners Area

Marlencia Chee, (Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program) Jemez Pueblo

State Workforce Investment Board

Veronica Alonzo, (Department of Workforce Solutions) Albuquerque

State Educational Agency Representative

Breezy Gutierrez, (NM Public Education Department) Santa Rosa

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

Casey Stone-Romero, Director of NMDVR

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

Nash Sisneros, RSU Administrator

Charles Alan Hamlin, DDS Administrator

Angelina Montoya, SRC Liaison



NMDVR OFFICE LOCATIONS

*(Offices are Statewide —**Albuquerque Offices on next page)*

Alamogordo

2300 Indian Wells Rd
Alamogordo, NM 88310
Fax: 575-205-1716
Phone: 575-437-6550
Toll-free: 888-901-7868

Carlsbad

3605 National Parks Hwy
Carlsbad, NM 88220-1448
Fax: 575-205-1718
Phone: 575-885-8821
Toll-free: 800-645-0258

Clovis

100 E. Manana Blvd #17
Clovis, NM 88101
Fax: 575-215-2478
Phone: 575-763-3437
Toll-free: 800-645-2143

Española

710 B La Joya St
Española, NM 87532
Fax: 505-207-5268
Phone: 505-753-2908
Toll-free: 888-901-3647

Farmington

3401 E. 30th St, Suite B
(Physical Address)
PO Box 960
Farmington, NM 87499
(Mailing Address)
Fax: 505-207-5272
Phone: 505-327-5123
Toll-free: 888-901-7901

Gallup

312 East Nizhoni Blvd
Gallup, NM 87301
Fax: 505-207-5274
Phone: 505-726-1429
Toll-free: 800-279-5681

Hobbs

2120 North Alto #109
Hobbs, NM 88240
Fax: 575-205-1719
Phone: 575-393-3330
Toll-free: 888-201-5859

Las Cruces

3381 Del Rey Blvd
Las Cruces, NM 88012
Fax: 575-205-1715
Phone: 575-524-6135
Toll-free: 888-901-7866

Las Cruces

Loretto Towne Center
505 South Main St,
Suite 142
Las Cruces, NM 88001
Phone: 575-888-3753

Las Vegas

32 NM 65 Hot Springs Blvd
Las Vegas, NM 87701
Fax: 505-207-5269
Phone: 505-425-9365
Toll-free: 888-901-7865

Los Lunas

445 Camino Del Rey SW,
Suite D
Los Lunas, NM 87031
Fax: 505-207-5281
Phone: 505-864-1617
Toll-free: 888-901-7902

Rio Rancho

3791 Southern Blvd SE, Suite
210 (Physical Address)
PO Box 15430 (Mailing
Address)
Rio Rancho, NM 87124
Fax: 505-207-5271
Phone: 505-896-4500
Toll-free: 866-585-5446

Roswell

1014 S. Atkinson Ave
Roswell, NM 88203
Fax: 575-213-1097
Phone: 575-624-6024
Toll-free: 800-644-7732

Santa Fe

525 Camino De Los Marquez,
Ste 200
Santa Fe, NM 87505
Fax: 505-207-2313
Phone: 505-827-3526
Toll-free: 800-773-4072

Santa Fe – Administration

1596 Pacheco St, Suite 203
Santa Fe, NM 87505
Fax: 505-207-2307
Phone: 505-954-8500
Toll-free: 800-224-7005

Silver City

3088 32nd St Bypass Ste A
Silver City, NM 88061
Fax: 575-205-1717
Phone: 575-538-5351
Toll-free: 888-901-7861

Socorro

1014 N. California
Socorro, NM 87801
Fax: 575-205-1720
Phone: 575-835-4243
Toll-free: 888-901-7903

Taos

145 Roy Road, Suite C
Taos, NM 87571
Fax: 575-215-2479
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 Research Office

10510 Research Rd SE,
Suite 800
Albuquerque, NM 87123
Fax: 505-207-5278
Phone: 505-841-6450
Toll-free: 866-526-0863



Albuquerque Lomas Office

111 Lomas Blvd NW,
Suite 422
Albuquerque, NM 87102
Fax: 505-207-5275
Phone: 505-383-2500
Toll-free: 888-818-3259

Albuquerque Oakland Administration Office

5200 Oakland Ave NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113
Fax: 505-207-5270

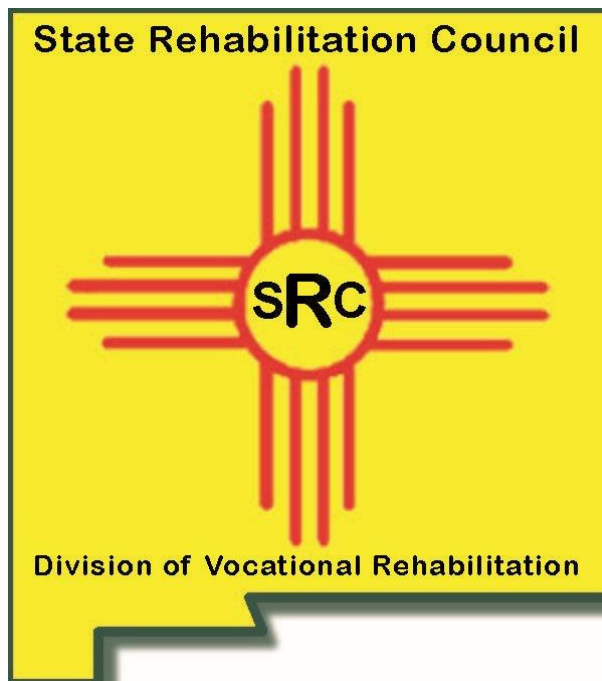
Albuquerque Quail Office

5205 Quail NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120
Fax: 505-207-5273
Phone: 505-836-1774
Toll-free: 888-818-3263

Albuquerque South Valley Office

1710 Rio Bravo SW
Albuquerque, NM 87105
Fax: 505-207-5280
Phone: 505-877-7673
Toll-free: 888-815-2981





Where does the money come from to help New Mexicans with Disabilities get jobs?

The NM Vocational Rehabilitation program receives 78.7% of its funding through a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). For federal fiscal year 2024, the total awarded is \$24,698,300. The remaining 21.3% is funded by state matching funds from state appropriations.

