

## State Rehabilitation Council

Quarterly Meeting

May 15, 2025

NMDVR Albuquerque Administrative Office

5200 Oakland Ave NE

Albuquerque, NM 87113

SRC Meeting 10 am

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- I. Call to Order/Introductions/Roll Call  
Meeting called to order at 10:02am

### Roll Call:

Tracy Agiovlasis, Present

Veronica Alonzo, Present

Kendra Garcia, Present

TJ Chester, Present

Jennifer Gelhardt, Present

Rebecca Sandford, Present

Paula Seanez, Present

Alexandra Lutz, Present (in place for Breezy Gutierrez)

Bernadine Chavez, Present arrived at 11:29am

### Guests:

Raven Macias, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Kendra Karp, Interim Director Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Antoinette Holmes, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Rudy Grano, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Michelle Bowdon, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Sasha King, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

## II. Action Items

### A. Approval of Agenda (action item)

TJ Chester motions to approve agenda

Paula Seanez seconds motion

Unanimously approved

### B. Approval of Minutes (action item)

Jennifer Gelhardt motions to approve minutes as is

Kendra Garcia seconds

Unanimously approved

## III. DVR Directors Reports

### A. Agency Interim Director – Kendra Karp

#### a. RSU numbers

i. as of July 2024- May 8,2025 totals are as follows,

1. students served 903

2. VR applications Applications2872

3. determined eligible 2,451,

4. receiving services 1,883
  5. cases closed 483.
  6. application to eligibility is 93% service to closer 63%
- b. Time to service before determined eligible less than 30 days
- c. Vacancies
  1. Overall is at a 20% vacancies rate
  2. ASU is at a 12% vacancies rate
  3. RSU is at a 11% Vacancies rate
  4. DDS 35% Vacancies rate (due to fundings)
  5. 15 positions are in the process of being filled.
- d. Fundings:
  - i. Received last federal award 12 million dollars
  - ii. Total 24 million for FY25
  - iii. RSU spent \$4.5 million more in FY25 compared to FY23
  - iv. On 4/30/2025 sign off was done for the FY26 annual budget of 64 million dollars
- e. Senate Bill 376 -Effective July 1,2025 health care benefit for State Employees
  - i. 80% of health care premiums will be contributed by the State.
    1. \$887,000 budget for FY26 for health care will be used as State matching funds
    2. All employees will be covered by Bill 376 regardless of pay band.
    3. The current match for funds before bill 376 comes in to play was based off of pay band and employment type.
- f. Recently signed sub lease in Gallup NMDVR office with Navajo nation office of special education and Navajo office
- g. Working with PED on an MOU under legal review, for an annual update.
- h. Recommendations given by SRC
  - i. Continue focusing on communication with clients.
    1. 100 cell phones added for staff on the field including V Councilors and techs.
  - ii. New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) statewide training for NMDVR staff
    1. Sessions began in April 2025 in Roswell as Albuquerque, and Las Cruces on June 11,2025
      - a. Offers assistance for any tech assistant that is needed as well as technology program.
  - iii. All NMDVR services maintain disability focus all employees participating in comprehensive training topics such as disability awareness, insensitivity, VR services, delivery options including consumer choice regarding employee outcomes
    1. 320 on demand courses on yes ESLMS
      - a. Case management
      - b. Virtual counseling ADA
      - c. Medical aspects of disabilities, ethics transition and motivation
    2. Contracts through September
    3. Able to track and see who is logging in courses completed amount of time taken
  - iv. Employment outcome data
    1. Ensure transparency and outcomes on participants

- a. Updates will be incorporated into public reports, social media content, as well as national presentations.
    - b. Update is in response to recommendations for ongoing efforts to increase the number of quality employment outcomes.
      - i. Communicate more accurately.
  - v. Getting to school districts to utilize and communicate with DVR on available programming.
    - 1. MOU working with PED for school districts.
    - 2. For PED to work on getting services for school aged children MOU to cover cost
    - 3. Adding services that special education already provides.
    - 4. Helpful hiring dedicated councilors has made a difference in helping our schools and children
      - a. Background clearance
  - vi. VR counselors serve over 150 schools
  - vii. 2 New Cisco Conference units (research office)
    - 1. By the first week of June the conference room should be available to use.
      - a. Holds up to 100 people
      - b. It has 2 big monitors (high resolution)
      - c. Microphone in the ceiling
  - viii. NMLDS New Mexico Longitude Data System aka Rise NM
    - 1. Educational outcomes to link data with state agencies.
    - 2. Google is the primary vender for NMLDS.
    - 3. Currently under development.
    - 4. Cradle to career

## B. RSU Update – Antoinette Holmes & a Field Operations Director (FOD)

### a. Transition

- i. Needs assessments from local education agencies
  - 1. 70 percent response rate from schools
  - 2. Project Surge sites have come to an end.
  - 3. 60 percent placement rate
  - 4. Several sites will provide work base learning throughout the summer.
  - 5. Summer work base learning fee for service
  - 6. Opportunity for new students looking
- ii. Client services
  - 1. Increase client service dollars.
  - 2. Strategies on maintaining spending 11 million spent
- iii. Training cohort
  - 1. Quality management training was in late April. Areas in improvement and concern.
  - 2. Acher cohort 15 employees in training 16 weeks
    - a. Partners for employment education focus (supported by UMN)
    - b. Support employment and waver program
    - c. Association of community employment rehabilitation
    - d. Free for venders to receive training
    - e. Ran in spring and in fall.
    - f. Self-employment, eligibility focus and funding
- iv. Employment leadership visit this month RSU leadership

1. Discuss DDS driving objectives and goals utilize all support from UNM how the system is working.
- v. Dedicated team that does data validation

C. Rudy Grano

- a. New Area 10 Loretto (Las Cruces), Silver City and Alamogordo, due to the amount of staffing overpowering.
  - i. Area 10 will serve
    1. Demming
    2. Lords' berg
    3. Silver city
    4. South of Las Cruces
  - ii. Area 3 has been split in half
    1. Del Rey will continue as part of area 3 largest staffed location
- b. Success plan needed for RSU
- c. Process of feedback from SRC
  - i. Being involved in the process
  - ii. Bring a review committee
    1. Map a process and share with SRC to schedule a meeting by
    2. Have legal on committee and client assistance be included.
    3. Advance notice is important.
      - a. Ad Hop Committee 'will carry on a conversation
        - i. TJ Chester
        - ii. Jennifer Gelhardt
        - iii. Bernadine Chavez
  - iii. Communication plan by RSU

D. DDS Administrator – Alan Hamlin

- a. Kendra Karp on behalf of Alan
  - i. SSA key change is
    1. Elimination of reginal offices
    2. DDS now primarily engages with SSA headquarters.
  - ii. Workload targets
    1. SSA has updated the new workload targets for the physical year which are in line with DDS current performance
    2. Performance accuracy to date stands at 97% on target goal.
  - iii. Program support
    1. Timely case processing
    2. Good case review
    3. Good customer service
  - iv. DDS has a medical consultant for internal and external cliental.

E. Update on Fair Hearings – Michelle Bowdon

- a. Dismissed for failure to prosecute. Disability rights of New Mexico participant reached out and requested to be dismissed
- b. Resolved through mediation communication issue was resolved

IV. 121 Report – Paula Seanez & Marcie Chee

- a. • Navajo Nation is in its 4th year of funding and continues to work to review grant outcomes and budgets to meet its goals and objectives. The program officers assigned to the AIVRS programs are critical in providing guidance to tribes. The Navajo Nation continues to provide independent living services based on funds allocated by the Navajo Nation Council. Accessibility projects, including ramps, home modification and assistive devices are some services that can be provided.
- b. Laguna Acoma Connections will start its final year and will be submitting an application in 2026. Director, Petra Solimon continues to work through the MOU to address collaborative efforts. On March 23, 2025, Charlene provided a presentation to Navajo Nation staff on Transition and Pre-ETS services.
- c. The Consortia on Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) is scheduled for June 3-5, 2025 in Spokane, WA. We are looking forward to the networking and professional development session planned for the upcoming conference. The tribes in the Washington area are hosting the CANAR conference.
- d. Navajo Nation will be celebrating their 50-year anniversary. The Navajo Nation will plan a celebration along with the Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disability. The Annual CANAR conference will be held in Phoenix/Chandler, AZ and will be dedicated to the 50 year anniversary (1975-2025) - Self Determination to Resiliency. The dates for CANAR will be the first week in December 2025. 2
- e. Vacancies for Navajo Nation – The Navajo Nation has filled most of its vacancies. 2 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) and 1 Rehabilitation Technician vacancies remain in Farmington, NM. Challenges with recruitment and retention. The sublease with NMDVR office in Gallup was finalized May 1, 2025. The Navajo Nation program VRC and Rehabilitation will co-locate with the NMDVR staff in Gallup.
- f. Public Law (PL) 102-477 Indian Employment, Training and Related Services Demonstration Act a federal law that allows federally recognized tribes and Alaska Natives entities to streamline and combine various federal grant programs related to employment training and related services to a single cohesive plan. The goal is to reduce unemployment in tribal communities by creating economic opportunities and streamline administrative processes. Tribal self-determination for tribes to have control over employment and training programs.
- g. The continued Job Development positions remain vacant. The Navajo Nation is working with the University of Boston/Institute for Community Inclusion for their Innovative Guided Rehabilitation Employer Engagement Training. These models include training on WISE models for Job Development and Job Placement specialists.

V. SRC Chairperson's Report – Tracy Agiovlaitis, Chair

- a. Sarah is back on the committee
- b. Sasha in process to become chair member
  - 1. Possible VR counsel position for committee
- c. 3 Positions currently still open
  - 1. Business partners
  - 2. one veteran
- d. By Laws:

1. When someone gets to the end of their term they are to be off the council for 3 months before they can reapply.
2. Kendra Garcia and Tracy Agiovlasitis both expire this August
  - a. Next meeting may be run by the Vice Chair Jennifer Gelhardt
- e. Request for written reports or bullets makes it easier to jot down notes.
- f. It is important to state your name when speaking.

## VII. Old Business

- A. Consumer Satisfaction Survey Update – Jen Gelhardt & Bernadine Chavez
  - a. Scrapped the survey
    - i. Identify where survey comes from
    - ii. Another meeting, more suggestions
    - iii. Develop new survey
    - iv. How many surveys should we have?
    - v. Work with a consultant. Being able to single out ages while taking the surveys.
    - vi. Request Sasha help to overview the survey.
    - vii. The percentage rate needs to go up
    - viii. DVR knowing about when survey comes out so that client can keep look out and be more responsive.

## VIII. New Business

- A. CSAVR Update from attendees
  - a. More cautious on money
  - b. Rehab act presentations for directors, lots of materials are very educational
  - c. Concern of Department of education. Not very much insight
  - d. Chris pope knows a lot on the program
  - e. Federal performance. Spend money be cautious, don't save or send money back.
- B. Update regarding New Director – Kendra Karp
  - a. PED is still interviewing
- C. Disability Employment Awareness Month – Awards & Committees
  - a. October 15<sup>th</sup> Bernafacio
  - b. Lisa McNivine planning calls
  - c. Presenting awards at Deam Conference
    1. Outstanding employer
    2. Outstanding service provider
  - d. For DVR
    1. outstanding participant
    2. outstanding staff member
    3. outstanding supervisor
  - e. No all-staff DVR meeting this year, all awards will be presented at DEAM.
  - f. Participant being publicly acknowledged
- D. Next Meeting
  - a. Next meeting August 14, 2025
    - i. Destination: Lomas

## IX. Comments from Audience

## X. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:51 pm By Tracy Agiovlasitis

*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 NM DVR 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.*

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(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.)