

## 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 Agiovlasitis, Present

Veronica Alonzo, Present

Kendra Garcia, Present

TJ Chester, Present

Jennifer Gelhardt, Present

Rebecca Sanford, Present

Paula Seanez, Present

Alexandra Lutz, Present proxy 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  
Kendra Garcia seconds motion  
Unanimously approved
- III. DVR Directors Reports
- A. Agency Interim Director – Kendra Karp
- a. RSU
- i. As of July 2024 - May 8, 2025 totals are as follows
1. Students served 903
  2. VR Applications 2,872
    - a. Determined Eligible 2,451

3. Receiving Services 1,883
4. Cases closed 483
5. Application to eligibility is 93%
  - a. Service to close 63%
  - ii. Time to service before determined eligible less than 30 days
- b. Vacancy Rates
  1. ASU- 12%
  2. RSU- 11%
  3. DDS- 35%
  4. Overall- 20%
  5. 15 positions are in the process of being filled
- c. Funding
  - i. Received last federal award 12 million dollars
    1. Total 24 million for FY25
  - ii. RSU spent \$4.5 million more in FY25 compared to FY23
  - iii. On 4/30/2025 signatures were signed off for the FY26 annual budget of 64 million dollars
- d. Senate Bill 376
  - i. Effective July 1, 2025 health care benefit for State Employees
  - ii. 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 into play was based off of pay band and employment type
- e. Recently signed sub lease in Gallup NMDVR office with Navajo nation office of Special Education and Navajo office
- f. Working with PED on an MOU
  - i. Currently under legal review
- g. Recommendations given by SRC
  - i. Continue focusing on communication with clients
    1. 100 cell phones assigned to staff including VR Councilors and Tech's
  - ii. New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) statewide training for NMDVR staff
    1. Sessions began in April 2025 in Roswell, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces
  - 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 YESLMS
      - a. Case management
      - b. Virtual counseling
      - c. Medical aspects of disabilities, ethics transition and motivation
    2. Contract 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
- v. Getting to school districts to utilize and communicate with DVR on available programming
  - 1. MOU working with PED for school districts
  - 2. PED to work on getting services for school aged children
    - a. 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
- vi. VR counselors serve over 150 schools
- vii. 2 New Cisco Conference units at the DVR Research office
  - 1. By the first week of June the conference room should be available to use.
    - a. Holds up to 100 people
    - b. 2 monitors with 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% response rate from schools
      - Project Surge sites have come to an end
    - 2. 60% placement rate
    - 3. Several sites will provide work base learning throughout the summer
    - 4. Summer work base learning fee for service
    - 5. Opportunity for new students
  - ii. Client services
    - 1. Increase client service dollars
    - 2. Strategies on maintaining spending
      - a. 11 million spent
  - iii. Training Cohort
    - 1. Quality management training was in late April
      - a. Areas in improvement and concern
    - 2. ACRE Cohort
      - a. 15 employees in training
      - b. Partners for Employment Education Focus
        - i. Supported by UNM
      - c. Support Employment and waiver program
      - d. Association of Community Employment Rehabilitation
      - e. Free for vendors to receive training
      - f. Runs in the Spring and Fall
      - g. Self-employment, eligibility focus and funding
  - iv. Employment visit this month from 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. DVR Area 10 structure
  - i. Las Cruces Loretto Office
  - ii. Silver City
  - iii. Alamogordo
  - iv. Area 10 will serve
    1. Demming
    2. Lordsburg
    3. Silver City
    4. South of Las Cruces
  - v. Area 3
    1. Las Cruces Del Rey office will be the only office in Area 3 with the split of area 10 above
- b. Success plan needed for RSU
- c. Process of feedback from SRC
  - i. Being involved in the process
  - ii. Review Committee
    1. Map a process and share with SRC to schedule a meeting
    2. Have legal on committee and client assistance be included
    3. Advance notice is important
      - a. Ad Hoc Committee
        - 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 Hamlin
  - i. SSA key change is
    1. Elimination of regional offices
    2. DDS now primarily engages with SSA headquarters
  - ii. Workload targets
    1. SSA has updated the new workload targets for the fiscal year which are in line with NMDDS 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
  - i. Disability rights of New Mexico participant reached out and requested to be dismissed
- b. Resolved through mediation, communication issues were resolved

IV. 121 Report – Paula Seanez

- 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
  - a. The program officers assigned to the AIVRS programs are critical in providing guidance to tribes
  - b. Navajo Nation continues to provide independent living services based on funds allocated by the Navajo Nation Council.
    - i. 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
  - a. Director, Petra Solimon continues to work through the MOU to address collaborative efforts
- c. March 23, 2025, Charlene provided a presentation to Navajo Nation staff on Transition and Pre-ETS services
- d. The Consortia on Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) is scheduled for June 3-5, 2025 in Spokane, WA
  - a. We are looking forward to the networking and professional development session planned for the upcoming conference
  - b. Tribes in the Washington area are hosting the CANAR conference
  - c. Navajo Nation will be celebrating their 50-year anniversary
  - d. Navajo Nation will plan a celebration along with the Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disability.
  - e. 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.
    - i. Dates for CANAR will be the first week in December 2025
- e. Vacancies for Navajo Nation
  - a. Navajo Nation has filled most of its vacancies
    - i. 2 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) and 1 Rehabilitation Technician vacancies remain in Farmington
    - ii. Challenges with recruitment and retention
- f. Sublease with NMDVR office in Gallup was finalized May 1, 2025
  - a. The Navajo Nation program VRC and Rehabilitation will co-locate with the NMDVR staff in Gallup.
- g. 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
  - a. The goal is to reduce unemployment in tribal communities by creating economic opportunities and streamline administrative processes
  - b. Tribal self-determination for tribes to have control over employment and training programs
- h. The continued Job Development positions remain vacant
  - a. 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 Agiovlasitis, Chair
  - a. Sarah is back on the committee
  - b. Sasha is in process of becoming a 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 SRC terms both expire August 2025
      - a. November meeting may be run by the Vice Chair Jennifer Gelhardt

## VII. Old Business

- A. Consumer Satisfaction Survey Update – Jen Gelhardt & Bernadine Chavez
  - a. Scrapped the survey
    - i. Another meeting, more suggestions
    - ii. Develop new survey
    - iii. How many surveys should we have?
    - iv. Work with a consultant
      - 1. Being able to single out ages while taking the surveys
    - v. Request Sasha's help to overview the survey
    - vi. DVR knowing about when survey comes out so that clients can keep a 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
    - i. not very much insight
  - d. Chris Pope knows a lot on the program
  - e. Federal performance
    - i. 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> Berna Facio
  - b. Lisa McNiven planning calls
  - c. Presenting awards at DEAM Conference
    - 1. Outstanding Employer
    - 2. Outstanding Service Provider
  - d. DVR Awards
    - 1. Outstanding Participant
    - 2. Outstanding Staff member
    - 3. Outstanding Supervisor
  - e. There will not be a DVR All Staff meeting this year
    - i. 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

No comments from audience

X. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:51 pm

*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.)