

## State Rehabilitation Council

Quarterly Meeting

August 14, 2025

NMDVR Albuquerque Lomas Office

111 Lomas Blvd NW, Suite 422

Albuquerque, NM 87113

SRC Meeting 10 am

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- I. Call to Order/Introductions/Roll Call  
Meeting called to order at 10:06am

### **Roll Call:**

TJ Chester, Present  
Vernoica Alonzo, Present  
Kendra Karp, Present  
Sarah Michaud, Present  
Kendra Garcia, Present  
Jennifer Gelhardt, Present  
Bernadine Chavez, Present  
Tracy Agiovlasitis, Present  
Alexandra Lutz, Present Proxy for Breezy Gutierrez  
Paula Seanez, Present  
Marlencia Chee, Present

### **Guests:**

Rudy Grano, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)  
Angelina Montoya, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)  
Antoinette Holmes, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)  
Sasha King, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

- II. Action Items
- A. Approval of Agenda (action item)
    - TJ Chester accepts agenda as written
    - Bernadine Chavez seconds motion
    - Unanimously approved
  - B. Approval of Minutes (action item)
    - Spelling corrections needed to acronyms, names, and who made what reports
    - Paula Seanez motions to approve minutes with corrections
    - Veronica Alonzo seconds motion
    - Unanimously approved
- III. DVR Directors Reports
- A. Agency Interim Director – Kendra Karp
    - a. NMDVR at a glance
      - i. NMDVR by the numbers, Fiscal Year (FY) 2025
        - 1. \$18.88 average hourly employee wage of participants successfully rehabilitated
        - 2. 57 interns graduated from the yearlong Project SEARCH program at 8 locations around the state

3. 99.4% decisional accuracy in processing claims by DDS
4. 645 New Mexicans with a disability attained successful employment
5. 2,433 New Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) developed
6. 5,601 Pre-Employment Transition Services provided to students with disabilities
7. 8,718 New Mexicans engaged in VR services
8. 24,427 SSA disability claims processed by DDS team
9. \$19,120,227.36 total wages for successful employed individuals with disabilities
- b. Agency State Plan modifications are due soon
  - i. Rudy and Antoinette are planning on reaching out to the council to gather input
- c. Federal
  - i. DVR is in a secure spot
- d. Director update
  - i. PED is working on it
- B. RSU Update
  - a. Antoinette Holmes
    - i. RSU Financials
      1. Year End Spending totals
        - a. RSU client service funding for FY25 was \$14,100,651.66. These are direct client service dollars including PRE-ETS spending
      2. DVR was flat funded moving in the new FY
        - a. Client service funding was distributed at \$14 million
    - ii. Updates to address fiscal forecasting and appropriate budget planning for services
      1. Quarterly cycle of authorizations
        - a. Close out of open authorizations
        - b. Helps maintain where we are in spending
      2. Period of Performance and RSA compliance in grant commitments
      3. Addressing attrition rates
    - iii. SE Coordinator Updates
      1. 511 consultations with subminimum wage recipients have been completed for the cycle
      2. New vendor agreements
        - a. Vendor training 1:1
      3. Current revisions underway on the MOU with DDSD
    - iv. RSU Training
      1. DRAN Office hours training on 07/11/2025: 29 Attendees
      2. Rehab Academy Summer Week 1 (07/21/2025 – 07/25/2025): 10 Attendees
      3. Rehab Academy Summer Week 2 (08/18/2025 – 08/22/2025) 11 Registrants
      4. Financial Training 08/27/2025: 31 Registrants
      5. Office Hours Training for Pre-ETS 08/28/2025: 27 Registrants
    - v. Conference / National Training Cohorts
      1. Project SEARCH Conference (07/14/2025 – 07/18/2025): 2 Attendees

2. LeadVR National Training Cohort (08/18/2025 – 03/16/2026): 3 Attendees
3. NET Summitt (09/24/2025 – 09/25/2025): 2 Attendees
4. NENA Conference (09/16/2025 – 09/25/2025): 2 Attendees
5. Navigating Disability Benefits and Work (NABWIS) Conference (10/07/2025 – 10/09/2025): 1 Attendee
6. NRLI (02/24/2025 – 12/04/2025): 1 Attendee
- vi. Calendar Year 2025 (Through May) Conference supported
  1. PFE Reaching New Heights in SE (04/10/2025 – 04/11/2025) 22 Attendees
  2. ADA Symposium each: 2 Attendees
  3. NRLI each: 2 Attendees
  4. CSAVR: 3 Attendees
  5. NM Public Procurement Conference (04/14/2025 – 04/16/2025): 1 Attendee
  6. NTACT:C Capacity Building Institute (05/06/2025 – 05/08/2025): 2 Attendees
  7. VRTAC-QE Symposium (05/21/2025 – 05/22/2025): 5 Attendees
  8. Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work Training Symposium (03/04/2025 – 03/06/2025)
- vii. Regional Financial Trainings
  1. Area 6 Financial Training 01/16/2025: 10 Attendees
  2. Area 1 Financial Training 01/22/2025: 11 Attendees
  3. Area 9 Financial Training 01/29/2025: 6 Attendees
  4. Area 3 Financial Training 02/05/2025: 19 Attendees
  5. Area 4 Financial Training 02/12/2025: 14 Attendees
  6. Quarterly Financial Procedures 05/29/2025
    - a. Region A: 67 Attendees
  7. Quarterly Financial Procedures 06/05/2025
    - a. Region B: 32 Attendees
  8. Quarterly Financial Procedures 06/11/2025
    - a. Region C: 37 Attendees
- viii. NMTAP Regional Trainings
  1. Roswell 04/16/2025
  2. Albuquerque 05/15/2025: 72 Attendees
  3. NMTAP Training 06/11/25
    - a. Las Cruces: 15 Attendees
  4. NMTAP Training 06/27/25
    - a. Online: 9 Attendees
- ix. AWARE Data Page Trainings
  1. Region A 04/15/2025: 38 Attendees
  2. Region B 04/16/2025: 48 Attendees
  3. Region C 04/22/2025: 54 Attendees
- x. Pre-ETS Fee for Service / Project Search Training: 60 Attendees
- xi. Office Hours Presentations
  1. Documentation 01/10/2025: 27 Attendees
  2. Self-Employment 02/28/2025: 46 Attendees
  3. DRAN Office Hours Training 06/27/2025: 71 Attendees
- xii. Title IX Training in YesLMS 02/14/2025: 132 Attendees
- xiii. Rehab Academy Cohort TA Sessions

1. Applications, Intakes, Caseload Management 04/03/2025: 12 Attendees
2. Eligibility Best Practices 04/17/2025: 9 Attendees
3. Comparable Benefits 05/02/2025: 11 Attendees
- xiv. NMDVR Leadership
  1. With John Walsh and Ronald Vessell (04/29/2025 – 04/30/2025): 36 Attendees
- xv. Job Development Agreement and Process Overview
  1. Region A: 39 Attendees
  2. Region B: 53 Attendees
  3. Region C: 49 Attendees
- xvi. College of Employment Services / ACRE Training (02/17/2025 – 05/30/2025): 14 Attendees
- xvii. Business Outreach Team
  1. ADA Coordinator, iGreet, and DWS Labor market training completed by BOCs
  2. 6<sup>th</sup> Performance indicator baseline data will be collected by RSA
    - a. AWARE has been adapted to begin additional reporting on services to employers
  3. Fiscal Year 2026
    - a. Launched Employer Module in AWARE
    - b. Training and development of BOCs in training essentials and best practices (universal design, adult learning theory, engagement, openers/closers, AV equipment, virtual training software, PowerPoint development) customer service, Motivational Interviewing, documentation, SMART Goals, time management, labor market analysis, and job analysis
    - c. Curriculum development for employers and DVR staff
      - i. ADA, reasonable accommodation, safety planning, Wells Fargo neurodivergent training
    - d. Overhaul Business Outreach portion of the DVR website
    - e. LMS and e-learning for employers
    - f. Increase recruitment, retention, education and partnerships for both internal and external customers
    - g. Operating procedures for Business Outreach unit
- xviii. Benefits Advisement
  1. During this past FY the Benefits Advisement Team conducted 712 intake sessions, provided 803 intensive counseling services, supported 1,927 participants through forms of benefits counseling
- xix. Data
  1. Collaboration with CFB to combine numbers and submit ETA-9169 for Program Year 2024 by October 1, 2025
  2. Internal Audits on CMS Security Templates to ensure internal controls are being adhered to
  3. Submit RSA-911 PY 2025 Q1 by 11/15/25, PY2025 Q2 by 2/15/26, PY2025 Q3 by 5/15/25 and PY2025 Q4 by 8/15/25
  4. Data Imports with UI/SWIS data are current

5. Provide SWP Deputy Director Data for Gov Energy and Infrastructure Initiative Oct 15, 2025, January 15, 2026, April 15, 2026, and July 15, 2026
- xx. PY24/FY25 Completed
  1. RSU Attrition Report and Analysis tracking
  2. Updated and Conducted annual Data Validation training to all RSU plus Rehab Academy with Pre and Post Knowledge Checks
  3. Created Period of Performance Policy
  4. Data Manager represented New Mexico in the 2025 Summit Group Winter Forum in both the Data Literacy Summit Panel and The Intersection between program evaluation and fiscal management in state VR Panel
  5. Creation of Authorization Trackers and Master Tracker Report
  6. Created New 5-day AWARE Navigation Training
  7. Represent and attend Vocational Rehabilitation Meetings
    - a. QAA+, Case Management CoP, VRTACQM Case Review CoP, VRTACQM Fiscal Forecasting CoP
- xxi. PY25/FY26
  1. Launch new AWARE Navigation Training for all AREAs
  2. Update Data Validation Policy and Presentation
    - a. per new TAC 19-01
  3. Conduct Formal Case Reviews on WIOA/VR Data Validation
  4. Updating the Understanding and Protecting PII Specific to SSA Policy
- b. RSU Update- Rudy Grano
  - i. 2023 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)
    1. CSNA completed every 3 years
    2. Feeds into our state plan
    3. Highlights:
      - a. Overall Agency Performance
      - b. DVR has returned to pre-pandemic performance levels in many areas
      - c. Staff remain committed and caring despite shortages
      - d. Passed all WIOA performance measures for PY 2022
      - e. Recruitment and retention remain key challenges
      - f. Need for greater community awareness and staff development
      - g. Reduce rate of exits prior to plan development.
        - i. Recommendations:
          - ii. Increase staff pay to improve recruitment/retention
          - iii. Leverage AI technology for communication and data
          - iv. Expand self-employment and remote work preparation
          - v. Broaden marketing and outreach efforts
  - ii. Needs of Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities
    1. Barriers: transportation, job skills, education/training, mental health services
    2. Limited broadband access and assistive tech in rural areas

3. Shortage of supported employment services outside urban areas
4. fear of benefit loss impacts SSA beneficiaries' employment pursuit
5. Affordable housing and poverty remain significant issues
  - a. Recommendations:
  - b. Creative solutions for rural transportation
  - c. Conduct connectivity assessments; supply digital access tools
  - d. Strengthen partnerships with CILs and BHSD
  - e. Expand collaboration with recovery programs and counselor training
- iii. Needs of Individuals from Different Ethnic Groups
  1. Language barriers and interpreter shortages limit access
  2. Service reach aligns with state racial demographics, but rural access lags
  3. Deaf individuals underserved due to counselor/interpreter shortage
    - a. Recommendations:
    - b. Regular meetings with tribal VR programs
    - c. Support staff attendance at cultural and cross-training conferences
    - d. Build ties with agencies serving Deaf and Hispanic communities
- iv. Needs of Youth and Students with Disabilities in Transition
  1. More work experience and soft skills needed
  2. Transition counselors have strong school partnerships
  3. Work-based learning is critical for student success
  4. Parental engagement is essential; SSI benefit fears persist
    - a. Recommendations:
    - b. Expand work-based learning, replicate Project Search successes
    - c. Outreach to families of SSI recipients
    - d. Establish Model Transition Program sites
- v. Needs of Individuals Served Through Other Workforce Development Components
  1. DVR often refers clients to Workforce Connection Centers
  2. Co-location benefits clients but staff need disability training and updated tech
    - a. Recommendations:
    - b. Share case co-funding examples
    - c. Develop apprenticeships and customized training
    - d. Provide ongoing cross-training for staff
- vi. Community Rehabilitation Programs
  1. Pandemic reduced service provider staffing
  2. Need for more VR services in rural areas and SE providers statewide
  3. Rates for purchased services may need revision
    - a. Recommendations:
    - b. Review/revise service rates
    - c. Bring services in-house if external growth stalls
    - d. Create a provider network for communication and best practices

vii. Needs of Businesses/ Employer Engagement

1. Employers need education on training candidates with disabilities
2. DVR hiring staff for business relations
3. Post-pandemic employer openness to disability hiring has increased
  - a. Recommendations:
  - b. Provide disability awareness training to employers
  - c. Partner to expand apprenticeship opportunities
  - d. Launch annual employer awards recognizing inclusive hiring

C. DDS Administrator – Kendra Karp on behalf of Alan Hamlin

- a. Workloads
  - i. Working to reach SSA budgets workload targets by end of the federal fiscal year
- b. Operations
  - i. Average Production per examiner
    1. 12.4 cases per week, up from 11.3 shared in May meeting
- c. Quality
  - i. Year-to-date Performance Accuracy
    1. 99.4%
    2. NM DDS is #3 nationally
    3. SSA Public Service Indicator (PSI) goal 97%
- d. Fiscal
  - i. Wonderful relationship and communication with DVR Fiscal unit and staff
  - ii. Routine communication and very focus on reduction of efforts and improved product/deliverables
- e. Federal / State Relationship
  - i. Working to share communication from SSA with DVR leadership to ensure communication is shared
  - ii. Alan continues to work to advocate for the staff of the NM DDS and those we serve

D. Update on Fair Hearings – Kendra Karp

- a. No Fair Hearings to report

IV. 121 Report – Paula Seanez

- a. Rehab services admin
  - a. Competitive application process
  - b. Up for renewal in 2026
    - i. Applying for new grant working with Program officer to spend down from our last grant year
    - ii. Successful in getting full grant award for year 5
    - iii. Looking at goals and objectives while looking at the new grant
      1. Invitation to Rudy Grano to assist
    - iv. Look at how we have done in the past 4 years and what are the needs
      1. Put together a fundable application
    - v. Continuing to work with the Senora Center of Excellence and Disability for transition
      1. Work based
      2. Pilot for Employment First Opportunities

- c. Filled most vacancies except in Farmington
  - d. Lease Agreement with NMDVR Gallup office
    - i. Looking to get connectivity in the building
    - ii. Furthering our partnership in the Gallup area
      - 1. Zuni
  - e. CANAR-Spokane Conference
    - i. Well attended over 200
      - 1. Most participants in years
      - 2. Our Program staff benefited
    - ii. September 4-6 in Salt Lake City
      - 1. New Directors training
      - 2. Training travel, grant process, policy and procedures
  - f. Navajo 50-year celebration
    - i. Set for October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025
      - 1. Our Advisory Council is hosting
      - 2. Theme "Our Story"
  - g. CANAR in Chandler, AZ in December
    - i. Dr. Elmer Guy presentation to present
    - ii. Overview of cultural aspects and significance of Tribal VR programs
    - iii. CSAVR partnerships
  - h. Navajo Nation Code Talker Day August 14<sup>th</sup>
    - i. Recognition of the Marines in WWII
- b. Marci- Jemez VR
- a. Current data this coming FY
    - i. 63 current active consumers
    - ii. This FY15 successful closures
    - iii. October to current 101 active consumers
      - 1. 60 first time consumers
  - b. October 1
    - i. Celebrating 30 of Tribal VR program
  - c. Applying for our year 5 grant
    - i. Jemez funds decreased this FY due to carryover
    - ii. Jemez VR is one of the programs getting one dollar
      - 1. News was given on Tuesday
    - iii. Increasing dual cases with the state
    - iv. Looking at Administration costs for the FY
    - v. We are not going to stop services
    - vi. Our goal is to continue getting participants and keep our heads up
    - vii. Turned it into a positive and continue to share information regarding our program
    - viii. Update policy and procedures and revisit our partnerships
    - ix. New consumers were made aware that they aren't going to be able to spend as much as they usually do
  - d. 3 Students on Project HOPE
    - i. Contract ends at the end of August
      - 1. Individuals wages were \$15.00 an hour at the Bernalillo Senior Center- Summer work Experience
    - ii. Scheduled MOU review on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 with NMDVR
      - 1. Meeting with Rudy Grano and his team
  - e. New building and Training Center
    - i. Training Center, conference room
  - f. Continue to work with NM Community Capital



- i. 25 individuals through the Self-Employment business
- g. CANAR Participation
- h. Attendance at Salt Lake City for the New Directors Travel VR training

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

- a. We still have 3 businesses that need to be recruited
- b. Total SRC members 13
  - a. Tracy will have to wait 3 months after her term ends 08/2025 to come back to the council

VII. Old Business

- A. Consumer Satisfaction Survey Update – Jen Gelhardt & Bernadine Chavez
  - a. Draft was presented to SRC
    - i. Committee revamped it
      - 1. Two questionnaires
    - ii. Final draft was sent and DVR reached out to vendors
      - 1. Pre-ETS question based
        - a. Needs parental consent for those under 18
      - 2. Vendor had multiple questions that were addressed with Charlene Chavez and Rudy Grano
  - b. Request that DVR clients are made aware of the survey going out so they know its not spam
    - i. Make them aware that the survey is not directly from DVR but rather SRC
  - c. Hoping to have Scope of Work as soon as possible in order to get a Purchase Order in place

VIII. New Business

- A. Annual Report Fiscal Year (FY25) Plan
  - a. Include member quotes
  - b. Ad Hoc committee to complete Recommendations and send draft to council for edits and approval
    - i. Executive Committee to be involved
      - 1. End of August deadline
- B. Disability Employment Awareness Month (DEAM) Update – Awards & Committees
  - a. October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025
  - b. SRC to present Awards at DEAM event
    - i. Missing a nomination for a participant and service provider
    - ii. Deadline to nominate extended to 08/29/2025
- C. Review of SRC Committee Members and SRC Leadership
  - a. Executive Committee
    - i. Chair- Tracy Agiovlasis
    - ii. Vice Chair- Jennifer Gelhardt
    - iii. Sargeant of Arms- TJ Chester
  - b. Employment and Community Partnerships Committee
    - i. TJ Chester
    - ii. Jennifer Gelhardt- Committee Chair
    - iii. Kendra Garcia
    - iv. Jeff Levine/ NMDVR Awards
    - v. Angelina Montoya/ NMDVR
    - vi. Veronica Alonzo
    - vii. Sasha King/ NMDVR
  - c. Program Review Committee

- i. Tracy Agiovlasitis
    - ii. Bernadine Chavez- Committee Chair
    - iii. Marlencia Chee
    - iv. Paula Seanez
    - v. Angelina Montoya/ NMDVR
    - vi. Breezy Gutierrez
    - vii. Sarah Michaud
  - d. Nominations for SRC Chair
    - i. Paula Seanez nominates Jennifer Gelhardt as SRC Chair
    - ii. Bernadine Chavez nominates Paula Seanez for SRC Vice Chair
- D. Next Meeting
  - a. November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at NMDVR Santa Fe Field Office, 10:00am – 2:00pm
    - i. 525 Camino de Los Marquez, Suite 200 Santa Fe, NM 87505

IX. Comments from Audience  
No comments from Audience

X. Adjournment  
Meeting adjourned at 2:11pm

*If you need a language translator or are an individual with a disability who needs 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.)