

**PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION  
(COMBINED OR GENERAL)**

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

**A. STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL.**

1. ALL VR AGENCIES, EXCEPT FOR THOSE THAT HAVE AN INDEPENDENT CONSUMER- CONTROLLED COMMISSION, MUST HAVE A STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (COUNCIL OR SRC) THAT MEETS THE CRITERIA IN SECTION 105 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPLICABLE, HAS:

*Select A or B:*

*(A) is an independent State commission*

*(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council*

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ASSURANCE (A)(1)(B), IF SELECTED, PLEASE PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL BY REPRESENTATIVE TYPE, INCLUDING THE TERM NUMBER OF THE REPRESENTATIVE, AS APPLICABLE, AND ANY VACANCIES, AS WELL AS THE BEGINNING DATES OF EACH REPRESENTATIVE'S TERM.

Select 'Edit' to edit the narrative.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	2	8/2021
Parent Training and Information Center	1	6/2021
Client Assistance Program	Vacant: Appointment in Progress	
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	1	8/2023
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	1	7/2021

Business, Industry, and Labor	1	8/2023
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	
Business, Industry, and Labor	Vacant	
Disability Advocacy Groups	2	8/2023
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	1	8/2023
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	Unlimited	7/2023 7/2021
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the	1	

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Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)		
State Workforce Development Board	1	8/2023
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	1	8/2025
Disability Advocacy Groups	1	8/2023
Veteran	Vacant	

IF THE SRC IS NOT MEETING THE COMPOSITION REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 105(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AND/OR IS NOT MEETING QUARTERLY AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 105(F) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, PROVIDE THE STEPS THAT THE VR AGENCY IS TAKING TO ENSURE IT MEETS THOSE REQUIREMENTS.

The SRC has four membership spots currently open due to term expirations and resignations. These include three vacancies from business, labor and industry and one vacancy for veteran. Efforts at recruitment to fill these vacancies are ongoing. The SRC has a membership committee, which has been tasked with monitoring membership and following up on recommendations for potential members. The SRC Chair and Vice Chair serve as points of contact for these recommendations and reach out directly to potential members to assist them in completing the state's application for council membership and to answer any questions the potential applicants may have. Once an application is submitted, the Chair or Vice Chair will then reach out directly to our contact with the Governor's office to inform them of the applicant and the SRC's interest in having the individual on the council. Regardless of the identified vacancies, the SRC does maintain a quorum of members and meets quarterly throughout the year in accordance with federal regulations and the council's bylaws. Special meetings may be called as needed to ensure timely action and response to state and federal reporting deadlines or activities.

3. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 101(A)(21)(A)(II)(III) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, INCLUDE A SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT (INCLUDING HOW IT WAS OBTAINED) INTO THE STATE PLAN AND ANY STATE PLAN REVISIONS, INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORTS, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS.

Using the prior Customer Satisfaction Survey report and considering input from consumers and council members, these follow recommendations were established by the SRC for NMDVR during the August 14, 2025, council meeting. Responses from NMDVR will be included for ongoing review, discussion, and council input.

1. 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 IPE. Given feedback from consumers in the previous consumer satisfaction survey, this will be an ongoing area of focus.
2. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continues to enhance their knowledge gained through the

partnership with NMTAP to ensure ongoing training on assistive 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 and businesses on AT costs, resources, and accessibility so that they can more easily transition when, for example, school-provided tools are no longer available, or a reasonable accommodation needs to be requested. Our vision is that the education and resources provided through this partnership become embedded as a regular part of service delivery.

3. The SRC recommends that NMDVR capitalize on the enhancements it has made to onboarding to 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.
4. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to develop and identify opportunities for trauma-informed care for VR field 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 challenges and establishing effective natural support.
5. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to maximize efforts to utilize available funding sources to ensure positive outcomes for consumers.
6. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to give attention to establishment of career ladder opportunities within the agency to increase retention of knowledgeable employees.
7. 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.
8. The SRC recommends that NMDVR continue to explore expanding Pre-ETS services throughout the state.
9. The SRC recommends that NMDVR incorporate regulars feedback from consumers via satisfaction surveys to collect and rely on data to identify trends, inform the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, and enhance internal policies and procedures. Furthermore, the council recommends drawing from lessons learned to increase group consumer input and reach rural communities to solicit input and feedback.

**PROVIDE THE VR AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING AN EXPLANATION FOR THE REJECTION OF ANY INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**

List each recommendation/input followed by the VR agency response

1. *NMDVR accepts this recommendation and throughout the past year has provided additional cell phones to the Counseling staff to be even more accessible to participants. This has expanded the agency's ability to*

*communicate via multiple modes of communication in terms of mobility, text messaging which has expanded access statewide. This has increased engagement with youth and students with disabilities.*

*NMDVR continues to support virtual applications by Microsoft teams, Webex and Zoom platforms to also support communication with participants. The flexibility of these virtual platforms supports participants statewide to contact the Counseling staff.*

*The agency continues to prioritize frequent and consistent participant engagement in the VR process through monthly contacts, correspondence requesting contact and calendar scheduling guidelines that maximize Counseling staff work hours to support the many participants of the VR program.*

*DVR provides performance updates at the full council meetings to provide insight into the number of individuals seeking and utilizing VR program. This report out provides insight into the participant to counselor ratio.*

*NMDVR accepts this recommendation and has already begun efforts to upgrade and update technology in all 24 offices in the agency as budget allows. NMDVR will continue researching and discovering new technology items to better support the agency staff and participants.*

- 2. NMDVR accepts this recommendation and will continue to educate staff, participants, job coaches/developers, and employers on AT costs, resources, accessibility, and reasonable accommodations.*

*In FY26, NMDVR entered into a formal Intergovernmental Agreement with the New Mexico Governor's Commission on Disability (NMGCD), the administrative home of the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP). This agreement strengthens interagency collaboration to expand access, knowledge, and utilization of Assistive Technology (AT) among NMDVR participants statewide.*

*Through this agreement, NMDVR and NMGCD will jointly provide statewide training on AT devices, software, and applications; maintain an updated and expanded AT device inventory; and deliver device demonstrations, loans, and AT evaluations to support participants' vocational goals.*

*NMDVR will continue to support staff attendance at the annual NMTAP conference and integrate lessons learned into service delivery and staff training across the state.*

- 3. NMDVR accepts this recommendation and has a fully dedicated 2- staff training team specifically for Rehabilitation Services Unit. The RSU Training Team coordinates the implementation of the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) for NMDVR, ensuring that personnel have a 21st-century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities. NMDVR personnel have specialized training and experience enabling them to assist individuals with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment and to work effectively with employers who hire such individuals.*

*RSU Training Team is directly responsible for on-boarding of the RSU staff hired into the agency. The team instructs the 3-Week Rehabilitation Academy for new Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Rehabilitation Technicians as well as Management staff to the unit.*

*NMDVR has committed over the past several years to support participation in executive leadership instruction through San Diego State University, National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute, This has*

*been an extremely beneficial training to skill-up our internal mid-level management and provides continuity of the mission of the vocational rehabilitation program for New Mexico. NMDVR has also supported several supervisors through the University of Arkansas, Currents LeadVR Training.*

*NMDVR has invested in the subscription to YESLMS. The content library of the YESLMS learning management system is developed by VR professionals for VR professionals. George Washington University, San Diego State University, Council for State Administrators Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) staff, and the National Technical Assistant Centers.*

*NMDVR will implement an NMDVR Community of Practice that will be comprised of a combination of Counseling Staff, Management Staff and Statewide Coordinators. The CoP will be a mentorship program to provide guidance and relationships as new staff onboard. This will cultivate a sense of “belonging” and encourage staff to stay at NMDVR as they are building long-lasting relationships and developing a network of technical support and expertise to become functional in their roles at NMDVR. Additionally, the agency strives to appropriately compensate NMDVR employees for education and experience, based on budget availability.*

- 4. NMDVR accepts this recommendation and will continue to provide access and opportunities to staff in the trauma-informed care topics. Over the past several years many training opportunities have been provided to staff not only to support employees of the agency but to support participants seeking VR services. NMDVR will continue to engage and utilize the many training resources also available from the National Technical Assistant Centers funded under the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The State of New Mexico as an employer provides Employee Assistance Program that allows for counseling supports to employees and family members.*
- 5. The agency accepts this recommendation and will be initiating a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), which will provide a critical assessment of the program related to strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. Data obtained from this endeavor will provide the agency with a unique lens related to where funding can be strategically invested to ensure quality service delivery, shore up service gaps, and better serve underserved populations. Additionally, the agency has been working with National Technical Assistance Centers to upskill executive staff and other leadership related to fiscal forecasting in hopes that leadership can be better prepared to serve New Mexicans regardless of economic conditions with little to no impact to client services.*
- 6. NMDVR accepts this recommendation and will strongly consider and explore options for retention pay for all staff to enhance consistency, communication, and confidence in services. In addition, it is worth noting that, statewide, New Mexico has begun implementing retention pay components for State employees in recognition of workforce stability needs. NMDVR will evaluate alignment with these statewide initiatives as part of its internal review.*
- 7. NMDVR agrees to this recommendation and continues to strategically align efforts for positive employment outcomes. NMDVR has maintained excellent progress in meeting RSA negotiated levels in terms of expected key performance indicators. Measurable Skills gains and Credential Attainment accomplishments reflect a committed effort to support participants in obtaining the skills necessary to obtain competitive integrated employment.*

*NMDVR continues to access all available resources to provide tools for Counseling staff in supporting participants through the VR process to reach employment goals.*

*NMDVR has a fully operational Business Outreach Team that maintains community relationships statewide to educate, support and guide employers to hire individuals with disabilities. There is an internal notification process to inform Counselor of available employment opportunities that may fit the participants' vocational goals.*

*NMDVR also has access to Tapability and other VR specific job posting boards where employers have been vetted and are welcome to hire individuals with disabilities. Training for staff has been provided, and this has become a valuable resource in the job search and placement efforts.*

*NM has recently signed service agreements with Community Resource Providers, Independent Job Developers and Job Coaches, which has detailed scope of work for each job support activity and has an increased rate structure for payment of these services. This effort is to encourage more providers set into the specialized job support services employment and further expand job placement efforts of participants of the VR program.*

*The Collaborative (NTACT:C) to develop long-term training platforms. This will support an increase in, and better-quality of, employment outcomes by training RSU staff and management on how accurate and complete data correlates to quality employment outcomes for NMDVR participants. NMDVR will focus on data reporting and validation in 2024, emphasizing streamlining and improving processes.*

- 8. NMDVR accepts this recommendation and will continue to partner with Local Educational Agencies, and private vendors across the state to provide pre-employment transition services. The New Mexico Division of vocational Rehabilitation transition unit continues to increase staff, we have added a Program Manager, Rehab technician and have 11 100% transition counselors dedicated to providing pre-employment transition services "Pre-ETS" to students across the state. NMDVR has approved 11 virtual headsets that transition counselors are working with students to explore by assimilating various skills in over 1000 identified work sectors. Pre-ETS service continues to be provided across the state by having 74 DVR vocational counselors serve over 150 schools. The agency has approved 8 providers across the state to support NMDVR with delivery of pre-ETS and NMDVR has identified a new Project Search site in Deming NM. NMDVR continues to support 8 Project SEARCH sites across the state and will continue to explore by adding one more site to the Eastern part of the state. The following counties will be explored to begin FY 27-28 Eddy, Lea, Roosevelt, Curry, Chaves and San Miguel. This project continues to provide opportunities for students to experience work base learning while still in high school. The agency is on target to spending 15% of pre-ETS funding, for FY 25-26.*

*NMDVR will continue to partner with all American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation programs in New Mexico to implement Pre-ETS services. Jemez VR will work with NMDVR to reinstate Project Hope Transition work-based training program. This model will be explored for other tribal agencies across the state. Discussions with the Jemez VR, Laguna Acoma VR, and Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (NNOSERS) meet quarterly in efforts to rebuild engagement by all vested parties. NMDVR will continue to review fee for service proposals for Pre-ETS to provide the five core Pre-Employment Transition Services across the state currently we are serving 8 programs across the state, the following counties are being served Bernalillo, Sandoval, Santa Fe, Taos, Lea, Eddy, Donna Anna,*

- 9. NMDVR is actively preparing for the work associated with the next Comprehensive Needs Assessment so that the completion of this task aligns with state plan submission cycle. NMDVR will utilize this data to strategize, plan and implement necessary policy updates. The goals of the agency are to remain focused on participant needs in accordance to the rehabilitation act and subsequent amendments, CFR and uniform grant guidance.*

## COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA).

Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:

### THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, INCLUDING:

The agency completed a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) on February 28, 2024, which provided a critical evaluation of program strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. The data gathered offered the agency valuable insight into where funding can be strategically invested to enhance service quality, address service gaps, and better support underserved populations.

NMDVR continues to work toward the goals identified in the 2024 CSNA and has achieved meaningful progress in multiple areas. However, the agency remains focused on addressing additional needs within the program's varied capacity and continues to implement improvements to ensure consistent, effective service delivery.

Generalized overview of CSNA evaluation;

1. Transportation was by far the most common need cited by all groups for individuals with disabilities to prepare for, obtain, and maintain employment. Public transportation in the rural areas is especially problematic and was characterized as nonexistent in most cases, and unreliable when it was available. The lack of transportation is a barrier to both employment and accessing NMDVR services.
2. The lack of broadband Internet access was cited as a barrier. The shift to remote work and communication resulting from the pandemic magnified how important reliable Internet access is for all individuals, and the lack of access in many rural areas of New Mexico prevents individuals with disabilities from accessing information necessary for job search and remote employment opportunities.
3. Assistive technology, job placement assistance, employment preparation services, work experience and behavioral health counseling were all cited repeatedly as rehabilitation needs of NMDVR customers.
4. Participants indicated that NMDVR serves a large population of individuals with behavioral health impairments, including mental health impairments and substance use disorders. The available treatment for this population was noted as severely lacking, especially outside of Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Mental health counseling was noted as nearly non-existent in the rural areas of the state, which impacts the stability of individuals necessary for sustained employment.
5. The fear of benefit loss, especially medical benefits, is a barrier to Social Security Administration (SSA) beneficiaries returning to work or pursuing work at a self-sustaining level. Many NMDVR customers who are receiving either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) pursue employment at the part-time level so they can augment their benefits, but not face losing them due to work. This results in many individuals working below their potential. NMDVR provides benefits counseling, and this is helpful, but it has not made any significant impact on motivating beneficiaries to pursue employment at a level high enough for them to need benefits no longer.
6. Many Deaf customers need to develop their reading and language skills, but there are very few options available to them in the state.

7. The need for affordable housing has become a significant issue since the pandemic began in 2020. Interview participants across all groups indicated that the need to identify affordable housing options has become of paramount importance for NMDVR consumers.
8. Poverty is a significant concern for individuals with disabilities in New Mexico. The poverty rates in the state are consistently in the top three in the country, according to the US Census Bureau, and the effect of poverty on individuals with disabilities is disproportionate, according to several partners and staff interviewed.

***RECOMMENDATIONS:***

The following recommendations are offered to NMDVR, based on the results of the research in the Needs of Individuals with Disabilities served through other Components of the Statewide Workforce Development System area:

1. NMDVR should identify and share examples of shared funding of cases throughout the state to encourage replication of these cases.
2. NMDVR is encouraged to work with the Workforce Connection staff to develop apprenticeships and customized training programs in high demand occupations that include individuals with disabilities.
3. NMDVR and the Workforce Connection center staff should provide regular and consistent cross-training to staff in order to improve the number of individuals with disabilities who are effectively accessing and benefitting from services at the centers.
4. NMDVR is encouraged to strengthen its relationship with the Title I Youth program to provide training and placement opportunities for students and youth with disabilities.
5. NMDVR is encouraged to establish more work-based learning opportunities as part of its expansion of pre-employment transition services across the state. The agency has been working closely with community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) and schools to expand these opportunities and should continue these efforts as resources and capacity of CRPs allow.
6. NMDVR is encouraged to replicate Project SEARCH programs as resources allow. NMDVR staff and community partner agencies indicated that these programs are innovative and significantly impact the employability of participants.
7. NMDVR is encouraged to continue to work with the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) and VRTAC-QM to increase and improve relationships with schools and improve tracking and reporting of pre-employment transition services.
8. As the number of transition counselors increases through future hiring, NMDVR is encouraged to expand its outreach and education of families of students receiving SSI to help assuage the fear of benefit loss and encourage the work-seeking behavior of these youth.

9. NMDVR is encouraged to examine creative ways to address the transportation barrier in rural areas of the state. One possibility is to utilize ride-share services such as Uber or Lyft when available. Ride-share services also provides an opportunity for former or current consumers of VR to engage in part-time employment., so if they can be recruited and supported to be drivers, this strategy can act as a way to build capacity in the rural areas.
10. NMDVR is encouraged to conduct connectivity assessments for all consumers engaged in the comprehensive assessment process for plan development. When needed, VR should purchase the necessary equipment and services to ensure their participants are able to effectively access and function in the digital world. This includes broadband internet where available and laptops, cell phones, and hotspots in cellular service plans. One possibility for adaptation is the BPD Technology Assessment Checklist created by the Technology Committee for the association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors. NMDVR should adapt the tool for its own needs.
11. Because of the positive working relationship that NMDVR has with the Centers for Independent Living in the state, the agency is encouraged to identify CILs where partnership can be further developed and CILs can be recruited to become service providers. Increases in the ability to live independently are positively associated with successful employment outcomes, so enhancing IL services for consumers is an important goal for NMDVR.
12. NMDVR is encouraged to further its partnership with the Behavioral Health Services Division (BHSD) of the Human Services Department in New Mexico. BHSD offers an array of services and support that are helpful for NMDVR consumers.
13. The rate of consumers served by NMDVR that have either a primary or co-occurring disability of substance abuse necessitates that VR staff and partners increase collaboration and partnerships with other state and community organizations that serve youth and adults in recovery. NMDVR is encouraged to share expertise and resources with recovery programs and provide training to counselors and providers on ways to help consumers address the multiple dimensions of recovery that included:
  - a. Planning for physical and emotional health;
  - b. Helping the individual identify resources to ensure that they have a safe and supportive living environment;
  - c. Assisting the individual to have hope, often as a result of a sense of purpose which can frequently be established through the pursuit of meaningful employment; and
  - d. Providing the individual with resources that can help establish a support network and build a sense of community.

The dimensions of recovery noted above are also applicable to individuals with mental health impairments and are recognized as a standard of effective counseling and treatment by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) found here:

<https://www.samhsa.gov/>

14. NMDVR is encouraged to work with Deaf advocates and service programs to further develop Deaf and Hard of Hearing services in the southern half of the state. In addition, NMDVR is encouraged to develop a communication and language skills training program for the Deaf to address the language development needs of this population throughout the state.

15. A large percentage of NMDVR consumers are SSA beneficiaries whose fear of benefit loss affects their return-to-work behavior. Although NMDVR has Benefits Advisors, it would be helpful for the agency to augment these services with training for staff and providers on strategies that contribute to the pursuit of work above the level of Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA), including self-sufficiency. These interventions and strategies include:
  - a. Establishing and reinforcing high expectations for the individual;
  - b. Identifying role models, or peer mentors who will model positive behavior and provide a positive “push” for individuals to achieve their maximum potential (The positive push can come from the rehabilitation counselor if there are no family members, friends, or mentors available);
  - c. Maximizing the individual’s ability to live and function independently;
  - d. Reinforcing the need for tenacity and persistence by the individual by helping them develop resiliencies, then providing constant support and positive feedback;
  - e. Ongoing benefits planning and plans for overpayments when work occurs. Overpayments are planned for and the individual or the Benefits Planner is aware enough to calculate the effect of wages on benefits and set aside money that will likely occur from a result of overpayments for future payback to SSA;
  - f. Pursuing higher education at the highest possible level for the individual; and
  - g. Work experience, internships, or any exposure to work in the beneficiary’s field of choice.
16. NMDVR is encouraged to ensure that their staff has access to affordable housing resources for consumers. One option is found at [https://www.hud.gov/states/new\\_mexico/renting](https://www.hud.gov/states/new_mexico/renting).
17. NMDVR is encouraged to help consumers address poverty concerns through short-term and long-term strategies such as assisting customers in obtaining “survival employment” while supporting long-term training for in-demand high-paying jobs.

#### **B.1.A INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT;**

Many NMDVR customers need supported employment (SE) services to maintain employment, but there are very few SE providers outside of the urban areas of the state. Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) are experiencing high vacancies and there are almost no SE providers in the rural areas of the state.

Over the past year, NMDVR has collaborated with Community Rehabilitation Programs and Individual Service Providers to restructure the pay structure and rates for supported and specialized job services. The vendors utilized by NMDVR have signed service agreements that outline a clear scope of work, expand service opportunities statewide, and ensure that providers meet industry standards and qualifications. NMDVR has required nationally recognized certifications for approved service provider vendors for many years, however with the implementation of service agreements in 2025 a small number of vendors needed time to complete the certification.

NMDVR works in collaboration with University of New Mexico Partners for Employment, University Center Excellence Developmental Disabilities. This intergovernmental agreement provides NMDVR the opportunity to support service providers in accessing workforce resources to skill-up providers serving Supported Employment participants. This has increased the quality of services offered to participants. This agreement also supports quarterly meetings, Supported Employment Local Leaders (SELL), an initiative that allows providers to engage in conversations regarding best practices, educational opportunities, and conversation with NMDVR staff as well as Developmental Disabilities Supports Division staff for firsthand question and answer sessions. NMDVR is committed to developing a network of service providers qualified to meet the needs of Supported Employment.

In addition, NMDVR has partnered with the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division to revise the memorandum of understanding, reaffirming shared responsibilities and strengthening ongoing efforts to expand provider capacity. Despite these initiatives, there continues to be a shortage of providers, particularly in rural areas of the state. To address this ongoing challenge, NMDVR continues to actively advertise and promote the need for additional services providers.

Approximately 50% of the individuals served by NMDVR are most significantly disabled. NMDVR works closely with the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division to coordinate and align access to both programs by sharing information regarding the number of individuals served on the waiver programs. This shared effort assists in a coordinated service delivery model, cross education between agency staff, ensuring duplication of services is assessed, and more efficiently services the participants between agencies.

#### **B. 1. B. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM.**

The following themes emerged in the area of the needs of individuals with disabilities from different ethnic groups, including individuals who have been potentially unserved or underserved by NMDVR:

1. Native Americans with disabilities were cited the most frequently as a population of people that may be potentially underserved by NMDVR. This is in part due to the large number of tribes in the state. NMDVR does maintain a highly productive working relationship with the tribal VR programs in the state. The number of shared cases between the tribal programs and NMDVR was cited as very low and in need of growth over the next year as staffing patterns stabilize and liaisons assigned by NMDVR establish working relationships with each tribe.
2. Rural areas of the state were cited as underserved due to lack of access to transportation and other services. While the capacity to connect by distance increased during the pandemic, the lack of broadband access in rural areas means that they were not able to benefit from remote possibilities to the same extent as those living in urban areas.
3. Hispanic individuals were noted as being potentially underserved. This was noted as primarily occurring because of the lack of bilingual counselors in NMDVR.
4. Based on disability, the one group that was noted as possibly being underserved was Deaf individuals. This was related to the lack of counselors who can sign and the general lack of interpreters in the state.

NMDVR continues to assess needs statewide to address the complexities of a primarily rural state and the challenges that arise due to this composition of New Mexico.

### B.1.C INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

The following information was gathered from the individuals interviewed for this assessment in the area of the needs of individuals with disabilities served through other components of the Statewide Workforce Development System:

1. NMDVR consumers are frequently referred to the New Mexico Workforce Connection (Titles I and III) centers for job search assistance and resume writing workshops. The workshops are helpful for consumers, but job development services were described as self-initiated and online, so were less impactful on individuals with disabilities needing one-on-one assistance.
2. While the workshops are helpful, the relationship between NMDVR and the Workforce Connection centers is one of referral primarily. There are few cases where funding for training is shared between agencies.
3. Co-location of NMDVR within the Workforce Connection offices was described as beneficial to the relationship between the two agencies and staff says it helps with ensuring individuals with disabilities are quickly connected to the services and supports, they need.
4. Workforce Connection staff need training on how to work with individuals with disabilities and they need working and up-to-date assistive technology for job seekers who need this technology to access programs. Deaf interpreters were also cited as needed in the Workforce Connection offices.

NMDVR's Business Outreach team has made great strides in promoting NMDVR services to employers across the state some of which is established due to the partnerships with the American Job Centers. The NMDVR is co-located at two American Job Centers in the state.

NMDVR has also piloted within the past year along with the workforce partners an online cross agency referral system that is expected to be utilized statewide within the next year.

### B.1.D YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER IDEA.

The following recurring themes emerged related to the needs of youth with disabilities in transition:

1. The needs of youth and students with disabilities are similar to adults served by NMDVR except that youth are noted as needing more work experience and soft skills.
2. NMDVR transition counselors have helped develop relationships with schools and increase pre-employment transition services.
3. Project SEARCH sites were applauded for their impact on students, especially because they provide work experience for students and youth, which was identified as an important need.

4. The relationship between NMDVR and schools across the state varies in intensity. Some schools are very involved with the agency and services are coordinated and working well, in others, NMDVR does not go into the school and VR services are not getting to students until they are close to graduation or after. The pandemic stalled the progress in the relationship between NMDVR and schools, especially in those areas where there has been turnover of NMDVR staff and school staff. As staff are hired and relationships reestablished, progress has picked up and services are increasing.
5. All five required pre-employment transition services were noted as important and helpful for students with disabilities. Work-based learning opportunities were identified by all as the most important of the five required services and NMDVR has worked to increase the availability of these work-based learning opportunities across the State.
6. Youth succeed at higher rates when parents are engaged in the process. Lack of parent engagement can result in youth not accessing services early or “falling through the cracks.” Parents were described as essential to the transition process, helping youth to understand their disability and to developing realistic vocational expectations. Focus group and interview participants indicated that there is a need to engage with parents and keep them involved in transition efforts.
7. Parents of youth who receive SSI were often characterized as fearful of their children losing benefits and this adversely affects the motivation of the youth to work. In addition, if the youth does attempt to work, parents may not be supportive, which can lead to an unsuccessful work attempt.
8. NMDVR has good working relationships with community colleges and universities throughout the state. These positive relationships result in a smoother transition from secondary to postsecondary education, reasonable accommodation needs being met, and increased rates of persistence and success for youth and students with disabilities. Although the overall number of individuals with disabilities in postsecondary education dropped during the pandemic from PY 2020-21, the numbers increased again in PY 2022 as schools reopened.

NMDVR has established work-based learning opportunities for students with disabilities in the following local educational agencies, Rio Rancho Public Schools, Albuquerque Public Schools, Las Cruces Public Schools, New Mexico School for Deaf Hard of Hearing, Taos Public schools, Artesia Public schools, Hobbs Public Schools, and Mckinnley Public schools. NMDVR will continue to establish additional opportunities throughout the state.

NMDVR has 8 established Project SEARCH sites throughout NM, UNM Hospital, Embassy Suites, Hilton Garden Inn, City of Farmington, City of Deming, Holloman Air Force Base, The Hive-Educational Center and Presbyterian Rust Hospital. NMDVR will begin to work with local educational agencies, long-term providers and employers in the eastern part of the state to identify a new site by FY 27-28.

NMDVR continues to work with National Technical Assistance Center on Transition, NMDVR partners with Public Education, UNM Disabilities Center, Parents Reaching Out to establish the transition goals for New Mexico:

- Established a working committee with state agencies and community providers to support Indicator 13 Secondary Transition in NM,
- A survey developed to gather information on how other agencies external and community partners provide support for Secondary transition in NM,

- Coordinated a transition focused summer summit to increase youth engagement across the state of NM
- Work with National technical Assistance center to attend the national capacity building institute yearly,
- Meet quarterly with partners from across the state to discuss trends, outcomes and best practices of transition activities in NM.

NMDVR provides support to families and students who are receiving Social Security Benefits, by providing training to families during school functions, and Project SEARCH family night meetings/trainings.

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) has recently established an initiative in partnership with the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) to promote increased graduation rates among students with disabilities. This initiative will focus on expanding NMDVR's Vocational In-School Engagement (VISE) services to support secondary students in achieving key milestones on their path to graduation.

Through this effort, NMDVR aims to encourage and recognize incremental progress toward graduation while connecting students with Vocational Rehabilitation services that support academic persistence, career exploration, and successful transition to postsecondary education or employment. By strengthening collaboration with schools and providing targeted supports, the initiative seeks to empower students with disabilities to remain engaged in their education and graduate prepared for the workforce and independent living.

## B. 2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

The recommendations offered to NMDVR, are based on the results from the most current CSNA.

The following themes were recurring from the individuals interviewed for this assessment in the area of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs serving individuals with disabilities in New Mexico:

1. The pandemic significantly impacted staffing at service providers agencies, with shortages noted in most geographic areas and services. Consequently, the wait for services has increased and the need to establish and develop services offered by CRPs is pervasive.
2. There is a need to establish all VR services and service providers in the rural areas of the state.
3. There is a significant need for SE providers throughout the state.
4. There is a need for NMDVR to examine its current rate structure for purchased services. Partners indicate that the current fee schedule is insufficient to meet their needs for service provision.

### ***RECOMMENDATIONS***

The following recommendation is offered to NMDVR, based on the results of the research in the Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs in New Mexico:

1. NMDVR should examine its current rates for purchased services and the past methodology for how these rates were established. This will determine if rate revisions are needed and if the methodology is adequate given the changing landscape of staffing and service delivery since the

pandemic. The agency is encouraged to work with the fiscal team at the VRTAC-QM as needed for technical assistance in this area.

2. NMDVR is encouraged to consider using the Establishment Authority to help establish SE and other service providers over the course of the next State Plan cycle. The need for these services is clearly evident from all staff and partners interviewed for this CSNA.
3. NMDVR is encouraged to establish a provider network meeting at least semi-annually to share information, increase communication, and enhance the partnership between NMDVR and service providers.
4. If VR services are unable to be developed, then NMDVR is encouraged to consider bringing services in-house by hiring individuals with specialized skills in the given area (e.g. job placement, assessment, supported employment).

Key accomplishments include the successful completion of Service Agreements with vendors who provide specialized job development, placement and coaching services for our supported employment participants. The new pay structure was developed in alignment with our partnership with DDS, ensuring consistency and equity across service providers. Additionally, qualification standards for Job Developers and Job Coaches have been standardized to align with the joint initiative between NMDVR and DDS promoting quality and accountability in service delivery. This partnership has fostered new ideas and initiatives, including exploration of expanded training opportunities to enhance provider skills, and the creation of peer support networks for professionals working in the field. Further, clinical and real-life demonstrations of service delivery are expected to be incorporated to strengthen understanding and practical application, while ongoing training efforts continue to expand knowledge on various aspects of disability and best practices in supported employment.

Through these efforts, NMDVR and DDS aim to improve the quality and continuity of care for participants, ensuring they receive consistent and effective support as they navigate between systems.

1. IDENTIFY MEASURABLE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND THE BASIS FOR SELECTING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES (E.G., CSNA, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES, SRC RECOMMENDATIONS, MONITORING, OTHER INFORMATION). AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 101(A)(15)(D), (18), AND (23), DESCRIBE UNDER EACH GOAL OR PRIORITY, THE STRATEGIES OR METHODS USED TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OR PRIORITY, INCLUDING AS APPLICABLE, DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGIES OR METHODS THAT—

### **C. GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIES**

Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of Section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

C.1. DESCRIBE HOW THE SRC AND THE VR AGENCY JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO

## THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND ANY REVISIONS; AND

The State Rehabilitation Council was actively involved with development of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The overall major themes identified as a result of the CSNA: the impact of the pandemic and increasing applications; NMDVR staff consistently characterized as caring and committed to helping individuals with disabilities in New Mexico to prepare for and obtain employment despite, staff shortages; New Mexico passing all of its WIOA Performance Measures for PY22; difficulty with recruitment of VR staff based on low wages; a need for increased community awareness of NMDVR and its services; a need for more staff development opportunities, especially related to behavioral health and criminal backgrounds; the need for an increase in the use of self-employment due to the ruralness of the state; and the loss of individuals after application but prior to plan..

### **c.2 Goals, Priority and Strategies**

#### **(A) Support Innovation and expansion activities.**

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) is set to align its efforts with the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) themes over the next three years, aiming for measurable outcomes through targeted strategies.

**Goal 1:** NMDVR plans to integrate AI technology, demonstrating it to field staff in 2024 and piloting various platforms to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

Strategy 1. Explore available AI tools utilized in Vocational Rehabilitation to streamline tasks and increase efficiency.

*Update:* Due to limitations to allowability and access to AI at state level, NMDVR continues to engage in informal discussions regarding the potential integration of AI within the agency. NMDVR will continue to assess opportunities and possibilities associated with this technology.

NMDVR was able to secure the rental agreements of virtual headsets for the purpose of career exploration for students with disabilities. NMDVR was able to procure Ubi Duo communication devices utilized with our Deaf and Hard of Hearing clientele. This has allowed increase communication between hearing and Deaf individuals resulting increased access within our field offices.

**Goal 2:** To increase applicants and client engagement.

Strategy 1: NMDVR will launch a marketing campaign and implement rapid engagement strategies, ensuring clients remain actively involved in their rehabilitation journey. NMDVR is assessing available funding to engage in this endeavor.

#### **(B) Overcome barriers to accessing VR and supported employment services;**

**Goal 1:** NMDVR is dedicated to providing customized employment training through the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (UCEDD). This initiative aims to develop skilled job developers and coaches at Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs). Each year, the program goals that at least 15 NMDVR staff and 25 CRP and vendor staff engage in the available

training.

Strategy 1: NMDVR will collaborate with our partners UNM CDD to monitor the number of staff and vendors trained annually to increase service capacity.

Strategy 2: Data collection will be thorough, with records of training sessions and regular surveys. Annual reports will summarize training numbers and outcomes, highlighting successes and areas for improvement.

Strategy 3: NMDVR is committed to continuous improvement, regularly updating the training curriculum and engaging with stakeholders to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Through this approach, NMDVR aims to achieve meaningful and sustainable employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

**Goal 2:** New Mexico faces a significant challenge with a limited number of long-term support providers statewide. The Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) oversees various waiver programs, each functioning as its own department, including the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver and the Mi Via (My Way) waiver. The Mi Via program is unique in that it allows participants or their guardians to self-direct services, enabling them to hire service providers of their choice, such as ongoing job coaches. The goal of the agency is to continue supporting collaboration and education to expand access to providers.

Strategy: The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) currently maintains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Waiver program. Building on this collaborative framework NMDVR is currently amending the MOU to be inclusive of all state waiver programs. The new agreement will strength interagency communication, streamline referral process, and ensure that individuals transition from NMDVR services to waiver programs experience a seamless and person-centered transfer of care.

Strategy: NMDVR is collaborating through our partnership with University of New Mexico to create an ACRE accredited training for New Mexico service providers in efforts to continue to expand the workforce and opportunities within this field.

**(C) Improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to post-secondary life (including the receipt of VR services, post-secondary education, employment and pre-employment transition services and;**

**Goal 1:** Maintain requirements and annual reporting for PED MOU. Report on progress of Intensive Technical Assistance Agreement with PED.

Strategy: NMDVR has continued to work with Public Education Department to review and update its current MOU. In program year 2025-26 NMDVR engaged with PED to amend the DVR PED MOU with support of National Technical Assistance. Progress towards this amendment has been slower than anticipated. NMDVR and PED staff will continue to review MOU yearly and initiate updates as necessary.

**Goal 2:** Explore additional areas in New Mexico for Project SEARCH sites. Report areas explored and outcomes of exploration.

*Strategy:* NMDVR engaged in a new site on Navajo Nation FY 24-25, (Kirtland Central Schools/Shiprock), due to school staff shortages, student numbers and concerns of work sites availability for students' program has been put on hold for FY 25-26. NMDVR was able to start a new Project SEARCH site at City of Deming and is in it's first year implementation FY 25-26. New sites for the eastern part of the state continue to be explored, NMDVR has implemented a work-based program for Artesia and Hobbs school districts.

**Goal 3:** Partner with NM Commission for the Blind to provide regular Section 107 Corrective Action Plan updates and spending of the 15% Pre-Employment Transition Services reserve requirement.

*Strategy:* NMDVR meets quarterly to discuss Pre-ETS spending and align efforts to maximize the 15% reserve funds for Transition. NM Commission for the Blind and NMDVR are part of the National Technical Capacity Building Institute and have a strong relationship that is supporting Pre-Employment trends statewide.

**(D) Improve the performance of the VR and Supported Employment programs in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes.**

**Goal 1:** The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR), partnering with the New Mexico Behavioral Planning Council and the Behavioral Health Collaborative, is set to amend state Medicaid regulations to allow Supported Employment funds for individuals with mental health diagnoses.

The Behavioral Health Agency completed its five-year plan and ultimately chose not to incorporate employment as a priority area. In addition, the agency opted not to pursue discussions with Medicaid regarding revisions to service language or coverage that would allow Supported Employment services for this population. The legislative action proposed by the Behavioral Health Collaborative for this initiative stalled during the most recent legislative session. Progress toward this goal has been impacted by recent developments. Because the regulatory and funding pathways identified in the original strategy depended on collaboration with the Behavioral Health Agency, the Behavioral Health Collaborative, and Medicaid, these decisions directly impact the viability of the initiative and as such, NMDVR will continue to monitor opportunities for renewed interagency engagement. NMDVR remains fully committed to serving all individuals with disabilities who are eligible for the VR program.

**Goal 2:** NMDVR continues its efforts to provide the necessary oversight assigned to the Vocational Rehabilitation program to conduct required Section 511 annual information session for individuals earning sub-minimum wages.

*Strategy:* Maintain relationships with the states 14 (c) holder agencies and continue to provide the annual informational sessions, counsel the individuals receiving sub-minimum wage and educate on the Vocational Rehabilitation program services available to assist in obtaining competitive integrated employment opportunities.

**Goal 3:** Increase the number of CRPs and independent job developers and job coaches.

*Strategy:* Increase the use of assistive technology to reduce the need for long-term job coaching; work with CRPs to expand to areas outside of the major metropolitan areas; recruit former CRP employees, school personnel, social workers, retired VR staff, etc. to become self-employed and vendors of NMDVR.

Contracts for Service Providers as well as an rate increase pay structure were accomplished in July 2025.

The NMDVR is working with almost 30 providers statewide.

NMDVR is successfully utilizing AVAIL technology to support individuals on the job with job coaching on demand through laptops, mobile cell phones and tablets.

#### **D. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS**

For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—  
**PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FOR THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS;**

List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies

- **NMDVR Goal: Expand NMDVR presence in the NM workforce and American Job Centers to expand services for individuals at all skill and ability levels.**

*Update:* The Business Outreach Unit will be providing training and education in the areas identified. This unit is fully developed and covers regional assignments providing direct supports to employers across the state. These coordinators are tasked with meeting staff from other states to learn about their approaches to business engagement, developing training and technical assistance for employers regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), inclusion, and tax credits, and creating resources for internal staff use. The Business Outreach Team works closely with the Department of Workforce Solutions, participating in its employer engagement activities to maximize each program's effectiveness and minimize duplication of efforts. Additionally, Business Outreach Coordinators are active on a national level, participating in the National Employment Team (NET) and the NET Summit.

Several training programs—VR Overview, Unconscious Bias, Interviewing Tactics, and ADA—are currently approved and available for use. All of these existing trainings are scheduled for revision and updates by January 15, 2026, to ensure content accuracy, relevance, and alignment with current best practices. In addition, new training courses on *Customer Service*, *Emotional Intelligence*, and *Perception and Bias* are in development and are expected to be completed by December 15, 2025. Further training modules are planned for development by March 25, 2026, including *Communication Skills*, *Interviewing Strategies*, *Inclusive Hiring Practices*, *Employee Retention*, *Cultural Humility*, *Reasonable Accommodations*, and *HIPAA Compliance*. These initiatives demonstrate the unit's ongoing commitment to delivering comprehensive, high-quality professional development resources that strengthen service delivery and enhance employer engagement.

In addition, NMDVR utilizes AWARE as its agency case management system. Over the past year, the Employer Module feature was tested and refined, culminating in its official launch on July 1, 2025. The module is now being used to track specific services provided to employers, enabling more detailed reporting and enhanced analysis of employer-focused activities and outcomes.

- **NMDVR Goal: Utilize the integrated structure of American Job Centers to increase customer participation, support and engage local businesses, and strengthen partnerships.**

*Update:* Regular partnership meetings with American Job Centers have strengthened collaboration and increased NMDVR staff participation in job and career fairs across the state. These connections have fostered a coordinated approach to supporting individuals seeking services by enhancing communication among staff, addressing individual needs, and promoting cross-agency collaboration to maximize use

of comparable benefits.

- **NMDVR Goal - Expand collaboration efforts for service delivery to Students and Youth with Disabilities to include Supported Employment:**

*Update:* New Mexico Division Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) has implemented several intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) and/or Memoranda of Agreement (MOU) in cooperation with other state agencies including the Department of Health (DOH), Developmental Disabilities Support Division (DDSD), Center for Development and Disabilities (CDD), and New Mexico Public Education (PED). These cooperative agreements aid in facilitating transition services for Transition individuals and youth who are eligible for Supported Employment services across the state.

- **NMDVR Goal - Strengthen and sustain statewide Supported Employment services through ongoing collaboration with the Center for Development and Disability and key partners, including Project SEARCH, Partners for Employment, and the Social Security Administration.**

*Update:* The collaboration efforts with these entities continue through regular monthly meetings, reporting, and contract monitoring. The annual review of the contracts allows for comprehensive planning to amend and evaluate as necessary to sustain and expand efforts. Updates to initiatives has expanded educational opportunities with the service provider communities, vocational rehabilitation staff and the upcoming ACRE NM Course to be offered in 2026.

- **NMDVR Goal: Adult Project SEARCH Model for NMDVR supported employment participants ages 21-30.**

*Update:* The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) is exploring the possibility of launching a new Project SEARCH site for supported employment out-of-school youth. The goal is to have the site operational by 2028, with additional sites being explored across New Mexico.

This initiative seeks to empower out-of-school youth with essential training and employment opportunities, addressing their immediate needs and fostering sustained employment and career growth. By tracking these metrics, NMDVR is committed to making a lasting impact on the lives of these individuals and the broader community in New Mexico.

- **NMDVR Goal: To strengthen Assistive Technology Integration and Accessibility**

NMDVR will expand and modernize statewide Assistive Technology (AT) access through the formal Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the New Mexico Governor's Commission on Disability (NMGCD), the administrative home of the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP). This goal aligns with the Rehabilitation Act and the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act to ensure AT is fully integrated into participant service planning, counselor training, and program accountability.

*Update:* Expand Access: Increase statewide availability of AT devices, software, and demonstrations through collaboration with NMGCD/NMTAP. Ensure AT services reach all regions through shared device libraries and remote service delivery options.

Provide annual AT trainings for staff, including participation in new-hire orientations, the Rehabilitation Academy, and regional hands-on workshops.

Support NMGCD in maintaining an updated, secure AT inventory that reflects emerging technologies. Conduct an annual review of at least 90% of inventory items and submit an Annual Inventory Report identifying upgrades or retirements.

Implement standardized referral and evaluation procedures that ensure AT assessments by qualified Assistive Technology Professionals (ATPs) are authorized and documented.

Require NMGCD to provide monthly performance and inventory reports summarizing device usage, training, and participant outcomes. Use this data to inform statewide AT program improvements and WIOA Section 116 performance metrics.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increased utilization of AT by NMDVR participants across all regions.
  - Improved staff competency and confidence in integrating AT solutions.
  - Documented year-over-year growth in AT-related training and service delivery.
  - Strengthening accountability through standardized tracking and reporting.
- 
- **NMDVR Goal: NMDVR to focus on unserved or underserved ethnic groups.**

*Update:* NMDVR has continued to prioritize services for unserved and underserved ethnic groups. Over the past year, the agency developed Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions and executed three Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) in Program Year 2023 with the Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (NNOSERS), Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation (JVR), and Laguna Acoma Connections (LAC). Quarterly meetings are held with all three AIVRP partners, each program maintains representation on the State Rehabilitation Council, and NMDVR continues to provide training opportunities to its staff. In Program Year 2025, NMDVR initiated the process of renewing the three MOUs with the goal of executing them by September of Program Year 2026. Notably, during Program Year 2025, NNOSERS executed a sub-lease with the NMDVR Gallup office, further strengthening the partnership. NMDVR also continues to support staff participation in the Annual Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) Conference and has partnered with the Interwork Institute, San Diego State University Research Foundation, to take part in the Activities for Underserved Populations grant, though this initiative may not move forward without the additional funding. Progress toward this goal will be measured by the number of MOUs completed, the frequency of quarterly meetings, and participation rates of AIVRP representatives on the State Rehabilitation Council. Additional measures include the number of training sessions offered to AIVRP staff, attendance of NMDVR staff at the CANAR Conference, and membership in CANAR. Expected outcomes include improved employment rates among individuals from unserved or underserved ethnic groups, strengthened engagement and satisfaction among AIVRP partners, enhanced staff skills and knowledge on both sides of the partnership, and increased long-term retention and career progression for individuals from these communities.

- **NMDVR Goal: NMDVR will continue to explore options for increasing services to students with disabilities by partnering with the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) and the Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS).**

*Update:* NMDVR is working closely with PED and DWS, along with Centers for Independent Living (CILs), to implement a Disability Innovation Fund Grant that PED applied for and received. Furthermore, PED has established a new state Office of Special Education. NMDVR is ensuring a strong partnership between the Office of Special Education, NMDVR, and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) in implementing the Intensive Technical Assistance Agreement signed by both agencies. NMDVR has increased the number of dedicated Transition Staff to thirteen and elevated the program to a stand-alone department under the Rehabilitation Services Unit (RSU).

To ensure the effectiveness of these initiatives, NMDVR will measure the number of partnerships established and maintained with PED, DWS, and CILs, attendance and participation rates of PED and DWS staff at relevant conferences and meetings, number of initiatives implemented under the Disability Innovation Fund Grant, number of dedicated Transition Staff and the establishment of the stand-alone department, frequency and effectiveness of collaboration between NMDVR, PED, the Office of Special Education, and NTACT. Through these efforts, NMDVR will improve service delivery and increased employment rates for students with disabilities, achieve higher satisfaction rates among students, parents, and educators with the services provided, enhance skills and knowledge among NMDVR, PED, and DWS staff through joint initiatives and training, and ensure long-term retention and success of students with disabilities in the workforce.

- **NMDVR Goal: NMDVR will explore options to increase transportation and work opportunities for individuals facing transportation barriers.**

*Update:* Ensure the effectiveness of initiatives that expand access to transportation, internet, remote work opportunities, and self-employment support by measuring program participation and outcomes, while collaborating with community partners and providers to identify and enhance resources for rural New Mexico.

- **NMDVR Goal: NMDVR is committed to meeting and exceeding WIOA Performance Indicators.**

*Updates:* Staff have received continuous internal training opportunities to comply with WIOA RSA 911 reporting standards. Quarterly accuracy in managing educational goals and tracking of measurable skills gains and credential attainment. These efforts align the agency to support competitive integrated employment opportunities. NMDVR will continue to utilize the available resources offered through the National Technical Assistance Centers to further expand knowledge and education for staff training. Specialized training needs have further expanded in areas of behavioral health, criminal background, and self-employment.

Progress will be tracked through measurable goals, monitoring the implementation of improved policies and training (outputs), and assessing their impact on employment rates and participant satisfaction (outcomes). Report on number of staff by title that complete specialized training.

Through these efforts, NMDVR aims to significantly improve service delivery and outcomes over the next three years, meeting client needs with high standards of care and innovation.

- **NMDVR Goal: Support the growing population of older workers, including those continuing employment beyond age 65, by providing intensive training and resources to help them maintain employment and adapt to evolving workforce demands.**

*Update:* NMDVR continues to work with senior programs for individuals over 65 by providing training site opportunities in our field offices. NMDVR also closely monitors initiatives with the local workforce boards to support older workers in reentering or sustaining employment beyond 65.

- **NMDVR Goal: To increase applicants and client engagement, NMDVR will launch a marketing campaign and implement rapid engagement strategies, ensuring clients remain actively involved in their rehabilitation journey.**

*Update:* Advance NMDVR’s marketing and outreach efforts by developing and implementing strategic campaigns, expanding the agency’s social media presence, sharing success stories, and leveraging local and national media, with the aim of increasing public awareness and engagement despite funding challenges.

**PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, REFLECTING ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE. EXPLAIN ANY DISCREPANCIES IN THE ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS; AND**

NMDVR, in partnership with NM Commission for the Blind, reported the follow performance for PY 2024

PY 2024	Employment Rate 2nd Quarter	Employment Rate 4th Quarter	Median Earnings	Credential Attainment	MSGs
Negotiated	43%	41.5%	\$5080	39.1%	53.4%
Actual	42.4%	44.1%	\$5663	41.3%	53.3%

**1. THE USE OF FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES (SECTIONS 101(A)(18) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT) (E.G., SRC, SILC).**

In the coming FFY, NMDVR will review the innovation and expansion plans submitted by the State Independent Living Council (SILC) to the NMDVR Director, which should outline initiatives designed to address the overall needs identified in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). This review will determine budget availability to implement additional funding for the implementation of the stated SILC objectives.

Additionally, DVR will continue to reserve funds for use by the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to carry out its required activities. These activities include gathering customer satisfaction feedback, assisting with the CSNA, and publishing the Annual Report in support of the Vocational Rehabilitation program. The funds reserved for the SRC are determined through a shared planning process addressed in quarterly SRC Meetings in which the SRC identifies the resources needed to fulfill its responsibilities. In recent years, DVR has reserved approximately \$80,000 to support SRC activities.

E. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS, AND ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF TITLE VI FUNDS:

VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided

2. IF THE VR AGENCY HAS ELECTED TO RECEIVE TITLE VI FUNDS, SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRES VR AGENCIES TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC GOALS AND PRIORITIES WITH RESPECT TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. DESCRIBE THE USE OF TITLE VI FUNDS AND HOW THEY WILL BE USED IN MEETING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

N/A

3. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MAY BE PROVIDED WITH TITLE 1 OR TITLE VI FUNDS FOLLOWING PLACEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN EMPLOYMENT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(22) AND SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, DESCRIBE THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES; AND THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

NMDVR is committed to providing comprehensive, supported employment services. These services are crucial in assisting individuals with the most significant disabilities in not only securing employment but also ensuring their success and growth in their chosen fields.

NMDVR recognizes the unique challenges faced by youth with significant disabilities. To address this, extended support is offered for up to 24 months, ensuring that youth have ample time and resources to establish themselves in their employment. This period is critical as it allows for adjustment, skill development, and the formation of a stable work routine.

In a bid to offer more inclusive support, NMDVR extends these employment services for youth, with no other forms of support, for up to 48 months or until they reach the age of 25. This extended timeframe is significant as it encompasses a critical transition period from youth to early adulthood, providing continuous support during a phase where they are most vulnerable to employment challenges.

Recognizing that individuals with the most significant disabilities require ongoing support regardless of age, NMDVR also offers services for up to 24 months for those who are 25 years or older. This ensures that age does not become a barrier to receiving necessary employment support.

The NMDVR has a dedicated Supported Employment Coordination position for the agency to manage focused coordination activities statewide. Dedicated Supported Employment Liaisons are located in every area across the state to provide local technical assistance to counseling staff in supporting participants with to provide critical services to Supported Employment participants. Monthly monitoring of all Supported

Employment cases is conducted to ensure progress, follow-up and engagement is occurring with VR staff to ensure continuous participation in planned services is assessed as well as other necessary services to support competitive integrated employment.

4. SECTIONS 101(A)(22) AND 606(B)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE THE VR AGENCY TO DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND ARRANGE, INCLUDING ENTERING INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ENTITIES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. THE DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE EXTENDED SERVICES, AS APPLICABLE, TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(A) AND 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(C)(19)(V).

NMDVR has implemented a comprehensive strategy to enhance its service provision, This approach focused on several key areas which include, but are not limited to, the following:

In collaboration with the Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) and the New Mexico University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (NM UCEDD), NMDVR is actively involved in training job developers and coaches. This training includes assistance in obtaining credentials like ACRE (Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators) and CESP (Certified Employment Support Professional), which are vital for providing high-quality services. This initiative also addresses the shortage of professionals in this field

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Vocational Rehabilitation Technicians are directly involved in job development and placement activities. This hands-on approach helps in understanding the current job market and developing more effective employment strategies.

NMDVR staff members are receiving training from NM UCEDD and are working towards obtaining ACRE credentialing. This enhances their skills and knowledge, enabling them to provide better support to their participants. Over the past two program years, the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) has supported 31 staff members in completing ACRE training and obtaining certification. This initiative reinforces the agency's commitment to maintaining a highly skilled workforce capable of effectively supporting participants in achieving competitive, integrated employment outcomes. NMDVR will continue to advance this effort through its contractual partnership with the University of New Mexico and plans to send the next NMDVR staff cohort for ACRE training in Spring 2026.

Recognizing the importance of a supportive network, NMDVR is working closely with families and community agencies to identify more job coaches. This is particularly important as the DDSD's Mi Via program currently lacks long-term support vendors.

NMDVR is increasing its collaboration with various entities like DD Waiver Case Managers, Medicaid's Community Benefit Program's consultants, and the Aging and Long-Term Services' community benefits consultants. Such collaborations are crucial for a holistic approach to vocational rehabilitation and employment services.

To further expand its capacity, NMDVR is entering into contracts with external vendors for job development and placement services. This step not only extends the range of services offered but also brings in additional expertise and resources.

A key component of NMDVR's strategy is the inclusion of extended services, particularly for individuals with the most significant disabilities. These extended services are crucial in ensuring sustained employment and success in the workplace. For youth with the most significant disabilities, NMDVR provides tailored extended services that support their transition from school to work. This in

ongoing job coaching, mentorship, and other support services that help these individuals maintain and succeed in their employment roles.

By integrating these extended services into their overall approach, NMDVR not only facilitates immediate job placement but also ensures long-term support and stability for individuals with the most significant disabilities. This holistic approach enhances the agency’s ability to meet the diverse needs of its participants and adapt to the changing employment landscape.

Overall, NMDVR’s actions reflect a multi-faceted approach to increasing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. By focusing on training, collaboration, and direct involvement in job placement, NMDVR is enhancing its ability to meet the diverse needs of its participants and adapt to the changing employment landscape.

NMDVR also maintains contracts with 3 Centers for Independent living within the state.

#### F. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

##### 1. ESTIMATES FOR NEXT FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR—

##### A. VR PROGRAM; AND

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The agency anticipates approximately 7,600 individuals will be served by the program during the PY2026 – PY2027 period. These estimates are based on historical data utilized over the past three program years.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
SD	2,646	2,646	7,087,286.34	N/A
MSD	2,371	2,371	\$6,145,161.53	N/A
NSD	79	79	\$15,424.11	N/A

**B. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.**

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In FFY 2025, NMDVR served 761 Supported Employment participants; For FFY 2026, 513 Supported Employment participants so far it is expected NMDVR will serve approximately 70-75 additional Supported Employment participants through the remainder of the FFY. Many referrals into the NMDVR are based on the referrals from the state’s waiver program, this number may be slightly higher or lower based on the number of individuals that determine to engage in employment services with Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) waiver program.

The efforts of the MOU between NMDVR and DDSD assist in ensuring quality referrals of individuals from the state's waiver program but also indicative of NMDVR’s ongoing commitment to enhancing vocational opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The state’s commitment to provide funding to the Health Care Authority Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) waiver program is a critical factor contributing to this increase and success of serving Supported Employment.

These funds are being strategically utilized to bolster NMDVR’s Supported Employment services. This includes expanding specialized training programs for job coaches, enhancing collaboration with local businesses to create more employment opportunities, and investing in assistive technologies that facilitate workplace inclusion. Furthermore, NMDVR is actively working on broadening its outreach and engagement with underrepresented communities to ensure a more inclusive approach. This holistic strategy not only aims to meet the immediate increase in service demand but also to sustainably support the vocational aspirations of individuals with disabilities in New Mexico. By doing so, NMDVR is reinforcing its commitment to support individuals successfully in the workforce which is essential for the overall economic growth of the state.

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
Supported Employment FFY2025	761	761	\$2,100,088.5 M	0

**G. ORDER OF SELECTION**

1. PURSUANT TO SECTION 101(A)(5) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, THIS DESCRIPTION MUST BE AMENDED WHEN THE VR AGENCY DETERMINES, BASED ON THE ANNUAL

ESTIMATES DESCRIBED IN DESCRIPTION (F), THAT VR SERVICES CANNOT BE PROVIDED TO ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE WHO APPLY FOR AND ARE DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES.

\* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

The VR agency is not currently implementing an active order of selection, and all eligible individuals will be served for the time being.

## 2. FOR VR AGENCIES THAT HAVE DEFINED PRIORITY CATEGORIES DESCRIBE—

### A. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

Due to federal budget uncertainties NMDVR may be in a financial situation in the future to institute an order of selection. Although NMDVR is not currently on an order of selection, should resources become limited due to federal budgeting restrictions the NMDVR may need to consider a move to order of selection.

### B. THE ORDER (PRIORITY CATEGORIES) TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES ENSURING THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; AND

#### **Implementation of Order of Selection**

When the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) determines that resources are insufficient to serve all eligible individuals, the agency will implement an Order of Selection (OOS). DVR will continue to accept applications, determine eligibility, and assign individuals to priority categories based on an assessment of the significance of disability.

Individuals with active Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) at the time OOS is implemented will continue to receive services as planned, regardless of priority category. Individuals removed from the waiting list and currently receiving services will also continue to be served.

#### **Priority Categories**

Eligible individuals will be assigned to one of three priority categories:

Category 1 – Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities (MSD)

Category 2 – Individuals with Significant Disabilities (SD)

Category 3 – Individuals with Disabilities

Categories will be closed in ascending order, beginning with Category 3 and continuing to Category 2 and then Category 1, depending on available resources. Only individuals in open categories will receive new services. Individuals in Category 1 will always be served first when resources permit reopening.

#### **Notification to Individuals**

DVR will inform each applicant or eligible individual of:

- The existence and structure of the OOS priority groups
- Their assigned priority group upon determination of eligibility
- Their right to appeal the priority category assignment
- Their opportunity to remain on a waiting list if their priority group is closed
- The availability of information and referral services, regardless of category closure

### C. THE VR AGENCY'S GOALS FOR SERVING INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, INCLUDING HOW THE AGENCY WILL ASSIST ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS ASSIGNED TO

CLOSED PRIORITY CATEGORIES WITH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL, THE METHOD IN WHICH THE VR AGENCY WILL MANAGE WAITING LISTS, AND THE PROJECTED TIMELINES FOR OPENING PRIORITY CATEGORIES. NOTE: PRIORITY CATEGORIES ARE CONSIDERED OPEN WHEN ALL INDIVIDUALS IN THE PRIORITY CATEGORY MAY BE SERVED.

If the NMDVR must implement an order of selection the waitlist is managed statewide through the case management system. At this time NMDVR is not on an order of selection and is serving all participants.

Waiting List Administration

Placement on the Waiting List

Eligible individuals whose priority categories are closed will be placed in delayed status on a waiting list. No IPE will be developed for individuals in closed categories.

Release from the Waiting List

When DVR's resource analysis determines that services can be resumed for a closed category:

Staff will be notified of the reopening.

Individuals will be released from delayed status based on:

Priority group, followed by

- Earliest application date
- Released individuals will be contacted to initiate or continue development of their IPE.
- Continuation of Services for Individuals with Existing IPEs
- Individuals with an IPE developed before OOS implementation will continue to receive services without interruption, regardless of category.  
IPEs may be amended only as necessary to support continued progress toward employment outcomes or to remain consistent with established policies.
- Information and Referral Services

Applicants and eligible individuals placed on the waiting list will receive information and referral services, including guidance and connection to:

Federal and state programs

Local community resources

Components of the statewide workforce development system

These services will be provided without developing an IPE.

3. HAS THE VR AGENCY ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER OF SELECTION WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

NMDVR will provide services those individuals seeking VR services to maintain employment. This requires the individual to be in a current competitive integrated employment situation, where seeking VR services is a necessity to maintain employment. In this instance the NMDVR can support an individual outside order of selection rules so that the individual does not lose their employment.

H. WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS.

The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewideness or has a previously approved

waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate “not applicable.”

N/A

**I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT.**

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency’s comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the State VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

**1. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PERSONNEL AND PROJECTED PERSONNEL NEEDS INCLUDING—**

- A. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND**
- B. THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF PERSONNEL THAT ARE EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING RATIOS OF QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS;**
- C. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.**

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Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
VR Counselor (including Transition Counselors)	64	75	96
VR Supervisors	6	8	8
VR Technicians	42	47	55
Program Managers	10	11	11
Administrative Assistants	8	9	5

Field Operation Directors	3	4	7
Business Outreach Coordinators	4	4	7
RSU Assistant Deputy Director	2	2	2

**D. RATIO OF QUALIFIED VR COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS:**

72 Caseloads to service 336,557 Individuals with Disabilities in New Mexico (*NIDILRR 2023 Compendium*).

1 Counselor to 4,674 Individuals with Disabilities in NM. However, based on current statistics approximately 2.3% of individuals with disabilities are seeking vocational rehabilitation services with NMDVR. This provides a ratio of 1:107 of VR counselors to clients.

The ratio of counselors to Individuals with Disabilities supports the projected personnel needs of the agency within 5-years identified in C. of this section.

**E. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:**

Considering the number of individuals currently being served in the VR program and based on a 3% increase per year, it is expected that the NMDVR would expand services to an additional 1,200 individuals over the next 5 years. Based on statistical data provided from RSA, New Mexico is on track to meet the 3% growth in the current program year. This would result in NMDVR serving approximately 8,950 participants in PY2028.

**2. DATA AND INFORMATION ON PERSONNEL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:**

- A. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

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Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
-------------------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------

New Mexico Highlands University	Clinical Mental Health Counseling	162	33
New Mexico Highlands University	Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling	7	3
New Mexico Highlands University	Rehabilitation Counseling	1	1
New Mexico Highlands University	School Counseling	26	10
Western New Mexico University	BAS in Rehabilitation Counseling	25	8
Western New Mexico University	Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling	8	1

**B. THE VR AGENCY’S PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL, WHICH ADDRESSES THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED NEEDS FOR QUALIFIED PERSONNEL; AND THE COORDINATION AND FACILITATION OF EFFORTS BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TO RECRUIT, PREPARE, AND RETAIN PERSONNEL WHO ARE QUALIFIED, INCLUDING PERSONNEL FROM MINORITY BACKGROUNDS AND PERSONNEL WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.**

NMDVR has implemented many avenues to recruit qualified personnel. In 2022, NMDVR worked closely with the Public Education Department to update the state rule on licensure for Rehabilitation Counselors in the education system in New Mexico. This has allowed NMDVR to expand the pool of qualified individuals to serve as Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

Recruitment efforts have included updates to job postings to ensure accuracy in qualifications for employment and expansion of job postings to national platforms such as LinkedIn and Indeed. Additionally, NMDVR has activated its social media platforms and posts open positions on those sites routinely. NMDVR has made internal efforts to better educate current staff on the open positions within the agency by utilizing SharePoint intranet and monthly employee newsletter for internal recruitment.

In 2022, the NMDVR HR team worked to review pay bands and adjusted those pay ranges to make the agency a more competitive employer. As a result, NMDVR began the process of aligning in-band pay adjustments for all positions. This project has provided the opportunity to increase pay, as appropriate, based on qualifications, education, and experience to ensure appropriate monetary compensation is provided for employees in the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

The agency uses the State Personnel automated data system to account for the number of employees, status of individual employees as probationary, permanent, temporary, or term; and related information such as salary, earned leave balance, etc. Vacancies are reported on a routine basis and used to monitor hiring activities. All new hires, promotions, and transfers require the approval of the Director.

The NMDVR HR team continually reviews all agency positions to ensure pay for employees is in alignment with educational and work experience as part of the hiring process. This project has been

extensive and provides the agency an opportunity to ensure staff are compensated competitively for the skill sets necessary to work in vocational rehabilitation.

Employees of the agency are covered by the State Personnel Act:

- The agency has committed to hiring and compensating staff at competitive salaries (appropriate placement).
- State of New Mexico employees are offered a competitive employment benefits package, including premium health care coverage, pension (75% of average of top three years' salary), and the option to retire with 25 years of service for staff hired before 2012 and 30 years of service thereafter.
- State Personnel Board rules allow VR Counselors to be paid a supervisory differential for assuming supervisory responsibilities inclusive of training staff in effective case management and best practices.
- Paid Parental Leave is provided to eligible staff.
- The agency offers training and continuing education opportunities not available with other state agencies.
- The State of New Mexico has implemented an Alternative Work Schedule Policy. This allows staff to request to change from the Normal Work Schedule (NWS) to an Alternative Work Schedule (AWS) with prior written approval of the employee's immediate supervisor and NMDVR Director. The purpose of this policy is to provide employees with more options in work schedules, while adhering to Federal and State statutes and regulations. The added flexibility in creating alternative work schedules also provides new opportunities for efficiency and expanded hours of customer service.
- The State of New Mexico has also implemented a Fitness and Wellness Policy. Employees may request modified work schedules that permit the employee two hours of leave time per week for fitness and wellness activities. The purpose of this policy is to support NMDVR employees in pursuing a healthy lifestyle, potentially leading to improved job performance, increased work satisfaction, and reduced health care and insurance costs. NMDVR recognizes the benefits of employee health and wellness and supports time for fitness and wellness activities. NMDVR also recognizes such activities are mutually beneficial to the agency and its employees because they improve productivity, work performance, and morale while reducing absenteeism, turnover, and health care costs.

**Institutes of Higher Ed:** NMDVR has created MOUs to support practicums and internships from various programs including NM Highlands University, Western and Eastern New Mexico University. We support staff obtaining additional education through higher education programs by offering flexible schedules for staff participation.

**Minority backgrounds:** Ethnicity and race are not required reporting stats for State of NM Employees. However, by nature New Mexico has a very culturally diverse population. According to Health Resources & Services Administration of the more than 2.1 million residents, 50.1% identify as Hispanic or Latino, 35.9% as White Non-Hispanic or Latino, 11.2% as Native American or Alaskan Native, 2.7% as Black or African American with New Mexico's total population being approximately 50% female. NMDVR supports diverse hiring practices.

**Individuals with disabilities:** NMDVR has a dedicated ADA Coordinator in the Human Resources Unit. We have established policies for equal access in our working environments, reasonable accommodation, assistive technology and a dedicated Information Technology team for supports with assistive technology. We comply with all other ADA requirements.

**On-boarding and training:** NMDVR promotes a thorough on-boarding process to help new employees

integrate successfully into their new work environments. Furthermore, the Rehabilitation Services Unit (RSU) provides specific training to the various roles in the field serving participants. This training ensures staff members have the necessary training to work at high performance levels and work effectively with participants of the program. This training includes virtual courses as well as an in-agency Rehabilitation and Support Staff academy. NMDVR will implement an NMDVR Community of Practice that will be comprised of a combination of Counseling Staff, Management Staff and Statewide Coordinators. The CoP will be a mentorship program to provide guidance and relationships as new staff onboard. This will cultivate a sense of “belonging” and encourage staff to stay at NMDVR as they are building long-lasting relationships and developing a network of technical support and expertise to become functional in their roles at NMDVR. Additionally, the agency strives to appropriately compensate NMDVR employees for education and experience, based on budget availability.

**Recognition and Awards:** NMDVR has a Positive Organizational Climate Committee that encourages acknowledgement of employees and highlights achievements. This committee accepts nominations for various awards and acknowledges these awards in the employee newsletter and in the 'Round the Roundhouse newspaper (print and online) for state employees.

C. DESCRIPTION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND ACTIVITIES THAT ENSURE ALL PERSONNEL EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY RECEIVE APPROPRIATE AND ADEQUATE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS:

- I. PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND
- II. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO VR AGENCY PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS AND FOR PROVIDING TRAINING REGARDING THE AMENDMENTS TO THE REHABILITATION ACT MADE BY THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

In 2022 NMDVR requested a state rule change to the NM Administrative Code (NMAC) for VR Counselors. The update aligned WIOA professional degrees and credentials with New Mexico state licensing for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. This process was completed in September 2022 and the amendment to the NMAC is now published.

As a result of the new NMAC, a one-year mentorship plan is required to ensure NMDVR provides a full year of direct work experience encompassing exposure to the many aspects of vocational rehabilitation. Upon completion of the one-year work experience under the mentorship program, the VRC will then be eligible to apply for Level 1 Rehabilitation Counselor licensure issued by the New Mexico Public Education Department.

NMDVR requires all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to have applied for licensure and clear a background check. It should be noted that new counselors have 60 days from their start date to apply for their license. All applications are monitored for compliance. Initial VR Counselor licenses must be renewed after three years. VR Counselors need to apply for renewal at the expiration of state licensure.

licensure is identified in policy as top priority and required for continued employment. Identified documents to be submitted in the credentials package for licensure include:

- Official college transcripts of all degrees received
- Copy of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification, if applicable
- Work history in a rehabilitation field
- Copies of course syllabi related to counseling and guidance, vocational counseling, disability, psychosocial or psycho-cultural aspects of disability, case management in rehabilitation counseling, and placement aspects in rehabilitation counseling
- Criminal background information

NMDVR follows the state personnel minimum qualification standards in hiring for the variety of positions in the Vocational Rehabilitation program. In addition, NMDVR supports professional development and continuous learning to ensure the staff possess and maintain the necessary skills for 21<sup>st</sup> century understanding of the workforce and needs of individuals with disabilities.

NMDVR Rehabilitation Services provides extensive training to professionals and paraprofessionals. This includes a comprehensive rehabilitation academy—three full weeks of training upon new hire involving webinars, in-person, and virtual sessions. It encompasses topics from introduction to vocational rehabilitation, history of the VR program, comprehensive assessments, eligibility, caseload and case management, case management system training, counseling theories, and modalities to job development, placement, assistive technology and writing IPEs.

The agency also coordinates a week of training to include state partners' presentations acclimating the staff on a variety of service collaborations and supports including independent living centers, technology assistance programs, 121 grants, pre-employment transition services, performance indicator training, and core state partners. NMDVR also has all new Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Technicians who participate in ACRE and CESP training. The agency works with University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability to provide these intensive 15-week trainings to support the systemic strategy to skill-up providers in the state.

NMDVR subscribes to the YESLMS platform, which provides a library of over 100 vocational rehabilitation-dedicated training courses which expands a variety of training courses for all staff to access with immediacy and ease. The training is mandated for Rehabilitation Services staff, and all other agency employees are encouraged to utilize the training offered.

Additionally, Program Managers can request targeted training for the Training Team based on performance trends and as needed. The Training Team continually develops curriculum and distribution of content. Annually, the Training Team will submit the RSU Training plan for the year outlining all training requirements for the year.

Assistive Technology collaborative efforts include NMDVR's identified AT liaisons who participate to support the annual statewide Assistive Technology conference. Assistive Technology training for staff is offered throughout the year in coordinating presentations for staff. The New Mexico Technology Assistance

Program (NMTAP) offers hands-on access to equipment for staff to learn and utilize for gaining knowledge regarding the variety of available equipment for participants. NMTAP participates in NMDVR Rehabilitation Academy, providing valuable learning experience.

NMDVR has expanded its presence in national community of practice groups, including participation with the Council for State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) conferences and with national technical assistance teams. NMDVR has developed several internal teams to address specific content with VR technical assistance programs to expand knowledge areas even further. These work groups participate in monthly meetings, webinars, and conferences. Learned information is shared and disseminated through the agency.

The agency has an internal training request system that allows employees to request various courses offered by external parties. This is an expanded opportunity to continue to increase staff knowledge supported by NMDVR.

NMDVR also supports CRC-related training and certification. Staff holding a CRC are supported to participate in the necessary continuing education requirements to maintain their national certification. Information regarding training and skills development is disseminated to the rehabilitation services unit via the RSU Training Unit. This Unit of three staff is tasked with maintaining the hub of information to share with staff for the purpose of professional development. The Training Team participates in national community of practice for trainers. Additionally, it receives ongoing communication via listservs from many training providers on VR-specific initiatives to ensure staff are provided opportunities for training in the various aspects of vocational rehabilitation. Many of the training courses are available on demand. NMDVR also has a subscription to YESLMS, which provides a library of VR training topics produced by VR professionals.

Over the past several years NMDVR has supported several individuals to attend the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute (NRLI) which is an exceptional executive leadership and skill development program offered by San Diego State University. It is the intention of the agency to continue to utilize this program when appropriate to skill-up internal leadership within the agency. NMDVR has also supported mid-level managers to attend LeadVR, which is a supervisory program designed for Vocational Rehabilitation professionals in supervisory roles offered from University of Arkansas Currents. The investment into NMDVR professionals is intended for the successful continuity of managers with in the agency to become leaders moving the agency into the future.

**DESCRIPTION OF VR AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PERSONNEL STANDARDS CONSISTENT WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B) TO ENSURE THAT VR AGENCY PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ARE ADEQUATELY TRAINED AND PREPARED, INCLUDING—**

**STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND**

**A. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE**

## EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

In 2022, the New Mexico Vocational Rehabilitation program requested a state rule change to the New Mexico Administrative Code for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. The update aligned WIOA professional degrees and credentials with New Mexico state licensing for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. This yearlong process was completed in September 2022 and the amendment to the NM Administrative Code is now published.

The NMDVR program requires all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to apply for and maintain licensure through New Mexico Public Education Department.

In 2025, the New Mexico State Personnel Office conducted a Classification Architect project that impacted several positions within the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor classification was one of the largest groups affected by this project.

As a result, the NMDVR Human Resources Unit completed a comprehensive and complex classification and pay band request, which was presented to the State Personnel Board for review.

In February 2026, the State Personnel Board approved the updated classification and corresponding pay band. NMDVR is pleased to acknowledge that recruitment efforts are now aligned with the appropriate pay band for the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor classification.

The agency will continue to provide training to all staff interested in improving their job skills. The RSU Training Team works with leadership to implement agency initiatives and provide valuable internal training, enhancing knowledge, skills, and abilities in various agency positions

The RSU Training Team will continue to collaborate with internal staff identified as experienced in their respective positions to support the training of new employees in their various areas.

RSU leadership will collaborate to identify options for implementation of a mentorship modality to be adopted by the agency, providing an expansion of quality training and hands-on support for new staff. The agency is aware of the need to hire and retain well-qualified staff. NMDVR is proactively working toward the future in terms of career development and succession planning. With the expanded application pool based on WIOA educational standards for VRC positions, there is an obvious increased need for training new staff in specific VR topics.

As a result of the new NMAC, a one-year mentorship plan is required to ensure NMDVR provides a full year of direct work experience encompassing exposure to the many aspects of vocational rehabilitation. Upon completion of the one-year work experience under the mentorship program, the VRC will then be eligible to apply for Level 1 Rehabilitation Counselor licensure issued by the New Mexico Public Education Department. Once Level 1 Rehabilitation Counselor Licensure is obtained, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor meets Qualified Personnel standards consistent with Section 01(a)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R 361.18(c) for the purposes of conducting eligibilities, comprehensive assessments, and the development of Individualized Plans for Employment. NMDVR Rehabilitation Services Unit has amended several policies to align with the one-year mentorship program.

NMDVR requires all Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to have applied for licensure and clear a background check within 60 days of the start date. All applications are monitored for compliance. Initial VR Counselor licenses must be renewed after three years. VR Counselors need to apply for renewal at the expiration of state licensure. State licensure is identified in policy as top priority and required for continued employment. Identified documents to be submitted in the credentials package for licensure include:

- Official college transcripts of all degrees received
- Copy of Certified Rehabilitation Counselor certification, if applicable
- Work history in a rehabilitation field
- Copies of course syllabi related to counseling and guidance, vocational counseling, disability, psychosocial or psycho-cultural aspects of disability, case management in rehabilitation counseling, and placement aspects in rehabilitation counseling
- Criminal background information

Examples of agency training/professional development not included in the section above also include: Working with the VRTAC-QM, VRTAC-QE, NTACTION through intensive technical assistance agreements. Examples of training have included Measurable Skills Gain & Credential Attainment, Data Analysis Training, Fiscal Training, Training on Educational Goals. Future plans include Clinical Supervision Training. NMDVR has also supported staff to attend National Conferences including the NET Summit, NENA, APSE, CSAVR, NRLI, Project SEARCH, Lead VR 2024 National Academy, and CANAR. Staff across all positions are selected to attend these conferences to offer the opportunity to network on a national level and bring back knowledge to build instate capacity.

3. METHOD(S) THE VR AGENCY USES TO ENSURE THAT PERSONNEL ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN APPROPRIATE MODES OF COMMUNICATION WITH OR IN THE NATIVE LANGUAGE OF APPLICANTS OR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY.

NMDVR's goal is to ensure every individual with a disability has full and equitable access to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) process. This includes the identification, assessment, and accommodation of all communication needs to support meaningful participation throughout service delivery.

Communication requirements, including preferred language, assistive technology needs, interpreter services (e.g., ASL, spoken language, Certified Deaf Interpreter), written or visual communication formats, and any other accommodations, will be collected at the time of application. This information will be documented to ensure that VR staff can plan accordingly and are fully prepared prior to any meetings, interviews, or assessments.

The state has a high need for Spanish speakers and NMDVR employs many staff members who can communicate in Spanish. Additionally, NMDVR employs several American Sign Language (ASL) staff with specialized caseloads to meet the communication needs of individuals who are Deaf. NMDVR also utilizes multiple vendors that provide certified ASL interpretation services to support participant engagement, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and employers particularly in the job searching stages of the VR process. There are a wide range of languages spoken in New Mexico and multiple resources are available to assist the VR team in communications. NMDVR provides a pay differential for staff who are able to communicate in various languages, including Spanish and Sign Language. Other available resources are Ubi Duo devices in each field office which provide a communication tool between Deaf individuals where interpreters are not available. Language line is an available translation service that is utilized for numerous languages on demand to facilitate communication. NMDVR also ensures website and other online services utilized by the program are compliance with inclusive design which expands accessibility.

4. AS APPROPRIATE, DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES TO COORDINATE THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT WITH PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH

## DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

The Public Education Department (PED), through its Office of Special Education, administers state services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The NMDVR Transition Director serves as a liaison between the two agencies to ensure communication is consistent and that the programs complement one another to achieve successful outcomes and strengthen relationships and collaboration.

On May 26, 2023 PED created the Office of Special Education, a move that would elevate the needs of students with disabilities and help their families navigate the complex system currently in place. The Office of Special Education is the first of its kind in New Mexico and will operate within the state Public Education Department to ensure school districts are providing the best possible special education services that align with state and federal laws. This office creates an opportunity for collaboration between state agencies, districts, and families of students.

Yearly training is conducted between NMDVR and local education agencies regarding IDEA. These efforts are coordinated between the NMDVR Transition Director and the Office of Special Education to provide a mechanism of training to strengthen and inform all interested personnel regarding IDEA, statewide initiatives, and resources. In 2023, NMDVR and PED provided collaborative trainings in an eight-week series promoting understanding of the various aspects of education in New Mexico, from graduation requirements and pathways to the VR program, which covered areas of supported employment and writing and understanding Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The training events were extremely educational and a benefit to the state system.

In FY 23-24, FY 24-25 NMDVR and PED identified statewide trends in regard to transition and graduation outcomes. Goals were identified for the state of NM during a national conference “Capacity Building Institute” where technical assistance was provided to NM to establish goals for NM transition students with disabilities. NMDVR continues to work with PED in disseminating information to school educators, families, students, and VR staff on graduation requirements, next step plans, strengthening attendance, and engagement pathways to improve graduation outcomes in NM. This collaboration will continue in upcoming academic years. and the NMDVR Transition Director will continue to internally hosts trainings for personnel within the year to provide IDEA training as well as other aspects related to serving students in New Mexico.

NMDVR counseling staff obtains licensure through the Public Education Department, which provides a coordinated mechanism for Vocational Rehabilitation staff to access students in providing Pre-Employment Transition Services. This allows for ease of access in working with school districts, accessing students, and coordinating events and activities for transition services.

NMDVR works closely with PED licensure department, to coordinate a mechanism that supports Vocational Rehabilitation staff to obtain a license to work directly with students who are potential or eligible for VR services.

NMDVR will participate in the IDEA Advisory Committee to represent vocational rehabilitation as appropriate. An NMDVR Program Manager has been asked to join the IDEA Advisory Committee. An application has been submitted and is pending approval and appointment by the Governor’s office. NMDVR partners with the IDEA Chair/ Director of the Office of Special Education of New Mexico, to collaborate and provide agency updates. The NMDVR Transition Director continues to work with PED to identify innovative and engaging ways to further support professional development in New Mexico.

NMDVR continues to be part of the IDEA Advisory board, A Program Manager was approved and has

been participating in the IDEA Advisory Transition committee where they are working on establishing a statewide transition fair.

NMDVR Transition Director is a board member of the Career Technical Education “CTE” Advisory Board, the director is part of the Student with Disabilities Committee, the committee meets quarterly to review data-driven recommendations to expand equitable CTE pathways and workforce transition for students with disabilities. The goal is to enhance and expand career information and guidance for students, parents, guardians, teachers, and counselors with the help of employers, to engage students in exploring careers and workplaces.

Additionally, there will be vocational rehabilitation representation at the School-to-Work Transition Teams and support for Regional Education Cooperatives in the state.

NMDVR works collaboratively with UNM Center for Disabilities, where 8 regional School to work Transition team meetings occur with NMDVR vocational counselors, school educators, and local agencies who support transition activities within their region. NMDVR will continue to work with UNM to identify new transition trends and provide training to VR counselor, educators and community providers.

#### J. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act—

1. DESCRIBE PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATION OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THAT ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF THE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM THE RECEIPT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES.

NMDVR and The Commission of the Blind have put in place plans, policies, and procedures to enable the agencies to coordinate with educational officials, and to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services. The Public Education Department (PED), of which NMDVR is a division, is the State Education Agency (SEA) for New Mexico. The MOA with PED serves to facilitate the integration and coordination of services to eligible secondary education students in providing a continuum of services that will meet the needs of all served by Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The integrated continuum of services is to be flexible enough to meet the needs of all IDEA-eligible students to qualify for NMDVR services within the available resources, maximize opportunity for students, and eliminate limitations and obstacles.

On April 20, 2021, the Governor appointed the state’s Director of Special Education to serve on the Commission for the Blind State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The service of the Special Education Director on the Commission’s State Rehabilitation Council helped the Commission to coordinate transition services with the Public Education Department (PED) and also with Local Educational Agencies. She resigned from her position with PED in July 2023, although she has agreed to remain on the agency's SRC. The Commission will be seeking another formal representative for the SRC from PED.

NMDVR, Commission of the Blind and PED leadership meet annually to review the established MOA and address necessary updates, edits, additions, or deletion of content. NMDVR works closely with PED to assure facilitation of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) of students by utilizing the established agreements, assessing local education agency needs, and through extensive collaboration efforts. The purpose of the Memorandum of Agreement (Agreement) is to establish a Formal interagency agreement as required by 34 CFR 361.22(e). The Agreement provides for methods of coordination between the agency and PED to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services, including pre- employment services, in school to the receipt of

vocational rehabilitation services from the agency. These methods of coordination also facilitate the development and approval of an Individualized Plan for Employment as early as possible during the transition planning process, but not later than the time a student with a visual impairment is determined to be eligible for the Commission's vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting.

NMDVR and Commission continue to work closely with PED staff and all Local Educational Agencies across the state. The New Mexico Division of vocational Rehabilitation transition unit has 11 100% transition counselors dedicated to providing pre-employment transition services "Pre-ETS" to students. Additional Pre-ETS services are provided across the state by 64 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who serve over 150 schools. The agency has approved 8 providers across the state to support NMDVR with delivery of pre-ETS. The Commission for the Blind and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation have agreed to make pre-employment transition services available to all students with disabilities who are potentially eligible or eligible for VR services in New Mexico starting at 14 years of age, or earlier as needed, based on the IDEA definition of a "student with a disability."

NMDVR has continued to work with PED to review and update its current MOU. In Program year 2025-2026 NMDVR engaged with PED to amend the DVR PED MOU with support of National Technical Assistance. NMDVR and PED staff will continue to review MOU yearly and initiate updates as necessary.

In 2022, NMDVR and PED signed an intensive technical assistance agreement with the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition. This agreement has provided an opportunity for the two state programs to align transition efforts across the state and identify goals and areas of priority with guidance from the technical assistance team. PED and NMDVR are currently in several project developments through this initiative.

In FY 23-24, FY 24-25 NMDVR and PED identified statewide trends in regard to transition and graduation outcomes. Goals were identified for the state of NM during a national conference "Capacity Building Institute" May of 2025 where technical assistance was provided to NM to establish goals for transition in NM. NMDVR and The Commission continue to work with PED in disseminating information to school educators, families, students, and VR staff on graduation requirements, and strengthening attendance and engagement pathways to improve graduation outcomes in NM. This collaboration will continue in upcoming academic years. and the NMDVR Transition Director will continue to work closely with PED staff.

2. DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATUS AND SCOPE OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY. CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(B), PROVIDE, AT A MINIMUM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGREEMENT:

;

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, WHICH MAY BE PROVIDED USING ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR MEETING PARTICIPATION (SUCH AS VIDEO CONFERENCES AND CONFERENCE CALLS), TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES AND OTHER VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES;

Pursuant to 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(b)(1), NMDVR provides consultation and technical assistance to local education agencies (LEAs) to help them plan for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including Pre-ETS and other vocational rehabilitation services. NMDVR provides consultation and technical assistance to LEAs, charter schools, the New Mexico School for the Blind and

Visually Impaired, and the New Mexico School for the Deaf (collectively referred to as “educational agencies”). Consultation and technical assistance may be provided using alternative means (e.g., video conferences and conference calls).

Methods of coordination will facilitate the development and implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the IDEA, and the development and coordination of Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs), as early as possible. This begins during the transition planning process with student, family, school personnel, and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor(s), but not later than the time a student with a disability is determined to be eligible or potentially eligible for NMDVR services.

The IPE is addressed within 90 days from the date of eligibility determination for the VR program as required by 34 C.F.R. §§ 361.22(b) and 361.45(e). NMDVR may develop IPEs with projected post-school employment outcomes for students with disabilities (34 C.F.R. § 361.46(a)(1))

**B TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY PERSONNEL FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPS) UNDER SECTION 614(D) OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT**

NMDVR has a Memorandum of Agreement to establish methods of coordination between NMDVR and NMPED facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including the receipt of pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. These methods of coordination shall facilitate the development and implementation of individualized education programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the IDEA, and the development and coordination of individualized plans for employment (IPEs), as early as possible during the transition planning process, but not later than the time a student with a disability is determined to be eligible for the NMDVR's vocational rehabilitation services, leaves the school setting, and within 90-days from the date of eligibility determination for the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program as required by 34 CFR §§ 361.22(b) and 361.45(e). NMDVR may develop IPEs with projected post-school employment outcomes for students with disabilities (34 CFR § 361.46(a)(1)).

The agreement supports avoidance of any gaps between secondary and post-secondary vocational services. NMDVR is committed to provide a Transition Counselor/VR counselor to support Pre-Employment Transition Services. The counselor will assist in identifying when to refer the student and guide them through the process. School staff, the students, or family/guardians may also refer to VR services.

The PED shall maintain a list of single points of contact within PED and LEAs that shall be shared with the NMDVR on an annual basis to facilitate collaboration and coordination of transition activities, including pre-employment transition services.

**C. THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES;**

The NMDVR and PED are responsible for their own costs incurred in carrying out the provisions. The NMDVR shall coordinate with Local Educational Agencies (LEA) to ensure that services are not duplicated.

The NMDVR and PED are responsible for gathering, analyzing and reviewing statewide transition data on a quarterly basis. Collection and sharing of data shall provide the two agencies necessary information to

improve strategic transition goals, set by PED and NMDVR to increase transition activities, which shall elevate the level of services and support provided to students with disabilities in New Mexico

The agreement clarifies NMDVR dedicates the following qualified staff who are responsible to ensure the coordination and delivery of Pre-ETS across New Mexico:

- Statewide Transition Director
- Field Operation Director(s)
- Transition Program Manager
- Transition Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
- Transition Program Coordinator

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. OUTREACH TO THESE STUDENTS SHOULD OCCUR AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE DURING THE TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS AND MUST INCLUDE, AT A MINIMUM, A DESCRIPTION OF THE PURPOSE OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM, ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, APPLICATION PROCEDURES, AND SCOPE OF SERVICES THAT MAY BE PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS;

NMDVR continues to expand Pre-ETS activities, NMDVR will explore incorporating authorized activities in the coming years. Authorized activities are those Pre-Employment transition services that may be provided only after a state has determined sufficient funds remain available to provide the required and coordinated activities. Incorporating allowable authorized activities will expand exposure to students with disabilities across the state to valuable community resources and realistic work settings, and increase independent living skills and inclusion in communities, while expanding training and instruction opportunities for vocational rehabilitation staff.

NMDVR provides outreach to these students—which should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process—to include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the VR program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals.

NMDVR will assign at least one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor or Transition Rehabilitation Counselor to each public high school in the state.

NMDVR will utilize a Pre-Employment Consent Form, signed by student and parent/guardian for potentially eligible students to receive Pre-ETS. This consent form provides verification of a student with a disability confirmed by certified school personnel or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

NMDVR staff will meet annually with LEAs to assess school needs (via Needs Assessment Form) and establish a Collaboration Agreement Form to identify services to be implemented throughout the school year.

Services may include Pre-ETS to potential or current VR students with disabilities, scheduled Page 44

orientations, attending and conducting transition fairs, and making referrals to VR.

NMDVR ensures that its staff entering the schools have obtained clearances on background checks obtained for Federal Bureau of Investigation records, and otherwise meet requirements detailed in 34 C.F.R. § 361.18(c) or other applicable laws. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors maintain a state issued Public Education Department Rehabilitation Counselor license.

NMDVR provides individuals with documentation of services provided should the individual still be interested in working for a sheltered workshop at subminimum wage. NMDVR is responsible to assist in education LEA's about the limitations of supporting students with disabilities into subminimum wage employment options.

**E. Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 CFR part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and**

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) does not engage in contracts with any programs holding a subminimum wage certificate. The agreement between NMDVR and the Public Education Department (PED) does not include provisions for programs where youth with disabilities are compensated at subminimum wages. Currently, CARC is the only agency in New Mexico that pays subminimum wages. CARC is aware of the legal framework and opts not to employ high school students in such roles. However, NMDVR has established a process for youths aged 16 to 24 who are exiting or graduating from high school and seek employment in sheltered workshops earning subminimum wages.

**E. Assurance that, in accordance with 34 CFR 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 CFR 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.**

Under rules of section 511, NMDVR provides education and counseling to subminimum wage programs. The NMDVR, in consultation with the PED, shall document the completion of the actions described in 34 CFR § 397.20 and 397.30 regarding the responsibilities of the DVR and LEA in relation to youth with disabilities known to be seeking subminimum wage by students with a disability.

NMDVR Transition Team as well as the Supported Employment Coordinator provide education regarding this rule to LEA's.

## K. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

NMDVR has established a fully functional Business Outreach Team of specialists who are tasked with the responsibility of engaging with employers. The unit conducts outreach efforts to employers while promoting the services offered through the VR program. This includes coordinated efforts to seek and

identify workforce demands and coordinate with Counselors and Participants to educate on potential opportunities. Employers will be surveyed to gather information at both the state and regional level. Ultimately, this information will provide guidance regarding the services the VR program provides employers to meet their needs. The NMDVR Business Outreach Unit focuses on providing training and education to employers on hiring individuals with disabilities. It is the goal of the NMDVR program to become a valuable and reliable resource to employers as this service becomes promoted across New Mexico. NMDVR will coordinate efforts to reach employers closely with the NM Department of Workforce Solutions to ensure services complement each agency and do not duplicate effort.

As an additional support to employers, the goal of the Business Outreach Unit is to develop relationships that will result in employment opportunities for VR participants. These opportunities will be advertised to staff, so potential applicants are notified promptly. The Business Outreach Unit will work with counselors to also identify areas of job interest of participants. Aligning our case management system with the mission of the Business Outreach Team will provide a communicative and cross collaborative approach internally to meet the dual-customer model.

Expansion of Work Based Learning training opportunities will also be explored through multiple avenues. The Transition Director and the Transition Team work directly with local schools and employers to seek potential employment opportunities for students. This has been successful through the development of direct contracts with the schools to provide an onsite opportunity at the school site with school personnel instructing and training students on multiple job tasks. Throughout the state, Program Managers have coordinated summer-work based training for students with disabilities. These efforts have resulted in expanded opportunities each summer, with the coordination of multiple entities participating and sharing the responsibility of training students.

#### **L. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES**

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:

1. STATE PROGRAMS (DESIGNATE LEAD AGENCY(IES) AND IMPLEMENTING ENTITY(IES)) CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

In FY26, NMDVR entered into a formal Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the New Mexico Governor's Commission on Disability (NMGCD), the administrative home of the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP). This agreement builds upon the long-standing partnership between the agencies and establishes a statewide Assistive Technology capacity-building initiative to increase access, knowledge, and utilization of AT among NMDVR participants.

Under this IGA, NMGCD will employ a dedicated full-time Assistive Technology Technician to support device inventory management and process development; expand and modernize the statewide AT equipment inventory; and conduct annual inventory reviews to ensure at least 90 percent of devices remain current, functional, and aligned to participant needs.

NMGCD and NMDVR will jointly deliver AT training for staff through monthly new-hire orientations, semi-annual Rehabilitation Academy sessions, and up to four regional hands-on trainings per year. This training will enhance staff competence in recommending and integrating AT solutions into Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs).

NMGCD will continue to offer AT device demonstrations and short-term loans, while NMDVR funds formal AT evaluations separately through AWARE. The partnership will also produce monthly reports to track delivery service and an Annual Inventory Report identifying updates and recommended replacements for equipment.

Through this strengthened agreement, NMDVR ensures that Assistive Technology is a core component of Vocational Rehabilitation services in New Mexico, supporting participants in education, training, and employment outcomes.

Two core services—Device Demonstrations and Device Loans—are essential to providing access to Assistive Technology (AT) for NMDVR participants. Under the FY26–27 Intergovernmental Agreement between NMDVR and the New Mexico Governor’s Commission on Disability (NMGCD), which administers the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP), these services have been standardized and integrated into the vocational rehabilitation process.

Device demonstrations may be conducted in person or remotely and include consultation between the participant and their assigned Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) to assess suitability for employment or educational needs. Device loans may be issued for short-term trials, typically up to 42 days, to determine functional effectiveness.

The IGA establishes a clear procedural framework for determining when a formal AT evaluation is necessary. AT evaluations are provided by an Assistive Technology Professional (ATP), and include a referral plan, hands-on assessment, research, training, and a final report with recommendations and resources.

The collaborative procedure ensures consistency with the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. §§ 701–796l) and the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act (29 U.S.C. §§ 3001–3008). Ongoing review and quarterly coordination meetings between NMDVR and NMGCD evaluate the efficiency, compliance, and quality of all AT-related processes.

Under the FY26–27 Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between NMDVR and the New Mexico Governor’s Commission on Disability (NMGCD), the administrative home of the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP), the agencies have established new accountability and performance tracking mechanisms.

NMGCD shall provide monthly reports to NMDVR each month. These reports will include updates on assistive technology (AT) device demonstrations, loans, trainings, evaluations, equipment inventory status, and participant outcomes.

Additionally, the IGA requires NMGCD to conduct an annual inventory review of all AT devices and software, assessing at least 90 percent of total inventory each year. A formal Annual Inventory Report will be submitted to NMDVR, identifying outdated or underutilized devices and recommending replacements, upgrades, or retirements.

These reporting and monitoring processes provide NMDVR with ongoing data to evaluate the effectiveness, reach, and impact of AT services statewide, ensuring that AT access directly supports WIOA Section 116 performance indicators and participant employment outcomes.

## **2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;**

NMDVR currently does not have an active partnership regarding programs carried out by the Undersecretary for Rural Development of the Department of Agriculture but will seek to develop such

partnerships in future years. NMDVR works closely with the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP) under the Governor's Commission on Disability, which offers the New Mexico AgrAbility Program.

### 3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

The Social Security Administration (SSA) serves out-of-school youth and refers individuals aged 22 to 26 to NMDVR benefits advisement. Services include assisting SSA beneficiaries in reporting income, applying for work incentives, and developing self-advocacy plans.

In the next 3 years NMDVR will work to strengthen relationships with Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD) funded programs that provide residential and scattered site services for youth ages 16-23. Priority is given to youth that are in CYFD custody and in the Fostering Connections program; involved with juvenile justice and/or tribal social services. Community referrals are accepted but must be cleared up for acceptance by CYFD. See description below for additional priority.

### 4 STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

New Mexico has a state use program and NMDVR adheres to the state use act, which requires that purchases are submitted to the state use vendor, Horizons of New Mexico, for first right of refusal. Horizons of New Mexico works on behalf of the New Mexico Council for Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities to manage the contracts for its members outside of the normal bid process, as long as services are quoted at fair market price. Horizons of New Mexico maintains an itemized list of approved services available through members services. The utilization of the state use program by governmental agencies promotes support to employ individuals with disabilities by granting contracts to employers who employ at least 75% of disabled individuals.

### 5 STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT (42 U.S.C. 1396 ET SEQ.);

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) actively engages with the Medical Advisory Committee to address and refine policies and procedures, ensuring that any issues are promptly clarified. As part of this effort, NMDVR staff members are dedicated to educating Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who are participants in the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. This education focuses on teaching self-advocacy skills, particularly in navigating the Medicaid system.

New Mexico's status as a 1634 state facilitates automatic Medicaid coverage under Title XIX for eligible individuals. NMDVR as required will example comparable benefits such as Medicaid to explore potential VR services as applicable. Additionally, VR Counselors will refer individuals to apply for Medicaid to ensure access to healthcare coverage.

NMDVR also utilizes as a rate setting measure the Medicaid agreed upon rates for planned services within an Individualized Plan for Employment. NMDVR will also refer appropriate individuals that may qualify for long term service supports via Community Based Service waiver.

The collaborative efforts between NMDVR and the New Mexico Human Services Department (HSD) play a crucial role in providing streamlined services for participants. This partnership involves a data sharing agreement which was executed in 2019.

## 6 STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

NMDVR and DDS have executed an MOU to accomplish joint implementation for supported employment under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 29 USC 730; 8.314.5 NMAC, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Revised ADA Regulations. The MOU addresses the mechanisms used to address the referral, exchange of information, and confidentiality of personal information used to determine the eligibility of individuals served in common. It will facilitate the coordinated planning of programs between NMDVR and DDS regarding individuals whom both these agencies jointly serve.

Through a contract with CDD, the following trainings are provided:

- Customized Employment Trainings to job developers and job coaches and their agencies, NMDVR staff, high school personnel, and families. This training enables the attendees to obtain CESP or ACRE certifications.
- CDD offers instructional support and education to New Mexico's specific needs. The topics are varied and include training on topics such as customized employment, job development, job coaching skills, and community mapping.
- The Reaching New Heights Conference is facilitated by CDD annually. The conference brings together professionals, including school-to-work transition staff, community inclusion providers and vendors, leadership staff, and State of New Mexico partners. Conference sessions are led by local and national experts and include many sessions and tracks that focus on topics such as the transition from school to work, integrated employment services, community inclusion, and leadership development. This training also provides participants with an opportunity to earn continuing education credits.
- CDD provides opportunities for 15 NMDVR staff to attend the National Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) Conference or other similar national conferences.
- CDD facilitates statewide quarterly peer networking meetings known as the Supported Employment Local Leaders (SELL) groups. These networking meetings include advocacy groups, family organizations, businesses, civic groups, key state and local agency partners, and providers to build increased community employment options.

## 7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; AND

The Medicaid program in New Mexico does not allow for Supported Employment services for individuals with mental health diagnoses. The Collaborative is undertaking a transformational process regarding improving behavioral health services to adults, children, youth, and families by focusing on recovery and resiliency.

NMDVR also has a Governor-appointed position on the New Mexico Behavioral Health Planning Council (NMBHPC). The appointee is actively working with the NMBHPC to address this population's employment and long-term support options.

NMDVR has a dedicated Rehabilitation Staff available for support to behavioral health initiatives. When appropriate the agency also employs a Supported Employment Coordinator that may be of supported employment expertise to consult on behavioral health projects.

## 8 OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

NMDVR has a relationship with The New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CDHH). The collaboration addresses services to individuals who are served by NMDVR and have a communication disorder. The New Mexico Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing transfers funds from CDHH to NMDVR to support and enhance rehabilitation services for individuals who are Deaf, Deaf Blind, or hard of hearing. NMDVR works to expand services and access through:

1. On-the-job training programs for persons with these disabilities with the state's Independent Living Centers to acquire the skills to work as contracted independent living skills specialists
2. Addressing technology needs, employment outcomes, and post-secondary and vocational training
3. Working collaboratively with state agency job fair organizers to maximize communication accessibility for this population
4. CDHH assisting with locating potential VR Counselors who are fluent in ASL and the cultural and communication needs of this population.

The NMDVR has had an MOU with the Health Care Authority Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD) since 2018. The purpose of the MOU is joint implementation and coordination for supported employment services. The MOU is a method for the two agencies to address the process, exchange of information, and confidentiality of personal information. Cases are addressed at the regional level to resolve issues and to solve both individual and systemic issues. New Mexico became an Employment First state in 2016 to establish procedures for supporting working-age youth and adults to have access to competitive integrated employment.

NMDVR continues to work with Navajo Nations OSERS, Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program, and Laguna Acoma Vocational Rehabilitation program. The scope of this MOU is to ensure the relationship between the entities establishes processes to ensure shared resources and collaboration in serving individuals with disabilities who also receive services from a tribal VR program. The MOU defines shared costs, personnel training, services to students with disabilities in providing pre-employment transition services, eligibility procedures, and development of Individualized Plans for Employments to ensure supportive services are not duplicated.

There are several additional projects throughout tribal land to support work-based learning experiences for students with disabilities, such as Project HOPE and Project SEARCH.

## 9 OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

NMDVR ensures the appropriate use of community rehabilitation programs to the maximum extent feasible. Most services purchased from community rehabilitation programs are on an individualized basis, addressing the specific barriers to employment because of an individual's disabling condition. Where applicable, community programs must be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). The agency requires services be purchased in conformance with state laws which regulate professional practices (ex.: psychologists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, etc.). When appropriate to the individualized needs of a participant of vocational rehabilitation services, community rehabilitation programs are utilized toward an employment outcome.

NMDVR requires vendors and providers interested in working with participants to submit W-9 forms and all required documentation, and that the appropriate staff review and approve all potential vendors prior

to the delivery of services to the individuals participating in Vocational Rehabilitation. NMDVR will be implementing an electronic vendor portal to manage all established and interested vendors that would provide direct client services. The estimated completion of this project is 2027.

**Project Search:** Project Search is a business led program and internationally trademarked model that leads to competitive integrated employers for youth with a variety of development disabilities. Year after year New Mexico has had one the of highest placement rates for individuals completing the Project Search.

**Private Non-Profit Vendors:**

Albuquerque Public Schools Title I Homeless Project

Assistance Dogs of the West

Best Buddies New Mexico

Mandy’s Farm

Centers for Independent Living

NMRECA New Mexico Regional Educational Cooperative Association

Various Developmental Disability Waiver Providers/Community Rehabilitation Providers

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

**The VR agency must select the “Edit” button to review and agree to the VR State plan Assurances.**

The State Plan must include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.

3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:
3.a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).
3.e. as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

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The State Plan must include
3.f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.h. the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
3.m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:
4.a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act

The State Plan must include
4.g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,
4.j.i. has developed and will implement,
4.j.i.A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
4.j.i.B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and
4.j.ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and 113).
4.j.iii. shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the

The State Plan must include
costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:
7.a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.b. The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Do you attest that these assurances will be met? Yes

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR  
 COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY TITLE IV OF WIOA[1], AND ITS STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT;

[1] Public Law 113-128.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Certifications (General)

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

Name of designated State agency **New Mexico Public Education Department**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Dr. Stephon Scott**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Director of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

2. IN THE EVENT THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY IS NOT PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH VOCATIONAL AND OTHER REHABILITATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY MUST INCLUDE A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT FOR THE VR PROGRAM (SECTION 101(A)(2)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT). AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT)[2] AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[3], THE REHABILITATION ACT, 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C), AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[4], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE TO STATES UNDER SECTION 111(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Designated State agency **New Mexico Public Education Department**

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY, OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[5], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[6], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

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[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT OR, IF NOT APPLICABLE, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C);

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS

SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Authorized representative Dr. Stephon Scott

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND

THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Title of authorized representative **Director of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED

THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

#### FOOTNOTES

[1] Public Law 113-128.

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations

(EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

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[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

**CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE**

**To review and complete the Certification section of the VR portion of the State plan, please select the “Edit” button.**

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
<b>Name of Signatory</b>	Dr. Stephon Scott
<b>Title of Signatory</b>	New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Director
<b>Date Signed</b>	2/27/2024

**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan’s approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

**Effectiveness in Serving Employers**

In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	43.0%	43.0%	44.0%	44.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	40.5%	41.5%	41.0%	42.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4808	\$5080	\$4900	\$5120
Credential Attainment Rate	38.1%	39.1%	38.5%	40.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	49.4%	53.4%	50.0%	53.9%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

*I*

Performance Indicators	PY 2026 Expected Level	PY 2026 Negotiated Level	PY 2027 Expected Level	PY 2027 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	44.0		44.5	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	44.5		44.7	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	5675.0		5725.0	
Credential Attainment Rate	41.7		42.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	54.3		54.9	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

*The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.*

GEPA 427 FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION PACKAGE -  
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

**EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES**

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

**Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)** (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

**GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants**

**State applicants must respond to the following four questions:**

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE  
EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT  
OR ACTIVITY.

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.***

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions. The first of***

***four questions is:***

*Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.*

1. New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is committed to ensuring that every New Mexican with a disability achieves their employment goals and thrives in their communities. Our mission is to help individuals with disabilities achieve a suitable employment outcome.
  2. Any individual with a physical, mental, cognitive, or other form of disability who has a substantial impediment to employment may qualify for services available through New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.
  3. New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will ensure that no participant will be denied participation based on gender, race, national origin, socioeconomic status, disability, or age.
  4. New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation commitment to equitable access through participation on different boards, such as the Workforce Development Boards, Partners for Employment, Statewide Independent Living Council, and the State Rehabilitation Council. We promote access to Workforce Development programs and partners, and other programs and services where the VR program actively advocates on behalf of individuals with disabilities statewide.
2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER BENEFICIARIES?

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.***

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions. The second***

***of four questions is:***

*Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?*

The State of New Mexico has one of the highest poverty rates in the country, so a significant portion of our population, especially in the rural areas, may face challenges when trying to participate in a rehabilitation

program.

Individuals may not always receive information about the full range of available programs and services due to assumptions regarding functional abilities or service needs.

Some individuals may experience barriers related to communication or access to information. Individuals may be unaware of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services due to limited access to outreach or informational materials in their preferred language. In some cases, individuals may require interpreter services to support effective communication with VR staff or other service providers. Written materials may also need to be provided in an individual's preferred language to support access to services.

Transportation limitations may affect an individual's ability to access programs and services. Some individuals may require Assistive Technology (AT) to participate in programs or obtain services. Individuals may also require information in alternate formats or communication supports in order to access services.

Physical accessibility limitations may exist at certain service providers or community businesses. In some cases, individuals may experience barriers when attempting to access community resources or participate in available programs. Access to appropriate educational services, including pre-employment transition services, may also be limited in certain circumstances.

**Rural Status:**

Individuals residing in rural areas may experience barriers related to limited transportation options, limited broadband connectivity, and fewer available service providers within the community.

Some individuals may require Assistive Technology or physical restoration services in order to effectively access programs and services.

**Homeless Status or Housing Insecurity:**

Individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability may face challenges associated with low income, lack of stable housing, and difficulty receiving consistent communication from service providers. Additional barriers may include limited access to behavioral health treatment, limited financial resources to meet basic living needs, and limited access to information regarding available services.

***BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECTOR ACTIVITY?***

*Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.*

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions. The third of four questions is:***

*Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?*

The following steps may be applicable to multiple barriers:

1. Provide funding and training for transportation to get to offices or appointments. Funding can take many forms such as paying mileage, a bus pass, ride share services, taxis, and payments to friends or family members.
2. Providing Assistive Technology as needed to access programs and services.
3. Creating informational items or marketing materials in different languages and alternate formats.
4. Conduct professional development and training for staff and partners on relevant topics such as:
  - Cultural awareness
  - Trauma informed care
  - Behavioral health impairments
  - Disability-specific awareness and interventions
5. Increase online presence and ability to apply for services online to minimize the need for travel to offices.
6. Partner with schools, developmental disability agencies, and other federal, state, and local programs serving individuals with disabilities to increase access, service delivery, and outcomes.
7. Conduct employer education or training to increase disability knowledge and increase employment opportunities.
8. Business outreach staff that advocate with employers and increase opportunities.

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

*Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.*

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions. The final of four questions is:***

*What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?*

NMDVR addresses identified barriers and remains in a cycle of continual improvement. These steps identified above are ongoing and aligned with the 4-year state plan cycle. This timeframe allows the NMDVR to assess goals based within the initiative derived during the beginning of the 4-year state plan and CSNA results. NMDVR's strategic planning and direction in removing barriers continues to be labeled and revised and will ultimately guide the timelines and targeted milestones. NMDVR has already addressed some of the barriers noted above with next milestones to take place by next fiscal year 2026 and continue in fiscal year 2027 based on CSNA results, and SRC recommendations.

New Mexico focuses annually on State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators at the state level and with our local education agency (LEA) partners.

## **EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES**

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

**Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)** (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

### **GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants**

**State applicants must respond to the following four questions:**

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

*Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.*

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions. The first of four questions is:***

*Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.*

New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is committed to ensuring that every New Mexican with a disability achieves their employment goals and thrives in their communities. Our mission is to help individuals with disabilities achieve a suitable employment outcome.

Any individual with a physical, mental, cognitive, or other form of disability who has a substantial impediment to employment may qualify for services available through New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will ensure that no participant will be denied participation based on gender, race, national origin, socioeconomic status, disability, or age.

New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation commitment to equitable access through participation on different boards, such as the Workforce Development Boards, Partners for Employment, Statewide Independent Living Council, and the State Rehabilitation Council. We promote access to Workforce Development programs and partners, and other programs and services where the VR program actively advocates on behalf of individuals with disabilities statewide.

NMDVR supports all participants with the most significant disabilities who may be in receipt of Supported Employment services to obtain employment utilizing their maximum capabilities. New Mexico has an executive order as an employment first state. NMDVR has valuable established relationship with the Health Care Authority to maximize cross collaboration efforts to efficiently serve participants across the state.

2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER BENEFICIARIES?

*Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and*

*participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.*

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

***State applicants must respond to four questions. The second of four questions is:***

*Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?*

The State of New Mexico has one of the highest poverty rates in the country, so a significant portion of our population, especially in the rural areas, may face challenges when trying to participate in a rehabilitation program.

A primary barrier for the Supported Employment participants continues to be lack of rural service providers and other community supports.

Individuals may not always receive information about the full range of available programs and services due to assumptions regarding functional abilities or service needs.

Some individuals may experience barriers related to communication or access to information. Individuals may be unaware of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services due to limited access to outreach or informational materials in their preferred language. In some cases, individuals may require interpreter services to support effective communication with VR staff or other service providers. Written materials may also need to be provided in an individual's preferred language to support access to services.

Transportation limitations may affect an individual's ability to access programs and services. Some individuals may require Assistive Technology (AT) to participate in programs or obtain services. Individuals may also require information in alternate formats or communication supports in order to access services.

Physical accessibility limitations may exist at certain service providers or community businesses. In some cases, individuals may experience barriers when attempting to access community resources or participate in available programs. Access to appropriate educational services, including pre-employment transition services, may also be limited in certain circumstances.

**Rural Status:**

Individuals residing in rural areas may experience barriers related to limited transportation options, limited broadband connectivity, and fewer available service providers within the community.

Some individuals may require Assistive Technology or physical restoration services in order to effectively access programs and services.

**Homeless Status or Housing Insecurity:**

Individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability may face challenges associated with low income, lack of stable housing, and difficulty receiving consistent communication from service providers. Additional barriers may include limited access to behavioral health treatment, limited financial resources to meet basic living needs, and limited access to information regarding available services.

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State***

*applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.*

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions. The third of four questions is:***

*Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?*

The New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) is collaborating closely with the New Mexico Health Care Authority (NMHCA) to expand training opportunities for individuals interested in providing job support services and long-term supports. These trainings are also available to family members who wish to learn about delivering high-quality services. By supporting and training family members to obtain the necessary certifications and education related to supported employment, this initiative aims to strengthen the workforce and address the statewide shortage of service providers.

**3. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?**

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.***

*GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package*

***State applicants must respond to four questions. The final of four questions is:***

*What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?*

NMDVR addresses identified barriers and remains in a cycle of continual improvement. These steps identified above are ongoing and aligned with the 4-year state plan cycle. This timeframe allows the NMDVR to assess goals based within the initiative derived during the beginning of the 4-year state plan and CSNA results. NMDVR's strategic planning and direction in removing barriers continues to be labeled and revised and will ultimately guide the timelines and targeted milestones. NMDVR has already addressed some of the barriers noted above with next milestones to take place by next fiscal year 2026 and continue in fiscal year 2027 based on CSNA results, and SRC recommendations. Several of the initiative to promote quality services for supported employment have been achieved in the first 2-years of the state plan.