

State Rehabilitation Council

Quarterly Meeting

November 13, 2025

NMDVR Field Office

525 Marquez Suite 200

Santa Fe, NM 87505

SRC Meeting 10 am



- I. Call to Order/Introductions/Roll Call
Meeting called to order at 10:05am

Roll Call:

Tracy Agiovlasitis, Present
Jennifer Gelhardt, Present
Kendra Garcia, Present
Sarah Michaud, Present
Rebecca Sanford, Present
Breeze Gutierrez, Present
Leah Johnson, Present
TJ Chester, Present
Paula Seanez, Present @ 10:13am
Bernadine Chavez, (retired)

Guests:

Raven Macias, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Dr. Stephon Scott, Interim Director Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Antoinette Holmes, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Jeff Levine, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Sasha King, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)
Chuck Santistevan
Alan Hamlin, DDS

- II. Action Items
 - A. Approval of Agenda (action item)
 - Jennifer Gelhardt Motion to approve
 - Sarah Michaud Seconded
 - All voted approved
 - B. Approval of Minutes (action item)
 - Jennifer Gelhardt motion to approve
 - Kendra Garcia Seconded
 - All voted approved
- III. DVR Directors Reports
 - A. Agency Interim Director – Dr. Stephon Scott
 - a. Dr. Scott has been with NMDVR for 90 Days now Thanks to all executive team for smooth transition.
 - b. Vacancies have been placed on a halt due to shut down
 - c. Eager to enhance

- d. ABQ Council officially adopted proclamation to officially name October Disability Employment Awareness Month
- e. 5 members attended CSAVR in November
- f. NMDVR success stories have been featured

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

- a. 4815 open cases statewide
 - a. Gone through 6202
- b. Average of 24 days for applications
- c. 50 internal and external events
- d. Budget client services – being monitored October 1 Switched over to state match funding
- e. Quarterly billing cycle
- f. Lots of internal training on reporting
 - a. 45 days to submit quarter data (rsa)
- g. Training updates
 - a. 3 individuals training in lead VR
 - b. Attendees with net summit in September
 - c. 8 people have been licensed by PED
- h. Order of selection continues after 1/31/26
- i. Working with school board to get more information for students and parents on NMDVR and the program it offers.
- j. State plan modification due every spring December 12th needed for DDS

C. DDS Administrator – Alan Hamlin

A. NM DDS Federal Fiscal Year 2025, 09/28/2024-09/26/2025

- 1. Total Receipts—19,653
- 2. Total Dispositions (all claim types)19,087
 - i. Initial Claims (IN)
 - a. Receipts—13,165
 - b. Dispositions—13,234
 - ii. Reconsideration Claims (RC)
 - a. Receipts—3,519
 - b. Dispositions—3,629
 - iii. Continuing Disability Review Claims (CDR)
 - a. Receipts—1,942
 - b. Dispositions—1,108

A. Initial Average Processing Time (APT)

- a. NMDDS/SSA Combined Overall: 210.9 days
- b. SSA Public Service Indicator (PSI) Goal: <215 days
 - i. NMDDS only: 147 days

B. FY25 Allowance Rate---38.5%

- a. 39.8% IN Allowance Rate
- b. 21.2% RC Allowance Rate
- c. 75.4% CDR Allowance Rate

C. NMDDS Accuracy:

D. Initial Accuracy:

- i. NM – 97.4%, 1st in the region, 2nd in the nation
- ii. Nation – 95.3%

E. Reconsideration Accuracy

- i. NM – 97.7%, 2nd in the region, 5th in the nation
- ii. Nation – 93.1%

F. CDRs

- i. NM – 98.0%, 1st in the region, tied for 11th in the nation
- ii. Nation – 96.8%

G. Operations

- a. Compared to FY24, average caseload sizes for examiner staff increased for all levels of experience
- b. NM DDS Pre-Development Unit (PDU) continued to provide significant positive impact in claim process. Thanks to the work of this unit, the NM DDS has seen a continual decrease in claim processing time and increase in claim accuracy for claims initiated by our PDU.
- c. To start FY26, the NM DDS instituted a casework redistribution strategy aimed at reducing caseloads of individual staff to increase customer service to constituents. October results showed an immediate positive impact with increased production and reduced inquiry calls.

H. Consultative Exam Scheduling Unit

- a. Scheduled: 10,061 exams, down from 11,491 exams in FY24.
- b. Cancellations: 824, down from 1,053 exams in FY24
- c. Switchboard Coverage: In FY25, a total of 25,555 calls were logged during this time, up from 35,295 in FY24
 - i. FY26, SSA is transitioning all DDS nationally to an SSA phone platform. NM DDS is in pre-implementation at this time.

I. NM DDS Supporting SSA

- a. The NM DDS Medical Consultant Cadre continue to go Above and Beyond reviewing and completing cases for the NM DDS, our MC/PCs completed 13,736 MC/PC reviews for 3 other state DDS offices outside of NM.

J. Challenges

- a. Limited experience of staff
 - i. Management team continues to look for ways to increase staff retention
- b. Staffing shortages within the SSA.
 - i. SSA did not give NM DDS hiring authority in FY25, therefore NM DDS was unable to recruit or fill vacant positions.
- c. Complexity of the SSA Program

- i. DDS Leadership Team is supporting more informal, peer to peer supports accompanied with larger agency support such as desk aides and written business process.
- d. SSA Field Office impacts to examiner workload and quality
 - i. DDS Administrator has re-engaged in SSA Area Work Incentive Coordinator (AWIC) to identify and resolve SSA FO training issues.
- e. Adaptation to change
 - i. There has been so much program growth and change over the last 3 years. NM DDS Management is taking a measured approach in FY26 to slow down and “meet staff where they are”, building long term institutional knowledge.
- f. Budget
 - i. NMDDS is entering FY26 fiscal year with a government shutdown. Kudos to the leadership of NMDVR for the ongoing support and advocacy of our federal funded positions.

K. Successes

- i. NMDDS launched our internal DDS SharePoint page. Our aim was to provide a singular resource for all staff to have access to business processes, policies and procedures, desk aides and training resources.
- ii. NMDDS Leadership Huddles-The NMDDS Supervisors and Managers met biweekly throughout FY25. The goal of these huddles was to provide a level of communication among DDS Leadership to ensure we were working collaborative to help support our staff.
- iii. The Operations Work Group created and facilitated multiple “Did You Know” staff trainings throughout FY25. These trainings were meant to be peer driven to support the continued development of our staff.
- iv. The NMDDS Activities Committee was restarted and helped to plan, coordinate and support many of the fun and engaging activities hosted within the NMDDS in FY25.
- v. Operations held one successful push week and a month long ‘end of year’ push for higher production. With management personal financial contribution, staff were provided with daily snacks and coffee for a month, prizes and games.
- vi. The Professional Relations Unit and Internal Quality Assurance Unit each continued to host case clinics throughout FY25, to help increase support for our adjudicative staff.
- vii. Natasha Gutierrez, Operations Manager, represented NewMade, our local chapter of a national organization, National Association of Disability Examiners (NADE) at the national convention in Denver, Co.
- viii. NMDDS Predevelopment Unit, has been extremely successful. This unit was conceptualized in FY23 and staffed/developed from the ground up in FY24. NMDDS used a data driven approach to monitor effectiveness of the unit from FY24 and FY25.
- ix. NMDDS Fiscal Manager maintained the 5% Social Security Administration variance requirement with an average of 3.19% throughout FY25.
- x. The NMDDS Fiscal Unit is maintaining monthly DVR/DDS fiscal meetings where we have been able to streamline processes that ensures all State and Federal regulations are being met. Communication between to the two programs has been greatly enhanced by this collaboration and a greater understanding of our unique needs has been received in a positive light.

- xi. NMDDS was a top performing site on IMAGEN, a SSA case processing tool aimed to help increase case processing efficiency.
- xii. NMDDS continues to review, and write internal Business Process, ensure consistency of information and shared institutional knowledge, across the agency.
- xiii. The NMDDS staff exhibited tremendous teamwork across the agency to accomplish goals with changing priorities and a steadfast willingness to assist each other.

L. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES FOR FFY2026

M. Administrative Theme—Transformational Growth

- i. With Transformational Growth as our guiding light, the NMDDS Leadership Team will be looking at all the singular and collective actions that make up the work we do.
- ii. The only way to transform our processes will be to improve our processes. This doesn't just mean workloads. It means how we approach our work, our communication, and expectations.

D. Update on Fair Hearings – Michelle Bowdon

- a. No Fair hearings reported by Dr.Scott

IV. 121 Report – Paula Seanez

- a. Navajo Nation is in its 5th year of funding and continues to work to review grant outcomes and budgets to meet its goals and objectives. The program officers assigned to the AIVRS programs are on Reduction in Force (RIF) status. We do not have Program Officers who are available to provide guidance and support.
- b. Vacancies for Navajo Nation – The Navajo Nation has filled most of its vacancies. 2 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC).
- c. We continue our partnership with Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities on Transition initiatives. We are collaborating on how the Customized Employment Pilot/prospective service can best work with Navajo Nation TVR. The Sonoran Center's proposal for the FY2025 Innovative Rehabilitation Training grant was funded. The grant- *Building VR Capacity for Self-Employment: Training, Policy Reform, and Tribal Partnership Initiative*. This project is part of our Employment First team.
- I. Grant Overview: *We All Work Arizona* is a three-year systems transformation project that will make competitive integrated employment the expected outcome for people with significant disabilities in Arizona. Instead of defaulting to day treatment or segregated programs after high school, this initiative will change policies, contracts, training, and governance so the system consistently supports real jobs in the community. By centering self-advocates, families, and tribal partners in decision-making, the project aims to improve health, reduce family stress, and create lasting equity across the state.
 - a. AIVRTACC and University of Boston (UMASS)/Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) will be hosting an AIVRS/iGREET professional development opportunity on November 19-20, 2025. The iGREET training provides employer engagement staff with foundational and advanced knowledge of the principles of effective employer

engagement as well as strategies for partnering with businesses to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

- b. Navajo Nation celebrated their 50-year anniversary along with the Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disability. Our Story: *"The Power of Self-Determination in Advancing Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation."* The Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disability collaborated with us on this celebration which was held on Wednesday, October 28, 2025 in Flagstaff, AZ. We had guest speakers from the folks who originally involved in the establishment of the AIVRS (e.g. Dr. Elmer J. Guy, Hoskie Benally, Treva M. Roanhorse). We acknowledged our collaborative work with state VR.
- c. The Annual Consortia on Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) conference will be held in Phoenix/Chandler, AZ and will be dedicated to the 50-year anniversary (1975-2025) – *Our Story: 50 years of Self-Determination through TVR.* CANAR is scheduled for December 2-4, 2025 in Chandler, AZ. The Arizona tribes planned this year's conference to celebrate all tribes funded under the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services Projects.

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

- i. Ending term at last meeting with governor's office
 - a. Bylaws reviewed by Jennifer Gelhardt
 - b. Tracy Agiovlasis continues to be appointed as Chair
- ii. Membership in general
 - a. Bernadette retired from
 - b. DRNM Jason
- iii. David Trigg veteran has been recruited.
 - a. Paperwork in process
- iv. 3 vacancies for businesses still open
 - a. Building relationships with any business will be great
- v. Bylaws
 - a. Some discrepancies
 - i. Were not signed by interim director at the time Kendra Karp
 - b. Budget needs to be clarified with Michelle Bowdon
 - i. Budget to help with awards
 - c. Dr. Scott will follow up and get this Bylaw signed

VII. Old Business

- i. Consumer Satisfaction survey
 - a. Working with Antoinette and Rudy to get the survey out and delivered to the community.
 - b. Do not wish to change any questions
 - c. Will not be complete and ready to go out until early spring 2026
 - d. Have DVR inform the community that the survey will be sent out so they can spread the word.
 - e. Survey can be done more than every 3 years.
- ii. DEAM Conference Celebration
 - a. Offers job fair
 - b. Awards were given and recognized
 - c. Improvement can be made on planning and make the event go more smoothly.

- d. How many people get employed through the event.

VIII. New Business

- i. Annual Report
 - a. Microsoft publisher to canva
 - i. Moving to digital distribution
 - ii. Finalizing recommendations from DVR
 - b. Recommendations
 - i. 1st recommendation stayed the same
 - ii. 2nd recommendation changed
 1. Added Vision
 - iii. 3rd recommendation changed
 - iv. No changes to recommendations 4-6, 7-9
 - v. Recommendations 10-12
 1. SRC 10 -11 (delete 2nd sentence) end after data-based quality
 - c. SRC Member quotes needed by 12/1/2025 Letter from
 - i. Tracy
 - ii. Jeff
 - iii. Dr. Scott
- ii. Committee review
 - a. ECPC
 - b. program review committee
 - i. Paula Seanz will Chair Program review committee
 - ii. Leah Johnson will be on this committee
 - c. Need to pick a committee
 - i. Jason
 - ii. Rebecca
 - d. Each committee come up with a brief action plan prior

IX. Comments from Audience

Draft will be at the round house 2/11/2026

1. Next meeting will be February 26, 2026

Location Gallup

X. Adjournment

Tracy @1:15pm

If you need a language translator or you are an individual with a disability who is in need of a reader, amplifier or any other form of auxiliary aid or service to participate in this meeting, please contact NM DVR at the telephone number(s) listed below. Public documents, including the agenda or minutes can be provided in various accessible forms. For additional information, contact NMDVR. Telephone numbers: 1-800-224-7005 or 505-954-8500.

(Note: the SRC attempts to follow the order of items listed on the agenda; however, it should be noted that the order of specific items is tentative and may vary from the date of the printed agenda.)