

Annual Report 2020



New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council





The New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was established under Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and authorized in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Tasked with partnering with the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) to ensure the highest quality services are made available to those seeking support and services, the SRC acts as the external, community-oriented voice in the consideration and development of NMDVR policy. To achieve this goal, the SRC works closely with the NMDVR to remain informed on those issues most pertinent to the provision of services to the disability community within New Mexico and to express concerns or support regarding those issues and initiatives.



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Letter from SRC Chair



December 2020

To the Honorable Michelle Lujan-Grisham and Secretary Ryan Stewart,

As the Chair of the New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), it is my great pleasure to submit the 2020 annual report. The members of the NM SRC are dedicated to understanding the specific needs of people with disabilities within our state, helping to track and to increase the state of satisfaction with New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) services, and expanding our partnership with NMDVR to maintain a standard of excellence on behalf of its participants.

This report summarizes efforts of the SRC to maintain collaboration with NMDVR over the past year; which we can all agree has been a particularly trying one. This has been a year unlike any other. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, I'm pleased to be able to share that the members of the SRC worked diligently to meet not only the council's federally mandated charges and to maintain the standard of service to New Mexicans with disabilities in the area of vocational rehabilitation, but also to remain apprised of the impact of the pandemic upon people with disabilities within our state and to advocate for those needs.

The members of the SRC have worked consistently to support the mission of NMDVR and to be the voice of the consumer this year. Our mission has been to ensure that the vocational rehabilitation program continued to provide efficient, effective, and results-oriented services for New Mexicans with disabilities seeking employment despite the challenges of a global pandemic that necessitated the provision of services remotely for a majority of the year. It has been extremely inspiring to watch both our council members and our NMDVR staff work together to share the concerns, recommendations, and support necessary to make vocational rehabilitation successful within our state this year.

As I continue my term as Chair, I look forward to seeing the continued progress of the SRC and NMDVR as they move forward with services under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). I look forward to future success and even more to report in the coming year.

Sincerely,

Sarah Michaud

Sarah Michaud, SRC Chair

Letter from DVR Director



December 2020

Dear Partners and Friends,

Over the past year, the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR) and State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) have worked closely to fulfill our mission to provide vocational rehabilitation services and expand employment opportunities for New Mexicans with disabilities. Although the pandemic and social restrictions have presented our state with unprecedented challenges, NMDVR's dedicated team of professionals has been devoted to ensuring the needs of New Mexicans with disabilities are met during this time.

Throughout the past year, NMDVR staffers across our state have been providing quality services to our program participants and students with disabilities. First and foremost, it has been a priority to reduce the number of participants on our Order of Selection waiting list. I am very pleased to report we have released more than 830 participants since June 30, 2020. As of November 4, 2020, there are 623 participants on the wait list; a year ago, there were 1,444 on the wait list. My team has made it a top priority to reduce the number of participants on this list.

As we move into 2021, we are very excited to continue expanding our services for youth and adults with disabilities, using technology to reach current and prospective participants. We aim to address the distinct needs of both populations as we adapt services and develop new programs that enable us to provide services safely during the pandemic. While our traditional methods of outreach are not available at this time due to health restrictions, we are still working diligently to ensure New Mexicans with disabilities are empowered with the best tools and services to support their preparation to enter the workforce.

NMDVR program participants are from all walks of life; we strive to serve each and every one of them and ensure our services are customized to meet individual needs. It is a privilege to partner with our participants and our state's students with disabilities, providing them guidance and assisting them on their journeys as they determine their educational and career goals.

Our goals are ambitious; we cannot achieve them without our hardworking, trusted partners at SRC and other partner organizations such as the State Independent Living Council, the Commission for the Blind and Disability Rights New Mexico, as well as other state and local governments, schools, and universities. NMDVR is eager to work collaboratively with other state disability agencies and business partners towards ensuring our program participants are included in New Mexico's economic recovery efforts.

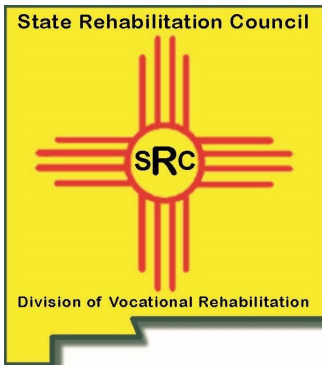
We look forward to continuing our shared mission.

Yours in partnership,

Diane Mourning Brown

Diane Mourning Brown, Director
New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation





SRC AT-A-GLANCE

Mission

The New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council is responsible for assisting with the operation of the New Mexico Division of Rehabilitation program through advisement, evaluation and partnership to support access to employment and promotion of a diverse workforce statewide.

The State Rehabilitation Council must ensure that New Mexico consumers receive the services they need so that they maximize their ability to achieve their workforce goals. To do so, the State Rehabilitation Council must collaborate with NMDVR to identify key challenges and opportunities; advise and assist in the preparation of the NMDVR State Plan; and review and analyze the effectiveness of NMDVR programs.

*TJ Chester
Transition, State Plan and Outcomes Committee Chair*

Vision

The New Mexico State Rehabilitation Council will endeavor to ensure the highest quality services are made available to New Mexico citizens with disabilities seeking employment and support services.

SRC Goals:

- Monitor NMDVR's wait list of services under Order of Selection and related reductions in order to ensure VR services for New Mexicans with disabilities remain available on an ongoing basis.
- Continue to request and receive updates from NMDVR regarding the Combined State Plan for New Mexico.
- Continue to request and receive updates regarding expansion of Pre-ETS services into communities across the state and encourage the permanent funding for innovative transition services.
- Ensure that the SRC is in compliance with statutory requirements for membership by recruiting new members to fill vacancies. Encourage and monitor applications and appointments for membership as needed.
- Ensure ongoing training for the SRC membership to increase understanding of their roles and responsibilities as well as our federal mandates.



- Recommend that DVR include the SRC in the process of developing, implementing and reviewing a proposed impact study to determine the best placement of the agency within the state government.
- Recognizing NMDVR staff that go above and beyond their day to day duties and responsibilities.
- Recognizing a local employer that goes above and beyond in working with people with disabilities and NMDVR.
- Assist NMDVR administration to educate legislators regarding the services NMDVR provides to New Mexicans with disabilities and to endorse requests for adequate state funding to maximize New Mexico's federal allocation.
- Request a dedicated point of contact staff for NMDVR and SRC liaison services to enhance communication and productivity.
- Receive routine updates from NMDVR on SRC budget for required outreach activities and council expenses.
- Receive notice of LFC hearings in order to better advocate for NMDVR funding needs on a state level.

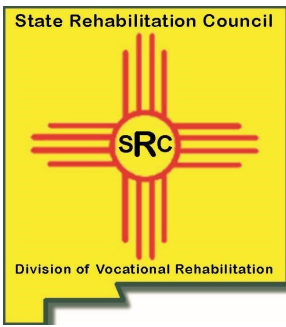
As a member of the SRC, I feel that our individual input is valued and our strength is that we all come from diverse backgrounds. As we move forward together with a common vision, we accomplish so much as a team. We expand the idea of independence by approaching our work from an interdependence approach.

Paula Seanez,
Transition, State Plan and Outcomes
Committee Member

SRC Functions:

Working in partnership with NMDVR, the SRC strives to accomplish the following tasks:

- Review, analyze and advise NMDVR on their responsibilities as listed below:
 1. Eligibility
 2. Monitor Order of Selection and the waiting lists
 - In 2020, the SRC requested and received routine updates on Order of Selection and the waiting lists. The SRC is pleased to note the NMDVR did take successful steps to reduce the wait list this year.
 - In 2020, the SRC provided verbal and written support to NMDVR in educating the state legislature about the impact cuts to the agency budget could have on services to consumers. SRC members attended the Legislative Finance Committee meeting for the NMDVR budget to support the agency's request for FY2022.
 3. Analyze functions performed by NMDVR that effect or potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes.



- In 2020, SRC members participated in public hearings regarding potential changes recommended by NMDVR to the NM Administrative Code. Council members provided feedback on these changes. We are pleased to note NMDVR responded positively to our request that consideration be given to updating language to clearly explain to consumers the differences between mediation and a fair hearing.
- The SRC participated in calls to support NMDVR with their RSA on-site review this year and to receive updates on recommendations for agency services and practices.
- NMDVR provided routine updates on the impacts of COVID-19 on agency services from the transition to telework to an increased focus on remote training. The SRC is pleased to note an increased focus from the RSU in using the success of telework to advocate for consumer employment needs, which have previously been cited by employers as rationale not to hire candidates with disabilities.

In partnership with NMDVR:

1. Develop, review and provide input into state goals and priorities.
 - SRC members participated in planning meetings for the Combined State Plan public hearings and participated in those public hearings to support NMDVR services and agency goals and priorities.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program and submit reports of progress to the Secretary and the Office of the Governor.
3. Advise NMDVR regarding activities carried out to assist in the preparation of the State Plan and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations.
 - The SRC received updates from NMDVR regarding staffing trends in order to remain aware of the agency's efforts in regard to attrition planning. Based on these reports, the SRC has requested ongoing updates in regard to this issue to ensure that consumers across the state have equal access to DVR staff. Additionally, the SRC continues to endorse appropriate disability training and cultural sensitivity training for incumbent staff as well.
4. Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with the functions performed by NMDVR and VR services.
 - The SRC requested and received regular updates regarding all Fair Hearing requests and their outcomes.
5. Prepare and submit to the Office of the Governor and to the Secretary an annual report on the status of NMDVR and to make the report available to the public.
 - The SRC provided copies of their 2019 annual report at numerous public events this year including Disability Rights Awareness Day, public hearings for the Combined State Plan, and health fairs around the state.



- The SRC Membership, Awards and Training Committee worked diligently to follow up with the Governor's Boards and Commissions personnel as part of the council's effort to fill vacancies and ensure understanding of the differences between the NMDVR SRC and the SRC for the Commission for the Blind. Unfortunately, despite these efforts, we were not successful in gaining new appointments to the council this year.
6. Avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served, coordinate activities with other councils in the state including Statewide Independent Living Council, IDEA Advisory Panel, Development Disabilities Planning Council, State Mental Health Planning Council, and State Workforce Investment Board.
 - The SRC membership received routine updates on the work being done by State Workforce Boards, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Governor's Commission on Disability as a result of member reports.
 7. Perform other comparable functions as the Council determines to be appropriate.
 - Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the SRC opted to conduct virtual meetings through Zoom this year. All meetings links were posted in our public notices to facilitate community participation.
 - The SRC Membership, Awards and Training Committee planned and facilitated an awards ceremony to recognize outstanding VR Counselors, VR Support Staff and Businesses for their work supporting consumers this year. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the awards ceremony was held virtually as part of the SRC's June meeting and certificates were mailed to all awardees.
 - The SRC Legislative and Outreach Committee developed talking points for council members to assist with discussing both NMDVR and SRC services during the legislative session and educating legislators about the importance of VR services.
 - The Transition, State Plan and Outcomes Committee members attended public hearings on the Combined State Plan to ensure that consideration was given to the needs of New Mexicans with disabilities with all sections of the plan.

This has been an unprecedented year for us all. COVID-19 has impacted not only our daily lives, but how and if we can access the services that we have become accustomed to. This has truly highlighted the importance of services for people with disabilities, and the role of the SRC in being forward thinking rather than reactionary. It is our responsibility, and our privilege, to incorporate the needs of the disability community into all of our recommendations not only to DVR, but to the state as a whole.

*Sarah Michaud
SRC Chair*

DEDICATION = JOBS



Project SEARCH—New Mexico

Despite pandemic restrictions, the Project SEARCH—New Mexico is pleased to report a very successful year for our students.

During the past eight months Project Search sites through out the state (Albuquerque, UNM hospital & Embassy Suites Rio Rancho/ Rust Presbyterian, Gallup/Hilton Garden Inn, Gadsden Schools/Las Cruces Good Samaritan Las Cruces, Farmington/ City of Farmington, Santa Fe/Pueblo of Pojoaque, Alamogordo/ Holloman Air Force Base) have adjusted to working remotely and were able to conduct a virtual graduation for 43 interns. National Project Search shared that they are developing an extensive unit on technology training for PS interns during restrictions.

Online meetings with each site have occurred, with each site addressing job development plans for all interns during COVID-19 contingency plans for job search activities were implemented where daily Zoom meetings with interns, and weekly check-ins with VR counselor's and community provider's were initiated to discuss job placement and preparation to return to the work force. As of today, six interns have been able to secure employment, and others are working virtually with team member's to return to the work force.

Since the summer, PS sites begin to explore options for an alternative classroom sites in fall 2020, as host business were not able to let interns return to facilities due to COVID-19 safety measures. School districts have worked closely with community providers and VR to explore options within their own school district or other community sites to provide opportunities for interns to continue to expand work experience within a business setting. Each site continues to meet virtually daily and work closely with VR counselors, and community providers (Adelante, Best Buddies) to prepare interns for employment. Interns are learning modalities on computer systems technology. Interns have been placed in working interviews at businesses in their communities, and four have already been offered jobs.

Project SEARCH—New Mexico



Graduate Spotlight: Shelby's Story

Over the past three years, Shelby has been working as a banquet server, food prep, in hotel industries. She has learned various skills where she has prepared breakfast for customers, and helped chef's prepare food, and set up and serve food in banquet services.

Shelby has always worked hard to increase her skills in the food industry. Earlier this year, she accepted a part-time position as a cook for the Hilton Garden Inn Gallup.

The creativeness of teachers, VR counselors, community providers, skills trainers and businesses has been outstanding; they continue to find ways to support interns and families who struggle to have internet or limited resources to participate. Each intern continues to work towards their goal to become employed. Former interns such as Shelby serve as terrific role models for our current students.

We are very proud of Shelby and look forward to hearing about her progress as she continues to grow in her chosen career!

DEDICATION = JOBS



Kris's Success Story

NMDVR and our partners are always so happy to hear about program participants who not only secure satisfying careers, but excel and receive accolades for jobs well done.

Kris, an NMDVR program participant who accepted a job at Dion's at the pizza chain's Cottonwood Place Mall in Albuquerque, was recognized as an "Employee Who Inspires." This fall, Dion's tweeted that Kris is "dedicated to the health, safety, and comfort of our customers, and always has a positive attitude and smile on his face."

On their website, Dion's had even more to say about Kris's fantastic performance and contributions to his workplace:

"Fortunately for Dion's, Kris came to work for the company through a partnership with Adelante, which is a nonprofit organization that supports people with mental and physical disabilities, seniors, and disadvantaged populations across New Mexico. Kris has worked hard with his job coaches at the Adelante Development Center to understand how to best function in a work environment with his disability through the services the organization provides. We are proud he uses his skills at Dion's every day."



Chris's Success Story

Chris, a 2019 Clovis High School graduate, attended Eastern New Mexico University and recently started a new job at Pizza Hut. "DVR made a change in my life. To everyone trying to go to DVR, welcome to DVR! DVR is a very nice program that helps you grow and get the job."

Assistance Dogs of the West

Assistance Dogs of the West, an NMDVR partner and the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps' Canine Leadership Crew have adjusted to the pandemic and working from home. This year, two graduates of the Canine Leadership Crew, who were former DVR clients, were hired as staff by ADW. Both are now part-time Program Assistants/



Assistant Trainers. One employee is working this job part-time while she attends cosmetology school; the other is working towards promotion as full-time Trainer with ADW.

Also, the Youth Corps continued its work with the NM School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, adding a new work-based learning opportunity with the Bernalillo County Animal Care Center. Born out of a desire to reach more NMSDHH students now living at their homes across the state instead of having the on-campus option, we are piloting this placement with a local animal shelter.

DEDICATION = JOBS

A Business Owner's Success Story

Mr. Thomas Baca transferred to Rio Rancho DVR on August 9, 2019. Mr. Baca's path to employment was long and complicated, but DVR provided assistance and support along the way.

Initially, Mr. Baca's tools of his trade were stolen from him, and DVR was able to replace them. However, in the end, due to persistence by both the client and DVR, Mr. Baca became a licensed barber but was also persistent enough to open his own shop in Albuquerque.

Mr. Baca was closed rehabilitated on March 23, 2020 and thrived as a business owner. He relayed his interest in employing or providing OJT for other DVR clients who wish to become barbers.

On April 6, 2020, Mr. Baca was contacted for a post-closure follow up. Mr. Baca stated he was doing well and was appreciative of the call and the services provided by DVR.

Mr. Baca stated, "I recognize that I would not have the successful business that I have today without the help of DVR services."

As of present, despite COVID-19, Mr. Baca is planning on opening a second location in 2021. Mr. Baca's business details are listed below with testimonials. A huge NMDVR success story!



Customer testimonials for Thomas's salon:

This was my first haircut after retiring from the Navy and my first ever beard trim. Thomas took my from looking shaggy AF to crisp and clean. Came out looking like a completely different person. The atmosphere was chill and friendly, and even though there was a VIP waiting in the parking lot for the shop to be empty, he took his time and gave me the VIP treatment. I've finally found a place that can do more than just a fade. 10/10, I'll be back. - **Cecil D**

The visit was awesome. I really liked the confidence from Thomas. He really did a great job with the hair I have having a problem with for months. I couldn't find my new style... Thomas took it on with a great positive attitude. And need less to say he killed it. I highly recommend this barber shop. Very clean, nice vibes, professional, friendly. - **Antonio H**

Found this place after searching Google. "Best haircut in Albuquerque." This place does not disappoint! Pedro gave me the best haircut I've ever had while living in ABQ and this is now my go-to spot. Thomas and Pedro fill this place with passion and make you feel welcome! Don't think twice, get the best haircut, and support local! - **Michael G**

I've been going to barbershops for many years. I can truly say Thomas is a master at what he does. If you want an awesome cut with style, this is definitely the place. I'm a loyal and permanent customer for life. Great shop, great vibe and a great cut. - **Ray S**

NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

Statistical Year At-A-Glance

8,447

New Mexicans sought and received vocational rehabilitation services

7,876

New Mexicans received vocational rehabilitation services including medical treatment, guidance & counseling training and job seeking skills training

475

Successfully Rehabilitated

683

Job ready or employed but not yet closed

\$21,371.80

Average yearly employee wage

94%

Percent wage increase after rehabilitation

48%

Most Significantly Disabled

49%

Significantly Disabled

\$10,151,604.00

Total wages for successfully rehabilitated individuals

NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

INCOME RELIANCE BEFORE AND AFTER RETURN TO WORK		
PRIMARY SOURCE OF SUPPORT	AT APPLICATION	AT CLOSURE
Public Support (SSI, SSDI, TANF, AFDC)	174	136
Family and Friends	164	19
Personal Income	94	316
All Other Sources	25	4
Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)	6	
Employment Earnings	7	
All Other Public Sources	3	
Public Assistance without Federal Funds (GA Only)	1	
Client Income	1	
TOTAL REHABILITATED CLOSURES	475	475

NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

REHABILITATED CLOSURES BY OCCUPATION	
CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	CLOSURES
Office and Administrative Support	53
Food Preparation, Serving, and Related	51
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	51
Personal Care and Service	49
Sales and Related	36
Installation, Maintenance and Repair	32
Education, Training and Library	28
Healthcare Support	25
Transportation and Material Moving	17
Production	16
Community and Social Services	16
Construction and Extraction	16
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	14
Management	13
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, Media	12
Protective Services	10
Architecture and Engineering	9
Computer and Mathematical	7
Business and Financial Operations	7
Legal	3
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	3
Life, Physical and Social Science	2
Military	1
TOTAL REHABILITATED CLOSURES	480

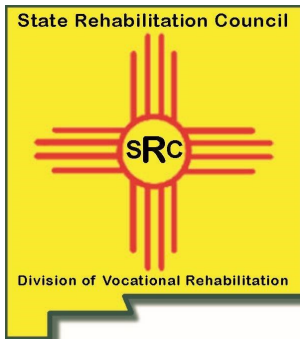
NMDVR AT-A-GLANCE

Eligible Participants by Major Disabling Conditions	
PRIMARY DISABILITY	COUNT
Cognitive Impairment	2392
Other Impairment	1945
Psychosocial Impairment	1725
Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neuro Impairment	591
Hearing Loss	387
Deafness	226
General Physical Debilitation	210
Combination of Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	138
Communicative Impairment (Expressive/Receptive)	116
Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment	70
Respiratory Impairment	36
Blindness	30
Deaf-Blindness	10
Total Eligible	7876

SRC Accomplishments



- ♦ ***The SRC assisted in the review of proposed changes to the New Mexico Administrative Code clarifying the options available to consumers for appealing NMDVR service related decisions.***
- ♦ ***The SRC membership participated in planning meetings and local public hearings to provider feedback on the Combined State Plan for New Mexico, which will impact DVR services and reporting for the next four years.***
- ♦ ***The SRC prepared and submitted a position statement to the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee regarding the importance of DVR services for New Mexicans with disabilities and the impact of budget cuts on the agency's ability to provide those key services.***
- ♦ ***Despite COVID-19 restrictions, the SRC met routinely throughout the year to conduct committee and council business using remote communication platforms. While things may have looked and felt differently this year, the SRC's business was continued.***
- ♦ ***The SRC coordinated and facilitated an awards ceremony to recognize outstanding work by NMDVR personnel and business partners who had gone above and beyond working with the agency. The SRC solicited nominations from NMDVR staff statewide for awards, reviewed the nominations, selected awardees and hosted an awards ceremony virtually in conjunction with the councils' June 2020. Certificates of recognition were mailed to the awardees.***
- ♦ ***SRC members attended Legislative Finance Committee budget hearings to support NMDVR funding requests.***
- ♦ ***The SRC received routine updates on NMDVR and 121 American Indian VR Program efforts to provide services to New Mexican's with disabilities.***



SRC Strategic Planning

In October 2019, the SRC conducted strategic planning to identify council strengths and set actionable goals for FY20. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was used to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the SRC. Identified items included:

STRENGTHS:

- ♦ **Diversity, lots of expertise, committed/passionate members**
- ♦ **Well informed on issues related to DVR/Disability**
- ♦ **Skilled diplomats**
- ♦ **Consistency of membership**
- ♦ **Strengths-based focus and a unified voice**
- ♦ **Advocacy for all individuals with disabilities**
- ♦ **Good ideas around the table—this group wants to accomplish things**
- ♦ **Resourceful members, creative thinkers**
- ♦ **Excellent services provided**
- ♦ **Ability not to dwell on the past and to look for new solutions**
- ♦ **Potential for more partners**
- ♦ **Strong partnership with NMDVR**

WEAKNESSES:

- ♦ **Limited time together—4 meetings per year is not enough**
- ♦ **Challenges with timely communication**
- ♦ **Rural areas not well represented and/or visited for meetings**
- ♦ **Unknown budget for SRC work**
- ♦ **Uncertainty about general funding for NMDVR**
- ♦ **Challenges to hold meetings via video conference**
- ♦ **Lack of annual meeting dates**
- ♦ **Consistency with Executive Committee meetings**
- ♦ **Lack of training and/or access to ongoing training**
- ♦ **Need annual strategic plan and then do it**

I am honored to be on the State Rehabilitation Council, as DVR has helped me personally after suffering a terrible accident. DVR was able to help me return to gainful employment for which I will always be grateful.

Guy Surdi,
Membership, Training and Awards Committee
and
Legislative and Outreach Committee Member

SRC Strategic Planning, continued



OPPORTUNITIES

- ♦ Have/improve SRC training
- ♦ Develop solid work plan - completing tasks, following through and everyone carrying the workload
- ♦ SRC training/onboarding
- ♦ Potential to be true partner with NMDVR
- ♦ Do what has never been done - think outside the box
- ♦ Flyers at field offices about SRC meetings to inform people and increase SRC visibility
- ♦ SRC controls focus on outreach and public relations
- ♦ To be fully constituted
- ♦ Elevating our work by collaborating with other agencies and governor's office
- ♦ DVR as a commission or stand alone entity within state government

THREATS:

- ♦ Limited control of outside forces (state budget, SPO, hiring practices)
- ♦ Delay in governor appointments to the council and short terms if members term expires without renewal or replacement
- ♦ Lack of participation
- ♦ Challenges with timely communication
- ♦ National/state attitudes towards disability
- ♦ Small group - need more members
- ♦ DVR turnover
- ♦ Lack of membership from all areas of disability
- ♦ Potential move of DVR to another state department

SRC Goals from Strategic Planning:

- ⇒ *SRC will set consistent meetings, which are scheduled in advance and not changed. All scheduled SRC meetings will include time for committee meetings prior to business discussions.*
 - *The SRC is pleased to note this goal was achieved for 2020 despite COVID-19 restrictions. This goal will carry forward for 2021 as well.*
- ⇒ *SRC will develop a formal training plan and orientation for new members and for existing members, which will include an orientation packet, mentorship and a way to track membership to ensure all possible seats are filled.*
 - *While work was done on this goal the SRC was not able to achieve it due to COVID-19. As a result, this goal will be carried forward for 2021.*
- ⇒ *Working with NMDVR, the SRC will determine an annual SRC budget and will establish a resource plan to meet council goals and objectives for each year.*
 - *Due to the demands of COVID-19, this goal was not prioritized in 2020. It will be carried forward for further work in 2021.*

NMDVR Response to SRC Recommendations



- 1. The SRC recommends that NMDVR's wait list of services under Order of Selection be reduced in order to ensure VR services for New Mexicans with disabilities remain available on an ongoing basis.**

NMDVR Response:

From Sept of 2019 until November of 2020, DVR removed 1444 people from the waitlist. DVR is holding public hearings in December of 2020 to propose a public plan for further reductions.

- 2. The SRC recommends that NMDVR ensure the council remains informed of all efforts regarding the Combined State Plan for New Mexico, which must be submitted in March 2020.**

NMDVR Response:

NMDVR participated in all SRC meetings during the previous program year. They worked fully in partnership with the Council to complete the combined state plan for New Mexico. Council members were full participants with DVR in development of the plan.

- 3. The SRC recommends that NMDVR explore expanding Pre-ETS services, similar to Project HOPE as implemented in partnership with the Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program, into other communities.**

NMDVR Response:

The Jemez project was put on hold for one year at the request of the Pueblo because of COVID-19 restrictions. NMDVR remains in full partnership with Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation program with the hope of renewing Project HOPE efforts when Pueblo leadership determines it is safe to do so.

Being a member of the SRC means being committed to serving people with disabilities. Together, we can overcome the obstacles and persevere to make it a better place for all.

Keith Maes,
Membership, Training and Awards Committee and
Legislative and Outreach Committee Member



NMDVR Response to SRC Recommendations, Continued

DVR added six full-time Pre-employment transition service (Pre-ETS) rehabilitation counselors with expectations to add at least one additional counselor during FY21. We also expanded counselor expectations for Pre-ETS services statewide

4. The SRC recommends that a formal training process for new SRC members be implemented to increase member understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SRC and our federal mandate.

NMDVR Response:

NMDVR will design an orientation process for new SRC members and for current members who would like to attend. A notebook (online) will be developed that will contain critical information about NMDVR, including:

- Mission, Vision, Values and Goals**
- Contact information for Rehabilitation Services Unit staff**
- Link to the Rehabilitation Act and assistance in interpreting the Act.**
- Link to the NMDVR website**
- Access to Rehab Academy training and materials**
- List of all 26 NMDVR field offices and areas covered**
- NMDVR will invite SRC members to tour field offices, once the COVID-19 pandemic is over or when deemed safe**
- Link to NMDVR agency newsletter**

Links to community resources and information on disability.

Please note that once Staff Development Unit is notified of a new SRC member, an overview session of the agency will be conducted by a Staff Development Unit employee.

5. The SRC recommends that NMDVR include the SRC in the process of developing, implementing and reviewing the proposed impact study to determine the best placement of the agency within the NM state government.



NMDVR Response to SRC Recommendations, Continued

NMDVR Response:

The director has worked in partnership with the executive committee of SRC to develop this plan.

6. The SRC recommends that all NMDVR offices and/or co-locations must be accessible to people with all disabilities.

NMDVR Response:

NMDVR is in full agreement with this recommendation and has assured compliance in all NMDVR offices.

7. The SRC recommends that all NMDVR services must remain individualized based on the needs and abilities of the consumer.

NMDVR Response:

NMDVR is in full agreement and continues to fulfill this expectation as part of our mission.

8. The SRC recommends that NMDVR be funded at an appropriate level to allow the agency to move out from Order of Selection.

NMDVR Response:

NMDVR is in full agreement. The agency has expressed these concerns to appropriate legislative officials regarding funding, although we have not been able to obtain additional funding at this time. We will continue to responsibly move people off of the Order of Selection waitlist as resources are available.

NMDVR can be a valuable catalyst for people with disabilities to obtain the jobs that highlight their contributions to society.

Tracy Agiovlasis
Membership, Training and Awards
Committee Chair

NMDVR Response to SRC Recommendations, Continued

- 9. The SRC recommends that assistance be offered to NMDVR to streamline access to public school districts to assist the state in meeting the transition services mandate set forth by the Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act.**

NMDVR Response:

NMDVR has been in contact with all superintendents, principals, and special education directors at all public schools and charter schools in the state of New Mexico. We have been working in partnership with NM PED to assure that we have access to all students in the state of New Mexico. We are currently in negotiation regarding a Memorandum of Understanding with NM PED to ensure these opportunities exist.

- 10. The SRC recommends that all NMDVR services should maintain a disability focus, and all hires at NMDVR should participate in comprehensive training on topics including disability awareness and sensitivity, vocational rehabilitation services, assistive technology and the needs of specific disability groups.**

NMDVR Response:

NMDVR is in agreement and regularly provides training to all new staff in these areas and provides updated training to existing staff.

During this difficult time of a pandemic, the SRC remains committed to our mission and partnership with the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. We remain committed to ensure that New Mexicans with disabilities have resources to be successful in their employment efforts.

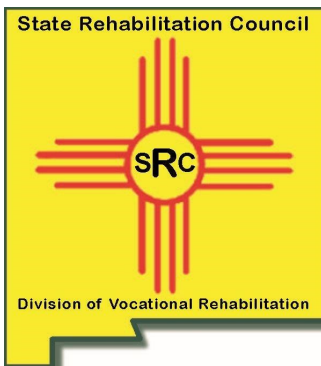
Bernadine Chavez,
Legislative and Outreach Committee Chair

SRC Recommendations for 2021:



Due to COVID-19 and the resulting restrictions placed upon state agencies in New Mexico, the SRC elected this year to extend our recommendations from 2020 into the next calendar year to offer both the council and the agency time to focus on these recommendations. Therefore, our recommendations for 2021 include the following:

- The SRC recommends that NMDVR's wait list of services under Order of Selection be reduced in order to ensure VR services for New Mexicans with disabilities remain available on an ongoing basis. Additionally, the SRC recommends that NMDVR continue the current policy of providing regular updates to the Council on this issue to ensure the membership remain informed.
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR ensure the Council remains informed of all efforts regarding the Combined State Plan for New Mexico, which must be submitted in March 2020, and that appropriate invitations for involvement are extended to ensure Council input.
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR explore expanding Pre-ETS services, similar to Project HOPE as implemented in partnership with the Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program, into other communities and consider permanent funding options to support these innovative strategies.
- The SRC recommends that a formal training process for new SRC members be implemented to increase member understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SRC as well as our federal mandates.
- The SRC recommends that NMDVR include the SRC in the process of developing, implementing, and reviewing the proposed impact study to determine the best placement of the agency with the NM state government.
- The SRC recommends that all NMDVR offices and/or co-locations must be accessible to people with all disabilities. It is imperative to us that thought be given to the needs of a large cross-section of disabilities when considering space for NMDVR offices as it makes no sense to place a service dedicated to disability supports in a location that consumers cannot access.
- The SRC recommends that all NMDVR services must remain individualized based on the needs and abilities of the consumer. It is important to the SRC that NMDVR not lose its focus on career path development, which is very different than simple job placement.

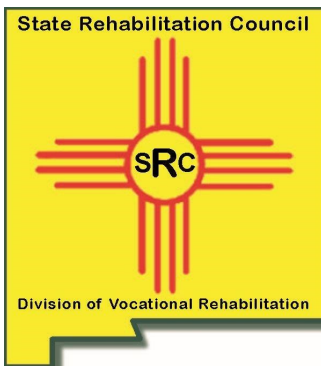


SRC Recommendations for 2021 (continued):

3. The SRC recommends that DVR needs to be funded at an appropriate level to allow the agency to move out from Order of Selection. The current status of Order of Selection for the agency has essentially created a situation where no new consumers are receiving services due to lack of funding. This needs to be corrected as soon as possible.
4. Assistance should be offered to NMDVR to streamline access to public school districts in order to assist the state in meeting the transition services mandate set forth by the Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act. The SRC further recommends that Pre-ETs services should be monitored routinely to ensure youth engagement is occurring and services are being delivered across the state.
5. All DVR services should maintain a disability focus, and all hires at NMDVR should participate in comprehensive training on topics including disability awareness and sensitivity, vocational rehabilitation services, assistive technology and the needs of specific disability populations. With the change in federal and state hiring requirements regarding minimum qualifications for VR Counselors, the SRC has noted that new agency hires can lack a foundation in vocational rehabilitation and the framework of rehabilitation service delivery. It will be extremely important moving forward that a comprehensive professional development plan be implemented in order to reduce the challenges that are created by this lack of foundation, and which frequently move to complaints and/or fair hearing requests.

Working together to meet the needs of New Mexicans has become increasingly more important than ever. Coordinating our efforts, leveraging our expertise and building opportunities will require all of us to do and think differently in order to assure that all our citizens with disabilities are part of the workforce and economic recovery post COVID-19-19

Yolanda Cordova, Transition,
State Plan and Outcomes Committee Member



SRC Membership

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

Rebecca Holland, Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program (through September 2020, position currently vacant)

Parent Training and Information Center

Andrea Leon, Albuquerque (through July 2020, position currently vacant)

Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Bernadine Chavez, Albuquerque

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (ex-officio, non-voting member)

Keith Maes, Las Vegas

Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider

Vacant

Business, Industry and Labor

Sandy Sandoval, Santa Fe

Yolanda Cordova, Department of Workforce Solutions, Albuquerque

Disability Advocacy Groups

Tracy Agiovlasis, SRC Vice-Chair, Albuquerque

Representatives of Individuals with Disabilities

Sarah Michaud, SRC Chair, Santa Fe

TJ Chester, Socorro

Current or Former NMDVR Participants

Guy Surdi, Santa Fe

Section 121 or American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Paula Seanez, SRC Sergeant at Arms, Navajo Nation Department of Dine Education Administration/Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services

Director of NMDVR (ex-officio, non-voting member)

Diane Mourning Brown, Director of NMDVR

Employees of NMDVR (ex-officio, non-voting members)

Dr. Michael O'Brien, RSU Administrator

Eileen Marrujo, ASU Deputy Director (through October 2020)

Robert Cardon, CFO (effective December 2020)

Charles Alan Hamlin, DDS Administrator



NMDVR OFFICE LOCATIONS

Alamogordo

2300 Indian Wells Rd
Alamogordo, NM 88310
Fax: 575-434-1582
Phone: 575-437-6550
Toll-free: 888-901-7868

Edgewood

3 George Court, Suite B
Edgewood, NM 87015
Fax: 505-281-9400
Phone: 505-281-9946
Phone: 505-281-9947

Hobbs

2120 North Alto #109
Hobbs, NM 88240
Fax: 575-393-3630
Phone: 575-393-3330
Toll-free: 888-201-5859

Belen

911 Castillo Avenue
Belen, NM 87002
Fax: 505-864-6292
Phone: 505-864-1617
Toll-free: 888-901-7902

Espanola

706-B La Joya St.
Espanola, NM 87532
Fax: 505-753-7303
Phone: 505-753-2908
Toll-free: 888-901-3647

Las Cruces

3381 Del Rey Blvd.
Las Cruces, NM 88012
Fax: 575-524-6139
Phone: 575-524-6135
Toll-free: 888-901-7866

Carlsbad

3605 National Parks Highway
Carlsbad, NM 88220-1448
Fax: 575-887-7312
Phone: 575-885-8821
Toll-free: 800-645-0258

Farmington

2901 Hutton
Farmington, NM 87402
Fax: 505-599-9720
Phone: 505-327-5123
Toll-free: 888-901-7901

Las Cruces

Laredo Towne Center
505 South Main Street,
Suite 142
Las Cruces, NM 88001

Clovis

100 E. Manana Blvd. #17
Clovis, NM 88101
Fax: 575-769-2794
Phone: 575-763-3437
Toll-free: 800-645-2143

Gallup

312 East Nizhoni Blvd
Gallup, NM 87301
Fax: 505-726-1431
Phone: 505-726-1429
Toll-free: 800-279-5681

Las Vegas

32 NM 65 Hot Springs Blvd.
Las Vegas, NM 87701
Fax: 505-454-6120
Phone: 505-425-9365
Toll-free: 888-901-7865

Rio Rancho

3791 Southern Blvd. SE,
Suite 210 (Physical Address)
PO Box 15430 (Mailing Address)
Rio Rancho, NM 87174
Fax: 505-896-4501
Phone: 505-896-4500
Toll-free: 866-585-5446

Roswell

1014 S. Atkinson Ave.
Roswell, NM 88203
Fax: 575-624-6198
Phone: 575-624-6024
Toll-free: 800-644-7732

Santa Fe

2540 Camino Edward Ortiz,
Ste B
Santa Fe, NM 87507
Fax: 505-827-3564
Phone: 505-827-3526
Toll-free: 800-773-4072

Santa Fe – Administration Office

2935 Rodeo Park Drive East
Santa Fe, NM 87505
Fax: 505-954-8562
Phone: 505-954-8500
Toll-free: 800-224-7005

Silver City

500 E. 18th St.

Silver City, NM 88061
Fax: 575-538-5537
Phone: 575-538-5351
Toll-free: 888-901-7861
Socorro

1014 N. California
Socorro, NM 87801
Fax: 575-835-4468
Phone: 575-835-4243
Toll-free: 888-901-7903

Taos

145 Roy Road, Suite C
Taos, NM 87571
Fax: 575-758-7485
Phone: 575-758-4348
Toll-free: 888-901-7869

Disability Determination Services

7421 Bartlett Dr. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87107
Fax: 505-841-5724
Phone: 505-841-5600
Toll-free: 800-432-5868

Albuquerque Gibson Office

Gibson Medical Center
5400 Gibson SE Box #6
Albuquerque, NM 87108
Fax: 505-841-6451
Phone: 505-841-6450
Toll-free: 866-526-0863

Albuquerque Lomas Office

111 Lomas Blvd NW,
Suite 422

Albuquerque, NM 87102
Fax: 505-383-2529
Phone: 505-383-2500
Toll-free: 888-818-3259
Albuquerque Mountain Office

501 Mountain Rd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
Phone: 505-843-1900

Albuquerque Oakland Administration Office

5200 Oakland Ave NE
Albuquerque, NM 87113

Albuquerque Quail Office

5205 Quail NW
Albuquerque, NM 87120
Fax: 505-836-5674
Phone: 505-836-1774
Toll-free: 888-818-3263

Albuquerque South Valley Office

1710 Rio Bravo SW
Albuquerque, NM 87105
Fax: 505-877-0961
Phone: 505-877-7673
Toll-free: 888-815-2981

