



Mission Statement: *The mission of the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is to encourage and assist the efforts of New Mexicans with disabilities to reach their goals for working and living in their communities.*

Vision Statement: *Every New Mexican with a disability has the opportunity to contribute to the quality of life and the economic prosperity of the state.*

Attachment 4.10: Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

In preparation for its budget request, the Division annually assesses the supply of qualified professionals and paraprofessionals available to the Division to ensure an adequate staffing base.

The Division maintains professional vocational rehabilitation counselors to provide direct client services. These counselors manage individual caseloads.

The total number of counselors employed corresponds with a ratio of approximately one counselor per 30,000 of the general population, the number of positions filled as allowed by the State Personnel Office, and the available budget as approved by the State Legislature and Congress. Under this current methodology with 66 caseloads available, but not filled, the Division has enough counselors, with full capacity, to serve a population base of 1,980,000.

Creating additional challenges to realizing an ideal ratio is the current hiring freeze in New Mexico state government. In fiscal years 2010 and 2011, the Division has experienced approximately a 20 – 23 percent vacancy rate in the VR counselor ranks, creating a shortage of 13 - 15 counselors. Given the current economic recession, it is not anticipated that the freeze will be lifted in FY12. The Division submitted an exception to fill some key positions, with the goal to reduce the vacancy rate to 15 percent or less.

Ideally, the Division would like to decrease the ratio to one counselor per 25,000 of the general population with prevalence of disability and geographic variables factored into the ratio. Under this new formula with an estimated general population of 1,984,356 (U.S. Census 2008 estimated population), the Division has determined that 13 new counselor positions would be necessary to adequately meet the growing population needs in five years, for a total of 79 counselor positions. Reducing vacancies by 15% and using the new service formula NMDVR needs 16 -18 counselors to meet the new service ratio by 2017.

The 2008 Disability Status Report, Cornell University provides the following disability statistics specific to New Mexico (Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14853 www.disabilitystatistics.org):

Prevalence of disability among non-institutionalized people ages 21 – 64 in New Mexico (Working Age):

- Overall percentage of working-age people with a disability was 12.4%
- Disability Type

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| Any Disability | 12.4% |
| Visual | 2.5% |
| Hearing | 3.2% |
| Ambulatory | 6.4% |
| Cognitive | 5.3% |
| Self-Care | 2.4% |
| Independent Living | 4.4% |
- Employment rate for working-age people with disabilities was 41.2%
- Actively looking for work among people with disabilities who were not working was 6.5%, one of the lowest in the U.S.
- Working people with disabilities working full-time / full-year was 24.5%
- Median annual earnings of working people with disabilities working full-time / full-year was \$37,200
- Median income of households that include any working-age people with disabilities was \$36,200
- Poverty rate for working-age people with disabilities was 25.2%
- Working-age people with disabilities receiving SSI payments in NM was 20.5%
- Educational Attainment of working-age people with disabilities in NM
 - High school diploma or equivalent 32.1%
 - Some college or an associate degree 31.3%
 - Bachelor's degree or more 14.7%

These disability population statistics do not indicate the number of individuals eligible for, available for, or in need of vocational rehabilitation services. However, the numbers suggest that as disability prevalence increases and as age-disability prevalence increases along with an increasing need for older workers in the workforce, the demand for vocational rehabilitation services will continue to increase in New Mexico.

The Division employees 121 direct service positions consisting of New Mexico Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Rehabilitation Technicians, and Caseload Secretaries in the Rehabilitation Services Unit (RSU). There are 66 vocational rehabilitation counselor positions for the 66 caseloads located throughout the state. The Division also employs 34 rehabilitation technicians and 21 caseload secretaries providing direct services to NMDVR clients (per RSU organizational chart revised December 05, 2008). The ratio of counselor to rehabilitation technician and caseload secretaries varies throughout the state given the available resources. A typical ratio is one caseload secretary and one rehabilitation technician for two vocational

rehabilitation counselors. In some offices in rural locations, NMDVR staff is usually one counselor and one rehabilitation technician.

The Division employs 27 counselors with Certified Rehabilitation Counselor credentials; all have Masters' degrees and one with a PhD. Fifteen of these individuals are caseload Rehabilitation Counselors located throughout the State providing direct services to DVR clients. Another twelve individuals occupy other professional positions located in the Division as follows:

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| Administrative Services | |
| Staff Development | = Two Positions |
| Director's Office | = One Position |
| Program Development | |
| And Support | = Two Positions |
| RSU Field Operations Directors | = One position |
| RSU Program Managers | = Five positions |
| RSU State Office Positions | = One position |

The Division encourages and assists eligible staff to attain CRC designation.

Institutions of higher education in New Mexico:

New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU), Las Vegas, New Mexico has 28 students currently enrolled in the RSA counselor training grant, and vocational evaluation grant. The number of recent graduates by academic year is as follows:

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| Summer 2006 | = two graduates. |
| Summer 2007 | = seven graduates |
| Summer 2008 | = Data Not Available |
| Summer 2009 | = five graduates (all eligible to sit for the CRC exam) |
| Summer 2010 | = two graduates |
| Summer 2011 | = three graduates this academic year thus far, with seven anticipated at the end of July 2011. |

The Division was instrumental in developing, and is committed to, maintaining a vocational rehabilitation counselor education program at NMHU. The NMDVR director, field managers, and Staff Development Unit (SDU) personnel sit on NMHU's curriculum advisory council to ensure that coursework aligns with Agency goals. Additionally, individuals from within the agency have taught courses in Foundations of Rehabilitation, Transition, and Job Placement in NMHU's Rehabilitation Counselor Masters program.

The Division continues to work with New Mexico Highlands University students to complete their internships with the NMDVR. Internships enhance opportunities to hire the NMHU graduates.

New Mexico Highlands University applied for and received three year accreditation in July 2008 from the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) accreditation.

Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Implementation of a Masters Degree standard for employment under the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development initially attributed to the high turnover rates in vocational rehabilitation counselor positions. This rate has been as high as 32%. In response, the Division implemented strategies to reduce the turnover rate. The Division began to realize a significant reduction in the turnover rate. The turnover rate for VR counselors in FY10 was 7%. In FY09 it was 12%, down from 17% in FY08. The Division continues to strive to reduce the turnover rate, excluding retirement of staff.

Six factors are considered to contribute to maintaining reduced counselor turnover:

- 1) Employees of the Division are covered by the State Personnel Act.
- 2) The Division has committed to hiring and compensating staff at competitive salaries (appropriate placement).
- 3) State of New Mexico offers employees an extremely competitive employment benefits package, including premium health care coverage. Employees have the option to retire with 25 years of services (75% of average of top three years' salary).
- 4) State Personnel Board Rules allow NMDVR to pay Counselors a supervisory differential for assuming supervisory responsibilities, and training staff in effective case management and best practices.
- 5) The Division offers training opportunities not available with other state agencies;
- 6) Leadership provides staff with recognition for performance including awarding administrative leave.

As of May 2011 direct service positions as a complement of the Division included following positions:

- 66 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Positions with 11 vacancies.
- 34 Rehabilitation Technician Positions with 11 current vacancies and two additional vacancies based on potential retirements through FY11.
- 21 Caseload Secretary Positions with 8 vacancies.

Effective November 15, 2008 the state implemented a hiring freeze for those agencies under the control of the Governor. All new hiring and/or selection transactions for vacant positions must have an approved Exemption to the Hiring Freeze before filling a vacant position.

People estimate the hiring freeze will be in effect at least through FY12. Division staff currently works with the Governor's Office to justify filling vacant positions, during the hiring freeze, as mission-essential.

The Division created Program Policy Instruction PPI 02-02 in 2002, in an effort to reduce counselor turnover. The policy addressed and provided guidelines related for creating and implementing the Supervising Counselor position for the Rehabilitation Services Program. This PPI decreased the workload for Area Managers, improved training, mentoring, staff coaching, and supported quality case management. Additionally vocational rehabilitation counselors and program managers received pay increases as the agency addressed competitive, attractive entry level salaries, and appropriate pay placement.

The Division continues to seek ways of addressing the salaries of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, to reduce turnover. The works with the State Personnel Office to restructure counselor pay to be in line with licensure, education, and competency standards. One compensation mechanism, an In-Pay Band Adjustment, is a mechanism to reach and establish appropriate placement, through demonstrated performance, for those not already appropriately placed. This tool was utilized to provide pay increases from FY06 through FY08. Plans were to implement the In-Pay Band Adjustment again through FY11, pending approval of Department of Finance and Administration, and the State Personnel Office. The agency continues to attempt to recruit and hire professional staff at competitive salary levels.

NOTE: While the Division remains committed to this initiative, it is currently on hold given the hiring freeze referenced above. When the hiring freeze is lifted, the Division will revisit reauthorizing In-Pay Band Adjustments.

The Division experiences barriers to hiring qualified staff particularly in isolated work locations. The State Personnel Director, pursuant to the direction of the State Personnel Board, establishes, maintains, and in conjunction with state agencies, administers a pay plan for all positions throughout the classified service. The State Personnel Director conducts an annual survey of Total Compensation (means of all forms of cash compensation and the dollar value of the employer-sponsored benefit package).

The comparison market is comprised of private and public entities within the state of New Mexico, regional state government employers, Central, Western, and Southwestern state governments and federal employers. The pay plan offers many compensation tools for agencies to utilize and help management attract qualified applicants, retain employees who contribute to the overall success of the organization, motivate employees to maintain high standards of productivity and service, and reward employees for their specific contributions to the achievement of organizational goals and objectives.

The Division has committed funds for training, and continuing education to ensure that all personnel, particularly vocational rehabilitation counselors, meet professional standards for ethical service provision. In providing ongoing training, the Division considers meeting the standards of practice, succession planning, capacity building, and includes evolving issues such

as amendments to the Rehabilitation Act, the Workforce Investment Act, Ticket-to-Work, consumer informed choice, and State issues.

The Division has been largely successful in recruiting individuals with disabilities and minority groups. Naturally, the Division seeks to hire qualified individuals with disabilities. Job accommodations for individuals with disabilities are routinely provided, to attain or maintain employment.

NMDVR advertises job on the Division website www.dvrgetsjobs.com, and the State Personnel site www.spo.state.nm.us, assuring jobs are available nationally to anyone with Internet access.

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

The Division continues to provide training and experience to all staff interested in increasing their job skills. The Staff Development Unit responds to agency initiatives such as case management software, and Microsoft training. The Staff Development Unit financially supports training which offers continuing education credits in a variety of training formats to assist all DVR staff meet and maintain the highest qualifications. Staff Development Unit also supports baccalaureate programs for degree programs that support Agency goals. NMDVR has a number of staff who currently attends Master's Degree programs in Rehabilitation Counseling to advance within the agency.

The Division's strategic planning includes a goal of Career Development and Succession Planning for all staff. Not only is there a shortage of well-qualified staff, but the agency must plan for an increasing loss of senior employees with valuable skills and "agency knowledge". Mechanisms such as post-retirement, re-employment, job sharing, tele-work and alternative work schedules are considerations to offer opportunities for these valuable staff to remain employed or return to work. The agency is currently collaborating with the University of Arkansas TACE Program to address a comprehensive analysis of career development and succession planning as part of strategic planning efforts.

The Division has completed a survey of staff demographics in terms of education background, years of experience, expected time to retirement, and any staff with disabling conditions who want to advance their careers over the long-term and/or return to employment after retirement. These data allows the Division to assess the staff future plans regarding future career development, advancement, and the means to compare these plans with NMDVR needs.

As qualified staff approach retirement age, NMDVR plans to approach well-qualified staff to elect to remain employed with the Division beyond retirement eligibility. This addresses shortages of workers and in particular workers with long-term experience or critical skills.

Personnel Standards

In 2011, all NMDVR counselors (58 of 66 positions) all program managers (8 of 9 positions), and all field operations directors (1 of 3 positions) are fully licensed. Note that 48.3% of NMDVR counselors have a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Two DVR counselors have doctorate degrees.

In 2001, DVR included the Master's degree as the academic standard for the Job Related Qualifications Standard to meet the requirement of § 361.18 CSPD of the Rehabilitation Act. Persons seeking licensure in rehabilitation counseling shall meet the requirements of Subsections A, B, C, D, or E:

- A. Valid certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor issued by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification, 1699 E. Woodfield Rd, Suite 300, Schaumburg, IL 60173: phone, 847-944-1325, hyperlink, www.crc certification.com.
- B. Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from a regionally accredited college of university. This requirement shall be satisfied by meeting the requirements of Subsection B(1) or B(2) below.
 1. A master's degree awarded by a New Mexico college or university must incorporate the New Mexico Public Education Department's approved competencies in rehabilitation counseling.
 2. A master's degree awarded by a college or university outside of New Mexico must be in a rehabilitation counseling program approved by the New Mexico Public Education Department.
- C. Master's degree in school counseling, vocational counseling or other related field and the provisions of Subsection C(1) or C(2) below.
 1. One (1) year of experience in rehabilitation counseling, or
 2. Fifteen (15) semester hours of credit in the rehabilitation counseling competency areas of vocational/transition assessment, medical aspects of disability, psychosocial and/or psycho-cultural aspects of disability case management in rehabilitation counseling, issues and practices in rehabilitation counseling, or placement aspects of rehabilitation counseling.
- D. Bachelor's degree in rehabilitation counseling from a regionally accredited college or university and one (1) year of experience in public or private facility in which direct vocational rehabilitation counseling is the primary job responsibility. The degree requirement shall be satisfied by meeting the requirements of Subsection D(1), or D(2) below.

1. A bachelor's degree awarded by a New Mexico college or university must incorporate the New Mexico Public Education Department's approved competencies in rehabilitation counseling.
 2. A bachelor's degree awarded by a college or university outside of New Mexico must be for a rehabilitation program approved by the New Mexico Public Education Department.
- E. Bachelor's degree in a related field and the provisions of Subsection E(1) or E(2) below.
1. Two (2) years of experience in a public or private Facility in which direct vocational rehabilitation counseling is the primary job responsibility, or
 2. Fifteen (15) semester hours of credit in the rehabilitation counseling competency areas of vocational/transition assessment, medical aspects of disability, psychosocial and/or psycho-cultural aspects of disability, case management in rehabilitation counseling, issues and practices in rehabilitation counseling, or placement aspects of rehabilitation counseling.

All NMDVR counselors applied for state licensure by December 2002. Counselors who were not eligible for the highest level of state licensure participated in training leading to licensure. Currently, all NMDVR counselors have applied for and been granted licensure. New counselors have 90 days to apply for their license. Licensure application includes a criminal background check, and the application is monitored for compliance. If new NMDVR counselors do not meet the experience requirement for State Licensure, they may re-apply upon gaining the necessary experience.

State licensure is identified in policy as a top priority, and required for continued employment. Identified documents 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 from courses related to counseling and guidance; vocational counseling; disability; psycho-social or psycho-cultural aspects of disability; case management in rehabilitation counseling; and placement aspects in rehabilitation counseling.
- Criminal background information
- Fingerprints
- Each Rehabilitation Counselor licenses must be renewed every three years.

Importantly now most, if not all new hires for counselor positions have Masters Degrees. However, rarely NMDVR hires a person without a Masters Degree, especially in rural areas of the state. Such a new hire must immediately begin working toward their Masters Degree to meet the highest standards of the state. Counselors without advanced degrees are required to enroll in the NMHU program or in an accredited distance learning graduate program.

NMDVR may purchase vocational evaluations , rehabilitation engineering services, accessibility studies, job modifications, essential job function studies for employers and employees, from qualified vendors. The Division also employs staff with the professional capabilities of performing these services.

Staff Development Unit

The Division continues to work cooperatively with the Public Education Department to issue State Licensure for rehabilitation counselors. The Division coordinates with the State Personnel Office to develop pay equity that reflects the skills and qualifications of licensed counselors. Counselors are encouraged to submit their credentials when they meet the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) designation, as this nationally recognized accreditation The Staff Development Unit will support graduate level course work which, when completed, will allow counselors to sit for the CRC examination.

SDU provides for professional and paraprofessional development for all staff from Division, state sponsored, institutions of higher education, private vendors, professional organizations, or any training that would enhance job performance. SDU provides and monitors a series of required training that is available to all new employees. NMDVR policy requires these courses on a regular basis: Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Preventing Employment Discrimination, Workplace Violence Prevention, and Mileage and Per Diem. Counselors and Rehabilitation Technicians also complete on-line courses in Orientation to Rehabilitation and VR 101: Determining Eligibility and Writing the Individualized Plan for Employment.

SDU also offers Rehabilitation Academy to new counselors and rehabilitation technicians (rehabilitation secretaries are highly encouraged to attend). Participants from the Native American partner agencies and community-based programs are invited to attend Rehab Academy. The Academy is taught over a three-week period focusing on assessment, eligibility, vocational counseling, job placement and rehabilitation technology. A “sample case” allows new staff to make appropriate eligibility decisions and suitable vocational goals. Uses may practice with the case Management software AWARE, use training games and activities to reinforce learning. SDU makes good use of technology as participants give the Academy high marks in terms of content and learning satisfaction.

An Awards Webinar replaced the annual Statewide Staff Meeting to contain costs. In a similar effort New Employee Webinar may be view at employees desks to eliminate the travel and associated costs to direct al available budget to direct service delivery.

The Division uses a customized software application called the Training Administration System (TAS) to track employee training progress and CSPD compliance. This software provides the information necessary to summarize the training requested and completed on an individual basis. It provides the data necessary to analyze overall progress of individuals and groups of employees toward obtaining and retaining required credentials and job skills. The system offers the agency the ability to track all employees' training, and let employees to request training seamlessly by computer. The SDU routinely transmits new training opportunities via email and Agency Intranet.

The SDU conducts annual needs assessments to provide the resources necessary to ensure personnel receive appropriate training. SDU offers workshops and seminars in various topics related to Rehabilitation Counseling, geared to sharpen counselors' skills and abilities in serving citizens of New Mexico who are disabled. Recently SDU facilitated internal training for staff for: Comprehensive Assessment, Comparable Benefits, Office 2001, AWARE 5.6 Case Management System, Fraud Prevention, and Prevention of Sexual Harassment Refresher. The training topics are always based on expressed needs, whether by management or by committees such as the agency's Health and Safety Committee. Recently, SDU staff developed and presented training about the agency's implementation of an order of selection.

As part of the Division's overall strategic planning efforts and in spite of these times of difficult budget decisions, NMDVR is proactively working toward the future in terms of career development and succession planning. A Career Development Team has developed a plan which will benefit staff, the agency, and the participants served by the Division. The goals of this group are to help staff develop skills that may help them advance or become more effective in their jobs. The Career development Program entitled the Leadership Institute for Tomorrow (LIFT) has been endorsed by the Division's Leadership Team and includes the following components: Leadership Foundations, Supervisory Academy, Degree Advancement, Individual Career Development Plans, Mentoring and / or Job Shadowing. LIFT was rolled out in July 2010, and the first cohort of staff participants is scheduled to complete project activity in fall of 2011. A steering committee of 12 individuals representing a cross section of the agency is working in collaboration with the Region 6 Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center. A Supervisory Academy is intended to develop the available talent pool within the agency, promoting a learning culture and develop networks of future leaders.

Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

In New Mexico, there are large portions of the general population whose first language is Spanish or an American Indian dialect. When necessary, the Division obtains the services of interpreters of Spanish and other languages. However, Division staffing, which is consistent with the percentage of minority population and the general population, includes many individuals who are able to communicate in Spanish and native languages. This is most beneficial to terms of providing services to applicants and eligible individuals with limited English speaking ability.

Although not a requirement, the Division may give preference to individuals who are bilingual or multilingual in applying for Division jobs. Many of the Division's field offices have at least one individual who can speak Spanish or an American Indian dialect. The Division's EEO Plan reflects the State's diversity. The Division successfully recruits graduates of New Mexico Highlands University's Vocational Rehabilitation masters program. Many of these graduates are from various minority groups.

In addition, the Division employs several individuals skilled in communicating in American Sign Language. When necessary, interpreters are hired to fulfill communication needs.

Telecommunications, sensory and other technological aids and devices may be used to assist individual applicants and clients to participate in and benefit from the rehabilitation program. The Division may purchase, lease, or utilize equipment from loan banks to meet these needs, as appropriate. Division staff may consult experts in rehabilitation technology and assistive devices to address client needs.

Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

The Division is organizationally placed under the Public Education Department, as is the Special Education Unit, which administers state services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. In developing its comprehensive system of personnel development, the Division has and will continue to coordinate with the Special Education Unit and will coordinate its CSPD activities with those provided under IDEA. This activity will be implemented under the auspices of the Secretary of Education.

The licensure rules for Rehabilitation Counselors in New Mexico are in agreement with the Public Education Department requirements and competencies applicable to both the school systems to effect school-to-work transition in the high schools and the Division.

The aforementioned activities for developing a distinct plan and maintaining a comprehensive system of personnel development will incorporate methodology to ensure cooperation and coordination with the personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The Division developed state licensure for vocational rehabilitation counselors through its parent agency, the New Mexico Public Education Department in 2001. This licensure, endorsed in rule by the Public Education Department is required of all vocational rehabilitation counselors working for the NMDVR and is commensurate with national standards under CSPD.