

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 E. Boulevard Ave. – Dept. 325, Bismarck ND 58505-0250**

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For more information, contact public information officers Heather Steffl at 701-328-4933 or LuWanna Lawrence at 701-328-1892.

Human Services seeks comments from employers on Vocational Rehabilitation services

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the North Dakota State Rehabilitation Council are sponsoring community meetings about workforce services next week in Minot and Fargo. They are inviting employers and business representatives to attend and to share comments and insight into vocational rehabilitation efforts and workforce programs intended to help businesses recruit and retain workers.

The **Business and Employer Meeting in Minot** is Tuesday, **Dec. 8**, from 6 to 8 p.m., Central Time, in the Viking Room at the Grand Hotel, 1505 N. Broadway.

The **Fargo** employer meeting is Thursday, **Dec. 10** from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Baymont Inn and Suites' Woodland East Room, 3333 13th Ave. South.

“Every year, we host community meetings to hear directly from stakeholders interested in workforce needs and the employment of people with disabilities,” said Russ Cusack, VR Division director. “The feedback we collect helps shape our state plan and identify priorities for the upcoming year.”

Cusack said the division wants to hear from employers who have job openings and currently work with VR, as well as employers who need workers and may be less familiar with the division's services.

VR professionals, he said, can match clients who have the required skills and abilities with job openings.

“We can also help employers retain their experienced workforce,” Cusack said. “If a business has an employee who is struggling with an injury, illness, or impairment, we can visit with the employer and employee and help them figure out an accommodation. Modifying a workplace is often low-cost and may be as simple as rearranging a work station.”

During the 2015 Federal Fiscal Year, VR professionals worked with both employers and individuals with disabilities and helped 531 North Dakotans obtain and maintain employment.

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Employers can also submit written comments until 5 p.m., on Friday, Dec. 18, 2015. Send comments to Marv Erhardt, Discovery Consulting, 1527 Territory Dr., Bismarck, N.D., 58503 or marverhardt.discovery@midco.net.

The 2013-2014 VR State Plan is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/policies/state.html. It can also be obtained by calling 701-328-8950, 800-755-2745, or ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888.

General public comment meetings will also be held in Minot on Dec. 8 and in Fargo on Dec. 10. Details are available online at www.nd.gov/dhs/info/publicnotice/2015/10-23-vocational-rehabilitation-state-plan-public-comment-meetings.pdf

Individuals who need accommodations, including auxiliary aids or other services to participate in the meetings, should contact Erhardt at 701-223-1192, or ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888.

North Dakota is a leader in the employment of people with disabilities. VR Division information is available online at www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/index.html. Local VR Office location information is listed on the Web at www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/about/regional-contact.html.

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