

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Feb. 8, 2018**

Media contacts: Heather Steffl at 701-328-4933 or LuWanna Lawrence at 701-328-1892

ND Vocational Rehabilitation agency and state council seek public comments on employment services

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the North Dakota State Rehabilitation Council are seeking public comments and suggestions on VR employment services for people with disabilities. Interested individuals are invited to a public comment meeting on Feb. 27 from 2:30 to 5 p.m. Central Time.

The meeting will originate in Bismarck at the department's Prairie Hill Plaza location at 1237 W. Divide Ave., Suite 1B, in the Prairie Rose Room, and interested individuals can also participate at video conference sites in Devils Lake, Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, Jamestown, Minot and Williston.

"North Dakota leads the nation in the employment rate of people with disabilities,"¹ said Acting VR Division Director Robyn Throlson. "However, we are striving to connect even more individuals to meaningful competitive employment. We are starting earlier by working with schools and special education districts, employers and other partners to help young people with disabilities discover their interests and talents and begin planning to reach their employment and career goals after graduation."

Throlson said the VR division also helps employers meet their workforce needs by connecting them with people who have the right abilities and training to fill job openings and providing consultation when employees experience a disability and may need an accommodation.

VR clients, employers, advocates and other interested individuals can participate in the public comment meeting from these video conference sites:

- **Devils Lake:** Lake Region Human Service Center, 200 Hwy. 2 W., East Conference Room;
- **Dickinson:** Vocational Rehabilitation office, 1674 15 St. W., Unit E, VR Conference Room;
- **Fargo:** Vocational Rehabilitation office, 1655 43rd St. S., VR Conference Room;
- **Grand Forks:** Northeast Human Service Center, 151 S. Fourth St., Ste. 401, Conference Room 5E;
- **Jamestown:** South Central Human Service Center, 520 Third St. N.W., Room 317;
- **Minot:** Vocational Rehabilitation office, 1015 S. Broadway, Ste. 21A, VR AT Lab Conference Room 105; and
- **Williston:** Northwest Human Service Center, 316 Second Ave. W., Room A200.

-MORE-

Comments sought on employment services for people with disabilities – page 2

During the 2016 Federal Fiscal Year, the department's VR professionals worked with hundreds of employers and 3,528 individuals with disabilities and helped 613 North Dakotans reach their employment goals.

Throlson said the public comments collected help shape North Dakota's state plan on Vocational Rehabilitation services, which outlines priorities. Individuals who are unable to attend the meeting, can submit written comments until 5 p.m. CST, on Feb. 28, to Kayla Conklin, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, 1237 W. Divide Ave., Suite 1B, Bismarck, N.D. 58501, kconklin@nd.gov.

Individuals who need accommodations, including auxiliary aids or other services to participate in the meeting, should contact Kayla Conklin at 701-328-8953, toll-free 800-755-2745, ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888 or kconklin@nd.gov.

Information about the department's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and its services is available online at www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/index.html or by contacting the division at 701-328-8950, toll-free 800-755-2745, ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888 or dhsvr@nd.gov.

###

¹ Kraus, L., Lauer, E., Coleman, R., and Houtenville, A. (2018). 2017 Disability Statistics Annual Report. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire.
https://disabilitycompendium.org/sites/default/files/user-uploads/AnnualReport_2017_FINAL.pdf