

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505**

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Agency reminds employers of a valuable workforce resource: people with disabilities

October is Disability Employment Awareness Month

BISMARCK, N.D. – While North Dakota ranks in the top among states for the employment of people with disabilities, the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) says there are thousands of North Dakotans who would like a chance to contribute their skills and talents to the workforce.

According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, in 2013 just over half of the 34,800 working-age adults with disabilities in North Dakota were employed.

During October, which is *Disability Employment Awareness Month*, the agency is encouraging employers to look beyond a person's disability and to contact the Vocational Rehabilitation office in their region for help filling vacant positions.

"Our goal is to help people become employed," said division director Russ Cusack. "To achieve that, we provide counseling, training and assistive technology to individuals with disabilities. We also connect businesses with prospective employees and resources to assist with on-the-job training and workplace modifications that may benefit other employees too."

During the 2015 federal fiscal year, the division helped just over 500 people with significant disabilities obtain jobs. Consultation services are available to employers at no cost.

"Vocational rehabilitation services can help businesses retain experienced employees whose abilities have changed, and can also help assure newly hired employees with different abilities are successful at work," Cusack said.

To raise awareness about the benefits of workplaces that welcome the talents of all people, Gov. Jack Dalrymple proclaimed October *Disability Employment Awareness Month*. In addition, the division recently recognized state and regional [employer of the year](#) award winners, and is distributing a public service announcement (PSA) to television broadcasters, as part of the "What Can You Do?" campaign.

The governor's [proclamation](#) and the [PSA](#), and information about vocational rehabilitation services are available online at www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/index.html.

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Cusack said collaboration with community providers, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, the Centers for Independent Living in North Dakota, and other workforce development partner agencies are key factors to the state's successful efforts to address workforce needs and to develop an inclusive high quality workforce in North Dakota.

DVR offices are located in North Dakota's eight largest communities. Local DVR office contact information is available online at www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/about/regional-contact.html.

Employers and people with disabilities can learn more about vocational rehabilitation services at <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr/index.html> or by contacting the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation at 1237 W. Divide Ave., Suite 1B in Bismarck, N.D., 58501, 701-328-8950, toll-free 800-755-2745, ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888, or dhsvr@nd.gov.

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