



Monica's Success: A Journey Powered by OVR, WIA, and Revenue & Taxation

Monica Pagdato first applied for Vocational Rehabilitation Services in 2017 while still in high school. At the time, Monica was shy and struggled with speaking to others. She knew that in order to succeed, she needed to build her self-confidence and learn how to advocate for herself.

After graduating from high school, Monica enrolled at Northern Marianas College. Although she took several college classes, she eventually decided to take a break from her studies to explore the workforce. With the support of her instructors and classmates, Monica worked hard to pass her college courses. However, she felt a strong desire to gain practical work experience.

Thanks to her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Ms. Jane Tudela, Monica secured Work Experience Training with the Division of Revenue and Taxation. From March 2021 to June 2021, she worked as a trainee, gaining valuable hands-on experience. Following that, Monica continued her growth with On-The-Job Training from September 2021 to March 2022.

Monica's supervisor praised her work ethic, and with further assistance from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), Monica received additional training to continue improving her skills. As a result, her job training extended for another year. In October 2024, Monica was hired as a full-time Revenue Taxation Trainee at the Division of Revenue and Taxation.

Throughout her journey, Monica learned valuable strategies to help her focus on tasks and not worry about making mistakes. She appreciated the consistent guidance and encouragement from her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Monica also gained confidence by collaborating with her classmates in college and her colleagues at work.

Her advice to others? "It's okay to make mistakes and not worry about them; you'll learn from them. Don't be afraid to ask questions if you don't understand the task."



MONICA PAGDATO, FORMER VR CONSUMER

OVR & DOL/WIA Partner for Professional Growth

On February 7, staff from OVR and DOL/WIA gathered at Aqua Resort for an all-day professional development event, a collaboration outlined and supported by our unified State plan. Efforts to further strengthen these partnerships are already underway. The event was cost-shared between the two agencies.





Lourdes Atalig: A Legacy of Dedication to Vocational Rehabilitation



Everyone at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), and those connected to us, knows her as “Lou.” Lourdes C. Atalig has been an indispensable part of the CNMI Vocational Rehabilitation Program since 1979. Back then, OVR was known as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), which operated under the Marianas Education Department. Lou was one of just two employees at DVR, alongside the late Manuel C. Villagomez, who served as the Chief of Vocational Rehabilitation.

In the early days of her career, Lou wore many hats—serving as a secretary, administrative assistant, and caseworker. Her exceptional time management skills were crucial in keeping the program running smoothly. Lou recalls with a chuckle, “The hardest part of the job back then was preparing all the documents using a typewriter... how I wish computers had been available sooner!”

Lou’s dedication to public service spans nearly five decades, including her time before joining DVR. Currently, she serves as OVR’s Fiscal Officer, overseeing both financial and human resources management. Her unwavering commitment has made her a cornerstone of OVR’s leadership team.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Lou for her lifetime of service and wish her continued joy, happiness, and success in the years ahead. Thank you, Lou, for everything you’ve done and continue to do for the program and the community.



Celebrating Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month



Honorable Acting Governor David M. Apatang signs the Proclamation declaring March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month on February 28, 2025 at the Saipan World Resort. Also in photo are representatives from the State Rehabilitation Council, Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.



OVR recognized its hardworking Counseling staff for their unwavering dedication and outstanding service in empowering individuals with disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment. OVR’s Case Services Unit is under the direct supervision of Ms. Rose Ann Billy-Ichuo, Case Services Manager (far right).



A unified gathering bringing together self-advocates, families, policymakers, dignitaries, employers, and key community partners. This collaborative group includes members of the State Rehabilitation Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and organizations such as the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Council on Developmental Disabilities, University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems, Inc., Center for Living Independently, Division of Youth Services, Division of Labor/Workforce Investment Agency, Special Education, and many more dedicated to supporting individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities and other disabilities achieve success.



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