OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

BASIC SUPPORT/SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (BS/SE)
INDEPENDENT LIVING OLDER BLIND PROGRAM (ILOB)
PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (PRE-ETS)

Table of Contents

03 Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Executive Director's Message

04 State Rehabilitation Council Chairperson's Message

04 State Rehabilitation Council Officers and Members

05 Executive Summary

06 Organizational Chart

07 About Us

08 Self-Employment Projects

08 Guiding Principals

08 Programs & Services

09 VR Fiscal Facts at a Glance

10 VR Data Facts at a Glance

11 VR Process & Consumer Satisfaction Survey Summary

12 Citizen Centric Report

13 Highlights

14 Making a Difference- A Success Stories

15 Community Impact

Message from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Director's Message

Hafa Adai & Tirow!

It is with excitement that I share with you the CNMI Office of the Governor-Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) 2020 Annual Report in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). This year's "Changing Face" is an apt theme for an ever-changing and improving consumer driven agency that provided a career pathway for eligible individuals with disabilities. Change is innovative and exhilarating in effectively addressing the needs of our consumers who want stable jobs with sustainable wages and employers in the CNMI who want trained, skilled and motivated employees. With the implementation of Pre-ETS for students with disabilities, the delivery of training to workforce credentials and skills training for our consumers, as well as the focus on career pathways that augment consumer earnings and eventual advancement in employment, the VR program is on a positive path!

In addition, OVR's Management Team continuously updates its case tracking system to modernize work and to relieve the technical responsibility of keeping up with changes to the federal reporting requirements. Our good office is exploring ideas and options that will include case management, a business/engagement engagement tools, electronic records retention, a participant portal, and other customized features to work effectively and efficiently.

I hope that you will take the time to review the full report that outlines our VR program performance and our activities this past year. OVR's priorities will include ensuring quality professional development training for all staff, seamless integration of OVR services within the workforce system, improving our expertise in Assistive Technology as a critical strategy access to competitive integrated employment for individuals with significant disabilities, and the continued management of resources for the benefit of our consumers and community.

The path to successful employment for our consumers remains to be a partnership between the consumer, VR counselors and employers, with services tailored to each individual's needs and their chosen employment goal. With this partnership, consumers became successfully employed, including providing the youth Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) training as they begin on their path to post-secondary education to eventual employment.

I truly appreciate the partnership, collaboration, advice and guidance provided by the committed members of our State Rehabilitation Council. I serve as ex-officio of the SRC and have personally witnessed their dedication to their responsibilities and mission, their commitment to enhance our program and their own amazing individual efforts to enhance the lives of CNMI's with disabilities.

All in all, I wish to thank the hardworking staff, the CNMI Office of the Governor, stakeholders, employers, and partners, for their hard work in support of our consumers. It's only through their efforts that CNMI OVR's mission is fulfilled.

MaryAnn Borja-Arriola
OVR Executive Director

Message from the State Rehabilitation Council Chairperson's

Hafa Adai!

It is with great pleasure that, on behalf of the members of the State Rehabilitation Council of the CNMI (SRC), I, with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVR), present this 2020 Annual Report.

2020 has been a challenging year with the onset of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. Health and safety issues challenged our ability to provide services. Adverse economic conditions challenged local businesses, decreasing employment opportunities for our consumers. Even in these unprecedented times, both the OVR and SRC have persevered and overcome these challenges in commitment to fulfilling our mission of "partnering with the CNMI workforce to ensure people with disabilities are able to obtain and maintain meaningful and satisfying employment."

I thank my fellow SRC members for their selfless dedication and continued service to supporting the OVR program. I also give my sincere appreciation to OVR Director Maryann Borja and her dedicated staff for their hard work, perseverance and innovation in carrying out the goals of the program to serve individuals with disabilities. I look forward to continuing working with all of you in the new year.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Hilma M. Persson Castro
SRC Chairperson

2020 State Rehabilitation Council Members

Irene Holl
Secretary
Business, Industry & Labor

Preston O. Basa
Vice Chairperson
Representation:
Public School System – Special Education

Emeterio Fitial
Fiscal Officer
Representation:
Former Consumer

"It is the mission of the State Rehabilitation Council to partner with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the CNMI workforce to ensure people with disabilities are able to obtain and maintain meaningful and satisfying employment."

Angel Ray Guerrero
Representation: Consumer

Irene Holl – Employment & Marketing Committee Chairperson
Representation: Business, Industry & Labor

Robert Mendiola – Transition & Assistive Technology Committee Chairperson
Representation: Advocate & Rota Representative

Julia Victoria I. Benavente – Quality Assurance & Quality Improvement Committee Chairperson
Representation: State Workforce Investment Board

Gernadine Camacho -Representation: Statewide Independent Living

Junnie Masga – Representation: Parent Training & Information Center

James Rayphand – Representation: Client Assistance Program

Jane Tudela – Representation: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Victorino S. Cepeda – Representation: Business, Industry & Labor

Janice Tenorio – Representation: Business, Industry & Labor

Linda C. Torres – Representation: Business, Industry & Labor

Chad Merfalen – Representation: Advocate

Christopher Cabrera – Representation: Advocate

Monika H. Diaz – Representation: Consumer/Tinian Representative

Maryann Borja-Arriola – Ex-Officio, Director of Office of Rehabilitation – Designated State Unit

Executive Summary 2020

Under the auspices of the CNMI Office of the Governor-Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is the Designated State Unit (DSU) that is primarily charged with providing vocational and other rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities. It is tasked to extend rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment. Further, OVR provides direct services to people with disabilities in order to promote independent living, skill development and eventual employment.

OVR employ staff whose purpose is to manage program planning, conduct staff development and assess facility development, including support staff to assist program participants in understanding the rehabilitation process, applying and receiving services.

The Executive Director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is responsible for the administration and all other provisions of the law relating to the functions of OVR. This includes the preparation of a consolidated State Plan, which serves as the basis for CNMI's operation and administration of the VR programs comprised of: 1) Basic Support/Supported Employment (BS/SE), 2) Independent Living for Older Blind (ILOB), and 3) Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Additionally, the Executive Director is responsible to conduct employer/business outreach activities on all three islands of Saipan, Rota and Tinian, develops innovative plans and activities that build relationships with employers, community groups, faith-based organizations, non-profits, and government agencies, as well as incorporates accommodations into employer communications to maximize consumer employment opportunities for all.

Our envisions of the CNMI as a "true tropical island paradise of the Marianas", a place where there is no discrimination or fear, abide by our guiding principles helping individuals with disabilities achieved their vocational dreams for a brighter future. Our qualified VR staff, community service providers, and employers support individuals with disabilities compete equally for employment with persons without disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are recognized not for their disabilities, but abilities. Individuals with disabilities are respected, accepted, valued, active, independent, included in family and social events, and integrated in all aspects of an island community environment.

OVR met with U.S Army Colonel Harry Blanco, Field Representative from the CNMI Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) to discuss potential federal grant opportunities for OVR. Grant opportunities, such as Technical Assistance Program & Maintenance Assistance Program, would help expand OVR's services while upholding OIA's mission is to foster economic opportunities, promote government efficiency, and improve the quality of life for the people of the insular areas.

Delta Management Owner Jim Arenovski and Operations Manager Mr. Ephrem Gaangin of met with OVR and conducted successful interviews for OVR consumers hoping to participate in Work Experience Trainings (WET) and On-the-job (OTJ) trainings with Delta Management.

OVR attended ribbon-cutting to celebrate the opening of the Division of Youth Services (DYS) Kagman Branch where we conducted outreach to share more information with attendees about OVR's programs and services.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

2020 Organizational Chart

Office of the Governor
Honorable Ralph DLG. Torres, Governor
Honorable Arnold I. Palacios, Lieutenant Governor

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Executive Director
Maryann Borja-Arriola

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

Fiscal Officer
Lourdes Atalig

Planner
Tiava Dolores A. To'omata

Case Service Manager
Caroline Agulto

Administrative Operations Specialist
Arlene Reyes

Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinator
Samuel Santos

VR Counselor 1
Jane Tudela

VR Counselor 1
Rose Ann Ichiuo

VR Counselor 1
Shana Iguel

ILOB Case Worker Assistant
Jemmie Agulto

VR Counselor Aide
Vvica Kaipat

VR Counselor Aide
Elvira Seman

Data Analyst
Magdalene Reyes

Admin. Clerk/ A.T. Assistant
McQueen Hiroichi

Pre-ETS Assistant
Klein Lizama

About Us

Vision

The vision of OVR is that individuals with disabilities are employed in competitive and integrated work settings, are empowered to make qualified decisions and informed choices, and are economically self-sufficient.

Mission

The mission of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is to increase employment and promote independence among eligible individuals with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Core Values

We value...

- People with disabilities who wish to be employed, their families and other support systems that are willing to help them realize their dream of meaningful employment and increased independence.
- The provision of appropriate vocational rehabilitation services.
- The prompt and efficient delivery of vocational rehabilitation services.
- The belief that disability is a natural part of the human experiences.
- The belief in the consumer's right to full participation in the development of his/her vocational rehabilitation program.

Philosophy

"We recognize and respect the contributions of all individuals as a necessary and vital part of a productive society."

Self-Employment Projects

2020 PROGRAM GOALS

Virgie's Dress Shop, Saipan

World Enterprise dba Ground Maintenance, Rota

The CNMI has a thriving entrepreneurial economy for start-ups, and self-employment can offer a pathway to economic independence and self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. Three Counselors who assist in self-employment in collaboration with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) on topics related to successful entrepreneurship, such as business plan structure, tax requirements, poster ads, business sign, zoning permit, business license and social media presence. They were five business plans were considered over the past year, with three moving forward in the self-employment process. OVR supported consumer to develop successful businesses on three inter-islands in a variety of markets, including: Virgie's Dress Shop (Saipan), Tito's Tents & Tables Rental (Saipan), World Enterprises DBA Ground Maintenance (Rota), Sweet Fix Ice-Cream Shop and Lani's Kitchen (Saipan).

Self-employment is work done for a profit in individual's own business, profession or trade. The eligible consumer takes personal responsibility for all business decisions and activities, including services rendered, hours of operations, employee services, pricing, purchasing of equipment, tools & supplies. It is an array of employment settings available to the consumers developing a plan to accomplish his/her vocational goal. The VR consumer has ownership and directly operates the business, managing all or most aspects of the operation.

The decision to commit VR funds in support of self-employment is based on variety of factors, including but not limited to business plan, potential for obtaining supporting resources (financial and non-financial, startup costs and financial projections.

In FY 2020, OVR approved and funded 5 business plans with VR grant dollars. Amounts varied and exceeded over $50,000.

CNMI Office of the Governor-Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Guiding Principles:

- Serving our consumers is the primary focus of everything we do to enhance their vocational goals.
- Informed choice is essential to sound decision-making and allows decisions to be based on all relevant information, options, and consequences.
- All people have value regardless of age, race, creed, color, gender, or disability.
- Collaborative partnerships with employers are indispensable to our success.
- Good communication is essential to delivering quality rehabilitation services.
- Quality outcomes are a result of the commitment of consumers and qualified staff working together towards mutually agreed upon goals.
- Effective partnerships are critical in achieving results for consumers.
- When all things are equal, legal, and based on good rehabilitation counseling, decisions will be made in favor of the consumer.
- Change is inevitable and provides opportunities for innovation and creativity.

Programs & Services

No-Cost Services To Businesses - These services include professional training and consultation on employing individuals with disabilities, meeting their needs through reasonable accommodations, and complying with relevant regulations. This program also includes funding to pay for on-the-job (OTJ) training of OVR consumers.

Services to Individuals and Veterans with Disabilities (SIVD) - There is an array of services available to which include vocational guidance and career counseling, access to rehabilitative technology and services, job placement, and other training services.

Independent Living Older Blind Program (ILOB) - This program provides independent living services to individuals with visual impairment (20/70 in the better eye) aged 55 years and older to assist them in maintaining their independence at home and in their communities.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PreETS) - PreETS is provided to students with disabilities who are (1) between the ages of 16-21 years and (2) enrolled in high school receiving Special Education Services, college, or any other educational program.

Services include job exploration and transition counseling, work readiness training, and instruction on self-advocacy.

Independent Living Services (ILS) - The ILS program grant is funded through the Administration for Community Living. This provides resources that support the work of the State Independent Living Council (SILC) and activities reflected in the approved State Plan for Independent Living.

VR Fiscal Facts at a Glance

FEDERAL & STATE APPROPRIATIONS
FISCAL YEAR 2020
SOURCE OF FUNDS
TOTAL: $1,263,362.00

1. **Title I – Basic Support Program**
   (Requires State match of 21.3%)
   Carry-over FY2019: $240,384
   FY 2020: $873,491
2. **Title VII-A – Independent Living/Older Blind**
   Carry-over FY2019: $36,927
   FY 2020: $40,000
3. **Title VII-B – Independent Living Services**
   Carry-over FY2019: $10,303
   FY 2020: $30,737
4. **CNMI State Funds: $31,520**

Expenses FY 2020	
Administration & Operation	374,964
Counseling & Guidance	193,399
State Rehabilitation Council	6,731
Statewide Independent Living Council	16,390

Case Services	
• Employment Goals	202,420
• Pre-Employment Transition Services	111,217
• Independent Living/Older Blind	51,295
• Independent Living goals	19,210

Indirect Costs	82,598

CASE SERVICES SUMMARY EXPENDITURES

Basic Support/Supported Employment

Services	Expenses
Assessment	8,615
Diagnosis and Treatment of Impairments	691
Junior & Community College Training	30,814
Occupational & Vocational Training	2,846
Job Readiness Training	14,395
On-the-Job Training	28,770
Interpreter	4,456
Transportation	6,909
Maintenance	10,951
Rehabilitation Technology	83,433
Personal Attendant	885
Others	9,655
TOTAL BS/SE CASE SERVICE EXPENDITURES	**202,420**

Pre-Employment Transition Services	
Required Activities	**Expenses**
Job Exploration Counseling	47,222
Work-based Learning Experience	833
Workplace Readiness Training	35,000
Counseling on Opportunities for Enrollment in Comprehensive Transition or Postsecondary Education Program	15,000
Self-Advocacy	12,000
Total required activities	**110,055**
Other Activities	
Authorized Activities	156
Coordination Activities	1,006
Total Other Activities	**1,162**
Grand Total All Activities	**111,217**

Independent Living/Older Blind	
Services	**Expenses**
Case Services	13,974
Caseworker Assistant (salary/operations)	37,321
Total ILOB Expenditures	**51,295**

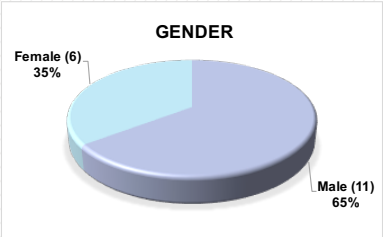
Independent Living Expenditures (DHHS,ACL)	
Services	**Expenses**
Case Services	19,210
Total ILOB Expenditures	**19,210**

"Nothing excites us at OVR more than reaching people who may avail to our services!"

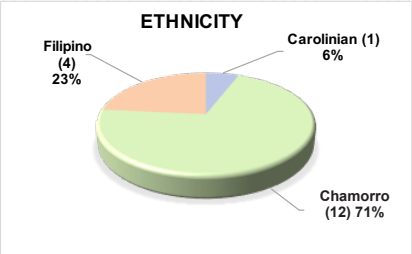
VR Data Facts at a Glance

Consumer Successful Employment (ST-26) Demographics

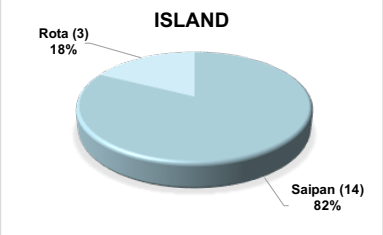
Gender	Total:
Male (11)	11
Female (6)	6
Grand Total:	**17**



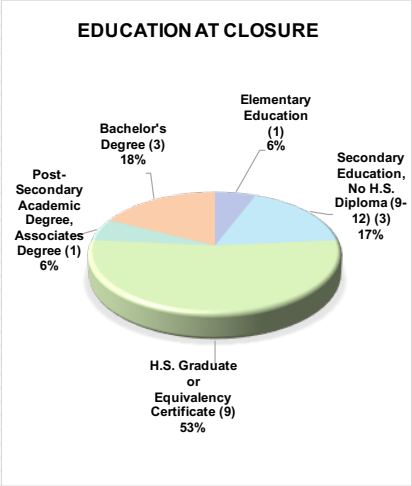
Ethnicity	Total
Carolinian (1)	1
Chamorro (12)	12
Filipino (4)	4
Grand Total:	**17**



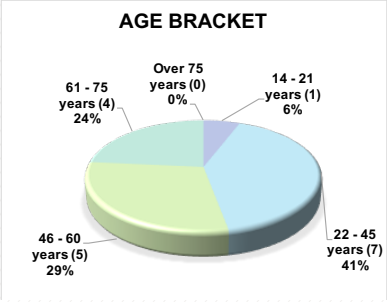
Island	Total:
Saipan (14)	14
Rota (3)	3
Grand Total:	**17**



Education at Closure	Total
Elementary Education (1)	1
Secondary Education, No H.S. Diploma (9-12) (3)	3
H.S. Graduate or Equivalency Certificate (9)	9
Post-Secondary Academic Degree, Associates Degree (1)	1
Bachelor's Degree (3)	3
Grand Total:	**17**

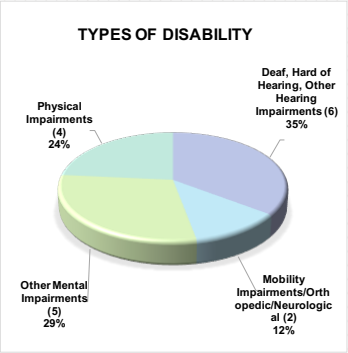


Age Bracket	Total
14 - 21 years (1)	1
22 - 45 years (7)	7
46 - 60 years (5)	5
61 - 75 years (4)	4
Over 75 years (0)	0
Grand Total:	**17**

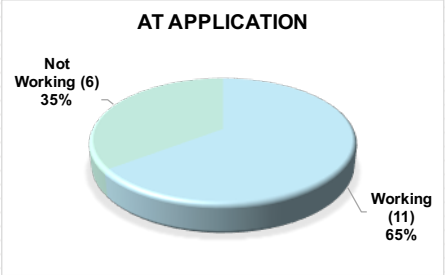


Caseload Service Summary

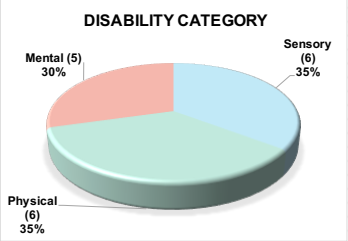
Types of Disability	Total
Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Other Hearing Impairments (6)	6
Mobility Impairments/Orthopedic/Neurological (2)	2
Other Mental Impairments (5)	5
Physical Impairments (4)	4
Grand Total:	**17**



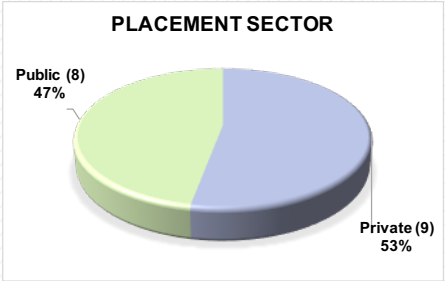
At Application	Total:
Working (11)	11
Not Working (6)	6
Grand Total:	**17**



Disability Category	Total:
Sensory (6)	6
Physical (6)	6
Mental (5)	5
Grand Total:	**17**



Placement Sector	Total:
Private (9)	9
Public (8)	8
Grand Total:	**17**



The Vocational Rehabilitation Process & Choices in the Process

STEP 1 — Eligibility

Criteria

An applicant is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services if

1. Is an individual with a disability, and
2. Has a physical or mental impairment which for such individual constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and can benefit in terms of an employment outcome fro vocational rehabilitation services, and
3. Requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, or retain employment: and
4. Has legal status to allow employment in the CNMI or the United States.

Choices

Bring you disability information to VR or sign release form so VR can get disability records.

Ask VR to pay for a disability evaluation if you do not have complete or current disability information.

Timeframe: 60-days

STEP 2 — Gather Info on Jobs & Disabilities.

Questions to Answer

- Do you know what types of jobs match your skills?
- Do you know if those jobs are available where you plan to live and work?
- If you receive disability benefits, will your job goal pay enough to replace your benefits?
- If you cannot work full-time, will your job goal jeopardize your benefit
- How can the limitations caused by your disability be addressed?
- Do you need your disability assessed by an expert who can answer those questions?

Choices

Find the answers to these questions and share them with your VR Counselor.

Work with your VR Counselor to find the answers.

Select service providers who can help you find the answers.

STEP 3 — Individualized Plan for Employment

The Plan & Your VR Services

You and VR need to agree on the Individualized Plan for Employment. You need to agree on your job goal and what you and VR need to do to reach your employment goal.

Questions to Answer

- What will you need to address the limitations of your disability?
- What will you do to learn the skills for your job goal (ex. Schooling, work experience, on-the-job training)?
- Do you need new assessments to answer these questions?

Choices

Write the Plan with VR help, by yourself, or with help from someone else.

Work with your VR Counselor to find the answers.

Select services providers who can help you find the answers.

Timeframe: 60-days

STEP 4 — Employment & Follow-up

Seeking Employment

You are ready to apply for jobs or change jobs if your current job is not suited to your skills.

- Do you know how to use community resources (e.g., Department of Labor,Workforce Investment Agency, Office of Personnel Management, private HRs, etc.) to find jobs?
- Do you need job placement assistance?

Job Follow-up_ Activities

When you are hired, keep in touch with VR to let your VR Counselor know how it is going.

If you find there are things you cannot do on the job, contact your VR Counselor right away.

Choices

You can discuss any job-related issues or concerns with your VR Counselor and come up with solutions during the job follow-up phase before case closure.

Timeframe: 90-days

STEP 5 — Closure of VR Services

When Active VR Services Stop, Your VR File is Closed.

VR should not close your case until you and your VR Counselor discuss it.
If you cannot be reached, VR will close your case. This allows VR to serve other people in their open and active caseload.

Reasons to Close Your Case

- Achieved an employment outcome.
- No longer interested in receiving services or further services.
- Unable to locate or contact.
- Unavailable to participate in a VR program for an indefinite or considerable period of time.

Choices

You can reapply to VR at any time. Your VR case will be closed when you are successfully employed or when you are not able to actively work on reaching your job goal.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey Summary

CNMI Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
Consumer Satisfaction Survey - Phase I ILOB
Results for Fiscal Year 2020 (10/01/2019 to 09/30/2020)

TIMELINESS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

		Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:
1	The orientation and materials were easy to understand.	40	1	0	41
		98%	2%	0%	100%
2	The OVR staff was easy to contact.	41	0	0	41
		100%	0%	0%	100%
3	The OVR staff treated me in a professional manner.	41	0	0	41
		100%	0%	0%	100%
4	My questions were answered clearly and quickly.	41	0	0	41
		100%	0%	0%	100%
5	I understand what OVR can do for me.	40	1	0	41
		98%	2%	0%	100%

QUALITY OF SERVICES

		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
6	Please rate the quality of services you received from OVR.	31	8	2	0	0	41
		76%	20%	5%	0%	0%	100%
7	75	31	9	1	0	0	41
		76%	22%	2%	0%	0%	100%
8	Please rate the accessibility of the OVR facilities.	23	8	2	0	8	41
		56%	20%	5%	0%	20%	100%
9	Please rate the chance of you recommending OVR services to someone else.	32	8	1	0	0	41
		78%	20%	2%	0%	0%	100%

NOTE: 41 out of 55 (75%) Applicants participated in the ILOB Phase I Survey.

CNMI Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
Consumer Satisfaction Survey - Phase I
Results for Fiscal Year 2020 (October 01, 2019 to September 30, 2020)

TIMELINESS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

		Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:
1	The Orientation started on time.	101	2	1	104
		97%	2%	1%	100%
2	The presentation was easy to understand.	103	1	0	104
		99%	1%	0%	100%
3	The OVR staff was easy to contact.	103	0	1	104
		99%	0%	1%	100%
4	The OVR staff treated me in a professional manner.	104	0	0	104
		100%	0%	0%	100%
5	The OVR staff was responsive in answering my questions and concerns.	103	0	1	104
		99%	0%	1%	100%
6	I know what services OVR offers and how to apply for those services.	102	1	1	104
		98%	1%	1%	100%

QUALITY OF SERVICES

		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
7	Please rate the quality of services you received from OVR.	86	12	1	0	5	104
		83%	12%	1%	0%	5%	100%
8	Please rate the courtesy and respect you received from the OVR staff.	91	10	2	0	1	104
		88%	10%	2%	0%	1%	100%
9	Please rate the accessibility of the OVR facilities.	74	14	0	0	16	104
		71%	13%	0%	0%	15%	100%
10	Please rate the chance of you recommending OVR services to someone else.	91	11	1	0	1	104
		88%	11%	1%	0%	1%	100%

NOTE: 104 out of 106 (98%) Applicants participated in the Phase I Survey (October 01, 2019 to September 30, 2020).

CNMI Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
Consumer Satisfaction Survey - Phase II (ST26)
Results for Fiscal Year 2020 (October 01, 2019 to September 31, 2020)

SERVICES

		Yes	No	No. Ans.	Total:
1	I felt the OVR staff was respectful and helpful.	7	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	100%
2	My VR plan for services was based on my skills and abilities.	7	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	100%
3	I received services that I needed.	7	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	100%
4	I benefited from services that I received.	7	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	100%
5	Services were provided in a timely manner.	7	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	100%
6	I am satisfied with the quality of services I received from OVR.	7	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	100%

QUALITY OF SERVICES

		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
7	The ability to reach my counselor or another OVR staff member within one business day.	7	0	0	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
8	My counselor's ability to clearly explain services available to me.	7	0	0	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
9	My counselor's ability in listening to my needs and concerns.	7	0	0	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
10	My counselor's ability in involving me in making decisions about the services I needed.	6	1	0	0	0	7
		86%	14%	0%	0%	0%	100%
11	My counselor's ability in involving me in choosing service providers.	7	0	0	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
12	The services in helping me get or keep a job.	7	0	0	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
13	Your counselor's overall performance in assisting you.	7	0	0	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
14	The quality of services you received from OVR.	6	1	0	0	0	7
		86%	14%	0%	0%	0%	100%
15	The chance of you recommending OVR services to someone else.	7	0	0	0	0	7
		100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%

NOTES: 7 out of 17 (41%) Consumers after successful closure participated in the Phase II Survey. Phase II survey is administered after Successful Closure (ST26).

Citizen Centric Report 2020

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

A REPORT TO OUR CITIZENS

FISCAL YEAR 2020

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is a State and Federal partnership agency, placed within the Office of the Governor, that provides services to individuals with disabilities in the CNMI. The OVR was established in 1975 and serves the three major islands of the Commonwealth: Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

WHAT'S INSIDE

About OVR 1
Programs Offered 2
Data & Finances 3
Successes & Needs 4

Mission

OVR's mission is to increase employment and promote independence among eligible individuals with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

Vision

The vision of OVR is that individuals with disabilities are employed in competitive and integrated work settings, are empowered to make qualified decisions and informed choices, and are economically self-sufficient.

OVR Executive Director's Message

Welcome to the CNMI Office of the Governor-Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). Our staff of more than 13 employees is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with disabilities through meaningful employment, community integration and independent living. We serve clients through several programs, which include: Basic Support/Supported Employment (BS/SE), Independent Living for Older Blind (ILOB), Pre-Employment Transition Services, and Self-Employment.

At OVR, we don't just want to help you get a job, we want to also help you plan and achieve a satisfying career path. Every job seeker has unique needs, skills and challenges, so we adapt our services to meet those needs, build out skills, and address those challenges. Services can include assessment, helping you to figure out what you really want to do, talking about your goals and barriers to finding employment, and assistance for purchasing items related to work.

For more than four decades, our services to people with disabilities in the CNMI have resulted in countless lives improved, dreams realized, and accomplishments achieved. Although we have made great strides toward providing equal employment opportunities, much work remains to be done. As part of this continuing effort, we encourage businesses to increase access and opportunities for workers with disabilities, support disability inclusion in the workplace and understand the values that people with disabilities bring to the workforce. No person should face unnecessary barriers to success, and no person with a disability should be limited in their desire to work.

Regardless of which program serves you, excellence is a promise we will work hard to fulfill every day. Thank you for visiting and allowing us to serve you.

Our website is a starting place to learn more about our program and services. Please contact us at 322-6537/38 or email maryann@ovrgov.net, if you or someone you know is in need of our services.

PROGRAMS OFFERED

No-Cost Services For Businesses

- Consultations regarding reasonable job accommodations for a newly hired employee or one who has acquired a disability.
- Disability Employment Training, such as Disability Awareness, Sensitivity Training, Americans with Disabilities Act (Title I-Employment), etc. Training can be customized to meet the needs of businesses.
- Recruitment and retention of qualified job applicants/employees with disabilities.

Funding for work experience training (WET) & on-the-job (OJT) is available to employers through OVR to help off-set the cost for providing training to an OVR consumer.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Pre-ETS is provided to students with disabilities who meet the following:

1. Between the ages of 16-21 years.
2. Enrolled in high school and is receiving Special Education Services, or is in college, or participating in another educational program.

Pre-ETS services include:

- Job exploration counseling.
- Work-based learning experiences.
- Counseling on postsecondary (college) options.
- Work readiness training.
- Instruction on self-advocacy.

Services to Individuals and Veterans with Disabilities

Services may include a combination of the following:

- Vocational guidance and career counseling.
- Restoration (physical/mental).
- Vocational and other training services.
- Rehabilitation technology, including assistive technological services, assistive technology devices, and rehabilitation engineering.
- Job placement into suitable employment.
- Occupational tools and equipment.
- Personal assistance services such as personal attendant, interpreter, reader and scribe.

There is a financial needs test at OVR, so you may be required to contribute to the cost of some services.

Independent Living Older Blind Program (ILOB)

Our ILOB Program provides independent living services to individuals with visual impairment (20/60 in the better eye, with corrections) aged 55 years and older to assist them in maintaining their independence at home and in their communities.

Services are individualized and cater to the specific needs and Independent Living (IL) goals of the individual.

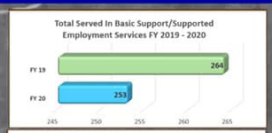
INDEPENDENCE is the goal!

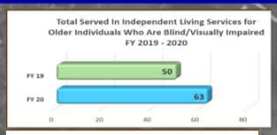
Independent Living Services (ILS)

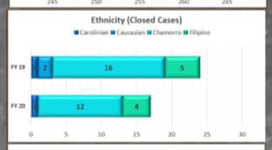
The ILS program grant is funded through the Administration for Community Living, and provides resources that supports the work of the State Independent Living Council (SILC) as well as provides funds for activities reflected in the approved State Plan for Independent Living. Funds are allocated, through a contract, to the Center for Living Independently (CLI) to provide Independent Living Services to people with disabilities in the CNMI. CLI is required to provide five core services.

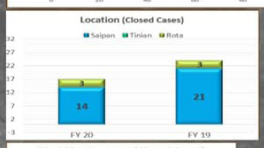
1. Information & referrals.
2. Independent living skills training.
3. Peer counseling.
4. Individual & systems advocacy.
5. Transition from institutions or postsecondary life.

DATA REPORT

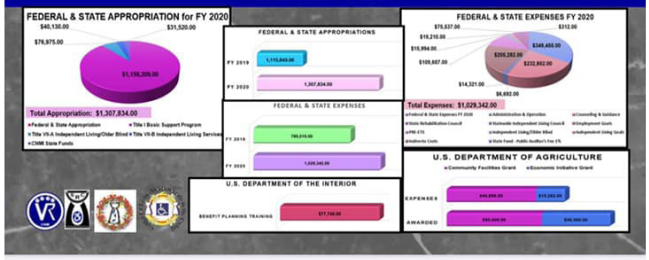




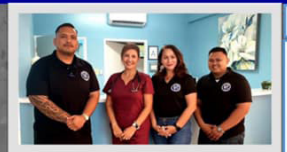




FINANCES



SUCCESSES & NEEDS



WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

Consistent with OVR goals and priorities, the program will continue to promote competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities in our community. Our biggest successes of FY 2020 include:

- United States Department of Agriculture Community Facilities Grant Award in the amount of $50,000.
- United States Department of Agriculture Economic Impact Grant Award in the amount of $36,000.
- Office of Insular Affairs Benefit Training Program Grant in the amount of $77,745
- Completion of the WIOA tri-annual Unified State Plan.
- Fully serving all three islands of the CNMI for VR Services
- Self-Employment for consumers have been launched with more to come.

Completions of grants for:

- Training of OVR staff in becoming Certified Benefits Planners.
- Obtaining a vehicle for Counseling Services

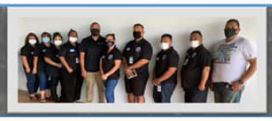
IDENTIFIED NEEDS

The 2017-2020 Unified State Plan utilized information gathered in our 2017 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) to help inform the development of OVR's Unified State Plan.

The CNMI OVR will continue its efforts to maintain or develop cooperative arrangements or agreements with various local, State, Federal agencies and entities for referrals, training, services, facilities utilization, potential cost-sharing, and advocacy activities.

Itemized below are a few of the needs of individuals with disabilities and the recommendations offered to OVR based on the results of the CSNA:

- The need for work incentive counseling and benefits planning remains a major need in CNMI. OVR needs to ensure that all SSA beneficiaries, especially young people, have access to benefits planning so that they can help counter the fear of benefits loss through work.
- OVR should continue to try and develop individual service providers to provide common service needs like job placement and job coaching.
- The Pre-Employment Transition Services program needs to be marketed to students and parents so that they are familiar with the possible activities and the purpose of the program.
- OVR and the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) program should target a set number of co-enrolled individuals with disabilities to share funding for training and employment services. The concept of shared or braided funding is viewed positively by both organizations, but it was difficult to identify any concrete examples of this in CNMI.
- In order to increase the level of direct service to Tinian and Rota, the core partners should consider cost-sharing for an employee that can be paid by the Mayor's office and each agency could share a percentage of the individual's salary and allocate that percentage of work time for the program accordingly.



For more information contact us at: (670) 322-6537/8 www.ovrgov.net email: maryann@ovrgov.net

Highlights 2020

OVR partnered with Tinian's DPS officers for Job Shadowing opportunities for our Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) students. In this program students with disabilities ages 16 – 21 avail to the various opportunities in the workforce such as Job Shadowing. The staff at Tinian DPS showed the ropes to the students on the day-to-day operations of DPS and their respective divisions. The students were able to spend the entire day experiencing first-hand how it is like to be a public safety official.

Taro Sue Inc. is one of OVR's proud business partners as they have hired a Full-Time Employee and has continuously offered positions for OVR's Work Experience Training (WET) Program and On-The-Job Training (OJT.) Our consumers are able to train in the various positions in Taro Sue Inc. such as being a stocker, store clerk and administrative clerk. We look forward to our continued partnership and for more businesses to be open minded to hiring and training people with disabilities.

With months of hard work, OVR has garnered a new office vehicle! This vehicle was funded from the USDA Community Facilities Grant sought out by OVR. With this vehicle, we are able to visit new businesses and employers to advocate for more jobs for the disability community as well as conduct necessary administrative work that supports our efforts to serve our consumers!

As a part of our 2020 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), OVR has been conducting outreach about our Work Experience Training (WET) Program that helps OVR clients learn basic skills in employment as they transition with success. To help service their business and the disability community, Kinpachi has agreed to open up WET positions for OVR consumers. We commend Kinpachi for believing in our mission to create more professional opportunities for people with disabilities!

Making a Difference

A Success Stories:

Virginia Camacho

Mrs. Virginia Camacho came to OVR to avail VR Services as her former employer advised her to inquire if she can get a prosthesis and return back to her job as a Seamstress. The outcome was unclear for her to go back to work after having one of her leg amputated. However, along the way, it led her to thinking about to better serve the community with creativity by designing clothes. The process of applying for VR services was very tedious, but with perseverance, Mrs. Virginia found herself opening and running a small business call Virgie's Dress Shop. At one point, Mrs. Virginia wanted to forget about the idea, but she prevailed with assurance from different people who played a role in supporting her self-employment and making her goals become a reality.

Virgie's Dress Shop is located in the beautiful village of San Roque. You will find Mrs. Virginia at her sewing machine peeking out the window as cars and pedestrians pass by. Her tailoring is a perfection in a unique way since she is credited to unique curtains, wedding dresses, pants, masks, purses, and repair old clothes, which might find themselves serve as rags, but Ms. Virginia gave them a second chance in life. Speaking of rags, Mrs. Virginia is an example of how riches comes within. "Never let your disability take over your life or pull you down, but rise above and find your own niche," as one of Mrs. Virginia's friend would constantly remind her when she faced the reality of using a wheel chair. Remember, Virgie's Dress Shop is the place to see and Virgie will make you smile after getting your perfect clothes.

Mr. Rodolfo Lenon has been employed with the Pacific Biomedical Services, Inc. as an Electrical Specialist since February 2009. In the duration of his employment, Mr. Lenon started experiencing difficulties with his hearing and soon became an issue with communicating with others. He was referred by a friend to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) on May 14, 2019. He was seeking VR assistance through a diagnostic hearing evaluation and hearing aids.

Mr. Lenon, was sent for a diagnostic hearing evaluation in which he met the VR eligibility criteria to receive VR services. After discussing, developing and completing his IPE, Mr. Lenon received his hearing aids. Since then, he's been able to perform his essential duties and maintain employment. Mr. Lenon's case was successfully closed on February 10, 2020. A quarterly check-in is done to follow-up with the individual's employment status. After being successfully closed, it is humbling to share that Mr. Rodolfo Lenon continues to maintain his employment with Pacific Biomedical Services, Inc

Rodolfo Lenon

Jonder Aisek

Jonder Aisek applied for VR Services on September 13, 2017 seeking to obtain employment and was determined eligible two months thereafter. He received services such as Counseling & Guidance, Job Search, Job placement, work apparel, back support and received his On-the-Job Training (OJT) at Taro Sue Corp. from March 09, 2020 to September 09, 2020. Jonder was able to land himself a Full-Time Employment (FTE) after completing 6 months of his On-the-Job Training. He excelled during his training and was well like by the employer and colleagues. Hard work and commitment paid off for Jonder as he maintains his full time employment at Taro Sue.

Community Impact 2020

OVR Trash Pick-Up Project 2020: The OVR Staff gave back to our island home by picking up trash in Tanapag, north of the Cemetery from Santa Remedios Rd. - Leenwoong Wy. An entire morning and afternoon was spent beautifying this illegal dumping area with 3 trailers full of trash being transported to the community dumping site. We look forward to more projects like these to help keep our Marianas clean and safe!

OVR held its first-ever International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPWD) celebration. Through our various partnering government, private and non-profit agencies and our hardworking Director and Staff, this event was made possible and successful. We look forward to hosting this annually in 2021.

Rota Mayor Efraim Atalig and his cabinet members for hosting a round table to discuss many of OVR's programs and explain the criteria to qualify for OVR services. OVR presented and explained just how important it is to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to learn while on the job, and asked for continued partnership as we ensure that all people on Rota, regardless of ability, have equal access to employment opportunities.

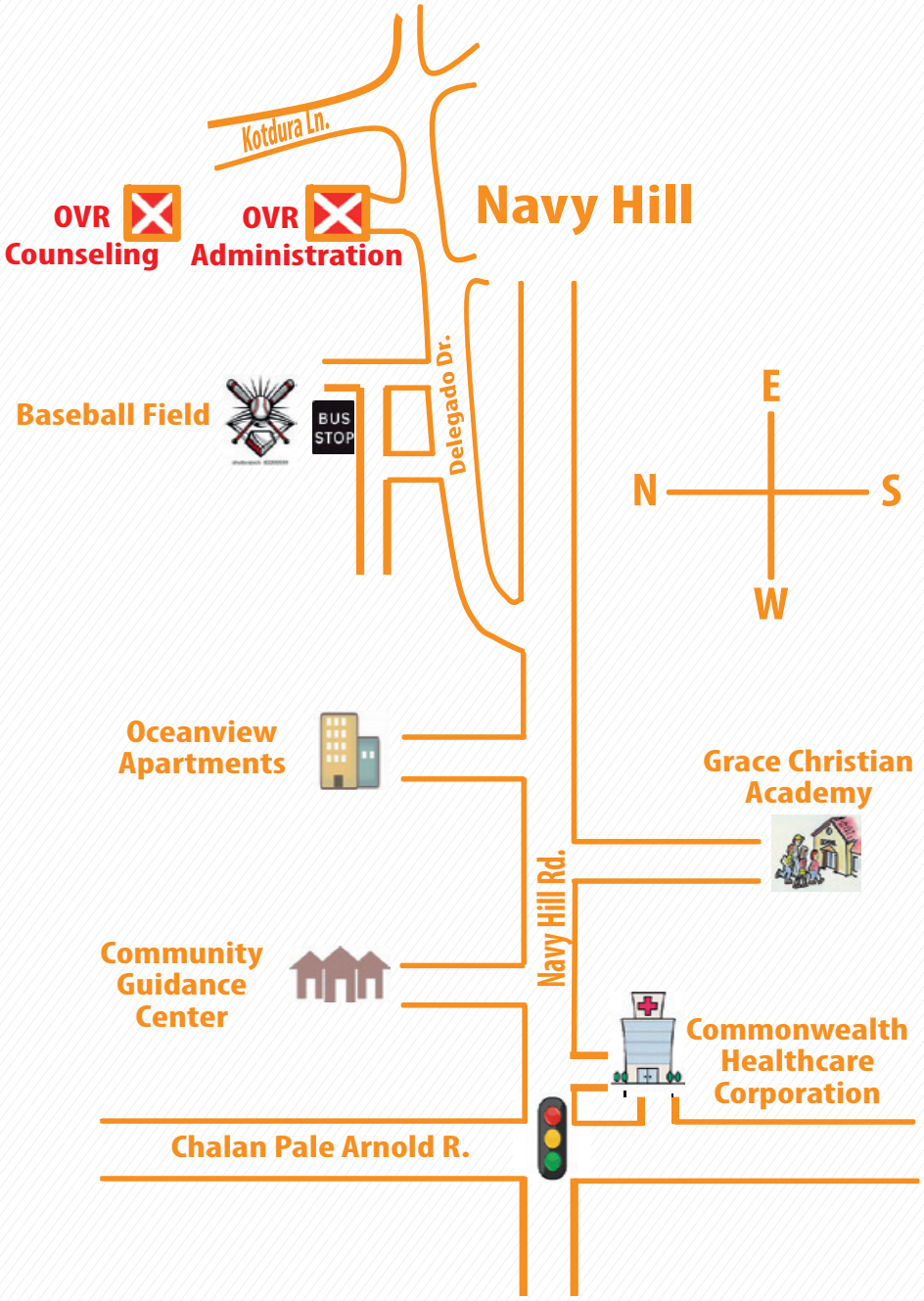
Team OVR joined fellow government agencies, nonprofits, businesses, and community groups in beautifying our beaches on International Coastal Clean-up Day at Tank Beach! According to the 501c3 nonprofit Ocean Conservancy, "The International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) began more than 30 years ago, when communities rallied together with the common goal of collecting and documenting the trash littering their coastline." Locally spearheaded by the CNMI Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality-Division of Coastal Resources Management (BECQ DCRM), OVR was proud to be one of many groups to help beautify our island on ICC!

OVR was interviewed by First Lady Diann Torres for a webinar that is featured on the Lady Diann Torres Foundation (LDTF) Facebook Page. During the discussion, the OVR Team shared several challenges around providing services during the pandemic, how OVR overcame those challenges, and how OVR is continuing to expand its outreach to best serve the disability community.

The Rotary Club of Saipan extended an invitation for OVR as their special guest presenters in their monthly meeting. During this presentations, OVR was able to advocate and promote their programs and for people with disabilities to all Rotary members, officers and affiliates, who are comprised of various private, public and non-profit agencies.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation



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