



CNMI OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

2021 Annual Report



STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

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MESSAGE FROM OVR DIRECTOR



If you want to be happy, do something for yourself. If you want to feel fulfilled, do something for someone else.

– Simon Sinek

Hafa Adai yan Tirow!

It is with joy and honor that I present the CNMI Office of the Governor - Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) 2021 Annual Report, which is brought to you in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). There is no doubt that this year was not without its unique challenges, but it is precisely these obstacles that has driven us to come up with innovative ways to develop our services for people with disabilities here in our Commonwealth in a way that is transparent, ethical, and in alignment with the policies and procedures we have in place as guided by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) regulations.

This year's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) theme, "America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion" invites us to reflect on the importance of ensuring that people with disabilities have full access to employment and are involved in the life of our community, especially as we stride towards recovering from the COVID-19 Pandemic. Having assumed the role of Executive Director in April of this year, it has been, and it will always be my goal to further develop our partnership with the various entities, sectors, and businesses here in our community. It is through these engaging and productive partnerships that we are given an opportunity to conduct professional developments and training so that our partners are aware of the proper etiquette and best practices when working alongside people with disabilities. This is our agency's effort to take part in breaking the barriers that hinder people with disabilities from being successful, independent, and productive stakeholders of our Commonwealth. Thus, this annual report seeks to highlight OVR's purpose: that we are an agency on a mission to help increase employment and promote independence among eligible individuals with disabilities

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MESSAGE FROM OVR DIRECTOR

throughout the CNMI. It is with this mission in mind that we are driven to realize our vision of having people with disabilities to be employed in competitive and integrated workplace settings, and that they are empowered to make qualified decisions, informed choices, and that they are economically self-sufficient.

Whether big or small, the impact we make is a stride towards acceptance. I believe that establishing a disability-inclusive workplace culture, as well as meeting our agency's diversity, inclusion and accessibility goals we will be able to further assist our consumers in reaching their vocational goals. We look forward to further our engagements with our partners, establish new business partnerships and community resources with much anticipation.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge and express my sincere gratitude to the members of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), and the Disability Network Partners (DNP), the CNMI Office of the Governor, and our partners in the government, as well as in the private sectors, all of whom has allowed us to fulfill our goals and vision as an agency. Our collaborative partnership continues to pave a way for us to cultivate a culture of acceptance here in our Commonwealth that goes beyond simply being aware. Their continued support towards our initiatives is an expression of their confidence towards our agency, which is both humbling and motivating for us to further our efforts and work.

And finally, to the hard working and resilient OVR Team, my closest collaborators, without whom nothing we have achieved would be possible. To Arlene Yamagata our Case Services Manager and Lourdes Atalig, our Fiscal Officer your guidance and support is wholeheartedly appreciated. To each and every single staff of our small agency who has, in one way or another, contributed to the successes we have achieved thus far, and those that are to come. I thank each of them for their unwavering dedication, support, and flexibility and bringing on the best in each other. Their openness to accept change, and their drive to go above and beyond the standards is an assurance for me that OVR is committed to staying on the right track in fulfilling its mission and realizing its vision. Until then, I am,

Sincerely yours,

ARLENE M. REYES
OVR Director

MESSAGE FROM OVR CASE SERVICES MANAGER



I am humbled to have been asked to write an inspirational message. I can't promise that my message will be inspirational, but I can promise you that the words you are reading now are coming from the heart.

It is such a privilege to be back at OVR and working with a great team under the auspicious leadership of our Director, Ms. Arlene M. Reyes. She was able to assemble a team that is just right for the times. This team that I am talking about believes in the abilities of people with disabilities first and foremost. This team believes in working together in harmony to support the agency's mission, vision, and values. And this team is happy to work diligently and creatively within the bounds set by policy, rules, and regulations.

An organization that values its staff and the unique contributions each one brings to the table is an organization that I am proud to be a part of. Of course, any day can bring about various challenges, but if we are all guided by the values of dignity and respect for each other then any challenge can be overcome and any task achieved. At OVR, we are grateful to the many people that continue to add to its steady growth and success. You know who you are. Smile.

Now to the annual report. It is our sincere hope that through this report you will come to appreciate the work that we do at OVR. May the highlights and the data presented in these pages paint a vibrant picture of what OVR is all about. WE. ARE. ABOUT. PEOPLE. At OVR, you can expect for people to come first. My work philosophy is simple: support the staff who support our customers (e.g., consumers and employers). In one of the pages, you'll be introduced to our wonderful staff, and they are like no other. Forgive me, I can't help but to be biased on this point. Smile.

In conclusion, we remember this past year that continues to be challenging because of the ongoing pandemic. Nevertheless, the staff can be counted on to rise above the challenges and to continue serving with heart. Resilient is a great word to describe the staff of OVR. They not only survive through the hard times, but they thrive and do it beautifully, too. Happy holidays, everyone, and be safe.

ARLENE KAY A. YAMAGATA, M.S., CRC
OVR Case Services Manager

THE OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation 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 STATEMENT

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 Marianas Islands.

OVR 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 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.



OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ORGANIZATIONAL CHART INFORMATION AS OF JANUARY 18, 2022



HONORABLE
RALPH DLG. TORRES,
GOVERNOR



HONORABLE
ARNOLD I. PALACIOS,
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



Director
ARLENE M. REYES



Fiscal Officer
LOURDES C. ATALIG



Administrative
Operations Specialist
AMBER TIFFINY C.
PANGELINAN



Case Service Manager
ARLENE KAY A.
YAMAGATA



ILOB Case Manager
JEMMIE ANN A.
AGULTO



Transitions Specialist
SAMUEL DAVID F.
SANTOS



Data Analyst
MAGDALENE
P. REYES



Administrative Clerk
MCQUEEN U.
HIROICHI



VR Counselor
JANE FRANCES M.
TUDELA



VR Counselor
ROSE ANN B. ICHIUO



VR Counselor
SHANA THERESE A.
IGUEL



VR Counselor Aide
ELVIRA O. SEMAN



VR Counselor Aide
SHERRAINE DLG. FLORES



Office Clerk
ANN MARIE S. MARCIANO



Employment Specialist
RITA WERLLINDA A. SANTOS

PROGRAMS & SERVICES

BASIC SUPPORT/SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (BS/SE)

These services are individualized based on the individual's unique circumstances. Comparable services and benefits: a federal mandate, must be fully explored and applied to the maximum extent possible.

Services include:

- Assistive/Rehabilitative Technology
- Job Coach
- VR Counseling & Guidance
- Job Search Assistance
- Job Placement Assistance
- Work Readiness Training
- Post-secondary Counseling
- Job related services (e.g., police clearance, drug test, food handler's permit and other work requirements)
- Training (e.g., WET, OJT, Independent Living including Self Advocacy)
- Post-Secondary educational and vocational supports
- Information and referral
- Transportation for training and new employment (limited time)
- Diagnostic assessment (e.g., hearing, vision, psychological, etc.)

WORK EXPERIENCE TRAINING (WET) PROGRAM

Placed in an integrated work environment, consumers under the WET program are provided for up to three months and can be extended on the employer/supervisor's recommendations & justification with monthly progress reports. The consumer will work four hours a day and not exceed twenty hours per week. Bi-weekly Progress Reports are due from Supervisor and Trainee.

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING (OJT) PROGRAM

Consumers are placed in a competitive integrated work environment. OJT can be provided for up to six months depending on the training objectives and can be extended based on the employer/supervisor's recommendation and justification with monthly progress reports. Under the OJT program, consumers work six to eight hours a day not exceeding forty hours per week. The employer will be reimbursed for consumer's gross wages. OVR will reimburse the minimum wage, which is \$7.25 an hour. The Supervisor must complete and submit OJT Monthly Progress Reports, and OJT required documents for reimbursement. Partnerships with employers beyond OJT completion to include Full-Time Employment (FTE) placement.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES (PRE-ETS) PROGRAM

Pre-ETS is provided to students with disabilities who are between the ages of 16-21 years and are receiving Special Education Services, or have 504 plan.

Services include:

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Work-Based Learning Experience
- Counseling on Comprehensive Transition and Post-Secondary Education Programs
- Work Readiness Training
- Instruction on Self-Advocacy

INDEPENDENT LIVING OLDER BLIND (ILOB) PROGRAM

This program provides independent living services to individuals with visual impairment (corrected vision in the better eye 20/70 or worse) aged 55 years and older to assist them in maintaining their independence at home and in their communities.

Services include:

- Information and referral
- Diagnostics vision evaluation
- Visual Aids (e.g., magnifier)
- Self-sufficient devices (e.g., talking watch/alarm)
- Assistive technology device training
- Health Maintenance Training
- Peer Counseling
- Individual Advocacy

INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES (ILS) PROGRAM

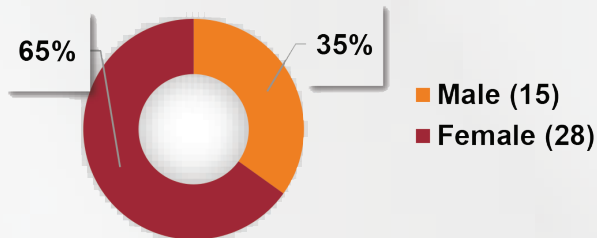
The ILS program is funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living. This provides resources that support the work and activities of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) provides the five (5) core independent living services to individuals with significant disabilities reflected in the approved State Plan for Independent Living.

NO-COST SERVICES TO BUSINESSES

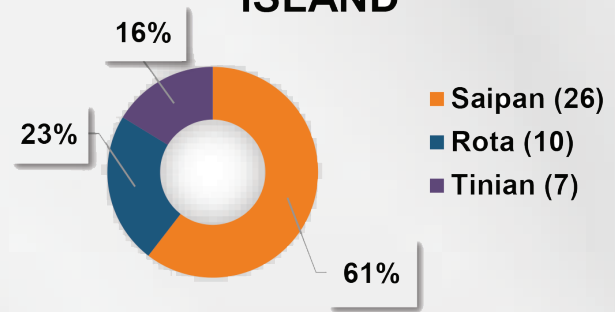
These services include professional training, etiquette training, and consultation on employing individuals with disabilities, meeting their needs through reasonable accommodations, and complying with relevant regulations. This program also provides funding to reimburse employers for consumer's OJT gross pay for providing on-the-job-training.

BASIC SUPPORT SERVICES SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES SUCCESSFUL REHABILITATION PROFILE

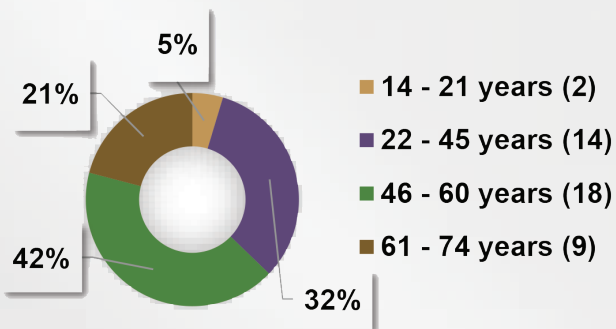
GENDER



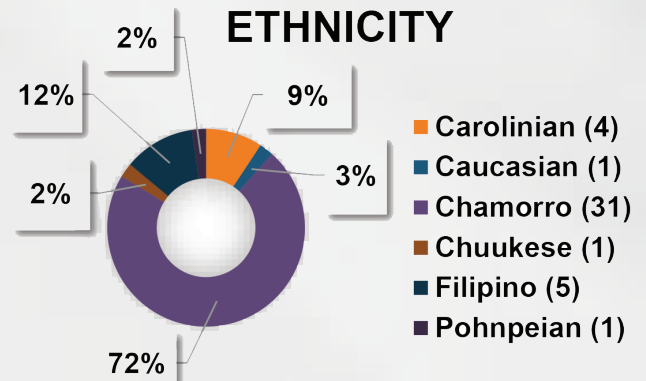
ISLAND



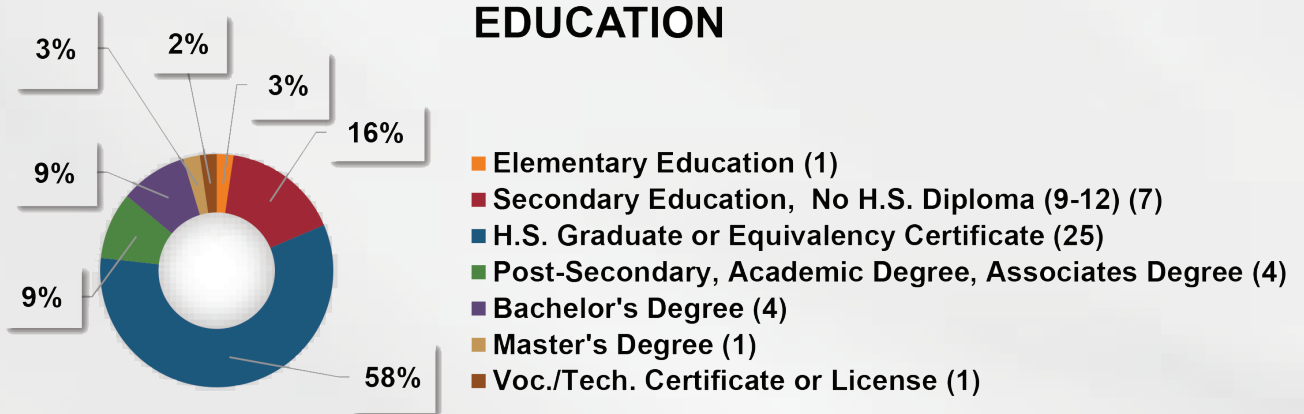
AGE



ETHNICITY



EDUCATION

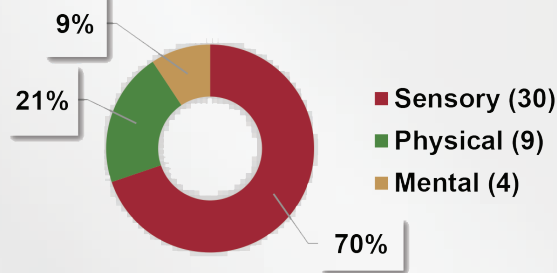


BASIC SUPPORT SERVICES SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES SUCCESSFUL REHABILITATION PROFILE

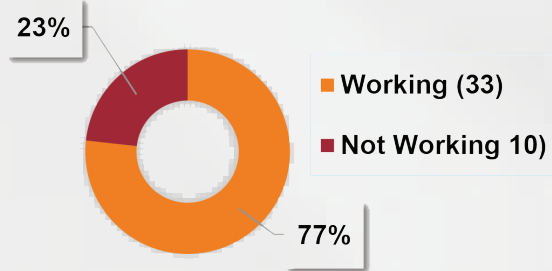
TYPES OF DISABILITY



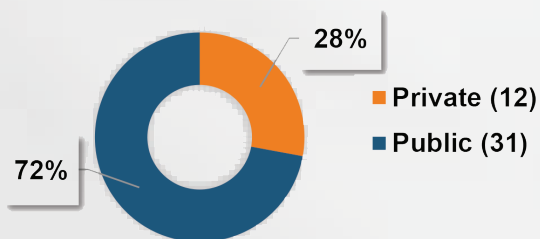
DISABILITY CATEGORY



AT APPLICATION



PLACEMENT SECTOR



AVERAGE EARNINGS

	Before	After
Average Annual Earnings of Consumer Before and After Rehabilitation	\$21,921.94	\$26,603.56
Average Hourly Wage of Consumer Before and After Rehabilitation	\$11.38	\$13.90

CASELOAD FOR EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR FY 2021

Basic Support Services/Supported Employment Services Total	282
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CASELOAD FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING/OLDER BLIND PROGRAM FOR FY 2021

Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind/Visually Impaired Total	72
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FEDERAL AND STATE FISCAL YEAR 2021 SOURCE OF FUNDS

Federal & State Appropriations **\$1,204,175.00**

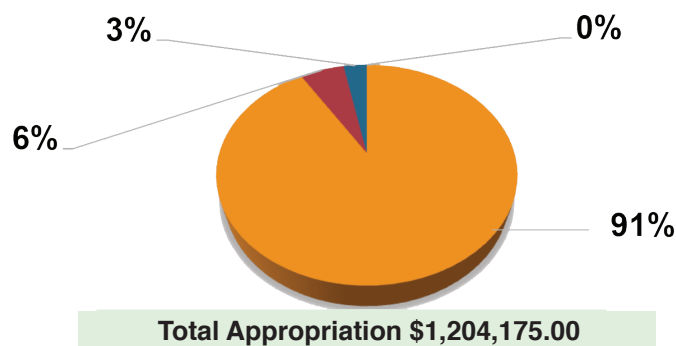


\$1,204,175.00

FEDERAL & STATE APPROPRIATIONS

Title I Basic Support Program	\$1,098,778.00 *
Title VII-A Independent Living/Older Blind	\$68,982.00 *
Title VII-B Independent Living Services	\$36,414.00 *
CNMI State Funds	\$1.00
Total Appropriation:	\$1,204,175.00

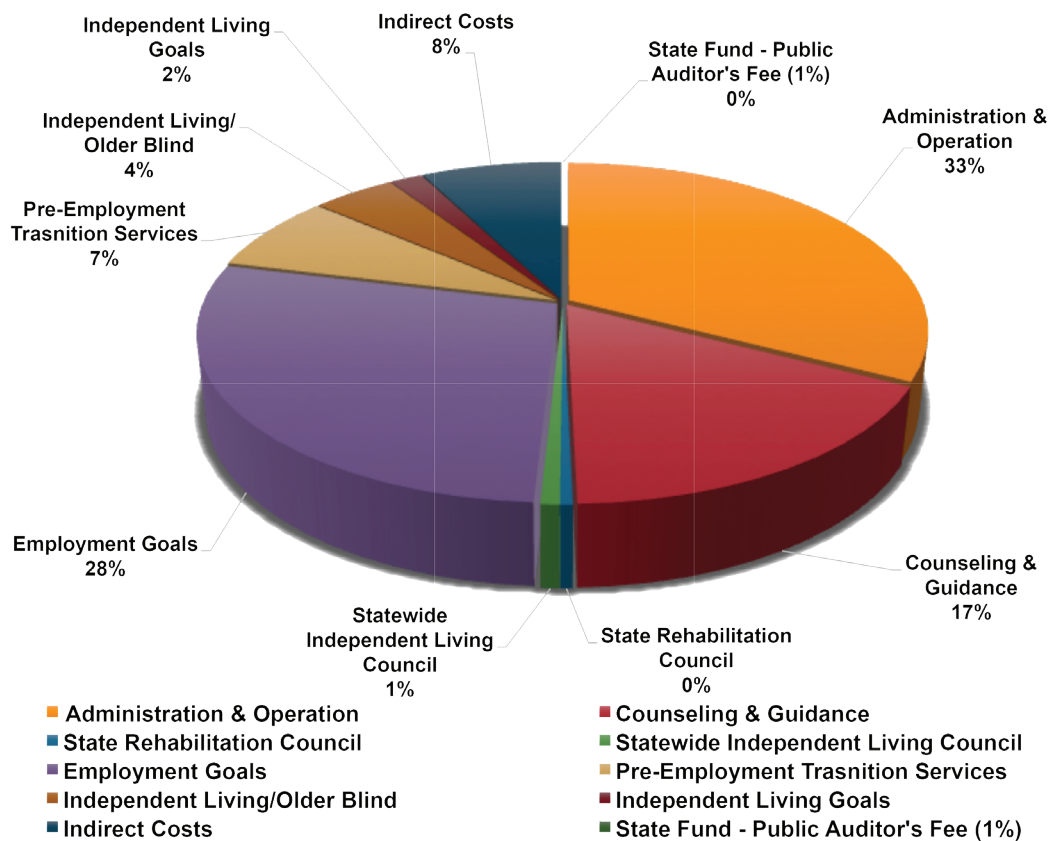
***Includes carry-over from FY 2020**



■ Title I Basic Support Program	■ Title VII-A Independent Living/Older Blind
■ Title VII-B Independent Living Services	■ CNMI State Funds

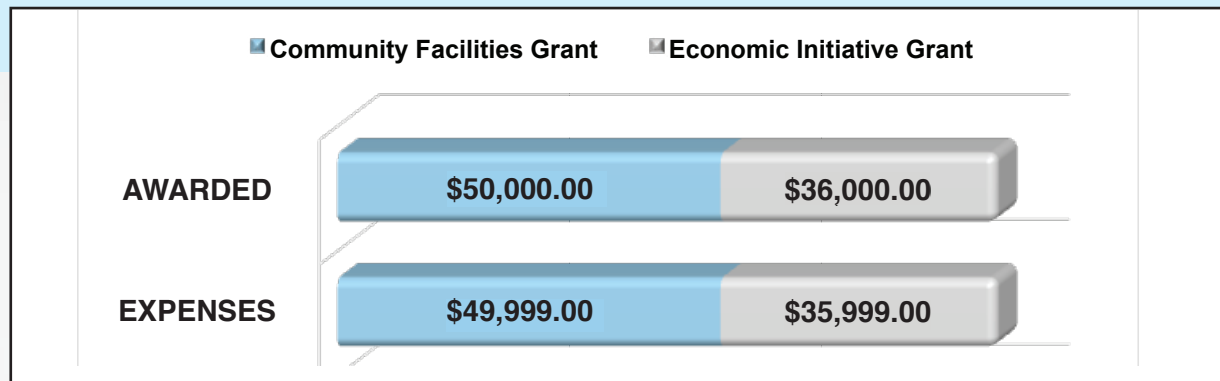
FEDERAL & STATE EXPENSES FY 2021

Administration & Operation	\$351,700.00
Counseling & Guidance	\$182,819.00
State Rehabilitation Council	\$5,115.00
Statewide Independent Living Council	\$7,737.00
Employment Goals	\$301,999.00
Pre-Employment Transition Services	\$79,988.00
Independent Living/Older Blind	\$47,682.00
Independent Living Goals	\$18,783.00
Indirect Costs	\$81,101.00
State Fund - Public Auditor's Fee 1%	\$1.00
Total Expense:	\$1,076,925.00

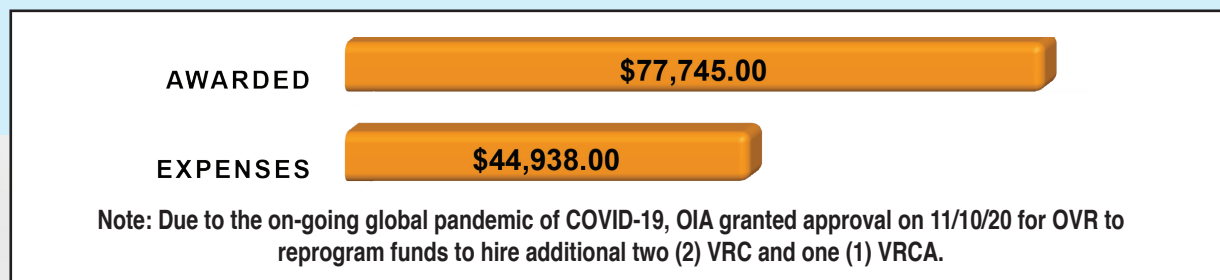


**Other Federal Funding Source through the Office of the Governor,
Office of Grants Management**

U.S. Department of Agriculture	Awarded	Expenses
Community Facilities Grant	\$50,000.00	\$49,999.00
Economic Initiative Grant	\$36,000.00	\$35,999.00

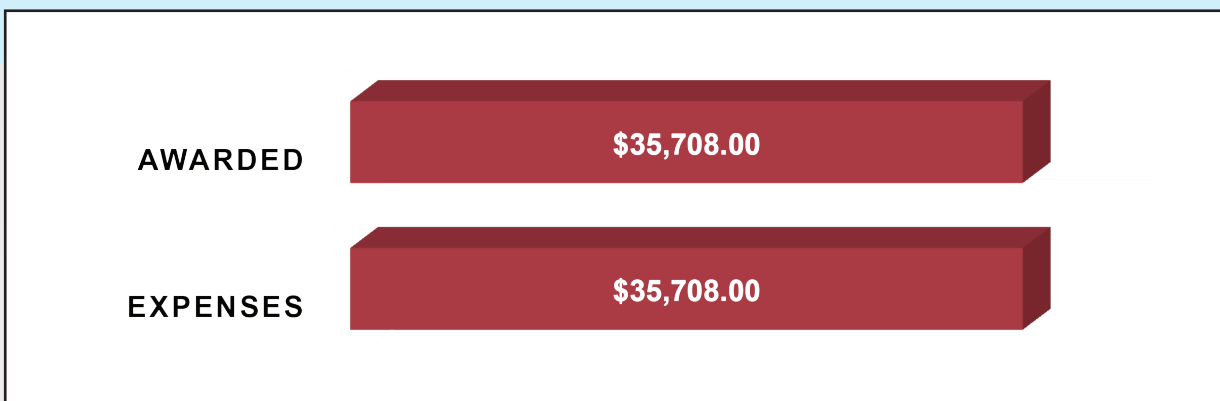


U.S. Department of the Interior	Awarded	Expenses
Benefits Planning Training	\$77,745.00	\$44,938.00



American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

	Awarded	Expenses
OVR	\$35,708.00	\$35,708.00



CNMI OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION APPLICANT SATISFACTION SURVEY - PHASE I

RESULTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021 (OCTOBER 01, 2020 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2021)

TIMELINESS OF SERVICE DELIVERY							
1	The Orientation started on time.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		74	1	0	75		
		99%	1%	0	100%		
2	The presentation was easy to understand.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		75	0	0	75		
		100%	0%	0	100%		
3	The OVR staff was easy to contact.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		74	1	0	75		
		99%	1%	0	100%		
4	The OVR staff treated me in a professional manner.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		75	0	0	75		
		100%	0%	0	100%		
5	The OVR staff was responsive in answering my questions and concerns.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		74	1	0	75		
		99%	1%	0	100%		
6	I know what services OVR offers and how to apply for those services.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		74	1	0	75		
		99%	1%	0	100%		
QUALITY OF SERVICES							
7	Please rate the quality of services you received from OVR.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		71	3	1	0	0	75
		95%	4%	1%	0%	0%	100%
8	Please rate the courtesy and respect you received from the OVR staff.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		73	2	0	0	0	75
		97%	3%	0%	0%	0%	100%
9	Please rate the accessibility of the OVR facilities.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		68	5	1	0	1	75
		91%	7%	1%	0%	1%	100%
10	Please rate the chance of you recommending OVR services to someone else.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		72	2	1	0	0	75
		96%	3%	1%	0%	0%	100%

NOTE: 75 out of 199 (63% Applicants in the Phase I Survey (October 01, 2020 to September 30, 2021.)

CNMI OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY - PHASE II (ST26)

RESULTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021 (OCTOBER 01, 2020 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2021)

SERVICES							
1	I felt the OVR staff was respectful and helpful.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		24	0	0	24		
		100%	0%	0	100%		
2	My VR plan for services was based on my skills and abilities.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		24	0	0	24		
		100%	0%	0	100%		
3	I received services that I needed.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		23	1	0	24		
		96%	4%	0	100%		
4	I benefited from services that I received.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		23	1	0	24		
		96%	4%	0	100%		
5	Services were provided in a timely manner.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		23	1	0	24		
		96%	4%	0	100%		
6	I am satisfied with the quality of services I received from OVR.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:		
		23	1	0	24		
		96%	4%	0	100%		
QUALITY OF SERVICES							
7	The ability to reach my counselor or another OVR staff member within one business day.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		18	6	0	0	0	24
		75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	100%
8	My counselor's ability to clearly explain services available to me.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		18	6	0	0	0	24
		75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	100%
9	My counselor's ability in listening to my needs and concerns.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		18	5	1	0	0	24
		75%	21%	4%	0%	0%	100%
10	My counselor's ability in involving me in making decisions about the services I needed.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		18	6	0	0	0	24
		75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	100%
11	My counselor's ability in involving me in choosing service providers.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		18	5	1	0	0	24
		75%	21%	4%	0%	0%	100%
12	The services in helping me get or keep a job.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		16	7	0	0	1	24
		67%	29%	0%	0%	4%	100%
13	Your counselor's overall performance in assisting you.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		18	5	1	0	0	24
		75%	21%	4%	0%	0%	100%
14	The quality of services you received from OVR.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		18	5	1	0	0	24
		75%	21%	4%	0%	0%	100%
15	The chance of you recommending OVR services to someone else.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans.	Total:
		18	6	0	0	0	24
		75%	25%	0%	0%	0%	100%

NOTE: 24 out of 43 (56%) Applicants after successful closure participated in the Phase II Survey. Phase II survey is administered after Successful Closure (ST26).

CNMI OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION APPLICANT SATISFACTION SURVEY - PHASE I ILOB

RESULTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021 (10/01/20 TO 09/30/21)

TIMELINESS OF SERVICE DELIVERY						
1	The orientation and materials were easy to understand.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:	
		32	0	0	32	
		100%	0%	0%	100%	
2	The OVR staff was easy to contact.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:	
		32	0	0	32	
		100%	0%	0%	100%	
3	The OVR staff treated me in a professional manner.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:	
		32	0	0	32	
		100%	0%	0%	100%	
4	My questions were answered clearly and quickly.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:	
		32	0	0	32	
		100%	0%	0%	100%	
5	I understand what OVR can do for me.	Yes	No	No Ans.	Total:	
		32	0	0	32	
		100%	0%	0%	100%	
QUALITY OF SERVICES						
6	Please rate the quality of services you received from OVR.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans. Total:
		30	1	0	0	1 32
		94%	3%	0%	0%	3% 100%
7	Please rate the courtesy and respect you received from the OVR staff.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans. Total:
		31	0	0	0	1 32
		97%	0%	0%	0%	3% 100%
8	Please rate the accessibility of the OVR facilities.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans. Total:
		27	3	0	0	2 32
		84%	9%	0%	0%	6% 100%
9	Please rate the chance of you recommending OVR services to someone else.	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Ans. Total:
		29	2	0	0	1 32
		91%	6%	0%	0%	3% 100%

NOTE: 32 out of 52 (62%) Applicants participated in the ILOB Phase I Survey.



MESSAGE FROM SRC CHAIRPERSON



Hafa Adai yan Tirow!

Although our Commonwealth has faced many challenges since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CNMI Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has worked tirelessly through these unprecedented challenges to our personal and professional lives. With the current situation, OVR staff had to shift to a whole new way of providing services and interacting with clients. The CNMI State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is happy to express its satisfaction with the ability of OVR to tackle these unique challenges and continue with its mission to ensure that CNMI residents with disabilities are able to obtain and maintain meaningful and satisfying employment. With that said, it is with great pleasure that, on behalf of the CNMI State Rehabilitation Council and the CNMI Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, we present this 2021 Annual Report.

As we continue to face challenges in regards to health, safety and our economy, the OVR staff continue to make progress to inform existing clients, new and potential clients, government and private agencies, and the general public on the services they provide and how they plan to carry on their duties to fulfill their mission. SRC is committed to its strong partnership with OVR to work together in ensuring that all CNMI residents with disabilities are afforded fair and equal employment opportunities.

I would like to thank all the SRC members, OVR Director, Ms. Arlene Reyes, and her staff for their dedication, commitment and service to our community members with disabilities.

PRESTON O. BASA
SRC Chairperson

CNMI SRC MEMBERSHIP

PRESTON O. BASA, CHAIRPERSON

Representation: State educational agency responsible for the public education of students with disabilities who are eligible to receive services under this title and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

EMETERIO S. FITIAL, VICE CHAIRPERSON

Representation: Current or former applicants for, or recipients of, vocational rehabilitation services

JOHN ALLEN A. CABRERA, FISCAL OFFICER

Representation: Current or former applicants for, or recipients of, vocational rehabilitation services

IRENE HOLL, SECRETARY, EMPLOYMENT & MARKETING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Representation: Business, Industry, and Labor

JULIA VICTORIA I. BENAVENTE, QUALITY ASSURANCE & QUALITY IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Representation: Business, Industry, and Labor

ROBERT MENDIOLA, TRANSITION & ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

Representation: Rota Representative

GERNADINE CAMACHO

Representation: Statewide Independent Living Council established under Section 705, whose representative may be the chairperson or other designee of the council

JUNNIE MASGA

Representation: Parent Training and Information Center established pursuant to Section 682(a) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

JAMES RAYPHAND

Representation: Client Assistance Program established under Section 112

JANE FRANCES M. TUDELA

Representation: Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

HILMA P. CASTRO

Representation: Community Rehabilitation Program service providers

MYSTICA KAIPAT

Representation: Community Rehabilitation Program Service Providers

VICTORINO S. CEPEDA

Representation: Business, Industry, and Labor

JANICE A. TENORIO

Representation: Business, Industry, and Labor

LINDA C. TORRES

Representation: Business, Industry, and Labor

CHAD MERFALEN

Representation: Individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities

ROMEO CUELLAR

Representation: Individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities

ESTELLA A. CABAOBAS

Representation: Individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities

CHRISTOPHER CABRERA

Representation: Individuals with disabilities who have difficulty in representing themselves or are unable due to their disabilities to represent themselves

DARLENE P. ALDAN

Representation: Individuals with disabilities who have difficulty in representing themselves or are unable due to their disabilities to represent themselves

FRANK RABAUIMAN

Representation: Individuals with disabilities who have difficulty in representing themselves or are unable due to their disabilities to represent themselves

ANGELRAY T. GUERRERO

Representation: Current or former applicants for, or recipients of, vocational rehabilitation services

MONIKA H. DIAZ

Representation: Tinian Representative

MARYANN BORJA-ARRIOLA

Ex-Officio

Representation: Director of Designated State Unit
04/22/19-03/18/21

ARLENE M. REYES

Ex-Officio

Representation: Director of Designated State Unit
04/26/21 - Current

CNMI SRC MISSION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



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.

- Conducted four (4) general membership meetings with quorum established
- Developed, approved, and adopted the SRC Resource Plan
- Ensured that membership vacancies were filled
- Filled Executive Committee positions
- Provided guidance to OVR on the future of the program and its sustainability
- Participated in the DNP's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Conference
- Provided or shared some resources to OVR that will help to benefit the program (e.g., equality of persons with disabilities and partnership between Council and the VR program)
- Revised, approved, and adopted the by-laws on compensation for full or half day session
- Recommended use of a shared Google drive for the efficient exchange of information and materials between the SRC and OVR
- Reviewed the Consumer Satisfaction Surveys for FY 2020



MESSAGE FROM SILC CHAIRPERSON



Håfa Adai yan Tirow!

In spite of the current challenges we have been facing due to the pandemic, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) continues to provide support and services to its consumers, whether current or potential, who reach out to them for help. Having assumed my role as acting chairperson just recently, it has been a joy for me to be working with OVR Executive Director, Ms. Arlene M. Reyes, and the rest of her team. Thus, it is our Council's great pleasure to be featured into this year's issue of OVR's Annual Report.

As we continue to brave through the challenges we face as a small island community, it is my hope that we can continue to work together to further efforts to help people with disabilities to succeed, gain employment, and live independently. This 2022, I invite our partners to collaboratively work together towards strengthening our ACCEPTANCE CAMPAIGN. This campaign, which we will initiate alongside the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), is an effort for our councils and partners to increase community acceptance for people with disabilities. Truly, acceptance can mean many different things, but when duly incorporated into the heart and soul of a resilient community like ours, it becomes a catalyst for more opportunities, and pathways for people with disabilities to be more involved into the lifeline of our community.

I look forward to this upcoming year with much anticipation that our Commonwealth will continue to open doors of opportunity for people with disabilities through acceptance. It is one thing to raise awareness for the many different causes and advocacies that we have, but to promote acceptance, this is where our work begins.

CONSOLACION C. ATALIG

SILC Interim Chairperson

CNMI SILC MEMBERSHIP



JOHN A. DEMAPAN, CHAIRPERSON

Representation: Advocates of and for individuals with disabilities

CONSOLACION C. ATALIG, VICE CHAIRPERSON

Representation: Advocates of and for individuals with disabilities

ANTONELLI ROSARIO, SECRETARY

Representation: Rota representative

ESTANISLAO BENAVENTE, FISCAL OFFICER

Representation: Private business

MARY SUSAN SATUR, SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Representation: Executive Director of Center for Living Independently

CARLA SAN NICOLAS

Representation: Parents and guardians of individuals with disabilities

HANNAH IGISAIAR

Representation: Advocates of and for individuals with disabilities

MARIANO K. CAMACHO

Representation: Advocates of and for individuals with disabilities

GERNADINE DLC. CAMACHO

Representation: Advocates of and for individuals with disabilities

NICOLAS TORRES

Representation: Advocates of and for individuals with disabilities

GREGORY BORJA

Representation: From organizations that provide services for individuals with disabilities

**MARYANN BORJA-ARRIOLA
EX-OFFICIO**

Representation: Director of Designated State Entity
04/22/19-03/18/21

**ARLENE M. REYES
EX-OFFICIO**

Representation: Director of Designated State Entity
04/26/21 - Current

CNMI SILC MISSION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



The mission of the Council is to serve individuals with significant disabilities in the CNMI and, to promote independence, productivity, integration and inclusion of such individuals into society. The Council supports the independent living philosophy of consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and advocacy.

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing conference on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota
- Disability Network Partners Meeting.
- In partnership with OVR, SILC conducted a presentation to the 22nd Commonwealth Legislature's Committee on Federal and Foreign Affairs. This presentation on OVR's program and services was requested by Committee Chairperson Representative Vicente Camacho.
- Engaged in discussion with the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority (COTA) regarding the Call-a-Ride Program and MOU renewal.
- Co-sponsored the annual joint State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) meeting held at the Lao Lao Bay Golf and Resort.
- Soft skills training supported by NMC UCEDD in collaboration with the DD Council.
- In honor of the Disable the Label Campaign, the SILC, in proud partnership with the Disability Network Partners, participated in the Celebrity Bagging Event at Joeten Hafa Adai Shopping Center.

EMPLOYER SUCCESS STORIES

CENTER FOR LIVING INDEPENDENTLY



The Center for Living Independently (CLI-CNMI) is pleased to express its strong support for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. CLI-CNMI works closely with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The joint partnership between the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Center for Living Independently in the CNMI is a process of teamwork in aiding and supporting our consumers, from helping with daily living skills to various resources to gain more independence in their everyday lives.

The Center for Living Independently and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation share some of the same consumers. We often work in conjunction with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and train the consumers to get a job in the field of their interest. An example of this is one consumer would like to be able to work in an office setting. That consumer will attend the Center and work in the office being trained to answer phones and file pertinent documents. We recently had a consumer from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and we were asked to train her in office work. We were able to hire this individual on a part-time basis.

We also share a consumer who would like to have to work as a landscaper. The Center for Living Independently is currently training this individual in the Center for Living Independently sustainable garden and assisting in yard maintenance. We share another consumer that would like to work in a kitchen for a restaurant. This young man has truly blossomed in the kitchen and has decided to go to school part time at a culinary school working with both the Center and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

In closing, I would like to report that it is a blessing to work alongside the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

MARY SUSAN SATUR
Executive Director



I would like to thank the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for this honor in recognizing our company as one of the outstanding employers of people with disabilities. It has been a privilege to work with such employees who have such positive attitudes. As they learn employment skills with us, we learn about how to work with people with disabilities. As a team, we also learn how to better assist customers with disabilities that come in our store.

Working with people with disabilities has been such a joy for all of us. They are valued employees and team members. We not only work towards a common goal as a team, but we also enjoy having them around because they can also be a character as well. I believe that during their time with us at Taro Sue, they not only acquired employment skills, but we have also learned so much from them. They have taught us patience, empathy, and most of all how to laugh when times get tough. These are the things that no human resource training program can ever prepare you for, and we are grateful to have such an amazing experience together.

We would also like to thank OVR Director Arlene M. Reyes and all the staff for giving us the opportunity to be a part of this program. You have also helped us as a team to be more understanding, patient and caring not only with our employees but our customers as well. We are truly grateful and we look forward to a long-lasting partnership with OVR in the years to come.

ARLENE SILVA
General Manager

CONSUMER SUCCESS STORIES



MONA CELIA MERCADO

The process and experience in applying for VR services at OVR was excellent. The VR Counselor, Ms. Jane Tudela did an excellent job in the interview process and she assisted me in developing my IPE in providing informed choice, which I greatly appreciated. In Addition, she was able to make appointment to meet with Angie Mister for hearing and evaluation and that went smoothly. I got my hearing aids sooner than I thought. My VR counselor, Ms. Jane Tudela did a wonderful job in updating and communicating with me via email regarding appointments and job follow ups. Ms. Jane Tudela made me feel that my life matters, so she made the effort to communicate with Angie Mister for an update of my hearing aids order. There were no challenges in applying for VR services, but not having hearing aids was difficult in communicating with anyone literally. I had to ask people to repeat themselves, stand closer to me, or write or text me a question or make comments. My expectation as a consumer is to get a lot of direction and guidance in finding a job which is time consuming but finally, I found a job I really enjoy. OVR's ultimate goal is for consumers to find employment and they have assisted me in my rehabilitation process in procuring hearing aids for me. Believe me, hearing aids are expensive. I greatly appreciate all the assistance from OVR and VR Counselor, Ms. Jane Tudela.



ANN MARIE SKILANG MARCIANO

Håfa Adai yan Tirow.

Before I proceed, I would like to express my utmost appreciation to the staffs of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for taking time off of their schedule to train me. I want to say that throughout the time that I was there, I have to admit that there was a part of me that was afraid of the fact that I was finally there. Also, the fear of failing but they assured me that it would be alright. They made it perfectly clear that they are not the kind to be afraid and it is alright to be completely open. Despite having PTSD and not being able to trust anyone and the pain that comes with it, was a big change and it really opened my eyes to see that not everything is something to fear. Now, before I get lost in the moment, I would like to share my experience with the Work Experience Training (WET) and On-the-Job Training (OJT) programs. It was a great experience and I learned from wonderful individuals who are loving and can be loud, wild, free and forever young in the office.

In the duration of my WET program, I was trained and guided to understand OVR's daily operations. My duties as a WET trainee were to answer the phones and take messages, route and file documents, make copies of documents, and faxing documents. I was comfortable with the people I worked with because I was welcomed and accepted. I was provided with accommodations when needed. My WET program was extended for another 3 months because there were still some areas that I needed more training on.

After completing my WET program, I continued with the next employment training which was the On-the-Job Training (OJT) program. This training was up to 6 months long and I was a full-time trainee. This training was more challenging because it was another 4 hours. It helped me to grow professionally and personally. I was able to adjust to my new work schedule and work duties as an OJT Trainee. During my training, I worked closely with the Case Services Manager and assisting all other staffs in the office.

Upon completing my OJT program, I was informed that I would be permanently hired. Hearing this great news, I felt blessed and honored. I felt like everything I was trained to do, I had accomplished. I felt so blessed to have the opportunity to gain more knowledge and wisdom while working alongside the ones who have been serving the CNMI. It has opened my eyes to the possible paths that can be provided for those that think it has been lost. OVR has restored my life in so many ways. I can't find the right words to explain the great appreciation that I have for each and every one of them. I had people tell me that I should share and encourage others about my experience and that they should not give up. Yes, it will be hard, but you have to remember that nothing in life is easy-you must focus and dedicate yourself. All I can say is to stay strong and do what must be done. My counselor is Shana A. Iguel and working with her was warm and inviting. She made me feel welcomed. Whenever I had a question, she was always there to give me the right advice. She always updated me regarding my case and other potential possibilities for growth. If I felt overwhelmed, she offered her office as a sanctuary place.

Working with my supervisors and all other staffs, I encountered many different personalities. I feel like I am able to learn quickly, with guidance, on tasks given to me. I am proud to say that I am officially a permanent employee of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation as an Office Clerk.

INTERNSHIP TESTIMONIAL



*Tell me, and I will forget.
Show me, and I may remember.
Involve me, and I will understand.
- Confucius*

As Benjamin Franklin explained Confucius, being told something is fleeting, being taught something is more memorable, but learning something is unforgettable. That, in summary, is how I would describe my overall internship experience with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR).

Håfa Adai yan Tirow. My name is Ruth Ann Torres, and I am a student at the Northern Marianas College. Recently, I was privileged to become a part of the OVR team for a short while, from September 21, 2021 through October 14, 2021. During the time of my internship. If there was a single word to describe my time with the OVR staff and the learning that took place, it would be the word “amazing.”

Having been a part of the OVR staff, I was able to gain more insight into the field of disabilities and the staff's good efforts at educating the community about disability employment (e.g., Employer Recognition Ceremony including Consumer and Employer Panels in October in celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month). I admire the work put forth by OVR staff. You can count on their assistance and appreciate the support and services they provide to their consumers and employers. Their open doors are always inviting, and they go beyond the extra mile to help build a more inclusive community. Efforts such as those do not go unnoticed, and they are priceless efforts.

Over the course of my internship, I was able to sit in and observe multiple interviews. I have to say that despite being an employee working within the field of disabilities, it was not until I began my internship with OVR that I truly understood this particular field. I have sat in and listened to individuals speak on their own behalf in regards to their vocational goals and how they are often faced with many obstacles that affect them physically and mentally. The professionalism that I have witnessed being demonstrated by the OVR staff is the same kind of professionalism that I wish to exert as I progress in my career path. They have demonstrated the utmost positivity in their actions and services, and I hope that I can one day walk in the same shoes as these wonderful individuals that comprise the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

As Albert Einstein once said, “Information is not knowledge. The only source of knowledge is experience. You need experience to gain wisdom.” Because of OVR, not only did I gain wisdom from experience, but I have built upon self-mastery as well. I will always be thankful for them and the time they allowed me to share with them.

RUTH ANN P. TORRES

OVR/SRC/SILC HIGHLIGHTS & ACTIVITIES



OVR, SRC, SILC and Disability Network Partners (DNP) participated in the Celebrity Bagging event at the Joeten shopping centers in honor of the #DisabilityTheLabel campaign, that seeks to raise awareness and acceptance of individuals with disabilities throughout the CNMI on July 10, 2021.



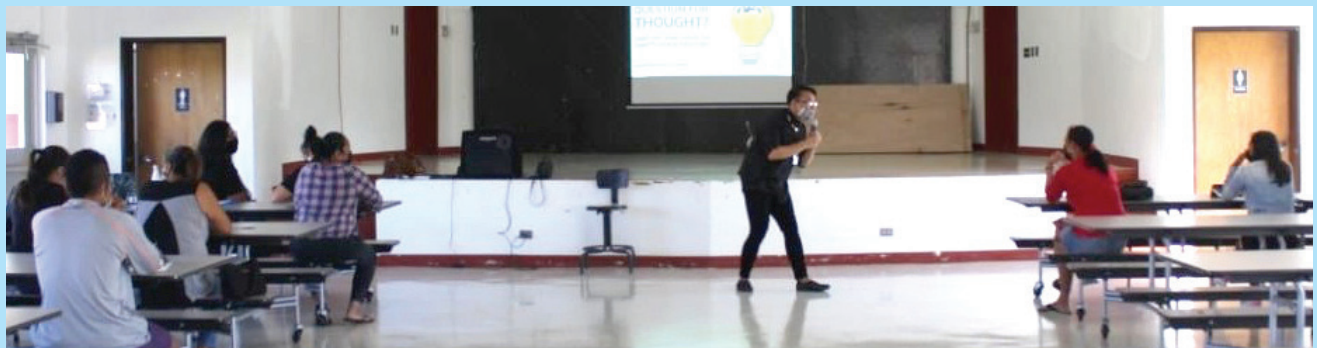
OVR is proud to have joined the 2021 International Coastal Clean up in collaboration with the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality (BECQ) on September 17, 2021.



OVR Full-Blown Outreach along with DNP at Koblerville Youth Center on August 04, 2021.



On May 03, 2021 the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) conducted a presentation at the House of Representatives per the invitation of the 22nd Commonwealth Legislature Federal and Foreign Affairs Committee. Included, in the photo are our DNP who were present to show and express their support.



OVR Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Coordinator and VR staff conducted its first outreach to Tinian Jr./Sr. High School on February 25, 2021.



OVR Full-Blown Outreach along with DNP at Joeten Daidai Social Hall on August 05, 2021.



Precinct 5 Representatives Congressman Richard Lizama and Congresswoman Leila Staffler contributed assistive technology devices for both OVR consumers and staff on May 28, 2021.



OVR participated in the 2020 Christmas Toys for Tots.



FY 21 State Rehabilitation Council First General Membership Meeting on April 19, 2021.



FY 21 SILC 2nd General Membership Meeting on May 19, 2021.



OVR full blown outreach along with DNP at Tanapag Middle School on August 06, 2021.



OVR Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Coordinator and VR staff conducted an outreach to Saipan Southern High School on March 2021.



OVR Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Coordinator and VR staff conducted an outreach to Marianas High School on March 2021.



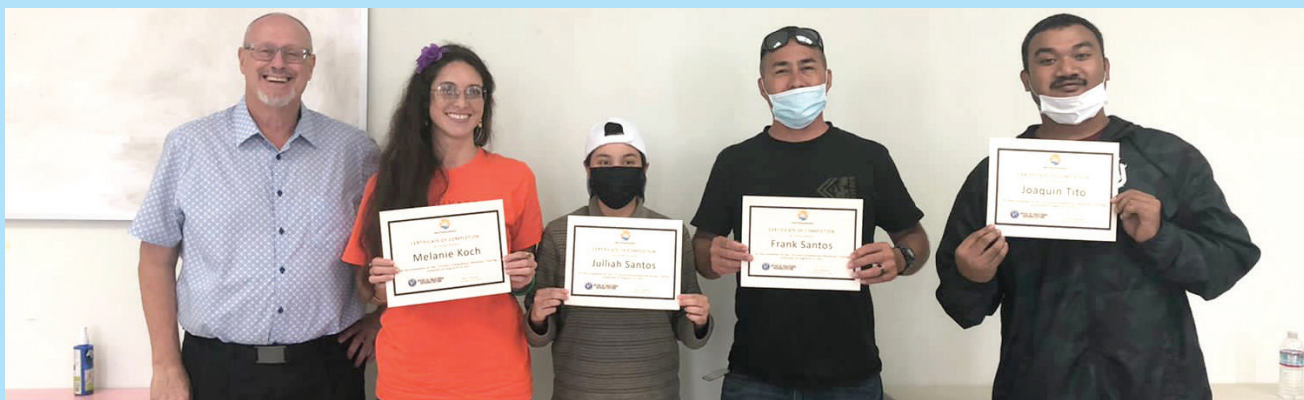
OVR Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Coordinator and VR staff conducted an outreach to Kagman High School on February 2021.



OVR staff professional development with NMC Disability Support Services Counselor Lucille Deleon Guerrero on April 19, 2021.



OVR staff professional development with Office of Personnel Management staff Marlene Cruz on April 05, 2021.



OVR consumers completed the Self-Employment Training conducted by Jim Arenovski of Island Training Solutions on August 06, 2021.

THE OVR LOGO: DESIGNED WITH SIMPLICITY IN MIND, HAS A MEANING THAT RUNS DEEP.



The outer circle represents Networking, Collaboration, and Cooperation, ingredients necessary for any program's success. The "O" also stands for Office. We realize that OVR management and staff alone cannot possibly achieve its mission of increasing employment and promoting independence among eligible individuals with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. To ensure that the goals and objectives continue to be met and that there is a high level of consumer satisfaction, OVR must rely on the collaboration and cooperation of the State Rehabilitation Council, consumers and their families, employers and businesses, disability-related agencies and organizations, and the entire community. As the saying goes: There is strength in numbers and, the more people, businesses, agencies and organizations join in the effort of improving the quality of life for all our island residents, we will indisputably witness even better and greater things to come.

The "V" stands for Vocational and, the "R" stands for Rehabilitation. If you look closely, the "R" somewhat resembles a latte stone. Latte stones, which are the stone pillars of ancient dwelling places in the Marianas, are strong and resilient and could withstand even the strongest of super typhoons over time. You could say that our consumers exhibit these similar characteristics or qualities. OVR consumers are always working hard to reach their vocational/

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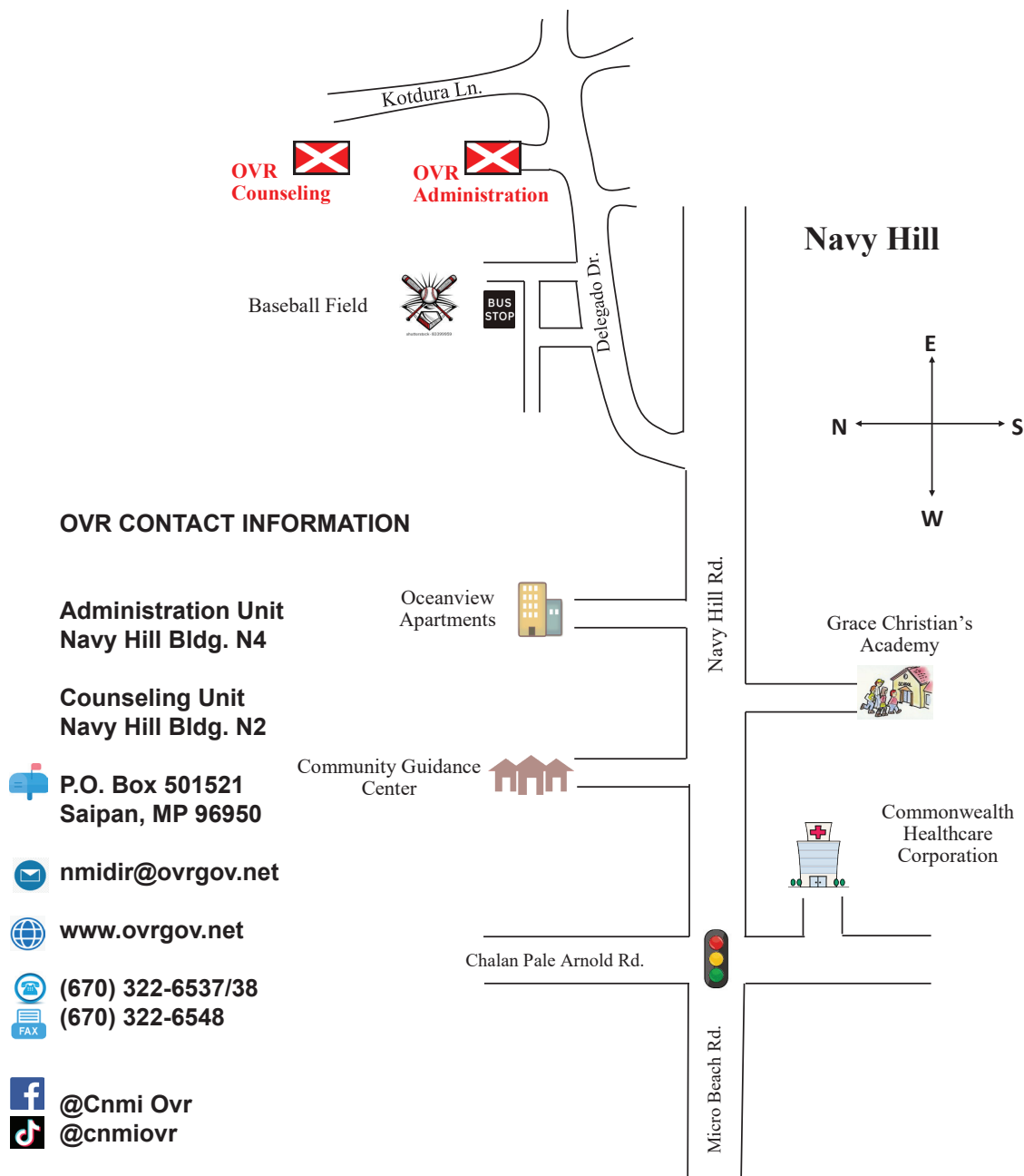
THE OVR LOGO ...

employment goals and, despite the bumpy roads and obstacles they may encounter along the way, to give up is just not an option. Another truth about the latte stone is that they are highly regarded in the CNMI and, like the latte stone, OVR applicants and consumers are treated with dignity and respect. Also, the latte stone represents one of the two groups indigenous to the CNMI, the Chamorros.

The inner circle has a deep blue color that represents the vast Pacific Ocean where the islands of the Northern Marianas are situated.

The plumerias, placed right above the “VR” in an arched position, are representative of the four (4) islands that comprise the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands: Saipan, Tinian, Rota, and the Northern Islands. The plumerias are also representative of the “successes” of our consumers. Just like the tiny buds that blossom into beautiful flowers, our consumers also blossom, with the assistance of OVR and its partners, to become empowered and having realized the depth of their self-worth. Furthermore, the plumeria was selected for the OVR logo as it is the national flower of the CNMI and is also representative of the Carolinians, the other group native to the CNMI. The Carolinians are known for many things, including their skill in making leis and mwarmwars. The plumeria is a popular choice for many lei and mwarmwar makers.

The acronym CNMI stands for Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.



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This report will be made available in alternative formats upon request.

