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PRESS RELEASE

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DETR's Rehabilitation Division Receives High Marks From National Disability Organization

RespectAbility, a national organization that advocates for workforce opportunities for people with disabilities, publically recognized the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR) in a report responding to Nevada's unified state workforce development plan that was submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor in April.

"Nevada is so ahead of many states in terms of expanding competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities," the report stated. "Fully 40.9 percent of the 201,717 working age people with disabilities are employed in Nevada. Because of your good work, the 8,200 youth with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 21 living in Nevada have increasing chances to successfully transition into the world of work. Another measure of the significant strides that the Silver State has been making is the decreasing gap in the labor force participation rates between people with and without disabilities. Nevada has the second smallest employment gap amounting to only 33.4 percentage points and is only surpassed by North Dakota."

The Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation's main focus is to help people with disabilities become employed or receive the tools they need to succeed in the workforce, said Shelley Hendren, administrator for DETR's Rehabilitation Division. The bureau also works in partnership with schools statewide to help students with disabilities transition from high school to the workforce.

In 2015, the bureau helped 886 of 1,654 consumers, or 54 percent, prepare for and obtain employment. The bureau works closely with employers to educate them about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and to provide assistance in making the workplace accessible for employees with disabilities, Hendren said.

RespectAbility also recognized the bureau for its partnerships with national companies in Nevada such as Starbucks, Pepsi, and OfficeMax/Office Depot.



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“We regularly suggest to other states that they have much to learn from Nevada,” the report said. “Additionally, we were very excited to learn about your new training program with Arrow Electronics in Reno, Nevada. Effective employer engagement...is a necessary component of achieving improved employment outcomes. Nevada has already developed a network of engaged businesses who understand the competitive advantage that employees with disabilities can bring to the workforce. Business to business communication can help tear down the misconceptions and stigmas which are barriers to employment.”

The Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation established work-readiness training programs with the companies, allowing some of the bureau’s consumers to gain valuable work experience. So far, 26 clients have completed the six-week training program at OfficeMax/Office Depot, with 18 finding employment. Starbucks has graduated 23 candidates, with 21 receiving employment. PepsiCo’s program has graduated seven candidates, with six finding employment. Wages for the clients who became employed ranged from \$11.60 to \$23 an hour.

“We are quite pleased with the successful outcomes of the Vocational Rehabilitation program, and appreciate the commitment of the business community in recognizing the abilities of these jobseekers,” Hendren said. “We appreciate the recognition and support that we have received from RespectAbility and are committed to continuing the positive work we are doing in helping people with disabilities realize their potential in the workforce.”



DETR is comprised of the Employment Security Division, Equal Rights Commission, Rehabilitation Division, and the Research and Analysis Bureau. DETR works in partnership with the Nevada JobConnect System to provide training and job placement services to job seekers and to assist employers in hiring practices. It also supports economic development efforts through improving Nevada’s workforce.