



# 2019 Annual Report



State Rehabilitation Council  
&  
Office of Vocational  
Rehabilitation



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## Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Director's Message

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is proud to share its 2019 Annual Report, which highlights OVR's efforts to increase employment and promote independence among individuals with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

This past year, OVR continued to advance its mission by assisting those who live with a disability find meaningful employment. Rather than fixating on the disability of our clients, our team focused on their many capabilities to identify career opportunities that align with their many strengths, interests, aptitudes, and priorities.

To accomplish this, we created a support system of partnerships that act as a network to ensure that our clients have fair access to the job market and, more importantly, find success in the career pathway of their choosing.

The effort of my OVR Team is highlighted in the data included in this report and further brought to life by the narratives and images of the many faces of individuals with disabilities who have shaped their success stories. Also highlighted are our community partnerships, which have brought many innovations to our effort to ensure gainful employment of our special population. Most notable was the work to expand support to school-age youth, preparing them for careers in the 21st-century and allowing them to dream bigger than ever before.

It is OVR's calling to be responsible stewards of support and employment of those with special needs. My team and I fully recognize the magnitude of this task, so we passionately charge ahead knowing that those we serve are family, friends, and loved ones in our CNMI. While this year has come with promising data and ample successes, it also provided rich learning that my staff and I celebrate as opportunities for improvement. OVR is committed to continuous growth, best practices, and innovative processes using feedback from our clients, stakeholders, and partners in our decision-making process.

As we bring this year to a close and reflect on the milestones and achievements documented in this Annual Report, I would be remiss if I did not congratulate my OVR Team. They bring life to the work that we do every day and are the champions of ensuring that individuals with disabilities are respected, accepted, valued, active, independent, and integrated into all aspects of an island community.

To the stakeholders, partners, and councils we collaborated with over the past year, thank you for your passion in combating discrimination and fear about individuals with disabilities. Most importantly, thank you for believing that all individuals are a necessary and vital part of a productive CNMI. These successes are ours to celebrate together. With the challenges of job scarcity looming, our work to empower our community members who live with a disability is more important than ever.



Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maryann Borja-Arriola'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

**MARYANN BORJA-ARRIOLA**

OVR Director



# State Rehabilitation Council

## Chairperson's Message

Hafa Adai and Tirow!

It is with great pleasure that I, along with the members of the State Rehabilitation Council, present you the 2019 Annual Report.

This year was a challenging one for not only the SRC but the entire community. The devastation from Typhoon Yutu hindered the activities of both the SRC and the Vocational Rehabilitation program. Nevertheless, the SRC remains committed to its mission: "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." We are excited for what is ahead of us and look forward to fostering greater collaboration with stakeholders and most especially individuals with disabilities.

I am truly grateful to the council members for allowing me to continue to serve as your Chairperson. I'd also like to thank OVR Director, Maryann Borja-Arriola and her dedicated staff for all the support they provide the council but more importantly the services they provide to consumers.

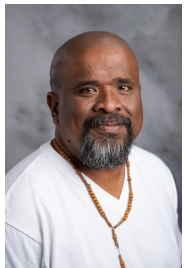


**FRANCES TORRES**

SRC Chairperson



## 2019 State Rehabilitation Council Members



Emeterio Fitial,  
Former Consumer



Angel Ray Guerrero  
Consumer



Monika Diaz  
Tinian Representative



Chad Merfalen  
Advocate



Gernadine Camacho  
Statewide Independent Living

"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."

**Frances Torres** - Chairperson Employment & Marketing Committee Chairperson  
Representation: Business, Industry & Labor

**Junnie Masga** - Parent Training & Information Center

**James Rayphand** - Client Assistance Program

**Jane Tudela** - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

**Hilma P. Castro** - Community Rehabilitation Program

**Victorino S. Cepeda** - Business, Industry, & Labor

**Janice Tenorio** - Business, Industry, & Labor

**Wilma Villanueva** - Advocate/Community Guidance Center

**Joe Ada** - Business, Industry, & Labor

**Robert Mendiola** - Advocate  
Rota Representative

**Anna Yamada** - State Educational agency  
Public School System-Special Education

**Josephine Mesta** - State Workforce  
Investment Board

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

Under the Office of the Governor, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is the Designated State Unit 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 employs staff whose purpose is to manage program planning, conduct staff development, and assess facility development. OVR employs Rehabilitation Counselors and support staff to assist program participants in understanding the rehabilitation process, applying for and receiving services.

The Director of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is responsible for the administration and all other provisions of 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 Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Supported Employment Program, Independent Living Services, and the Independent Living/Older Blind program. Furthermore, the Director is responsible for the distribution of copies of the approved State Plan to every field office operated by either OVR and other appropriate entities.

OVR envisions the CNMI as a "true island paradise," a place where: There is no discrimination or fear about individuals with disabilities. Qualified OVR staff, service providers, and employers assist 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.



# Organizational Chart

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



**Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Director**  
Maryann Borja-Arriola

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**

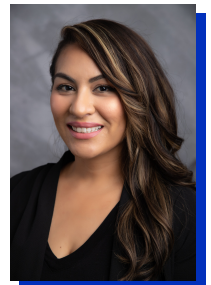
**Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)**



**Fiscal Officer**  
Lourdes Atalig



**Admin & Operations Manager/ Interim Case Service Manager**  
Josephine Tudela



**Employment Specialist**  
Naomi Tudela



**VR Counselor 1**  
Jane Tudela



**ILOB Case Worker Assistant**  
Marlina Litulumar



**Data Analyst**  
Magdalene Reyes



**VR Counselor 1**  
Rose Ann Ichiuo



**VR Counselor Aide**  
Tomeko Kaipat



**Admin. Clerk/  
A.T. Assistant**  
McQueen Hiroichi



**VR Counselor 1**  
Shana Iguel



**VR Counselor Aide**  
Elvira Seman

2019

# 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.**

# 2017-2020 Program Goals

The CNMI Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) reviewed and jointly approved the following goals and priorities. The goals and priorities incorporated the findings of the FY 2014-2017 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the VR portion of the Unified State Plan.

- 1 Improve the delivery of competitive integrated employment services to VR clients.
- 2 Facilitate the seamless transition of students/youth with disabilities to employment or continued education through coordination and collaboration with WIOA core and other programs.
- 3 Strengthen partnerships with employers to identify and provide opportunities for competitive integrated employment to VR clients including transition students with disabilities.
- 4 Continue to collaborate with the Workforce Investment Agency (WIA) to prepare mutual clients for competitive integrated employment.
- 5 Improve VR service delivery to effectively meet the needs of clients with most significant disabilities.

## Current key projects for FY 2020

Consistent with OVR goals and priorities, the program will continue to promote competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities in the community. Continued projects include:

### Building capacity in the areas of:

- Pre-Employment Transitions Services providers.
- Identifying or recruiting of possible Community Rehabilitation Providers.
- Increasing of supports and services offered to employers.
- Completion of the required CSNA update
- Working with WIOA partners to complete the tri-annual Unified State Plan.

### Completions of grants for:

- Training of OVR staff in becoming Certified Benefits Planners
- Obtaining a vehicle for the Counseling Services Unit
- Upgrading of computers/hardware that are over a decade old.

## 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.



**Federal & State Funding Total: \$1,080,117.00**

## Title 1 - Basic Support Program (\*Requires State Match of 21.3%)

- Carry-over FY 2018: \$91,086
- FY 2019: \$853,772

## Title VI-B - Supported Employment (\*Requires 10% State Match for cost incurred YMSD)

- Carry-over FY 2018: \$0
- FY 2019: \$5,430
- Adults with MSD: \$5,430
- Youth with MSD: \$0

## Title VII-A - Independent Living/Older Blind

- Carry-over FY 2018 : \$29,254
- FY 2019: \$40,000

**CNMI State Funds : \$60, 575**



**OVR commits to continued fiscal responsible and integrity in serving its consumers.**

## Case Services Expenditures

### Pre-Employment Transition Services

Required Activities	Expenses
Job Exploration Counseling	195
Work-based Learning Experience	5,280
Workplace Readiness Training	49,000
Comprehensive Transition or Postsecondary Education Program	28,375
<b>Total required activities</b>	<b>82,850</b>
Other Activities	
Authorized Activities	7,268
Coordination Activities	1,448
<b>Total Other Activities</b>	<b>8,716</b>
<b>Total All Activities</b>	<b>91,566</b>

### Basic Support/Supported Employment

Services	Expenses
Assessment	4,082
Diagnosis and Treatment of Impairments	7,513
Junior & Community College Training	9,453
Job Readiness Training	2,703
On-the-Job Training	3,281
Interpreter	1,558
Transportation	8,601
Maintenance	5,020
Rehabilitation Technology	57,596
Personal Attendant	13,200
Others	876
<b>TOTAL CASE SERVICE EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>113,883</b>

### Independent Living for Older Blind (ILOB)

Services	Expenses
Consumer Services	8,018
Administrative & Support Staff	21,737
<b>Total ILOB Expenditures</b>	<b>29,755</b>

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



# Data Summary

## Consumer Successful Employment (ST-26) Demographics

Island	Total
Saipan	21
Rota	3
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>24</b>

Age Bracket	Total
14 - 21 years	3
22 - 45 years	8
46 - 60 years	9
61 - 75 years	3
Over 75 years	1
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>24</b>

Gender	Total
Male	14
Female	10
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>24</b>

Ethnicity	Total
Carolinian	1
Caucasian	2
Chamorro	16
Filipino	5
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>24</b>

Education at Closure	Total
Secondary Education, No H.S. Diploma (9-12)	2
H.S. Graduate or Equivalency Certificate	14
Post-Secondary Academic Degree, Associates Degree	2
Bachelor's Degree	4
Master's Degree	2
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>24</b>

## Disability Information

Disability Category	Total
Sensory	11
Physical	8
Mental	5
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>24</b>

Types of Disability	Total
Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Other Hearing Impairments	11
Mobility Impairments/Orthopedic/Neurological	4
Other Mental Impairments	5
Physical Impairments	4
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>24</b>

## Caseload Service Summary

CASELOAD FOR EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM FOR FY 2019	
<b>EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>
Basic Support Services	237
Supported Employment Services	27
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>	<b>264</b>

CASELOAD FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM FOR FY 2019	
<b>INDEPENDENT LIVING PROGRAM</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>
Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind/Visually Impaired	50
<b>GRAND TOTAL:</b>	<b>50</b>

At Application	Total
Working	17
Not Working	7
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>24</b>

Placement Sector	Total
Private	13
Public	11
<b>Grand Total:</b>	<b>24</b>

2019

# The Vocational Rehabilitation Process & Choices in the Process

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5
<b>Eligibility</b>	<b>Gather Info on Jobs &amp; Disabilities.</b>	<b>Individualized Plan for Employment</b>	<b>Employment &amp; Follow-up</b>	<b>Closure of VR Services</b>
<p><u>Criteria</u></p> <p>An applicant is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services if</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is an individual with a disability, and</li> <li>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 from vocational rehabilitation services, and</li> <li>3. Requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, or retain employment; and</li> <li>4. Has legal status to allow employment in the CNMI or the United States.</li> </ol> <p><u>Choices</u></p> <p>Bring you disability information to VR or sign release form so VR can get disability records.</p> <p>Ask VR to pay for a disability evaluation if you do not have complete or current disability information.</p> <p><b>Timeframe: 60-days</b></p>	<p><u>Questions to Answer</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you know what types of jobs match your skills?</li> <li>• Do you know if those jobs are available where you plan to live and work?</li> <li>• If you receive disability benefits, will your job goal pay enough to replace your benefits?</li> <li>• If you cannot work full-time, will your job goal jeopardize your benefit?</li> <li>• How can the limitations caused by your disability be addressed?</li> <li>• Do you need your disability assessed by an expert who can answer those questions?</li> </ul> <p><u>Choices</u></p> <p>Find the answers to these questions and share them with your VR Counselor.</p> <p>Work with your VR Counselor to find the answers.</p> <p>Select service providers who can help you find the answers.</p>	<p><u>The Plan &amp; Your VR Services</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>Questions to Answer</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will you need to address the limitations of your disability?</li> <li>• What will you do to learn the skills for your job goal (ex. Schooling, work experience, on-the-job training)?</li> <li>• Do you need new assessments to answer these questions?</li> </ul> <p><u>Choices</u></p> <p>Write the Plan with VR help, by yourself, or with help from someone else.</p> <p>Work with your VR Counselor to find the answers.</p> <p>Select services providers who can help you find the answers.</p> <p><b>Timeframe: 60-days</b></p>	<p><u>Seeking Employment</u></p> <p>You are ready to apply for jobs or change jobs if your current job is not suited to your skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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?</li> <li>• Do you need job placement assistance?</li> </ul> <p><u>Job Follow-up Activities</u></p> <p>When you are hired, keep in touch with VR to let your VR Counselor know how it is going.</p> <p>If you find there are things you cannot do on the job, contact your VR Counselor right away.</p> <p><u>Choices</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>Timeframe: 90-days</b></p>	<p><u>When Active VR Services Stop, Your VR File is Closed.</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p><u>Reasons to Close Your Case</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieved an employment outcome.</li> <li>• No longer interested in receiving services or further services.</li> <li>• Unable to locate or contact.</li> <li>• Unavailable to participate in a VR program for an indefinite or considerable period of time.</li> </ul> <p><u>Choices</u></p> <p>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.</p>

## Consumer Satisfaction Survey Summary

To ensure high quality of services, OVR conducted its Consumer Satisfaction Survey to capture consumer data on their review of services received.

Phase I of survey administration spans from October 01, 2018 to September 30, 2019. A 100% participation rate of all consumers was attained. In summary, consumers have been overwhelmingly satisfied with the timeliness and professionalism of service delivery. The quality of services have all been rated as "Excellent" in regards to consumer satisfaction, facility accessibility, overall quality. Counseling and in-take services were highly rated as informative, supportive, and caring for every client's needs. One recommendation is to enhance the promotion of services to the community since there could be more potential consumers who are unaware but need of these services.

Phase II of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey was administered after Successful Closure (ST-26) of a consumer case within Fiscal Year 2019. A majority of service-recipients participated in the survey. The survey assessed a deeper dive into service quality. All respondents rated services as "Excellent" with criteria reviewing counseling support through vocational and rehabilitation services.

## A REPORT TO OUR CITIZENS

FISCAL YEAR 2019

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 Programs 1
- Data & Finances 3
- Future Outlook 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.



### VR Portion of the Unified State Plan 2017-2020 Program Goals

The CNMI Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) reviewed and jointly approved the following goals and priorities. The goals and priorities incorporated the findings of the FY 2014-2017 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the VR portion of the Unified State Plan.

#### Goal 1

Improve the delivery of competitive integrated employment services to VR clients.

#### Goal 2

Facilitate the seamless transition of students/youth with disabilities to employment or continued education through coordination and collaboration with WIOA core and other programs.

#### Goal 3

Strengthen partnerships with employers to identify and provide opportunities for competitive integrated employment to VR clients including transition students with disabilities.

#### Goal 4

Continue to collaborate with the Workforce Investment Agency (WIA) to prepare mutual clients for competitive integrated employment.

#### Goal 5

Improve VR service delivery to effectively meet the needs of clients with most significant disabilities.

## OUR PROGRAMS

### No-Cost Services To 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 on-the-job (OJT) is available to employers through OVR to help offset the cost for providing training to an OVR consumer.

### 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 technology 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 (20/70 in the better eye) 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!**



### Pre-Employment Transition Services (PreETS)

PreETS 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:

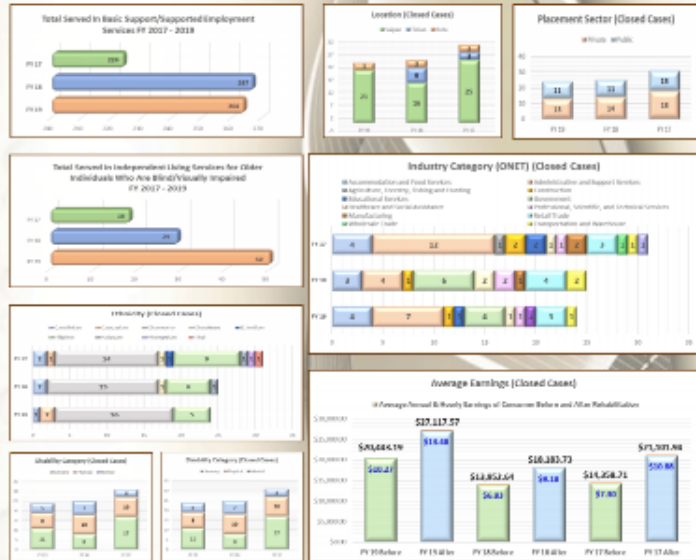
- Job exploration counseling.
- Work-based learning experiences.
- Counseling on postsecondary (college) options.
- Work readiness training.
- Instruction on self-advocacy.

### 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.

## OUR DATA



## OUR FINANCES



## FUTURE OUTLOOK

### A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) will promote continual improvement, best practices, and innovative processes using your feedback as our guide. As we begin a new year, we pledge to always serve our community by adhering to the mission and vision of our agency and making sure that every voice is heard and valued.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate the staff of OVR who continue to expand their knowledge and implement new approaches to benefit our consumers. The dedication demonstrated daily from the staff is a reflection of the success we are celebrating in this report.

### WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

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

- Building capacity in the areas of:
  - Pre-Employment Transitions Services providers.
  - Identifying or recruiting of possible Community Rehabilitation Providers.
  - Increasing of supports and services offered to employers.
  - Completion of the required CSNA update.
  - Working with WIOA partners to complete the tri-annual Unified State Plan.
- Completions of grants for:
  - Training of OVR staff in becoming Certified Benefits Planners.
  - Obtaining a vehicle for the Counseling Services Unit.
  - Upgrading of computers/hardware that are over a decade old.

### IDENTIFIED NEEDS

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.

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.

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.



Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios signs Proclamation declaring December 4, 2019 as International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPWD). This day is an important reminder for the community to make the world more inclusive for the one billion people in the world who have a disability. With the year's theme "The Future is Accessible," IDPWD promotes the renewed commitment to ensuring that people living with disabilities enjoy full equality and unhindered participation in all facets of their lives.

OVR has also extended recovery efforts in the community in partnership with The Office of the Governor - Office of Grants Management & State Clearinghouse and the Empty Vessel Ministry Foundation to deliver relief goods, comfort, and connections to families in need. Due to the super typhoons and storm the CNMI has endured in the past year, OVR is committed to assisting its consumers in ways beyond the call of duty.



As a testament to its commitment to its consumers, OVR partnered with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide information and assistance on disaster recovery benefits. Pictured is an OVR presentation in conjunction with FEMA, Guam Procurement Technical Assistance Center, and the CNMI Small Business Development Center on Rota to inform the public that people with disabilities may avail to start up services should entrepreneurship be their goal.

To assist current and prospective NMC students with disabilities in their transition to college, NMC collaborated with the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to host the first Pre-Employment Transition Services Conference at Kanoa Resort. The partnership recognized the need for collaboration to ensure that an individual living with a disability in the CNMI has a network of support to ensure their success.



Office of the Mayor of Tinian and Aguiguan has been making a huge difference in the community. The Mayor of Tinian Edwin P. Aldan has been an especially instrumental government partner in supporting OVR's efforts to extend services to consumers in the community of Tinian. There are special populations throughout the CNMI that need support and this assistance is made possible by proactive leaders like Honorable Mayor Aldan. The effort to ensure that all members of society have a fair opportunity to participate in ways that are inclusive and meaningful requires the highest levels of leadership.

# All Stars' Stories

## Chad Merfalen



Chad Merfalen graduated high school in 2007 and immediately started at Northern Marianas College. Despite many challenges, Chad never gave up. With support from his instructors, counselors, classmates, and his parents, Chad graduated with a Liberal Arts degree from Northern Marianas College in May 2018. Soon after, Chad attended the Culinary Arts program at the Northern Marianas Trade Institute. On September 27, 2019, he completed a certification in Culinary Arts with career aspirations to become a chef. Chad shared, "Without assistance from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and my parents, I would not be able to be the person I am today and hope to make a brighter future for myself."

Angel Ray Guerrero graduated High School in 2013 and is now at the Northern Marianas College working on a Bachelor's degree in Business Management. Angel Ray is no stranger to higher education, having already completed two Associate degrees, one in Liberal Arts and one in Computer Applications. Angel Ray encountered many personal challenges, but with the support from his family, understanding instructors and counselors, and friends, he has no doubt that he will accomplish his goals and achieve more. He shared, "I can say that OVR has been a great help in my time of need. They continue to support my endeavors to finish my post-secondary education and find a good job to not only to sustain my life but also to contribute back to the CNMI as well."

## Angel Ray Guerrero



## Jordan Agulto



Jordan Marie Reyes Agulto is currently a full-time student at the Northern Marianas College. Her goals are to obtain her Bachelor's of Science Degree in Criminal Justice and get a job within the Criminal Justice field. She has a passion for law enforcement and is eager to start her career and help the community. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has contributed in her life through their services such as counseling and guidance, work training, and supporting her with her education. She is very thankful and grateful for OVR's services provided to her. She advocates its importance in the community to assist individuals with disabilities achieve employment and success in living independently. Jordan shared, "OVR has been a huge help in my life."

Efren Echderdel Sablan Nicholas graduated High School in 2011 then Efren Nicholas graduated from the Northern Marianas College with an Associates in Computer Application in May 24, 2014. Three years later, Efren earned his Bachelor's in Business Management in May 20, 2017. With the support from his instructors, classmates, families, and friends, Efren overcame his challenges and accomplished his goal by helping the community through the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation. Efren shared, "I became a better person with the needs I have acquired through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. I HIGHLY recommend students and individuals with disabilities to never stop learning and continue to pursue a higher quality of life."

## Efren Nicholas





OVR established a relationship with Rita Hocog Inos Junior High School to begin offering OVR's Pre-Employment Transition Services to students. Prioritizing the youth!



CNMI Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services (DFEMS) establish a partnership to support On The Job Training, and Pre-Employment Transition Services.



OVR and Community Guidance Center-Systems of Care leverage partnerships to support at-risk youth to combat abuse and neglect, especially of those with physical, mental, social, emotional, and developmental needs.



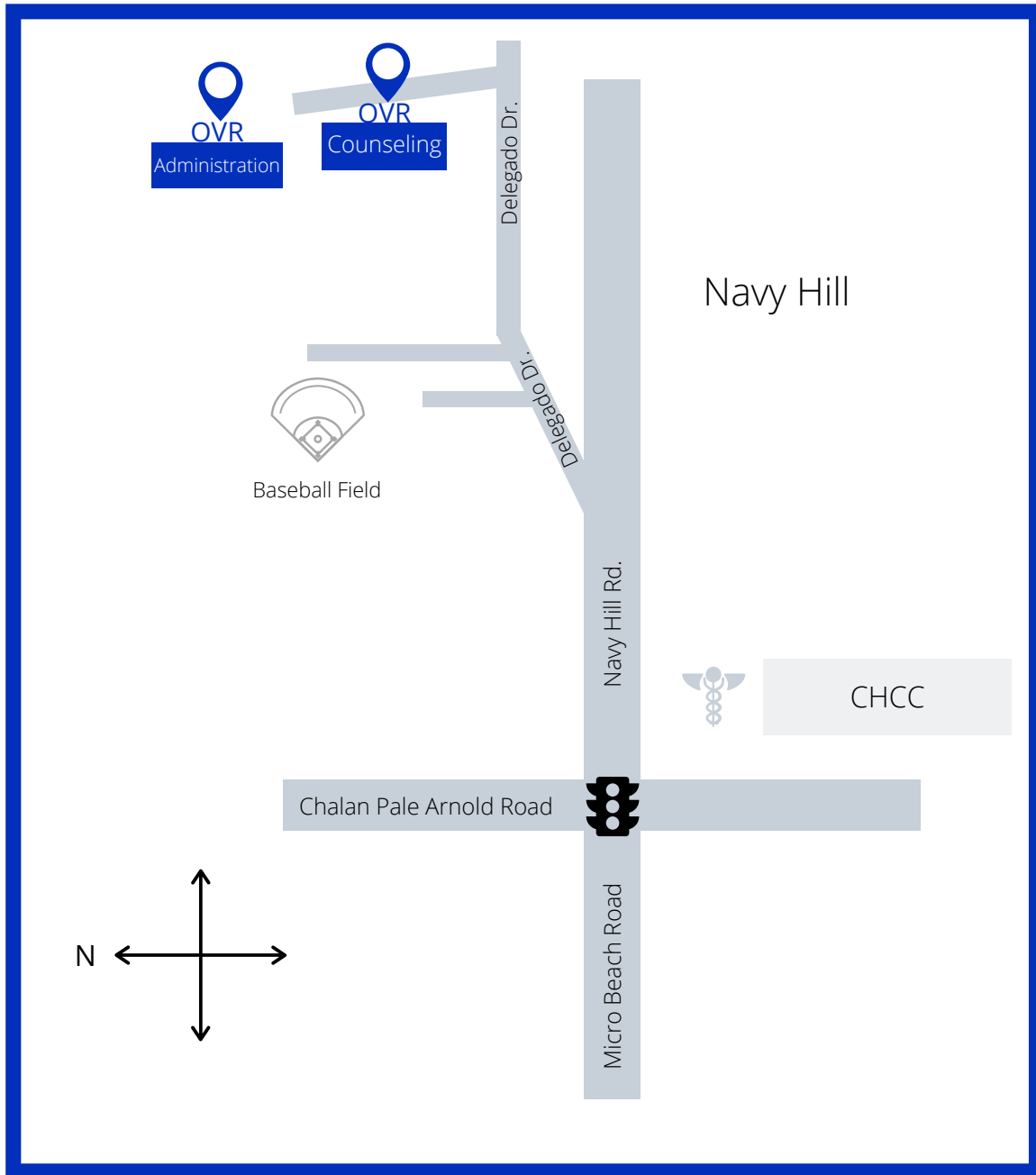
OVR and Office on Aging form a partnership to work hand-in-hand to ensure that the needs of our man'amko's in the CNMI are met.



OVR was able to engage with Congressman Kili Sablan and his staff to collaborate on how OVR can better serve Veterans and Service Members with disabilities.



Tinian Jr. Sr. High School opens your doors to VR's Work Experience Training Program, to learn basic skills in employment as they transition to success.



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

