

## New Mexico Commission for the Blind

### Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The Commission for the Blind equips persons who are blind or visually impaired to obtain employment at high wages and that is commensurate with their interests, abilities and informed choice. The Commission's performance must be gauged in light of the historically high rates of unemployment caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. Persons who are blind tend to be the last hired and the first fired. Government agencies are also more receptive to hiring persons with blindness and visual impairments, and reductions in government spending have negatively impacted on our employment outcomes.

### Independent Living and Older Blind

The Commission's independent living services helps blind persons to live in their own homes and communities, and helps many blind seniors delay or avoid transitioning to a nursing home or assisted living facility. Approximately 3.5% of Americans over 65 are legally blind, and there are about 31,000 persons 65 and over in New Mexico who have serious difficulty seeing. This population is at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and the Commission limited in-person contacts even before the first stay-at-home orders were issued. The primary causes of vision loss among seniors are age-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma. The pandemic is causing many persons to delay routine health screening, and it is likely that we will see increased numbers of persons with blindness due to glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. The pandemic will likely cause the Commission to fall below target for SFY 2021.

## Performance Measures

### 1. Average hourly wage for blind or visually impaired persons

SFY20 target: \$15.00

SFY20 Actual: \$18.42

SFY21 target: \$16.00

SFY21 Actual: TBD

Proposed SFY22 Target: \$16.00

### 2. Number of persons who avoided or delayed moving into a nursing home or assisted living facility as a result of receiving independent living services

SFY20 target: 95,

SFY20 Actual: 215

SFY21 target: 125

SFY21 Actual: TBD

Proposed SFY22 Target: 150

### 3. Number of quality employment opportunities obtained for agency's blind or visually impaired clients

SFY20 target: 20,

SFY20 Actual: 15

SFY21 target: 20

SFY21 Actual: TBD

Proposed SFY22 Target: 15

### 4. Number of blind or visually impaired clients trained in the skills of blindness to enable them to live independently in their homes and communities

SFY20 target: 540

SFY20 Actual: 471

SFY21 target: 540

SFY21 Actual: TBD

Proposed SFY22 Target: 525