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## New Mexico Residents with Disabilities Meet Continued Resistance When Seeking Work

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Of the 84,000 New Mexico residents with disabilities, there are only 25,000 who find sustainable employment. That is to say, more than 70% of the entire disabled population of New Mexico is unable to find work. In nearby counties alone, there are 24,000 capable residents with disabilities who face struggles every day as they search for ways to break through the myriad barriers to successful work outcomes.



The New Mexico Workforce Connection, Northern Area, has partnered with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to do something about this. They are working to educate area employers to dispel the myth that people with disabilities are harder and more trouble to employ. Fanny Pearce, the Santa Fe One Stop's Navigator states, "This is simply not the case...the US Chamber of Commerce conducted a national study finding that persons with disabilities tend to remain on the job longer and maintain better levels of attendance than persons without disabilities. The average amount of outlay for reasonable accommodations is less than \$100, which dispels the myth that it is expensive to hire someone with a disability. Actually, the reverse is true. Employers who hire persons with disabilities can be eligible for tax credits and other such benefits."

When area resident, Albino Lucero, experienced resistance from local employers because of his deafness when he was seeking work, he was referred by DVR Counselor, Monica Montoya to the Workforce Connection's Santa Fe One Stop. The Workforce Connection partners with DVR to have an onsite Navigator to assist those participants with disabilities who are using the career services at the Santa Fe One Stop. Their Navigator works with the One Stop to place qualified, job-ready applicants, such as Mr. Lucero, in available positions and can benefit area businesses by linking them with qualified professionals and evaluating the accessibility of their workplace.

Mr. Lucero is an eager and motivated worker and is seeking steady, full-time employment in his field of construction and manual labor. His biggest challenge right now is finding steady work. He says many area employers are not sure how they can accommodate an employee with deafness. Mr. Lucero goes on to say, "It's been hard to find work here. I keep applying, and the companies ask who's going to pay for the interpreter. I think they fail to realize I do not need an interpreter all the time...just in the beginning for orientation or for special meetings."

When asked what kind of work he would like to secure, Mr. Lucero states, "I have worked in construction for many years. I am a motivated employee. I like hands-on work and am interested in learning new trades, like installing windows, pipe-fitting, and setting up electrical wires in houses and businesses, but I can work in any field...I want to find work in the community of Santa Fe. If I could find work here, I'd give back and show others [with deafness] they can do this, too."

Michelle Tschanz, Career Development Specialist at the Santa Fe One Stop, is working closely with DVR Counselor, Monica Montoya, and Navigator, Fanny Pearce, to find the best possible job for Mr. Lucero. Ms. Tschanz met with Mr. Lucero recently to go over his career objectives and screen him for pre-employment with area companies. "We remain hopeful that we can find work for Mr. Lucero soon. He is a capable employee and any employer would be lucky to have him on board."

The Santa Fe One Stop holds WIA Orientations every Monday at 9:00 a.m. and Wednesday at 1:00 p.m. to assist job seekers in the Santa Fe area. The One Stop is located at 2904 Rodeo Park Drive East, Suite 300, at the intersection of Sawmill and Rodeo Rd. To learn more about the New Mexico Workforce Connection's myriad career development and placement services or DVR's Navigator program, please call (505) 473-5831.

**Photo Caption:** Albino Lucero meets with Michelle Tschanz, Career Development Specialist at the Santa Fe One Stop, to prepare for pre-employment testing. Cathleen Rooney signs for Mr. Lucero while Michelle explains the testing instructions.

***About the New Mexico Workforce Connection, Northern Area***

The New Mexico Workforce Connection, Northern Area, is funded by the Northern Area Local Workforce Development Board. Their 10 fully accessible One Stops are located in Santa Fe, Espanola, Los Alamos, Taos, Las Vegas, Mora, Raton, Farmington, Gallup, and Grants. The One Stops are staffed by career development specialists to offer free career, training, and placement services to employers and unemployed and dislocated workers in the 10-county area.