



Partners for Employment

FY25 Annual Report

July 2024 - June 2025



CENTER FOR
DEVELOPMENT
& DISABILITY

Table of Contents

Who We Are	2
The Partners for Employment (PFE) Steering Committee	3
The UNM Partners for Employment Team	4
PFE Master Training Plan	7
Foundational Trainings	8
Introduction to Employment Services (IES)	
College of Employment Services	
Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) Certificates	
Development of a New Mexico ACRE Curriculum	
Credentialed Employment Supports Professional (CESP)	
Continuing Education	12
Monthly Training Series	
Networking and Information-Sharing	13
Supported Employment Local Leaders (SELL) Meetings	
Partners for Employment Website	
Partners for Employment Training Portal	
New Mexico FINDER	
School-to-Work Transition	16
School-to-Work Transition Teams (SWTT)	
Project SEARCH	
Online Resources	20
Online/On-Demand Trainings	
Employment First in New Mexico	
Working with DDSD and NMDVR	
Social Security Benefits and Employment	
Community Mapping	
Topics in School-to-Work Transition Video Series	
PFE Newsletter	
Leadership Development	23
New Mexico Training Associates (NMTA)	
<i>Reaching New Heights in Supported Employment</i> Conference	
Overall Reach	27
Looking Ahead	31

Who We Are

Founded in 2013, Partners for Employment (PFE) is a statewide collaborative to improve competitive and integrated employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In keeping with New Mexico's Employment First policy, we believe people with disabilities should have the support to pursue a rewarding life in their communities, including pathways to competitive, integrated employment. PFE provides training, resources, and technical assistance to agencies and individuals who are building their capacity to deliver high quality Supported Employment, Community Inclusion, and School-to-Work Transition Services.

Our partners include:

- The University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability (UNM CDD)
- New Mexico Health Care Authority/Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD)
- New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR)

PFE is operated by UNM CDD and funded by DDSD and NMDVR. UNM CDD is New Mexico's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). There are 67 UCEDDs in total, one in every US state and territory. UCEDDs provide training, technical assistance, service, research, and information sharing to support individuals with developmental disabilities.

We advance promising practices for inclusive employment throughout New Mexico. We work to build the capacity of the following stakeholder groups:

- Individuals with disabilities
- Family members
- Providers/Vendors
- Guardians
- Advocates
- Case Managers/Consultants/Community Supports Coordinators
- Teachers/educators
- DDSD Staff and
- NMDVR Staff



The Partners for Employment (PFE) Steering Committee

Partners for Employment's work is guided by continuous input from the members of the PFE Steering Committee. The Steering Committee meets at least once every month to review progress on contract deliverables, to discuss issues and opportunities in New Mexico's supported employment and school-to-work transition systems, and to develop training projects.

PFE would like to thank the following FY25 Steering Committee members for their ongoing commitment to elevating the field of Supported Employment and School-to-Work Transition services in New Mexico.

New Mexico Health Care Authority/Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (DDSD)

Christina Hill, Deputy Bureau Chief, Community Programs Bureau

Alix Dean, Statewide Community Inclusion/Supported Employment Lead

Adam Shand, Advocate Trainer

New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation/Public Education Department

Kathy Abernathy, Rehabilitation Services Unit Staff Manager

Antoinette Holmes, Deputy Director of Rehabilitation Services Unit Statewide Programs

Christine Fuller, Supported Employment/Deaf & Hard of Hearing Coordinator

Shannon O'Quinn, Supported Employment Coordinator

Charlene Chavez, Statewide Transition Coordinator

Rudy Grano, Field Operations Director

Mario Lucero, Field Operations Director

Dominique Nunez, Staff Development Trainer

Monica Moya, Staff Development Trainer

The UNM Partners for Employment Team



Carrie Walter, MEd, is the Family and Community Partnerships Division Director at the University of New Mexico's Center for Development and Disability. The division houses Partners for Employment, the Mi Via and Supports Waiver programs, and the library and Information Network at the center. Carrie has 30 years of experience supporting people with developmental disabilities at the county, state, and University levels. Carrie is a Credentialed Employment Support Professional (CESP) and believes that everyone can work!



Marcy Hintz, BA Secondary English Education, MA Clinical Psychology, CESP, is the Partners for Employment Education and Outreach Manager. Before joining Partners for Employment (PFE) in 2016, Marcy worked in both high school and college settings as a classroom teacher, program manager, and mental health counselor for transition-age youth and families. Within PFE, Marcy has overseen New Mexico's Project SEARCH programs and led School-to-Work Transition Teams (SWTTs). Marcy enjoys building on the strong leadership of New Mexico's Supported Employment community by maintaining a culture of learning, expertise, and chances to grow.



Monica Elsbrock serves as a Program Manager for PFE's training initiatives. Monica has 35 years of experience working for individuals with disabilities as they build careers of their choosing. She has worked with some of the largest non-profits in the country, creating, implementing and managing Community Employment Programs. Monica has a BS from the University of New Mexico and is very happy to work at her alma mater.



Naomi Sandweiss Willie serves as Program Manager for PFE's School-to-Work initiatives. The PFE School-to-Work team coordinates statewide School-to-Work transition teams, Project SEARCH, and produces training modules on transition-related topics. Prior to joining PFE, Naomi served as Executive Director at Parents Reaching Out (PRO) for seven years during which she was involved in a number of statewide initiatives for young people with disabilities. Previously, Naomi worked as a non-profit program manager, college career counselor, and ran youth-serving programs for UNM. Naomi holds an MA in Education.



Alex Rios is a Training and Development Consultant for Partners for Employment. Alex has a Master of Public Health degree and is a Credentialed Employment Supports Professional (CESP). Alex has experience working as an employment consultant and in implementing Project SEARCH. She serves as New Mexico's statewide Project SEARCH Coordinator.

The UNM Partners for Employment Team



Amanda Cowan is a Training and Development Consultant with Partners for Employment. Amanda uses her background in critical intercultural communication to build inclusive and equitable practices in educational spaces. Amanda has led PFE's College of Employment Services and is PFE's liaison with the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) on the Credentialed Employment Support Professional (CESP) exam and certification process.



Deborah Lassiter is an Education Specialist with Partners for Employment. In her role, she works alongside PFE's College of Employment Services team. She has a BS in Psychology and worked in education before entering this field in 1999. She enjoys training on Customized and Integrated Employment best practices and sharing resources and tools to support professionals in the field.



Jun Dai, B.M. Information Management & Information System, M.A. Family & Child Studies, joined the Partners for Employment team as a Education Specialist in October 2022. She is a Credentialed Family Life Educator (CFLA) and holds an Association of Community Rehabilitation Educator (ACRE) certificate. Jun works on projects related to school-to-work transition and supports all regions in New Mexico.



Shiloh Burton, is an Education Specialist with Partners for Employment, supporting the School-to-Work Transition Team and handling marketing and communications. They bring 16 years of experience as a CTE instructor in Arts, Media & Entertainment, and have worked with unhoused youth in San Francisco. Since moving to Albuquerque in 2022, Shiloh has held roles at the National Hispanic Cultural Center and the Department of Workforce Solutions. They hold a BA from Bard College, an MFA from San Jose State, and multiple certifications. Shiloh is passionate about social change, collective action and narrative sovereignty (storytelling).



Alma Gamboa, is an Education Specialist with Partners for Employment. She is part of PFE's College of Employment Services team. She previously worked for Albuquerque Public Schools as a Special Education teacher for 14 years. She has a BS in Education and an MA in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling. Alma is committed to lifelong learning and empowering others through education, advocacy, and personalized support.

The UNM Partners for Employment Team



Kathryn Schwaar worked as an Education Specialist with Partners for Employment through April, 2025. She helped oversee school-to-work transition team meetings and various micro trainings that educate community members about inclusion, community mapping, Employment First ideals, school-to-work transition, and working with DVR to gain better employment outcomes.



Kaitlyn Terayama served as PFE's Training Support Analyst through February, 2025. In her role, she collaborated with all PFE activities to produce and coordinate the behind the scenes communication and information-management platforms.



Master Training Plan

In 2018, Partners for Employment developed a **Master Training Plan** to address the diverse training needs of employment support professionals in New Mexico. In developing this training plan, which originally addressed fiscal years 2018 through 2020, Partners for Employment conducted extensive research of exemplary Supported Employment training programs across the country, including WISE and ICI at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

The plan was updated in FY21-FY23 to address how PFE would address learners' needs, instructional design methods, and how training would be evaluated to measure increased knowledge.



In FY24 and FY25, the plan was updated again to demonstrate projected timelines and training content for FY24 and FY25 contract deliverables.

As the Master Training Plan has unfolded and PFE's work has grown, we've gained a clearer picture of the areas in which its work of capacity-building takes place. In FY25, these include:

- Foundational Training and Certificates
- Continuing Education
- Networking and Information-Sharing
- School-to-Work Transition
- Online Resources
- Leadership Development

This remainder of this report will review FY25's work inside each of these domains.



Foundational Trainings

Introduction to Employment Services (IES)

IES is a new training created by Partners for Employment in FY25 to address a growing need for “get-up and go” tools among family members, educators, employers, and others who are brand new to the field of Supported Employment. Prior to attending the 3-hour instructor-led training, participants are provided a link to view PFE’s “Introduction to Employment First” recorded training. This equips them with a foundational understanding of Employment First values. Then, in the instructor-led course, learners are given brief instruction and an accompanying tool for these on-the-job skills:

- Person-Centered Planning
- Building Relationships with Employers
- Supporting and Employee’s Job Placement
- Supporting an Employee’s Long-Term Success

In FY25, the pilot year of this course, attendance was as follows:

October 15, 2025	9 attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Mi Via case consultant• 3 school-based transition staff• 4 provider agency staff• 1 New Mexico Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
March 27, 2025	12 attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 NMDVR• 1 case manager• 9 provider agency staff
May 22, 2025	13 attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 DDSD• 1 school-based transition staff• 3 case managers• 8 provider agency staff

College of Employment Services (CES)

CES is an Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) credentialed training that PFE first implemented during the summer of 2018. This online course was developed by the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston. It consists of 11 self-paced online modules. From this base, PFE has created a blended training that combines the online modules with 1-hour, bi-weekly online Zoom sessions that allow participants opportunities for group discussion and the practice of new skills. Over 15 weeks, learners participate in 8 hours of in person discussion in addition to 26.4 hours of online content, for a total of 34.4 hours of learning.

The following table represents attendance and completion data for FY25 CES cohorts across stakeholder groups.

	Attended	Completed all coursework
State Employees (DVR, DDSD, Workforce, other)	17	10
Provider Agency Staff	51	34
Employment Service Vendors/Independent Contractors	3	3
School-Based or Post-Secondary Employment Preparation Programs	12	9
Advocacy or Community Organizations	0	0
Family Members	0	0
Other	8	7
TOTAL	90	63

* Since the first summer 2018 cohort, 577 individuals have participated in College of Employment Services Training.

CES Satisfaction Survey

The PFE Facilitators Were:	Percentage that Strongly Agree or Agree
Knowledgeable in their topic/area.	100%
Responsive to participants' questions and needs.	100%
Well-organized.	100%
Able to present the materials in an understandable way.	100%

Zoom Discussion Sessions:	Percentage that Strongly Agree or Agree
Gave me the opportunity to apply what I had learned in the online session.	100%
Helped me understand supported employment issues.	100%
Provided me the opportunity to have my questions answered.	100%
Provided me the opportunity to network and learn from my peers.	97%
Contributed to the overall success of the whole program.	100%

CES participant comments:

- *“As someone who is new to supported services and intellectual disabilities, I gained a lot of information and insight about the role of my job coach position.”*
- *“This course strengthened my ability to navigate community resources so that my own career and family roles will be strengthened.”*
- *“I truly enjoyed the class and the instructors. They were well organized and listened well which helped the participants feel very comfortable being involved.”*
- *“The course materials and added information were provided in a positive and thoughtful manner. There was always ample opportunity to engage and interact in classroom discussion.”*

Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) Certificate

The Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) awards nationally recognized Certificates of Achievement to employment professionals. This certificate documents that the employment professional has satisfactorily completed a minimum of 40 hours of training or professional development provided by an ACRE-approved training resource. Partners for Employment offers ACRE-approved training via the College of Employment Services, followed by scholarship opportunities for individuals to pursue an ACRE certificate.

Individuals who utilize a PFE scholarship to pursue an ACRE certificate must then complete additional coursework to demonstrate a thorough understanding of Supported Employment best practices. Throughout this process, participants receive individualized technical assistance from PFE in setting up their account, accessing their coursework through a designated website, technical assistance in understanding their ACRE grades and submitting ACRE coursework, monthly progress reports, monthly question and answer sessions, and individualized assistance to understand the requirements for successfully obtaining an ACRE certificate.

In FY25, 6 FY25 CES cohort graduates obtained their ACRE certificates. An additional 13 NMDVR staff members completed all CES coursework and 1 NMDVR cohort participant obtained their ACRE certificate. At the end of the fiscal year, New Mexico had a total of 320 professionals listed in the national ACRE certificate registry.

Development of a New Mexico ACRE Curriculum

In FY24, PFE began a three-year process of designing and implementing its own 40-course hour ACRE curriculum. The curriculum will incorporate all ACRE learning competencies and will be structured around online/on-demand video modules, facilitator-led discussion sessions, and skill-based assignments. The course will also prioritize accessibility features for diverse learners, cultural competencies for New Mexico's diverse and rural regions, and connection to New Mexico resources.

In the second year of designing this course, PFE (in conjunction with the wider UNM Center for Development and Disability), identified the Learning Management System (LMS) that will house the NM ACRE course and learner records. They also assembled course content, cataloguing it according to its ACRE competency, and organizing it into a syllabus. They also constructed an approach toward measuring learners' skills gains. In early June, PFE showed an early draft of the NM ACRE course to DDSD and NMDVR funders.

Credentialed Employment Support Professional (CESP)

Partners for Employment also provides scholarships for the Credentialed Employment Support Professional (CESP) examination for employment professionals in New Mexico. This credential was established by the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) and is recognized as the national standard of knowledge for employment support professionals to demonstrate the skills and competence necessary to perform the requirements of the job. Partners for Employment provides scholarships to support the cost of examination fees. In FY25, no new individuals obtained their CESP certificate. PFE supported 6 current CESP holders to renew their CESP credential. At the end of the fiscal year, New Mexico had a total of 41 professionals who hold the CESP credential.

Continuing Education

Monthly Training Series

In FY25, PFE partnered with WISE (formerly known as the Washington Initiative for Supported Employment) to host three training series. The trainings were led by WISE staff and enhanced by the local knowledge and experience of various Employment Specialists across New Mexico.

The following table presents FY25’s three training series, their attendance numbers, and the stakeholder groups in New Mexico who contributed to the content of each training.

Series 1 September to November 21 Century Skills for Employment Specialists: Communication and Technology Average attendance - 28 Trainings led by Partners for Employment	Series 2 January to March Empowering Individuals with Skills to Regulate Emotions, Responsibilities, and Relationships Average attendance - 64 Trainings led by Wise with co-facilitating from resource agencies in New Mexico	Series 3 April to June Empowering Individuals to be Self-Advocates in and out of the Workplace Average attendance - 39 Trainings led by Wise with co-facilitating from resource agencies in New Mexico
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WISE Satisfaction Survey

Because I attended this session...	Percentage that Strongly Agree or Agree
I have gained valuable knowledge and skills.	100%
There will be a positive impact on my professional work.	100%
Overall, I am satisfied with the session.	100%

Networking and Information-Sharing

Supported Employment Local Leaders (SELL)

Partners for Employment facilitates the collaborative peer networking opportunities of employment providers to increase statewide capacity through ongoing peer networking and informational meetings. As interagency meetings shifted to an online format in 2020-21, PFE shifted Supported Employment Local Leaders (SELL) meetings to an online, statewide format in FY22 to facilitate their accessibility to a wider audience. Statewide SELL meetings include local community agency providers, advocacy/family organization members, business representatives, and state agency partners.

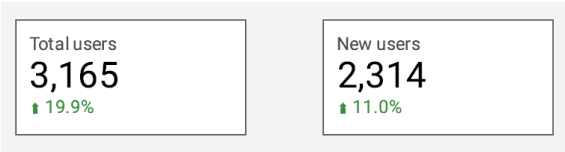
PFE hosted 4 statewide SELL team meetings in FY25 with an average attendance of 57 people per meeting.

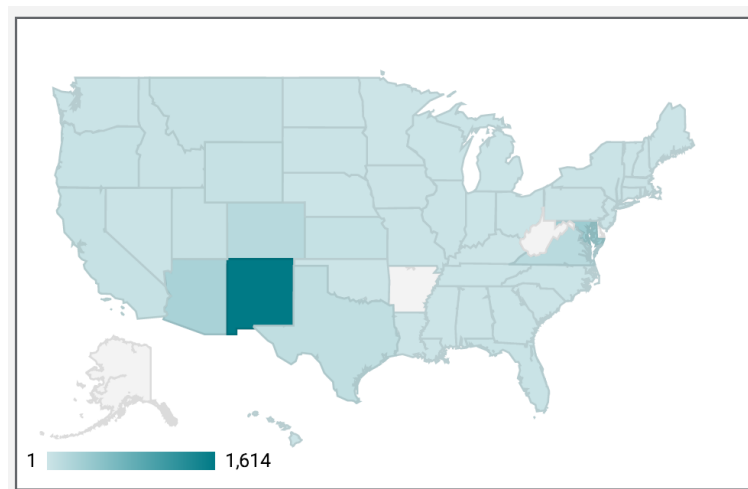
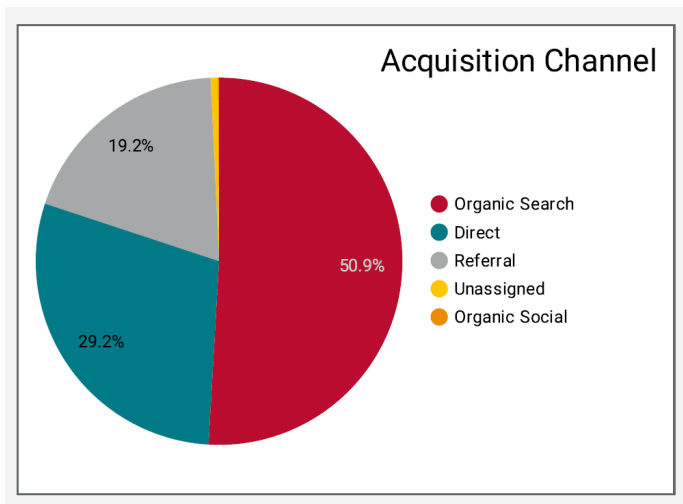
Supported Employment Local Leaders Annual Satisfaction Survey Results	Percentage that Strongly Agree or Agree
Because I participated in SELL, I have gained valuable knowledge and skills.	92%
Because I participated in SELL, there will be a positive impact on my professional work.	92%

Partners for Employment Website

In FY25, Partners for Employment launched a revamp of its [Partners for Employment website](#) that prioritizes a strong Employment First message, information about careers in supported employment, and a clearer organization of Partners for Employment trainings and resources relative to a parent’s or professional’s role in supporting competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. The PFE website also hosts a dynamic training calendar featuring registration links to all upcoming, live PFE training events.

The following data reflects traffic on the Partners for Employment website in FY25:





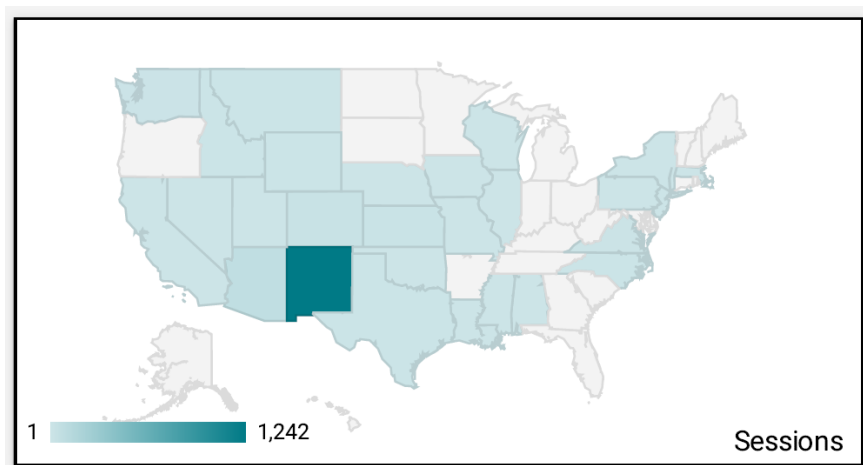
* log-ons to the PFE website throughout the U.S..

Partners for Employment Training Portal

In addition to revamping its main website in FY25, Partners for Employment also launched a [PFE Training Portal](#) – an online, catalogued repository of all PFE recorded trainings and resources. Whereas the PFE website is designed for a public audience who are perhaps discovering PFE and Employment First for the first time, the Training Portal is designed for stakeholders who are familiar with PFE offerings, and want to dig deeper into training offerings.

A link to the Training Portal is built into the main PFE website. It's also accessible, without a password, on its own.

The following data reflects traffic to the PFE Training Portal in FY25:



* log-ons to the PFE Training Portal throughout the U.S..

Page	Page Views
/pfe/	1,104
/pfe/school-to-work-resources/	534
/pfe/public-training-library/	312
/pfe/foundational-trainings/	277
/pfe/pfe-calendar-of-events/	226
/pfe/trainings-with-learning-certificates/	178
/pfe/public-training-library/social-security-benefits-and-employment-training/	112
/pfe/networking-and-leadership-development/	77
/pfe/public-training-library/employment-first-in-new-mexico/	51
/pfe/state-and-national-resources/	51

* Individual page views on the PFE Training Portal.

New Mexico FINDER

In FY25, Partners for Employment continued to promote New Mexico Disability Resource FINDER at SELL and SWTT networking meetings. NM FINDER is a statewide directory of disability-related resources and events. Organizations and individuals are able to upload resources and events available in their local community and search for resources and events happening elsewhere in the state on behalf of job-seekers they serve.



School-to-Work Transition

School-to-Work Transition Teams (SWTT) Meetings

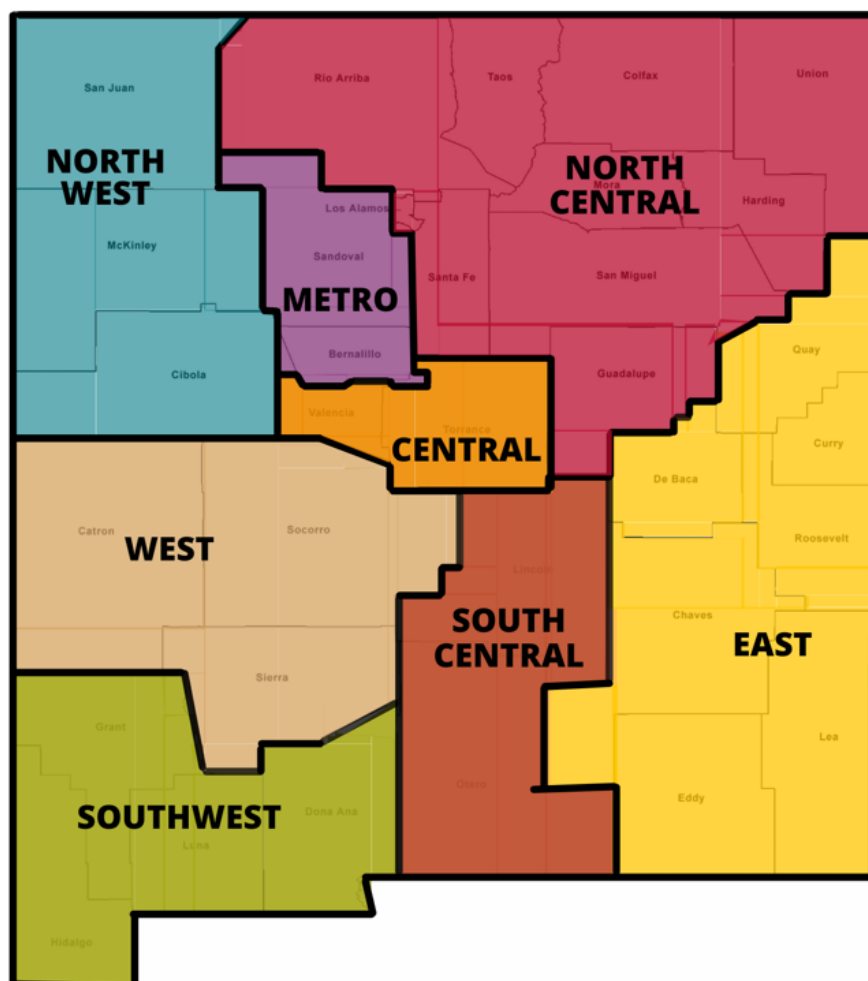
In support of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act's (WIOA) mandate for coordinated services among agencies supporting transition age youth, Partners for Employment facilitates collaborative networking meetings for schools, state agencies, local provider agencies, advocacy organizations, civic group leaders, and business representatives who play a role in supporting youth with disabilities' transition to adulthood.

In FY25, PFE coordinated the meetings of 8 School-to-Work Transition Teams.

Topics addressed in FY25 meetings included:

- Focused training and resources on self-determination and student-led IEPs.
- The use of technology in the job market, with a focus on AI and other resources.
- Resources, services, and opportunities for collaboration from Workforce/America's Job Centers

FY25 SWTT teams covered the following regions:



School-to-Work Transition Team Annual Satisfaction Survey Results	Percentage Agree or Strongly Agree
Because I participated in SWTT, there's been a positive impact on my delivery of school-to-work transition services.	94%
Because I participated in SWTT, my understanding of agencies' different roles in supporting successful school-to-work transition has increased.	93%
Because I participated in SWTT, I am connected to resources in my community that will benefit the young adult I serve.	100%
Overall, I am satisfied with the information-sharing and collaboration provided by this School-to-Work Transition team.	100%

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is an internationally-adopted, evidence-based school-to-work internship model for youth with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 22. The program takes place at a host business and is a full collaboration of an interagency Steering Committee with representatives from a local school district, NMDVR, DDS, a local long term provider agency, the host business, and the UNM CDD. These agencies work together to provide workplace education and community-based support to students in three 10-week rotations over the course of the year. Students learn different employability skills in each rotation, with the overall goal of obtaining competitive employment by the end of the internship. In alignment with the Pre-Employment Transition Service goals outlined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Partners for Employment coordinates training and ongoing professional development in the Project SEARCH model for New Mexico's seven Project SEARCH teams. Partners for Employment also provides each team with technical assistance to establish internal processes, shared documents and resources, and a continuous plan for improvement.



Since its inception in 2015, 147 New Mexico Project SEARCH graduates have achieved competitive employment in their communities, working at least 16 hours per week, at or above minimum wage. New Mexico Project SEARCH teams have also received national awards, presented at statewide and national conferences, and contributed to national Project SEARCH work committees.

Project SEARCH notable outcomes in FY25:

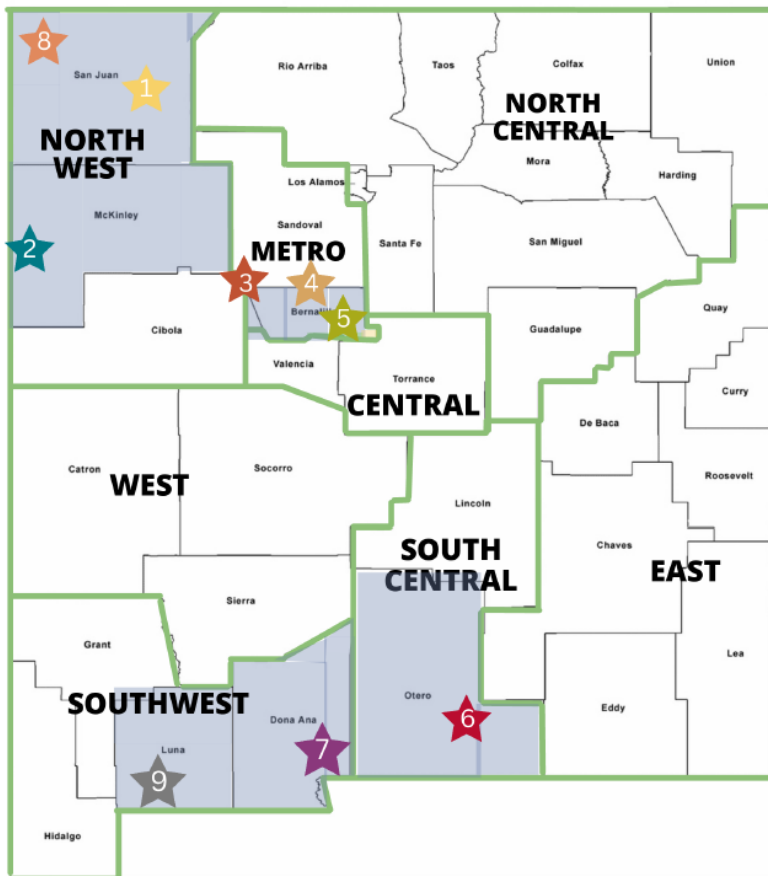
- **Impact on Employment Outcomes:** 27 Project SEARCH interns from the class of 2024 were hired in competitive, integrated jobs in FY25.
- **Impact on Professional Growth:** 5 New Mexico Project SEARCH sites presented at the July FY25 Project SEARCH national conference.
- **Impact on Businesses and Communities:**
 - Gallup Project SEARCH expanded their employer reach to include Sun Capital Hotels, parent company to Fairfield Inn & Suites, which operates hotels across New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado.
 - Managers and staff from 15 different City of Deming departments participated in Project SEARCH internship development for the launch of their site in fall 2025. The City of Deming is also coordinating city transportation for Project SEARCH.



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NM PROJECT SEARCH SITES



OPERATING SITES:

1. Farmington Municipal Services, Farmington NM

Program Contact- Chelsea Chairion: cchairion@fms.k12.nm.us

2. Hilton Garden Inn, Gallup NM

Program Contact- David Palenschat, dpalensch@gmcs.k12.nm.us

3. Presbyterian Rust Medical Center, Rio Rancho NM

Program Contacts- Theresa Griffin-Golden, theresa.Golden@rrps.net, Ben Vigil, benjamin.vigil@rrps.net

4. Embassy Suites Hotel, Albuquerque NM

Program Contact- Terry Moore teresa.moore@aps.edu

5. UNM Hospital, Albuquerque NM

Program Contact- Brian Love, brian.Love@aps.edu

6. Holloman Air Force Base, Alamogordo NM

Program Contact- Lisa Jones, lisa.jones@dvr.nm.gov

7. The Hive Education, Sunland Park, NM

Program Contact -Patricia Garcia, pgarcia@gisd.k12.nm.us

8. Central Consolidated School District, Shiprock, NM

Program Contact: Alex Rios, aerios@salud.unm.edu

SITES IN DEVELOPMENT:

9. City of Deming, Deming NM

Program Contact: Alex Rios, aerios@salud.unm.edu

Project SEARCH Annual Satisfaction Survey Results	Percentage Agree or Strongly Agree
Increased my knowledge of how to support successful School-to-Work transition.	100%
Had a positive impact on my ability to support successful School-to-Work transition.	100%
Overall, I'm satisfied with the technical assistance I received.	100%



Online Resources

Online/On-Demand Trainings

Employment First in New Mexico

In FY25, Partners for Employment redesigned this recorded online training. In the redesign, they retained all foundational information about national and state history related to DDSD's 2016 adoption of Employment First in its DD waiver standards, while updating the training to reflect New Mexico Healthcare Authority branding.

The training is accessible through the Partners for Employment Training Portal as both a registration-based training leading to a certificate of learning hours, and as a training requiring no registration for the general learning public.



Working with DDSD and NMDVR

This online training is available on demand via the Partners for Employment training portal. The training provides an overview of accessing supported employment services through the New Mexico Health Care Authority/Developmental Disabilities Supports Division and the New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. An online test and certificate of completion are available to those participants who register through Partners for Employment's registration and learning management system. In FY25, 12 professionals have successfully registered for the training and passed the skill check.

Social Security Benefits and Employment Training Series

In FY25, Partners for Employment updated this 5-part online/on-demand training series addressing common questions related to Social Security Benefits and employment. Each video is less than 15 minutes long and is designed to give teachers, counselors, case

managers, employment specialists, and family members basic information to combat myths and connect to personalized Benefits services.

Part One: General Knowledge about Social Security Benefits

Part Two: Dispelling Myths about Social Security Benefits and Work

Part Three: Case Study: Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Work Incentives

Part Four: Case Study: Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Work Incentives

Part Five: Getting Personal Social Security Advisement

The Social Security Benefits and Employment Training Series is posted in the DDS Training Portal and on the Partners for Employment website.

In addition to these 5 short recorded trainings, Partners for Employment offers 12 Social Security Benefits tip sheets on its website. Six of these tip sheets are available in both English and Spanish. In FY25, Partners for Employment reviewed these tip sheets, updating content to reflect FY25 Social Security Administration information as needed. Topics include:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Social Security Benefits - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- ABLE Accounts and Social Security
- Age 18 Redetermination for SSI
- Social Security Timelines
- 1619(b) Supplemental Security Income Work Incentive
- Student Earned Income Exclusion (SEIE)
- Ticket to Work

Community Mapping Training Series

This online training is available on demand via the Partners for Employment website. The training addresses person-centered planning, community inclusion, and tools to identify and pursue community-based interests in collaboration with individuals utilizing services. An online test and certificate of completion are available to participants who register through Partners for Employment's learning management system. In FY25, 54 professionals registered for the training and passed the skill check.

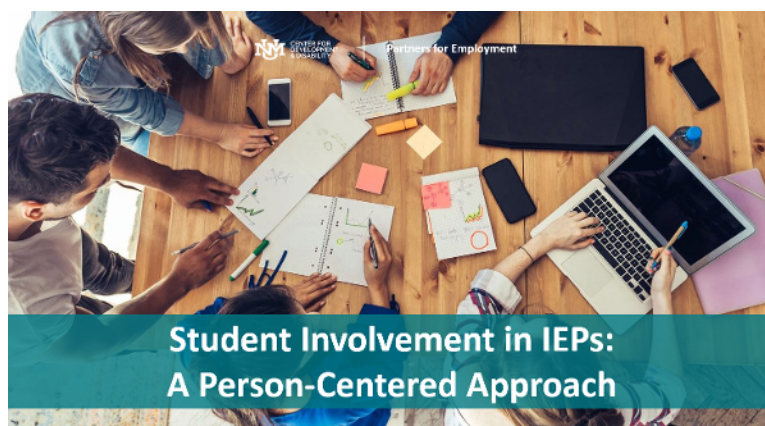
School-to-Work Transition Training Videos

In 2025, PFE produced three new video trainings addressing issues in school-to-work transition:

- Supported Decision Making for Individuals with Disabilities
- Student Involvement in IEPs: A Person-Centered Approach
- Best Practices in School-to-Work Transition Planning

Each video is roughly 20 minutes long and combines instructional information with interviews featuring the lived experience of youth, family members, and professionals. In creating the videos, PFE consulted with representatives from the New Mexico Public Education

Department, the New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Council, and with a 2025 trainee from New Mexico LEND. All three videos will be posted to the PFE training portal in FY26, where they will be available on-line and on-demand.



PFE Newsletter

PFE produces a monthly newsletter through Constant Contact. In FY25, the monthly newsletter's contact list maintained a steady number of roughly 2050 professionals and family members. The monthly newsletter is PFE's primary written communication to a wide stakeholder base of all upcoming PFE training events, online resources, and initiatives at the state and national level in support of Employment First.

Leadership Development

New Mexico Training Associates (NMTA)

New Mexico Training Associates (NMTA) is an initiative developed to identify, train, and catalyze the leadership of young career Supported Employment advocates and professionals in New Mexico. Qualified participants have either completed College of Employment Service training and/or received their CESP or ACRE credential; or have demonstrated sustained engagement in Partners for Employment (PFE) training and networking activities. Participants are paired with a mentor from the PFE staff who guides them in selecting a professional development exercise related to their professional interests and in developing a capstone training presentation which is given at the Partners for Employment *Reaching New Heights in Supported Employment* conference.

In FY25, the following individuals participated in PFE's NMTA program:

- Samuel Emord - Job Developer, Mandy's Farm
- Maxine Cordova - Transition Specialist, Rio Rancho Public Schools

Between December and April, NMTA participants met regularly with their PFE staff mentors to hone and develop the trainings they presented at the *Reaching New Heights in Supported Employment* conference. Following the conference, their trainings were recorded and posted on the PFE website. The NMTAs' trainings were as follows:

- Samuel Emord - *Whole Systems, Whole People*
- Maxine Cordova - *Breaking Barriers for a Successful Transition to Adulthood*

Reaching New Heights in Supported Employment Conference

PFE's sixth annual Reaching New Heights in Supported Employment conference took place April 10-11, 2025 in Bernalillo, New Mexico. One hundred seventy-five (175) participants representing state agencies engaged in employment services, local provider agencies, advocacy organizations, and school districts attended the conference.

The conference was headlined by Kyle Stepp, an elite para-athlete from New Mexico who has worked with New Mexico's legislature, businesses, and not-for-profits to expand access to community-integrated recreation for all abilities. Kaity Ellis, a self-advocate who has utilized NMDVR services to establish a career with Disability Rights New Mexico and most currently with the Office of Special Education in the New Mexico Public Education Department, closed the conference on Day 2.

Notable outcomes from the FY25 Reaching New Heights in Supported Employment conference included:

- Of the 175 in attendance 37% represented state agencies, 31% represented Employment Provider agencies or vendors, 30% represented school-based transition program educators. Attendance among stakeholder groups was evenly distributed.

- 8 Employment Providers who live more than 75 miles from the conference site were able to take advantage of a scholarship to cover the cost of overnight lodging at the conference.
- Breakout session presentations featured diverse regions, stakeholders, and issues in Supported Employment and School-to-Work Transition, including presentations from:
 - Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation
 - New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Council
 - New Mexico Ombud for Special Education
 - DDSD Technology First Task Force
 - Pauline Lucero, Director of Corazon Counseling and DDSD Friends and Relationships course leader, on “supporting relational connections” for people with ID/D.
 - Direct Service Providers who participated in the New Mexico Training Associate program
- In two main session presentations, attendees received procedural information and outcome data from PFE, DVR, and DDSD, in a way that demonstrated the working partnership among the three agencies.
- In a 1-hr Q&A session, conference participants were able to ask questions of NMDVR and DDSD. Throughout the conference, attendees also had a chance to debrief conference sessions with fellow attendees from different organizations.
- 13 Community Providers and 3 artisans who are supported by DD waiver services attended as vendors; attendees had opportunity to gather information and purchase items from them.

PowerPoint slide decks from all breakout sessions are available for download on the Partners for Employment website: [Click here](#).

Conference Satisfaction Survey Results	Percentage that Strongly Agree or Disagree
As a result of attending this conference, I learned about policies and resources that guide the practice of Supported Employment in New Mexico.	100%
As a result of attending this conference, I learned about Supported Employment's core values of equal access to employment, equal wages, and person-centeredness.	100%
As a result of attending this conference, I learned best practices in individualized employment and career planning.	100%
As a result of attending this conference, I learned strategies for researching my community and communicating with prospective employers.	100%
Overall, this conference met its learning objectives.	100%

PARTNERS FOR EMPLOYMENT

Reaching New Heights in Supported Employment Conference 2025



Let's discover what we can do together!

DAY 1 – Thursday, April 10

	8:00-9:00	Conference check-in open; breakfast	
JOINT SESSIONS	9:00-10:00	<i>A year of discovering what we can do together</i> Marcy Hintz, Partners for Employment	Vista Grande Ballroom
	10:00-11:00	<i>Opening Keynote: Beyond Limits: Transforming Challenges into Meaningful Change</i> Kyle Stepp	
	11:00-11:15	Break	
BREAKOUT SESSIONS	11:15-12:15	<i>Whole Systems, Whole People</i> Samuel Emord, Mandy's Farm 2025 New Mexico Training Associate	Sierra Blanca
		<i>DDSD's Action Steps Taken Toward Technology and What's to Come</i> Anysia Fernandez, Katherine Johnson, Aaron Joplin - DDSD	Sacramento West
		<i>How to Make a Successful Transition IEP</i> Michelle Tregembo, Office of Special Education Ombud, NM Dev. Disabilities Council	Sacramento East
	12:15-1:15	Lunch	Vista Grande Ballroom
BREAKOUT SESSIONS	1:15-2:15	<i>New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions/America's Job Center: Resources & Opportunities</i> - Veronica Alonzo, Tammy Gallegos-Burke	Sierra Blanca
		<i>Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program and Project HOPE</i> Marlencia Chee, Yolanda Toya, Alana Chinana – Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation	Sacramento West
		<i>Empowering Choice: A panel discussion on Supported Decision Making</i> New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Council	Sacramento East
	2:15-2:30	Break	
JOINT SESSION	2:30-3:30	<i>Day 1 Debrief: What have we learned together?</i> Kathryn Schwaar, Partners for Employment	Vista Grande Ballroom

DAY 2 – Friday, April 11

	8:00-9:00	Conference check-in open; light continental breakfast	
JOINT SESSION	9:00-10:00	<i>NMDVR and NM DDSD: Leveraging Collaborations for Employment</i> Shannon O'Quinn, NMDVR Supported Employment Lead Alix Dean, DDSD Statewide Community Inclusion/Supported Employment Lead	Vista Grande Ballroom
	10:00-10:15	Break	
BREAKOUT SESSIONS	10:15-11:15	<i>Breaking Barriers for a Successful Transition to Adulthood</i> Maxine Cordova, Rio Rancho Public Schools 2025 New Mexico Training Associate	Sierra Blanca
		<i>Let's have a CONVO: Communication Strategies for Interagency Collaboration</i> Amanda Cowan, Partners for Employment	Sacramento West
		<i>Building Meaningful Connections with Individuals with IDD: An Overview of the Friends and Relationships Class</i> Pauline Lucero, Corazon Training & Consulting; Jessa Walker, MA, LPC; Colleen Monaghan; Jesus Jaime; Michael Meyers	Sacramento East
LUNCH	11:15-12:30	Lunch, Artisan Market	Vista Grande Ballroom
BREAKOUT SESSIONS	12:30-1:30	<i>Q & A Session with DDSD and NMDVR</i> Shannon O'Quinn, NMDVR Supported Employment Lead Alix Dean, DDSD Statewide Community Inclusion/Supported Employment Lead Adam Shand, DDSD Advocate Trainer	Vista Grande Ballroom
		<i>Conference workshop: Beyond the Surface: An Interactive Tool for Discovery, Advocacy, and Reflection</i> Shiloh Burton, Alexandria Rios - Partners for Employment	Sacramento West and East
	1:30-1:45	Break – <i>Return to Vista Grande Ballroom at 1:45 for the raffle drawing!</i>	Vista Grande Ballroom
JOINT SESSION	2:00-3:00	<i>Closing Keynote - Empowering Change: Advocacy, Innovation, and the Path to Independence</i> Kaitlin Ellis, LMSW, ADAC, NMPED Office of Special Education	

PARTNERS FOR EMPLOYMENT

Reaching New Heights in Supported Employment Conference 2025



Keynote Speakers



Kyle Stepp is an elite para triathlete, an advocate for LGBTQA+ and disability rights, and a champion for equity in healthcare. His journey, marked by resilience and a lifetime commitment to using pain for a bigger purpose, exemplifies the power of transforming personal challenges into meaningful change. In recent years, Kyle has channeled his experience into advocating across multiple systems for the accessibility of outdoor sports and recreation for people of all abilities.



Kaitlin Ellis is a social work administrator and passionate advocate for individuals with disabilities. She describes her career path has one that has been shaped by the support of compassionate educators and her own desire to make a difference. A graduate of WNMU, Kaity has worked as a full-time advocate with Disability Rights New Mexico, and now as the Social and Community Coordinator for New Mexico Public Education, Office of Special Education.

2025 New Mexico Training Associates

Samuel Emord joined the Community Integrated Employment department at Mandy's Farm in 2021 and is currently the Development Liaison Manager supporting individuals with the transition from Job Development to successful job placement. He is born and raised in Albuquerque, NM and is an avid reader and cat dad to two rambunctious kittens. Sam will present *Whole Systems, Whole People* at 11:15 on Thursday.

Maxine Cordova has dedicated her career to supporting individuals with disabilities in finding fulfilling employment and building meaningful lives. She began her journey as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with the State of New Mexico's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, where she worked for six years. For the past ten years, she has served students and families within Rio Rancho Public Schools and is currently a social worker at the University of New Mexico Hospital (UNMH). Maxine is licensed as both an LMSW (Licensed Master Social Worker) as a Level III Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Maxine will present *Breaking Barriers for a Successful Transition to Adulthood* on Friday at 10:15

Overall Reach

In FY25, one hundred five (105) provider agencies, school districts, government agencies, advocacy organizations, colleges and universities, and employers attended Partners for Employment training events.

Provider Agencies

A Better Way of Living
Absolutely You, LLC
Adelante, Inc.
Aprendamos Family of Services
ARCA
Aspire Developmental Services
Best Buddies of New Mexico
Bright Horizons
Center for Function and Creativity
Community Options, Inc.
Dungarvin
ENMRSH, Inc.
Free Indeed, LLC
Guardian Angel Guidance
Las Cumbres Community Services
La Vida Felicidad, Inc.
Life ROOTS
Love of Rose, LLC
LSG & Associates
Mandy's Farm
Milagro De Vida
Mis Amigos Family Services
Nezzy Care
Onyx Supported Living
Peak Developmental Services

PMS Project Shield
Pomegranate Orchards
Ramah Care Services, Inc.
Tobosa Developmental Services
Zia Therapy

School Districts and Regional Education Cooperatives

Alamogordo Public Schools
Albuquerque Public School
Albuquerque Sign Language Academy
Aldo Leopold Charter School
Alma d'Arte Charter High School
American Sign Language Academy
Atrisco Heritage Academy
Aztec Municipal Schools
Bloomfield Municipal Schools
Carlsbad Municipals Schools
Carrizozo Municipal Schools
Central Consolidated School District
Central Region Educational Cooperative (CREC)
Cesar Chavez Charter School
Chaparral High School
Clovis Municipal School District
Cloudcroft Municipal Schools
Cobre Consolidated School District
Deming Public Schools
Española Public Schools
Estancia Valley Classical Academy
Farmington Municipal Schools
Gadsden Independent School District
Gallup-McKinley County Schools
Grants-Cibola County Schools
Hobbs Municipal Schools
Lake Arthur Municipal Schools
Jal Public Schools

Las Cruces High School
Las Montanas Charter High School
Los Lunas Public Schools
Mesa Vista Consolidated Schools
Mescalero Apache Schools
Montessori of the Rio Grande Charter School
New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
New Mexico School for the Deaf
Portales Municipal Schools
Rio Rancho Public Schools
Silver Consolidated Schools
Taos Academy
Truth or Consequences Municipal Schools
Wingate High School

Government Agencies and Organizations

Jemez Vocational Rehabilitation Program
Los Lunas Community Program
Navajo Nation Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (NNOSERS)
New Mexico Commission for the Blind
New Mexico Council of Administrators of Special Education
New Mexico Healthcare Authority / Developmental Disabilities Supports Division (NM HCA DDSD)
New Mexico Department of Workforce Connections
New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions
New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Council - Office of the Special Education Ombud
New Mexico Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (NMDVR)
New Mexico Governor's Commission on Disability
New Mexico Public Education Department - Special Education Division (PED/SED)
Pueblo of Acoma

Community and Advocacy Agencies

Arc of New Mexico
Assistance Dogs of the West
Education for Parents of Indian Children with Special Needs (EPICS)
El Paso Community Foundation
New Vistas
New Mexico Technology Assistance Program
Parents Reaching Out
Rocky Mountain Youth Corp
Youth Development Inc.

Employers

The University of New Mexico Hospital
Presbyterian Rust Medical Center
Central Consolidated School District
City of Deming
City of Farmington
Hilton Garden Inn - Gallup
Embassy Suites Hotel - Albuquerque
HIVE Education - Sunland Park
Holloman Air Force Base
Sun Capital Hotels

Looking Ahead

In FY26, PFE will remain dedicated to continuously improving the training and resources we provide and elevating New Mexico's capacity to deliver high quality Supported Employment and School-to-Work Transition services.

Contact Us

Email: CDD-PartnersForEmployment@salud.unm.edu

If you'd like to learn more about Partners for Employment or keep in touch, scan or click the QR code below.

Visit PFE Website



Sign Up for the PFE Mailing List



**CENTER FOR
DEVELOPMENT
& DISABILITY**

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