

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT WORK WITH THE SOUTHERN PUEBLOS COUNCIL TO EXPEDITE SERVICES AND TO OVERCOME THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DIVISION'S BARRIERS TO SERVICE.

WHEREAS, the southern pueblos council is comprised of the nine southern New Mexico Pueblos of Acoma, Cochiti, Isleta, Jemez, Sandia, San Felipe, Santa Ana, Santo Domingo and Zia and Ysleta del Sur Pueblo in Texas; and

WHEREAS, the American Indian vocational rehabilitation program of new vistas provides a liaison between Native American citizens residing on tribal lands and the public education department's vocational rehabilitation division; and

WHEREAS, the goal of the American Indian vocational rehabilitation program is to provide services to the members of nineteen pueblos and two Apache nations, a goal consistent with the vocational rehabilitation division's purpose, which is to help people with disabilities to achieve suitable employment outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the American Indian vocational rehabilitation program assists the vocational rehabilitation division in identifying needs, making referrals and coordinating services for tribal members with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, eight of the ten southern pueblos are served by four different vocational rehabilitation division area offices in Albuquerque; and

WHEREAS, according to the 2000 United States census, approximately twenty-seven percent of the population of the ten pueblos aged twenty-one to sixty-four have disabilities, and the unemployment rates of the ten pueblos range

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between thirty percent and seventy percent; and

WHEREAS, under the current vocational rehabilitation division area service plan, major barriers exist in the delivery of consistent, easily accessible, individualized and uniform services, including a lack of understanding and recognition of the unique cultural differences between tribal members;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the public education department and the vocational rehabilitation division of the public education department be requested to study ways to provide a more consistent and streamlined approach to servicing tribal members and to improve coordination and communication by recognizing the unique social, economic and cultural situations of tribal members; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the public education department and the vocational rehabilitation division be requested to study the feasibility of providing services to the southern pueblos council member tribes serviced by the Albuquerque offices through one centralized office location with one vocational counselor; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the public education department and the vocational rehabilitation division be requested to report their findings to the interim legislative Indian affairs committee before November 1, 2004; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the public education department, the vocational rehabilitation division of the public education department, the southern pueblos council and the governor.

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