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# CNMI First Lady Calls for Disability Network Collaboration to Establish One-Stop Disability Center



First Lady Diann Torres (LDTF); Dr. Carmen Fernandez (Northern Marianas College President); Floyd Masga and Jennifer-Eileen Castro (University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities); Pam Sablan (Council on Developmental Disabilities); James Rayphand and Tom Thornburg (Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc.); Arlene Yamagata (Office of Vocational Rehabilitation); Susan Satur (Center for Living Independently in the CNMI); Maryanne Arriola (Office of Grants Management); (Shevonne Castro) Voices of the CNMI; and support staff

Saipan, CNMI – January 30, 2018 – First Lady Diann Torres called for a meeting with representatives of local disability-related agencies to discuss ways in which the Lady Diann Torres Foundation (LDTF) could assist in improving services to individuals with disabilities as they transition from school to career or to higher education.

Floyd Masga and Jennifer-Eileen Castro, from the University Center for

Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) at NMC, facilitated the meeting, calling together representatives from other disability-related agencies including the Council on Developmental Disabilities (CDD), Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc. (NMPASI), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), the Center for Living Independently (CLI) and V.O.I.C.E.S – Saipan Chapter. A representative from the Grants

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Management Office under the Governor's Office also attended.

She was visibly emotional in recollecting former students with disabilities whom she taught in high school. "I've always wondered what happened to certain kids in my classes after leaving high school, whether they were able to successfully get jobs, go to college, or support their families."

Torres added, "I have this vision of a kind of one-stop center where our kids

with special needs can go once they leave school...a kind of stepping stone or training ground to help them transition into the workplace."

"Of course," she adds, "I wanted to hear from this group first... any thoughts or ideas about what is needed, but beyond that how we might be able to collaborate to help this particular population."

This initial meeting was to garner support and suggestions from current

disability partners, and to align each organization's objectives toward the realization of this collaborated effort. The group looks to explore further the feasibility of a one-stop Disability Center that would serve as a central location for the Disability Network to provide information and services to Individuals with Disabilities and service providers, with added input from representatives of the Special Education Program/Public School System, NMTI, and CoTA. Presently, they plan to reconvene for further discussion in mid-February.

After thanking the group, she shares, "This has been a dream of LDTF for a long time, and I am grateful for the overwhelming support of the CNMI Disability Network partners at today's meeting. We are all very excited to work toward this goal."

**Contact:**

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## Developmental Disabilities and Employment Awareness Month

The Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM) and National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) were both combined to make Developmental Disabilities and Employment Awareness Month (DDEAM). This was a collaboration between the Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). The brainchild of Arlene Yamagata, Director of OVR, and Pam Sablan, Director of DDC.

In celebration of Developmental Disabilities & Employment Awareness Month, the Disability Network Partners are bringing together JOBSEEKERS and EMPLOYERS for a one-day training conference on Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

### 2018 DDEAM Conference Schedule

7:30-8:00	Registration	10:15-10:30	Break (Transition to Next Session)
8:10-8:15	Welcoming Remarks	10:30-11:15	Assistive Technology & The Workplace (Ray)
8:15-8:30	Keynote Speaker (Brandon Nicholas)	11:15-12:30	Lunch
8:30-9:15	Navigating DOL/WIA System (Frances Torres)	(12:00-12:30)	Awards Ceremony
9:15-9:30	Break (Transition to Next Session)	12:30-1:15	Disability Basics (Floyd & Jennifer)
9:30-10:15	Concurrent Sessions	1:15-2:15	Resume Writing (Donna & DDEAM Members)
	1. Dress for Success / Mock Interview (Donna & Brandon)	2:15-2:30	Wrap-up & Evaluations
	2. Reasonable Accommodations		





## **A Proclamation**

### **Proclaiming March 2018 in Recognition of DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH**

The CNMI Disability Network Partners has embraced the theme “Advancing to Success” in recognition of Developmental Disabilities and Employment Awareness Month.

A talented pool of individuals with developmental or other disabilities residing in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is waiting to be tapped. The CNMI is stronger when people of all abilities are included in community life and in the workplace. When people with developmental and other disabilities are included in the workforce, they have the opportunity to earn a competitive wage and to work as part of a team. People with developmental and other disabilities who are included and active in the communities are more likely to give back to their communities.

Even to this day in the year two thousand eighteen, we are presented with a number of barriers or challenges that prevent people with developmental and other disabilities from reaching their full and maximum potential in our community including the workplace. We join our U.S. program counterparts in acknowledging the adverse impact that attitudinal barriers play not only in the lives of people with developmental and other disabilities, but in our communities as well. Despite this reality, the Disability Network Partners are committed to ensuring that we continue on our collective journey towards true unity and diversity.

During Developmental Disabilities and Employment Awareness Month, we celebrate the many talents and contributions of CNMI workers with disabilities as well as recognize the positive strides that employers have made in ensuring an all-inclusive workplace and culture. This month, please be encouraged to learn more about diversity in the workplace and decide what part you will play in this important effort.

NOW, THEREFORE, I RALPH DELEON GUERRERO TORRES, Governor of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, do hereby proclaim March 2018 as Developmental Disabilities and Employment Awareness Month. I call upon the Disability Network Partners, employers, and other community organizations in the CNMI to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities, and to advance its important message that with inclusion comes success.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand eighteen.

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RALPH DELEON GUERRERO TORRES

# March 22 is National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day



OVR happily invites the CNMI community to join them in recognizing and extending appreciation to its Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors for their dedication in serving the employment needs of eligible individuals with disabilities as well as the business needs of employers.

March 22 is annually designated by U.S. Congress as National Rehabilitation Counselors Appreciation Day, commending “...*rehabilitation counselors, for the dedication and hard work rehabilitation counselors provide to individuals in need of rehabilitation; and professional organizations, for the efforts professional organizations have made to assist those who require rehabilitation.*” To read the full S. RES 106 of the U.S. Senate on March 19, 2015, please go to: <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/114/sres106/text>. The CNMI has 2 general VR Counselors and 1 VR Transition Counselor: *Jane Tudela, Rose Ichiuo, and Shana Iguel.*



**Tudela** is a counselor with a general caseload, meaning she serves our adult population of individuals who have varying disabilities. She serves the needs of our consumers residing in Saipan as well as in Rota through our monthly outreach activities. Tudela is currently

pursuing a Master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling through San Diego State University’s distance learning program. She is expected to complete her program in the fall of 2018.

**Ichiuo** is another general counselor and is currently assigned to work with consumers from Saipan as well as Rota through our monthly outreach activities. Prior to joining OVR in 2012, Ichiuo was employed for many years as a Special Education Teacher with the CNMI Public School System. In 2014, OVR recognized Ichiuo for closing the most cases as successfully rehabilitated.



**Iguel** specializes in school-to-work transition including pre-employment transition services, and is highly visible at the Saipan public high school campuses through our co-location program. A student who would like to learn about OVR and what they have to offer no longer has to come up to our Navy Hill office for an orientation or to do intake/application. These can all be done at the school campus. Co-location has also helped to strengthen collaboration and networking with our Special Education partners. Co-locations are also being conducted at the Northern Marianas College campus on a monthly schedule.

If you would like to express your appreciation to our Counselors or want to simply say hello and wish them well, please call 322-6537/8, send an email to [nmidir@ovrgov.net](mailto:nmidir@ovrgov.net), or find us on Facebook (Cnmi Ovr) and post a comment.



# Snapshot of OVR's Successful Closure Profile for FY 2017

In FY 2017, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation closed as "Successfully Rehabilitated" a total of 31 cases. A closer look at the statistics will show that out of the 31 successful closures:



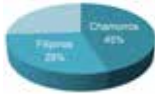
- 20 (65%) are males



- 25 (80%) are from Saipan



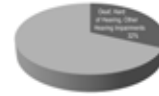
- 21 (68%) are between 46 & 74 years old



- 14 (45%) are Chamorros followed by 9 (29%) who are Filipinos

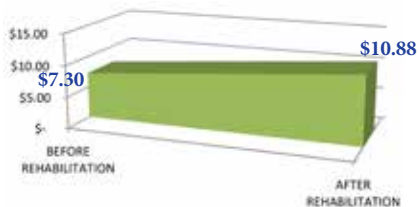


- 18 (58%) have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate

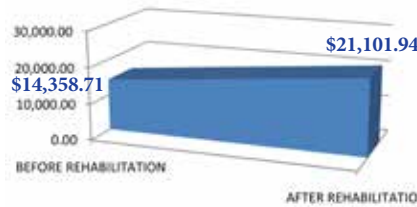


- 10 (32%) fall into the "Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Other Hearing Impairments" disability category

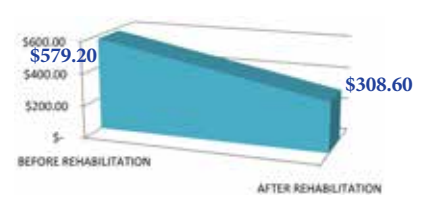
Other additional data:



AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE



AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARY



AVERAGE AMOUNT OF SSI

More statistics, including the Consumer Satisfaction Survey findings as well as OVR and the State Rehabilitation Council's accomplishments during FY 2017, will be highlighted in their Annual Report. To request a copy of the report, please call OVR at 322-6537/8.

## New Employment Specialist Hired at OVR



The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) is pleased to announce the hiring of Joseph B. Roberto – known as "Topyy" – as their Employment Specialist effective October 16, 2017.

Mr. Roberto is responsible for establishing and/or strengthening OVR's relationship with CNMI employers and to help them meet their business needs through information sharing, training, and placement activities. He will be working very closely with VR Counselors as well as employers to place job-ready consumers in competitive integrated employment.

On October 24-25, 2017, Mr. Roberto met with over 2 dozen representatives from the business community who attended the focus group meetings for employers facilitated by Dr. Chaz Compton, Ed.D., CRC of San Diego State University Research Foundation. The focus

groups, which are a part of OVR's triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Project, also captured the feedback of clients and community partners regarding the current needs of individuals with disabilities residing in the CNMI, and OVR's performance in meeting those needs.

On October 26, 2017, Mr. Roberto traveled to Tinian to attend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Program Overview and Business Services event as well as deliver a prepared speech to business partners on behalf of OVR Director Arlene Yamagata, M.S., CRC. Mr. Roberto ended the event by networking with employers and disseminating resource materials including OVR's "Services to Employers" flyer and the "Building an Inclusive Workforce 2017: A Four Step Reference Guide to Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Employees with Disabilities," a free publication of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy.

So far, Mr. Roberto is enjoying his work at OVR and carrying out his duties and responsibilities enthusiastically. "I feel so welcomed since day one. My co-workers are awesome," he said.

# Volunteer Respite Service Training

## *Everyone needs a break.*

Respite care provides caregivers or relatives with short-term care services that offer a temporary rest and relief from caregiving, while the person needing care continues to receive the services in a safe environment. Respite care can help a caregiver by providing a new environment or time to relax. It also improves family stability and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect. Using respite services can support and strengthen one's ability to be a caregiver.

For many years, the Commonwealth Respite Service Program (CRSP) has been looking for ways to receive more funding in order to cater to the needs of its future consumers. Upon attending the Lifespan Respite Conference for two years, the CRSP staff has been able to connect with other respite programs around the U.S. to find ways to fulfill the need of the CNMI.

Last February 21-22, 2018, a training called "Volunteer Respite Service" was conducted by MaryJo Alimena Caruso at the Pacific Islands Club. CRSP staff and MaryJo Alimena Caruso have been in contact for two years to conduct a training for implementing a volunteer pool within the Commonwealth Respite Service Program. By implementing a volunteer pool for the Respite Program, the program will be able to cater to clients for little to no cost. With this we will be able to finally serve our caregivers, prevent



*MaryJo Alimena Caruso, M.Ed is a Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator at FRIENDS National Center for Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention. MaryJo has over 23 years of experience in the delivery of services and in the provision of training and technical assistance for child welfare and human service professionals. She has experience in statewide and national initiatives with program planning and design, curricula and resource development and dissemination, product/material creation, fiscal management, and a focus on quality assurance, best practices, and outcome data. In addition, MaryJo has worked to develop respite resources and serves as an adjunct faculty member and field supervisor for local universities' social work and rehabilitation counseling programs. For many years MaryJo has been working in different parts in the U.S mainland to implement a little to no cost respite care for the community.*

burnout, and provide relaxation to help renew their energy to better care for the individual. With the help of the volunteers, we will be able to fulfill our purpose which is to provide short term, temporary relief to a family member and or primary caregiver caring for an individual with developmental disabilities. We were able to train 71 potential volunteers for our pool.

The training toolkit used in the training was specifically designed for a program to be able to implement a volunteer respite pool and/or program. Although it was made for accumulating volunteers for respite care, all the training materials were customizable, so that they could meet the need for other programs. Not only are they for just programs, but they could also be used with any community organizations or in a faith-based setting.

The first day of training was focused on the implementation of a volunteer respite program. This day was mainly for community organization heads, government agency heads and or faith-based leaders. Ms. Caruso covered program planning, operation, management, marketing, recruiting, screening volunteers, as well as TakeFIVE activities and requirements. TakeFIVE is the volunteer-based program that MaryJo established while working at the Watson's Institute. She shared examples of how volunteer respite programs can be replicated based on the model that will be presented. This training lasted for about 6 hours.

The second day was mainly for volunteers. The training topics consisted of preparing to care, core competencies, volunteer rights, and responsibilities, and skill building. This training was done in 4 hours.



# Consumable Garden at CLI



The Center for Living Independently staff and consumers have been working hard with painting and renovating our center. We now have a computer room, mini-library, & a show off of case our mini-Arts & Craft gift shop. Outside our building, we have changed from colored pink to beautiful green, inside we have changed from blue and pink now inside our center walls are all beige. However, what we are most excited about is, we are in the process of planting our very own

consumable garden. We are participating in the Hydroponics programs sponsored by the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, Farm Bill under the supervision of the Department of lands and Natural Resources. Joshua Santos is assisting us through the process for our beautiful garden. The staff and consumers invite you to come by and see the ongoing changes at the Center for Living Independently located at Anatahan Drive & Guguan Drive, House number 1366.



## INVITATION

Employer & Jobseeker Opportunities:

### “Advancing to Success”

In celebration of Developmental Disabilities & Employment Awareness Month, the Disability Network Partners are bringing together **JOBSEEKERS** and **EMPLOYERS** for a one day training conference on Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

You are cordially invited to attend the conference on the following dates:

Rota: March 7, 2018—NMC Campus

Tinian: March 14, 2018—NMC Campus

Saipan: March 21, 2018—Fiesta Resort

Time: 8:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. (Registration begins at 7:30)

#### Come and join us as we learn about:

- Navigating DOL Employment Services & WIA System
- Assistive Technology & The Workplace
- Dressing for Success / Mock Interviews
- Disability Basics
- Resume Writing
- Reasonable Accommodations

Seating is limited so please R.S.V.P. seven (7) days prior to the training date noted above, to reserve a seat, or if requesting for reasonable accommodations. You can contact Maggie at OVR at 322-6537/8 or Lillian at DD Council at 664-7003/5.



# DCCA - NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM



## FY 2018 Income Eligibility Standards and Benefit Level Adjustments

The **NAP Income Eligibility Standards** in Table 1 and the **Maximum Monthly Benefit Allotment** in Table 2 have been adjusted to take effect from October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018.

Table 3 is an example of how NAP determines a household's monthly income, eligibility, and benefit level. The example is for a household with one U.S. worker earning bi-weekly wages on Saipan with 3 dependents.

**Table 1**

Maximum Monthly Income Standards Effective October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018	
Household Size	Rota, Tinian and Saipan
1	\$841
2	\$1,045
3	\$1,252
4	\$1,451
5	\$1,656
6	\$1,861
7	\$2,071
8	\$2,267

**Table 2**

Maximum Benefit Allotment Effective October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018			
Household Size	Rota and N.I.	Tinian	Saipan
1	\$269	\$223	\$206
2	\$491	\$407	\$376
3	\$703	\$583	\$538
4	\$897	\$744	\$686
5	\$1,061	\$880	\$811
6	\$1,204	\$999	\$921
7	\$1,410	\$1,170	\$1,079
8	\$1,604	\$1,331	\$1,227

**Table 3**

1. Average Gross pay from 3 current pay stubs (rounded)	\$564.00	
2. Multiply Average Gross Pay (from Line 1) by 2.15 (bi-weekly rate)	\$1,212.60	= <b>Monthly Gross Income</b>
3. Compare Monthly Gross Income to Household Size 4, in Table 1 (less or equal to)	\$1,451.00	= <b>Eligible</b>
4. Less 10% from line 2 (for earned income only, i.e. wage/salary of U.S. worker)	\$1,091.34	= <b>Monthly Net Income</b>
5. Multiply 30% from Line 4 (rounded)	\$327.00	= <b>Purchase Requirement</b>
6. Deduct Purchase Requirement from Table 2 Household Size 4	\$686.00	
7. Entitled Benefit, Line 6 minus Line 5	\$359.00	= <b>Entitled Benefit</b>

Additionally, applicant households must not exceed the resources eligibility standards, below. Resources basically applies to only "accessible" or "readily negotiable" liquid assets at the banks such as: savings, checking accounts, time certificate of deposits, savings bonds, other negotiable instruments, and cash on hand.

Resources Eligibility Standards Effective October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018	
Household of one and households that do not contain a member age 55 or older	Limit \$2,250
Households of two or more members, one or more of whom are either age 55 or older or are disabled	Limit \$3,500

To apply for NAP assistance, the Head of Household or the Authorized Representative must pick up and submit a completed Application for Nutrition Assistance at the Certification Unit, NAP Office located at the ground floor of the JTV Building in As Lito. The following general documentation will be required to be submitted for verification for each member listed in the application:

1. Certified Copy of Birth Certificate or Valid Passport
2. Copy of U.S. Social Security Number Card  
If applicable:
3. Copy of three (3) most current check (pay) stubs
4. Copy of most current bank statement, i.e. checking, savings, time certificate of deposit, saving bonds, etc.

**Mandatory requirements:** the Head of Household or Authorized Representative must be interviewed by an Eligibility Worker; the Head of Household or Authorized Representative must attend an orientation.

**Application timeliness:** the NAP Program has thirty (30) days following receipt of a signed application to determine eligibility and provide the appropriate benefit. Applications received by the 10th of the month may receive the full appropriate month allotment. Application received by the 20th of the month may receive half of the month's appropriate allotment.

**For more information please contact the NAP Administration Office at telephone number 237-2842 or 237-2843.**