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The Bureau of Services for Blind Persons increases service delivery and employment outcomes

The purpose of the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP) Rehabilitation Services Program is to assist blind individuals in the state of Michigan to become employed in a career that suits their current or potential skills and abilities. BSBP provides diagnostic evaluations, vocational counseling, and training in skills of blindness. Depending on needs and eligibility, additional services may include low-vision equipment, vocational training, technical school training, a college education, job development and placement, and follow-up. In addition, BSBP also provides services to older blind individuals and persons who need Independent Living skills to allow them to continue to live in independently their homes.

Increased Service Delivery: Service Delivery Requests in 2015 have increased 32% for the year that this project has been in place.

Increased Employment Outcomes: Employment Outcomes have increased by 11%.

Streamlining

BSBP receives 80 percent of their funding from the federal government. The reporting requirements to qualify for those dollars are complicated and comprehensive. As a result, the process and paperwork is also complex. In an effort to streamline the process, BSBP has implemented a pilot project that reassigned a secretary to work as an intake secretary, completing intakes in both the Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids field offices for 26 counties. The role of the intake secretary is to provide positive interaction between the blind individual and the agency at the beginning of the process. This designated secretary is able to spend additional time fielding questions about BSBP programs and services and allowing the potential consumer or family member to gain information. Assigning this duty to one person in the region allowed the remaining secretaries in each office to focus on fiscal duties, working with field staff to order consumer equipment, support the regional and assistant regional managers, track memos and other office duties.

Efficiencies

When a consumer contacts the office and requests services they are referred to one individual who



handles the referral and intake process for a region. The Bureau has three regions and the goal is to assist consumers in having one source of contact. This means that the information being shared regarding the Bureau and services is streamlined, uniform and minimizes the opportunities for inconsistencies which can cause confusion. The concept provides an environment where data is also more reliable. As well as adding consistency to data reliability, in the event there are questions or concerns about the process there is a single point of contact that can help to streamline and obtain the answers efficiently. This process allows counselors, teachers and support staff to concentrate on other duties as outlined in their position descriptions. The staff will be able to rely on the intakes coming to them with basic information being gathered and documentation being obtained that can help determine eligibility. One of the benefits of this pilot project is that counselors, who in the past spent a lot of time answering client questions and concerns, now have been able to do more outreach and community partnering, which resulted in increased consumer requests for services in turn producing more employment outcomes.

Expansion

At this time, this concept has only been piloted in the West Region and has worked well. The data mirrored above is not reflective of the state as a whole. It is expected that that BSBP will expand this concept statewide. It would be anticipated that service delivery requests and employment outcomes could increase statewide as a result of this initiative. BSBP suggests that the "Return On Investment" for this pilot is a structural design that will benefit the consumers, and streamline efficiencies and staff utilization.