



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
**LABOR & ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY**

MRS PROMOTING
ABILITIES
Michigan Rehabilitation Services

Rehabilitation Services Manual

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SECTION I

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) is designated as the State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services General Program under Title IV of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as Amended in 2014 by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Note: Individuals who are legally blind are referred to the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP). The Bureau serves individuals, with or without non-visual disabilities, who are legally blind or have visual acuity of 20/100 or less with rapid deterioration. Such individuals must be referred to the Bureau. A referral can be made by calling the local Bureau of Services for Blind Persons office.

MRS is awarded a grant to operate a statewide comprehensive, coordinated, effective, efficient, and accountable vocational rehabilitation program. The VR program is:

- An integral part of a statewide workforce development system
- Designed to assess, plan, develop, and provide vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities, consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice so that they may prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency

The MRS policy manual "Manual" contains policies, procedures and information for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for customers.

There are two categories of customers of Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Reportable and Participant.

Terms are defined in the individual Policy and Procedures manual item and in a glossary.

Sections of the Policy

Each individual policy has five primary sections, Purpose, Definitions, Policy, Procedures and References. In addition to these sections MRS will maintain associated: Forms, Standard Operating Procedures, and Bulletins.

Note: Bulletins may be Informational Memorandums (IM), Policy Directives (PD) or Technical Assistance Memorandums (TAM) that are issued by the MRS director upon the issuance of a policy or informational directive. A bulletin issued by the MRS director becomes policy.

DEFINITIONS

Customer: All individuals served by MRS regardless of program involvement that may fall into either of these categories:

- **Participants:** Individuals with disabilities (youth or adult) who have an approved and signed Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and have begun services.
- **Reportable:** All individuals with disabilities who are in application, or eligible, status in the VR program including individuals with disabilities who are referred as in-school youth (ages 14-26) who may be provided Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Prior to an Application (PTA).

Case Record: Encompasses both electronic and hard copy files maintained by the agency which includes:

- The Accessible Web-based Activity and Reporting Environment (AWARE) electronic file
- The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) hard copy file
- The Pre-Employment Transition Services (PTA) hard copy file
- All secondary files maintained by internal program including, but not limited to, Vocationally Handicapped

Certification (P.A. 183), Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) and Business Network Division (BND)

Document: Indicates a requirement to record specified information in the case record including written detail indicating a set of reasons or a logical basis for a course of action based on verifiable sources of information.

REFERENCES

34 CFR 361.1 (b)

CONTACT

Policyunitsupportcenter@michigan.gov

SECTION II

Ethical Conduct General Policies

Policy:

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) staff shall place the interests of the individuals whom they serve above their own personal interests. They shall treat their positions as a public trust, using public resources and their duties and powers only to advance the public interest.

MRS staff shall adhere to the following principles of ethical conduct, in addition to any other ethical standards appropriate to their professions.

- Each individual will be treated with integrity and as a unique individual.
- Each individual's trust and confidence will be maintained consistent with policies and laws regarding confidentiality and disclosure.
- A professional relationship with each individual will be maintained which contributes to the individual's rehabilitation and employment. The individual-counselor relationship will not be exploited for monetary, sexual, personal or other reasons.
- Professional standards in the provision of rehabilitation services will be adhered to so as to not cause or contribute to the harm of the individual or others.
- Personal and professional strengths and limitations will be recognized and supervisory or other consultation will be sought when necessary to assure appropriate service delivery.
- Professional competence in rehabilitation practices will be maintained through continuous personal and professional development, so that individuals are assured of the highest level of service.
- Personal integrity and honesty will be maintained in dealing with the public, colleagues, and individuals so as not to discredit the profession or MRS.

Rehabilitation Counseling and Guidance

General Policies

Policy:

Rehabilitation counseling and guidance are essential rehabilitation services directed toward the achievement of an employment outcome and provided by the counselor throughout the course of the individual's vocational rehabilitation.

Procedure:

The case record shall reflect the provision of rehabilitation counseling and guidance.

Information:

Counseling in vocational rehabilitation is the collaborative process between the individual and the counselor in which they assess the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, abilities, capabilities, interests and rehabilitation needs; explore, clarify and assess employment and career options; address barriers to be overcome; and develop and carry out a plan of action that will result in meaningful employment for the individual based on his or her informed choice.

The following values are implicit in the rehabilitation counseling relationship:

- belief in the dignity and worth of all people,
- recognition of the importance of the person's assets,
- facilitation of independence, integration, and inclusion of people with disabilities in employment and in the community,
- commitment to models of service delivery that emphasize integrated, comprehensive services mutually planned by the consumer and counselor,
- commitment to supporting persons with disabilities in activities of self-advocacy and self-empowerment,
- emphasis on the holistic nature of human function which is facilitated by interdisciplinary teamwork.

The scope of practice of rehabilitation counseling, as recognized by the profession, includes;

- assessment and appraisal;
- diagnosis and rehabilitation planning;

Rehabilitation Counseling and Guidance General Policies

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- career counseling;
 - individual and group counseling interventions focused on facilitating adjustments to the medical and psychosocial aspects of disability,
 - case management services coordination;
 - program evaluation and research;
 - intervention to remove environmental, employment and attitudinal barriers;
 - consultation services between multiple parties and regulatory systems;
 - job development and placement services, including assistance with employment and job accommodations; and,
 - providing consultation and access to rehabilitation technology.

Guidance involves the provision of information and advice about careers, the labor market, training options, education, and the world of work, as related to the skills, aptitudes and career aspirations of the individual so that informed choices can be made about these matters by the individual.

The term “counselor” is generally used throughout this manual to denote a Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) Rehabilitation Counselor unless otherwise indicated.

**Non-Discrimination
General Policies****Policy:**

Individuals shall not be discriminated against because of their age, color, creed, marital status, national origin, race, sex, or type of disability.

In addition, eligibility requirements shall be applied without regard to the type of expected employment outcome; the source of referral for Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) services; the particular service needs or anticipated costs of services required by an applicant; and the income level of an applicant or applicant's family.

PURPOSE

In accordance with State and Federal regulations, this policy and procedure establishes the guidelines for the contents and organization of the customer case record.

POLICY

Electronic and/or a hard copy case records are maintained for individuals served by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS).

The electronic case file will reference any secondary case record that is maintained.

The case record is to contain documentation of all actions and decisions of the rehabilitation counselor or assigned personnel involved.

DEFINITIONS

Case Record - Encompasses both electronic and hardcopy files maintained by the agency. This includes:

- The Accessible Web-based Activity and Reporting Environment (AWARE) electronic file
- The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) hardcopy file maintained in the home office of the customer
- The Pre-Employment Transition Services (PTA) hardcopy file maintained in the home office of the customer

Note: The Pre-Employment Transition Services (PTA) hardcopy file is merged with the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) hardcopy file when the student submits an application for VR services.

- Any other hardcopy or electronic record maintained by MRS including, but not limited to, Vocationally Handicapped Certification (P.A. 183), Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) and Business Network Division (BND)

Signatures - Documents that the customer exercises or waives rights, consents to certain action, or acknowledges understanding and/or receipt of something.

Note: The signature of a legal guardian or parent is obtained in addition to the customers, if the customer has a legal guardian or is under the age of 18. All notifications are sent to legal guardians and parents of minors.

Note: An original signature is required to show consent, agreement, or noted to make an offer or take a position (e.g., a price quotation), an original signature is required. A facsimile copy may be utilized where there is a credible basis for concluding that the original document is on its way to MRS and time is of the essence.

PROCEDURES

Required Case File Content

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) hardcopy file maintained in the home office of the customer is to contain the following:

1. All documents that require a signature
2. All non-electronic documents pertaining to financial authorizations
3. All non-electronic documents required within a specified policy
4. A completed SSA Consent for Release of Information (SSA-3288) (**For VR cases only**)

Note: The SSA Consent for Release of Information (SSA-3288 permits MRS to communicate with SSA and Maximus to verify identity for all customers.

Hard Copy Case Record Order

Upon discontinuation of services and case closure the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Pre-Employment Transition Services (PTA) hardcopy file are organized in the following order:

Note: Within each section, documents are organized chronologically starting with the most recent documents on top.

Note: Electronic records are not to be printed unless specifically required per policy due to signature requirements.

Section 1. Case Closure/Discontinuation of Services

- Case closure documentation.
- Case notes, correspondence and other documents not contained in AWARE

Section 2. Referral, Application and Intake

- Signed application and/or referral/consent for services information and related materials
- Case notes, correspondence and other documents not contained in AWARE

Section 3. Eligibility Determination, and Vocational Needs Assessment (VR) and/or Need Determination (PTA)

- Medical, psychological, school reports, and other diagnostic and assessment reports
- Employment Network Agreement – Ticket case records maintain copies of all MRS Referral Packet information
- Case notes, correspondence and other documents not contained in AWARE

Section 4. IPE and IPE amendments (VR) and/or Service Agreement (PTA)

- IPE and/or PTA Service Agreement associated reports/records
- Case notes, correspondence and other documents not contained in AWARE

Section 5. Release of Information

- Consents to release/request personal information
- Signed consents to release/request personal information including SSA Consent for Release of Information - SSA-3288 in all case records of SSA recipients to allow MRS to communicate with the SSA and Maximus

Section 6. Fiscal documents

- Open signed authorizations for services (with bids and quotes)
- Closed, signed, paid authorizations (with receipts, invoices, proof of purchase, bids and quotes)

**Vocationally
Handicapped
Certification**

Vocationally Handicapped Certification, or P.A. 183 records, should be stored in a separate folder as outlined in Rehabilitation Services Manual (RSM) Item 8175. The P.A. 183 folder shall be placed at the front of the hard copy case folder.

REFERENCES

34 CFR 361.47

CONTACT

PolicyUnitSupportCenter@michigan.gov

Confidentiality, Release of Information General Policies

Policy:

All personal information about applicants and eligible individuals, including photographs and lists of names, shall be kept confidential. It shall be released only with the informed, written consent of the individual or as needed to protect the applicant from physical harm to self or others; in response to law enforcement, fraud or abuse investigations; in response to a judicial order; when required by federal statute or regulation; for audit, research or evaluation purposes; or in a suspected case of abuse, neglect, exploitation or endangerment of applicant or eligible individuals. Information obtained from another agency or organization shall be released only by, or under the conditions established by the other agency/organization.

Applicants, eligible individuals, and providers of information shall be advised of these confidentiality and release restrictions through appropriate means of communication.

Medical, psychological and other information that may be potentially harmful to the individual shall not be directly released to the client but shall be released instead to a third party chosen by the individual which may include, among others, a qualified medical or mental health professional, advocate, family member or legal guardian. Information may be released to parents of applicants or eligible individuals who are minors, or legal guardians, under the same conditions as it may be released directly to clients. Release of information to another individual or organization shall contain a statement precluding its further release.

Procedure:

Case file records are not to be altered or deleted by individuals being served or non-MRS personnel who, in selected situations, may inspect, review and receive copies of personal records. If the individual or other party believes the case record to be inaccurate or misleading, the counselor may add documentation to the case record to acknowledge that person's position.

Personal records, including correspondence, shall not be stored on walk-up computer stations. When computers containing customer records are sent to salvage, the hard drive shall be reformatted.

The State Office will notify district offices when case records can be destroyed, including the procedure that is to be followed in disposing of this material. The length of time closed case records must be kept varies depending on audit schedules.

By law, records from the following agencies may not be re-disclosed, even with the client's informed, written consent:

Section II

- Social Security Administration
- Veterans Administration

Records which contain information regarding an individual's addiction to drugs and/or alcohol, or information which identifies the individual as someone who has a severe communicable disease, such as AIDS or Hepatitis C, cannot be released without the specific informed written consent of the individual utilizing a release of information form which clearly advises the individuals that such records will be released.

Information:

A counselor engaged in job development, with the knowledge and consent of the individual, may disclose relevant information about the individual's ability to perform the job, such as work skills, educational background, capacity to learn new skills, etc. Information about an individual's disability is generally not released to employers except when job accommodation(s) or site modification will be needed, or a situation could be hazardous to the client or others and the individual gives informed, written consent to the release. (See Policy 2075, Case Record, for more information)

The informed consent of the individual means that the individual knows the name of the third party to whom information is to be provided, the purpose or the need for providing the information, and the extent or nature of the information to be released. The individual's informed consent may be recorded in a letter or on Form RA-26, Consent to Release Personal Information. Information which has been subpoenaed must be released only if the subpoena is a direct judicial order. Counselors should contact Michigan Rehabilitation Services' Ombudsperson when a subpoena for records is received.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services may charge for costs related to the release of information unless the requesting person is on public assistance or is indigent. A charge should not be made for materials sent to a designated representative.

Forms:

- RA-26 – Consent to Release Personal Information
- RA-2773 – Release Authorization Letter.

Job Aids:

For further information see Confidentiality and Release of Information Job Aid (2100a-JA) in the Job Aids Section of this manual.

Section II

Casework Notes:

For additional Information, refer to Casework Notes issue 2 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

PURPOSE

In accordance with State and Federal regulations, this policy and procedure outlines the agency's process for processing of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

POLICY

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests are referred to the departmental FOIA coordinator.

PROCEDURES

Upon written request, customers may inspect, copy or receive copies of public records except personal information concerning clients under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act (P.A. 442 of 1976, as amended).

The requests, by law, are processed within **five** business days of receipt. FOIA requests are forwarded to the MRS designated FOIA liaison within **24 hours of receipt**.

FOIA Liaison:

Kate Stojsih

Michigan Rehabilitation Services

320 South Walnut St. 1N, PO Box 30010

Lansing MI 48909

Telephone 517 335-2351 Fax 517-241-5339

StojsihK@michigan.gov

Note: If denied, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services FOIA Coordinator will prepare an official denial.

A fee may be charged for the actual costs for mailing, copying including labor, and the cost of search, examination, review, and deletion and separation of exempt from non-exempt information.

Questions about the procedures and fee schedule should be directed to the FOIA Liaison.

REFERENCES

Public Act 442 of 1976, as amended

CONTACT

Policyunitsupportcenter@michigan.gov

Lawsuits and Subpoenas General Policies

Rev. 2/2015

Policy:

All customer and case service matters related to litigation, potential litigation or Civil Rights complaints are to be referred to Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) Administrative Hearings Coordinator for processing.

Procedure:

The MRS Administrative Hearings Coordinator will forward litigation and potential litigation to Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Office of Legal Services. Civil Rights Complaints will be forwarded to DHHS, Human Resources.

District managers may respond directly to subpoenas and should do so as soon as they are received, as a delay could result in a contempt of court citation against the named person or MRS. Upon receipt, copies of subpoenas must be **promptly** faxed to Ruth O'Connor, Administrative Hearings Coordinator at MRS, at 517-335-0745 who will forward to the DHHS, Office of Legal Services Subpoena Specialist.

Staff processing subpoenas may consult with the MRS Administrative Hearings Coordinator at 517-241-5730, should they have questions or need guidance in preparing a response to a subpoena.

If it is not already attached to the subpoena, the attorney who requested the subpoena should be advised that the customer's informed, written consent is required before the subpoena can be responded to. Districts should use the RA-27, a letter developed by Central Office, in collaboration with the Attorney General's office, when contacting attorneys or worker's compensation magistrates regarding their subpoenas when MRS does not have the individual's informed, written consent.

Information obtained by MRS from other agencies or organizations may not be re-released even with the customer's informed, written consent. The attorney who requested the subpoena should be advised of the existence of such information and enough data about the source so that the attorney may obtain it directly (i.e., name, address and patient or customer identification number, etc.). MRS is not responsible for obtaining permission from the third party from whom we have obtained records.

If staff are subpoenaed to give testimony, they should advise the judge or presiding officer of MRS requirements concerning confidentiality of customer information before testifying or releasing information by reading the following statement:

Michigan Rehabilitation Services is required by federal law to ensure that personal information about customers is kept strictly confidential. The court should refer to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 USC 701-742, and, in particular, to 34 CFR 361.38.

Lawsuits and Subpoenas

General Policies

Under those provisions, MRS may disclose such personal information only under certain specific circumstances. Pursuant to 34 CFR 361.38(e)(4), for example, MRS may disclose personal information in response to judicial order.

The judge or presiding officer will order staff to testify or not, or to provide case record information after the statement is heard. Additional information on handling subpoenas can be found in the Job Aid Appendix section on Confidentiality and Release of Information dated July 27, 1999.

Forms:

The form related to this manual item is the RA-27 – Letter Requesting Customer Release of Information.

Client Appeals, Mediation and Hearings

General Policies

Policy:

Applicants and eligible individuals or, if appropriate, their representatives have the right to appeal decisions of Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) personnel with which they are dissatisfied regarding the provision of services.

Appeals must be made within 30 days of the decision by requesting a hearing before an impartial hearing officer. Individuals who appeal also have the right to pursue mediation whenever a hearing is requested. The hearing shall be held within 60 days of receipt of the request unless both parties agree to extend the time.

Assessment, plan development, or Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) related services that have been initiated shall not be suspended, reduced, or terminated pending mediation or the hearing decision unless the applicant or eligible individual or their representative so requests or there is evidence that the services have been obtained through misrepresentation, fraud, collusion or criminal conduct on the part of the applicant, eligible individual, or their representative.

Nothing shall preclude the parties to such a dispute from informal negotiation and resolution prior to mediation and/or hearing if the informal process is not used to deny or delay the right of an applicant or eligible individual to a hearing or to deny any other right outlined in MRS policy.

When informal resolution of an appeal of a case closure occurs, the closure shall be rescinded and the case returned to the previous status unless other policies or exceptional circumstances require that a new case be opened.

Procedure:

1. Hearing request comes in to MRS Hearing Coordinator. The Hearings Coordinator acknowledges receipt of the hearing request, in writing, to the individual indicating the intent to pursue informal resolution and provide the opportunity for mediation or the right to proceed directly to a Hearing.
2. The request is forwarded to the Division Director, District Manager, Site Manager and Policy Unit for coordination.
 - a. The District Manager initiates contact with the applicant or eligible individual to determine if the issue under appeal can be resolved informally. If necessary, the customer and District Manager may agree to request a specific extension of time to pursue informal resolution.

Client Appeals, Mediation and Hearings General Policies

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- b. The Policy Unit will contact the District Manager to arrange for a consultation to discuss options towards resolution or to assist with the interpretation of the hearing request.
 - i. Participants in the consultation are to consist of the Rehabilitation Counselor assigned to the case, Division Director, District Manager, Site Manager, and Policy. Additional attendees include the Agency Director, and Attorney General representative as necessary.
 3. The outcome of both the attempted resolution with the customer and initial coordination meeting with policy is reported to the Hearings Coordinator.
 4. The Hearings Coordinator requests the assignment of a qualified impartial hearing officer and schedules the hearing unless notified by the District Manager that the issue has been resolved and this is confirmed by the individual.
 - a. If resolved a written summary of the resolution agreement must be sent to the individual by the District Manager with a copy to the Hearings Coordinator and to the individual's representative if the individual was represented.
 5. If informal resolution is not reached with the district manager, the applicant or eligible individual has the right to pursue mediation or proceed with the hearing. The mediation process is voluntary, does not diminish the timeliness standard for hearings and must be conducted by qualified mediators.

Individuals appealing MRS determinations have the right to submit evidence or information and present witnesses to support their position at a mediation session or hearing and have the right to be represented at the mediation session or hearing by a person selected by the individual. The individual may be represented by a friend, relative, an attorney, or representative from the Client Assistance Program.

MRS is not responsible for any costs associated with the individual's representation at the mediation session or hearing or with any cost associated with the appearance of witnesses presented by the individual at the mediation session or hearing.

MRS shall insure that an interpreter, reader, transportation assistance or other reasonable accommodations are provided, if necessary and requested by the individual, for an individual to participate in mediation or the hearing process. The individual or the individual's representative can review or receive copies of pertinent case file information in preparation for mediation or a hearing, subject to MRS policy regarding release of confidential customer information. Copies of relevant MRS policies can also be

Client Appeals, Mediation and Hearings

General Policies

provided, if requested. These materials shall be provided at no cost to the individual or the individual's representative.

Mediation

Upon receipt of a request for mediation the Hearings Coordinator assigns a qualified mediator and schedules the mediation in a timely manner and at a location convenient to the parties to the dispute. MRS bears the cost of the mediation process including any reasonable accommodations needed by the individual to participate in the mediation process. Although mediation is voluntary, District Managers and counselors are encouraged to participate in the process, when appropriate.

Discussions that occur during the mediation process are confidential and may not be used as evidence in any subsequent due process hearing or civil proceeding.

An agreement reached by the parties to the dispute in the mediation process is set forth in a written mediation agreement provided to the parties to the dispute, with a copy to the Hearings Coordinator. The written agreement may be in the form of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), an IPE Amendment, or a set of agreements on how to move forward.

Either party may enter the written mediated agreement as evidence in a subsequent hearing or civil proceeding.

Hearing

The hearing, if convened, is held before an impartial hearing officer who is not an employee of MRS. The impartial hearing officer renders a decision based on evidence and testimony presented at the hearing. A written transcript is generated by a court reporter.

The representative from the AG office will serve as MRS' legal representative in hearings.

The AG in coordination with the District Manager is responsible for selecting MRS witnesses including the individual's counselor, and selecting or making copies of the written evidence (exhibits) needed to support MRS' decision. The individual or individual's representative is responsible for selecting claimant witnesses, paying for any costs related to the witness, and selecting and making copies of written evidence that will be provided in support of the individual's case. The individual has the right to examine all witnesses and/or materials or sources of information and evidence presented by MRS.

Client Appeals, Mediation and Hearings General Policies

A “Notice of Hearing” is issued by the Hearings Coordinator to the individual and MRS representative at least two weeks prior to the hearing specifying the date, time, mutually agreed upon location, name of the impartial hearing officer and the issue(s) being appealed. An outline of the hearing procedure and guide on how to prepare for the hearing is enclosed with the Notice of Hearing.

The impartial hearing officer may determine that an abandonment of the hearing has occurred and dismiss the case if either the individual or the individual’s authorized representative fails to notify MRS that the individual will be unable to attend at the scheduled time, or does not appear at the hearing. MRS may exercise flexibility in adherence to time frames if the appellant’s notification is a few days late for good cause.

The impartial hearing officer is to make his or her decision within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of the hearing transcript but no later than 30 calendar days from the date of the hearing. The decision must be based on the provisions of the approved State Plan; the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; federal regulations to the Rehabilitation Act and MRS policies that are consistent with federal requirements. A full written report of the findings and grounds for the decision is provided to the MRS director, individual, individual’s representative if the individual was represented, and the MRS representative. The decision of the impartial hearing officer is final and the last administrative remedy available to the individual.

MRS action required as the result of a hearing decision shall be taken promptly. Either party involved in the hearing may bring a civil action in response to the hearing decision. If a party brings a civil action challenging the decision of the impartial hearing officer (IHO), the decision of the IHO must be implemented pending review by the court.

Information:

Examples of an appealed case returning to the pre-appeal status are:

- A case closed unsuccessfully from service status is returned to service status.
- A case closed unsuccessfully from eligible status is returned to eligible status.
- A case closed unsuccessfully from application status is returned to application status.

Examples of exceptional circumstances that warrant opening a new case after informal resolution are:

Client Appeals, Mediation and Hearings

General Policies

- A case is closed successfully from post-employment services and comprehensive services, not related to the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) or post-employment plan, are needed to achieve an employment outcome.
- An appeal of the closure occurs after the official close of a fiscal year.

MRS service is considered “initiated” after it has been authorized and actually started, for the duration of said authorization.

Mediation is defined as a consensual process in which a neutral third person assists two or more parties to reach a voluntary agreement which resolves a dispute and/or provides options for the future. The mediator serves as a facilitator and helps the parties identify their individual needs and interests, clarify their differences and find common ground. The mediator, unlike the impartial hearing officer, does not direct or render decisions; but, rather, assists the parties in pursuing voluntary agreements.

At any point during mediation, either party or the mediator may elect to terminate the mediation process. In the event mediation is terminated, the individual may proceed to a Hearing or withdraw their Hearing request.

Administrative Rules:

Mich Admin R 395.84 Review; hearing; costs

Mich Admin R 395.85 Informal review

Mich Admin R 395.86 Continuation of services pending completion of hearing

Mich Admin R 395.87 Mediation

Mich Admin R 395.88 Hearing

Client Assistance Program (CAP) General Policies

Policy:

All applicants and eligible individuals shall be eligible for services from the Client Assistance Program (CAP) for additional information, problem resolution assistance, and assistance with an appeal.

Procedure:

Counselors or other responsible staff shall:

- Respond to general CAP inquiries in a prompt manner, generally within 3 workdays.
- Respond to requests for telephonic, faxed, e-mailed or mailed client information or records within 3 workdays of receipt or possession of a Release of Client Information (ROI), unless records requested exceed 30 pages.
- Promptly contact the CAP advocate to discuss a reasonable extension of the 3-day standard response time, if needed, when records requested exceed 30 pages in length.
- Request client completion of a written informed ROI for CAP at any time after the role of CAP is explained to the client at orientation to minimize delay of due process.
- Provide individual client records at no charge to CAP.
- Resolve client disputes involving CAP at the counselor/advocate/client level whenever possible.
- Conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner with CAP staff.

Information:

The Client Assistance Program was established by Congress to facilitate access to services funded under the Rehabilitation Act through individual and systemic advocacy.

CAP staff may:

- advocate for the interests of individuals with disabilities who are participating in programs funded by the Rehabilitation Act (e.g., community rehabilitation programs, centers for independent living, Projects with Industry programs);
- provide information regarding available services and benefits under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act;
- work collaboratively, at the request of the individual and/or the counselor, to resolve misunderstandings and/or facilitate planning;

Client Assistance Program (CAP)

General Policies

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- provide individuals with advice and clarification about their rights, responsibilities, and the services available from Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), and make referrals to other agencies as appropriate;
 - advocate for the fair resolutions of individual complaints, including assistance or representation in the appeals process or in seeking legal remedies; and
 - report to management the type and frequency of individual complaints, dissatisfactions, and misunderstandings for program assessment purposes.

Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc. is the designated agency for CAP in Michigan. MRS and MPAS-CAP entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in October, 2004. MRS staff should consult the MOU for further details about how the two entities are to carry out their respective and joint responsibilities in serving MRS customers under the Rehabilitation Act.

Informed Choice General Policies

Policy:

Applicants and eligible individuals shall be full and active participants in their vocational rehabilitation. They shall have the opportunity to obtain information about options and make informed choices throughout their rehabilitation program including: evaluation and assessment services and providers; trial work experience services and providers; their specific employment goal; the rehabilitation services required to accomplish their rehabilitation program; procurement methods; and the service providers which will be used.

Information about potential services shall include cost, accessibility, duration of services, the qualifications of the providers, the types of services offered by those providers, the degree to which the services are provided in an integrated setting, and as available, information about user satisfaction.

Applicants and eligible individuals shall be informed through appropriate means of communication, about the availability and scope of informed choice, how it may be exercised, and of the availability of support services for clients with cognitive or other disabilities who require assistance in exercising informed choice.

Procedure:

Information provided by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) should be readily understood and in a format accessible to the individual. At a minimum it shall include the following:

- the individual's financial and other responsibilities related to his or her choices,
- MRS requirements regarding the use of comparable benefits and services,
- MRS policy regarding the purchase of goods and services at the least cost and policy regarding bids and quotations,
- service provider standards, and other state and federal requirements related to MRS' expenditure of funds.

Counselors shall describe MRS financial constraints in ways that are positive and encourage participation, as well as assist the individual in locating alternate resources where MRS cannot help.

Informed Choice General Policies

Documentation of Informed Choice

The case record shall document the individual's opportunity to make choices and the resulting service delivery decisions and actions throughout the case record.

Informed Choice Throughout the Rehabilitation Program

The applicant and/or eligible individual shall have the opportunity to exercise informed choice through all the phases of the rehabilitation program, from assessment through closure.

Orientation and Intake

The applicant shall be provided sufficient information to understand the purpose of the program, eligibility criteria, and the nature and scope of services, in order to decide whether or not to apply for services. Orientation should include an explanation of the opportunity to make informed choices at all points of the rehabilitation program, including the right to make informed decisions about rehabilitation planning, employment goal selection, rehabilitation services and service providers, as well as rights of appeal. Such information will be provided in a way that is readily understood by the individual.

Assessment of Eligibility and Rehabilitation Needs

The applicant shall be involved in providing and securing existing assessment information to the maximum extent possible. The applicant should understand the purpose and need for any additional assessments that are to be completed. When the purchase of assessment services is indicated, the applicant will be offered the opportunity to select from among appropriate types of assessment services and service providers. Before purchasing additional assessments to determine rehabilitation needs, counselors and applicant should explore the use of self-assessment tools in facilitating self-awareness and development. Once assessment information has been obtained, the counselor and applicant should fully discuss findings and their relevance to an identification of the individual's strengths, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and barriers to employment and how these may affect vocational planning decisions. See Policy 2250 for further information.

Trial Work Experiences with Supports

The applicant shall be a full partner with the counselor in choosing trial work experience options and providers as well as support services needed to complete the trial work experience (TWE). Individuals receiving TWE may require specific support services to facilitate making informed decisions. When TWE calls for medical treatment interventions to refute or confirm the ability to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services (such as addiction treatment), the individual should be provided an understanding of treatment options and the consequences of not pursuing treatment.

Informed Choice General Policies

Employment Goal Selection and IPE

Should the eligible individual choose to use the services of the MRS counselor to facilitate IPE planning, the counselor shall assist the individual (or as appropriate the individual's representative) to select a meaningful employment goal consistent with the individual's primary employment factors and informed choice. The counselor provides, or assists the individual in obtaining information about the current and projected labor market, the variety of occupations congruent with the individual's abilities, needs and preferences, and the various services and qualified providers available to the individual in achieving the employment outcome. Job matching programs such as Open Options and MOIS can help individuals explore career or employment options. Counselors may also provide the individual with information about other local, state and federal resources to assist in defining and achieving an employment goal. This includes Social Security trial work options and work incentives, local Michigan Works! Programs, and Work First programs.

Selection of IPE Services and Service Providers

In assisting the individual to obtain information about service providers, the following methods or sources of information may be used:

- state or locally developed lists of services and service providers;
- consumer satisfaction surveys and reports about providers;
- referrals to other consumers;
- local consumer groups, or other advisory councils qualified to discuss the services or service providers; and relevant accreditation, certification, licensure or other information relating to the qualifications of various agencies or individual service providers under consideration.

Where such qualifications apply to a provider or a service, the provider shall meet MRS service provider standards as provided see Policy and Procedures 9050. The counselor's professional views about the qualifications, accessibility, and the relative advantages and disadvantages of using a service provider can be a valuable source of information for the individual.

Case Closure

The individual shall be involved in the closure decision and be provided an opportunity to discuss case closure. Before a rehabilitated case closure can occur, both the individual and the counselor must agree that the employment is satisfactory and the individual is performing well on the job.

Informed Choice General Policies

Informed Choice and Comparable Benefits

Policy requires that counselors and clients explore and use comparable benefits and services available to meet the individual's rehabilitation needs. These may include medical services available through Medicaid, Medicare or the Hill Burton Act; mental health and substance abuse services available through public community health programs; and remedial educational programs available through public schools.

The individual shall be informed of the requirement to pursue and use comparable benefits and services when available. MRS may not pay for services to the extent that comparable services and benefits are available to meet the individual's rehabilitation needs.

MRS Financial Requirements and Informed Choice

If an individual chooses a service or service provider whose cost is higher than another service or service provider that will equally meet the individual's need, the counselor is not required to pay the higher cost because it is the individual's choice. Part of the choice process is ensuring that individuals are informed about the advantages and disadvantages of each choice option. While individuals have a right to choose a higher cost service or service provider, one of the disadvantages of that choice may be that MRS payment will not exceed that of the lower cost service or service provider and that the individual will have to provide for the difference. This approach applies in a wide variety of situations, including:

- Training programs that lead to the same employment outcomes;
- College programs that lead to comparable job goals;
- In-state vs. out of state colleges;
- Public vs. private colleges;
- Training programs that require greater vs. lesser transportation and maintenance costs;
- Transportation services;
- Physical restoration services including hearing aids;
- Rehabilitation technology

Informed Choice General Policies

Limitations of Choice

Informed choice is not unrestricted choice. Counselors may not always be able to support an individual's choice.

- A choice should not be supported if the counselor has substantial evidence it will not lead to an employment outcome. If a goal is incompatible with the individual's abilities, capabilities and limitations and no accommodation, rehabilitation technology or other service can bridge the gap, the counselor can say no.
- If relevant labor market information indicates that the employment goal or services will not lead to a job outcome, the counselor should not approve the IPE.
- If the individual wants MRS to pay for a service, but the service is not required to achieve the employment outcome, the counselor cannot approve the service.
- Counselors cannot support choices that may be harmful to the individual or others. It is the counselor's responsibility to ensure that the individual understands the consequences of their decisions.

When the counselor cannot support the individual's choices, he or she should clearly and respectfully explain the reasons for non-support and consider alternatives with the individual. The individual should also be provided information about appeal rights and CAP under these circumstances.

Information:

Definitions, Process and Outcome

Informed choice is the process by which individuals participating in the vocational rehabilitation program make decisions about their assessment services, vocational goals, the services, and service providers that are necessary to reach those goals, and how those services will be procured. This process starts with the individual's values, interests, characteristics, and proceeds to an evaluation of availability of resources and alternatives, including the labor market. Implementing informed choice requires that the counselor listens carefully, communicates clearly, and gathers and analyzes information without bias. The counselor works with the individual to make choices and to evaluate their impact. Finally the counselor supports the individual in setting goals, making plans and following through with decisions, with the aim of achieving meaningful employment.

Role of the Individual

The individual, or the individual's representative, as appropriate, is the primary decision-maker. Factors to consider in assessing the individual's ability to make informed decisions include:

- skill in gathering information;
- skill and experience in making independent decisions;
- knowledge of community resources;
- experience and skill in career planning;
- knowledge of the labor market;
- and knowledge of MRS services.

Based on these and other factors, some individuals will need or want little additional information regarding decision-making support. Others will need or want only information and guidance regarding training options, restoration services, or employment opportunities. Many others, however, may want extensive career exploration and counseling to choose appropriate careers.

The primary role of the counselor in implementing informed choice is to ensure that the individual has sufficient information and knowledge of options, as well as the necessary supports to make meaningful choices. The counselor facilitates the individual's self-determination through careful listening, clarification of issues, exploration of options and their implementation, and when necessary, building the individual's capacity to make informed decisions.

Building Capacity to Make Informed Choices

If an individual lacks skills, knowledge, or confidence in making informed choices, referral for decision-making skill development, or involvement with a peer resource or other individuals knowledgeable about individual self-direction, may help ensure their meaningful participation in the choice process. Family members, significant others, advocacy organizations, rehabilitation assistants, mentors, and advisors may serve as decision making supports for the individual with his or her agreement. Individuals with substantial cognitive limitations may require additional supports and services in exercising informed choice. Techniques such as repetition and visual, auditory or written media may be used, including assistive technology. Such support services may be provided directly, arranged or purchased, consistent with MRS policy. The counselor can refer to the Rehabilitation Services Administration Technical Assistance Circular 98-01, Support Services for Individuals with Disabilities and Others Who Need Assistance in Implementing Informed Choice, available from the Casework Policy Section, for more information on this subject.

Informed Choice General Policies

The Michigan Postsecondary Admissions and Financial Assistance Handbook is the comprehensive information resource about accredited or state licensed post-secondary education and training providers.

Procurement Methods and Informed Choice

MRS has flexible purchasing options, including authorizations to qualified vendors of the individual's choice, direct payment to individuals when an authorization is not possible, emergency payment to meet true emergency needs, and third party authorization when none of the other procurement methods is possible. In select cases, an eligible individual may receive direct pay to contract directly with a service provider, like a personal assistant or rehabilitation renaissance advisor. To the extent that the individual participates in the procurement of services, implementing choice may involve basic consumer skills, such as money management and negotiating in the market place.

Policy:

Applicants and eligible individuals shall be advised of their rights and responsibilities, including the availability of the Client Assistance Program (CAP), at the time they apply for services, when their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is prepared, whenever assessment or IPE services are suspended, reduced, or terminated, and at the time of case closure.

Information:

Customer rights include:

- An evaluation of eligibility;
- Notification of the eligibility decision and priority category;
- Once eligible, they have a right to obtain written information about options available to them in preparing their IPE;
- The opportunity to make informed choices about the employment goal, services and service providers throughout their rehabilitation program;
- An IPE;
- An annual review of the IPE;
- Notification of a delay or termination of services;
- Review of Information in the case record;
- Confidentiality; and information about circumstances when records may be released,
- Ability to appeal Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) actions concerning provision or denial of services; and
- Non-discrimination.

Customer responsibilities include:

- Providing information needed to determine eligibility and develop an IPE;
- Notification of change in address or telephone number;

**Rights and Responsibilities
General Policies**

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- Keeping scheduled appointments;
 - Participating financially in their rehabilitation program to the best of their ability;
 - Using other available funds and community services before MRS funds are used; and
 - Performing satisfactorily in training or any other activity related to their program.

PURPOSE

In accordance with State and Federal regulations, this policy and procedure establishes guidelines for citizenship, residency and identity verification.

POLICY

Michigan residents may be eligible for Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) services. No duration of residency is required for individuals present in the state.

MRS staff document residency, identity, and the ability to be legally employed prior to implementation of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Non-U.S. citizens with employment Visas are permitted to request MRS services.

Note: The process of application and eligibility assessment is not delayed while establishing an applicant's presence in the state.

Note: To protect confidentiality MRS is not to maintain a copy of personal identification in the case record

PROCEDURES

Residency

Presence in the state of Michigan is established through case documentation and attestation by the applicant of their home address provided on either the:

- Application for Vocational and Employment Services (MRS-2910)
- Student & Parent/Guardian Referral/Consent for Pre-Employment Transition Services (MRS-2900)

MRS staff document review of one of the following if there is a question of residency:

**Identity and
Employment
Verification**

1. Valid Michigan Drivers' License or State of Michigan ID
2. Current rental agreement/mortgage statement
3. Copy of recent utility bill
4. Verification from current shelter

Proof of identity

MRS staff document confirmation of proof of identity prior to implementation of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The following forms may be used:

- Driver's license/ID card
- School ID card (with photograph)
- Birth certificate
- Voter registration card
- U.S. Military card/draft record, or
- Military dependents ID card

*A list of acceptable documents may be found at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-9.pdf>

Verification of social security number, legal name, and date of birth prior to IPE implementation

MRS staff input the customer's social security number in AWARE. A cross reference check with the Social Security Administration to verify the applicant's Social Security Number (SSN), legal name and date of birth will take place. Verified information is documented in an AWARE case note.

Note: Noncitizen applicants, who may be legally able to work in the United States, should acquire guidance in applying for an SSN through <https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10096.pdf>.

Note: If SSN is not indicated by the customer, contact the AWARE Support Desk for a temporary SSN while the applicant obtains a valid SSN.

If a discrepancy is indicated:

- MRS staff document request for the customer to provide a correct SSN.
- MRS staff may proceed with the eligibility or service delivery process during reconciliation of the SSN.
- MRS funds may not be expended during this time
- If discrepancies are not resolved within 90 days, the case is to be closed

Identity verification requirements for employment:

The Department of Homeland Security maintains that employers are responsible for completing and retaining a Form I-9, *Employment Eligibility Verification*.

(<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-9.pdf>)

MRS staff document verification that the customer has required forms necessary for I-9 completion and legal employment prior to implementation of an IPE.

Note: If an individual believes that information generated by MRS staff in the case record is inaccurate or misleading, the individual may request that the information be amended.

Citizenship

Resident aliens who do not have an employment visa that legally permits employment in the United States are not eligible for services.

REFERENCES

34 CFR 361.42

CONTACT

PolicyUnitSupportCenter@michigan.gov

Order of Selection for Services General Policies

Policy:

At any time Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) resources do not permit all eligible individuals to be served, an order of selection for services shall be implemented giving first priority to individuals with the most significant disabilities. Second priority shall be given to individuals with significant disabilities and third priority to those with non-significant disabilities. If all eligible customers within a priority category cannot be served, they shall be served in the order in which they applied.

Eligible individuals who do not meet the order of selection for services priority criteria shall, at a minimum, be referred to other federal and state programs within the statewide workforce investment system, including the Michigan Works! program. Referrals are to be made to those programs best suited to address the specific employment needs of an individual with a disability. Each referred individual shall have a notice of referral to present to the agency carrying out the program, information identifying a specific point of contact within the agency carrying out the program and, information and advice regarding the most suitable services to assist the individual to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

An order of selection for services does not affect individuals who have begun to receive services under an approved Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) or who are in need of post employment services prior to the date a priority category or categories are closed. Eligible individuals in priority categories not able to be served are placed on a waiting list.

Individuals shall be informed in writing of their disability priority category assignment at the time they are notified of their eligibility determination. Any customer who does not agree with the disability priority category to which they are assigned may appeal this decision within 30 days. Customers may submit additional information in an effort to demonstrate assignment to a higher disability priority category.

The AWARE letters identified in job aid 2300c-JA shall be used to inform customers throughout the order of selection process.

Procedure:

The decision to provide services to fewer than all priority categories is reviewed periodically throughout the fiscal year. A full review of the need for an order of selection for services occurs as part of the annual planning process. The MRS Director is responsible for determining how many priority categories and how many eligible customers within each priority category shall receive services at any given time based on the resources available.

Order of Selection for Services General Policies

The MRS Director will notify MRS staff and major statewide agencies and organizations of the priority categories it is expected MRS will be able to serve in the new fiscal year. Any changes in the priority categories to be served during the fiscal year will also be communicated in writing by the MRS director to MRS staff and pertinent others.

Within the AWARE system, “significance of disability” and “order of selection for services” priority codes are combined in the “disability priority code” as follows: Most Significantly Disabled is Category 1; Significantly Disabled is Category 2 and Not Significantly Disabled is Category 3.

Applicants placed in trial work experience must be given a disability priority category assignment. At a minimum, individuals placed in trial work experience must be categorized as “significantly disabled”. The disability priority category assigned in trial work experience status might not be the disability priority category assigned at the time eligibility is determined.

If the MRS Director determines that vocational rehabilitation services must be provided under an order of selection for services, an information and referral system will be implemented. This will ensure that eligible individuals with disabilities who do not meet order of selection for services priority categories will be referred to federal and state programs within the statewide workforce investment system including referral to the local Michigan Works! program for assistance with core, intensive and training services, or for other services as appropriate.

Individuals are assigned to the highest priority category for which they are eligible at the time eligibility is decided.

The MRS priority categories are as follows:

Most Significantly Disabled:

- A) Individuals with a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits three or more of the seven functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and
- B) Whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require three or more services over at least six months.

Significantly Disabled:

- A) Individuals with a severe physical or mental impairment that seriously limits two of the seven functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and
- B) Whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require three or more services over at least six months.

Order of Selection for Services General Policies

An eligible SSDI or SSI recipient is automatically considered to be, at least, an individual with a significant disability. **An SSDI or SSI recipient may be determined most significantly disabled with additional supporting documentation.**

Not Significantly Disabled:

- A) Individuals with a physical or mental impairment that seriously limits one of the seven functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and
B) Whose vocational rehabilitation does not require multiple services over six months.

The codes to be used for priority categories are as follows:

1. Most Significantly Disabled
2. Significantly Disabled
3. Not Significantly Disabled

Seven Functional Capacities

- Mobility
- Communication
- Self-care
- Self-direction
- Interpersonal skills
- Work tolerance
- Work skills

For the purpose of determining the disability priority, serious limitations are defined as:

- the individual's impairment imposes limitations to the degree that the individual's functioning in the area is poor or below common expectations, or
- that the individual, due to the impairment, may require accommodations* not typically made for other individuals for employability/work.

Determining the appropriate priority category for an eligible individual is based solely on identification of serious limitations in one or more of the seven functional capacity areas. Other factors may affect employability but should not be considered for purposes of defining the significance of an impairment. Such factors may include:

- geographic location,
- poor public transportation, or
- lack of training

Order of Selection for Services General Policies

Defining limitations in these functional capacity areas relies on the professional rehabilitation counselor's interpretation of the effect of the impairment on the individual as well as on medical or diagnostic/evaluative information.

Planning for services to address serious limitations is consistent with the third component of eligibility that requires services to achieve an employment outcome (see Rehabilitation Services Manual (RSM) Item 3100 – Eligibility Criteria). The IPE shall therefore include treatment, supports or other interventions that address substantial barriers to employment by ameliorating, reducing or removing serious limitations in one or more of the functional capacity areas.

Information:

*Accommodations are defined as special working conditions, rehabilitation technology, or substantial support and/or supervision.

The table in job aid 2300b-JA lists each of the seven functional capacity areas, identifies serious limitations in each capacity area and provides examples of interventions that may be required to address or reduce presenting serious limitations through the arrangement or authorization of services to be included in the IPE.

Not included in the table is guidance issued by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) regarding eligibility and disability priority considerations for individuals with Borderline Intellectual Functioning and Specific Learning Disabilities. The guidance provided in the Technical Assistance Circulars (TAC) below are invaluable in the assessment of eligibility and determining the disability priority category for individuals with these disabilities.

RSA-TAC-05-01 issued on January 10, 2005.

Guidelines for Assessing the Functional Capacities of an Individual with Specific Learning Disabilities to Determine Significance of Disability for Order of Selection Purposes

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/rsa/tac-05-01.doc>

RSA TAC-11-01: issued on January 21, 2011.

Determining Eligibility for Persons with Borderline Intellectual Functioning under the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/rsa/tac/2011/tac-11-01.doc>

Signatures and Notifications

General Policies

Policy:

Client signatures shall be obtained on Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) documents which reflect that the client exercises or waives rights, consents to certain action, or acknowledges understanding and/or receipt of something.

The signature of a legal guardian or parent shall be obtained instead, or in addition to the client's, if the client has a legal guardian or is under the age of 18 and unmarried.

Notifications which are normally sent to clients shall also be sent to legal guardians and parents of minors.

Information:

In any situation where a document or signature on a document may be used to show consent or agreement (e.g. a release form), or make an offer or take a position that will be relied upon in decision making (e.g., a price quotation), an original signature should always be obtained and made a part of the case record. Reliance on facsimile copies should be limited to those situations where there is a credible basis for concluding that the original document is on its way to MRS and time is of the essence. When the legal validity of a document is of concern, reliance upon facsimile copies should be the exception, and never the rule.

Transferring Cases General Policies

Rev. 3/2004

Policy:

A case record may be transferred for administrative reasons within an office or between district offices with supervisory approval.

Procedure:

Case transfers within an office or a district are supervised by local site managers.

The following procedures apply to case transfers from one district to another. Prior to seeking supervisory approval for a case transfer, the sending counselor will discuss the transfer with the client, including continuation of services, service providers, and completion dates in view of the requested transfer, as well as the client's commitment to completing an existing IPE (if one exists) and IPE amendments that may be needed to bring the case up-to-date). The sending counselor shall annotate this discussion with a case note entitled "Case Transfer Request" in AWARE. This case note shall state the following information:

- 1) The reason for the request.
- 2) A summary of the case discussion with the individual, including any need for a change in services, service providers, financial commitment, time frames and IPE amendment consistent with Policy 5150.
- 3) Verification that the individual's address, phone number and contact persons are current in AWARE.
- 4) Verification that outstanding authorizations are paid or cancelled as appropriate.

Upon receipt of the "Case Transfer Request," the supervisor from the sending office shall discuss the case transfer with the receiving supervisor provide guest access in AWARE to review the request. The referring and receiving site managers are jointly responsible for determining if a transfer is appropriate or if other case action needs to occur.

If the transfer is appropriate, a discussion should occur as to who will be responsible for needed IPE amendment, if necessary. An IPE is developed between Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) and the client and should be honored by the receiving office unless the vocational goal and/or services are no longer appropriate due to the individual's relocation.

Prior to case transfer, the receiving site manager shall identify the receiving counselor and caseload group number for that counselor. The client shall be notified of the transfer by the referring counselor and be given the name, address and telephone number of the receiving

Transferring Cases General Policies

counselor, and asked to contact the new counselor as soon as possible. The Notice of Transfer to New Counselor in the AWARE letter catalog can be used to notify clients of the change. Case transfer requires mailing hard copy records and transmitting the AWARE record to the receiving counselor. Hard copy records should be mailed to the receiving office by interdepartmental mail or certified mail. To complete the case transfer, an MRS staff member of the current caseload group electronically transfers the case to the receiving caseload group by using the Case Transfer Module in AWARE. The sending counselor is responsible for ensuring that the electronic case transfer is completed promptly.

The Rehabilitation Act gives MRS the responsibility of making administrative decisions about the district and office boundaries in which individuals are served to accomplish effective and equitable utilization of resources and to achieve maximum results for all clients. Applicants and eligible individuals are served in geographic MRS districts and offices according to their residence.

Clients who change their permanent residence generally have the option to have their cases transferred to the district or office to which they have moved. Clients who change domicile to receive assessment, training or restoration services are not considered to be changing permanent residence and their cases are not generally transferred. Clients do not have a right to select the office or district in which they are served, or the counselor who will serve them. As relates to intra-office transfers, MRS recognizes that a good counseling relationship is important to a positive case outcome. While a change in counselors is sometimes called for, honoring a request for a change in counselors is not always the best answer to real or perceived problems. The client has a right to appeal the denial of a request to change counselors.

Threats and Acts of Violence

General Policies

Policy:

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) is committed to promoting and maintaining a safe workplace and service delivery environment for MRS staff and applicants or eligible individuals of MRS. Acts of violence will not be tolerated. In order to preserve a safe work environment for MRS staff, and a safe service delivery environment for individuals being served, MRS may deny, suspend, or terminate services to applicants or eligible individuals and/or close the case of individuals who threat or commit acts of violence.

Procedure:

The following definitions used in policy and procedures apply:

Act of violence means any intentional, reckless, or grossly negligent act that would reasonably be expected to cause physical injury or death to another person.

Threat of violence means any intentional communication or other act that threatens an act of violence and would cause a reasonable person to feel terrorized, threatened, or fear physical injury or death to oneself or another person. Any threat of violence, whether verbal, written, visual, or by gesture, is presumed to be an expression of intent to do harm to another person. Threat of violence as used in this definition includes harassment as defined in MCL 750.411i.

Workplace means an office or building owned or leased by the state in which employees are assigned or work. It includes any state-owned or leased common grounds or parking areas used by employees assigned to or working in the office or building.

Service delivery environment means any public or private site in which MRS staff customarily conduct, arrange or purchase vocational rehabilitation services.

Accommodations means the process of adjusting the physical, psychosocial, or cognitive requirements to enable an individual with a disability to perform required tasks or behaviors.

Harassment means conduct directed toward a victim that includes, but is not limited to, repeated or continuing unconsented contact that would cause a reasonable individual to suffer emotional distress and that actually causes the victim to suffer emotional distress. Harassment does not include constitutionally protected activity or conduct that serves a legitimate purpose.

Threats and Acts of Violence

General Policies

1. **Clear and imminent threat or act of violence:** Any MRS staff who is subjected to a clear and imminent threat or act of violence, or is aware of a clear and imminent threat or act of violence directed at another person in the service delivery environment, shall:
 - Immediately take appropriate measures to ensure their safety and the safety of others in the service delivery environment.
 - Promptly report the threat or act to appropriate law enforcement personnel (local police, sheriff and/or State Police) and to their immediate supervisor or other available supervisory personnel.
 - Comply with the requirements of the applicable Workplace Safety Plan mandated by the department.
2. **Non-imminent threat or act of violence:** MRS staff who are subjected to a non-imminent threat or act of violence, or are aware of a non-imminent threat or act of violence directed at another person in the service delivery environment, shall report the threat or act to their immediate supervisor, in accordance with the requirements of the applicable Workplace Safety Plan.
3. **Actions required after a threat or act of violence has occurred:** Subsequent to complying with the procedures above, MRS staff must determine whether services should be continued, denied, suspended, terminated and/or to proceed with case closure. Depending on the nature of the threat or act of violence, MRS staff shall consider providing individualized assessments, treatments, behavioral contracts and/or accommodations unless these measures would compromise MRS' commitment to promoting and maintaining a safe workplace and service delivery environment for staff, applicants, and eligible individuals.
 - a. **Assessment.** The counselor shall consider whether the act or threat of violence is related to the individual's disability(ies). If so, MRS staff shall assess whether treatment, a behavioral contract with the individual or reasonable accommodation will eliminate or mitigate the individual's threats or acts of violence. The following are examples of factors to be considered in such an assessment:
 - Mental health diagnoses that contribute to the individual's behavior;
 - Treatment necessary to reduce threatening behaviors, such as individual or group therapy;
 - Amenability to treatment;
 - Ability to understand the consequences of one's behavior;
 - Ability to make informed choices regarding vocational rehabilitation;
 - Ability to comply with treatment requirements;
 - Assessment of the impact of threatening behavior on the customer's employability;

Threats and Acts of Violence

General Policies

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- Consideration of a behavioral contract that will make future services contingent upon the individual's ability to eliminate or control his/her threatening or abusive behavior;
 - Whether behavior is opportunistic or predatory;
 - Whether the primary threat is to persons or property;
 - Potential target populations and triggers.
- b. Accommodations. Reasonable accommodations shall be considered and provided, as appropriate, to enable applicants or eligible individuals to participate in a vocational rehabilitation program or in the client appeal process. Examples of such accommodations include:
- Requiring the presence of a second employee or proximity of security staff when the individual is physically present in a service location.
 - Requiring that contacts between the individual and MRS staff take place in a safe environment or location.
 - Limiting communication between the individual and MRS staff to particular methods, intervals, or times.
- c. Notification of other staff. MRS staff who are likely to have contact with the customer, must be notified of any behavioral contracts or safety accommodations established. Proposed behavioral contracts or accommodations shall be reviewed with the immediate supervisor.
4. **Documentation Requirements:** Any determination that an applicant or eligible individual has or is likely to subject employees or others in the service delivery environment to a threat or act of violence shall be documented in a case note or otherwise substantiated in writing (e.g. a diagnostic report or Workplace Safety Plan Incident Report). The case note or other written documentation must include an explanation of the basis for the determination.

When behavioral contracts, treatments or accommodations are deemed a necessary service, their nature and rationale shall be documented in the individual's case record. For individuals who have an Individualized Plan for Employment or a Trial Work Experience Plan, treatments, behavioral contracts and/or accommodations shall be recorded as part of such a plan or plan amendment, as appropriate. When the applicant or eligible individual refuses to agree to or participate in assessments, treatments, behavioral contracts or accommodations, such refusal shall also be documented.

5. **Denial, suspension, or termination of services and/or case closure:** MRS may deny, suspend, or terminate services provided to an individual who has subjected MRS

Threats and Acts of Violence

General Policies

staff or other persons in the service delivery environment to threats or acts of violence, or who refuses to participate in assessment, treatment, accommodations or behavioral contracts to reduce or eliminate threatening or violent behavior. MRS may also close the individual's case record. The case record shall document consideration or provision of assessments, treatments, behavioral contracts and/or accommodations to reduce or eliminate an individual's threatening or violent behavior.

6. **Due process.** All MRS policies and procedures regarding denial, suspension or termination of services, and/or case closure, including notification and the right to appeal, shall be followed.

Information:

In order to promote and maintain a safe work environment, each MRS Office is required by the Department to develop a Workplace Safety Plan. This plan must be reviewed with staff and updated on an annual basis. MRS staff should be sufficiently familiar with their workplace safety plan to take prudent and timely actions in relation to their safety and that of others.

Policy and procedures in this manual item are not intended to alter or modify any provisions of MRS' or the Department's workplace safety requirements or State of Michigan Civil Service Rules. Staff have an obligation to know the requirements of department and Civil Service rules about workplace safety. The Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Workplace Safety Policy link is http://www.michigan.gov/documents/safety1_121969_7.doc. The Civil Service Rule 2-20 (Workplace Safety) link is: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcs/Reg_2.05_Workplace_Safety_207289_7.pdf

Staff may pursue a "personal protection order" from a circuit court in order to address concerns regarding individuals who commit threats or acts of violence. Prior to pursuing a personal protection order, the District Manager shall consult with the Attorney General's representative to MRS. The memorandum from the Department of Attorney General, "Restraining Orders Against Potentially Dangerous Clients" (2375a-JA Rev 10-2007) remains timely guidance on the matter.

Staff may file individual legal action against persons served by MRS who commit acts of, or threats of violence against them, as appropriate. When they do so in their capacity as MRS employees, they must notify the District Manager and Policy Manager and the MRS representative to the State's Attorney General.

Threats and Acts of Violence

General Policies

Relevant due process manual items to consider include RSM Item 2175, Clients, Appeals, Mediation and Hearings; RSM Item 2225, Informed Choice; RSM Item 5225, Termination of Services; and RSM Item 7150, Notice of Case Closure.

SECTION III

Policy:

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) shall make a good faith effort to promptly contact referred individuals to inform them of application requirements and to gather information necessary to initiate an assessment for determining eligibility and priority for services.

Procedure:

Referral procedures for MRS services are designed to maximize access to the Vocational Rehabilitation system. In order to facilitate referrals, application forms are to be widely distributed and available in Michigan Works! Service Centers and other community locations.

Prompt and equitable processing of referrals shall occur no later than 30 days following the referral date with provision of an orientation to the MRS program that includes a description of the MRS process and MRS requirements. The referral date shall be the date the MRS counselor or MRS representative receives the referral's full name, current telephone number or email address, and correct street address.

Orientation is a part of the information and referral process that provides individuals with sufficient information to determine whether MRS is the appropriate organization to assist them, and to decide whether or not they should apply for MRS services leading to employment or should seek referral elsewhere.

An orientation to the MRS process can be conducted in a group setting, individually with a MRS counselor or viewed on-line. The orientation date and orientation type provided shall be entered in the Referral Module in AWARE.

Interested individuals wishing to apply for MRS services can do so after receiving an orientation to the MRS program. Documentation shall be entered for intake in the Participant Module in AWARE no later than 60 days from the date of referral which is the date MRS receives the referral's full name, current telephone number or email address, and street address. Entering the applicant information on the intake page in AWARE closes the individual's status as a referral.

Individuals in referral status who choose, after an orientation, not to apply for MRS services or who do not show for scheduled orientation appointments, shall be closed from referral status no later than 60 days from the date of referral which is the date MRS receives the individual's full name, current telephone number or email address, and correct street address.

The referral date, orientation date, orientation type and any referral notes will automatically be transferred from the Referral Module in AWARE to the Participant Module once an Application for Employment Services is entered in AWARE.

Information:

A referral to MRS is defined as that process by which a person is directed to MRS for information or assistance. Referrals may be relatively formal or informal. Referrals may be made formally by educational institutions, health services personnel, community rehabilitation programs, welfare agencies, MichiganWorks! Service Centers, the Social Security Administration, or other sources. Conversely, referrals may be informal, such as self-referral or referral by word of mouth.

Orientation

Referral, Application, Intake, Eligibility, and Vocational Assessment

Policy:

Applicants shall be provided an orientation to Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) services which shall include:

- the employment purpose of program,
- that an employment outcome shall be in an integrated setting,
- eligibility criteria,
- services available through MRS, and the statewide workforce investment system,
- the availability of vocational rehabilitation services when MRS becomes the service provider for a Ticket holder of the Social Security Ticket To Work program,
- the individualized nature of their rehabilitation program,
- the requirement to use other sources of funds before MRS can pay for services,
- the fact that they shall be expected to contribute toward the cost of the services in their rehabilitation program to the extent they are able,
- how they will be involved in making informed choices regarding their rehabilitation program,
- MRS' order of selection for services policy,
- their rights and responsibilities as a customer of MRS,
- and the availability of the Client Assistance Program and how it may assist them.

Policy:

To apply for services with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), individuals, or their representative as appropriate, shall complete and sign an MRS application form or otherwise request services and provide the equivalent information; provide information necessary to determine eligibility and priority for services; and be available to complete the assessment process.

In accordance with the National Voter Registration Act, all new applicants for MRS services shall be provided an opportunity to apply to register to vote as part of the application process for MRS services.

Procedure:

The RA-2910, Application for Vocational and Employment Services, and AWARE Intake, Disability, Disability Priority, Special Programs, Application Documentation and Education data pages are used to record basic applicant information. They provide the counselor with the information needed for federal reporting purposes as well as for use in planning diagnostic services, determining eligibility, assessing rehabilitation needs and vocational planning.

Part 1 of the RA-2910, Application for Vocational and Employment Services, shall be completed by the MRS applicant. Part 2 of the Application for Vocational and Employment Services shall be completed by the applicant in partnership with the MRS Counselor during the intake appointment. For Students or Youth with Disabilities or individuals who are not their own guardian, Part 2 of the Application will also require the signature and may involve the participation of the applicant's parent/guardian or representative.

Services may not be denied based solely on an applicant's refusal to sign an Application Form. The refusal to sign should be recorded and the reason stated.

Recording the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of relatives and friends of the applicant is helpful in contacting customers if they move without notifying MRS.

There is no upper or lower age limit for applying for MRS services. Applicants must be able to obtain a work permit to be considered for employment.

Individuals who have previously been MRS customers may reapply for services and have their eligibility reassessed. For individuals whose cases were closed ineligible due to the severity of their disability, policy and procedure outlined in Rehabilitation Services

Manual Item 7225, Annual Review of Case Closure due to Severity of Disability, is applicable.

All new applicants must be provided an opportunity to register to vote during the intake process. If an applicant declines to complete the registration application for any reason, the AWARE system should be annotated accordingly. Customers who complete an application to register to vote may mail the form themselves or have the district office do the mailing.

The date of application is the date the individual completes the application requirements noted above in policy, and the entire application form is completed and signed by both the applicant and the MRS counselor. The date of the hard copy application is the "official" application date and overrides the application date entered in AWARE.

The application shall be entered into AWARE no later than 7 days after the application is completed and signed by the customer and counselor.

Forms:

RA-2409 -- Employment Planning Checklist
RA-2910 -- Application for Vocational and Employment Services
RA-2910-Spanish -- Application for Employment Services-Spanish Version
RA-4577 -- Student Checklist for Michigan Rehabilitation Services

Application of Agency Employees and Relatives Referral, Application, Intake, Eligibility, and Vocational Assessment

Policy:

Employees and members of their immediate family may apply for Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) services.

Procedure:

At the time of application, or at the point an individual is identified as a member of an employee's immediate family, the applicant should be informed of the option to be served by another district. The applicant's choice should be honored. If the applicant elects to receive services locally, the district manager shall determine which staff will be assigned to the case.

To avoid conflict of interest issues, counselors and support staff shall not provide services to members of their immediate families.

Case files of employees and/or members of their immediate family shall be stored in a manner which ensures confidentiality.

The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits MRS, as an employer, from co-mingling and/or utilizing client case record information of current or former employees during the hiring process or while employed by MRS. Employees who are (or were) clients may elect to release materials from their case record for purposes such as providing supporting documentation to an accommodation request.

Information:

Immediate family includes parents, spouse, siblings, and children. A more expansive definition of the term (e.g., in-laws, cousins, etc.) may be used if there might otherwise be a loss of privacy.

To ensure as much confidentiality as possible, Help Desk staff in the Central Office can be directed to suppress the name and Social Security number of the applicant in the AWARE system.

Section III

Policy:

Applicants shall be eligible for Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) services if they have a physical or mental impairment that constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment and if they require MRS services to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in or regain employment consistent with their abilities and capabilities. Applicants who have been determined to have a disability under the SSDI (Title II) and/or SSI (Title XVI) program of the Social Security Act, shall be considered to have a significant disability and presumed to be eligible for MRS services, provided they intend to achieve an employment outcome consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice. Once an individual has been informed of the employment nature of the program, the completion of an MRS application for services shall be considered as intent to achieve an employment outcome.

All applicants shall be presumed to be able to benefit in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services, unless found to be ineligible for services due to the severity of the disability by clear and convincing evidence, including applicants who have been determined to have a disability under SSDI and SSI.

Eligibility requirements shall be applied without regard to the:

- a) Age, sex, race, color, or national origin of the applicant;
- b) Type of expected employment outcome;
- c) Source of referral for vocational rehabilitation services;
- d) Particular service needs or anticipated cost of services required by an applicant or the income level of an applicant or applicant's family;
- e) Applicants' employment history of current employment status; and
- f) Applicants' educational status or current educational credential.

Applicants who are legally blind shall not be served by MRS, but will be referred instead to the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons. For further information, see Policy and Procedures 4400, Visual Impairments.

Applicants who have a third party legally responsible for the payment of their vocational rehabilitation costs, shall be promptly referred to the MRS Business Network Division for services.

Procedure:

1. At intake, the counselor shall ask applicants whether they are eligible for, or receiving SSI and/or SSDI benefits, or for any other third party benefits. The counselor seeks verification, such as a copy of an SSA award letter or other SSA correspondence, and places it in the case record.

2. When an applicant states he or she is an SSI or SSDI beneficiary, but has no documentation of SSA status, the counselor shall promptly obtain an AWARE Social Security Benefit Report to validate the individual's Social Security status.
3. The counselor shall make an eligibility determination for SSI or SSDI recipients, no later than 60 days from the date of application. The only exception to this federal requirement is when the case record is moved to Trial Work Experiences (TWE - Application T in AWARE) within 60 days of the date of application. TWE are only done when the counselor has serious doubt about the individual's ability to benefit from MRS services to achieve an employment outcome (See Manual Item 3175, Trial Work Experience, for further instructions).
4. Eligibility Determination Extension (Application-E in AWARE) **shall not** be used for SSI or SSDI applicants. Eligibility determination shall not be delayed to secure diagnostic records for such applicants.
5. When insufficient diagnostic and assessment information is available prior to an eligibility decision, additional information needed to determine vocational rehabilitation needs shall be obtained after eligibility and prior to IPE development. The counselor uses available disability information obtained from the application process to determine the disability and uses the default disability priority rating of *significantly disabled*. The counselor updates the disability and the priority rating, as appropriate, when further information is obtained, per Manual Item 3200, Determination of Eligibility and Priority Category.
6. In the event an SSI or SSDI applicant refuses to release information, or refuses to participate in the vocational rehabilitation needs assessment, the counselor shall continue to presume eligibility by validating SSA status via the AWARE benefit report and by completing an eligibility determination, or when ability to benefit is in doubt, TWE. If the individual continues to refuse to release records or participate in assessment, the case may be considered for closure.
7. When an individual indicates he or she is receiving third party benefits such as Worker's Compensation, Auto No Fault, or Long Term Disability, the individual shall promptly be referred to the Business Network Division, using form RA-2947 – Request for Services, to determine third party liability and appropriate case management. (See Manual Item 8075, Business Network Unit for referral procedures.)

Information:

The qualification that an individual requires services to advance in employment provides additional eligibility criterion to ensure that individuals with disabilities obtain the services necessary so they can pursue and engage in high-demand jobs available in today's economy. All other eligibility criteria continue to apply to applicants seeking to advance in employment.

For further information about the criteria for legal blindness, see Manual Item 4400, Visual Impairments.

Applicants who are eligible for SSI due to their disability and/or SSDI due to their disability, are presumed to meet all criteria for eligibility; i.e.:

- Have a mental or physical impairment that creates a substantial impediment to employment, and
- Require vocational rehabilitation services to achieve an employment outcome consistent with their abilities and capabilities, and
- Are able to benefit from MRS services, unless determined unable to benefit by clear and convincing evidence, consistent with Manual Item 3175, Trial Work Experience.

It is not necessary to receive a cash benefit to be eligible for SSI or SSDI. Only SSI and SSDI applicants are accorded the presumption of eligibility.

Policy:

Once an individual has completed an application for services, an assessment of eligibility and priority for service shall be conducted and an eligibility determination made within 60 days unless exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) preclude a determination within 60 days and MRS and the individual agrees to a specific extension of time or trial work experiences with supports.

To the maximum extent possible and appropriate, the assessment shall consist of a review of existing data, be conducted in integrated settings, and be consistent with the applicant's informed choice.

Procedures:

In the event an eligibility determination cannot be made within 60 days because of exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of MRS and for which the individual agrees, an Eligibility Determination Extension shall be completed in AWARE and the Notice of Extension of Eligibility letter in AWARE shall be forwarded to the customer. The Notice of Extension of Eligibility letter shall specify the activities to be completed and the date in which the activities shall be completed before eligibility can be determined.

If, because of exceptional and unforeseen circumstances the Eligibility Determination Extension expires without determining Eligibility, manager consultation and written approval is required before a second Eligibility Determination Extension may be executed. If it is determined a second Eligibility Determination Extension is warranted, the Eligibility Determination Extension may be completed in AWARE. The Notice of Extension of Eligibility letter in AWARE shall be forwarded to the customer, documenting that the customer agreed to the extension. The Notice of Extension of Eligibility letter shall specify the activities to be completed and the date in which the activities shall be completed before eligibility can be determined.

Sources of information that may be used to substantiate a physical or mental impairment and related limitations caused by the impairment include:

- Existing records from qualified facilities or practitioners familiar with diagnosing or treating the impairment(s) in question, especially practitioners or facilities that are currently treating the applicant. This would include records from qualified medical personnel, mental health or developmental disability programs, substance abuse treatment clinics, and individually licensed practitioners operating within their legal scopes of practice;

- Special Education records, including an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) which identifies the impairment;
- Veteran's Administration disability benefits records that identify the disability;
- Counselor observation of a readily visible anatomical impairment such as amputation, deformity, or muscle wasting associated with paralysis;
- Verification of current eligibility for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI); and
- Verification of State Disability Insurance (SDA) that identifies the disability.

Medical or other evaluations may be purchased or provided if other sources of documentation are not available, the nature of the disability is not stable, observable, or clearly defined, or information needed to determine the severity of the disability is not available.

The age of diagnostic information should be appropriate to the applicant's impairment(s) and the planned use of the information. Generally, more current information will be needed if the impairment is unstable, progressive, or the diagnosis is unclear.

The existence of a substantial impediment to employment (due to a mental or physical impairment) may be substantiated by any of the information sources noted above if the record in question addresses work or training limitations. The following information may also be used to substantiate the existence of substantial barriers to employment:

- Counselor observation of behavioral or functional limitations of an impairment;
- Written or verbal reports or descriptions of vocationally relevant limitations from the applicant, their representative, family members, school staff, employers and others familiar with the individual.

The existence of behavioral or functional limitations alone is not sufficient to establish a substantial impediment to employment. The counselor must determine that these limitations result in a substantial, material and significant barrier (given the individual's training, education and employment history) to the individual in terms of preparing for, securing or retaining employment consistent with their abilities and capabilities.

Licensed counselors and/or certified rehabilitation counselors may conduct appraisals and assessments directly as allowed by their scope of practice, and should document

such findings in case notes apart from the documentation required for Eligibility Determination in AWARE.

If the applicant's informed, written consent is needed to secure information from another source, it may be obtained by a letter of authorization, the Customer Information Request, Authorization to Release Personal Information form, RA-24 or a document provided by the information source. It may be necessary to pay for the information provided.

Applicants who have been determined to have a disability under SSI and/or SSDI are presumed eligible for vocational rehabilitation services unless their ability to benefit from an employment outcome is in doubt. (See Manual Item 3175, Trial Work Experience) Verification of eligibility for SSI and/or SSDI or a copy of an SSA issued "Ticket to Work" must be on file. No further eligibility assessment is necessary. However, existing assessments from SSA and additional assessments may be obtained for a determination of vocational rehabilitation needs.

An applicant eligible for SSI/SSDI can be entered into eligibility status and certified eligible for vocational rehabilitation services immediately upon verification of eligibility for SSI/SSDI by noting under all portions of the Certificate of Eligibility the individual's eligibility for SSI or SSDI (Title XVI and Title II)

Verification of disability for SSDI, SSI, SDA, Special Education, or Veterans Administration disability may include, for example:

- Copies of award notice or letters notifying the applicant of eligibility.
- A copy of an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) indicating that the applicant has been determined eligible for Special Education.
- Written confirmation of receipt of Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income (on the basis of disability) from the local Social Security office or a Ticket to Work issued by SSA.

Evidence of eligibility for Special Education presumes only that the applicant has a physical or mental impairment and a substantial impediment to employment. The counselor must still determine whether the individual requires vocational rehabilitation services to achieve an employment outcome consistent with ability and capability.

An appraisal of current health is not required for eligibility in addition to information documenting the disability, but should be provided, for example, if there is a question regarding the applicant's overall health status and how it may impact employability.

The assessment to determine rehabilitation needs should begin concurrently with the assessment to determine eligibility.

The RA-2908 may be used to provide the applicant with a schedule of any diagnostic assessments or other appointments that may be made.

Information:

The following are definitions of terms used in the determination of eligibility:

Ability to Benefit - likely to achieve an employment outcome with the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.

Disability – a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment and which is not temporary.

Mental Impairment – any mental or psychological disorder such as intellectual disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disorders.

Physical Impairment – any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculo-skeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine.

Requires Services - would not be able to achieve employment consistent with the individual's abilities and capabilities without vocational rehabilitation services.

Substantial Impediment to Employment - means that a physical or mental impairment (in light of attendant medical, psychological, vocational, educational, communication and other related factors) materially hinders an individual from preparing for, entering into, engaging in, or retaining employment consistent with the individual's abilities or capabilities. A substantial impediment to employment may be established if the impairment significantly limits one or more functional capacities of the individual in terms of an employment outcome.

Forms:

- RA-21 – General Medical Examination Report
- RA-24 – Information Request
- RA-2738 – Mental Health Report
- RA-2750 – Significant Disability Determination Worksheet
- RA-2908 – Diagnosis Plan

- RA-4672 – Report of Dental Examination
- RA-4683 – Physical Capacities Assessment
- RA-55 – Report of Eye Examination.

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Notes Issue 3 and Issue 5 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

Policy:

Once an individual has completed an application for services, an assessment of eligibility and priority for service shall be conducted and an eligibility determination made within 60 days unless exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) preclude a determination within 60 days and MRS and the individual agrees to a specific extension of time or trial work experiences with supports.

To the maximum extent possible and appropriate, the assessment shall consist of a review of existing data, be conducted in integrated settings, and be consistent with the applicant's informed choice.

Procedures:

In the event an eligibility determination cannot be made within 60 days because of exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of MRS and for which the individual agrees, an Eligibility Determination Extension shall be completed in AWARE and the Notice of Extension of Eligibility letter in AWARE shall be forwarded to the customer. The Notice of Extension of Eligibility letter shall specify the activities to be completed and the date in which the activities shall be completed before eligibility can be determined.

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Sources of information that may be used to substantiate a physical or mental impairment and related limitations caused by the impairment include:

- Existing records from qualified facilities or practitioners familiar with diagnosing or treating the impairment(s) in question, especially practitioners or facilities that are currently treating the applicant. This would include records from qualified medical personnel, mental health or developmental disability programs, substance abuse treatment clinics, and individually licensed practitioners operating within their legal scopes of practice;

- Special Education records, including an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) which identifies the impairment;
- Veteran's Administration disability benefits records that identify the disability;
- Counselor observation of a readily visible anatomical impairment such as amputation, deformity, or muscle wasting associated with paralysis;
- Verification of current eligibility for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI); and
- Verification of State Disability Insurance (SDA) that identifies the disability.

Medical or other evaluations may be purchased or provided if other sources of documentation are not available, the nature of the disability is not stable, observable, or clearly defined, or information needed to determine the severity of the disability is not available.

The age of diagnostic information should be appropriate to the applicant's impairment(s) and the planned use of the information. Generally, more current information will be needed if the impairment is unstable, progressive, or the diagnosis is unclear.

The existence of a substantial impediment to employment (due to a mental or physical impairment) may be substantiated by any of the information sources noted above if the record in question addresses work or training limitations. The following information may also be used to substantiate the existence of substantial barriers to employment:

- Counselor observation of behavioral or functional limitations of an impairment;
- Written or verbal reports or descriptions of vocationally relevant limitations from the applicant, their representative, family members, school staff, employers and others familiar with the individual.

The existence of behavioral or functional limitations alone is not sufficient to establish a substantial impediment to employment. The counselor must determine that these limitations result in a substantial, material and significant barrier (given the individual's training, education and employment history) to the individual in terms of preparing for, securing or retaining employment consistent with their abilities and capabilities.

Licensed counselors and/or certified rehabilitation counselors may conduct appraisals and assessments directly as allowed by their scope of practice, and should document

such findings in case notes apart from the documentation required for Eligibility Determination in AWARE.

If the applicant's informed, written consent is needed to secure information from another source, it may be obtained by a letter of authorization, the Customer Information Request, Authorization to Release Personal Information form, RA-24 or a document provided by the information source. It may be necessary to pay for the information provided.

Applicants who have been determined to have a disability under SSI and/or SSDI are presumed eligible for vocational rehabilitation services unless their ability to benefit from an employment outcome is in doubt. (See Manual Item 3175, Trial Work Experience) Verification of eligibility for SSI and/or SSDI or a copy of an SSA issued "Ticket to Work" must be on file. No further eligibility assessment is necessary. However, existing assessments from SSA and additional assessments may be obtained for a determination of vocational rehabilitation needs.

An applicant eligible for SSI/SSDI can be entered into eligibility status and certified eligible for vocational rehabilitation services immediately upon verification of eligibility for SSI/SSDI by noting under all portions of the Certificate of Eligibility the individual's eligibility for SSI or SSDI (Title XVI and Title II)

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Evidence of eligibility for Special Education presumes only that the applicant has a physical or mental impairment and a substantial impediment to employment. The counselor must still determine whether the individual requires vocational rehabilitation services to achieve an employment outcome consistent with ability and capability.

An appraisal of current health is not required for eligibility in addition to information documenting the disability, but should be provided, for example, if there is a question regarding the applicant's overall health status and how it may impact employability.

The assessment to determine rehabilitation needs should begin concurrently with the assessment to determine eligibility.

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Information:

The following are definitions of terms used in the determination of eligibility:

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Physical Impairment – any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological, musculo-skeletal, special sense organs, respiratory (including speech organs), cardiovascular, reproductive, digestive, genitourinary, hemic and lymphatic, skin, and endocrine.

Requires Services - would not be able to achieve employment consistent with the individual's abilities and capabilities without vocational rehabilitation services.

Substantial Impediment to Employment - means that a physical or mental impairment (in light of attendant medical, psychological, vocational, educational, communication and other related factors) materially hinders an individual from preparing for, entering into, engaging in, or retaining employment consistent with the individual's abilities or capabilities. A substantial impediment to employment may be established if the impairment significantly limits one or more functional capacities of the individual in terms of an employment outcome.

Forms:

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- RA-2738 – Mental Health Report
- RA-2750 – Significant Disability Determination Worksheet
- RA-2908 – Diagnosis Plan

- RA-4672 – Report of Dental Examination
- RA-4683 – Physical Capacities Assessment
- RA-55 – Report of Eye Examination.

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Notes Issue 3 and Issue 5 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

Policy:

Individuals with a disability who are employed may be eligible for Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) services if, as a result of their disability:

- they require vocational rehabilitation services to advance in employment*,
- their employment endangers the health and safety of the individual or others,
- the individual is at risk of losing their employment*,
- their employment is unsteady* and needed services cannot be obtained from other agencies or resources.

*definitions in the Information section below.

Individuals who have access to these resources, but choose not to use them, are generally not considered to require MRS services.

The individual must meet all eligibility criteria to be determined eligible for MRS services.

Information:

Advancing in employment for eligibility purposes may be considered when an individual meets all other eligibility criteria and requires MRS services to advance in current or new employment.

At risk: A person who is **at risk** is in danger of having his/her job terminated, due to disability related factors.

A job may be considered **at risk** if the disability results in substantial impediments to employment that will negatively affect the person's job retention. At risk also may apply to an individual who has confirmation that his/her job will be restructured in such a way that the individual will require vocational rehabilitation services to retrain for, or acquire, or advance to a new position.

When considering whether an individual requires job retention services, the counselor should seek objective verification, such as a statement from the current employer, a job analysis, or medical verification of a significant decline in functional capacity related to job function. *See Job Aid 2300b-JA, Table of Serious Limitations in the Seven Functional Capacity Areas, for information about the seven functional capacity areas, serious limitations in each capacity area, and examples of interventions that may be required to address or reduce presenting serious limitations through the arrangement or authorization of services to be included in the Individualized Plan for Employment.*

Unsteady Employment is work that is seasonal, intermittent, temporary, permanently part-time, or subjects the individual to a pattern of lay-offs or variations in the availability of work. The term "seasonal" is defined by the Department of Labor as employment of less than 5 months' duration, linked to seasonal or climatic conditions. "Temporary" is defined as employment for 180 days or less. "Part-time" is defined as permanently assigned to less than 30 hours of work per week.

For individuals requiring accommodations to maintain their employment, services may be requested of the Business Network Division staff, such as:

- On-the-job evaluation services or worksite evaluations provided by the Occupational Therapists
- Consultative ADA services for the employer provided by the Business Relations Consultants

See Rehabilitation Services Manual item 6025, Accommodations, for more information.

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Notes Issue 4 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

Trial Work Experience

Referral, Application, Intake, Eligibility, and Vocational Assessment

At a Glance – included in this Manual item:

- Trial Work Experiences (TWEs) must be arranged when an individual's ability to benefit from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services in terms of an employment outcome is in question;
- TWE plans may be initiated at any point in the rehabilitation process not only at application;
- A TWE plan must be signed by both parties before implementation;
- A TWE plan can only last 12 months unless there is a substantial need to extend the plan; and
- TWE plans either result in eligibility or demonstration by clear and convincing evidence that an individual is not able to benefit from VR services in terms of an employment outcome.

Policy:

Before an applicant or eligible individual with a significant disability can be determined incapable of benefiting from services in terms of an employment outcome, trial work experiences (TWE) shall first be provided. The presumption of employability continues during the TWE and may be refuted only if Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) demonstrates by clear and convincing evidence that the applicant cannot benefit from services in terms of an employment outcome.

During the TWE, MRS shall explore the individual's abilities, capabilities and capacity to perform in realistic work situations in the most integrated settings possible, through the use of appropriate supports.

TWEs shall be of sufficient variety and over a sufficient period of time to determine the eligibility of the individual or to determine the existence of clear and convincing evidence that the individual is incapable of benefiting in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services due to the severity of the individual's disability.

Procedure:

TWEs shall be arranged at any point in the rehabilitation process that an individual's ability to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome is in question.

A written TWE Plan shall be developed to include only those services required to determine eligibility or continued eligibility, and the nature and scope of services required to achieve an employment outcome. AWARE uses the TWE Plan page to document trial work experiences (Application-T). A Trial Work Experience Plan after Eligibility letter

Trial Work Experience

Referral, Application, Intake, Eligibility, and Vocational Assessment

template has been created and uploaded into the AWARE Letters Catalog to be used until the functionality to complete all TWE Plans is available in AWARE. The TWE Plan after Eligibility letter is to be used for instances when continued eligibility is in question.

Applicants or their representatives shall be full and active participants in the development of their TWE Plan and in the selection of services and service providers, and shall sign and be provided a copy of the written document. Progress toward achieving the TWE outcome shall be evaluated regularly and routinely. The assessment must be conducted in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the individual's needs and informed choice.

The TWE plan period begins with the date the TWE Plan is completed and signed by the applicant or eligible individual and the MRS counselor. The TWE shall be terminated at any time an eligibility determination can be made, or after 12 months, unless substantial need for additional time is documented. If the TWE Plan expected end date has expired in AWARE and there is substantial need for additional time to extend the TWE, an MRS counselor shall change the expected end date in AWARE.

When the question of ability to benefit relates to an unstable or untreated disability, appropriate treatment or diagnostic assessments may be arranged within the TWE Plan and initiated concurrent with participation in the TWE. The use of diagnostic assessments or involvement in treatments shall not delay or impede the arrangement or initiation of the TWE.

A statement from a medical provider that an individual is not capable of working is not sufficient evidence to render an individual ineligible for MRS. The case file must contain evidence that thoroughly documents the individual's inability to explore his or her abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in realistic work situations including trial work experiences before an ineligibility determination due to inability to benefit shall be rendered. The burden of proof rests with MRS to demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the individual is not able to achieve an employment outcome or participate in trial work experiences due to the instability of their impairment.

The follow-up letter to physician contained in the letters catalog in AWARE shall be used to obtain additional information from the individual's medical provider. The letter identifies general types of services, including job accommodations, and describes the trial work experience opportunity. If a response is not received from the individual's medical provider, the MRS counselor shall follow up with a telephone call. Efforts to work with the individual's medical provider shall be documented in a case note. If the medical provider continues to indicate the individual is not able to participate in services with MRS or if the medical providers does not respond after several attempts to solicit follow-up information, in writing and by phone, the individuals case with MRS shall be closed due to severity of disability.

Trial Work Experience

Referral, Application, Intake, Eligibility, and Vocational Assessment

Trial Work Experiences:

- Include supported employment, on-the-job training and other experiences using realistic integrated work settings;
- Must be of sufficient variety and over a sufficient period of time;
- Must provide appropriate supports, including, but not limited to, assistive technology devices and services and personal assistance services, to accommodate the rehabilitation needs of the individual during the Trial Work Experiences.

Once the issues related to the individual's ability to benefit in terms of an employment outcome through trial work experiences is resolved, an eligibility determination shall be completed or case closure pursued, as appropriate.

If a case that had been served in TWE is closed and subsequently reopened, a new TWE plan may be carried out provided that the basic conditions are met.

Information:

TWEs are provided when the counselor and applicant have established the presence of an impairment(s) and a substantial impediment to employment, but serious questions exist (due to the severity or instability of the individual's disability) as to what services may be needed to achieve employment. When the question relates to the severity of disability, TWE in an integrated, real work setting, with supports, should be arranged in accordance with the informed choice of the individual.

The purpose of the TWE is to explore the individual's abilities, capabilities and capacity to perform in realistic work situations that will result in the determination of eligibility.

Previous regulations, in addition to TWE provisions, also allowed for development of an extended evaluation plan for applicants with significant disabilities whose ability to benefit was in question. This provision was to be used only under limited circumstances when an individual's disability was too significant to allow for participation in trial work experiences and for whom additional diagnostics or treatment was needed to evaluate eligibility. The extended evaluation plan provision is no longer part of vocational rehabilitation regulation.

Clear and convincing evidence means that the designated State unit has a high degree of certainty before it can conclude that an individual is incapable of benefiting from services in terms of an employment outcome. The clear and convincing standard constitutes the highest standard used in our civil system of law and is to be individually

applied on a case-by-case basis. The term **clear** means unequivocal. For example, the use of an intelligence test result alone would not constitute clear and convincing evidence. Clear and convincing evidence might include a description of assessments, including situational assessments and supported employment assessments, from service providers who have concluded that they would be unable to meet the individual's needs due to the severity of the individual's disability. The demonstration of "clear and convincing evidence" must include, if appropriate, a functional assessment of skill development activities with the use of appropriate supports, including, but not limited to, assistive technology devices and services and personal assistance services, to accommodate the rehabilitation needs of the individual during the trial work experiences in real life settings.

Policy:

Eligibility decisions shall be made by a Michigan Rehabilitation Services counselor, dated and documented on a Determination of Eligibility. Individuals shall be assigned to an order of selection for services priority category at the time of the eligibility decision. They shall be notified in writing of the eligibility decision. If an order of selection for services is in effect at the time of eligibility determination, individuals shall also be notified of their priority category, the priority categories currently being served, and their right to appeal their priority assignment. If MRS is not servicing all priority categories at the time of the eligibility decision, the eligible individual who cannot be served shall be referred to other federal and state programs within the statewide workforce investment system, including the Michigan Works! program.

If MRS is functioning under an order of selection for services at the time the customer is determined eligible, the case is placed on a waiting list if the customer is not in a priority category currently being serviced. Otherwise, the case is moved to eligible status for development of an IPE. Individuals may appeal their priority assignment because it is a counselor determination that may result in the denial of services.

The Notice of Eligibility and Plan Options in the AWARE letters catalog should be used to notify clients of eligibility and plan options.

Job Aids:

- 3200a-JA – Disability Priority Job Aid
- 3200b-JA – Table of Serious Limitations in the Seven Functional Capacity Areas Job Aid
- 3200c-JA – Alcoholism and Drug Dependence

Continuing Eligibility

Policy:

Eligibility shall be continually reassessed as part of routine counseling and guidance provided to the individual. Eligibility for ongoing services is contingent upon the individual continuing to meet all agency eligibility criteria.

Procedure:

Whenever one or more of the following occurs when assessing continuing eligibility, the case shall be closed.

1. When an individual, prior to the completion of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), ceases to meet eligibility criteria identified in policy, the case shall be closed.
2. When an individual ceases to meet disability criteria after IPE services have begun, only short term and low cost or no cost job placement and/or job retention services may be provided or purchased to achieve an employment outcome. An authorized service in progress may be completed.
3. When an individual's impairment(s) are reduced through IPE services but continue to result in functional limitation(s) that substantially impede the individual's ability to prepare for, obtain or maintain suitable employment, required IPE services will continue as planned.
4. When an individual, including an SSI or SSDI beneficiary, expresses that he or she no longer intends to achieve an employment outcome after being determined eligible, the individual's eligibility ceases, and the case record shall be closed, as the individual no longer requires VR services to achieve employment.
5. When an individual is no longer able to benefit from further IPE planning or IPE services due to the severity of one or more disabilities, as demonstrated by clear and convincing evidence, the case record shall be closed.

If an individual has been found eligible and substantive questions emerge regarding the individual's ability to benefit from services, the individual must be afforded an opportunity to participate in Trial Work Experiences (see Manual Item 3175, Trial Work Experience, for requirements and procedures).

Continuing Eligibility

Substantive questions often arise from:

- the customer's inability to successfully complete one or more essential IPE services;
- the accumulated evidence of repeated unsuccessful efforts to benefit from services in one or more prior IPEs; or,
- evidence gained through the individual's involvement in an evaluative IPE as described above.

The standard of "clear and convincing evidence" is also defined in the Rehabilitation Services Manual (RSM) Glossary.

6. Individuals who continue to be beneficiaries of SSI and/or SSDI retain the presumption of eligibility as described in RSM Item 3100, unless their disabilities are determined to be too significant to benefit from MRS services to achieve an employment outcome, as demonstrated by clear and convincing evidence gathered through Trial Work Experience.
7. Individuals whose case is closed because they no longer meet eligibility criteria shall be notified that their case is closed due to a determination of ineligibility. (See RSM Items 7025, Case Closure Due to Severity of Disability, and 7050, Case Closed After Eligibility, for additional information.)

Information:

The counselor re-assesses eligibility as part of routine guidance and counseling whenever the circumstances of the case change.

Occurrences leading to the cessation of disability include the removal of functional limitations or substantial impediments to employment through physical or mental restoration, or the elimination of an impairment altogether. Examples of such occurrences are surgery that removes functional limitation, or treatment that eliminates the substantial impediment to employment.

Continuing or Residual Barriers in Chronic Physical, Mental and Substance Disorders

The functional limitations of many chronic physical, mental or substance disorders, depending upon their presentation and history in the individual, may be mitigated or reduced through treatment but may not be totally eliminated. The resulting residual effects may continue to present substantial barriers to preparing for, obtaining or retaining suitable employment. Treatments themselves may impose affective, cognitive or physical limitations that substantially impact employment. In applying continuing eligibility policy, counselors should take into account the individualized effects of chronic physical, mental and substance disorders and the possibility that substantial

impediments to employment due to disability may continue to exist after the treatment of a disorder.

“Low-cost” services are services generally not exceeding \$1,000. “Short-term” services are services generally not lasting more than six-months, consistent with the requirements for an IPE amendment under RSM Item 5150.

Ineligibility Determination

Referral, Application, Intake, Eligibility, and Vocational Assessment

Policy:

Ineligibility shall be determined if an applicant does not meet all of the eligibility criteria identified in Manual Item 3125, Eligibility Assessment. If it is determined, on the basis of clear and convincing evidence after trial work experiences that the customer cannot benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome, ineligibility shall be determined and the case closed.

Procedure:

Clear and convincing evidence means that there is a high degree of certainty that the customer is incapable of benefiting from services in terms of an employment outcome. A review of existing information does not provide clear and convincing evidence. For example, the use of an intelligence test result alone would not constitute clear and convincing evidence. Clear and convincing evidence includes a description of assessments, including trial work experiences and supported employment assessments, from service providers who have concluded that they would be unable to meet the customer's employment needs due to the severity of the individual's disability.

Ineligibility determinations are subject to the same timeliness criteria as eligibility determination. Applicants shall be notified of the Michigan Rehabilitation Services' (MRS) determination in writing, including their rights to appeal.

Policy:

A vocational needs assessment (VNA) shall be conducted to determine the goals, nature and scope of rehabilitation services to be included in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Data utilized to prepare for the IPE is to be based on a comprehensive assessment that is to be current and include information that is available from other programs and providers, collected from the customer and customer's family, and include data for the assessment of eligibility and priority for services.

If additional data beyond the assessment for eligibility are necessary to determine the employment outcome and the nature and scope of services to be included in the IPE of an eligible individual, a comprehensive assessment of the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice, including the need for supported employment services, of the eligible individual in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the informed choice of the individual, shall be conducted.

Procedure:

The vocational needs assessment:

1. Is limited to information that is necessary to identify the rehabilitation needs and the potential vocational goals of the eligible individual to develop the IPE;
2. Uses as a primary source of information existing information obtained for the purposes of determining eligibility of the individual and assigning priority of an order of selection for the individual. Such information can be provided by the individual and, if appropriate, by the family of the individual;
3. May include an assessment of the personality, interests, interpersonal skills, intelligence and related functional capacities, educational achievements, work experience, vocational aptitudes, personal and social adjustments, and employment opportunities of the individual and the medical, psychiatric, psychological, and other pertinent vocational, educational, cultural, social recreational, and environmental factors that affect the employment and rehabilitation needs of the individual;
4. May include an appraisal of the patterns of work behavior of the individual and services needed for the individual to acquire occupational skills, and to develop work attitudes, work habits, work tolerance, and social and behavior patterns necessary for successful job performance, including the use of work in real job situations to assess and develop the capacities of the individual to perform adequately in a work environment;
5. May include a referral for the provision of rehabilitation technology services to the individual, to assess and develop the capacities of the individual to perform in a work environment;
6. May include an exploration of the individual's abilities, capabilities, and capacity to perform in work situations with supports and training; and

Section III

7. Must document support for the vocational choice that gives direction to the rehabilitation process.

Documentation of the VNA:

Case notes that relate specifically to the VNA should use the case note title: 'Vocational Needs Assessment' that is offered as a drop down selection under Case Note Titles. Case notes shall include documentation of the vocational needs assessment process including information utilized to document the rehabilitation needs of the individual and how the employment factors (strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests) as well as the individual's informed choice apply to the selection of the IPE job goal, services and service providers.

At the time of IPE completion, a counseling summary of the vocational rehabilitation barriers facing the individual and how these barriers will be addressed through planned IPE services shall be completed. The IPE counseling summary is to contain information addressing the following:

- The basis and rationale for the job goal.
- The services necessary to address serious limitations associated with disability.
- Other services necessary to achieve the employment goal.
- The customer's involvement in the VNA/IPE development process.

The above four counseling summary sections are individual comment boxes located with the IPE page in AWARE. Upon completion of the IPE (entering of start date), a counseling summary case note will be automatically generated from the combined responses of these four comment boxes.

If the counselor does not complete the above comment boxes at the time of IPE completion, a blank counseling summary case note will be generated. The counselor has up to 30 days after the completion of the IPE to edit the counseling summary case note that has been generated.

Information:**Assessment considerations:**

- Appraisals of intellectual capacities, vocational aptitudes, interests and achievements, as well as assessments of personality, social and vocational adjustment, may be provided directly by qualified Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) counselors or purchased from other qualified providers.
- Assessment of physical capacities, assistive technology and accommodations, which could enable the individual to perform in an integrated employment setting, including supported employment may be provided.

Section III

Use of On-the-Job Evaluation (OJE) as an assessment tool:

- State and federal employment standards apply when conducting an OJE. Requirements are similar to on-the-job-training (OJT) with the exception that it is an evaluation only not a commitment for hire. The counselor, customer and employer agree on factors to be evaluated and record them on an RA-89 or similar document with appropriate signatures to indicate agreement with the OJE terms. The employer can be reimbursed up to 100% for an OJE. The typical length of an OJE is no more than four weeks. If job coach services are purchased to support an OJE, the job coach should be covered for Worker's Compensation and liability insurance through a third party. A third party can also be used as an "Employer of Record" to vend client wages, and can be paid reasonable administrative costs.

Use of Vocational Evaluations:

- Vocational evaluations may be arranged or purchased from accredited community rehabilitation programs. They may also be obtained from an educational institution; a self-employed, certified vocational evaluator; or a certified rehabilitation counselor.

Use of Labor Market Analysis:

- The Vocational Rehabilitation counselor and the customer both have a need and a responsibility to identify the customer's interests and abilities in relation to the availability of corresponding jobs in the local labor market. This includes a review of the physical and educational demands of the job, the outlook and availability of the job locally, and wages, the appropriateness of the fit between the customer's preferences, strengths, and other personal factors, and the need for accommodation services to perform the job.

Forms:

- RA-65 – Homemaker Activities
- RA-89 – On-The-Job Evaluation or Training Agreement.

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Notes Issue 6 and Issue 10 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

PURPOSE

Establish guidelines for documenting measurable skills gains, to ensure accurate data for mandated federal reporting.

**PERSONS
AFFECTED**

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) civil service employees who are engaged in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) performance measures.

POLICY

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) is to ensure counselors document measurable skills gains (MSG) in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and record MSG achieved by each participant on an ongoing basis on the Education page in the Accessible Web-based Activity Reporting Environment (AWARE).

DEFINITIONS

Measurable Skills Gains (MSG) - Progress a participant is making in an education or training program that is leading to a recognized credential or employment. There are five types of measurable skills gains allowable under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The type of education or training program the participant is working toward will determine the type of measurable skills gain that may apply.

Educational Functioning Level (EFL) Gain - This type of MSG is an advancement of educational level by making measurable improvement in educational attainment as measured by a pre- and post-test. An example includes moving from a 9th grade reading level to a 10th grade reading level. Tests used for this may include the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and Basic English Skills Test (BEST).

Secondary Transcript/Report Card - This type of MSG is a transcript or report card, for each school year, showing a participant

in a high school (HS), high school equivalency diploma (HSED), or general educational development (GED) program demonstrating a D- or above achieved for all classes taken. If any grade is lower than a D-, it does not meet the standard and is not a MSG. The report card must not indicate the participant dropped out of school, was removed from the institution, or any other conditions that indicate removal on academic or conduct grounds.

Post-Secondary Transcript/Report Card - This type of MSG is a transcript or report card demonstrating the following based upon enrollment status:

- Full Time Student – completion of a minimum of 12 hours for one semester.
- Part Time Student – completion of a minimum of 12 credit hours over the course of 2 consecutive semesters during a program year.

To be considered a MSG, documentation must show the credit levels achieved and good academic standing for each semester. The report card must not indicate the participant dropped out of school, was removed from the institution, or any other conditions that indicate removal on academic/conduct grounds.

Training Milestone - This type of MSG is a satisfactory or better progress towards skill advancement while participating in on-the-job training (OJT), Registered Apprenticeship program, or MCTI benchmark. Documentation may include employer verification.

Skills Progression - This type of MSG is a successful passage of an exam required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining trade-related benchmarks. Examples include passing the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) exam, National Counselor Exam (NCE), Commercial Driver's License (CDL) exam, and welding certification exam. Documentation may include transcripts and certificates; electronic documents originating from the training entity are allowable.

Measurable Skills Gains Common Performance Measure - The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress toward a credential or employment.

PROCEDURES

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) Documentation

Counselors shall determine the education service(s) that are essential to reach the individual's job goal. As consistent with Vocational Needs Assessment, Rehabilitation Services Manual (RSM) Item 3275, and Development of the IPE, RSM Item 5000.

Counselors shall list necessary training and education services for participants in the IPE.

Progress Reporting

Counselors shall track training and education on the Education page within AWARE for all enrolled and registered students, regardless of funding source or primary provider (i.e. comparable benefit, participant contribution, agency funding).

- Counselors shall only track training and education as specified in the IPE or IPE amendment. IPE and/or IPE amendments must be dated prior to the date of measurable skills gain.
- Counselors will report baseline education achievements at program entry. However, baseline achievements shall not be recorded as an MSG.
- Counselors will not report MSG attained after program exit.

Measurable Skills Gains Documentation

Counselors shall obtain documentation of MSG and place it in the participant's file.

1. Educational Functioning Level Gain
2. Secondary Transcript/Report Card
3. Post-Secondary Transcript/Report Card
4. Training Milestone
5. Skills Progression

Counselors shall document the date a participant achieves a MSG on the Education page within AWARE.

Example: A participant completes an apprenticeship program running from October 1 through February 1. The counselor receives documentation of the completion on February 15. The date of the MSG in AWARE is February 1, the date the MSG was achieved.

Counselors shall complete entries by the last day of the month in the quarter the MSG was achieved.

Tools available for counselor use are:

- Checkbox on the IPE that says: "I will present my term/semester grade report".
- AWARE letter reminding students to submit transcript or report card by June 30.

REFERENCES

34 CFR 361.155

RSA TAC 8/17/2017:

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/rsa/subregulatory/tac-17-01.pdf>

RSA-911:

<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/rsabvrs/rsa-911-case-service-report-manual-2016.pdf>

Job Aids:

3400-3500a-JA (4-2018) – Measurable Skills Gain and Credential Attainment

3400-3500b-JA (4-2018) – MCTI Measurable Skills Gains and Credentials

3400-3500c-JA (4-2018) – MCTI Credential Attainment

Memo:

MRS-PD-18-03

PURPOSE

Establish guidelines for documenting credential progress and attainment, to ensure accurate data for mandated federal reporting.

**PERSONS
AFFECTED**

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) civil service employees who are engaged in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) performance measures.

POLICY

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) is to ensure counselors document all Credential Attainment (CA) in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and record credentials achieved by each participant on an ongoing basis on the Education page in the Accessible Web-based Activity Reporting Environment (AWARE).

DEFINITIONS

Credential Attainment - the percentage of participants employed or enrolled in an education or training program (at or above the 9th grade level) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or secondary school diploma or equivalent. The credential can be obtained during participation in the VR program or within 1 year (365 days) after the participant's exit date. Individuals who are in an on-the-job training program or in customized training are excluded from this measure.

Secondary School Diploma - a diploma that is recognized by a State and that is included for accountability purposes under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Certificate of Completion of secondary education is not included.

Postsecondary Credential - a certificate awarded in recognition of an individual's attainment of measurable technical or

industry/occupational skills necessary to obtain employment or advance within an industry/occupation.

Including an associate, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree obtained from a post-secondary institution.

Certificates/Licensure - Occupational certificate, including Registered Apprenticeship and Career and Technical Education educational certificates (MCTI).

Occupational Certification examples: Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC), Certified Nurses Aid (CNA), American Service Excellence (ASE), and credential awarded by certification body.

Occupational Licensure examples: Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Licensed Master Social Worker (LMSW).

Other recognized certificates of industry/occupational skills completion sufficient to qualify for entry-level or advancement in employment.

- Certificates awarded by workforce development boards or work readiness certificates are not included.
- The credential must recognize technology or industry/occupational skills for specific industry/occupation rather than general skills related to safety, hygiene, etc., even if general skills certificates are broadly required to qualify for entry-level employment or advancement in employment.

PROCEDURES

IPE Documentation

- Counselors shall determine the education service(s) that are essential to reach the individual's job goal.

- Counselors shall list necessary training and education services for participants in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).
- This website can be used to research potential credentials for IPE development:
<https://www.careeronestop.org/Credentials/Toolkit/findcertifications.aspx>

Progress Reporting

- Counselors shall track training and education on the Education page within AWARE for all enrolled and registered students, regardless of funding source or primary provider (i.e. comparable benefit, participant contribution, agency funding). Counselors shall not track training and education not specified in the IPE.
- Counselors will not report baseline education or credential achievements attained prior to the individual becoming an MRS participant. (Example: A high school diploma at application cannot be counted as a credential attainment.)

Credential Achievement Documentation

- Counselors shall obtain documentation of the credential attainment and place it in the file.
- Counselors shall document the date a participant attains a secondary school diploma (or equivalent) or a recognized postsecondary credential on the Education page within AWARE.
- Counselors should complete entries by the last day of the month in the quarter that the credential was attained.
- Counselors may also enter achieved credential(s) for up to one year after case closure.

Tools available for counselor use are:

- Checkbox on the IPE that says: "I will present my term/semester grade report".
- AWARE letter reminding students to submit transcript or report card by June 30.

REFERENCES

34 CFR 361.155

RSA TAC 8/17/2017:

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/rsa/subregulatory/tac-17-01.pdf>

RSA-911: <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/rsabvrs/rsa-911-case-service-report-manual-2016.pdf>

Website to research potential credentials:

<https://www.careeronestop.org/Credentials/Toolkit/findcertifications.aspx>

Job Aids:

3400-3500a-JA (4-2018) – Measurable Skills Gain and Credential Attainment

3400-3500b-JA (4-2018) – MCTI Measurable Skills Gains and Credentials

3400-3500c-JA (4-2018) – MCTI Credential Attainment

Memo:

MRS-PD-18-03

SECTION V

Development of the Individualized Plan for Employment Planning and Service Provision

Policy:

At the completion of the eligibility determination and the assessment of vocational rehabilitation needs, eligible individuals or their representatives shall be provided, in writing and in appropriate modes of communication, information about their options available in developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Procedure:

Information about the options in developing the IPE shall include:

- the availability the assistance from the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) rehabilitation counselor in developing all or part of the IPE;
- the option of requesting assistance from a disability advocacy organization when developing the IPE;
- the availability of technical assistance in developing all or part of the IPE;
- the option of using other resources, including a qualified rehabilitation counselor not employed by MRS, in developing all or part of the IPE;
- the option of completing an IPE without MRS assistance on a form provided by MRS;
- a description of the rights and remedies available including the Client Assistance Program, and how to contact it.

For individuals who receive SSI/SSDI, the options in developing the IPE shall also include the availability of information on assistance and supports available to individuals desiring to enter the workforce, including benefit planning assistance.

This information shall also include, as appropriate:

- a description of the required components which must be included in the IPE;
- an explanation of MRS policies and guidelines associated with financial commitments related to an IPE;
- additional information required by the customer or MRS.

When the determination of eligibility and assessment of rehabilitation needs has been completed, eligible individuals shall be provided the MRS guide “Choosing Your Employment Plan” in a

Development of the Individualized Plan for Employment Planning and Service Provision

language or format appropriate to their communication needs. This guide meets policy requirements regarding the provision of written information about the individual's options in developing their IPE. The case record shall be annotated to indicate that the individual has been provided this written information.

Eligible individuals have the opportunity to choose the extent to which they wish to use the assistance of a qualified MRS rehabilitation counselor in developing part or all of their individualized plan for employment (IPE). They are to be informed of the availability of help or technical assistance in completing all or part of the IPE. Counselors may need to facilitate decision making by individuals regarding these decisions, depending on the individual's decision making skills, or to utilize technical or other assistance in helping individuals to obtain information and make decisions about their IPE.

Some eligible individuals may only need help in completing the printed MRS IPE form (see AWARE or RA-2915-S). Other individuals, with knowledge of MRS services, experience and skill in career planning, ability to work independently, knowledge of community resources, and ability in information gathering and decision making will need little or no assistance in completing an IPE.

Technical Assistance (assistance aimed at improving information gathering and decision-making skills needed in plan development) may be provided directly by other MRS staff, arranged, or provided by external sources. Examples of technical assistance are Rehabilitation Renaissance advisers, empowerment groups, and individualized decision-making assistance for persons with significant cognitive impairments. Technical assistance may be purchased by MRS only when the type of technical assistance required is not available directly through MRS staff or comparable community services or benefits. Technical assistance does not include vocational guidance and counseling, which is provided directly through MRS counselors. Counselors may work concurrently with technical advisers and eligible individuals in developing the IPE. Providers of technical assistance must meet provider standards as applicable.

Other plan development assistance may be provided through the use of interagency planning teams, person centered planning, peer groups, various consumer training activities, and other methods of helping individuals gather information and making informed choices. Such assistance may be purchased when not available through MRS staff or comparable community resources.

The IPE (and any IPE amendment) is signed by the eligible individual and approved and signed by an MRS rehabilitation counselor before taking effect. The Counselor's approval signifies that in the counselor's professional judgment:

- the IPE will achieve the individual's specific employment outcome;
- the job goal is consistent with the employment characteristics of the individual, and not contraindicated by health or safety reasons;

Development of the Individualized Plan for Employment Planning and Service Provision

- the IPE services are essential to reach the individual's job goal;
- the IPE is complete (contains the federally mandated components identified in policy);
- and otherwise meets MRS policy and accountability requirements (e.g. use of comparable services and benefits and "least cost to MRS".)

When differences between an eligible individual (or their representative) and the counselor arise the counselor is to negotiate resolution of differences in the context of a counseling and partnership relationship, respectfully considering the eligible individual's continuing substantive role in making informed choices about his or her IPE, while at the same time adhering to MRS requirements.

If the situation cannot be resolved, the customer may contact the Client Assistance Program at 1-800-288-5923 or the MRS Rights Representative at 1-800-605-6722.

Forms:

- RA-2915s – Individualized Plan for Employment
- RA-2915s-Arabic – Individualized Plan for Employment in Arabic
- RA-2915s-Spanish – Individualized Plan for Employment in Spanish

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Note 6 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

Employment Goal and Outcome Planning and Service Provision

Policy:

The IPE shall have a specific employment goal, in a competitive integrated setting, consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, and capabilities, taking into account the individual's interests and informed choice.

Achievement of an employment outcome shall mean entering, advancing in or retaining full-time or, if appropriate, part-time competitive integrated employment; supported employment including customized employment; telecommuting; self-employment; business ownership or any other type of employment in an integrated work setting that is consistent with an individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

Procedure:

The employment goal is a specific long-term vocational goal consistent with the general goal of competitive integrated employment based on an assessment of the individual's rehabilitation needs and based on the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice. Performance based information is encouraged as part of a comprehensive assessment to determine whether the individual is capable of achieving a desired employment goal.

Competitive integrated employment is defined as employment that:

- (i) Is performed on a full-time or part-time basis (including self-employment);
- (ii) The individual is compensated at a rate that;
 - a. Is not less than the higher of the rate specified in the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, or the State minimum wage law;
 - b. Is not less than the customary rate paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who are similarly situated in similar occupations by the same employer and who have similar training, experience, and skills; and
 - c. In the case of an individual who is self-employed, yields an income that is comparable to the income received by other individuals who are not individuals with disabilities and who are self-employed in similar occupations or on similar tasks and who have similar training, experience, and skills; and
 - d. Is eligible for the level of benefits provided to other employees;
- (iii) Is at a location that is typically found in the community;
- (iv) The employee with a disability interacts for the purpose of performing the duties of the position with other employees within the particular work unit

Employment Goal and Outcome Planning and Service Provision

- and the entire work site, and, as appropriate to the work performed, other persons (e.g., customers and vendors), who are not individuals with disabilities (not including supervisory personnel or individuals who are providing services to such employee) to the same extent that employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who are in comparable positions interact with these persons; and
- (v) Presents, as appropriate, opportunities for advancement that are similar to those for other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who have similar positions.

At the time of selecting the vocational goal for the IPE and/or at the time of placement into competitive integrated employment, the rehabilitation counselor is responsible for assuring that the position meets all standards of competitive integrated employment. The **Competitive Integrated Evaluation Form** is to be completed if there is an employment setting that is in question of meeting the definition of competitive integrated employment.

While it is not mandatory, the MRS-66 **Competitive Integrated Employment Evaluation Form** is a tool that may be very useful in determining if the position meets all standards of competitive integrated employment. If the MRS-66 form is utilized, the completed form shall be retained in the case record. If the MRS-66 form is not utilized, counselors shall document the evaluation of the position in a case note.

Supported Employment is defined in Rehabilitation Services Manual (RSM) Item 5075, Supported Employment.

Customized Employment is defined in RSM Item 5075, Supported Employment.

Employment Goal Considerations:

- Entry level (i.e., unskilled) employment may be identified as an employment goal if the individual is only capable of performing entry-level work or after a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs an individual chooses an entry level job as his or her employment goal.
- Advanced Training
 - Selecting an employment goal may involve preparing individuals with disabilities for high demand careers in today's 21st century economy. Qualified individuals who are eligible for MRS services may pursue advanced training in a field of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (including computer science), medicine, law, or business.

Employment Goal and Outcome Planning and Service Provision

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- Other advanced training may also be considered.
 - Career advancement issues shall be considered as a part of vocational counseling and vocational goal selection. Career advancement may also be considered for eligible employed individuals when it is determined that the current employment is not consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities and capabilities. Advancement in an individual's present career may be considered as a part of post-employment services if extended training is not involved. (See RSM 3175, Individuals Employed at Intake, and RSM Item 7175, Post Employment Services.)
 - Local Labor Market conditions alone cannot be used to rule out a job goal if it is otherwise consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities and capabilities, unless the individual is unwilling to relocate to a job market where the particular job is available.
 - Direct Placement Plans -- In a *direct placement plan*, more than one job goal, consistent with the individual's employment factors, may be selected in AWARE when the individual and counselor agree that they are appropriate job outcomes. Such added job goals are entered as customized employment goals in the IPE module.
 - Student Considerations – Career Pathways -- For eligible students in high school who have not yet determined a specific employment goal, a Career Pathway, as identified by the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education, may be used as an employment goal until the student completes secondary education. After the individual leaves high school, the IPE shall be amended as soon as feasible to reflect a more specific employment goal to provide planned direction before additional training or placement activity proceeds. A Career Pathway shall not be used as an employment outcome at closure.
 - Cost -- While cost may not be used to rule out an employment goal, once the employment goal has been identified, cost becomes a relevant factor in determining the means and services used in achieving the goal, consistent with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) policy.
 - Non-competitive integrated employment setting – After completing a vocational needs assessment and consideration of informed choice, if the customer elects to seek employment within a non-competitive integrated employment setting such as a Community Rehabilitation Organization (CRO), the counselor shall
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Employment Goal and Outcome Planning and Service Provision

process a case closure-other and shall assist the customer with a referral to the employer of choice.

Information:

An employment goal is defined, at a minimum, as an occupational grouping found in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, or as an occupational grouping identified in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) codes used in AWARE or as an occupational grouping in O-Net.

In selecting an employment goal, primary consideration shall be given to the individual's strengths, capabilities, abilities, priorities and career interests – as well as to the individual's functional limitations, family, environmental, and labor market issues. These factors, taken together, will dictate the degree to which training and other services will be necessary to provide the individual with an opportunity to compete in the job market, and have opportunities for advancement. For most individuals, an entry level job, one which requires little or no training, education or job experience will not be adequate, nor will it meet the requirements of federal regulations governing the vocational rehabilitation program. Entry level jobs may be appropriate for transitional work experience and in those instances where individuals are unwilling or unable to develop more specific job skills.

Job matching systems like Open Options or the Michigan Occupational Information System (MOIS) can assist the individual and the counselor in identifying and exploring appropriate career goals, after physical, mental and behavioral abilities and capabilities are identified.

Some individuals may not be ready to enter employment commensurate with their abilities and capabilities until they build work tolerance and develop core work behaviors (e.g., attendance, punctuality, dealing with criticism). They may need one or more transitional work experiences before they are ready to select and/or enter a vocational goal consistent with their abilities. Some individuals may need both transitional work experience and training to achieve a vocational goal.

A religious vocational goal may be selected and MRS services provided to help an individual prepare for, obtain, or maintain the goal, but by federal policy may not be provided solely to support the practice or advancement of religion.

In analyzing whether services support the practice or advancement of religious beliefs, the counselor should ensure that the service(s) provided:

Section V

- Addresses functional limitations (e.g., the individual is unable to hear and is provided with a hearing aid, or the individual is unable to drive to work and is provided with hand controls), and
- Have an impact primarily on the individual, rather than the religious organization or the practice of religion (e.g., the individual who uses a wheelchair is provided with a ramp to exit the home in contrast to providing a ramp at the church primarily for parishioners).

Job Aids:

- Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Job Titles (5025a-JA)
- Vocational Planning and the Impact of Criminal Background (5025b-JA)

Forms:

- MRS-66 (Rev 5-2017) Competitive Integrated Employment – Evaluation Form

Individualized Plan for Employment Planning and Service Provision

Policy:

The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) shall be a written document prepared on a form approved by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS). It shall be developed so that it affords the eligible individual meaningful opportunity to exercise informed choice in the selection of the employment goal, the specific vocational rehabilitation services required to achieve the employment goal, the entities that will provide services, and the methods of service provision. The IPE shall be signed by the individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative and by a qualified MRS rehabilitation counselor. Planning and approval of the IPE shall be conducted within the framework of a counseling relationship. Counselor approval of an IPE verifies that the IPE is consistent with MRS policies and guidelines, is complete and is expected to lead to an employment outcome.

Procedure:

The IPE shall be designed to achieve the employment goal of the individual. It shall include the following:

- A specific employment goal in an integrated setting. The employment goal shall be consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice.
- Services necessary to achieve the employment goal. Planning for services to address serious limitations shall be consistent with the third component of eligibility that requires services to achieve an employment outcome (see Rehabilitation Services Manual (RSM) Item 3100 – Eligibility Criteria). The IPE shall, therefore, include treatment, supports or other interventions that address substantial barriers to employment by ameliorating, reducing or removing serious limitations in one or more of the functional capacity areas.

These services shall be provided in integrated settings, to the maximum extent possible and appropriate. As needed, they shall include assistive technology devices; assistive technology services; personal assistance services and training in managing, supervising and directing personal assistance services.

- The anticipated date by which the employment goal will be reached;
- An expected and timely beginning date for each service, and as appropriate, an ending date or event for the service;
- Objective and measurable criteria to evaluate progress in achieving the employment goal;
- Identification of the service providers and their responsibilities.

Individualized Plan for Employment Planning and Service Provision

- Identification of the responsibilities of MRS and the individual in achieving the employment goal;
- The extent of MRS participation and the participation of the individual in the cost of services.
- The extent to which comparable services and benefits, available under any other program, will be used to cover service costs or provide needed services.
- The IPE shall be completed promptly, but no more than 90 days following eligibility certification, unless the counselor and eligible individual agree to the extension of that deadline to a specific date by which the individualized plan for employment must be completed.

In the event that more than 90 days are required, the Plan Development Extension (PDE) page in AWARE shall be completed providing the reason for extension and activities or services planned to complete the IPE. The Plan Extension Date shall be agreed to by both counselor and eligible individual, and shall be a date that reflects the time needed to complete the activities identified in the PDE without imposing an unnecessary delay in the provision of services. While delaying the development of the IPE is permissible when circumstances warrant, doing so should be the exception to the rule rather than a common practice with customers. *Note: Completing the Plan Development Extension page places the case in Eligibility-E status.*

When Plan Development Extension is warranted, it **must** be completed on or before the 90th day after Eligibility Determination. Completing the Plan Development Extension page extends the Activity Due to 14 days before the completion date selected on the Plan Development Extension page. Failure to complete the Plan Development Extension page in AWARE by the 90th day will result in the need to complete a case note, and the inability to eliminate the Activity Due until IPE completion.

Notice of Plan Development Extension letter in AWARE shall be forwarded to the customer specifying the activities or services planned to complete the IPE and the date in which the activities or services shall be completed before the IPE can be developed.

If, because of exceptional and unforeseen circumstances the Plan Development Extension expires without the development of an IPE, manager consultation and written approval is required before a second Plan Development Extension may be executed. If it is determined a second Plan Development Extension is warranted, the Plan Development Extension shall be completed in AWARE. The Notice of Plan Development Extension letter in AWARE shall be forwarded to the customer specifying the activities or services planned to complete the IPE and the date in which the activities or services shall be completed before the IPE can be developed.

Individualized Plan for Employment Planning and Service Provision

- For students in the K-12 educational system who are eligible for MRS services, the IPE shall be developed and completed before the student leaves the school setting. An agreed upon delay in developing an IPE is not an option for eligible transition students if the delay in development extends beyond the student's exit from school.
- The only exception to this practice is when a student is referred to MRS too late in the final semester to allow for a timely determination of MRS eligibility prior to the student leaving the school setting. In this instance, the counselor shall apply timeliness standards for IPE development as noted in general 90 day requirement procedures.
- A Career Pathway, as identified by the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education, may be used as an employment goal for transition students until the student completes secondary education. After the individual leaves the K-12 system the IPE shall be amended as soon as feasible to reflect a more specific employment goal to provide planned direction before additional training or placement activity proceeds. A Career Pathway shall not be used as an employment outcome at closure.
- The Individualized Education Program (IEP), for students receiving special education services, shall be considered while developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The student's IPE shall be coordinated with the goals, objectives, and services in the IEP. Coordination of the IPE with a student's Individualized Education Program is demonstrated by identifying the IEP services in the IPE or by attaching a copy of the IEP to the individual's IPE. As long as the student remains in school, a copy of the Individualized Plan for Employment may be provided to the educational entity.
- Whenever Supported Employment (SE) funds are used, the Supported Employment checkbox on the Plan page in AWARE must be checked. SE funds shall be used only for individuals identified as Most Significantly Disabled.
- A copy of the IPE shall be provided promptly to the individual and, as appropriate, to the individual's representative. It shall be provided in the individual's native language or in an appropriate mode of communication for the individual.

For eligible transition students whose IPE is developed nearing school exit, the counselor must ensure that the IPE is entered into AWARE prior to the date the student leaves the school setting.

The IPE shall be recorded on a blank AWARE Plan datapage. If a blank AWARE Plan datapage is not used, form RA-2915s may be used. No other forms are sanctioned by MRS. When an RA-2915s is used to secure the individual's signature, an IPE must be replicated in AWARE by recording the information on a blank AWARE Plan datapage.

Individualized Plan for Employment Planning and Service Provision

The start date of the IPE is the date the counselor approves and signs the IPE. The start date shall be entered on the IPE in AWARE no more than 7 days after the IPE has been signed by the counselor, the individual or the individual's representative.

Information:

The IPE is developed between MRS and the eligible individual. It is a statement of intent and is not legally binding. If a case is transferred between counselors, the IPE is to be honored by the receiving counselor unless the vocational goal, services or time frames are ambiguous or no longer appropriate.

The IPE letter in the AWARE Letters catalog may be used as the cover letter to help the counselor obtain the individual's signature on the IPE.

Forms:

- ✓ RA-2915s – Individualized Plan for Employment
- ✓ RA-2915s-Spanish – Individualized Plan for Employment in Spanish
- ✓ RA-2915s-Arabic – Individualized Plan for Employment in Arabic

Supported Employment Planning and Service Provision

Policy:

Supported Employment means competitive integrated employment, including customized employment, with extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities, consistent with their unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice.

Individuals appropriate to receive Supported Employment services are those:

- a. For whom competitive integrated employment has not occurred or for whom competitive integrated employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a most significant disability.
- b. Who, because of the nature and severity of their disabilities, need intensive Supported Employment services and extended services to maintain their employment.
 - The source of extended services or a description of the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that those sources will become available must be obtained prior to IPE;
- c. Who may need a customized employment opportunity that matches the specific abilities of the individual with a most significant disability and meets the business needs of an employer. Flexible strategies may include customizing a job description, developing a set of job duties, work schedule or other negotiated items.
- d. Who may need temporary placement in an integrated work setting in which an individual with a most significant disability is working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment.

Procedure:

Referral and Eligibility Determination Considerations (see Rehabilitation Services Manual (RSM) Item 3000, Referrals for more information)

1. Referrals for Supported Employment shall be generated through community partners such as local Community Mental Health Services Providers (CMHSP), school districts and other traditional referral sources, or shall be identified as Supported Employment candidates as a part of vocational services through MRS.
2. To be considered for Supported Employment services an eligible customer must meet disability priority of most significantly disabled.

Vocational Needs Assessment Considerations (see RSM Item 3275, Vocational Needs Assessment, for more information)

1. Rationale for Supported Employment is based on a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs and an evaluation of rehabilitation, career and job needs. The rehabilitation counselor must document the rationale for Supported Employment services including but not limited to:
 - a. Information obtained during the vocational needs assessment shall be utilized to identify the rationale for Supported Employment services.
 - b. Referral information shall be utilized to assess vocational needs and identify the rationale for Supported Employment services.
 - c. A trial work experience may be provided to assess vocational needs and identify the rationale for Supported Employment services.
2. Use of customized employment services:
 - a. An assessment of vocational needs should consider the potential necessity for customized employment options when more intensive interventions are needed to identify, obtain, or maintain employment.
 - b. Supported self-employment is a customized employment strategy that may be used to assist individuals with the most significant disabilities in developing a business of their own. If an individual chooses supported self-employment as a type of employment service and the counselor agrees, the services would follow small business policy (RSM Item 5200, self-employment and small business). The rehabilitation counselor would need to identify a reasonable expectation of the availability of extended services specific to a Supported Employment business job goal.

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) Development Considerations (see RSM Item 5050, Individualized Plan for Employment, for more information)

Specific to Supported Employment, the IPE must contain:

- a. All specified Supported Employment services to be provided by MRS;
- b. The source of extended services or include a description of the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that those sources will become available;
 - The source of extended services or a description of the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that those sources will become available must be obtained prior to IPE.
- c. Expected extended services needed, which shall be natural supports; employer supports; or other appropriate supports;

Supported Employment Planning and Service Provision

- d. Details for periodic monitoring to ensure that the individual is making satisfactory progress toward meeting the weekly work requirement established in the IPE prior to beginning extended services;
- e. Coordination of services with other agencies; i.e., local school transition plan including Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or Community Mental Health Service Provider (CMHSP) including Person Centered Plan (PCP);
- f. A Competitive Integrated Employment goal for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities; and
- g. All Supported Employment IPEs must be consistent with RSM Item 5050, Individualized Plan for Employment.

IPE Service Considerations (see RSM Item 6000, Services, for more information)

1. Use of Fund Sources

- a. Non - Supported Employment fund sources including general, Interagency Cash Transfer Agreement (ICTA) and other specific fund sources shall be used by MRS to fund services provided prior to the establishment of employment; i.e., prior and during application, eligibility determination, vocational needs assessment/IPE planning services, and all services leading to employment.
- b. Designated Supported Employment funds shall only be used to support and maintain an individual in employment (if there are no Supported Employment funds available then other funding sources may be utilized), from the start date of employment (this is the date of the start of employment and is not related to the stable-date) through the transfer to the extended services provider until case closure. These funds shall be directed to services such as:
 - I. The provision of job coaches or employment specialists who accompany the individual for intensive job skills training at the worksite and/or facilitate natural/employer supports at the worksite;
 - II. On-going services to reinforce or stabilize the placement; including, but not limited to regular contact with the individual, employer, family or guardian, and any other relevant professionals.
 - III. Extended-services for youth with disabilities; and
 - IV. Provision of any appropriate VR service during employment.

Supported Employment Planning and Service Provision

2. Supported Employment services provided by MRS are not to extend beyond 24 months from the begin date of the IPE, unless, under special circumstances, the individual and counselor agree to extend the time in order to achieve the rehabilitation objectives identified in the Supported Employment IPE.
3. In limited circumstances, an additional 6 months may be added to a trial work experience in order to fully assess Supported Employment needs. (For more information on trial work experience, see Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 3175, Trial Work Experience.)
4. On-going support services shall be provided from the time of job placement until transition to extended services, and thereafter by one or more extended services provider. They shall also be provided as a part of post-employment services if required after transition to the extended services provider.
See the Information Section for definition of on-going support services and extended services.
5. At a minimum, on-going support services shall be assessed twice monthly to determine employment stability.
6. The scope of VR services for Supported Employment customers extends to all MRS services necessary to achieve the employment goal as identified in an approved IPE, provided the customer is in employed status.

Extended Services (these are supported employment services to maintain employment beyond the employment stability date)

1. Extended services are ongoing support services and other appropriate services, needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in Supported Employment, that are:
 - a. Based on the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an individualized plan for employment;
 - b. Provided by, but are not limited to, other State agencies, private pay, community grants, private agencies, social security work incentives, natural supports, employer supports, or any other appropriate resource, to assist a customer in maintaining Supported Employment after transition of support has been made from MRS.
 - Exemption for Youth with disabilities:
 - i. If there is not an available resource for the provision of extended services, MRS shall be the provider of extended services and utilize Supported Employment funds for eligible youth with disabilities for a period not to exceed four years,

Supported Employment Planning and Service Provision

- or at such time that a youth reaches age 24 (see definition in the Information Section).
- ii. For youth with disabilities who still require extended services after they can no longer receive them from MRS, another source of extended services shall be identified to ensure there will be no interruption of services.

Employment Considerations in Supported Employment

1. Competitive Integrated Supported Employment is considered achieved when the:
 - a. Position is performed on a full-time or part-time basis;
 - b. Position compensates the individual at or above Michigan's minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage paid for similar work;
 - c. Level of benefits offered is the same for similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled;
 - d. Level of interaction with others (customers, vendors and co-workers) is the same as non-disabled persons within that individual's entire worksite and work unit; and
 - e. Opportunities for advancement are similar to those for non-disabled individuals who have similar positions.
2. The customer is considered to have achieved stabilization when the counselor, with input from the job coach/employment specialist, employer and individual, confirms that the initial intensive services identified on the IPE have resulted in:
 - a. The individual demonstrating acceptable job performance; and
 - b. A reasonable expectation that satisfactory job performance will be maintained with the individual based on ongoing support services being provided.
3. MRS Supported Employment services commence for a period not to exceed 24 months or until stability of employment is achieved, at which time the customer is transferred to the extended service provider as identified in the IPE. If there is justification for the period of service to exceed the recommended 24 months, to achieve stability in employment, an amended IPE shall be completed.

Documentation of the achievement of employment stabilization marks the readiness for transfer to extended services. Once the case is transferred to the extended service provider (or if retained as a VR case in the case of youth), the 90-day period of employment follow along is initiated.

Stabilization may be documented in several ways including but not limited to:

1. Reports provided from job coaches/placement service providers,
2. Employer follow up, and

3. Counselor conducted follow along/observation.

Short-Term Employment

Supported Employment is defined as competitive integrated employment. Development towards an employment outcome of Supported Employment may consist of temporary placement of employment in an integrated work setting in which an individual with a most significant disability is working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment.

Short-term basis within Supported Employment is defined as:

- a. An individual with a most significant disability, whose Supported Employment in an integrated setting does not satisfy the criteria of competitive integrated employment.
- b. The customer is considered to be working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment so long as the individual can reasonably anticipate achieving competitive integrated employment-
 - i. Within six months of achieving a Supported Employment outcome; or,
 - ii. In limited circumstances, within a period not to exceed 12 months from the achievement of the Supported Employment outcome, if:
 - a longer period is necessary based on the needs of the individual, and
 - the individual has demonstrated progress toward competitive earnings based on information contained in the service record.
- c. The six-month short-term basis period, and the additional six months that may be available in limited circumstances, begins after an individual has completed up to 24 months of Supported Employment services (unless a longer period of time is necessary based upon the individual's needs). The six-month short-term period begins when the individual enters into an integrated, non-competitive position.

Extended Employment

Extended employment means work in a non-integrated or sheltered setting for a public or private nonprofit agency or organization that provides compensation in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act. Extended employment programs have traditionally served as a safety net for individuals with most significant disabilities who cannot perform work in an integrated setting in the community or who choose to work only among their disabled peers.

Supported Employment Planning and Service Provision

An individual with a disability may pursue any form of employment he or she chooses. However, if the individual wishes to receive vocational rehabilitation services, he or she must intend to achieve an “employment outcome,” in competitive integrated employment or Supported Employment. If the individual chooses to pursue work that does not satisfy the definition of competitive integrated employment, such as sheltered employment, the individual must seek services from another agency or provider.

Counselors are not to use VR or Supported Employment funds to establish extended employment options for customers. For individuals who were referred to and were accepted into Extended Employment options, their case is to be closed in AWARE using the reason “Placed into Extended Employment”. The MRS counselor shall:

- Conduct semi-annual reviews and reevaluate the status of MRS customer for two years after the individual’s case is closed (and annually thereafter) to determine the interests, priorities, and needs of the individual with respect to competitive integrated employment or training for competitive integrated employment (see RSM Item 7250 – Annual Review of Case Closed in Extended Employment in Community Rehabilitation Program);
- Enable the individual or, if appropriate, the individual’s representative to provide input into the review and reevaluation and document that input in the review process;
- Make maximum efforts, including identifying and providing vocational rehabilitation services, reasonable accommodations, and other necessary support services, to assist the individual in engaging in competitive integrated employment.

Closure Considerations (see RSM Item 7075, Rehabilitated Case Closure, for more information)

1. A counselor shall pursue a Supported Employment rehabilitated case closure upon satisfactory completion of 90 days of stabilized extended services.
 - a. Prior to a rehabilitated closure of a Supported Employment case, the individual must have completed Supported Employment services, which shall be received for up to 24 months, or longer if the counselor and the individual have determined that such services are needed to support and maintain the individual in Supported Employment.
 - b. The individual has transitioned to an extended services provider or, for a Supported Employment youth case who does not qualify for extended services with another provider, MRS will continue as the extended services provider per the youth exception described above.

Supported Employment Planning and Service Provision

- c. The individual has maintained employment and achieved stability in the work setting for a minimum of 90 days after transitioning to extended services; and
 - d. The employment shall be individualized and customized consistent with the strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual.
- *The Information Section details specific scenarios for case closure.
- 2. The elements listed below must be in the "Justification for Closure" of AWARE closure page:
 - a. The employment placement is in a competitive integrated employment and the individual is employed on a full-time or part-time basis;
 - b. The level of interaction with others (customers, vendors and co-workers) is the same as for non-disabled persons within the individual's entire worksite and the work unit; and
 - c. The individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage; the individual's benefits are paid by the employer and are for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.
- 3. A counselor shall pursue a non-rehabilitated case closure when, during the IPE case services or employment follow along period, the customer is not able to achieve stability of employment.

Post-employment Service Considerations (see RSM Item 7175, Post Employment Services, for more information)

- 1. Post-employment services may be provided to individuals who achieved an employment outcome to assist the individual to maintain, regain or advance in employment while maintaining the follow along through the extended services provider.
- 2. Post-employment services will often enable the individual to preserve his or her employment.
- 3. A post-employment services plan shall be developed to provide services.

Information:

Definitions:

Youth with a Disability - Age 14-24.

Customized employment means competitive integrated employment, for an individual with a significant disability, that is:

- Based on an individualized determination of the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the individual with a significant disability;
- Designed to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a significant disability and the business needs of the employer; and
- Carried out through flexible strategies, such as job exploration by the individual; and working with an employer to facilitate placement, including:
 - Customizing a job description based on current employer needs or on previously unidentified and unmet employer needs;
 - Developing a set of job duties, a work schedule and job arrangement, and specifics of supervision (including performance evaluation and review), and determining a job location;
 - Using a professional representative chosen by the individual, or if elected self-representation, to work with an employer to facilitate placement; and
 - Providing services and supports at the job location.

On-going support services are:

- a. Needed to support and maintain an individual a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, in Supported Employment;
- b. Identified on the IPE based on the individual's need.
- c. Includes an assessment of employment stability and provision of specific services or the coordination of services at or away from the worksite that are needed to maintain stability based on:
 - i. At a minimum, twice monthly monitoring at the worksite;
 - ii. Off-site monitoring conducted twice monthly, due to specific circumstances or at the request of the individual;
- d. Consist of:
 - Any particularized assessment supplementary to the comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs;
 - The provision of skilled job trainers who accompany the individual for intensive job skill training at the work site;

Supported Employment Planning and Service Provision

- Job development and training;
- Social skills training;
- Regular observation or supervision of the individual;
- Follow-up services including regular contact with the employers, the individuals, the parents, family members, guardians, advocates or authorized representatives of the individuals, and other suitable professional and informed advisors, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement;
- Facilitation of natural supports at the worksite;
- Any other service identified in the scope of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals;
- Any service similar to the foregoing services.

Extended Services - Ongoing support services and other appropriate services, needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in Supported Employment, that are:

(A) Provided singly or in combination and are organized and made available in such a way as to assist an eligible individual in maintaining Supported Employment;

(B) Based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an individualized plan for employment; and

(C) Provided by a State agency, a nonprofit private organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, after an individual has made the transition from support provided by MRS.

Extended employment means work in a non-integrated or sheltered setting for a public or private nonprofit agency or organization that provides compensation in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Supported Employment is paid work in competitive integrated employment settings that offers ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities. The employment outcome is attained by providing intensive service and is maintained through the provision of extended support services (follow-along) which is provided by another community agency (other than MRS), such as a Community Mental Health Service Provider (CMHSP). The level of employment participation shall be full- or part-time based on the needs of the individual. Job goals selected are consistent with the individual's strengths, interests, aptitudes, abilities, priorities and capabilities. The intent of this model is to make competitive integrated, community-based employment available to

Supported Employment Planning and Service Provision

individuals who might otherwise be unable to achieve competitive integrated employment.

The potential to benefit from Supported Employment or customized employment should be specifically considered when assessing the employability of individuals with the most significant disabilities who have never worked before and need intensive support or have previously been unable to perform competitive integrated employment. MRS, by federal regulation, has an on-going responsibility to search for extended service providers for eligible but unserved individuals in order to maximize the numbers of individuals receiving Supported Employment and customized employment services.

Job skills training and other training shall not be needed for all individuals in Supported Employment and customized employment. If needed, it should be furnished by the most appropriate means for the individual, including training provided by skilled job coaches or employment specialists, or other qualified individuals including co-workers or through natural supports.

Natural supports means utilizing the natural work environment for support through social integration; i.e., connecting individuals with others in the work setting in ways that will be self-sustaining for the individual. The concept requires analyzing the social interactive systems within the work setting and culture and then, seeking, supporting and facilitating methods that would assist the individual in becoming a member of that culture. The goal is for the individual to belong socially and, as a result, receive assistance naturally in completing tasks and solving problems.

Provision of job coaching as a service does not automatically denote Supported Employment, unless other elements of Supported Employment noted above are also present specifically the need for extended support services.

When purchasing job coaching services, counselors should consider the individual's qualifications to provide this service; for example, does the individual have the requisite training and skills, is the individual covered by liability insurance through either a third party or if self-employed through personal insurance and does the provider have expertise to effectively work with specific disability populations such as individuals with autism.

Job Aid 5075b-JA (Rev 5-2017), [Supported Employment Job Aid](#), provides further information and details about case recording requirements for Supported Employment.

Supported Employment Planning and Service Provision

Scenarios for Case Closure:

Scenario #1: For an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, who has achieved an employment outcome in Supported Employment in competitive integrated employment, the service record is closed at the time the individual:

1. Achieves the employment outcome;
2. Satisfies the requirements for case closure; and
3. Is not receiving extended services or any other vocational rehabilitation service provided by the VR agency with funds under title I or the Supported Employment program.

Scenario #2: For an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability who is working toward competitive integrated employment on a short-term basis and is receiving extended services from funds other than those allotted under the Supported Employment program, the service record is closed when the individual:

1. Achieves competitive integrated employment within the short-term basis period established; and
2. Satisfies the requirements for case closure; and
3. Is no longer receiving vocational rehabilitation services provided by the VR agency.

If an individual does not achieve competitive integrated employment within the short-term basis period, the service record will be closed.

Scenario #3: For a youth with a most significant disability who is receiving extended services provided by the VR agency from funds under the Supported Employment program or the VR program, the service record will be closed when the youth:

1. Achieves an employment outcome in Supported Employment in competitive integrated employment without entering the short-term basis period; and
2. Is no longer eligible to receive extended services provided by the VR agency with funds allotted under the Supported Employment program or the VR program because the individual:
 - a. No longer meets age requirements established in the definition of a youth with a disability; or
 - b. Has received extended services for a period of four years; or
 - c. Has transitioned to extended services provided with funds other than those allotted under the Supported Employment program or the VR program prior to meeting the age or time restrictions; and

Supported Employment Planning and Service Provision

3. Satisfies the requirements for case closure; and
4. Is no longer receiving any other vocational rehabilitation service from the VR agency provided with VR program funds.

Scenario #4: For a youth with a most significant disability who is working toward competitive integrated employment on a short-term basis, the service record will be closed when the individual:

1. Achieves competitive integrated employment within the short-term basis period; and
2. Is no longer eligible to receive extended services provided by the VR agency with funds allotted under the Supported Employment program or the VR program because;
 - a. The individual no longer meets age requirements established in the definition of a youth with a disability; or
 - b. Has received extended services for a period of four years; or
 - c. Has transitioned to extended services provided with funds other than those allotted under the VR or Supported Employment programs prior to meeting the age or time restrictions; and
3. Satisfies the requirements for case closure.

If a youth does not achieve competitive integrated employment within the short-term basis period, the service record will be closed.

Comparable Benefits Planning and Service Provision

Policy:

Comparable benefits and services available in whole or part from other programs for the services listed in the individual's IPE shall be used before the services are authorized by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) unless this would result in an interruption or delay of the progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome identified in the IPE; delay in services for an individual at extreme medical risk or when an immediate job placement would be lost due to a delay in the provision of needed services.

Procedure:

Extreme medical risk shall be based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate medical professional documenting the individual would experience a substantial increase in functional impairment or risk death if medical services are delayed.

If comparable services identified in the IPE or benefits exist under any other program, but are not available to the individual at the time needed, services shall be provided until those comparable services and benefits become available.

The following services shall be exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable benefits and services:

- assessment for determining eligibility, priority for services, or rehabilitation needs;
- vocational rehabilitation counseling, guidance and referral services;
- vocational and other training services, such as personal and vocational adjustment services, books, tools, and other training material not associated with training in an institute of higher education, which are defined as colleges and universities, community and junior colleges, vocational and technical schools or institutes, and hospital schools of nursing;
- placement services;
- rehabilitation technology services including vehicle modifications, and
- merit awards and scholarships.

The same services shall be exempted from the comparable benefit and services requirement when provided during post-employment and when providing services to family members.

Comparable Benefits Planning and Service Provision

Case service funds shall not be spent on goods and services which are clearly the responsibility of another agency. It is the intent of the Rehabilitation Act that public entities such as Education, Medicaid/Medicare, public welfare (TANF, Work First!) which are obligated under Federal or State law to provide or pay for services that are also considered vocational rehabilitation services should meet that obligation either directly or through interagency agreement.

Support services such as maintenance, transportation, interpreter, and personal assistance services may not be provided by MRS unless a determination has been made that comparable services and benefits under any other program are unavailable.

Information:

Comparable services and benefits are those benefits or services that are: 1) paid for, in whole or in part, by another Federal, State or local public agency or an employee benefit; 2) available at the time the individual needs them; 3) comparable to services available through MRS.

Consideration of available comparable benefits and services is an essential part of the individual's needs assessment and IPE development. Individuals should be provided a clear understanding of what services are to be obtained from other sources such as their insurance provider, college financial aid resources, or other state and/or federal agencies as noted above, and what their responsibilities are in securing these services. The IPE should take into consideration the time frames required for securing comparable benefits and services, such as those required for securing medical benefits under Medicaid. Vendors who are providers for Medicaid/Medicare or other insurance(s), should be asked to process their charges to the insurance first before billing MRS for any costs which may not be covered by insurance. Although counselors may pay the individual's portion (20%) of a covered Medicare Part B service if no other resources are available, they may not contribute to services covered by Medicaid, or to the individual's spend down requirement.

If utilization of comparable benefits and services are not clearly established in the development of the IPE, MRS cannot, at a later date, require the individual to utilize comparable benefits if it will then delay or interrupt their established time frame within the IPE.

"Immediate job placement" means confirmed and verified employment, consistent with the individual's employment factors, which would be lost if MRS services were delayed due to a search for comparable benefits and services.

Comparable benefits and services are generally considered to be readily available when they are available within six months of the time planned in the IPE.

**Comparable Benefits
Planning and Service Provision**

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Note 3 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

**Financial Participation
Planning and Service Provision****Policy:**

Eligible individuals shall be encouraged to participate in the cost of the services listed in their IPE to the extent they are able to do so.

Individualized Plan for Employment Amendment Planning and Service Provision

Policy:

An Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) amendment shall be developed when, as a result of the annual review or at any other time, the IPE needs to be revised. An IPE Amendment shall not take effect until agreed to and signed by the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) counselor and the individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative. A copy of the amendment shall be provided to the individual and, as appropriate, to the individual's representative.

Procedure:

An IPE amendment (new Plan in AWARE) is required in any of the following circumstances:

1. Change in an IPE employment goal or outcome.

An IPE Amendment is required when the Job Title described in the AWARE Employment record is not within the same job group as the IPE employment goal(s) described in the IPE. When the Employment Goal(s) in the existing IPE and the Job title in the Employment record are within the same job group in AWARE, they are considered to match and an IPE amendment is not required. A job group is defined as an OES Job Title Category or as a "minor occupational group" in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System.

An IPE amendment revising the Employment Goal must be accompanied by completion of a counseling summary at the time of initiating an IPE including:

- The basis and rationale for the job goal.
- The services necessary to address serious limitations associated with disability.
- Other services necessary to achieve the employment goal.
- The customer's involvement in the Vocational Needs Assessment/Individualized Plan for Employment development process.

2. Addition or removal of a substantial service.

A service that costs MRS \$1000 or more meets the definition of a substantial service, regardless of how it is authorized. However, a service costing less than \$1000 may also be considered a substantial service based on the discretion of the counselor.

3. A substantial change in the service provider.

A change in a service provider that results in an increase in service costs to MRS, a longer period of time to complete, or a significant change in outcome is considered substantial.

Individualized Plan for Employment Amendment Planning and Service Provision

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4. A substantial lengthening of time required to achieve an employment outcome.
A substantial lengthening of time is defined as a lengthening of the IPE completion date by more than six months.
 5. A substantial increase in total estimated service costs to MRS beyond those noted in the current IPE.
A substantial increase is defined as an increase of more than \$2000 beyond the previous total estimated cost.

Changes to the IPE, as agreed to by the individual and counselor, shall be recorded in AWARE or on MRS Form RA-2915s. Use of the RA-2915s must be supplemented by recording the IPE Amendment in AWARE.

Information:

- An IPE amendment may also be warranted when a substantial comparable benefit is added or removed, such as the addition or removal of mental health treatment services provided by another agency or organization.
- Amending an IPE actually requires the counselor to create a new IPE in AWARE. The counselor should refer to the AWARE training manual for more information.

Forms:

- RA-2915s – Individualized Plan for Employment
- RA-2915Span – Individualized Plan for Employment in Spanish

Annual Review of the Individualized Plan for Employment Planning and Service Provision

Policy:

Each IPE shall be reviewed annually by any qualified rehabilitation counselor to assess the individual's progress in achieving the employment goal. At this time the individual shall be provided an opportunity to review the program and jointly redevelop and agree to its terms.

Procedure:

The results of the annual review documenting the individual's progress shall be noted in the case record.

The Notice to Client Regarding Annual Program Review located in the AWARE letters catalog, may be sent to offer clients an opportunity for a formal review of their IPE. If clients do not respond within 30 calendar days by scheduling an appointment, it can be assumed they are satisfied with their IPE as originally written. The counselor is responsible for completing the Plan Review documentation in AWARE. AWARE will alert counselors to client IPE annual review dates one month before they are due.

Information:

"Any qualified rehabilitation counselor" means a rehabilitation counselor who meets the requirements for national rehabilitation counselor certification (CRC). It is not required that this counselor be an employee of Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS). If a plan amendment is developed, it must be approved by the MRS counselor.

Policy:

Self-employment, including small business, may be considered as a vocational option for eligible individuals if:

- it reflects the individual's informed choice;
- is consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, interests, abilities and capabilities, including appropriate accommodations.

Procedure:

Self-employment plans shall be supported, at least in part, by resources beyond MRS, and make appropriate use of available community benefits and resources.

All self-employment plans that involve starting a business venture shall have a viable Business Plan prior to the approval of the Individualized Plan for Employment.

Small business enterprises may be supported by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) as part of an IPE if they:

- comply with all relevant state, federal and local laws and regulations
- are owned and operated by the individual being served by MRS
- are organized as a "for profit", as appropriate
- do not involve speculative activities (i.e., pyramid ventures)
- are designed to become a major source of income for the individual to the greatest extent practical.

A case closed successfully in any form of self-employment shall reflect income and other criteria described in the Business Plan or the IPE.

Because business enterprise plans require extensive development activities, the period of time required to develop an IPE will often exceed the standard 90-day time frame. Closure of business enterprise and other self-employment cases must be considered on an individual basis, consistent with the criteria for successful employment established in the IPE, and is likely to exceed the minimum 90 day follow-up period required for all successful closure.

Self-Employment and Small Business Planning and Service Provision

361.5(c)(15) & 361.49(5)

Rev. 9/2001

Information:

Services in support of self-employment, including small business, may include technical assistance and other consultation services to conduct market analyses and develop business plans, as well as other services necessary, including but not limited to training, restoration, occupational licenses, association fees, tools, equipment, initial stocks and supplies, and assistive technology.

Self-employment is a broad category for various options. It may include self-employed tradesmen, professionals, contractual service or technical workers, as well as various forms of small or micro business enterprise. Generally, self-employment is defined as: “The consumer owns, manages and operates the planned endeavor for profit or fee and is not considered to be an employee of another person, business, or organization.”

Business enterprise, as a type of self-employment, may be supported by MRS if it falls into one of the following sub-categories:

- Micro enterprise – a proprietorship that usually consists of only the owner, has difficulty securing loans from traditional lending sources, and generally requires a modest initial investment of funds.
- Small business – Independently owned and operated and not dominant in its field.
- Telecommuting: “commuting via electronic transmission from a geographically disperse location where an individual can work at home on a computer and transmit data and documents via telephone lines and is not employed by any other entity.” (Note: Telecommuting may also be other than self-employment.)

Assistance with business enterprise development should include coordination of all possible resources including local and statewide partners/providers, businesses, institutions of higher education, family members, banks, and micro-enterprise lenders. Technical assistance for business planning and financial support may be purchased or acquired at no cost from local providers. Judgment must be exercised in using informed choice principles to enable consumers to select provider(s) who have demonstrated performance and best meet the needs of the individual consumer at the least expense to MRS. Contributions by the individual may include non-financial resources.

A primary role of the rehabilitation counselor is to assist the individual with a plan for business enterprise to obtain support and information for assessment, planning, and implementation of the business plan. This should include the identification and acquisition of resources to support the plan. Each district office has a small business champion who is responsible for providing current

Section V

and more detailed guidance for small business development, especially identification of pertinent resources and service providers.

A step-by-step process for determining the viability, feasibility, market and financial resources for each business proposal is contained in the Michigan Rehabilitation Services Handbook for Business Enterprises.

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Note 4 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

**Termination of Services
Planning and Service Provision****Policy:**

Individuals shall be notified in writing 10 working days prior to the termination, reduction or suspension of a Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) authorized service. They shall have the right to appeal, including mediation of the termination, reduction or suspension and request that the service continue pending the outcome of the appeal. Services being provided in assessment, plan development or under an IPE shall continue during the appeal process unless the individual or the individual's representative requests termination of services, or MRS has evidence that the service has been obtained through misrepresentation, fraud, collusion, or criminal conduct on the part of the individual or individual's representative. The notification of appeal rights shall include the process for requesting mediation and includes the availability of the Client Assistance Program to assist with an appeal.

SECTION VI

Information Services

6/2017

This section contains policies, procedures and information about Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) services to individuals with disabilities. Except for assessments needed to determine eligibility, priority for services and vocational rehabilitation needs, most of the services identified in this section require that the individual be eligible for services and to have a signed IPE.

The foundation of all policies in this section is Policy 6000. The first part of Policy 6000, sets forth the basic MRS policy and legal requirements that apply to all services in this section:

“The services counselors can provide, arrange or purchase for an individual with a disability are those services related to an individualized plan for employment necessary to assist the individual in preparing for, securing, retaining, advancing in or regaining an employment outcome in a competitive integrated setting that is consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice.”

All other service policies in this section are derived from this basic policy and are related to it. Policies that follow about individual services, simply elaborate on special requirements and considerations that are connected with these services.

The goals, nature (type) and scope (extent) of services that may be provided under this section for an individual are determined through the vocational rehabilitation needs assessment described in Policy and Procedure 3275, regarding Vocational Needs Assessment.

Informed choice by an individual may be exercised relative to any given services in this section, as described in Policy and Procedure 2225 regarding Informed Choice, and found to be necessary as a result of the Vocational Needs Assessment described in Policy and Procedure 3275.

Policy:

The services counselors can provide, arrange or purchase for an individual with a disability are those services related to an individualized plan for employment necessary to assist the individual in preparing for, securing, retaining, or regaining an employment outcome in an integrated setting that is consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

These services may include:

- Assessment for determining eligibility, priority for services and vocational rehabilitation needs;
- Vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance including information and support services to assist individuals with disabilities in making informed choice;
- Job search, and placement assistance and job retention services;
- Referral and other services necessary to help individuals secure needed services from other agencies;
- Vocational and other training services including personal and vocational adjustment, books, tools, and other training materials, and such services to the families of eligible individuals as are necessary to the adjustment or rehabilitation of the individual, except that no training services in institutions of higher education (universities, colleges, technical institutions, or hospital schools of nursing) shall be paid for with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) funds unless maximum efforts have been made by the counselor and the eligible individual to secure grant assistance, in whole or in part, from other sources to pay for that training;
- To the extent that financial support is not readily available from a source (such as health insurance and benefits or other community resources), diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental impairments which may include:
 - Corrective surgery or therapeutic treatment necessary to correct or substantially modify a physical or mental condition that constitutes a substantial impediment to employment, but is of such a nature that such correction or modification may reasonably be expected to eliminate or reduce such impediment to employment within a reasonable length of time;
 - Hospitalization (either inpatient or outpatient) in connection with necessary corrective surgery or therapeutic treatment, and clinic services;

Services
Services

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- Prosthetic, orthotic and other assistive devices;
 - Eyeglasses and visual services;
 - Special services for eligible individuals with end-state renal disease including transplantation, dialysis, artificial kidneys, and supplies;
 - Diagnosis and treatment for mental and emotional disorders by qualified personnel;
 - Dentistry;
 - Podiatry;
 - Physical therapy;
 - Occupational therapy;
 - Speech or hearing therapy;
- Maintenance for additional costs, in excess of normal costs, incurred while participating in an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs or while receiving services under an individualized plan for employment;
 - Transportation (defined as travel and related expenses) including adequate training in the use of public transportation vehicles and systems, that is provided in connection with the provision of any other service and needed by the individual to achieve an employment outcome;
 - On-the-job or other related personal assistance services provided while an individual is receiving other vocational rehabilitation services;
 - Interpreter services for individuals who are deaf;
 - Occupational licenses, tools, equipment, and initial stocks and supplies;
 - Technical assistance and other consultation services to conduct market analysis, develop business plans, and otherwise provide resources, to the extent such resources are authorized to be provided through the statewide workforce investment system, to eligible individuals who are pursuing self-employment or tele-commuting or establishing a small business operation as an employment outcome;
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- Rehabilitation technology services including rehabilitation engineering, assistive technology devices and services, vehicle modification, telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices;
 - Transition services that promote movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation as needed to facilitate the accomplishment of the employment goal and objectives in the IPE;
 - Supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities;
 - Vocational rehabilitation services to family members if necessary for the eligible individual to achieve an employment outcome;
 - Other goods and services necessary to achieve an employment outcome; and
 - Specific post employment services necessary to maintain, regain or advance in employment including the assessment of rehabilitation needs.

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Note 4 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

Accommodations Services

Policy:

Accommodations shall be provided as needed during the rehabilitation process to enable applicants or eligible individuals to perform tasks or behaviors required for their rehabilitation program. Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) shall not provide accommodations that are the legal responsibility of a third party under the ADA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or any other law.

Procedures:

Counselors may provide accommodation services directly (e.g., designing and installing a color coding system for a client whom does not read). They may work collaboratively with other professionals (e.g., working with a psychologist to design memory cues for a client with limited short-term memory). Counselors can also purchase or arrange accommodation services (e.g., purchasing a work site evaluation and equipment modifications from an occupational therapist).

Examples of accommodation services that support job development and placement include:

- Services needed to enable the client to participate in an initial employment interview;
- Personal equipment and, as needed, training in the use of the equipment;
- On-the-job evaluation or training, or job coaching required to enable the client to perform the job if these services are not provided by the employer for all employees in the job category;
- Modified tools and equipment and, as appropriate, training in their use when the employer requires that all employees provide their own tools;
- Interpreter services during the initial adjustment period on the job; and
- That portion of the cost of accommodation services which would constitute an undue hardship for the employer.

Employers and institutions are responsible for accommodation services that provide for physical accessibility (e.g., ramps, doorways, parking spaces), become the property of the organization (e.g., a built-in desk and bookcase), are needed by consumers of their services and the general public, modify equipment provided for all employees (e.g., if all employees are provided with a computer, the employer would be responsible for providing the same equipment for a worker who is handicapped), or used by other workers as well as the employee who has a disability (e.g., a copy machine with modified dials used by all staff).

Accommodations Services

Federal regulations mandate that equipment or modifications purchased by MRS are the property of the client. When providing accommodation equipment that will be used at the work site, the fact of client ownership should be established with the employer.

Most community colleges receive monies under the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act to fund supplementary services used in the classroom for vocational education students and have access to these funds for interpreters, note takers, tutors, etc.

If it is necessary to purchase accommodation services to ensure client access to training or employment opportunities, or to avoid delays in IPE services, consultation with the district manager is advised before purchasing the service to ensure consistency of response to the community and customers.

The use of a rehabilitation engineer may be indicated when the problem can best be addressed by the application of engineering methodologies and scientific principles to modify or eliminate physical barriers to rehabilitation. Rehabilitation engineers may provide a continuum of prescriptive services ranging from design decisions on how to raise a desk to accommodate a wheelchair to the design and fabrication of a specialized computer keyboard. While possession of a bachelor's degree in engineering is usually recognized as a minimum requirement for entry in the field of engineering, the engineer's practical experience should also be assessed.

Information:

The Department of Treasury, Bureau of Revenue provides information on state income tax benefits for employers who provide accommodations. They can be reached at (517) 373-3196. Employers may also call 1-(800) 424-1040 for information on federal tax benefits (Section 190 of the U.S. Tax Code).

Job Aids:

For further information, see the Accommodations for Individuals with Hearing Loss in Classroom and Related Settings Job Aid (6025a-JA) in the Job Aid Section of this manual.

Acupuncture and Alternative Therapies Services

Information:

Acupuncture, and other forms of "alternative" treatment may represent an appropriate physical restoration service to reduce or eliminate functional limitations and impediments to employment.

Acupuncture, acupressure, aroma therapy, chiropractic, herbal remedies, homeopathy, and hypnosis are the most popular of the alternative treatment approaches for a variety of physical and mental conditions.

The appropriateness of purchasing alternative therapies lies with the counselor's assessment of the potential for improving employability. Medical or psychological consultation and/or a second qualified opinion may assist the counselor in considering the merits of requests to provide alternative therapies.

Acupuncture is the practice of inserting very thin sterile needles into specific parts of the body to stimulate circulation, healing, improved immune functioning, or relief of pain. Acupuncture is also used in the treatment of behavioral conditions such as substance abuse, overeating, and nicotine addiction. Acupuncture needles may or may not be electrically stimulated or manually manipulated after insertion, depending on the practitioner or the condition being treated.

In Michigan, acupuncture is defined as the practice of medicine and may be performed only by physicians or acupuncturists who are supervised by a physician. Because of the potential for serious reactions to acupuncture treatment, it is safest for acupuncture to be performed by physicians or in medical settings.

Purchase of acupuncture services may be appropriate when recommended by a physician or other qualified individual to eliminate or substantially reduce functional impediments to employment, especially if traditional treatment methods have failed. It is best to provide acupuncture treatment only after the client has been evaluated and a treatment plan has been formulated. It would not be appropriate generally to purchase acupuncture services when treatment is elective or when requested because it is not provided by the client's health insurance provider.

Assistive Listening Devices Services

Rev. 1/1996

Policy:

Assistive listening devices may be purchased when required to achieve an IPE employment goal. Assistive Listening Devices shall be recommended by an audiologist or other vendor experienced with assistive listening equipment.

Procedure:

If a permanent installation is required, it is federally required that assistive listening devices be installed only in buildings owned by the client. If the equipment is portable and used solely for the benefit of the client, the device is considered personal equipment and may be purchased for the client.

Information:

Assistive listening devices use specialized microphones, transmitters, and receivers to amplify speech and reduce background noise in group settings such as theaters, lecture halls, and meeting rooms. Most assistive listening devices can be used without a hearing aid or connected to hearing aids that have a tele-coil. They will not benefit individuals who have no functional hearing.

Four primary types of assistive listening devices are currently on the market:

- Personal amplified systems which are used for one-on-one conversations and TV listening;
- Induction loop transmitters which often use an existing sound system and transmit sound to a loop worn around the user's neck;
- FM transmitters which use radio waves to transmit from the speaker to one or more listeners; and
- Infrared transmitters which transmit sounds by invisible light beams from the speaker to the listener.

The induction loop and infrared devices require installation. These systems can be installed permanently, or can be set up and taken down after each use.

Job Aids:

For further information, see Assistive Listening Devices Job Aid (6075a-JA) and Environmental Considerations - Assistive Listening Devices Job Aid (6075b-JA), in the Job Aids Section of this manual.

Procedure:

To meet state and federal regulations and professional standards for the provision of cochlear implants, there should be a medical statement that, based on an examination, there is no medical contraindication to implantation or training; a prescription by an otologist or otolaryngologist; a second opinion, by an otologist or otolaryngologist (from a different setting or clinic) confirming the prescription; and a statement from an audiologist indicating that the client cannot achieve functional hearing from a hearing aid or other means of amplification and supporting the use of the implant.

Information:

A cochlear implant consists of components which are surgically implanted in the inner ear (the electrode array) and in the mastoid bone behind the ear (the receiver/stimulator), and worn externally (a speech processor and a microphone/transmitter).

In general, individuals who have lost their hearing after acquiring normal speech and language (post-lingual loss) are the most successful candidates for cochlear implantation. Individuals who have been completely deaf for a short period of time tend to adjust better to the implant than those who have experienced a long-term loss.

The Food and Drug Administration list the following criteria for patient selection:

- A profound sensorineural loss bilaterally;
- Post-lingual deafness;
- Psychologically and motivationally suitable for the surgery and training;
- Radiographic evidence that there is no contraindication to placement of the electrodes in the cochlea or to the placement of the receiver/stimulator in the mastoid;
- Little or no benefit from hearing aids;
- No contraindication, based on medical examination, to surgery or training; and
- A positive response to electrical stimulation of the oval window (promontory).

When considering a cochlear implant, adults should be counseled as to the lengthy adjustment period required.

Cochlear Implants Services

Following surgery, performed under general anesthesia, there is a period of post-operative testing and adjustment, followed by 10-22 weeks of training. Post-surgical training is an essential element in the effective use of a cochlear implant since the individual must be trained to interpret the sounds produced by the device. Thereafter, most programs provide regularly scheduled rechecks.

Clients should be provided with information and/or counseling to assure realistic expectations regarding risks and outcomes of implantation.

Counseling and Guidance Services

Policy:

Counseling and Guidance may be provided either as a primary or as a support service to achieve an IPE objective. Counseling may also be provided to support personal, social or vocational adjustment by providing it directly, arranging for it or purchasing the service.

Procedure:

- *Provided by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) Personnel*
Counseling and Guidance are considered essential rehabilitation services leading to employment provided directly by the counselor throughout the course of vocational rehabilitation. (See Policy and Procedure 2025, Rehabilitation and Counseling for a description of professional counseling services provided by qualified MRS counselors)
- *Purchased from other Providers*
When counseling or psychotherapy services outside the scope of practice or skill level of the counselor are required, they may be arranged or purchased from qualified service providers for a limited period of time. The following are guidelines in selecting qualified providers.
- *Professional Counselors, Psychologists, Marriage and Family Counselors* who are selected to provide counseling, psychotherapy, or personal and work adjustment counseling are required to be licensed by the State of Michigan. Certified Social Workers must be registered by the state. Limited license practitioners may be utilized. Psychotherapy, counseling and therapy are generic terms and may be provided by any of the professionals identified in this paragraph.
- *Mental Health Counselors or Work Adjustment Specialists* who are part of a nationally accredited mental health or rehabilitation facility, or who are individually certified meet provider standards.
- *Substance Abuse Treatment* providers or counselors who work in a substance abuse agency licensed by the Department of Licensing & Regulatory Affairs, Health Facilities Division, are covered by the agency's license, or they may be individually licensed as providers by the Department of Licensing & Regulatory Affairs. Psychologists and physicians may provide substance abuse treatment without certification. Professional Counselors and/or Social Workers may provide substance abuse counseling as part of their practice as long as they do not call themselves substance abuse treatment specialists or providers. The Department of Licensing & Regulatory Affairs, Professional Licensing Division can be contacted at 517-241-1970 for information on licensed CSAS providers.

Counseling and Guidance Services

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- *Debt Management Counseling* firms must be licensed by the Department of Insurance & Financial Regulations; however individual debt management counselors who do not handle customer's funds need not be licensed. The Department of Insurance & Financial Regulations can be contacted at 877-999-6442 or by going to <http://www.michigan.gov/difs/> for more information.
 - *Peer Counselors* (as distinguished from other peer support personnel) meet provider standards when they work for a recognized Center for Independent Living, a nationally accredited rehabilitation or mental health organization, a nationally or locally recognized disability organization (e.g., United Cerebral Palsy, Epilepsy Center of Michigan), or are individually licensed as counselors.

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Note 9 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

Dental Treatment Services

Rev. 1/1996

Policy:

Dental restoration services may be authorized only for dental impairments which create a substantial impediment to employment, for which no other community benefits or services are available, and which are required to obtain or maintain an IPE employment goal.

Procedure:

Dental restoration shall be prescribed by a licensed dentist.

Written price quotations shall be obtained.

Information:

Dental impairments which create a substantial impediment to employment generally fall into two categories: 1) those where disease or injury of the teeth and gums create chronic pain and a threat to the individual's health so that steady employment is precluded, and 2) those dental conditions which are primarily structural and cause problems of speech which interfere with job performance.

Forms:

The form used for this manual item is the RA-4672 – Report of Dental Examination, found in Policy and Procedure 3125 – Eligibility Assessment.

Employment Follow-up Services

Rev. 3/1997

Policy:

Employment follow-up shall be provided to address any accommodation or adjustment needs, and to ensure a successful employment outcome. The counselor and client and, as appropriate, the employer shall determine the most suitable method of employment follow-up.

Procedure:

Employment follow-up may be provided directly; arranged through another individual or agency involved with the client such as a job coach, rehabilitation organization, or placement agency; or purchased.

If employment follow-up services are purchased, a written agreement shall specify the following:

- The type of contact (e.g., by telephone, in person, in a group);
- The location of the follow-up (e.g., on the job, after hours);
- Frequency and duration of the contact and method of reporting; and
- The fee to be paid

When follow-up services have been arranged or purchased, at least one follow-up contact shall be completed with the client prior to case closure to ensure that employment is suitable and that there are no unresolved issues that would interfere with continued successful employment.

The date the federally required 90 day minimum follow-up period begins is the date employment begins. If the client changes jobs during the follow-up period, a new 90-day follow-up period shall begin to ensure the suitability of employment and satisfactory job performance on the new job before case closure.

For individuals employed at intake and provided services to maintain employment, the 90-day follow-up period begins when services have been completed. The purpose of follow-up in these cases is to ensure that the services have adequately and appropriately addressed the client's accommodation (or other) need(s), employment is satisfactory, and that no further services are needed to maintain employment.

While 90 days is the minimum period of employment follow-up required, the counselor and client shall consider whether a longer period of follow-up is needed to achieve satisfactory job performance and ensure job retention.

Employment Follow-up Services

For employment follow-up procedures of SSDI beneficiaries or SSI recipients, see Policy and Procedures 8100, Social Security Recipients Reimbursement Reporting Requirements.

Before purchasing employment follow-up services, it shall be determined whether these services are already included in fees paid for placement, job club, supported employment, or accommodation services.

Information:

In addition to employment follow-up, counselors may provide, arrange, or purchase services which support employment retention, including individual and group counseling, peer support groups, and employment retention groups offered by Centers for Independent Living, community rehabilitation programs and other community agencies.

A number of proprietary companies assist clients in documenting work incentives and managing the monthly reporting. Their fees are typically included in the charges made to the plan to achieve self-support or impairment related work expenses. Care should be taken to ensure that the client understands the financial impact of these fees. In some instances, fees may be so high that the client gains little by working.

The Employment Verification letter in the AWARE letters catalog can be used to request employment information from the client.

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Note 8 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

Equipment and Tools Services

Policy:

Equipment and tools may be purchased to achieve an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) employment outcome.

Procedure:

The availability of comparable benefits shall be explored and documented in determining the need to purchase equipment or tools.

When needed for training or employment, counselors shall evaluate the responsibility of the employer or training institution to provide the equipment or tools requested (see Rehabilitation Services Manual (RSM) Item 6025, Accommodations). If routinely provided to other trainees or employees, the responsibility for provision of equipment or tools rests with the training institution or employer unless exempted by procedures described in RSM 5100, Comparable Benefits.

Information:

Equipment and occupational tools are defined as tangible property of a more or less permanent nature. Examples include tools, equipment required for employment, machinery, computers, telecommunication devices, hand controls, mobility devices, etc.

Individuals seeking to return equipment purchased by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) are to be advised to donate the equipment to the charitable organization of their choosing to avoid any potential MRS liability for the proper tracking, storage or disposition of equipment recovered.

MRS will pursue legal action if a customer is suspected of securing equipment from MRS under false pretenses.

Hearing Aids Services

Policy:

Hearing aids may be authorized or arranged when part of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) or as part of a trial work experience.

Procedure:

Statewide contract:

- Beginning FY 2018 MRS has contracted with AudioNet America for the provision of hearing aids and related services including the hearing aid evaluation, assessment of hearing models, purchase and final fitting of hearing aids. All MRS customers who require hearing aids as a part of their IPE or a trial work experience shall utilize the AudioNet America In-Network providers, unless:
 - An in-network provider is not available within 25 miles of a customer's home or work.
 - Should a customer live or work more than 25 miles from an AudioNet In-Network provider, the counselor should contact AudioNet corporate for Out-of-network procedures. AudioNet will:
 1. Contact the non-participating provider and see if they want to become credentialed (if they meet requirements);
 2. Inquire if the provider will accept a one-time Special Provider Arrangement and agree to service the customer under AudioNet's guidelines or;
 3. Discuss the fee amount agreed to by MRS for a one time out of network claim payment.
 - The counselor shall determine the least cost means of providing services to the MRS customer; i.e. (a) paying for transportation for customer to commute to nearest In-Network provider, or (b) authorizing for a one time out of network claim payment.
 - AudioNet America is unable to support the specific hearing aid requirements identified by the audiologist.
 - AudioNet America will provide a written statement notifying the counselor of the inability to support the hearing aid request.
 - Rehabilitation Counselor will obtain a minimum of two independent bids for the required hearing aids.
- AudioNet America contracts with a network of audiologists to provide hearing aids and services associated with the purchase of hearing aids to individuals with a hearing loss.
- The AudioNet America contract is available in each office and should be reviewed by staff. Any questions may be referred to both the Policy Unit and Program Innovation Division.

Hearing Aids Services

- If there is a request for an exception it is to be sent to the MRS contract administrator for review. The MRS contract administrator will process the request with AudioNet America and communicate results to the counselor.

Establishment of Vocational Necessity:

- The counselor has the responsibility to determine the vocational necessity of hearing aids based on information provided by the audiologist, the customer, and, as needed, through a job or training site assessment. The counselor should clearly understand the customer's job duties and work-related communication requirements before determining that a hearing aid is necessary. A written statement from an employer may be used if it is detailed enough to establish the above. Utilization of RA-67, Workplace Assessment for Individuals with Hearing Loss (completed by the customer), and review of Manual Item 6025, Accommodations, is recommended.
- Establishing the vocational necessity of a specific hearing aid is achieved after discussion with the customer and recommendations of the audiologist. The focus should be on what is needed to facilitate performance of the customer's essential job functions and job-related communication requirements.
- Documentation of vocational necessity should be evident in the case record.
 - The ***Audiology Services Referral Form, RA-62***, shall be used to ensure adequate audiology or hearing aid recommendation reports.
 - The case record shall document how hearing aid(s) are essential to the individual's trial work experiences, job preparation or employment, and that the specific hearing aid(s) are required by the individual to carry out work or training functions.
- The following three evaluations are required before a hearing aid may be purchased:
 - Medical Concurrence. An examination by a licensed physician (preferably an Otolologist, ENT physician or credentialed authority) no more than six months prior to the purchase of a hearing aid, to ensure that a hearing aid is not contraindicated or that medically treatable conditions which effect hearing are identified and treated. Medical concurrence is achieved with the completion of the RA-61, Physician Recommendation for Hearing Aid(s). Medical concurrence is required for MRS customers 18 years or younger. Medical concurrence shall also be completed for first time wearers/users 18 years and up. If a customer is already a hearing aid wearer/user, a medical concurrence is not required.

Hearing Aids Services

- This service is not part of AudioNet contract.
- RA-61, Physician Recommendation for Hearing Aid(s) shall be forwarded to AudioNet America, when completed for MRS customer.
- When customer does not have primary care established, authorization may be necessary to obtain medical concurrence.

-- Audiology Evaluation. Hearing loss shall be evaluated and documented through an audiology assessment by a certified audiologist (American Board of Audiology or American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, CCC-A certified) within 6 months prior to authorization for a hearing aid.

- If an audiology evaluation has not been obtained within the last 6 months, a referral identifying the selected audiologist to be utilized will be made to AudioNet America.
- When a student or trainee is working under the supervision of a certified audiologist, the student or trainee may perform the service as long as the audiologist is on site and in the room with the student. The certified audiologist shall sign off on the work performed.

-- Hearing Aid Evaluation. A hearing aid evaluation by a certified audiologist is required to identify the appropriate hearing aid(s).

- Hearing Aid Evaluation is to be completed by AudioNet America audiologist/provider, per contract specifications.
- The RA-62, Audiology Referral Form, shall be utilized to document the required level of hearing aid(s) for the customer.
- Forward the F.PCI 1001 -- AudioNet Provider / Customer Information form from the AWARE Letters Catalog to AudioNet America. This is the form that will go to the In-Network Provider. Note: This form is also available in E-Learn for counselors who would like to print off copies and complete manually.
 - (a) Provider Name, Address, telephone number and NPI# may be provided, if known.
 - (b) Subcontracted Network (SCN) Manufacturer selection may be provided, if known.
 - (c) Customer Name, address, telephone number and date of birth as well as counselor name and telephone number shall be provided.
 - (d) Description of services shall also be specified.
- The RA-67, Workplace Assessment, may be forwarded with the referral to the AudioNet America In-Network provider to show vocational impact to hearing loss. (optional)
- The McCarthy-Alpiner Scale, RA-60, may also be used to identify the customer's perceived limitations. (optional)

Considerations for Vocational/ IPE Planning/Service Delivery:**Comparable Benefits:**

When a customer has Medicaid or private insurance coverage, this shall be used as a comparable benefit. Only comparable benefits that comply or are able to be utilized through AudioNet America will be considered. Only purchase of approved contract devices will be covered.

While the determination of comparable benefits remains a function of the MRS counselor, the contract requires AudioNet America to assist with comparable benefit planning including applicability of customer insurance benefits.

Financial Participation:

The counselor shall counsel the customer on the potential of individual financial participation towards the purchase of the hearing aids. The contribution level is to be consistent with the individual's ability to contribute, shall be discussed with the customer, strongly encouraged, and the results documented in the case record. While the suggested contribution amounts listed below will facilitate the automated billing process at AudioNet, MRS may request more or less than the suggested amounts consistent with the individual's ability to contribute. There are multiple means of contributing:

Option 1:

The customer may contribute to the recommended hearing aids. Through the contract with AudioNet America the customer may contribute at set levels of \$250, \$500, \$650, \$1,000 or \$1,300.

Option 2:

When there is a hearing aid recommendation submitted, the customer may elect to contribute the difference of cost in order to obtain the more expensive hearing aid.

Option 3:

The customer may not have the resources to contribute to the cost of the hearing aid, but might have some resources that can be committed to routine maintenance or future replacement of hearing aids. Counselors should document consultation with the customer regarding potential savings accounts or other mechanisms towards saving for future hearing aid needs.

Hearing Aids Services

Guidance and Counseling:

- Assistance with a hearing aid involves guidance and counseling with the customer throughout the rehabilitation process. This includes assisting the individual to understand the nature and severity of the hearing loss and personal, psychosocial, and vocational adjustment to the loss. Such guidance may include:
 - Realistic expectations of what a hearing aid can do;
 - Education regarding basic understanding of the audiogram;
 - Counseling to manage loss and stress related to a recent or progressive loss of hearing;
 - Assessment of the work or training site to determine the need for additional accommodations – utilization of RA-67, Workplace Assessment for Individuals with Hearing Loss (completed by the customer), and review of Manual Item 6025, Accommodations, is recommended;
 - Customers should be encouraged to work closely with the audiologist to assure proper use, fitting and adjustment in order to obtain optimum use from the aids;
 - Training in speech reading;
 - Referral to local support and information organizations;
 - Consideration of use of telephones, assistive listening technology and environmental alerting equipment; and
 - Guidance as to self-advocacy approaches, including rights under the ADA and Michigan disability laws.

AudioNet Referral:

- The RA-67, Workplace Assessment, may be forwarded with the referral to the AudioNet America In-Network provider to show vocational impact to hearing loss. (optional)
- The McCarthy-Alpiner Scale, RA-60, may also be used to identify the customer's perceived limitations. (optional)
- If the customer or counselor determine a preferred AudioNet In-Network Provider, a referral identifying the selected audiologist to be utilized will be made to AudioNet America. If the customer has not yet decided, then AudioNet (the contractor) will refer them to an In-Network Provider.
- Customers should be encouraged to work closely with the hearing aid provider to assure proper use, fitting and adjustment in order to obtain optimum use from the aids.

Questions to be asked of the audiologist by the counselor should include:

- How will a hearing aid(s) improve this person's work place functioning?
- What type of hearing aid and options, if any, are necessary to improve the person's hearing for employment functions?

Hearing Aids Services

- Is the identified hearing aid the least cost that meets the individual's work or training needs?
- Would additional assistive listening technology be needed to enable adequate work function?

Telecoil:

- The need for a telecoil should be considered as part of the hearing aid assessment. Many hearing aids function more effectively with a telephone when a telecoil is installed. When used with assistive listening devices, the telecoil feature maximizes the person's ability to hear the spoken word. (Policy and Procedures 7075, Assistive Listening Devices)
- All manufacturers of hearing aids provided under the AudioNet contract have Telecoil options.

Determination of the Level of Hearing Aid(s):

- Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) contribution to the purchase of hearing aids and services is limited to that which meets the functional vocational rehabilitation needs of the individual at least cost to MRS. As per customer contribution, the customer has the opportunity to select more expensive or cosmetically desirable hearing aids, but is responsible for the difference in cost.

Products Available:

- Up to two Standard Digital Mid-Level Hearing Aids are covered in full as well as professional testing related to such. Upgrades to Mid-High, Advanced and Flagship hearing devices which are listed on the AudioNet Product List are available as covered in full under the appropriate claim dollar amount, should such upgrade be vocationally required for the customer. Using the tools provided (RA-60, McCarthy-Alpiner Scale, or RA-67, Workplace Assessment) by MRS and the hearing aid evaluation, the recommendation to upgrade the hearing device from Standard Digital Mid-Level Hearing Aids shall be made by the In-Network Audiologist and identified on the RA-62, Audiology Referral Form.

Authorization for the Hearing Aid(s):

As per the AudioNet America contract, all communication regarding cost and authorization of funds is private/protected information. All pricing provided to MRS and its customers is to be considered confidential and not shared with third parties.

The MRS authorization will be sent to AudioNet America along with the RA-62, Audiology Referral Form. This will include:

- Customer ID which equates to AWARE Participant ID.

Hearing Aids Services

- The amount of the MRS authorization, insurance coverage and customer contribution.

Delivery of the Hearing Aid(s):

Conformity Check:

- A conformity check shall be completed by an audiologist before the standard 45-day factory return period expires to ensure fit and function. A Real Ear Technology assessment is recommended to determine the effectiveness of the hearing aid.
- AudioNet will verify that a conformity check has been completed by the audiologist before invoicing MRS.
- Payment shall be processed once the customer has received the hearing aid and conformity check, and after MRS has received the invoice from AudioNet.

Documentation for individuals who are employed at the time of service delivery:

- If a customer was employed at intake, or employed prior to the purchase of the hearing aid(s), *employment date* in AWARE is the date of the completion of the IPE, or the actual start date of employment.
- After the hearing aid(s) has been delivered to the customer, AudioNet will perform the conformity check within 45 days. In addition to the conformity check, it is the counselor's responsibility to contact the customer to determine the customer's employment stability;
- The date that the customer receives and is able to utilize the hearing aids is the first opportunity for the *employment stable date* to be considered and entered into the case record.

Routine Maintenance:

- Routine Maintenance is provided under the AudioNet program during the first six months at no charge. Ongoing Maintenance throughout the remaining 30 months of service is available through the servicing in-network provider at a \$20 copay per visit. The utilization of this service will be the responsibility of the customer.
- AudioNet's program provides a minimum two-year manufacturer's warranty including two-years of Loss & Damage (L&D) coverage. L&D coverage allows for a one-time replacement through the manufacturer. (For individuals provided 2 hearing aids, if both their right and left aid were lost or damaged, both would be covered.) Loss and damage claims will be processed through AudioNet and the manufacturer. A maximum \$150 service fee for dispensing a monaural benefit or a maximum of \$250 dispensing fee for binaural aids. Should the loss occur after the initial six months, a \$50 exam fee may also

Hearing Aids Services

apply to the customer for professional services. The utilization of this service will be the responsibility of the customer.

- Initial Earmolds and Absolute Power (AP) Receivers ordered with hearing aids are covered in full by the MRS authorization. Additional earmolds and/or AP receivers are the responsibility of the customer.

Emailed authorization and invoice (electronic signatures)

Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 2325, Signatures and Notifications, restricts the acceptance of documents that do not contain original signatures; faxed, emailed, etc.

AudioNet America is a vendor contracted by Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Michigan Rehabilitation Services. Because of the contractual commitments MRS has made with AudioNet, MRS is making an exception to the Signatures and Notifications policy. AudioNet shall email the authorization and invoice to the authorizing counselor at appropriate times, as indicated in Phase I and Phase II below.

The MRS Counselor shall verify the authorization has been signed by AudioNet, assuring the service has been delivered. The signed authorization shall be printed and placed in the hard copy case record as documentation of receipt of services. Once the signed authorization has been received and verified by the MRS Counselor, the payment for services shall be issued by MRS counselor and/or administrative staff.

Information:

The procedures above incorporate federal and state legal requirements governing the purchase of hearing aids. Audiology Referral Form, RA-62, is required to ensure adequate audiology or hearing aid recommendation reports.

Authorization Process (Referenced as 'Claims Process' by the contractor):

Phase I

1. Customer submits application for services. MRS case is opened.
2. Medical concurrence completed for MRS customers 18 years or younger as well as first time wearers/users 18 years and up. An authorization may be necessary. See Medical Concurrence section.
3. Assessment:
 - a. Customer provides recent audiology evaluation and MRS refers to AudioNet America to provide a hearing aid evaluation; or –

Hearing Aids Services

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- b. MRS refers to AudioNet America and issues authorization to AudioNet America to provide audiologist exam / audiology evaluation and hearing aid evaluation.
 4. MRS will determine eligibility and begin a vocational needs assessment which may consist of:
 - a. Medical concurrence performed by licensed physician (preferably Otolologist or ENT) – see Medical Concurrence section on page 2.
 - b. Audiology Evaluation received from audiologist.
 - c. Workplace Assessment conducted by Business Network Division.
 - d. Verification of customer contribution for any part of the service process.
 - e. Vocational impact of hearing loss.
 5. AudioNet America Process:
 - a. Verification and level of contribution through insurance for any part of the service process.
 - b. AudioNet America refers to network of providers for exam / audiology evaluation and hearing aid evaluation.
 - c. Networked provider arranges for or provides audiology and hearing aid evaluation of customer.
 - d. Networked provider sends hearing aid recommendations to AudioNet America, who reviews and reports to MRS.
 6. Phase I is complete. MRS issues payment upon completed service and delivery of assessment reports.

Phase II

1. MRS counselor conducts vocational needs assessment leading to formation of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), including:
 - a. Employment goals / job in jeopardy factors
 - b. Any necessary updates to recommendations from completed evaluations
 - c. Required services
2. MRS provides AudioNet America with authorization for hearing aid and conformity check.
3. Process:
 - a. Customer is fitted for hearing aids
 - b. Conformity check completed.
4. MRS verifies completion of all services through receipt of signed authorization and delivery of final report(s) sent via email prior to processing payment.

Hearing Aids Services

5. Phase II is complete. MRS issues payment upon completed service and delivery of reports. Include the invoice number when payment is made.

Referring potential providers to AudioNet America:

If a counselor is working with a hearing aid provider who is not associated with AudioNet America, the counselor or the manager may refer the provider to the contractor if there is interest in becoming an approved provider. Interested parties can contact AudioNet Customer Service at 586-250-2717 or at csr@audionetamerica.com to initiate the process.

Hearing Aid and Customer Medical Concerns versus Contract performance issues or concerns:

AudioNet America is under contract to deliver hearing aids to customers of MRS through the above detailed process. If there are concerns with any step within the process, the counselor should follow the steps identified below to resolve the issue:

- Concerns associated with a specified customer need or regarding the acquired hearing aid are to be resolved between the assigned MRS Rehabilitation Counselor and Audiologist that is delivering the service.
 - If there are unresolved issues the MRS Counselor should report the concerns to the Site Manager.
 - It is requested that the Site Manager report the unresolved concerns to the MRS contract administrator who will log and, if necessary, communicate the concerns to AudioNet America.
- Concerns associated with financial processes that are not able to be resolved at the local level shall be forwarded to the MRS Contract Administrator to be logged and communicated with AudioNet America as contractual concerns.
 - AudioNet America and the MRS contract administrator will attempt to resolve any financial related concerns and provide feedback to the specific counselor and provide guidance to the field.
 - AudioNet pricing is confidential and should not be discussed with providers directly.

Glossary of Terms:

Audiologist: means any participating person who (1) possesses a master's or doctorate degree in audiology or speech pathology from an accredited university, (2) possesses a Certificate of Clinical Competence in Audiology from the American Speech and Hearing Association and (3) is qualified in the state in which the service is provided to conduct an audiometric examination and hearing aid evaluation test for the purposes of measuring hearing acuity and determining and prescribing the type of hearing aid that would best improve the enrollee's loss of hearing acuity. A physician performing the foregoing services shall be deemed an audiologist for the purposes of this Program.

Hearing Aids Services

Audiometric Exam: means a procedure for measuring hearing acuity that includes tests relating to air conduction, bone conduction, speech reception threshold and speech discrimination.

Claim: Authorization process.

Contractor: AudioNet America.

Dispensing fee: means a fee predetermined by the carrier to be paid to a provider for dispensing hearing aids, including the cost of providing ear molds, under this Program.

Ear mold: means a device of soft rubber, plastic or a non-allergenic material which may be vented or non-vented that individually is fitted to the external auditory canal and pinna of the enrollee.

Hearing aid: means an electronic device worn on the person for the purpose of amplifying sound and assisting the physiologic process of hearing, and includes an ear mold, if necessary.

Hearing aid evaluation test: means a series of subjective and objective tests by which a physician or audiologist determines which make and model of hearing aid will best compensate for the enrollee's loss of hearing acuity and which make and model will therefore be prescribed, and shall include one visit by the enrollee subsequent to obtaining the hearing aid for an evaluation of this performance and a determination of its conformity to the prescription.

Participating: means having a written agreement with AudioNet America, Inc. pursuant to which services or supplies are provided.

Patient: MRS customer.

Physician: means a participating otologist or otolaryngologist or Otorhinolaryngologist who is board certified or eligible for certification in such specialty in compliance with standards established by the respective professional sanctioning body, who is a licensed doctor of medicine or osteopathy legally qualified to practice medicine and who, within the scope of such license, performs a medical examination of the ear and determines whether the patient has a loss of hearing acuity and whether the loss can be compensated for by a hearing aid.

Provider: means a physician Audiologist.

SCN: Sub-contracted Network.

The following are definitions of some common terms used in diagnosing and coding hearing impairments, as found in AWARE.

Conductive or obstructive hearing impairments are due to conditions of the middle or external ear. In this type of loss, the inner ear is capable of receiving sound waves, but there is an obstruction to the sound waves in the external or middle ear. Conductive losses may be caused by disease, trauma, or congenital conditions and should be evaluated in terms of potential for improvement through surgery or assistive devices.

Sensorineural hearing loss results from impairment of the inner ear. The damaged inner ear does not accurately respond to transmitted sound waves or does not transmit accurate sound signals to the brain. To an individual with this type of hearing loss, even loud sounds may be perceived as distorted. Most sensorineural losses cannot be improved medically, but hearing may be improved with hearing aids.

Deafness, Primary Communication Visual - Individuals who have very little functional hearing for speech comprehension and primarily use a visual means of communication (such as American Sign Language), both receptively and expressively. Some people who self-identify as deaf may occasionally use some speech when communicating with people who do not sign, but will primarily choose a visual means of communication.

Deafness, Primary Communication Auditory - Individuals who receive little or no benefit from hearing aids or hearing assistive technology and who prefer spoken communication to sign language. Speech comprehension will be through speech reading, cued speech or written text. The primary means of expressive language will be through spoken language. These individuals may be considered “oral deaf” or “late deafened” and may choose a cochlear implant to improve communication.

Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Visual - Individuals with severe hearing loss who are unable to hear sounds without hearing aids. These individuals may have difficulty understanding speech in less than optimal listening environments. Hearing Assistive Technology will improve speech comprehension in auditoriums, classrooms, and environments with background noise. Visual input is a necessary aid to auditory communication including good lighting, speech reading, and/or captioning services. Some of these individuals have recently become eligible for cochlear implants.

Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Auditory - Individuals with hearing loss who primarily depend on residual hearing to understand spoken language with hearing aids and/or hearing assistive technology. Spoken language is the primary communication mode both expressively and receptively.

Deaf-Blindness - The federal definition of deaf-blindness refers to those with any level of hearing loss and central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with corrective lenses, or a field defect such that the peripheral diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees, or a progressive visual loss having a prognosis leading to one or both these conditions. In Michigan, these individuals are generally served by the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons.

Speech Range- The range in which most speech sounds occur: 500-3000 Hertz(Hz).

Speech Reception Threshold (SRT) - the softest level of sound at which an individual can correctly respond to at least 50 percent of a list of spondee (bi-syllabic) words.

Pure Tone Average (PTA) - determined for each ear by computing the average of the pure tone thresholds at 500 Hz, 1000 Hz, 2000 Hz. For example, if the thresholds are 60 dB at 500 Hz, 80 dB at 1000 Hz, 90 dB at 2000 Hz, the pure tone average would be:

$$60 + 80 + 90 = 230 = 77\text{db}/3$$

Speech Discrimination Score - determined by a phonetically-balanced (PB) word list. The PB list should be administered at the most comfortable listening level (MCL).

Telecoil – An induction coil in a hearing aid for receiving electromagnetic signals from a telephone or a loop amplification system.

Resources:

The following list of resources may be useful to counselors or their customers. This list is not intended to be an exhaustive list, nor should inclusion or exclusion of any organization constitute endorsement by Michigan Department of Health and Human Services - Michigan Rehabilitation Services.

AudioNet America:

www.audionetamerica.com/

Fax: 844-522-5038

Division on Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing:

<http://www.michigan.gov/mdcr/0,4613,7-138-28545---,00.html>

Assistive Technology Loan Fund:

The Michigan Assistive Technology Loan Fund has been established to help people with disabilities purchase assistive technology, including hearing aids. Individuals who are not eligible for MRS services, or who otherwise wish to seek a loan to secure hearing aids or assistive listening devices may apply for a loan from this fund. The AT Loan Fund can be reached at 800-828-2714 or at www.michiganloanfunds.org

E-Learn

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resource Center: Log in to E-Learn <http://elearn.mrs.mi.us> , Choose “Other MRS Programs”, then “Deaf/HOH.”

Organizations for information and support:

-- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. <https://www.asha.org>

-- Michigan Self- Help for Hard of Hearing People (MI-SHHH). To locate groups in your local area: www.MI-SHHH.org

Hearing Aids Services

--Statewide Services for the Hearing Impaired: Agency is now called the Communication Access Center (CAC) for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
<http://dhcc.org>

--**Michigan Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing** – contact their Technical Support. Toll-Free Voice/TTY: 877-499-6232

--Michigan Coalition for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People:
www.michdhh.weebly.com

Forms:

- RA-60 – McCarthy-Alpiner Scale – Rev 03-2016
- RA-61 – Physician Recommendation for Hearing Aid(s)
- RA-62 – Audiology Referral Form
- RA-63 – Comparative Price Quotation on Hearing Instruments
- RA-67 – Workplace Assessment
- F.PCI 1001 -- AudioNet Provider / Customer Information form

Job Aids:

6225a-JA (Rev 9-2017) – AudioNet Pricing Matrix

6225b-JA (Rev 9-2017) – State of Michigan Contract with AudioNet America, Inc.

Experimental or Unproven Treatment Services

Procedure:

Experimental treatment may be provided under limited circumstances to achieve an IPE employment goal. Michigan Rehabilitation Services is federally prohibited from providing unproven treatment.

Experimental treatment may be provided if it meets the following criteria:

- It is conducted in a medical facility or university center with recognized protocols and adequate follow-up;
- It is the only treatment option available to the client which may reduce a substantial vocational impediment(s) to employment; and
- The counselor has advised the client to discuss related risks and benefits with the physician.

Information:

Unproven treatment is that which has never been tested or has been tested and shown to be fallacious (i.e., the drug Laetrile) or ineffective.

Experimental treatment is typically described as treatment for which efficacy has not yet been proven and is still under research with experimental protocols. Experimental treatment is rarely covered by Medicaid or Medicare. Patients are usually advised by their treating practitioners when a procedure is considered experimental. Classification of treatment modalities change over time; therefore, treatment classified as experimental today may be classified as standard in the future. The referring practitioner, a medical consultant, or other related specialist should be consulted to determine whether a recommended treatment is experimental.

The requirement that experimental treatment be provided by medical facilities or university centers with recognized protocols is a quality control measure. Generally such facilities are recognized as having appropriate research controls and follow-up. Commercial health insurance companies may pay for experimental treatment conducted in these settings.

Home Modifications Services

Policy:

Home modifications may be authorized or arranged as part of an IPE to enable an eligible individual to train for, obtain or maintain an employment outcome.

Procedure:

An evaluation and prescription, or written recommendation, by an occupational or physical therapist, physiatrist, licensed building contractor, or rehabilitation engineer shall be obtained before authorizing for home modifications.

A quotation shall include a statement of the length of time required to complete the modifications and a statement that the vendor will be responsible for assuring conformity to all applicable building codes and zoning ordinances.

It is federally required that the home be owned by the client or the client's family, for structural changes to be made.

Home modifications shall not be purchased when the primary purpose is independent living or self-care.

Information:

When considering home modifications, a comprehensive assessment of vocational, mobility, endurance, and other related issues will contribute to functional, cost-effective planning. For example, a change from a manual to an electric wheelchair may necessitate wider door openings and more room for turning space.

State and federal accessibility standards do not apply to single-family (State of Michigan's R-4 category) or duplex (State of Michigan's R-3 category) residential units. However, the Barrier Free Design provisions of the State Construction Code and the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines may provide helpful guidelines for ramps, doorways, grab bars, etc.

Independent Living Services Services

Rev. 1/1996

Policy:

Independent living services may be provided when necessary to achieve a vocational rehabilitation goal.

Information:

Independent living services include, for example:

- Case assessment;
- Home evaluation/consultation;
- Transportation;
- Interpreter services for the deaf;
- Language interpreter services/translation;
- Independent living skills instructions (individual or group);
- Peer consultation;
- Personal care attendance screening and referral;
- Personal care attendant service; and
- Structure/site modification.

Centers for Independent Living are one source of providing these services.

A listing of web sites for Michigan's Center for Independent Living facilities is available on the Disability Resources link at the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) public web site at www.michigan.gov/mrs

Interpreter Services Services

Policy:

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) shall provide interpreter services for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who do not speak or understand English and require this service to participate throughout the rehabilitation process, except when it is the legal responsibility of another entity.

Provision of interpreter services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing shall be effective in meeting customer needs in accordance with the provisions outlined in the Deaf Persons' Interpreters Act.

The goal of effective communication is to ensure that communication with people with disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities.

Procedure:

From initial contact throughout the rehabilitation process the counselor shall engage the individual in determining his or her preferred mode of communication apprising them of their right to have a qualified interpreter present at meetings. The key to determining effective communication is to consider the nature, length, complexity and context of the communication along with individual's preferred mode of communication. This should be an interactive process between the individual and the counselor.

MRS staff with sign language skills communicating with customers does not constitute provision of a qualified interpreter service. Counselors may choose to arrange for a qualified interpreter in providing counseling or vocational information. Conversely, an individual at any time during the counseling relationship and throughout the rehabilitation process may request to have a qualified interpreter provided. This request shall be honored.

Should a qualified interpreter be needed, MRS shall make a reasonable and timely effort to secure an interpreter which includes checking the availability of interpreters who work for other agencies or freelance. All requests for an interpreter and subsequent efforts to provide one shall be documented. Counselors shall allow at least 10 to 14 days to arrange for interpreter services.

When arranging for an interpreter, the referral source shall be provided with information regarding the nature of the assignment, date, time, address, and the communication mode preferred by the individual (sign language, oral, tactile). Because of the mental and physical fatigue brought on by the continuous interpreting process, it may be necessary to provide two or more interpreters and/or recess periods for assignments extending more than 2 hours.

Interpreter Services Services

Since the background, education, language levels, and communication methods of customers who rely on manual communication or oral interpretation vary, the interpreter shall be carefully matched to the individual's communication mode. Agencies that provide interpreter services in a region generally strive to match the interpreter with the known communication method of the customer. While some individuals who rely on manual communication or oral interpreting may be able to communicate by writing or lip reading for short periods of time and in low stress situations, interpreters shall be provided for more formal or demanding situations such as for vocational counseling, throughout a training program, during the initial training on the job, etc., unless the individual requests that an interpreter not be provided.

A professional interpreter will ensure a more impartial, professional and confidential interpretation. A customer may choose to have a family member, close friend or associate present, but this person should not substitute for a qualified interpreter. The Counselor has a responsibility to ensure that MRS is provided accurate information from the customer's perspective and that MRS information is conveyed accurately. A qualified interpreter should be utilized for this purpose.

If a qualified interpreter cannot be obtained within a reasonable time frame, a waiver, as specified by the Department of Civil Rights, must be completed by the agency and the customer and retained in the case file.

If MRS makes every effort to hire a qualified interpreter and is unable to do so, this should be clearly documented in the case file. If the customer is offered a less qualified interpreter or some other accommodation, and they agree to this variance from law, a Partial Waiver should be completed and retained in the case file. A Partial Waiver is available by linking to Department of Civil Rights website:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcr/Limited_Waiver-Final-3-31-16_519673_7.pdf

If a customer waives the right to a qualified interpreter after being offered an interpreter by MRS, a Full Waiver should be completed. A Full Waiver is available by linking to Department of Civil Rights website:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcr/FullWaiver-Final-3-31-16_519606_7.pdf

Foreign Language Interpreters

If a language interpreter is needed for a non-English speaking individual, care shall be taken to find an interpreter appropriately matched to the individual's needs, since the dialect, education and language level of the individual can vary.

Interpreter Services Services

The International Institute 313-871-8600 may be able to assist in locating an appropriate foreign language interpreter. The Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) can help identify interpreters for individuals who speak Arabic languages 313-842-7010 and 313-945-8380.

Information:

Qualified Interpreter

The Michigan law and rules define the minimum qualifications an interpreter must have to be considered qualified in a particular setting. The Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (DODDBHH) maintains an online interpreter directory on their website at <http://www.michigan.gov/doddbhh> (Found in the "For Interpreters" section). The interpreter will hold a credentialing card issued through the DODDBHH. For most MRS purposes, a Standard Level 2 is the minimum credential required. An additional endorsement is required for legal, medical and mental health settings.

Waivers & Variances

The Division on Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing may be contacted for additional guidance related to any exceptions in providing a qualified interpreter.

The link, <http://www.michigan.gov/mdcr/0,4613,7-138-28545---,00.html> provides answers to frequently asked questions in the area of Exceptions, Waivers and Variances.

Settings in which a Standard Level 2 Interpreter is required

Standard level 2 involves moderately complex situations with medium-high risk. Qualified interpreters may interpret when topics relate to government, employment, or finance.

Examples include:

- All Level 1 settings
- IEP (Individualized Education Program) Meetings
- Meetings
- Interviews
- Job Training
- Employment Grievances/Discipline
- Staff Meetings
- Political Events
- Finance
- Government Meetings
- Public Personalities
- Plays, Concerts, TV News

Interpreter Services Services

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- Tax Assessment Meetings/Appeals
 - Applications for State/Federal Services
 - Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) as appropriate to this level
 - Addiction Treatment
 - DeafBlind (in appropriate settings)

Definitions of an Interpreter

From the Deaf Persons' Interpreter Act

- "Intermediary interpreter" or "deaf interpreter" means any person, including any deaf or deaf-blind person, who is able to assist in providing an accurate interpretation between spoken English and sign language or between variants of sign language by acting as an intermediary between a deaf or deaf-blind person and a qualified interpreter.
- "Qualified interpreter" means a person who is certified through the national registry of interpreters for the deaf or certified through the state by the division.
- "Qualified oral interpreter" means a qualified interpreter who is able to convey information through facial and lip movement.
- "Qualified sign language interpreter" means a qualified interpreter who uses sign language to convey information.

Additional Information

Michigan Department of Civil Rights, Division on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Qualified Interpreter – General Rules: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcr/2007-047_General_Interpreter_Rules_5-16_submitted_FINAL_528688_7.pdf

Job Aids

6325a-JA (Rev 4-2017) – Qualified Interpreters Simplified

Maintenance Services

Policy:

Maintenance services may be provided only for additional costs, over and above normal living expenses, which individuals incur because of their participation in assessment or IPE services.

Procedure:

The amount reimbursed to state employees for traveling on Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) business, as published in the Standardized Travel Regulations or its annual update, is used as the basis for determining maximum maintenance amounts. The per diem rate is used, if computed on a whole-day basis.

After clients begin employment, maintenance may be provided only until clients receive their first full pay check.

Mortgage payments represent purchase of property and, therefore, are federally prohibited from being authorized.

Counselors shall ensure that the provision of maintenance services does not jeopardize assistance the client may be receiving from other sources, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or other welfare benefits.

Information:

The following are examples from Federal Regulations of expenses that would meet the definition of maintenance. The examples are purely illustrative, do not address all possible circumstances, and are not intended to substitute for individual counselor judgment.

- The cost of a uniform or other suitable clothing that is required for job placement or job seeking activities.
- The cost of short-term shelter that is required in order for an individual to participate in vocational training at a site that is not within commuting distance of the individual's home.
- The initial one-time costs, such as a security deposit or charges for the initiation of utilities, that are required in order for an individual to relocate for a job placement.

Native American Healers Services

Policy:

Native American Healers may legally be used for a client who is a member of a recognized tribal group for services such as the treatment of substance abuse, mental illness, chronic pain, and chronic physical illness.

Procedure:

Native healers are identified through tribal councils or through health or rehabilitation professionals who are Native American and involved in the client's rehabilitation program. Use of a Native American healer may be part of a comprehensive plan that makes provisions for on-going treatment and follow-up. Native American healers are used as an adjunct to, not in lieu of, recommended medical treatment. If monetary payment to the Native American healer is not appropriate, a direct payment may be authorized to the client for the purchase of goods traditionally presented to the healer as a part of the healing ceremony (e.g., blankets, food).

Information:

The following Michigan tribal groups are federally recognized - Bay Mills Indian Community of the Sault Ste. Marie Band of Chippewa Indians, Bay Mills Reservation, Michigan; Chippewa Indians of Michigan, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan, Isabella Reservation, and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Michigan; Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan; Hannahville Potawatomi Community of Michigan; Keweenaw Bay Indian Community of Michigan, and Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior.

Tribal councils and individual Native Americans will express widely divergent views on the use of Native American healers, ranging from endorsement of healers and other traditional ceremonies, to those who have embraced alternative religious values and ceremonies. It is important to provide the range of rehabilitation services in the context of a knowledge and appreciation of the client's cultural values. An understanding of the client's values and cultural views will be an important first step. Use of tribal council members and Native American-operated social service programs will often be helpful.

Other Goods and Services Services

Policy:

Other goods and services may be authorized or arranged when required to achieve an IPE employment outcome.

Information:

Examples of “other goods and services” include:

- Payment of union dues, medical insurance, initiation fees, or the cost of a bond, when necessary for the client to obtain employment.
- Legal services necessary to achieve an IPE objective except that fines, debts and/or bail expenses should not be authorized.
- Warning devices for the deaf.
- Clothing appropriate for interviewing with potential employers at job fairs, business advisory groups, etc.
- Training in self-care, self-care services and equipment when needed for a client to achieve an IPE employment outcome.

Personal Assistance Services Services

Policy:

As a federally defined support service, personal assistance services may only be provided in support of one or more required IPE services leading to employment, or in support of a trial work experience.

Procedure:

Only personal assistance services required to support specific trial work experiences or IPE services may be purchased.

The IPE must specify how the individual will sustain personal assistance services once employment is attained, whether through the individual's earnings, Social Security work incentives, or through comparable benefits and services.

- *Selection and Training Considerations*

The individual and counselor shall assess the scope and type of personal assistance services needed to support an employment related service, as well as the individual's readiness to manage personal assistants. Employers may need to be included to assess the assistance needs with respect to accomplishing essential job functions. Employers have responsibility for providing personal assistance services under the ADA when needed as a job accommodation, but not for self-care functions such as eating, dressing or toileting.

- *Use of Comparable Benefits and Services*

Comparable benefits such as Health Insurance, Auto No-Fault Insurance, special Medicaid programs and PASREP shall be explored and used to the extent they are available before authorizing for personal assistance services. The following is an elaboration of many comparable benefits:

Medicaid

Personal attendant care services are not covered under regular Medicaid. They are also not covered under the Freedom to Work Medicaid program. Medicaid coverage of personal care services are available under two different programs sponsored by the Department of Community Health.

The Home Help Program provides unskilled personal care services. These services can be arranged by the beneficiary's Department of Human Services adult services worker or can be prescribed by a physician. They are home-based

Personal Assistance Services Services

services such as laundry, housekeeping, and other personal care tasks. These services are generally only available to assist the beneficiary at home.

Home and Community Based Services Waiver (MI Choice Waiver) covers services to individuals with disabilities who, without the provision of waiver services, would require nursing facility care. The Department of Community Health administers the waiver through contracts with organized health care delivery systems in the community. These services are generally only available to persons to assist them at home.

Auto No-Fault

Individuals receiving Auto No-Fault insurance are served by the Disability Management Program. However, general program counselors may have a dual case with such individuals. Auto No-Fault insurance may be a source of personal assistance services. Call the consumer Assistance Section of the Office of Finance and Insurance Services at 1-877-999-6442 for information or assistance with program resolution. The web site is www.michigan.gov/ofis.

PASREP

The Personal Assistance Services Reimbursement for Employment Program (PASREP) is funded through a Michigan state appropriations line item in the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth budget. This program is targeted to a narrow set of working people with very severe disabilities whose earnings were not initially sufficient to pay for the costs of the Personal Assistance Services they require in order to work. Established in 1985, the PASREP program serves around 36 people statewide. Over the years, few people leave and few come into the program. There is generally a waiting list. The maximum a person can be reimbursed is \$1,000 a month with the average reimbursement being \$856 a month.

Persons in the program must work more than part time and pay the remainder of the cost for personal assistance services out of their own pocket. To apply, individuals need to contact their local Center for Independent Living or the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living at 734-971-0277. More information about PASREP may be found at the web site <http://www.copower.org/pasbook/pasb7.htm>.

Community Living Supports

Community living supports are used to increase or maintain personal self-sufficiency, facilitating an individual's achievement of his goals of community inclusion and participation. These supports can be provided in the home or in a community setting.

Personal Assistance Services Services

These services are available to persons covered under the Community Mental Health Services Program (CMHSP). While these services are available outside the home, they do not supplant Home Help services. Individuals and their case managers must request Home Help services before Community Living Supports assistance can be authorized.

- *Social Security Work Incentives*

Social Security work incentives are not federally defined as comparable benefits, but their use can significantly benefit the individual. Specific personal services can be deducted from earnings as an impairment-related work expense (IRWE). This will reduce the amount of earnings SSA uses as countable earnings to demonstrate performance of SGA. This benefits individuals by allowing them to earn more income before it affects their benefits. The following qualify as IRWE exclusion:

- Performed in the work setting.
- Performed to help individual prepare for work, the trip to and from work, and after work, for example bathing, dressing, cooking, and eating.
- Services that incidentally also benefit individual's family, for example meals shared by individual and individual's family.
- Services performed by individual's family member for a cash fee where he/she suffers an economic loss by reducing or ending his/her work in order to help individual. This includes individual's spouse reducing work hours to help individual get ready for work.

Individuals receiving SSDI may be able to write a Plan to Achieve Self Support (PASS) in order to become eligible for SSI and the Medicaid benefit.

- *Paying for Personal Assistance Services*

The individual with a disability and counselor should work collaboratively to identify sources of comparable benefits and plan for ongoing personal assistance services after case closure. Counselors may need to take an active role in helping individuals locate sources of funding for Personal Assistance Services.

There are several options available when paying for personal assistance services. In choosing an option, the individual and counselor shall consider issues such as the extent to which the payment option permits the individual to direct and manage the personal assistant. Issues of flexibility, the amount of record keeping required and liability shall also be considered. Payment options include individuals selecting and paying the personal assistant(s) directly; using his or her own funds, or funds from another source such as Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS); or utilizing a third party organization which specializes in delivering personal assistance and related services.

Personal Assistance Services Services

Counselors shall not authorize directly to an individual who will perform personal assistance services for an individual as it will result in MRS being liable for Worker's Compensation, taxes, etc.

The counselor and the individual with a disability should not assume that third-party organizations providing personal assistance services have Worker's Compensation Insurance coverage. The individual and the counselor should ask to see a copy of the certificate of coverage.

- *Customers as Employers*

Individuals who pay a personal assistant directly are considered employers regardless of the source of the funds.

Counselors shall discuss the individual's obligations as an employer and, in collaboration with the individual, arrange for training or other assistance as needed. Counselors should not calculate the individual's tax liabilities or prepare tax forms related to the individual's use of personal assistance services. (See Policy and Procedures 9075 for information on use of Independent Contractors.)

- *Personal Assistance After Case Closure*

MRS may not provide personal assistance services after case closure. The individual and the counselor shall work collaboratively to identify sources of comparable benefits and plan for ongoing personal assistance services after case closure. Counselors may need to take an active role in helping individuals become eligible for personal assistance services through Medicaid, as applicable. Additional information about Personal Assistance Services can be obtained at:

<http://www.copower.org/pasbook/pasb4.htm>.

Information:

Personal Assistance Services are federally defined as “a range of services provided by one or more persons designed to assist individual with a disability to perform daily living activities on or off the job that the individual would typically perform without assistance if the individual did not have a disability. The services must be designed to increase the individual’s control in life and ability to perform every day activities on or off the job. The services must be necessary to the achievement of an employment outcome and may be provided only while the individual is receiving other vocational rehabilitation services. The services may include training in managing, supervising, and directing personal assistance services.”

Personal Assistance Services Services

Examples of PAS that may be needed to facilitate other IPE services are assistance with toileting, dressing, meal preparation, eating, housekeeping, shopping, or laundry, or at the job site to accomplish such tasks as transporting, toileting, eating, positioning, etc. Personal assistance services may also be used to help an individual accomplish cognitive and affective activities. Examples of cognitive applications include assistance with time management, scheduling, learning travel routes and creating job aids to remember certain tasks.

Job Placement Services

Rev. 1/1996

Policy:

Job placement services may be provided directly, arranged, or purchased. Counselors shall ensure that clients are job ready and prepared to participate in job seeking activities when obtaining employment is part of an IPE.

Procedure:

Job seeking skills preparation includes teaching clients job-seeking techniques and preparing them to complete applications and interview successfully. Appropriate dress and behavior may need to be reviewed. Clients shall also be assisted in developing positive responses to questions about their work history, education, ability to perform the job and needed accommodation(s).

In the context of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Michigan Disability Civil Rights Act (PA-220), the following steps shall be taken to prepare clients for job interviews:

- The client and counselor shall define mutual roles and responsibilities. If the counselor will intervene with the employer on behalf of the client, the information that will be disclosed to the employer and the reason why shall be discussed with the client. If the counselor anticipates disclosing more than information regarding the client's ability to perform the job, the informed, written consent of the client shall be obtained. Generally, however, copies of medical, psychological or evaluation records are not given to employers, even with the client's permission, since under ADA these records cannot be used in applicant selection or included in the client's personnel file.
- When employment accommodations are anticipated, the client shall be provided an orientation to both laws either verbally, via videotape, or through written materials. A discussion of the client's responsibility to provide the employer with a written request stating the need for accommodation "within 182 days after the date the handicapper knew or reasonably should have known that an accommodation was needed" (P.A. 220, Section 210 (18)) shall be discussed. This notice may be filed at the time of application or hire.
- Clients shall be prepared to describe not only their skills and abilities, and how they could perform the job with or without needed accommodation. If clients will be interviewing independently, they should be able to describe the role the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) counselor might play in planning and/or providing accommodation services.

Clients shall not be referred to jobs where they may present a direct threat to the health or safety of others. Some behavior or other functional limitations associated with the client's disability may be demonstrated by a loss of consciousness which cannot be anticipated (as a result of diabetes or some forms of epilepsy), abusive sexual behavior, or physically violent behavior.

Job Placement Services

The ADA provides criteria for assessing "direct threat." The Regulations state, "an employer may require...that an individual not pose a direct threat to the health or safety of himself/herself or others." The Act defines "direct threat" in terms of a "high probability of substantial harm." In assessing direct threat, four factors must be evaluated: using objective and factual information regarding the duration of the risk; the nature and severity of the potential harm; the likelihood that the potential harm will occur, and the imminence of the potential harm. The Regulations stress the importance of not relying on stereotypes or assumptions in assessing a "direct threat."

The counselor and client shall consider whether accommodations will substantially reduce the threat, and, if so, the behaviors, reasons for disclosure, and accommodation options should be discussed with the client; and the client's informed, written consent to release information about the behaviors to the employer obtained.

For example, if the MRS counselor has information about a history of aggressive physical behavior, the counselor should inform the employer of this history -- with the client's informed, written consent. The counselor shall also ensure that the employer has access to information about situations that might trigger the behaviors/disability that could pose a direct threat, and information about how to cope with such behavior if it occurs.

Placement services may be purchased from accredited rehabilitation organizations, qualified individuals with knowledge and experience in providing placement services, or licensed personnel agencies. Before authorizing for placement services, there should be a written agreement with the vendor which specifies the:

- Name of the individual(s) being served;
- Type of job being sought;
- Method(s) of employer contact (e.g., by telephone, in person);
- Period of time during which the job search activities will be carried out;
- Method(s) of addressing accommodation and release of information issues;
- Frequency, duration, and method of employment follow-up;
- Fee to be paid;
- Payment schedule;
- Method, frequency, and content of progress reports to the counselor; and

Job Placement Services

- The vendor's responsibilities to comply with Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Michigan Disability Civil Rights Act (P.A. 220).

When placement services are purchased, counselors shall inform vendors they are prohibited from releasing information regarding the client's disability, limitations, or any disability related information to an employer, as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Authorizations for placement services may be written on the basis of performance outcomes with multiple billings. For example, the vendor might be paid 25% of the fee when the service is initiated (the job seeking phase), 25% of the fee at the time the client is placed on the job (job placement phase), and the remaining 50% of the fee when the client has maintained the job for a specified number of days (a follow-up phase). If a single billing option is chosen, the vendor should be paid only after the client has maintained the job for the period specified in the agreement.

If placement services are arranged or purchased, the counselor and the client should determine that the resulting employment is suitable; accommodation needs are addressed; tools, equipment, transportation, and other services in support of placement are identified and the need(s) addressed; and employer issues, including disability awareness training, ADA concerns, and any certifications are addressed.

Under Public Act 299, private personnel agencies which charge a fee to the person seeking employment (Type A agencies that assist a client seeking employment services, and put a client in direct contact with employers, or Type B agencies that aid or consult with a client to make basic career decisions, including counseling services) must be licensed. Agencies which only charge fees to the employer or charge no fee, and temporary placement agencies, are not required to be licensed. To determine whether an agency's licensed, the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Bureau of Professional Licensing may be contacted at 517-373-8068 for licensure information. Licensure can be verified through the State License Search website at <http://www.michigan.gov/statelicensesearch>.

Increasing numbers of employers lease or contract for employees through employment agencies. Such employment shall be evaluated in terms of suitability and permanency. Employee leasing agreements generally provide for more permanent employment. Regular, intermittent employment through a temporary agency may meet the client's definition of suitability and may afford the opportunity for flexible scheduling. The determination as to whether such employment is suitable rests with the client.

Counselors shall ensure that clients with heart, back, epilepsy or diabetes have a current Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certificate before initiating placement activities.

Prostheses and Orthoses Services

Policy:

Prostheses and/or orthoses may be arranged for or purchased as part of a Trial Work Experience Plan or IPE leading to employment.

Procedure:

A prescription by an orthopedic specialist or physiatrist shall be obtained for new wearers; the treating physician may prescribe prostheses or orthoses for previous wearers.

Comparable benefits such as Medicaid, Medicare or private insurance shall be thoroughly explored and (if available) used before authorizing for prostheses or orthoses.

Persons who have successfully worn a prosthesis or orthosis and require replacement or repair may not need a current orthopedic or physiatric examination, unless problems have been experienced or the condition is not stable.

A current evaluation by an internist or treating physician to determine that there have been no exacerbations of the physical condition is important for individuals with amputation resulting from diabetes.

New prosthetic wearers shall be referred to medical rehabilitation centers or amputee clinics when practical in order to benefit from the availability of the most recent technology and multi-disciplinary teams. If the client has a satisfactory relationship with a prosthetist, that relationship should be maintained whenever possible.

Information:

New wearers may require several visits for adjustment of the appliance. There is generally no charge for routine adjustments during the first few months. If there are significant physical changes which require major alterations, a charge may be made. Upper extremity amputees will require considerable training in the use of their prosthesis which is usually provided by occupational therapists. Training in the use of a lower-extremity prosthesis is sometimes called gait training and is usually provided by physical therapists.

Relocation Expenses Services

Policy:

The cost to permanently relocate clients may be authorized or arranged when required to achieve an IPE employment outcome.

Procedure:

Prior to assisting an individual in relocation for employment, local options for employment must be reasonably exhausted. Relocation expenses are limited to the cost of moving and insuring household goods, and transportation and subsistence expenses required as part of the move.

Three estimates are required for out-of-state moves, since these are not regulated. Within city limits, small local moving companies are not regulated and rates may be competitive. Three estimates shall, therefore, be obtained for local moves.

In addition to the basic charge for moving, there are additional charges which may be added for such items as stairs, long walkways, moving large items such as a piano, packing and packaging, disconnecting appliances, and removing draperies. These possible extra charges should be considered when planning the move. The time of the move should be carefully planned. Additional charges can be levied for moves during peak periods and on weekends. Some saving may be experienced by moving between the 3rd and 25th day of each month.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) shall not support moves outside the continental United States.

Information:

The transportation of household goods within Michigan is regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission. The Commission publishes a tariff which contains the rates, charges, rules and regulations which apply to all carriers.

Counselors shall be aware that various types of insurance coverage are available through the movers. The coverage ranges from full-value replacement (more costly) to depreciation only.

Services to Family Members Services

Policy:

Services to family members may be arranged or authorized when essential to the achievement of an employment outcome of the client.

Procedure:

Comparable community benefits and services must be explored and used, as applicable, before services to family members may be purchased.

Information:

Family member includes any relative by blood or marriage. It also includes individuals living within the same household, where close interpersonal relationships between the individual(s) and the client characterize a family unit.

Task Analysis Services

Policy:

Task analysis services may be provided, purchased or arranged.

Procedure:

Task analysis services shall be purchased from occupational or physical therapists, job coaches, rehabilitation engineers, or other rehabilitation professionals trained in the process.

When task analysis services are purchased or arranged, the counselor shall ensure that the individual completing the task analysis has been provided with information on the client's capabilities and limitations and any description of the activities or job to be analyzed.

The counselor, client, and vendor shall ensure that the task analysis and accommodation process has been described to the employer, teacher, or others who will be involved; and that any health or safety requirements imposed by the site (e.g., requirements of a union contract) have been identified.

Information:

Task analysis is a systematic method of identifying and evaluating job or task requirements and comparing these to human capabilities. The process can be applied in home, training, and work settings. Cognitive and affective, as well as physical requirements can be evaluated. The task analysis process may vary in complexity from a gross assessment based on a written job description to a detailed time and motion study. A more detailed task analysis may be necessary if the client is severely disabled or the task is complex.

Counselor participation in an initial site visit is an important pre-requisite to being able to evaluate the completed task analysis, and coordinate and implement task analysis results. Medical records, specialty examinations and information contained on the Physical Capacities Assessment form may not be adequate for comparison with a completed task analysis. More specific information is often needed to determine whether the client has capacities congruent with task demands. A work capacity evaluation, using simulated or real work, may be necessary. Michigan Rehabilitation Services' (MRS) task analysis forms may be used to report the findings of the task analysis.

Forms:

Forms related to this manual item are the RA-2435 A, B, and C - Task Analysis and the RA-4683 – Physical Capacities Assessment.

Telephone Devices for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services

Policy:

Teletype (TTY) devices may be purchased or arranged when necessary to achieve an IPE employment outcome.

Procedure:

The counselor shall plan carefully with the client to determine the features that will be needed before providing this service. Consider whether the TTY can be repaired locally, or must be shipped back to the company for repair. A device that can be repaired locally may be less expensive over time.

Clients who could benefit by the system shall be provided with information about the Michigan Relay Center at 800-649-3777. The Michigan Relay Center can also be reached by dialing 711 or through the Internet. Individuals who have TTY's can make or receive calls from parties who do not have TTY's by calling a relay operator at the center. Calls placed through the center, whether local, zone, or long distance, are billed as though the party had been dialed directly.

Information:

A variety of options are available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, including large print TTY's in-line amplifiers, amplified phones, and computer modems. For information on current telephone and TTY technology, the Job Accommodation Network may be contacted at 1-800-526-7234 (V/TTY). A listing of companies, products, and prices can be obtained from the Department of Civil Rights, Division of Deaf and Hard of Hearing at 877-499-6232 or 517-334-8000.

Policy:

Training is provided only after vocational assessment results in a mutual decision that the client requires new skills or knowledge for employment, consistent with the individual's abilities and capabilities.

Procedure:

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) contribution to training, including college training, shall not exceed the cost of that training program which meets the individual's rehabilitation needs at least cost to MRS.

Prior to deciding whether training is required, the counselor and the client shall consider the following:

- The use of transferable skills to achieve suitable employment immediately;
- Job modification or assistive technology to enable the client to return to previous employment, or retain current employment; and
- Physical restoration to enable a return to previous employment

Training is not considered a required service when the individual has marketable job skills consistent with the individual's abilities and capabilities.

Vocational training may be provided only to eligible individuals who have a permanent functional impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment which cannot be removed through physical or mental restoration.

Training – College and Vocational Services

Policy:

1. College or vocational training may be provided as an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) related service when an eligible individual requires new knowledge and skills to achieve an employment goal consistent with the individual's abilities, capabilities, and informed choice.
2. Eligible individuals shall make maximum effort to secure grant assistance in whole or in part from other sources to pay for post-secondary training. Counselors shall inform individuals considering post-secondary education that they must make timely annual application for post-secondary financial aid.
3. Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) shall not provide financial assistance for any item covered in the cost of attendance if the individual (or individual's family as applicable) fails to apply for or refuses to accept federal, state, institutional and other grants; need based scholarships; or tuition waivers for which they may be eligible.
4. Financial support for college or vocational training shall be consistent with MRS' policy of purchasing the service that meets the individual's vocational rehabilitation needs at least cost to MRS.
5. MRS shall impose an economic needs test for the student's cost of attendance (COA) of training at a post-secondary educational institution. The economic needs test utilized shall be the federally established needs test using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or its equivalent, as required by the post-secondary institution, to determine student eligibility for state and federal financial aid.
6. MRS shall not replace the expected family contribution, as determined by the post-secondary institution, using the federal Student Aid Report, in contributing toward the individual's cost of attendance at a post-secondary institution.
7. Individuals who are eligible for Social Security benefits under Title II (SSDI) and Title XVI (SSI) of the Social Security Act shall be exempted from financial need test requirements consistent with Federal regulations.
8. MRS assistance with the cost of attendance, combined with other financial resources, shall not exceed the individual's unmet financial need based on the cost of attending the least costly training institution that meets the individual's vocational rehabilitation need.
9. Maximum financial support that may be provided by MRS toward the cost of college or vocational training during the academic year shall be \$3500 and \$1200 for the summer semester. An exception to the maximum may be considered only when other forms of student aid are ruled out due to disability related factors but not to exceed the rate of

Training – College and Vocational Services

program that is least costly to MRS while meeting the individual's vocational rehabilitation need.

10. MRS customers attending Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) are exempt from needs testing for the cost of attendance.

Procedure:

1. **Accredited Institutions.** MRS financial support for college, vocational business or technical training shall be limited to participation in nationally or regionally accredited, or state licensed institutions. The counselor shall have reasonable assurance that a diploma, certificate or degree received from a training program is readily accepted by employers in the field of the individual's employment goal before approving an IPE that includes such post-secondary training.
2. **Ability to benefit.** The individual's ability to benefit from post-secondary training in terms of an employment outcome shall be determined as part of the individual's vocational rehabilitation needs assessment. MRS shall not support attendance in a post-secondary program for which the individual does not meet the published entrance requirements.
3. **Trial Semester.** MRS may, at its discretion, provide financial support to an individual in one trial term or semester with at least one subject in the individual's chosen major if there is doubt about the individual's ability to succeed in post-secondary training. Additional trial terms or semesters may not be supported with MRS funds. A semester or term of developmental or remedial study shall not count as a trial semester.
4. **Developmental Academic or Remedial Study.** MRS may provide financial support for one semester of non-credit developmental or remedial study. MRS may not pay for developmental or remedial study if available at no cost through post-secondary institutions or other public resources.
5. **Academic Progress.** Continued MRS financial participation in post-secondary training services is contingent on the individual meeting evaluation criteria noted in the IPE. This includes a) maintaining a "C" Average, (2.0 on a 4.0 point scale) or higher as required by the school or specific program the individual is attending, or a comparable passing grade, and, b) the submission of the individual's grade reports to the counselor upon completion of each semester or term.
6. **Full Time Enrollment.** The expectation is that students will attend training on a full time basis, as defined by the institution. Exceptions to full time study may be made based on documented medical or family care circumstances. Because most state and federal financial aid programs are based on a minimum of half time enrollment, MRS will generally not support training at a less than half-time enrollment status.

Training – College and Vocational Services

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7. **Duration of Training Support.** MRS financial support for post-secondary training is usually limited to one year beyond the normal period for full time matriculation identified by the institution. An extension beyond that period may be granted by the counselor due to an individual's disability or special circumstances, and requires an IPE amendment. MRS financial support generally shall not exceed 64 credit hours for an Associate of Arts degree, or 128 credit hours for a bachelor's degree.
 8. **Payment for Electives.** The counselor should be familiar with the student's curriculum or have a copy of curriculum requirements in the case record. MRS shall not pay for electives beyond those needed to complete an individual's curriculum. When there is a question as to whether a class is required to complete a curriculum that is needed to achieve the IPE outcome, the counselor may require written verification from the post-secondary institution.
 9. **Licensed Occupations.** The counselor shall discuss occupational licensing barriers, such as a criminal record, with the individual as part of IPE planning, and when possible assist the individual in overcoming such barriers. The counselor shall not support training in a field that requires licensing unless there is reasonable assurance that licensing can be secured.
 10. **Graduate, professional, or second-degree training.** Such training may be authorized or arranged if the individual cannot achieve employment consistent with the individual's abilities and capabilities without such training, and transferable job skills are not available due to substantial limitations imposed by a disability for which reasonable accommodation is not possible.
 11. **Summer School.** Summer school support is limited to circumstances in which the student is unable to work due to disability, has SSA disability status or requires a particular class that is only offered in the summer or is needed for timely program completion.
 12. **Transferability of Classes.** Counselors of students who elect to attend community college during the freshman and sophomore year should pay special attention to the transferability of classes to four-year institutions to avoid needless duplication of classes.
 13. **Orientation and Vestibule Programs.** A financial needs analysis is not required to cover the cost of short-term programs, summer orientation or vestibule programs, which are required but do not provide academic credit and do not qualify for financial aid.
 14. **Student Loans.** Student loans may be encouraged as a part of the student's contribution to their own training. However, students may not be compelled to take student loans for the student's unmet need at the rate of the least costly post-secondary program up to MRS' maximum contribution, whichever is less.
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Training – College and Vocational Services

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15. **Workers' Disability Compensation settlements.** MRS shall not replace insurance benefits received, in whole or in part, as a settlement of liability for vocational rehabilitation services, in contributing toward the cost of attendance at a post-secondary institution. This means that such targeted settlement dollars must be used before MRS dollars are used, unless it can be demonstrated that such settlement dollars are no longer available.
 16. **Late Applications.** The counselor may not authorize for any COA before the results of the application for financial aid are known. The counselor may approve an authorization for the first term to allow the individual's enrollment if the case record documents that the individual applied for aid no later than 60 days prior to the beginning date of the school term and if an IPE that includes college training has been completed. The counselor must subsequently adjust the total amount authorized for the academic year so it does not result in an over-award or exceed the maximum MRS allowable contribution. Adjustments may be made to the current term authorization or authorizations for subsequent terms as appropriate.
 17. **Financial Support Basis.** The extent of MRS' financial support for training, whether in-state or out-of-state, public or private, shall be conditioned on MRS' least-cost purchasing requirements, per Policy 9025 in combination with the college financial aid needs analysis. This means that, if a training program is available that meets the individual's vocational rehabilitation needs at a lesser cost to MRS than the program selected by the individual, MRS' support shall not exceed the less costly training program to MRS after application of the financial needs test.

In general, for the first two years of college through an associates degree or equivalent, MRS' post-secondary financial support will be based on financial support needed for attendance at a Michigan community college near to the student's home. For the Junior year and beyond, support for additional training will be based on the cost of attendance at the nearest public college or university program in Michigan, after a consideration of the financial needs test to such cost of attendance.

MRS support of unmet financial need shall not exceed \$3500 per academic year and \$1200 for the summer semester, except for SSI or SSDI beneficiaries or as noted in the Procedure on Loan Replacement. This amount is to be divided equally among the number of terms or semesters comprising the academic year.

18. **Coordination of Financial Aid.** Financial aid available through the school, student/family contribution, and MRS assistance shall be coordinated as follows:
 - A. A Statement of Financial Needs, Resources and Authorization (RA-6627) shall be sent to the financial aid office of the schools the individual will be considering, including the least costly alternative when possible, to obtain reports of the student's EFC, the financial aid awarded, and any remaining financial need.

Training – College and Vocational Services

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- B. The expected student/family contribution (EFC) and financial grant aid must be used as the primary sources to meet the student's COA.
 - C. If financial aid and student/family contributions are inadequate to meet the individual's COA at the least costly educational program that meets the individual's vocational rehabilitation need, and the individual cannot attend school without additional assistance, MRS may assist with the remaining unmet financial need up to \$3500, or up to \$1200 for the summer semester. This unmet need figure is the maximum of MRS' support, but not to exceed \$3500 and/or \$1200 for the summer semester, regardless of the educational institution selected. Counselors should consider special institutional financial aid awards provided by the student's preferred school, which may result in the lower unmet need for the student and make it the least costly training alternative to MRS.
 - D. The counselor may assist with all or part of the remaining unmet need up to \$3500 per academic year for college or university training, \$3500 per academic year for private vocational school training and up to \$1200 for the summer semester or term, or up to \$391 per month for vocational schools which operate on a monthly basis. See Procedure 19 for exceptions to the maximum for disability related reasons.
 - E. Assistance to individuals who begin school after the first term or semester shall be pro-rated. Individuals attending one-third, one half, or two-thirds, of the academic year shall be provided a pro rated percent of the maximum academic year assistance. (Example: A student attends only one half of the academic year. The maximum MRS contribution is. $\frac{1}{2}$ of \$3500.00= \$1750, or $\frac{1}{2}$ of unmet need, whichever is less.)
 - F. Individuals who meet the criteria for MRS support of summer programs (as defined by the educational institution) must apply for financial aid for the summer term 60 days in advance of the term. They may be provided up to \$1200 for full time attendance during the summer session if there is any unmet need, prorated at a proportional amount for part time attendance. (Example: if 10 credit hours constitutes a full time summer school load, and the student takes 4 credit hours, the maximum amount of MRS support would be \$480 or less depending on unmet need).
19. **Substitution of student loan and work-study awards.** In addition to assistance with unmet financial need up to \$3500, MRS funds may be substituted for the following financial aid awards if the case record documents that:
-

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A. College Work-Study:

- (1) the individual cannot work while attending school full-time due to limitations imposed by his/her disability, or the time required for medical treatment;
- (2) student jobs are not available as verified by an appropriate school official;
- (3) the individual is receiving SSI or SSDI benefits (work would jeopardize benefits or would be counted toward the trial work period for SSDI recipients);
- (4) childcare responsibilities or the need to travel long distances to school leave the individual inadequate time to attend school full-time and also work.

If the counselor intends to replace work study for any of the reasons noted above, the counselor should check the appropriate box on Form RA-6627.

- B. Loans: The individual will have exceptionally high personal attendant or medical expenses due to disability after graduation which will make loan repayment difficult. Under these circumstances loan substitution may be made up to \$2500 per year or up to the amount required to attend the least cost comparable program in the state, whichever is less. If the counselor intends to substitute for a loan for the above reason, the counselor should check the appropriate box in Part II of the RA-6627.

20. **Ineligibility for financial aid under the Higher Education Act.** MRS may not authorize for training support for individuals who are ineligible to receive or apply for post-secondary federal financial aid. Reasons for ineligibility for federal financial aid include: a) the individual owes a grant refund and has no documentation of having made satisfactory arrangements for repayment; b) the individual is in default of a federal or state student loan, and has no documentation of having made good faith repayment arrangements from the lender or school, or of no longer being in default status; c) the individual is convicted of a state and federal offense involving possession or sale of illegal drugs, and has not re-established eligibility as required by federal financial aid regulations (34 CFR 668.40); d) or the individual has not registered for the selective service system. Such individuals are considered to not have made a maximum effort to secure post-secondary federal or state grants or tuition waivers, and may not receive training funds from MRS. Counselors should assist such individuals, as appropriate, to help them regain financial aid eligibility.
21. **Disability Related Expenses.** Personal disability-related services may be authorized or arranged without regard for financial need. Such services include personal assistance

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services needed for classroom attendance, individually prescribed equipment like hearing aids, and non-routine medical expenses.

Personal disability-related services do not include classroom and learning accommodations, auxiliary aids and services that are the responsibility of the post-secondary institution.

22. **Notification of MRS Assistance.** Individuals and the post-secondary institution shall be notified in writing of the type and amount of assistance MRS will provide for institutional budget expenses, or that MRS will not be assisting with such expenses and the reason. The RA-5, “Notice of MRS Post-secondary Training Assistance”, may be used for this purpose.
23. **Out-of-State or Private Facilities.** Out-of-state or in-state private training facilities may be used, but financial aid may not exceed that which would be required for the least cost public in-state facility, unless there is compelling evidence that the out-of-state facility is the only option that meets the individual’s vocational rehabilitation need. If financial aid staff of out-of-state training facilities are not able or willing to complete Form RA-6627, they must be asked to prepare a letter stating:
 1. The applicable academic-related costs (tuition, fees, books, room and board, etc.) for the individual,
 2. Expected family contribution,
 3. Amount of Pell grant and other financial aid awards, and
 4. Balance of financial need, if any.
24. **Training Outside of the United States.** Training at an institution outside of the United States will not be funded unless it is part of an approved course of study for an in-state institution. If the home educational institution requires out-of-country instruction as part of the individual’s program, MRS may support it at the same rate as if the program were provided at the student’s home educational institution.
25. **Gallaudet University and Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)/National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID).** MRS support may be provided to these out-of-state facilities if required to meet the unique VR needs of certain deaf or hard of hearing students.

To determine MRS assistance for individuals attending RIT/NTID the RA-6627 shall be sent to the financial aid office, as described in Procedure 19. To determine MRS assistance for individuals attending Gallaudet College:

 1. The Gallaudet student will be required to complete two applications every year in order to determine eligibility for federal and institutional aid programs: (a) the FAFSA and (b) the Institutional Financial Aid Application (IFAA). After financial aid has received

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both FAFSA and IFAA, a determination of eligibility for grants and scholarships will be made.

2. MRS counselor contact information must be provided on the IFAA. The student's eligibility for grants and scholarships will be sent via e-mail.
3. FAFSA and IFAA forms must be completed by the Gallaudet student:
 - No later than July 1st, if enrolling in Fall semester
 - No later than January 16th, if enrolling in Spring semester
4. The counselor must advise the individual not to apply for student loans until after it has been determined whether s/he qualifies for institutional aid programs from the school.

26. Processing Payment.

1. Payment may be made for courses dropped by an individual for a good cause. The school should be paid in accordance with its published policy.
 - a. The case record shall document the action to be taken by the individual to make up the dropped course. If the individual fails to follow through with the agreed upon action, the counselor may, if providing tuition assistance:
 - 1) reduce financial participation for the following term in the amount of the non-refundable balance for the dropped class(es), or
 - 2) refuse to pay for the dropped class if the individual takes it again at a later date.

27. **Refunds.** When MRS funds are not needed by an educational institution due to subsequent replacement by college grants, need based scholarships, or dropped classes, the counselor shall notify the institution that these funds are to be returned to MRS, not to the individual or to offset the student's loan balance. If MRS funds are reimbursed to the individual or credited to a loan balance, an equal amount will be counted against the student's financial support from MRS for the following semester.

Information:

I. Definitions

- A. The Cost of Attendance: The total amount it will cost a student to go to school in a year. This may include tuition and fees; on campus room and board, required books, supplies, materials, tools and equipment; transportation; loan fees and some

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miscellaneous expenses. Four-year schools will generally include all items in student budgets; two-year and vocational schools may not. Most schools also have different budgets for differing individual situations. Budgets are revised yearly. The amount of the student budget and the items covered are reported by financial aid officers on Form RA-6627.

Note: MRS may only assist with costs to the student that represent added costs of the vocational rehabilitation program. When student budgets include costs that are not “added costs of training,” such as housing for students who commute, the counselor should subtract that amount from the institution’s COA. Items included in institutional budgets are sometimes described as “direct educational costs”. Items that are not included in the institutional budget may be authorized or arranged according to the policies and procedures stated in appropriate Rehabilitation Services Manual Items.

B. Independent Students are those students who:

1. are at least 24 years old by January 1 of the award year;
2. are Veterans, regardless of age;
3. are orphans or wards of the court;
4. have legal dependents that receive more than half of their support from the student;
5. are married; or
6. are enrolled in a master’s or doctoral program.

Students may also be considered self-supporting if they are determined to be so by financial aid administrators exercising professional judgment on the basis of unusual circumstances not covered by any of the statutory criteria.

C. Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is the portion families will be expected to contribute toward the expenses of a student if the financial need analysis indicates that they are able. The amount of the family contribution expected will be based on current income and assets according to congressional methodology. Dependent students may also be expected to contribute based on their income and assets, including expected savings from summer earnings.

For the independent student, the amount of contribution expected is based on the student's (and spouse, if any) taxed and untaxed income and assets, including expected savings from summer earnings.

D. Student Financial Need is the figure that represents the difference between the COA and the expected student/parent contribution. School financial aid is packaged against this figure.

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- E. Remaining Unmet Need is the figure that represents the difference between the student's financial need and all resources provided by the school.
- F. Academic Year, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education, is: the equivalent of 2 semesters, 2 trimesters, or 3 quarters (terms) at an institution which uses credit hours; 900 clock hours at an institution which uses clock hours; or 18 months for a correspondence program.
- G. "Meets the individual's vocational rehabilitation need" means, in terms of a post-secondary training program or institution, that the program has a curriculum that leads to, or is consistent with the student's employment goal, and is accessible to the student under Sec. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- H. "Disability related factors" (as relates to receipt of financial aid above MRS maximums) means that the individual will have exceptionally high personal attendant or medical expenses due to disability after graduation which will make loan repayment difficult, or that work study and other work to support college expenses is precluded due to disability or social security disability status.

II. Post-Secondary Financial Aid and Public Assistance

- A. Educational Income-All Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Programs.^{*} Educational income such as grants, loans, work-study, scholarships, assistantships and fellowships for education is excluded as income and as an asset by DHS. (Note: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients are required to be employed to remain eligible for their TANF benefit. Only 12 months of training is available at this time as a qualifying work activity.)
- B. Rehabilitation Services Payments-All Programs.^{*} Payments from Michigan Rehabilitation Services are excluded. They are reimbursements.
- C. SSDI and SSI Benefits. Grants, regardless of the amount, have no affect on SSDI. Grant funds, which exceed tuition, fees and books, are considered unearned income for SSI recipients, so SSI benefits are reduced by that amount. Loans do not affect SSDI or SSI benefits. College work-study awards are considered employment, so they may affect both SSDI and SSI benefits. To determine how college work-study is treated in each situation, the student should contact the local Social Security Office.
- D. Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS). Food Assistance Program (FAP) only: Income being diverted to a PASS is excluded as income and as an asset.

All other Programs

PASS set aside is considered earnings or unearned income.

* All Programs includes: Family Independence Program (FIP); State Disability Assistance (SDA); Child Development and Care (CDC); Food Assistance Program (FAP); Medical Assistance (MA) also known as Medicaid (i.e., Medicaid for individuals receiving FIP or Supplemental Security Income, Adult Medical Program (AMP), Transitional Medical Assistance Plus (TMA-Plus))

III. Financial Aid Process

Federal Student Aid

Federal student aid is financial help for students enrolled in eligible programs at participating schools to cover school expenses, including tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, and transportation. A “school” could be a two-year or four-year public or private educational institution, a career school, or a trade school. Most federal aid is need-based. The three most common types of aid are grants, loans, and work-study.

Grants: Grants are financial aid that does not have to be repaid. Generally, grants are for undergraduate students, and the grant amount is based on need, cost of attendance, and enrollment status. Federal Pell Grants range from approximately \$577 to \$5,700. Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG) range from \$100 to \$4,000.

Loans: Loans are borrowed money that must be repaid with interest. Both undergraduate and graduate students may borrow money. Parents may also borrow to pay education expenses for dependent undergraduate students. Maximum loan amounts depend on the student’s year in school.

Federal Stafford Loans are made to students, and Federal PLUS Loans are made to parents through two loan programs.

William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (Direct Loan) Program: eligible students and parents borrow directly from the federal government at participating schools. Direct Loans include Direct Stafford Loans, Direct PLUS Loans, and Direct Consolidation Loans.

Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program: private lenders provide federally guaranteed funds. FFELs include FFEL Stafford Loans, FFEL PLUS Loans, and FFEL Consolidation Loans.

Federal Perkins Loans are offered by participating schools to provide low-interest loans to students that demonstrate the most need.

Work Study: Work Study enables students to earn money for education expenses while enrolled in school.

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Not all schools participate in all of the Federal Student Aid (FSA) programs. Students should ask the school's financial aid administrator which programs are available.

Who gets federal student aid?

Some of the requirements to receive aid from the U.S. Department of Education's FSA programs are that students must:

- Be studying to earn the first graduate degree.
- Be a citizen of the United States or an eligible non-citizen with a valid Social Security Number.
- Not have a criminal record including drug related offenses.
- Must have graduated from the high school level, completed a GED, or completed a home school program approved by the State of Michigan.
- Academic progress must satisfy the norms of the school.
- A male in the age range of 18 to 25, must be registered with the Selective Service.
- Pell Grant eligibility will not be granted if an individual has ever defaulted on any federal grant or received a Pell Grant in the past or any other full scholarship for the current course.

How do students apply for federal student aid?

The first step is to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA lists deadlines for federal and state aid. Schools and states may have different deadlines for aid. Students may apply online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. If Internet access is not available, students can get a paper FAFSA from a high school guidance office, a college financial aid office, a local public library, or the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1- 800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433- 3243). Review the Student Aid Report (SAR). One to four weeks after students submit their FAFSA, they will be sent a SAR, either by an e-mailed link or on paper. The SAR confirms the information reported on the FAFSA and will tell the student their Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The financial aid administrator will use the EFC to determine the amount of federal student aid for which the student may qualify.

The student should contact the school(s) he/she might attend and talk with the financial aid administrator(s). They will review the SAR and prepare a letter outlining the amount of aid (from all sources) that their school will offer.

The U.S. Department of Education web site at www.studentaid.ed.gov contains additional detailed information on Federal Financial Aid.

State of Michigan Student Aid

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Scholarships: A scholarship is money for college and it does not have to be paid back. Scholarships are usually based on "merit", meaning they are given because of a student's particular skill or ability. For some of the state programs, financial need is also a factor in determining award eligibility. The Michigan Competitive Scholarship is based on both financial need and merit and is available for use at Michigan public and private post-secondary colleges.

Work Study: Work-study programs give students a source of money for college; however, the student has to work to earn the money. Most often work-study jobs allow students to work on their college or university campus. The Michigan Work-Study Undergraduate and Graduate Programs provide work opportunities to help needy students pay educational expenses.

Loans: Money can be borrowed to pay for college expenses and there are low-interest loans available for students and parents. Funds borrowed must be paid back. The MI-LOAN Program assists with the financing of a post-secondary education. Two loan programs include the Creditworthy Loan Program and the Credit Ready Loan Program.

Grants: Grants do not have to be repaid and are referred to as "gift" aid. Generally, grants are given to students based on their financial situation and need for the funds. The Michigan Educational Opportunity Grant is available for needy undergraduate students who enroll on at least a half-time basis at a Michigan public community college or university. The Michigan Tuition Grant is based on financial need for use at independent, non-profit degree-granting colleges and universities in Michigan. Awards are restricted to tuition and fees. Application for the Michigan Tuition Grant is made by filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Rewards and Incentives: Sometimes students can receive money for college by staying in school, getting good grades, or for good performance on certain types of tests. These programs reward students for good performance or staying in school. These include the Michigan Merit Award and the Tuition Incentive Program. The Michigan Merit Award is a merit-based program to reward student achievement as measured by the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests. The Tuition Incentive Program is a high school completion program that offers to pay for the first two years of college and beyond for identified students who graduate from high school or complete their GED before age 20.

Additional information regarding State of Michigan student aid may be found at the following web site: <http://www.michigan.gov/mistudentaid>.

IV. MISCELLANEOUS

- A. All schools in Michigan must be licensed to operate. Licensure of schools may be determined by contacting LARA - Post-Secondary Education at (517) 373-6551. To

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determine the licensure of out-of-state schools, counselors should contact the central administrative office of the state vocational rehabilitation agency of that state.

- B. High school students should consult their high school for assistance in completing financial aid applications.
- C. Form RA-4640, Monthly Training Progress Report, may be used to obtain progress reports from vocational schools that do not provide transcripts.
- D. Transportation allowances computed by financial aid offices are based on "averages." Financial aid offices should be contacted if actual costs exceed the estimates so adjustments may be made.

Forms and Job Aids:

The forms related to this manual item are:

- ✓ RA-4550 – Post-secondary Disability Services Referral
- ✓ RA-4640 – Monthly Training Progress Report
- ✓ RA-5 – Notice of Post-secondary Training Assistance
- ✓ RA-6627 – Statement of Financial Needs, Resources and Authorization

The Job Aid section of the manual contains the following job aids related to this manual item:

- ✓ 6625a-JA – College Training Policy
- ✓ 6625b-JA - Instructions for Completing Statement of Financial Needs, Resources and Authorization (RA-6627), Part B

Training – Distance Education Services

Rev. 4/2010

Policy:

Training by means of Distance Education may be authorized or arranged when required to achieve an appropriate Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) outcome under the following conditions.

1. The training needs of the individual cannot be met in a traditional classroom setting, and/or
2. The training is the most effective and efficient means of achieving the individual's job goal, taking into consideration the individual's ability to self-manage such training, learning capacity, learning style, physical or mental limitations, training needs and computer resources.

MRS financial support of post-secondary distance learning shall be consistent with Michigan Rehabilitation Services' (MRS) policy of purchasing the service that meets the individual's vocational needs at the least cost to MRS.

In conjunction with this manual item, as appropriate, policy and procedures contained in Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 6625, Training – College and Vocational, shall be applied.

Procedure:

Accreditation

MRS will only support distance training at institutions that are accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council or another accrediting body approved by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation. (www.chea.org; www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation; www.online-education.net)

Michigan proprietary schools offering distance education or training must be licensed by the State of Michigan and comply with all state and federal requirements applicable to such programs. (<http://www.michiganps.net/program.aspx>)

MRS may not authorize for correspondence courses in subjects such as heavy equipment operation, truck driving, etc. if practical experience is not provided.

Counseling Considerations

Before distance learning is approved, the individual and counselor must address the following counseling considerations.

1. Does the individual have the motivation, self reliance, social maturity, discipline and time to complete the coursework?

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2. Has the individual fully considered the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning? Although coursework in a distance learning class requires little or no travel and work can be done at home, there is little or no personal, face-to-face interaction with instructors or classmates.
3. Are the individual's learning styles consistent with the learning styles necessary for distance learning?

If it is determined that distance education is required to meet the individual's training needs, the following is a list of things that should be considered:

1. The individual's reading level.
2. The individual's learning style.
3. The level of peer interaction the individual needs.
4. The level of instructional support he/she may require.
5. Whether or not there are established expectations set by the training institution for completion of the on-line course or program. **
6. The advantages and disadvantages of distance training.
7. Whether or not there are additional supports the individual may need to successfully complete distance education coursework (i.e. rehabilitation technology).
8. If potential employers will recognize the distance education program or coursework the individual is considering.
9. The completion rate of the program at the school the individual is considering attending.

**In cases where the training institution has not set reasonable progress expectations for Distance Education coursework, and/or if those expectations are too vague, the counselor and eligible individual will need to assess what is reasonable and incorporate this into his/her IPE.

Computer Resources

Prior to approving distance training, the counselor must address the following computer technology needs.

1. Does the individual have the necessary computer and modem speeds?
2. Will the individual need audiovisual capabilities, a sound card, certain plug-ins, CD-ROM?
3. Is a specific browser recommended or needed?
4. Is specific software required for the program/course?

Explore comparable benefit.

1. Overall assessment of computer needs and what may need to be purchased.
2. Computer and software may be leased/rented or purchased as appropriate if no comparable benefits are available.

Training – Distance Education Services

If distance training is not required, but an option for the eligible individual, and is more costly including the equipment needs, then the MRS least cost principle is applied to MRS financial support, per Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 9025.

Information:

Definition:

Distance education, or Distance learning, is a field of education that focuses on the pedagogy (teaching), technology, and instructional systems design that aim to deliver education to students who are not physically “on site”. Rather than attending courses in person, teachers and students may communicate at times of their own choosing by exchanging printed or electronic media, or through technology that allows them to communicate in real time. Distance education courses that require a physical on site presence for any reason, including the taking of examinations is considered to be a hybrid or blended course or program.

Types of Distance Education:

1. Correspondence conducted through regular mail – means of training whereby the individual learns at home by independent study of coursework consisting of written materials and learning guides.
2. Tele-course/broadcast where content is delivered via radio or television.
3. Single short term virtual courses – used when a specific skill is needed and can be provided through an accredited distance.
4. On-line certification training program.
5. College courses.
6. On-line college campuses.
7. Continuing Educational Units – cannot be sponsored unless the individual has the necessary pre-requisite degree or certification to qualify for the coursework and it is determined that professional enhancement is necessary to meet the vocational goal.

Accreditation regulations define distance education as an “educational process that is characterized by the separation, in time or place, between instructor and student” that includes “courses offered principally through the use of...television, audio, or computer transmission, such as open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite transmission.....audio or computer conferencing.. video cassettes or disks..[or] correspondence.” All programs offered principally by one or more of these or similar means require evaluation and approval by an agency recognized for accreditation of distance education.

It is important to understand that not all accrediting agencies are recognized for accreditation of distance education. In 1998, Congress amended the Higher Education Act to require, for the first

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time, that the Secretary specify whether or not the scope of recognition granted to each accrediting agency recognized for Federal program purposes extended to accreditation of distance education programs.

Training – Driver Education Services

Policy:

Driver's training may be authorized or arranged when required to achieve employment outcome under an IPE.

Procedure:

Clients who require special equipment to operate a vehicle shall be referred to a medical rehabilitation center for driver evaluation and training; for example, University of Michigan Hospital, Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan, and Mary Free Bed in Grand Rapids.

Training – On-The-Job Services

Policy:

On-the-job training may be purchased or arranged to achieve an IPE employment outcome.

Procedure:

The counselor, client and employer shall agree on the specific operations or skills that will be learned and complete an RA-89, On-The-Job Training form, or a similar form to specify the skills to be learned and the employer's legal responsibilities in providing the training. Employers must provide Workers Compensation, Unemployment Insurance, Social Security and at least minimum wage except that Unemployment Insurance is not required for state and federal employees, state institutions of higher education, and religious or charitable organizations. Private non-profit organizations may elect not to take part in Social Security.

The training fee is usually based on a negotiated percentage of the entry wage. It may be calculated on a decreasing scale over the term of training based on the client's increasing productivity. When the client's skills reach a standard entry-level skill, the training is concluded.

On-the-job training may be supplemented by use of a job coach.

The counselor shall advise SSDI recipients that on-the-job training income is counted toward their 9-month trial work period.

Information:

On-the-job training allows the client to learn an occupation or skill under actual employment conditions while earning a wage. The counselor may utilize a third-party vendor to be the employer of record. The employer of record assumes the legal responsibilities for employment, usually for an additional administrative fee.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) reimbursement to an employer or employer of record constitutes a training fee for training services. MRS is prohibited from providing wage or salary in an OJT or OJE arrangement, or to promise to do so.

Forms:

Refer to Policy and Procedure 3275 – Vocational Needs Assessment for form RA-89 – On-The-Job Evaluation or Training Agreement.

Training – Tutorial Services

Policy:

Tutorial training may be provided under special circumstances for academic remediation or to develop technical or occupational skills needed to achieve an IPE employment goal.

Procedure:

When tutorial training is needed at the secondary or post-secondary level, the client shall be referred to the secondary or post-secondary training institution for such tutoring.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) shall not provide tutoring that is the responsibility of an educational institution under free appropriate public education (FAPE) or of a post-secondary institution under existing legislation and funding.

If the individual requires specialized training not available through the training institution, MRS may authorize academic tutoring provided the tutoring is not associated with the training facility.

Information:

Technical or occupational skill tutors should demonstrate proficiency in the area in which they tutor, and may be required to be licensed or certified as applicable.

Qualified academic tutors will usually have a bachelor's degree, with a major or minor in the area in which they tutor.

Forms:

Forms related to this manual item are the RA-4651 Application to Tutor and RA-4652 – Tutorial Time and Progress Report.

Training – Work Adjustment Services

Policy:

Work adjustment training may be provided as part of Trial Work Experience or as an IPE service.

Information:

Work adjustment training may be needed to assist individuals in acquiring personal habits, attitudes, and skills to function effectively on a job, develop or increase work tolerance prior to engaging in vocational training or employment, develop work habits and orient the client to the world of work, provide skills or techniques to compensate for losses due to disability, or assist in acquiring job-seeking skills and locating employment.

Work adjustment training may be provided by accredited community rehabilitation organizations, job coaches, and employers. When using employers to provide work adjustments services, the service is considered to be on-the-job training or work experience training.

Students and Youth with Disabilities Services

Policy:

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) may provide vocational rehabilitation services to eligible Students with a Disability and Youth with a Disability pursuant to an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) or in connection with the development of an IPE. An IPE shall be completed promptly for a Student with a Disability consistent with IPE requirements, but not later than the date of exit from the K-12 education system.

MRS may not purchase services that are the funding responsibility of Education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and are not mandated as part of a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

The definition of Student with a Disability and Youth with a Disability is as follows:

Student with a Disability:

- Age 14-26 at application **and**
- Enrolled in the K-12 education system including traditional public schools, intermediate school districts, private schools, charter schools (public school academies), alternative schools, schools for individuals with disabilities such as the Michigan School for the Deaf, 504 students, home-schooled students and students in education programs in correctional facilities.

Youth with a Disability:

- Age 14-24 at application **and**
- **Not** enrolled in the K-12 education system including traditional public schools, intermediate school districts, private schools, charter schools (public school academies), alternative schools, schools for individuals with disabilities such as the Michigan School for the Deaf, 504 students, home-schooled students and students in education programs in correctional facilities.

Counselors must identify youth at application as either a Student with a Disability or Youth with a Disability on the RA-2910 -- Application for Vocational and Employment Services and in AWARE on the Intake page (see 3050a-DD – Data Dictionary for AWARE -- Intake).

The Student with a Disability and Youth with a Disability definitions honor the intent of the Rehabilitation Act, which emphasizes transitioning from school to adult life. At the same time, it recognizes that Students with a Disability and Youth with a Disability have similarities and differences regarding service needs. Students with Disabilities are engaged in the K-12 education system and benefit from services and supports mandated by IDEA. Youth with a Disability have developmental needs related to their age but they no longer view themselves as a Student with a Disability, nor are they benefiting from the connection with a K-12 education system.

Students and Youth with Disabilities Services

Making the distinction between these two populations allows MRS to ensure that both groups have access to and receive the services most appropriate for their group.

Procedure:

The following are minimum casework standards for MRS service delivery to transition youth and young adults with disabilities.

Student with a Disability

1. Referral, Application and Eligibility Assessment

A Student with a Disability referred by a school for vocational rehabilitation services or who otherwise provides referral information to MRS are to be provided an orientation within 30 days of referral (see Rehabilitation Services Manual (RSM) Item 3000 – Referrals).

Examples of K-12 education referrals include: traditional public schools, intermediate school districts, private schools, charter schools (public school academies), alternative schools, schools for individuals with disabilities such as the Michigan School for the Deaf, 504 students, home-schooled students and students in education programs in correctional facilities.

Students and parents who attend an MRS group informational session are not considered referrals until they meet the requirements for referral noted in MRS referral policy (see RSM Item 3000 – Referrals).

Once the application process has been initiated, an eligibility and vocational needs assessment shall commence promptly, consistent with MRS policies. Minor students' parent or guardian must be involved at application and shall sign the application for services, unless refusal to sign occurs and is documented (see RSM Item 3050 – Application).

Documentation from a school, such as an Individualized Education Program (IEP), that certifies a student's disability and current eligibility for special education services, is sufficient to document that the student has a disability (physical or mental impairment that constitutes a substantial impediment to employment), but is not sufficient to presume eligibility for MRS services. To determine eligibility for services, the counselor must determine whether the student requires specific vocational rehabilitation services to achieve an employment outcome consistent with the student's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities and capabilities, taking into account the individual's interests and informed choice.

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Eligibility must be determined in a timely manner (see RSM Item 3200 – Determination of Eligibility and Priority Category).

Individuals who are entitled to SSI based on their disability (not the disability of a parent) are presumed to be eligible and, at a minimum, meet the federal criteria for "significantly disabled."

Extended assessment may be appropriate for any individual, including SSI recipients, when ability to benefit, due to the significance of disability, is in serious question. Extended assessments should be conducted in integrated settings to the maximum extent possible.

2. Assessment Documentation

The counselor must seek maximum available information from the school to determine eligibility and the student's vocational needs. Schools are required to conduct a comprehensive evaluation to determine a student's disability. Every three years thereafter, schools conduct a reevaluation using existing data to determine a student's continued eligibility for special education. If necessary, a new evaluation must be conducted.

In addition, a transition assessment is conducted yearly as part of the IEP process. When such assessments are not timely or sufficient for MRS purposes, the counselor may purchase assessments as needed to determine eligibility, disability priority, vocational needs, and for vocational planning. While a copy of a current IEP is sufficient to establish that a student has a disability, it rarely provides enough information for an assessment of a student's vocational rehabilitation needs. Additional school documentation should be secured when available even if this occurs after the initial referral.

A listing and description of the types of documentation that can be obtained from the school can be found in RSM Item 4300 – Specific Learning Disabilities. Examples include: Education Development Plan (EDP), Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP), Transition Assessments, and the Summary of Performance.

3. IPE Development

The Transition provisions in the Rehabilitation Act, in addition to requiring that an eligible student have an IPE in place prior to K-12 exit, now also require that MRS provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) prior to the eligible student's exit from the K-12 system.

Students and Youth with Disabilities Services

PETS are defined as:

- Job exploration counseling;
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible;
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and
- Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

PETS were enacted to ensure that Students with Disabilities have comprehensive career development opportunities and work experiences while transitioning from school to postsecondary life.

MRS is mandated to reserve not less than 15% of annual allotted funds for the provision of PETS. The provision of these services must be documented for each eligible Student with a Disability served by MRS. PETS services may be purchased, provided or coordinated. Civil service staff time spent in the provision and coordination of PETS must be documented on a PETS Tracking form.

PETS are provided in Extended Assessment; as part of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment toward the development of an IPE; or as part of service delivery in an IPE.

Referrals of Students with Disabilities need to occur early enough to facilitate the provision of PETS and meaningful IPE development prior to school exit. In unforeseen circumstances when this does not occur and eligibility is not determined prior to K-12 exit, the counselor shall apply the 90 day standard for IPE development consistent with general procedural requirements (see RSM Item 5050 – Individualized Plan for Employment).

Parents and/or guardians of minor students must be a part of IPE planning including job goal selections and must sign the IPE.

Students (and/or their legal guardians) must be provided the opportunity to exercise informed choice in the selection of the vocational goal, services and service providers that are part of the IPE (see RSM 2225 – Informed Choice).

4. Employment Goal

The Individualized Education Program (IEP), for students receiving special education services, shall be considered while developing the IPE. Aligning the IPE with the IEP is

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ideal, but can only be accomplished if the postsecondary employment goal in the IEP is consistent with the student's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, and capabilities, taking into account the individual's interests and informed choice.

For an eligible Student with a Disability in the K-12 education system who has not yet determined a specific employment goal, a Career Pathway, as identified by the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Career and Technical Education, may be used as an employment goal until the student completes the K-12 secondary education.

Use of a Career Pathway job goal still requires the counselor to provide the scope of PETS in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment and the IPE prior to K-12 exit. After the individual exits K-12, the IPE shall be amended as soon as feasible to reflect a more specific employment goal before additional training or placement activity proceeds. A Career Pathway shall not be used as an employment outcome at closure.

5. Services

Vocational rehabilitation services may be arranged, purchased, or provided to implement an IPE including the provision of PETS.

6. Closure

A Student with a Disability may not be closed as successfully rehabilitated with a Career Pathway job goal. The case must be closed with a specific job goal identified in the IPE or IPE amendment. Case closure requirements identified in case closure policies and procedures apply.

Youth with Disabilities

Requirements for serving Youth with Disabilities; i.e. processing an application, determining eligibility, providing a comprehensive vocational needs assessment and IPE development are consistent with general MRS policy and procedural requirements.

Specific considerations:

1. Application and Eligibility Assessment

- Minor's parent(s) or guardian(s) must be involved at application and shall sign the application for services, unless refusal to sign occurs and is documented.

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- Youth with a Disability who are entitled to SSI based on their disability (not the disability of a parent) are presumed to be eligible and, at a minimum, meet the federal criteria for "significantly disabled."
- Extended assessment may be appropriate for any individual, including SSI recipients, when ability to benefit, due to the significance of disability, is in question.

2. Assessment Documentation

- Although the Youth with a Disability is not enrolled in school at the time of MRS application, the counselor must seek maximum available information from all available sources, including any past school attendance, to determine eligibility and the individual's vocational needs.

3. IPE Development

- Parents and/or guardians of minor Youth with a Disability must be a part of IPE planning and sign the IPE.
- Youth with a Disability (and/or their legal guardians) must be provided the opportunity to exercise informed choice in the selection of the vocational goal, services and service providers that are part of the IPE, consistent with the provisions of MRS' informed choice policy.

Counselors may consider encouraging Youth with a Disability that do not possess a high school diploma/GED to explore options for how they may be able to earn their diploma/GED. Possible options include adult education, Michigan Virtual High School, alternative schools, high school completion programs in college settings, etc. Another option is to counsel Youth with a Disability to pursue a Michigan Career Readiness Certificate which is one way to validate an individual's job skills to potential employers.

Information:

Transition-related services are defined by the Rehabilitation Act as "a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, competitive integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation."

IDEA requires that educational entities begin transition services for students with disabilities no later than age 16. MRS may become involved as early as 14, if appropriate, to provide

Students and Youth with Disabilities Services

vocational rehabilitation services or in a consultative role, to be a part of transition planning in connection with a school's IEP or Transition Plan.

Schools have the responsibility to provide services entitled to the student under IDEA. Services are based on “the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences and interests,” and may include:

- functional and vocational assessments;
- instructional services and, as appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills;
- community and work experiences that provide the opportunity for the student to participate in skill development in community settings (including job development, job placement, job coaching and related services); and
- specific employment skill development through career and occupational skill training, employability skills development, and work behavior and self-management skills acquisition.

In addition; assistive technology, auxiliary aids and other supports, including transportation needed for the student to participate in his or her free and appropriate public education.

The school has the responsibility for implementation of the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Some students are identified as “students with disabilities /Section 504.” These students are not special education students, but participate in the general education program and receive mandated transition services that are stipulated in a plan consistent with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (504 Plan). MRS may work with these students if they meet the MRS eligibility criteria.

The Rehabilitation Act also requires that formal interagency agreements or memorandums of understanding be in place with the state educational agency and, as appropriate, with local education agencies that identify policies, practices and procedures that are to be coordinated between the agencies. Local agreements should include procedures for identification of youth in special education and in need of transition services, making referrals, information sharing, and time frames for follow-up. They should include standards for eligibility, the roles of each agency, staffing and financial responsibilities of each agency, and procedures for the facilitation of cooperation among other local agencies. The Act also requires plans, policies and procedures for similar outreach and services to students with disabilities who are not receiving special education services, including Section 504 students in regular education programs.

Transportation Services, Miscellaneous Services

Policy:

Transportation services may be authorized or arranged only in support of a vocational rehabilitation service required as part of an IPE or for assessment.

Procedure:

Transportation services may include, for example, bus fare, driver's license fees, vehicle license plates, mileage allowances, and taxi service in support of another service.

Public transportation shall be used when it is available and meets a client's rehabilitation needs. A multi-ride pass or single-ride tickets or tokens can be provided. Disbursement of tickets or tokens should be recorded on the district office bus ticket log in order to provide a record for state accounting purposes.

The following guidance may be used in determining amounts to be authorized for transportation:

- Clients driving their own vehicle should be reimbursed for their actual costs, but no more than 75 percent of the rate for state employees driving their own vehicle in lieu of an available state car.
- Attendants and escorts driving their own vehicle should not be reimbursed in excess of the rate state employees received for driving their own vehicle in lieu of an available state car.
- Reimbursement should be based on the number of miles to be traveled per trip and the number of trips to be covered.

Information:

Parking permits and special license plates are available to persons with disabilities through Secretary of State offices. There is no charge for the parking permit, and special plates cost the same as regular license plates. A physician must certify the client's handicap before permits or licenses will be issued unless the individual is visibly disabled.

The following are examples from the Federal Regulations of expenses that would meet the definition of transportation in support of another service.

- Travel and related expenses for a personal care attendant or aide if the services of that person are necessary enable the applicant or client to travel to participate in any vocational rehabilitation service.

Transportation Services, Miscellaneous Services

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- Short-term travel-related expenses, such as food and shelter, incurred by an applicant participating in evaluation or assessment services that necessitate travel.
 - Relocation expenses incurred by a client in connection with a job placement that is a significant distance from the client's current residence.

Vehicle Insurance Services

Policy:

Vehicle insurance may be provided as part of a transportation service under an IPE.

Procedure:

The period of insurance coverage purchased shall not exceed the duration of the IPE service that transportation services are in support of.

In general, \$500.00 deductibles are used when Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) purchases coverage.

The counselor shall consider the proportion of vehicle insurance that is required to support the individual's IPE in considering the extent of MRS' contribution to the purchase of insurance.

To comply with state accounting requirements, three comparative rates for new policies or policy renewals shall be obtained. Use of the Vehicle Insurance Worksheet, RA-4659 is encouraged to assure comparable quotations. This is not required if the current policy was purchased on the basis of comparative rates in the past six months. A receipt or copy of the Certificate of Insurance shall be obtained for the case record.

Information:

The Uniform Trade Practices Act of 1976 prohibits an insurance company from refusing coverage or charging a higher rate to handicapped persons unless it can show a relationship between the handicap and risk of loss. Clients may contact the Department of Insurance & Financial Services, P.O. Box 30220, Lansing, MI 48909, phone toll free 877-999-6442 for further information or assistance.

Forms:

The form related to this manual item is the RA-4659 – Request for Vehicle Insurance Quotation.

Vehicle Modification Services

Policy:

Vehicle modification may be arranged or purchased to meet an IPE employment outcome.

Procedure:

Following the procedures outlined below when modifying vehicles will ensure that state, federal and professional standards have been met.

At the time vehicle modifications are initially considered, the client and counselor shall review the Fit Factors Job Aid. The Job Aid describes issues which shall be considered when purchasing and modifying a vehicle, including the length of time needed for modifications, the interface between the vehicle and the client's mobility device or other specialized equipment, warranties, parking, security, insurance, and the cost of maintenance and operation.

If possible, clients considering van modifications should contact other individuals who drive modified vans to discuss the problems and realities of modifying and maintaining such a vehicle.

On-going communication among all involved parties (client, counselor, evaluator, and vendor) is a key element in successful vehicle modification. In many instances, a pre-quotation conference involving the counselor, client, vendor, and evaluator is indicated. Such a conference (by telephone or in person), occurring before the authorization is written, resolves questions about the prescription and specific equipment to be used.

Clients must have a valid driver's license, if they will be the driver. A copy shall be retained for the case record. Clients who are unable to take the road test until all modifications are completed need a temporary instruction or temporary operator's permit and a plan, developed with the driver evaluator, to obtain a driver's license. A copy of the temporary license, and the final driver's license shall be retained in the case record.

Evaluation and Training

A driver evaluation and prescription, completed by a qualified driver evaluator, shall be obtained except when purchasing or arranging the transfer of existing equipment or the provision of replacement equipment which involves comparable equipment, a comparable vehicle, and no changes in the client's functional capacities. The counselor shall be certain that the evaluator is qualified at the van level, if van modifications are planned.

Individuals are considered to be qualified driver evaluators in the area of adaptive vans if they:

- Hold a Certificate of Recognition in Automobile Modification from the Association of Driver Education for the Disabled (ADED), or

Vehicle Modification Services

- Are a registered occupational therapist, or
- Hold a secondary teaching degree with Driver Education Certification; and
- Have access to consultation with a registered occupational therapist.

All individuals and organizations which provide driver evaluation and training are required to be licensed by the Michigan Department of State – Licensing Unit (517) 241-6829. In addition, the Department of Education has established requirements for teenage (under age 18) driver programs and instructors (517) 373-0763.

If the driver evaluator is not a registered Occupational Therapist, a functional capacities evaluation for the client may be indicated. Similarly, such an evaluation may be indicated in determining whether there has been a change in functional capacities.

The individual's purchase of a vehicle should be deferred until after driver evaluation and initial training; the client's need for modifications will, to some extent, dictate the type of vehicle that will be purchased.

Arrangements shall be made for the client to complete both a driver evaluation and driver training before a prescription is written if the client is a new driver, will be driving a vehicle with unfamiliar modifications, or has not driven recently. The driver evaluator may determine that the training can be waived.

If additional driver training is needed after the modifications are prescribed, the training shall be arranged with an individual licensed to provide driver training and able to provide the training in the clients' modified van. Consultation with the driver evaluator will be required to make this determination.

Additional training, after modification of the vehicle, may be necessary if there is a delay between the initial training and completion of the modifications.

If the client will be a passenger, the counselor shall ensure that the person driving the client is a licensed driver and trained in the use of equipment used to modify the van.

Purchasing Modifications

A used vehicle with a warranty and/or used equipment may provide the client with a savings in the initial purchase cost and insurance costs. However, these savings shall be weighed against the longer-term costs of maintenance and replacement.

Vehicle Modification Services

If the client receives SSDI or SSI, the cost of purchasing and modifying a vehicle may be approved in a Plan To Achieve Self-Support (PASS) or as an Impairment Related Work Expense. The client and counselor should consult with the local Social Security office. If equipment is purchased without a prescription, state accounting rules require multiple bids.

The vehicle title shall be in the client's name. Including the make, year, and vehicle identification number on the authorization will ensure that the correct vehicle is obtained.

The prescription shall be reviewed with the client as well as the anticipated time frame for the modifications and the client's financial obligations, responsibilities, and commitment to participate in the conformance check.

In consultation with the driver evaluator, the counselor may determine that an engineering evaluation of the vehicle modification is indicated to ensure that any systems added or structural changes made were done in a manner which is safe. The engineering evaluation can be completed concurrently with the conformance check.

The counselor shall purchase vehicle modification services only from vendors who have agreed to conform to the National Mobility Equipment Dealer's Association (NMEDA) guidelines. Additional information can be obtained at the NMEDA website at: <http://www.nmeda.org/> For equipment that has been tested by the Veteran's Administration (VA), only the VA approved equipment should be used.

Reviewing the vendor's final bid or price quotation with the evaluator will help ensure consistency with the prescription.

If clients have unresolved complaints about service from a Michigan vendor after the authorization has been paid, they shall be directed to contact the Bureau of Automotive Regulation at 1-(800)-292-4204.

A conformance check shall be purchased or arranged for all van modifications before delivery to the client. This is best planned for at the time the authorization for the modifications is written, with the following message added to the authorization: "Payment is subject to successful completion of a conformance check." In scheduling the conformance check, priority should be given to scheduling a time when the client can be present. A written report or statement from the vendor regarding the conformance check should be obtained. Payment for modifications shall not be processed until the conformance check and any corrections have been completed. It may be necessary to authorize to the vendor to drive the van to the evaluator or pay the evaluator to travel to the vendor, as necessary.

Vehicle Modification Services

Information:

In Michigan, Mary Free Bed Hospital, Rehabilitation Institute of Detroit, Disabled Driver's Services (University of Michigan Hospital), A & A Driving School (Providence Hospital), and CDE Incorporated (Bay Medical Center) meet these criteria. Munson Hospital in Traverse City contracts with the Disabled Driver's Services for van evaluation, prescription, and training services.

The following offer rebate programs when an individual requires adaptive equipment to use a new vehicle.

- The Chrysler Corporation 1-(800) 255-9877 or visit the website at http://www.chrysler.com/en/incentives/bonus_incentives/
- Ford Motor Company 1-(800) 952-2248 or 1-(800) 833-0312 for people with hearing disabilities, General Motors Corporation 1-(800) 323-9935, TTY 1-(800) 833-9935, or visit the website at <http://www.gmmobility.com/>

Currently, the Veteran's Administration (VA) tests in the following categories: hand controls, van lifts, low effort steering systems, and special driving systems.

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Note 4 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

Job Aid:

For additional information, refer to Fit Factors: Vehicle Modification/Purchase Job Aid (6825a-JA) in the Job Aid Section of this manual.

Vehicle Purchase Services

Policy:

Assistance with the purchase of a vehicle may be authorized or arranged:

- only in support of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) service of training or employment;
- only when vehicle purchase has been determined to be the least cost service that will meet the individual's rehabilitation need after thorough exploration and exhaustion of alternate transportation options, including the availability of public transportation; and
- only with the documented approval of the Site or District Manager prior to IPE completion.

Sales tax must be paid either by MRS or the customer whenever MRS funds are expended toward vehicle purchase.

Procedure:

The results of researching transportation options prior to considering or requesting vehicle purchase must be comprehensively documented in a case note or IPE counseling summary. Exploration of public transportation options including commuter bus service and curb to curb service must be investigated and documented before considering other transportation alternatives.

If public transportation is not available or will not meet the individual's rehabilitation need, consideration of other options as delineated in Rehabilitation Services Manual (RSM) Item 6775, Transportation Services -- Miscellaneous, must be explored. Transportation possibilities may include authorization for mileage to an individual to drive their own vehicle; taxi service; bus fare, mileage authorized to another person to transport the individual, the cost of car pooling or in some instances short-term rental or leasing of a vehicle.

Assistance with the down payment of a vehicle may be adequate if the individual will have the funds to make subsequent payments.

A used vehicle in good condition is a less costly purchase than a new vehicle and will generally meet an individual's rehabilitation needs. There are instances, however, when a new vehicle must be purchased to meet the individual's need for adaptive equipment or specialized modifications not otherwise available on an existing used vehicle. A van shall be purchased only if it is the least costly vehicle which will meet the individual's functional rehabilitation and transportation needs.

Vehicle Purchase Services

Used vehicles are required to have a 90-day dealer warranty or pass an evaluation by a registered garage. The evaluation shall not be done by the dealer from whom the vehicle is purchased. The Vehicle Inspection Report Form RA-4657 or its equivalent shall be used to obtain the evaluation. Individuals are expected to trade in their old vehicle or use the proceeds from its sale, if it is marketable, toward the purchase of another vehicle or other service needs in their IPE.

The vehicle title shall be in the customer's name. A copy of the vehicle registration or vehicle title shall be retained in the case record.

At the time of vehicle purchase, the counselor and customer will determine who will cover the cost of sales tax. The practice of exploring and encouraging customer financial participation toward the cost of services is consistent with Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 5125, Financial Participation. Covering the sales tax, if agreed to by the customer might be a logical contribution as it is paid at the time the title is obtained.

If the customer will be the driver, there shall be assurance the customer has a valid driver's license before purchase of a vehicle. If a customer is unable to drive, a vehicle may be purchased if there is assurance of a driver with a valid license available to transport the customer. A copy of the driver's license of the customer or the individual who will be the driver for the customer shall be retained in the case record.

To comply with state accounting requirements, three bids must be obtained when purchasing new vehicles. This requirement is waived when the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) contribution is a flat down payment amount. When purchasing a used vehicle, the counselor shall ensure that the price is reasonable. Generally, the purchase price of a used vehicle shall not exceed by more than \$100 the "average retail price" listed in the current month's National Automobile Dealers Association's Used Car Guide ("Blue Book").

The customer is responsible for routine maintenance of vehicles after the MRS purchase and shall be advised of their responsibility. If MRS authorizes for the full purchase price of a vehicle, there must be case record documentation of the arrangements for ensuring that the vehicle is adequately protected by insurance to protect MRS' investment.

The customer and counselor shall discuss the probable impact on benefits the customer is receiving from another agency or program prior to vehicle purchase to minimize the impact of the vehicle purchase. For example, for public assistance recipients, if the equity value of the vehicle exceeds Department of Health and Human Services program

Vehicle Purchase Services

limits, the customer (and the family unit) will be ineligible for benefits. The equity value is the sale price of the vehicle less the amount owed on the vehicle.

Information:

Vehicle Purchase is defined as any financial assistance towards the leasing, renting, or purchasing of a vehicle including a down payment, a monthly payment or any variation of assistance towards that of a vehicle purchase.

Forms:

- ✓ RA-4657 – Vehicle Inspection Report

Vehicle Repair Services

Policy:

Repairs may be authorized for a vehicle owned by the client, a vehicle owned by a family member if the client will be driving it to support a rehabilitation service or a vehicle owned by a family member who will be responsible for transporting the client in carrying out an IPE service and this is the only means of transportation available.

Procedure:

A written repair estimate shall be obtained from a repair center registered with the Bureau of Automotive Regulation. A second estimate shall be obtained when estimated repairs are \$500.00 or more. A second estimate is not required if the vehicle is inoperable.

The counselor shall determine that the vehicle's condition or value justifies the cost of repairs before they are authorized. The information used to make the determination may include the following -- a statement from the mechanic or repair center which provided the estimate(s), or a vehicle inspection from a licensed mechanic or repair center or evidence that the repair costs do not exceed the average retail value of the vehicle.

Repairs shall be authorized only from licensed mechanics or repair facilities registered with the Bureau of Automotive Regulation.

In determining if, or the extent to which, recommended repairs shall be approved to ensure the safety and reliability of the vehicle, consider:

- The cost of current and anticipated repairs,
- The age, condition, and value of the vehicle,
- Other available means of transportation, and
- The length of time it will take the client to complete the IPE objective(s) for which the vehicle is required

Prior to authorizing vehicle repairs, the counselor shall verify that the client has a current driver's license and the vehicle has valid license plates and adequate insurance coverage. It may be necessary to assist the client with these costs.

Proof of vehicle ownership shall be requested if ownership of the vehicle to be repaired is questionable.

Vehicle Repair Services

Information:

Vehicles in excellent or good condition may warrant repair even if their market value is low. The older the vehicle, however, the more caution is indicated before approving repairs. When IPE activities will be of long duration, it may be more economical to replace rather than repeatedly repair an older or poorly maintained vehicle. The counselor may wish to observe the general condition of a vehicle or obtain an additional estimate before authorizing repairs if in doubt about the vehicle's worthiness for repair.

Vehicle inspections are recommended for older vehicles, when repairs are expected to be costly, or when the vehicle's general condition is questionable. In these instances a complete vehicle inspection may be appropriate. Vehicles in generally good condition or in need of only minor repair may benefit from a partial inspection to assess the immediate problem and safety related items such as brakes, steering, and the exhaust system. The National Automobile Dealers Association Used Car Guide or an equivalent publication can be used to estimate the market value of used vehicles. Financial institutions, used car dealers, and classified newspaper advertisements can be used to estimate the value of vehicles not listed in used car guides.

Forms:

The form related to this manual item is the RA-4657 - Vehicle Inspection Report.

Wheelchair/Powered Mobility Devices Services

Policy:

Wheelchairs and powered mobility devices may be purchased or arranged as part of a trial work experience plan or IPE.

Procedure:

Comparable benefits such as Medicaid or Medicare shall be explored and used if available.

Wheelchairs and powered mobility devices are high technology, high-cost items and shall be prescribed only after an analysis of the client's home and work sites, and transportation needs. This sequence helps ensure prescription of a device that will be functional in all these settings.

For new users of wheelchairs or powered mobility devices, or for changes in equipment for current users, a prescription shall be obtained from the treating physician, an orthopedic specialist, or a physiatrist. If the physician does not specify the seat height, width, length, and angle; footrest height; and -- for wheelchairs only -- the hand rim diameter; these measurements shall be obtained in writing from a physical or occupational therapist, orthotist, or rehabilitation engineer. The client's needs, activities and preferences shall be reported to the prescriber to ensure an appropriate prescription.

An independent evaluation may be needed to determine which device will best match the prescription and fit the client's needs. Such an evaluation cannot be considered *independent* if it is provided by the source that sells the prescribed equipment.

A re-check of equipment shall be arranged for new users by the professional or clinic who developed the prescription, to assure conformity to the prescription prior to approving the vendor's billing for the equipment.

Information:

Advances in technology are most notable in the following areas:

- *Adaptive Equipment* – Chairs are now available with “on-board” computers that in turn operate other computers, environmental control units, or computer-assisted speech units. In addition to sip and puff controls for acceleration, braking, and turning, controls can be operated through head sticks, eye blink, and muscle twitch.
- *Customized Seating* – Seating should be fitted to the needs and physical contours of the individual to reduce fatigue, improve upper extremity function, and reduce spasticity.
- *Integrated Driving Systems* – These are chairs designed to work with a specific package

Wheelchair/Powered Mobility Devices Services

of modifications for driving. If such a system will be considered, the driving evaluator should be consulted before the chair is purchased.

- *Power Chairs* – A wide range of options for power chairs are available, including chairs with removable batteries, electric recline systems, and on-board computers. There is also a range of carts or powered mobility devices, which are suitable for uneven terrain.
- *Ultra-Light Chairs* – Chairs that are ultra-light weight may increase mobility by reducing exertional demands, as they are easier to push and load into a car or van.

Some non-folding chairs are significantly lighter than folding models; those with quick release axles may permit independent loading by individuals with significant upper extremity limitations.

A variety of specialized wheelchairs and carts are available; including standing chairs and carts that operate in rough terrain. The Job Accommodation Network (1-800-JAN-PCEH) or <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu/> is one source of information on special function chairs. The Michigan Assistive Technology Loan Fund can also be contacted at www.michiganloanfunds.org for individuals considering a loan.

SECTION VII

Case Closed Prior to Eligibility Case Closure

Policy:

The applicant's case record shall be closed when:

- it is determined the applicant does not meet Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) eligibility criteria;
- the applicant selects an extended (sheltered) employment outcome after being informed of the (integrated) employment purpose of the program;
- the applicant declines to participate in or is unavailable during an extended period to complete an eligibility assessment, and MRS has made a reasonable number of attempts to contact the applicant or, as appropriate, the applicant's representative to encourage participation.
- the applicant has chosen to assign their Ticket to Work to an alternative third party vocational rehabilitation service with whom MRS does not have an Employment Network Agreement; or
- the applicant refuses services, fails to cooperate, has died, or is institutionalized.

Procedure:

The Closure Letter in the AWARE Letters Catalog shall be used to notify the individual in writing the case is being closed. See Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 7150, Notice of Case Closure, for additional information.

Case Closure Due to Severity of Disability Case Closure

Policy:

A case shall not be closed due to the severity of the applicant's disability except when, on the basis of clear and convincing evidence after trial work experiences, it is determined that the customer cannot benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome.

Procedure:

The applicant, or parent or guardian as appropriate, shall be provided an opportunity to discuss an ineligibility decision before the applicant's case is closed due to ineligibility.

A certificate of ineligibility, signed and dated by the counselor, shall be prepared for case closures due to ineligibility. The individual shall be informed in writing of:

- the ineligibility decision,
- the reason for the decision,
- the right to appeal the decision and the process for doing so, and
- the availability of the services available through the Client Assistance Program and how to contact that program.

Before closing a case non-rehabilitated for reasons of ineligibility due to severity of disability, the counselor shall ensure, as part of the test of clear and convincing evidence, accommodation services and assistive technology would not enable the individual to become employed.

The Closure Letter in the AWARE Letters Catalog shall be used to notify the individual the case is being closed and shall be annotated with the phrase "Certificate of Ineligibility". See Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 7150, Notice of Case Closure, for additional information.

See also Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 7225, Annual Review of Case Closure due to Severity of Disability.

Case Closed after Eligibility Case Closure

Policy:

An individual's case record shall be closed after eligibility when:

- it has not been possible to develop an IPE;
- IPE services have been completed;
- Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) services are no longer necessary or appropriate;
- the individual is no longer eligible; or
- the individual has chosen to reassign their Ticket to Work to an alternative third party vocational rehabilitation services with whom MRS does not have an Employment Network Agreement.

The same prior notice and written notification as for ineligibility decisions apply to these closures.

Procedure:

Case closure after eligibility has been determined, for reason that the individual no longer meets one or more eligibility criteria, is considered an IPE amendment. The Closure Letter in the AWARE Letters Catalog shall be used to notify the individual in writing the case is being closed and shall be annotated with the phrase "Certificate of Ineligibility/Plan Amendment."

See Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 7150, Notice of Case Closure, for additional information.

Rehabilitated Case Closure Case Closure

Policy:

An individual shall be determined to have achieved an employment outcome only if the following requirements are met:

- The employment outcome is at a competitive wage in an integrated setting;
- Services provided under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) are substantial and have contributed to the employment outcome;
- The employment outcome is consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice;
- Employment reflects the employment outcome described in the IPE or IPE amendment and has been maintained for at least 90 days;
- Prior to closing a case in supported employment including customized employment, there shall be confirmation of extended support services after case closure by the third party identified in the IPE;
- The individual and counselor consider the employment to be satisfactory and agree the individual is performing well on the job;
- Individuals shall be provided an opportunity to discuss case closure prior to the closure decision (see Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 7150); and
- At the time of closure there must be an assessment of the need for post employment services.

Procedure:

The impact of the individual's earnings on the other benefits the individual is receiving (e.g., SSI, SSDI, State Disability Assistance, FIP (TANF) benefits, housing subsidy) shall be reviewed and discussed with the individual before case closure.

An individual's case shall not be closed until the counselor has determined that the individual has the personal resources to meet ongoing needs or that these are available through other agencies or programs. These may include supportive counseling, medication for control of disabling conditions, disposable medical supplies, appliance repair and replacement, vehicle replacement and maintenance, repair or replacement of adaptive equipment, personal assistance services, transportation costs, subsistence, etc.

Rehabilitated Case Closure Case Closure

Additionally, a case shall not be closed until the counselor has ensured that the individual is able to meet production and interpersonal demands of the job. It may be appropriate for a case to remain open until the individual gains union membership or passes the initial probationary period.

Written confirmation of the employment data by the individual or another relevant source prior to case closure ensures that the case is being appropriately closed. In addition, in the written closure notification to the individual, it is advisable to include the data regarding the individual's employment including the name and address of the employer, job title, wages, and beginning date of employment to confirm the basis for case closure.

If the conditions for supported employment rehabilitated closure apply, the "Participant requires ongoing support services" field on the AWARE Closure page must be completed.

If the individual received SSI and/or SSDI benefits during the rehabilitation process and Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) will be requesting reimbursement for rehabilitation costs, there shall be a statement in the closure letter that the individual's employment status at case closure may be verified later by the Social Security Administration.

Substantial services are defined as services that are provided in the context of a counseling relationship and customer informed choice, and make a significant contribution to the individual's employment outcome.

Substantial services may be provided directly by MRS staff, arranged through comparable benefits and services, or purchased from third parties. They are identified in the AWARE closure page.

The Closure Successful letter in the AWARE Letters Catalog shall be used to notify the individual in writing that the case is being closed. See Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 7150, Notice of Case Closure, for additional information.

Authorizations must be paid in full prior to case closure.

Casework Notes:

For additional information, refer to Casework Note 8 in the Casework Notes Section of this manual.

Case Closed Not Rehabilitated Case Closure

Policy:

The case record of an applicant or eligible individual may be closed as not rehabilitated.

Procedure:

Reasons for closing a case not rehabilitated other than for ineligibility include,

- Inability to locate the applicant or eligible individual, or the individual has moved out-of-state,
- Individual's refusal of Michigan Rehabilitation Services' (MRS) services,
- Death of the individual,
- The individual will be institutionalized for an extended or indefinite period of time,
- The individual has failed to cooperate,
- Transportation is not possible or available, and
- The individual has committed an act of violence or threatened violence consistent with Policy 2375, Threats and Acts of Violence.

The closure is denoted as Closure-Other in AWARE.

The closure letter in the AWARE letters catalog shall be utilized to notify the individual of the case closure. See Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 7150, Notice of Case Closure, for additional information.

Notice of Case Closure

Case Closure

Policy:

Individuals whose cases are closed for any reason except death or no known address shall be notified in writing of their case closure, which shall include the following:

- the effective date of closure,
- a narrative description of the reason(s) for closure,
- their right to appeal (including mediation) the closure decision, and
- the process for seeking appeal and mediation including the availability of the Client Assistance program to assist with an appeal.

Individuals shall be provided an opportunity to discuss case closure prior to the closure decision.

The closure letters in the AWARE letters catalog shall be utilized to notify the customer of the case closure.

Procedure:

When a case is closed, counselors shall consider whether the referral source and other agencies involved in the individual's rehabilitation program should be notified.

Confidentiality issues shall be considered before releasing any case record information regarding the details of the case closure.

The closure letter shall include:

- the effective date of closure, which is the date of closure as entered in AWARE on the AWARE closure page
- the reason for closure; that is, a description of the circumstances surrounding the case closure in a narrative that can be easily understood by the customer. The reason for closure described in the notice to the customer must be consistent with the reason for closure as narratively described on the closure page in AWARE.

Selecting a reason for closure from the drop down menu in AWARE such as the item below is not acceptable to state as the reason for closure in the Notice of Closure letters:

“No longer interested in receiving services or further services”, which includes:

- Failure to cooperate
- Refused Services or No Further Services

Notice of Case Closure

Case Closure

While a categorical reason is not to be included in the notice of closure to customers, recording the reason for closure selected from the drop down menu in AWARE is still to be entered on the AWARE Closure page.

Information:

The counselor may release closure information to agencies involved in the customer's rehabilitation program, such as high schools, consistent with Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 2100, Confidentiality and Release of Information, and interagency agreements.

Post Employment Services Case Closure

Policy:

An assessment of the need for post-employment services shall be conducted prior to rehabilitated closure. Individuals whose cases have been closed rehabilitated shall be provided additional services if necessary to maintain, regain, or advance in their current employment.

Procedure:

The need for post-employment services may arise either from an unexpected situation or be planned as part of the IPE or at case closure. Clients shall be encouraged to stay in touch with their counselor following case closure to seek assistance if problems arise and employment is in jeopardy.

Post-employment services are provided as an amendment to the IPE and generally are provided within approximately twelve months of case closure. In determining whether it is appropriate to provide a needed service in post-employment status, the counselor shall determine whether the service(s) is related to the original IPE and, therefore, is an appropriate amendment to it. The Post-Employment Module within AWARE is used to document the amendment.

Post-employment services shall be used to assist an individual in maintaining employment when a job is in jeopardy, or to regain employment when a new placement is needed due to job loss. Services may also be provided in post-employment status to assist an individual in advancing in their present career if extended training is not involved, and if it is determined that the current job is no longer consistent with the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests. Objective, performance based data shall be obtained to assist the counselor and client in making this determination.

Changes in the client's work situation (e.g., employer name, wages, hours worked, etc.) shall be recorded in the case record.

If the client is employed in a location outside of the originating district's territory, the counselor and client shall determine whether it would be in the client's best interest to have the case served by the district in which the client is now living.

Referrals to Other Agencies Case Closure

Policy:

Applicants whose cases are closed prior to eligibility and individuals whose cases are closed other than rehabilitated, shall be referred to other agencies for services as appropriate.

Individuals who make an informed choice to pursue extended employment as an outcome, shall be referred to an extended employment provider. Under an Order of Selection, individuals whose services are pending shall be referred to the local Michigan Works! center.

Section VII

Policy:

Individuals whose cases were closed ineligible due to the severity of their disability and based on a finding that the individual was incapable of benefiting from Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) services in terms of an employment outcome shall be provided an opportunity for a review of that determination one year after case closure to assess whether their condition may have changed and they may now be capable of benefiting from services. A review shall not be conducted when the individual has refused it, is no longer present in the state, whereabouts are unknown, or when the individual's medical condition is rapidly progressive or terminal.

Procedure:

The AWARE Caseload Browse, Activity Due feature notifies districts of former clients whose cases were closed ineligible one year previously because their disability was too severe. The printout shall be reviewed against the closed case file to identify those individuals who do not require an annual review. For example, an annual review may not be required if:

- The review process was explained to the client at case closure, the client did not desire the review, and this fact was summarized in the closure letter;
- The individual is no longer in the state or cannot be located; or
- The individual's medical condition is rapidly progressive or terminal.

The Annual Review Case Closed Too Severe letter located in the Letters Catalog of AWARE shall be used to notify all individuals identified in AWARE of the opportunity for an annual review of their case closure. If an individual responds and indicates an interest in having a review of present circumstances, it shall be determined whether the individual's condition has changed so that MRS services would now be beneficial. If it appears the individual can now benefit from MRS services and is interested in reapplying, a new application shall be processed.

If the review indicates that the individual is not able to benefit further from MRS services, the individual shall be notified in writing of the decision and the rationale for it. The letter shall also advise the individual that subsequent reviews shall be self-initiated.

The outcome of the annual review shall be recorded in AWARE.

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In Community Rehabilitation Program**

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Section VII

Case Closure

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Policy:

A review shall be conducted semi-annually for the first two years and each year thereafter, if requested by the individual or their representative, after a case has been closed on the basis of extended employment (sheltered employment) in a community rehabilitation program. The purpose of this review is to determine whether the individual may be ready to benefit from services leading to competitive integrated employment.

Procedure:

This review or re-evaluation shall include information from the individual or, in an appropriate case, the individual's representative to determine the interests, priorities, and needs of the individual for employment in, or training for, competitive integrated employment.

This review shall include signed acknowledgement by the individual, or as appropriate, their representative, that the review or re-evaluation has been conducted, and that maximum efforts in the identification and provision of Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) services, reasonable accommodations and other necessary support services have been provided in an effort to engage the individual in competitive integrated employment.

The AWARE Caseload Browse, Activity due feature notifies districts of individuals whose cases were closed in Extended Employment six months previously. The printout shall be reviewed against the closed case file to identify those individuals who do not require a semi-annual review. For example, a semi-annual review may not be required if:

- The review process was explained to the individual at case closure, the individual did not desire the review, and this fact was summarized in the closure letter;
- The individual is no longer in the state or cannot be located; or
- The individual's medical condition is rapidly progressive or terminal.

The Semi-Annual Review Case Closed in Extended Employment from the Letters Catalog in AWARE shall be used to notify all other individuals on the listing of the opportunity for a semi-annual review of their case closure. If an individual responds and indicates an interest in having a review of present circumstances, it shall be determined whether the individual's condition has changed so that MRS services would now be

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beneficial. If it appears the individual can now benefit from MRS services and is interested in reapplying, a new application should be processed.

If the review indicates that the individual is not able to benefit further from MRS services, the individual shall be notified in writing of the decision and the rationale for it. After four semi-annual reviews have been completed, the letter shall also advise the individual that subsequent reviews should be self-initiated.

The outcome of the semi-annual review shall be recorded in AWARE in the Follow-up Browse page.

Information:

Extended Employment means work in a non-integrated or sheltered setting for a public or private nonprofit agency or organization that provides compensation in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act. Extended Employment does not satisfy the definition of competitive integrated employment and, therefore, is not considered a “successful” employment outcome under the Rehabilitation Act.

Policy:

An annual review shall be conducted yearly for the first two years and each year thereafter if requested by the individual or their representative after a case has been closed with a deviated wage; that is an hourly wage less than minimum wage. The purpose of this review is to determine whether the individual may be ready to benefit from services leading to competitive employment in an integrated setting.

Procedure:

This review or re-evaluation shall include information from the individual or, in an appropriate case, the individual's representative to determine the interests, priorities, and needs of the individual for employment in, or training for, competitive employment in an integrated setting in the labor market.

This review shall include signed acknowledgement by the individual, or as appropriate, their representative, that the review or re-evaluation has been conducted, and that maximum efforts in the identification and provision of Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) services, reasonable accommodations and other necessary support services have been provided in an effort to engage the individual in competitive employment.

The AWARE Caseload Browse, Activity due feature notifies districts of individuals whose cases were closed with a deviated wage one year previously. The printout shall be reviewed against the closed case file to identify those individuals who do not require an annual review. For example, an annual review may not be required if:

- The review process was explained to the individual at case closure, the individual did not desire the review, and this fact was summarized in the closure letter;
- The individual is no longer in the state or cannot be located; or
- The individual's medical condition is rapidly progressive or terminal.

The letter, Annual Review Case Closed Deviated Wage, from the Letters Catalog in AWARE shall be used to notify all other individuals on the listing of the opportunity for an annual review of their case closure. If an individual responds and indicates an interest in having a review of present circumstances, it shall be determined whether the individual's condition has changed so that MRS services would now be beneficial. If it appears the individual can now benefit from MRS services and is interested in reapplying, a new application should be processed.

Section VII

If the review indicates that the individual is not able to benefit further from MRS services, the individual shall be notified in writing of the decision and the rationale for it. The letter shall also advise the individual that subsequent reviews should be self-initiated.

The outcome of the annual review shall be recorded in AWARE in the Follow-up Browse page.

SECTION VIII

Federal Civil Service Placement Options Other Programs

Procedure:

The federal government has a special “Schedule A” appointing authority for persons with intellectual disabilities, severe physical disabilities, or psychiatric disabilities. Eligibility for appointment under this authority requires completion of a “proof of disability”. The proof of disability may be obtained from:

- Licensed vocational rehabilitation specialists (state or private)
- Licensed medical professionals (e.g. a physician or other medical professional certified by a State, the District of Columbia, or a U.S. territory, to practice medicine)
- Any federal agency, state agency, agency of the District of Columbia or a U.S. territory, who issues or provides disability benefits.

Proof of Disability

In order to be hired under a Schedule A appointing authority, an individual must provide proof that he or she is an individual with intellectual disabilities, severe physical disabilities, or psychiatric disabilities. The proof of disability may be provided by appropriate documentation such as records, statements, or other appropriate information. The proof of disability must be provided to the hiring agency before an individual can be hired.

Information:

Federal agencies hire individuals two ways, competitively and non-competitively (i.e., Schedule A). Persons with disabilities may apply for jobs either competitively or non-competitively. Individuals who are selected for employment must meet the requirements for the position and be able to perform the essential job duties with or without reasonable accommodations.

Most federal agencies have a Selective Placement Program Coordinator (SPPC), Special Emphasis Manager (SEM), or an equivalent position that assists the agency to recruit, hire, and accommodate persons with disabilities. Information regarding the role of the SPPC-SEM, as well as information regarding additional programs for persons with disabilities, can be found at the following web sites:

- <http://www.opm.gov/disability>
- <http://www.usajobs.gov>

Counselors are encouraged to visit these sites to obtain additional information regarding federal employment and programs for persons with disabilities.

Bureau counselors may complete a proof of disability for individuals who are not customers of MRS.

Business Owned by a Person With a Disability Other Programs

Policy:

PA-112 requires that three percent of discretionary state procurement contracts be awarded to "businesses owned by a person with a disability".

Procedure:

A "business owned by a person with a disability" is defined as:

"a business of which more than 50% of the voting shares or interest in the business is owned, controlled, and operated by persons with a disability; with respect to which more than 50% of the net profit or loss attributable to the business accrues to shareholders with a disability; and in which more than 50% of the employees are residents of this state."

Individuals who, within the past five years, meet any of the following criteria are automatically considered to have a significant disability for purposes of PA-112: (1) eligible for services from Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), (2) eligible for services from the Commission for the Blind, (3) determined to have a 30% or greater disability rating by the Veterans Administration, or (4) received SSI or SSDI benefits.

There are three steps to the process of bidding on State contracts as a "business owned by a person with a disability":

- Verification that the individual has a current significant disability;
- Certification as a "business owned by a person with a disability" by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights using form CR507 (forms available through the Civil Rights Commission (313) 456-3823)
- Completion of a Vendor Application with the Michigan Department of Management and Budget which may be completed at any time during the process (forms available through the offices of the Department of Management and Budget, (517) 373-4111).

The Department of Civil Rights will accept a copy of an award letter or a check as verification of a person with a disability who have received SSI or SSDI during the past five years.

All other individuals, and MRS clients served within the past five years, may have their disability verified by MRS. Clients of the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons, or the Veterans Administration within the past five years should be referred to those agencies for verification of disability.

Business Owned by a Person With a Disability Other Programs

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Forms:

The form related to this manual item is the RA-112, PA-112 Handicapper Verification.

**Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI)
Other Programs****Policy:**

MCTI may be used as appropriate for vocational assessment and as an employment training resource for MRS applicants, eligible individuals, and others who qualify.

Procedure:

The Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) is a residential public post-secondary vocational training facility which also provides comprehensive and individualized rehabilitation services. MCTI is accredited by CARF and the North Central Association. It is operated by Michigan Rehabilitation Services and may accept participants for enrollment referred by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) counselors, individuals with disabilities referred by other agencies and organizations, and individuals who are not disabled. Students must be 18 years of age or older at the date of enrollment.

In considering whether MCTI is a suitable training institution for a customer, the MRS Home Counselor is strongly encouraged to review the MCTI Student Handbook with the customer to ensure that the individual has enough information about MCTI to make an informed decision about seeking enrollment in its programs. Copies of the student handbook can be obtained by calling the MCTI reception desk at 1-269-664-4461 or accessed on-line at www.michigan.gov/mcti.

General Entrance Requirements:

It is expected that individuals referred to MCTI are able to self-manage in a way that will enable them to succeed. The following are suggested criteria:

- The individual is able to benefit from participation in MCTI's pre-vocational and vocational programs.
- The individual wants to take an active role in their rehabilitation and vocational program.
- The individual verbalizes motivation and willingness to learn.
- The individual can stay on task which will enable them to complete the program within specified time frames.
- The individual's disabilities appear to be stabilized.
- The individual verbalizes desire to obtain employment upon training completion.
- The individual seems to understand acceptable behavior including the ability to get along with peers, follow rules and accept supervision.
- The individual will be able to live independently in the MCTI dormitory environment.
- The individual does not have a history of harming self or others.
- The individual has the potential to exercise good judgment related to balancing academic, social and leisure activities.

Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI)
Other Programs

MCTI provides vocational training programs in the following fields:

Automotive Technology	Graphic Communications
Cabinetmaking/Millwork	Ground Maintenance and Landscaping
Certified Nursing Assistant	Machine Technology
Culinary Arts	Office Automation
Custodial	Pharmacy
Customer Service	Retail Marketing
Electronics	Weatherization

An updated listing of programs may be found at the following web site:
www.michigan.gov/mcti

CAREER READINESS CENTER

MCTI provides evaluation and remediation services to give students the necessary supports to successfully complete their program. The Career Readiness Center is comprised of four departments: Career Assessment Services, the Reading Clinic, Step-Up, and the Education Center. It should be noted that Home Counselors can make a direct referral into any one of the programs within our Career Readiness Center. MCTI provides the following Career Readiness Programs:

Career Assessment Services (CAS)

The purpose of CAS is to determine a student's aptitudes and abilities via vocational evaluation, standardized testing, and situational work assessments. Vocational counseling is provided to identify values, strengths, and vocational direction. In collaboration with the student, a recommendation is made to pursue occupational training at MCTI, on the job training, or further education. CAS students also participate in structured classes covering Self Management, Disability Awareness, Learning Strategies, Number Sense and Leisure Services. The CAS program lasts up to five weeks. Where applicable, the CAS staff will develop an individualized educational plan for further academic intervention and beneficial accommodations. Upon completion of the CAS program, a detailed vocational evaluation report will be provided with suggested next steps for the customer's Individualized Plan for Employment.

Reading Clinic

The MCTI Reading Clinic offers both full and part time programs to help students strengthen their literacy skills. The full time program provides a 10-week intensive remedial program for students with reading, writing, and/or spelling difficulties. Students work in small groups for three hours per day and in a large group and on computers for an additional two hours per day in an interactive and balanced program designed to strengthen the full range of literacy skills through direct skills instruction and authentic project-based learning. Students who complete the full time program may enroll in one of MCTI's training programs or pursue other educational options or seek employment.

**Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI)
Other Programs**

The part time program offers classes in spelling, reading comprehension, writing, and study skills. Students may participate in part time courses while attending other CRC programs or trade training.

Step-Up

Step Up is a 5- to 10-week pre-vocational skill development program. The goal of the Step-Up program is to prepare students with skills and strategies necessary to successfully participate and compete in vocational training opportunities at the post-secondary level. Students are encouraged to realistically assess their career decisions in relation to ability, needs, and expectations – and make adjustments if necessary. Course offerings are tailored to student needs and focus on improving basic math and literacy skills, study skills, computer literacy, communication, and other employability skills. Most students have a personal goal of improving their academic and workplace behaviors to the level needed to succeed in a particular MCTI vocational-trade training program.

Participants are referred from the Career Assessment Services program or are recommended following a personal interview on campus and/or a file review by an evaluative panel of MCTI staff.

The Education Center

The Education Center is a MCTI/Delton Kellogg Schools partnership that offers students the opportunity to strengthen and improve their academic performance while enrolled in trade training. Students can also work on obtaining a high school diploma or GED through the program.

MCTI SUPPORT SERVICES***Counseling:***

Each student is assigned a Program Manager/Rehabilitation Counselor to provide on site support and assist in determining what additional services are needed while the student is on campus. The student's progress is discussed during team meetings and on an individual basis throughout the student's enrollment. The Program Manager is the primary liaison with the MRS home counselor.

Leisure Services:

When not in class, MCTI students can participate in a wide variety of activities including boating, canoeing, fishing, swimming, golf, tennis, softball, biking, and hiking. MCTI also has an Olympic size swimming pool, a weight room, a bowling alley and an archery range. Basketball, volleyball, card tournaments, leatherwork, ceramics, and photography are available. Off campus activities are planned each week and vary from shopping and movie excursions to bike trips, local festivals, sporting events, and concerts.

**Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI)
Other Programs****Residential Services:**

Students at MCTI reside in dormitories, sharing suites with assigned roommates. Residential staff is on duty 24 hours a day to assist students. Housing for students with families is available on property adjacent to the campus.

There are four terms in the school year running from September through July. The campus is closed between each term, during Christmas Holiday and during Spring Break. Students are not allowed to remain on campus and are expected to have some place to go during this time. Family Housing students can remain through breaks if enrolled for the next term. The Home Counselor should discuss plans and options prior to admission. The terms are as follows:

- **Fall Term:** September to mid-November
- **Winter Term:** End of November to mid-February. (During this term there is Christmas vacation as well as some three-day weekends for state holidays.)
- **Spring Term:** Mid-February through the end of April. (There is one week of spring break during this term.)
- **Summer Term:** First of May through approximately mid-July.

During the summer term break in July of each year all personal items must be removed from resident rooms. Items left in the resident rooms during this time will be discarded. There is local off-campus storage available. MCTI cannot assume responsibility for personal belongings left in the resident rooms. Students are also urged to take personal items with them during term breaks; however staff will not discard items left in rooms during the school year. Items left in resident rooms during term breaks, holidays, and vacations are the sole responsibility of the student. All personal property must be removed at the end of the school year (July).

Health Services:

While on campus, students have access to registered nurses, a nurse practitioner, an occupational therapist, social workers, and substance abuse counselors. A local physician is also available for student appointments. Other referrals can be made to community providers as necessary; i.e., dentist, dietician, optometrist, etc.

MCTI ADMISSIONS/REFERRAL PROCESS

The MCTI Admissions Office requires the following documentation and activities when an individual is referred to MCTI by MRS district office staff:

- AWARE – Guest Access in the form of “Update Full” is given to the Admissions staff at the time of referral.
- A Service Authorization is entered in the AWARE system.

**Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI)
Other Programs**

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- A referral memo is sent to the Admissions Office which includes the following general information:
 - Name of the participant, counselor, and district office.
 - Reason for referral, vocational objective, and rationale (not required if the individual is being referred to CAS).
 - A list of specific questions to be answered for individuals being referred to CAS. (See the Vocational Assessment Questionnaire form in E-Learn.)
 - A description of accommodation services and equipment the participant may need while at MCTI.
 - A Financial Plan Sheet (RA-29Z), which is available in E-Learn.
 - Documentation of disability and related limitations:
 - A copy of medical, psychological, and/or other diagnostic assessment that is recent enough to reflect the current status of the individual's primary and any secondary disabilities, and includes the diagnosis, a description of functional limitations due to the disability(ies), and identification of any needed medication or treatment the individual requires and will continue to need while at MCTI. A recent Physical Capacities Assessment (RA-4683) or a Mental Health Report (RA-2738) is preferred. (Available in E-Learn. See Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 3125, Eligibility Assessment.)
 - Information necessary to determine ability to benefit from MCTI programs and vocational aptitude:
 - A WAIS or WISC score within 3 years of the referral date. (NOTE: Referrals with a Full Scale IQ score between 70 and 75 may be asked to participate in a pre-admissions interview with MCTI staff.)
 - The results of aptitude testing that include measures of spatial relationships and mechanical aptitudes or a recent vocational test battery, as well as information regarding vocational interests, and math and reading achievement (WRAT, Woodcock-Johnson, WIAT, Work Keys Applied Match and Reading for Information).
 - The results of a recent criminal background check. While a conviction does not, by itself, exclude individuals from MCTI programs in general, it may affect acceptance into specific occupational or housing programs.
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**Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI)
Other Programs**

- Medical documentation including the following:
 - TB skin test within twelve months of enrollment. (Required)
 - A report of the individual's general health status no more than 12 months old. (Required) (General Medical form (RA-21) available in E-Learn. See Rehabilitation Services Manual Item 3125, Eligibility Assessment.)
 - Immunization records. (Recommended) Questions can be directed to the MCTI Health Services Office (269-664-9207).
 - Documentation of a Hepatitis B series, including the dates given, for students in the Custodial program. (Recommended)

The MCTI Admissions Office will notify the referring counselor of the admissions decision regarding the referral within four weeks of receipt of referral. Applicants do have the right to appeal any admission decision by following MRS policy. The referring counselor will be notified of a projected enrollment date via e-mail. Most projected dates are met and often participants are invited earlier, but projected dates are not guaranteed.

Acceptance into the Career Assessment Service or Career Readiness Center programs does not necessarily guarantee a student will be accepted into trade training.

Enrollment Schedule

Each term is 10 weeks long. Enrollment into most MCTI training programs occurs four times a year: September, November, February, and May. Enrollment in Career Assessment Services and the Step-Up program occurs every five weeks (between September and June).

Enrollment Process

Each program at Michigan Career and Technical Institute has its own enrollment process.

If the student has never been to MCTI, Admissions places the student's name on the program enrollment list as soon as MCTI receives and assesses the referral and supporting documentation, and determines that the student has the ability to benefit from MCTI programs.

If the student is completing a Career Readiness Center program and is being assigned to a vocational trade program, Admissions will place the student's name on the vocational trade enrollment list as soon as the student has met the requirements for admissions to that program.

The actual enrollment date is dependent upon the capacity of the program, the number of returning students to that program, and the number of students on the enrollment list. The date also depends on whether or not the student is entering the program on a trial basis, as these students typically need more direction and one-on-one instruction.

Training trials are set up for students who do not quite meet the vocational trade program requirements but have other factors that indicate the student has the potential to succeed in that program. Career Assessment Services, Reading Clinic and Step-Up staff determine whether or not the student should enroll in a vocational trade program on a trial basis.

Financial Aid

Federal Student Financial Aid is a comparable benefit and service which students must apply for and, if eligible, accept as the first dollar toward their training costs at MCTI if they are enrolled in a MCTI eligible program. The balance of direct educational costs is authorized from MRS funds assigned to MCTI. The MCTI Financial Aid Office will send the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the student. Future FAFSA applications must be completed on the Web at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov> by the student and, if needed, the student's parents. MCTI's school code is 026184. The MCTI Financial Aid Office will have a computer available for students and their family to use for the purpose of completing the FAFSA application. The financial aid staff will assist the student and family in completing the form, as needed. The MRS counselor should ensure that the student provides any documentation needed by the Financial Aid Office such as copies of income taxes, child support, etc. that are needed to file a completed FAFSA application.

Students who are not MRS customers are responsible for their own costs while at MCTI, which may be met in total or in part by a third party or Federal Student Financial Aid.

Visiting MCTI

MCTI conducts a visitation day once a month from September through July for prospective students and their families. Pre-registration is required and initiated by contacting the MCTI receptionist at 1-877-901-7360. The MRS Counselor can arrange an overnight stay at the Comfort Inn in Plainwell (269-685-9891). Many current and former MCTI students recommend visiting the facility to assist the individual in determining whether MCTI will be an appropriate training site for them.

Illicit Drug and Alcohol Policy

MCTI has a "zero tolerance" policy for possession of alcohol or illicit drugs on campus and violation of this policy will result in a suspension from school. Students with a primary disability or diagnosis of substance abuse must sign a contract indicating 1) they understand the policy, 2) they will remain free of alcohol and non-prescription drugs, and 3) they agree to be tested on a random basis for the presence of alcohol and drugs during the course of their program with MCTI. This policy is reviewed with students during orientations. Students who violate the

**Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI)
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contract will be placed on a medical leave with stipulations for return including treatment and sobriety.

If there is sufficient evidence that any student is under the influence of drugs or alcohol while at MCTI (including students who do not have a known substance abuse disability) the student will be tested (breathalyzer or urine testing). If the test results are not immediately available, the student may be suspended from class until negative results are obtained. Positive test results may result in suspension or termination of the student's program at MCTI. Students who refuse testing will be considered to have tested positive and be suspended from their program.

Maintenance and Transportation

If the student will need assistance with incidental and/or transportation expenses, the home counselor should process a direct payment authorization ensuring that the first scheduled check will reach the student during the first week of school (or at the time agreed upon by the home counselor and student if other than during the first week).

Service Coordination between MCTI and Referring Counselors

Coordination of services between referring counselors and MCTI program managers is essential for good customer service and to avoid audit exceptions.

Referring counselors and/or students are responsible for any transportation, personal accommodation equipment (e.g., glasses, hearing aids, assistive listening devices, splints, specialized tools), or other personal and incidental expenses individuals may incur while at MCTI. Off-campus expenses are usually the responsibility of the student, unless otherwise specified in the IPE. Consideration should be given to having the individual get an eye exam and glasses (or, in some instances, safety glasses) if recommended, before arriving on campus. Poor visual acuity can significantly impact a student's successful participation in assessment and training activities.

MCTI suggests that prior to enrolling students have a State of Michigan picture ID or a driver's license. Students must also have a Social Security card, as these types of identification are needed before the student can obtain employment. Students should also have made the necessary arrangements with the local DHS office, if they are eligible for DHS subsistence or health care benefits. Once on campus, it is very difficult to coordinate any type of DHS medical care without having this done in advance or the student having to miss class time for appointments back in the home community.

While the student is attending MCTI (or is in an interrupted status), the referring counselor and MCTI counselor are both responsible for informing each other of the individual's progress at home and at school by providing copies of student records and case file entries via AWARE. MCTI staff will be placing case entries on student progress in the Service Notes section of the AWARE Service Module.

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All AWARE case status changes are the responsibility of the referring counselor. *An IPE that includes MCTI training should include an estimated budget of \$1,500 for MCTI Support Services such as therapeutic services and tutoring that may be required and for which MCTI must authorize to external service providers. MCTI program managers must promptly notify the referring counselor of any change in training or employment goal and authorizations for substantial services beyond those identified in an individual's IPE to avoid federal or state audit issues.* The referring counselor will be informed within three days of training interruptions. When the individual can resume training, the referring counselor will need to arrange for reinstatement with the Admissions office.

No written, informed consent is required to exchange information between MCTI staff and the referring counselor regarding an MRS applicant or eligible individual since they are both part of Michigan Rehabilitation Services.

Job Placement

Job placement is the shared responsibility of the home counselor and MCTI staff for students graduating from MCTI. MCTI staff will help with placement activities and suggest employer contacts and/or job openings. When an unemployed student graduates from MCTI, the placement activities return to the home counselor. Placement services available at MCTI include:

Resume Preparation	Employability Assessment
Cover Letters	Interviewing Skills
Transportation to Interviews	Job Seeking Skills Classes
Acquisition and Retention Services	

The Business Advisory Group for each trade area at the school provides an opportunity for students to interact with employers in an informal setting, which may be helpful in the job placement process.

Information:

Family Housing

MCTI offers Student Family Housing, adjacent to the campus of the Michigan Career and Technical Institute. Owned and operated by the Pine Lake Fund, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, the housing complex accommodates single and married parents with children enrolled in training at MCTI. The attached day care center can accommodate children (12 months and older) while the parent is in training.

To be considered for family housing, the student must:

- Be a single or married parent, or married couple;

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- Be accepted into a MCTI training program meeting all program requirements;
- Have a disability that is stabilized;
- Be a low-income DHS recipient or low income DHS eligible for housing and day care assistance, or non-low income MRS eligible individual or private pay student;
- Have physical examinations and required immunizations for all children; and
- Complete a MCTI Student Family Housing admissions packet including discharge plan and background check.

The student is expected to:

- Maintain current status as MCTI student;
- Be responsible for all transportation needs;
- Supervise and parent children when not in daycare or school; and
- Accept the project housing agreement and agree to follow all housing policies.

Delinquent housing daycare charges will terminate the housing agreement.

The cost is as follows:

The MCTI Family Housing program accepts day care reimbursement from DHS for eligible students. Housing cost is \$310/month for two bedroom units and \$360/month for three bedroom units. These rates include utilities and local phone. For students who do not meet low-income guidelines, housing costs are \$450/month for two bedroom units and \$550/month for three bedroom units and day care costs are \$3.00/hr/child. These rates are subject to change. Contact MCTI to obtain current rates.

The housing units are furnished with a couch, chair, end tables, lamps, twin beds, dressers, and all appliances. Students will need to bring dishes, pots and pans, kitchen utensils, bedding for twin beds, towels, cleaning products, personal products, and clothing for them and their children. The units have a unit air conditioner and ceiling fans in the bedrooms and in the living room.

Pine Lake Experience:

The Pine Lake Experience is a summer program designed for high school students interested in career exploration. The Pine Lake Experience offers a variety of recreational and educational

Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) Other Programs

opportunities including swimming, boating, archery, crafts, campfires, fishing, and bowling. An overnight tent camping experience will also be offered. Recommended ages for campers is between the ages of 16 (sixteen) and 19 (nineteen).

The Pine Lake Experience is available to students with physical, emotional, or learning disabilities, however this experience may not be appropriate for every student with a disability. Two sessions of the Pine Lake Experience will be offered during the summer (usually the last two weeks of July). Please contact the school regarding cost information at 1-269-664-9260. All meals and activities are included in the cost. Scholarship and sponsorship information is available.

Transportation to and from MCTI and Bus/Train Station

MCTI will provide transportation to and from the bus and train station in Kalamazoo. This run leaves every Friday afternoon (or the last school day of the week) at approximately 2:45 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. Pick up for students is at approximately 7:30 and 9:30 p.m. on Sunday nights at the bus and train station.

If a student calls for a ride at an unscheduled time, they will be charged for the ride.

When a school term ends at 3:30 p.m. on a particular day, students don't have to be out of the dorm until noon on the next day. Transportation to the bus station will be after 3:30 p.m. on the last day of class and the next morning. Transportation to the bus station will not be done at hours other than these simply for the convenience of a student.

Forms:

- ✓ RA-29Z – Financial Plan Sheet

MRS Business Network Unit Other Programs

Public Act 315 of 1982 as amended
Rev. 8/2014

Policy:

Applicants who have a third party legally responsible for the payment of their vocational rehabilitation costs, such as Workers' Disability Compensation or No-Fault Auto Insurance shall be referred to, screened and, if approved, served by Michigan Rehabilitation Services' (MRS) Business Network Unit (BNU). Applicants who receive Long Term Disability (LTD) benefits shall be referred to the BNU for a determination of the existence of third party responsibility for vocational rehabilitation costs. An individual may have simultaneous cases with the General Program and BNU if the third party is not responsible for all rehabilitation services required, or there is a second, non-compensable disability that creates additional rehabilitation needs.

Procedure:

1. At Intake

At intake, MRS staff shall ascertain whether a third party has legal responsibility for vocational rehabilitation by using the Insurance Benefit Recipient Screening Questionnaire (Form RA-2948) or by asking the individual whether s/he is receiving Workers' Disability Compensation, Auto No-Fault (wage loss and/or medical insurance), or LTD benefits. If it is determined that there is potential third party liability, the individual shall be referred to the BNU within three days for determination of the existence of third party responsibility and for case management if third party reimbursement exists. If the BNU determines there is no third party liability, LTD or otherwise, the case is returned to the General Program for eligibility assessment and MRS services.

2. After A Case is Opened

If a case has been opened in the General Program and it is subsequently determined that a third party may be responsible for a customer's rehabilitation, the case shall be referred to the BNU for screening and primary case management, if approved for third party reimbursement. The case will remain open in the General Program until the BNU has determined approval for third party reimbursement. The individual shall be provided an opportunity to maintain an open case in both the General Program and BNU after consultation with the BNU and general counselor. When there are other rehabilitation services required that are not the responsibility of the third party, dual cases shall be maintained. The individual will be notified in writing if a case is closed in either program.

MRS Business Network Unit Other Programs

Public Act 315 of 1982 as amended
Rev. 8/2014

3. Cases Served by Private Vocational Rehabilitation Providers

The BNU is prohibited from opening cases being served by private rehabilitation providers. When such cases are referred to a district office, they shall be provided an eligibility assessment to determine eligibility for the General Program. Vocational rehabilitation services that are not the responsibility of the third party insurer shall be provided. Consultation with the BNU is strongly encouraged, especially as relates to LTD cases, to ensure that comparable benefits from a responsible third party are fully utilized.

4. Referrals to the BNU

Referrals to the BNU shall be made using a Consultation Referral form (Form RA-2947). These forms can be found in the Rehabilitation Services Manual or in E-Learn.

5. Settled Cases

An individual whose Workers' Disability Compensation, Auto No-Fault or LTD case has been settled shall be served by the General Program.

6. Third Party Terminated Cases

If a third party customer terminates payment for a customer still in need of vocational rehabilitation services or refuses to pay for needed services, the BNU may close its case and/or refer the individual to the General Program for services. The receiving counselor in the General Program shall honor an IPE developed by the BNU, unless the vocational goal and/or services depends exclusively on third party support, or it is agreed by the parties to amend the IPE.

7. Cases Served By Both Programs

In the event an individual is served by both programs, each case is processed in accordance with the procedures of the respective program. The counselor and BNU specialist shall coordinate development of services to assure consistency in planning and service delivery.

8. Cases in Litigation

For cases in litigation, consultation with the BNU specialist shall be initiated to clarify issues of third party liability. The customer's attorney and insurer shall be notified by lien letter, after obtaining written and informed consent from the customer that MRS is providing vocational rehabilitation services and, in the event that third party liability is established, MRS will request reimbursement for authorized services. The Lien Letter should be sent prior to or concurrently

**MRS Business Network Unit
Other Programs**

with IPE completion, when possible. The Lien Letter (Job Aid 8075d) is found in the Rehabilitation Services Manual and in the AWARE letters catalog.

9. Billing Costs to Litigated Cases

Cost services are tracked in AWARE. If or when a third party is determined liable for rehabilitation costs or when requested by an attorney or insurer, the counselor shall provide a letter and/or report identifying types of services provided, vendor name, dates, and cost of services to the third party to recover costs.

Information:

Prior to opening a case, counselors in both the General Program and BNU should check the database of each other's program to determine whether a case record already exists and requires service coordination or referral. General Program counselors may contact BNU Specialist, Donna Whitcomb at (269) 254-5993.

The BNU of MRS is an application of the federal requirement that MRS and the individual seek out and use comparable services and benefits under other programs when they are available. The BNU of MRS is authorized under Public Act 315 of Michigan to recover the costs of vocational rehabilitation from third parties where legal responsibility exists for such services under the State's Workers' Disability Compensation law and Auto No-Fault law and, where applicable, under LTD. Third party liability under LTD is applicable when an employer has purchased a disability insurance policy that includes vocational rehabilitation or return to work services. The BNU is uniquely qualified to determine the existence of third party liability for vocational rehabilitation, and to recover costs from third parties. The BNU applies the same eligibility criteria to applicants as the General Program. It provides services and outcomes consistent with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act and the liable third party. The BNU applies the same principles and practices of rehabilitation counseling as the General Program.

Forms and Job Aids:

- ✓ RA-2947 – Business Network Unit Consultation Referral
- ✓ RA-2948 – Insurance Benefit Recipients Screening Questionnaire
- ✓ 8075a Job Aid – State Employees' Job Aid
- ✓ 8075b Job Aid – Workers' Compensation Job Aid
- ✓ 8075c Job Aid – Auto No-Fault Job Aid
- ✓ 8075d Job Aid – Lien Letter
- ✓ 8075e Job Aid – Long Term Disability Job Aid

Ticket to Work/Social Security Reimbursement Other Programs

Rev. 7/2015

Policy:

The Ticket to Work program is available to individuals who are eligible for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) based on disability. Please refer to Rehabilitation Services Manual (RSM) [Item 3100](#) - Eligibility Criteria for policy regarding presumption of eligibility and Eligibility Determination requirements.

When a Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) customer is eligible for a Ticket under the Ticket to Work program, vocational rehabilitation services will be provided based on the customer's agreement to place the Ticket with MRS at the time the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is signed. If the Ticket has already been assigned to a provider other than MRS, the counselor will be notified, and the customer must decide whether to remain with the Employment Network (EN) to whom they have assigned their Ticket or place their Ticket with MRS. Note: there are exceptions in those instances where the Ticket is held by another state VR agency; please contact the Policy Unit for assistance.

If a customer receives social security benefits after the development of an IPE, the plan must be amended to show that the customer has made an informed choice and agrees that the ticket will be placed with MRS.

All applicants shall receive an orientation explaining choices under the Ticket program including information regarding resources for benefits counseling and SSA work incentives.

The Social Security Consent for Release of Information ([RA-28 – SSA-3288](#)) must be signed and a copy retained in the case record of SSA recipients, giving MRS permission to communicate with SSA and Maximus.

Procedures:

The MRS counselor shall obtain verification of Social Security status for applicants eligible for SSI and/or SSDI benefits based on disability. This information shall be retained in the MRS case record. (RSM Item 2080 - Hard Copy Case File, Contents and Order)

Ticket to Work/Social Security Reimbursement Other Programs

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Examples of acceptable verification:

- A copy of the SSA award notice;
- A letter from SSA notifying the applicant of eligibility;
- SSA query or other written confirmation of receipt of SSDI or SSI from the local Social Security office; or
- Ticket award notice – this is an actual Ticket or verification from Maximus that the individual is eligible for a Ticket.

Orientation Procedures

All SSA case records shall contain documentation that the following information was provided during orientation.

- Customers may participate in the ticket program by working with MRS or an EN as the provider of VR services
- The customer's signature on an IPE signifies that customer agrees to work with MRS as the provider of choice.
- If MRS is notified by Maximus that a Ticket is currently assigned or in use with another provider and this occurs after the MRS counselor and customer have approved an IPE, the customer must decide to remain with the current provider or work with MRS. A Ticket may not be simultaneously assigned to MRS and an EN.

Ticket Procedures for MRS Staff

If IPE services have been initiated and MRS subsequently is informed that the Ticket has been assigned elsewhere, the MRS counselor must:

1. Notify their manager a customer on their caseload has assigned their Ticket to an EN;
2. Immediately stop all services and cancel all outstanding authorizations;
3. Notify the customer that services have been stopped using the "Stop Authorization" letter in AWARE;
4. Explain to the customer that a Ticket cannot be simultaneously assigned to MRS and an EN;
5. Based on the customer's decision to remain with MRS or to work with the EN, document the customer's decision in the case record. (a) If the customer chooses to work with the EN, the case must be closed. (RSM 7100 - Case Closed Not Rehabilitated) [411.40 CFR](#)
(b) If the customer chooses to work with MRS, the customer must send written notice to

Ticket to Work/Social Security Reimbursement Other Programs

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Maximus requesting ticket removal. Note: Services may resume upon counselor notification that the ticket has been placed with MRS.

Ticket Procedures for Customers

When a Ticket has been assigned to an Employment Network (EN), either the EN or the customer must send written notice to Maximus requesting removal of their ticket before MRS can provide services (by fax or mail: Maximus TTW at (703) 893-4149, or Maximus TTWP, PO Box 1433, Alexandria, VA 22313).

Resources

As MRS works with individuals eligible for SSI and/or SSDI based on disability, it is important to make use of the employment supports and options available to them in pursuing an employment outcome. Counselors and managers should encourage applicants and customers to use Community Work Incentive coordinators and Work Incentive Liaisons to learn about work incentives and benefits planning. Information and training for counselors is available at [E-Learn](#) and [Maximus, Inc.](#), and for customers at [Choose Work](#).

Information:

The “purpose of Social Security’s Ticket to Work program is to expand the universe of providers. . .” Any entity contracting with SSA under the program “assumes responsibility for the coordination and delivery of employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, or other support services to beneficiaries assigning tickets to it.” [Code of Federal Regulations 411](#)

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA) of 1999, is a program offered by the Social Security Administration for persons receiving SSDI, SSI or concurrent benefits based on disability. Its purpose is to increase the financial independence and self-sufficiency of SSI recipients and Social Security Disability beneficiaries through an expanded choice of providers for the provision of employment services, vocational rehabilitation services, or other support services.

Amended in 2008, the program offers a new service delivery model, Partnership Plus. Under this model, both a State VR agency and/or another service provider known as an Employment Network, may sequentially serve the same beneficiary and receive reimbursement from SSA, provided SSA payment criteria are met, as a ticket can only be designated to one service provider

Ticket to Work/Social Security Reimbursement Other Programs

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at a time. Beneficiaries achieving yearly progress goals, as established by SSA, will be exempt from a Continuing Disability Review per federal requirements.

Service Providers of the Ticket Program

A State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency can participate in the Ticket to Work program in one of two ways: Cost reimbursement or as an Employment Network (EN). MRS has chosen the cost reimbursement option. A State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agency is the only program authorized by law and automatically approved to provide services to beneficiaries without becoming an EN.

Employment Networks (ENs) contract with SSA to provide services with beneficiaries. The payment system is different, as ENs are reimbursed by either the Outcome Payment System or the Outcome-Milestone payment system.

As a current participant under the Cost Reimbursement Payment System, MRS receives notification of ticket status through a secure electronic data exchange with Maximus.

Refer to Job Aid 8100a Rev. 7-2015 – Understanding Ticket to Work Concepts, for additional information.

View the document [Social Security's Vocational Rehabilitation Reimbursement Program](#) for information regarding the Cost Reimbursement method.

Benefits Planning Information/Resources

E-Learn's [Social Security Ticket to Work program](#) includes forms, job aids, and resources, and information about Social Security Work Incentives. You can also find valuable material on the Ticket at [Maximus](#) and in the [Social Security Red Book](#) that can be found in most offices or on-line.




For Social Security ticket assignment issues, contact the Social Security Claims Analyst, [Anita Barkley-Smith](#) at (517) 373-4469.

Job Aids

- Refer to Job Aid 8100a-JA Rev 7-2015, Understanding Ticket Concepts
- Refer to Job Aid 8100b-JA Rev 7-2015, Ticket Held by an Employment Network

Ticket to Work/Social Security Reimbursement Other Programs

Forms

-  SSA Consent for Release of Information - RA-28-SSA-3288 Rev 5-2010
-  Ticket Assignment Form (OBSOLETE) - SSA-1365
-  Ticket to Work Inactivation - TTW-Inactive

State Civil Service Placement Other Programs

Information:

There are special procedures available for persons with disabilities to access employment with the Michigan Department of Civil Service if they are not able to compete through the standard examination process. These consist of:

- The 12-Month Trial Appointment Program. The 12-Month Trial Process for Persons with Disabilities can be found at: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/CS630_14467_7.pdf. The Application for Persons with Disabilities and Request for Reasonable Accommodation in the Written Examination Process, CS-944 Revised 5/2011, can be found at: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/CS-944_HandicapDesignApp_14472_7.pdf. Contact person: Vivian Tansel 517-373-3062
- The Return to Work of Injured Employees Programs*

*The Return to Work Program is administered by the Office of State Employer, Employee Health Management. Additional information is contained in the Michigan Department of Civil Service Advisory (MDCS) Bulletin No. 3.12-1 located at the MDCS website at http://www.michigan.gov/mdcs/0,1607,7-147-6877_8152_9795-243085--,00.html or call (517) 241-9090.

The 12-month trial appointment process through the Michigan Department of Civil Service allows individuals with disabilities in applicant pools, under certain conditions, without participating in the appraisal process administered by the department for classification. This process is designed for persons, whose disabilities prevent them from competing, even when reasonable accommodations are provided, with other candidates in a standard written, electronic, or other appraisal process.

Applicants for the 12-month Trial Appointment must be referred and certified by Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Michigan Commission for the Blind, or VA. Individuals submitting applications directly to the Dept of Civil Services, or individuals referred by other rehabilitation agencies, are referred to authorized certifying agencies, who can certify them for the process after verification of the necessary supporting documentation.

The applicant must be self-designated as a person with a disability, as defined by applicable state and federal laws, by completing the Civil Service Form CS-944, Application for Persons with Disabilities and Request for Reasonable Accommodation in the Appraisal Process.

Applications are reviewed to determine if reasonable accommodation can assist the applicant in the written, electronic, or other appraisal process.

State Civil Service Placement Other Programs

Applicants certified for the process must possess the required education and experience for the requested classifications listed on the Classified Civil Service Application (CS-102) and Application for Twelve-month Trial Appointment Program for Persons with Disabilities (CS-630) forms.

Applicants must be able to perform the essential functions of the classification for which they are certified, with or without reasonable accommodations. Requests for reasonable accommodations on the job may be necessary and provided by the employer.

Applicants approved for this process are included in applicant pools in accordance with the time period established by the Department of Civil Service.

Once an applicant is appointed from the applicant pool, the 12-month probation period will serve in lieu of the written, electronic, or other appraisal process to evaluate candidates for positions in state service. Upon satisfactory completion of the probation period, permanent status may be granted. The same probationary rating methods and time periods are observed as in regular appointments. Persons with a disability who receive less than satisfactory ratings are subject to the same conditions as other employees, including separation from employment.

Appraisal methods that consist of an assessment of an applicant's education and experience are exempted from this process.

To enable successful job performance, whenever possible, sponsoring rehabilitation agencies may provide supportive services to persons with disabilities appointed under this process and to employing departments and agencies.

The Agency must submit Form CS-944, Application for Persons with Disabilities and Request for Reasonable Accommodation in the Written, Electronic, and Other Appraisal Process; Form CS-630, Application for Twelve-month Trial Appointment Program for Persons with Disabilities; and the Examination Application Form.

The forms must include the classification and appraisal method, identification of the disability and the rationale for the certification, and signature of the counselor. When completing the forms, it is very important to include a description of how the disability places the applicant at a competitive disadvantage in the written testing situation. Where possible, describe specific functional loss; e.g., actual visual acuity; decibels of hearing loss; type of functional loss of specific limbs, etc. Submission of medical documentation is not necessary.

The Michigan Department of Civil Service will review the application to determine if the applicant is eligible for the program.

State Civil Service Placement Other Programs

If the applicant is eligible for the program, the Michigan Department of Civil Service will include the applicant in applicant pools for which they are qualified, send notification letter to the applicant, and send a copy of the approved Form CS-630 application to the authorized certifying Agency counselor.

If the applicant is not eligible for the program, the Michigan Department of Civil Service will indicate rejection and the rationale for the rejection of the CS-630 application and send a copy of the disapproved CS-630 application to the authorized certifying Agency counselor.

Questions regarding this regulation should be directed to the Department of Civil Service, P.O. Box 30002, 400 South Pine Street, Lansing, Michigan 48909, (517) 373-3048 or 1-800-788-1766, or MDCS-BHRS@Michigan.gov.

Vocationally Handicapped Certification Other Programs

Policy:

Individuals may be certified by Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) for Vocationally Handicapped Certification if they meet the following criteria:

- Have a medically certifiable heart, back, epilepsy, or diabetes disability;
- Are unemployed at the time the Worker's Certificate is issued;
- Have no pending job offer; and
- Are able to establish that they have been rejected for employment because of the disability.

Procedure:

Medical Records to Determine Eligibility

Although there are no specific recency requirements for medical records used to determine eligibility for Vocationally Handicapped Worker Certification, rehabilitation counselors shall determine whether available medical records are adequate to assess the applicant's current condition. Some conditions improve over time; for example, medical records which are several years old may not be adequate to diagnose a current back condition when the applicant's previous diagnosis was acute back sprain, from which s/he has recovered and become asymptomatic. Eligibility may not be based on history of a condition which no longer exists.

Based on federal regulations, medical evaluations may not be purchased for individuals who request only Vocationally Handicapped Worker Certification. It is not necessary to open a case for these individuals. Instead, a file folder, labeled "Vocationally Handicapped Only," shall be established for each P.A.183 applicant. Certification records for individuals who are not clients are stored and shipped in accordance with the **Case Storage and Shipping Instructions** outlined in this document.

Documenting Impairment is a "Substantial Obstacle to Employment"

Applicants for P.A. 183 certification must provide documentation they have been turned down for employment because of their disability, in order to demonstrate their impairment is a "substantial obstacle to employment," as required by P.A. 183. Individuals who already have an offer of hire will not be certified as they are not considered to have a substantial obstacle to employment. Employer rejection may not be assumed for an individual who has not been in the labor market. An individual cannot be certified until there has actually been a denial of employment for disability related reasons.

Vocationally Handicapped Certification Other Programs

Individuals who are eligible for extended assessment or for vocational rehabilitation services and have not had a job offer are not required to provide documentation of employer rejection.

On-the-Job Training or On-the-Job Evaluation

A Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certification should be completed prior to placing an individual in on-the-job training or on-the-job evaluation. If the worker certification is not completed prior to the initiation of evaluation or training, a community rehabilitation program or employer would not meet eligibility requirements and, therefore, would not qualify for employer certification.

Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certificate (RA-4476A) Procedure

The Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certificate also known as a Wallet Card (RA-4476A) may not be issued after employment has begun. *Only counselors and managers may sign certificates.* Other staff may gather data, complete case recording and conduct follow-up.

To document eligibility, the counselor must:

1. Obtain medical information to confirm the individual's disability.
2. Complete Part I of the Application for Vocationally Handicapped Certification Form (RA-70).
3. Obtain the Applicant's signature or, as applicable, the signature of the legal guardian or parent and date of signature. The Applicant's signature affirms that he/she is unemployed and allows Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) to forward records from his/her closed case record to the Vocationally Handicapped Provision of the Second Injury Fund for storage at the time the case record is scheduled to be destroyed. These records will be used to document that a disability was certified, if a claim is filed at a later date.
4. Obtain the employer's signature, position and date of signature in Part II as confirmation the Applicant was not hired due to inability to perform the job because of the disability checked in Part I.
5. Submit the RA-70 with the case record to the designated District Certificate Authorizer; i.e., either the counselor or the manager.

Part III.A. of the Application for Vocationally Handicapped Certification (RA-70) should be completed by the Authorizer on the same date that Part I is completed. If it is completed later, the counselor must obtain an updated, written verification of unemployment from the Applicant. The Authorizer must review the case record to ensure eligibility before completing and signing Part III.A.

Vocationally Handicapped Certification Other Programs

After Parts I-III of Form RA-70 have been completed, a Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certificate (RA-4476A) may be issued to the Applicant. The Certificate must be completed and signed by the Authorizer before it is issued to the certified individual.

The Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certificate expires two years after the issuance date. It must be renewed to continue certification. If a new certificate is requested, the same procedures must be followed as for original certificate, including completion of an RA-70.

Once you have completed the Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certificate, log the activity using the RA-76 – Vocationally Handicapped Certificate Log.

Vocationally Handicapped Employer's Certificate (RA-4476) Procedures

Any individual, firm, facility, or organization who is potentially liable for a claim under the Michigan Workers' Disability Compensation Act can request an employer certification.

Employers not potentially liable under the Michigan Worker's Disability Compensation Act are not eligible for certification. For example, federal government employers are covered by federal laws; interstate railroads are covered by the Federal Employers Liability Act; seamen on navigable waters are covered by the Merchant Marine Act of 1920; and people loading and unloading vessels are covered by the Longshoremen's and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act. Only those employers found eligible under Michigan's jurisdiction are afforded the protection of Chapter 9.

Only counselors and managers (Authorizers) may sign Vocationally Handicapped Employer's Certificates (RA-4476). Other staff may gather data and complete case recording and follow-up.

Note: Individuals who are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services or Extended Assessment and have not had a job offer are not required to provide documentation of employer rejection. Therefore, Part II of RA-70 would not need to be completed for those individuals.

1. The issuing counselor must complete Part I and II of the Employer's Certificate Form (RA-4476). The date must be the same on the RA-70, Part III.B. and RA-4476, Part II. Note: Three copies of the RA-4476 should be sent to the employer. Two of the copies should be stamped "Copy".
2. The Authorizer must review the certification documents to ensure their accuracy and completeness before signing and dating Part II of the Vocationally Handicapped Employer's Certificate (RA-4476).
3. Issuance of the Employer's Certificate must be recorded on the Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certification Log (RA-76).
4. The counselor must ensure delivery of the RA-4476 to the employer as indicated in PART III.B. of the RA-70. It may be necessary to follow up with the employer to ensure timely

Vocationally Handicapped Certification Other Programs

return of the completed RA-4476 form. One certified follow-up letter is required to notify an employer to return the certificate within 60 days of hire and the consequences of not doing so; Form RA-4478 may be used. Follow-up attempts must be documented in the case record or Vocationally Handicapped Fund file and on the RA-70, Part III.B.

5. Once the completed certificate has been received, the counselor must review it for accuracy and completeness. The date it was received and judged accurate and “complete” must be recorded on the bottom of the RA-4476 using a date stamp.
6. The employer must be notified in writing the certificate has been received (unless it was returned by certified mail). Written notification to the employer must be recorded in Part III.B. of the RA-70.
7. Make two copies of the employer certificate, stamped “copy”. The District Office retains one copy in the master file, one copy must also be sent to the Second Injury Fund, Vocationally Handicapped Provision, 7150 Harris Drive, P.O. Box 30182, Lansing, Michigan 48909. *(If you are using pre-printed, 3-part forms ordered from the DMB Materials and Management Warehouse, the white copy goes to the employer, the canary copy goes to the Second Injury Fund Vocationally Handicapped Provision and the pink copy is placed in the master file.)*

Vocationally Handicapped Certificate Log – RA-76

The Vocationally Handicapped Certificate Logs must be kept **permanently** by each district office, which provides the district office the ability to communicate the date of transfer of an inactive file to the Second Injury Fund. Additionally, once a year when requested, the Vocationally Handicapped Certificate Log will be forwarded to Central Office for tabulation of Vocationally Handicapped Employer and Worker Certificate numbers.

Case Storage and Shipping Instructions

A separate manila file folder must be set up for each **“Vocationally Handicapped Only”** non-customer and customer record. (A non-customer record is a case that is not opened in AWARE.) When a case is opened in AWARE, the manila file folder is maintained with the regular case record until the case is closed in AWARE. Then, the folder for the Vocationally Handicapped Provision (VHP) is pulled from the regular case record and stored with the other VHP folders. Folders are necessary to ensure ease of handling and prevent loss of materials during the time the VHP cases must be stored by the Vocationally Handicapped Provision (VHP files are retained for 30 years after the file becomes inactive).

The tab of the folder must be prepared as follows:

LAST NAME, FIRST NAME	DOB: 00-00-0000
SS # 0000	APPLICATION FOR HANDICAPPED CERTIFICATION

Vocationally Handicapped Certification Other Programs

Minimally, the folder must contain:

- ✓ The RA-70, "Application for Vocationally Handicapped Certification".
- ✓ Applicant's complete address
- ✓ Applicant's birthdate
- ✓ Applicant's Social Security Number (*last 4 digits only*)
- ✓ Medical evidence used to certify the disability(ies).

If Applicable:

- ✓ The district copy of the RA-4476, "Vocationally Handicapped Employer's Certificate".
- ✓ A copy of the letter acknowledging receipt of the RA-4476 from the employer, or a certified mail receipt.
- ✓ Other relevant correspondence and documents.

Voided Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certificate or Employer's Certificate

If a Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certificate or Employer's Certificate is voided at any point in the process, the guidelines in the Case Storage and Shipping Instructions section apply.

Transferring VHP Files to the Second Injury Fund

Vocationally Handicapped Provision files are retained in the district office for three years following the fiscal year in which final action was taken. In February through April, all customer VHP records eligible for transfer are boxed and shipped to:

Assistant Administrator
Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
Second Injury Fund, Vocationally Handicapped Provision
7150 Harris Drive
P.O. Box 30182
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Districts can order record retention boxes from the current state-contracted office products vendor. VHP records must be boxed in alphabetical order. Each box must contain an alphabetized list of the records enclosed in that box. (Note: If you don't have enough files to fill a record retention box, you may use a large envelope.) A copy of the list must be kept in your office as well. The list should identify the date you are sending the files, your district office and

Vocationally Handicapped Certification Other Programs

then each client's last name (in alphabetical order), first name, last 4 digits of social security number and date of birth.

VHP records should be mailed to the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Second Injury Fund, Vocationally Handicapped Provision by interdepartmental mail or certified mail.

Retrieval of VHP Records

When it is necessary to retrieve a VHP file from the Fund, a written request must be sent to the assistant administrator at the Second Injury Fund at the address above or an e-mail can be sent to funds@michigan.gov requesting the VHP file. The assistant administrator will need the name, date of birth, last 4 digits of social security number, date of transfer to the fund, and your office name and address for forwarding of the file. The entire file will be sent to your office and must be returned to the Fund within 5 working days using certified mail. Files may be the basis for legal proceedings; it is essential all materials are returned.

Information:

Vocationally Handicapped Certification (also known as PA 183 since 1972) limits an employer's liability for Workers' Compensation payments to 52 weeks per injury for any employee appropriately certified as having a heart, back, epileptic, or diabetic disability prior to hire. The Second Injury Fund pays all costs associated with the vocational rehabilitation of certified employees, from the date of injury. This legislation does not limit an employee's entitlement to benefits, but limits the number of weeks the employer is responsible for workers' compensation benefits, and eliminates the employer's responsibility for the cost of vocational rehabilitation under Section 319. If the employee is in need of vocational rehabilitation services and/or is entitled to compensation coverage beyond the number of weeks for which the employer is liable, the benefits are provided from the Vocationally Handicapped Provision of the Second Injury Fund established by the State Legislature. The Fund is maintained through an annual assessment against all insurance companies that write workers' compensation policies in the State of Michigan, and all employers who self-insure their workers' compensation liability in Michigan.

MRS is designated in the legislation as the certifying agency for the Vocationally Handicapped Worker Program.

There are two types of certificates in the Vocationally Handicapped certification process.

- A Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certificate, RA-4476-A, issued to the individual is a wallet size card that certifies that the applicant met certification criteria. It may be used to inform an employer of potential coverage once Employer Certification is completed.

Vocationally Handicapped Certification Other Programs

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- A Vocationally Handicapped Employer's Certificate, RA 4476, issued to the employer, is necessary to complete the certification process. This completed document initiates employer coverage by the Vocationally Handicapped Provisions of the Second Injury Fund.

Vocationally Handicapped Certification is authorized under Section 915 of Chapter 9 of the Worker's Disability Compensation Act.

Forms:

Forms related to this manual item are the:

- ✓ RA-70 – Application for Vocationally Handicapped Certification
- ✓ RA-4476 – Vocationally Handicapped Employer's Certificate
- ✓ RA-4476a – Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certificate
- ✓ RA-4478 – Vocationally Handicapped Worker's Certification Letter, and
- ✓ RA-76 – Vocationally Handicapped Certificate Log

Wage Deviation Other Programs

Policy:

Individuals shall be placed in suitable jobs at prevailing wages as allowed by their capability and consistent with their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE); however, wages below the legal minimum may be appropriate if they are commensurate with the individual's production rate and conform to governmental wage and hour regulations. The employer must obtain wage deviation certification.

Procedure:

The Federal Government issues special sub-minimum wage certificates and the State of Michigan issues wage deviation certificates. Federal and State procedures are outlined below.

Federal Certification

Federal certification is required for establishments to pay sub-minimum wages to workers covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) of 1938, as amended and who have a disability for the work to be performed.

Federal certificates are issued to establishments, which pay sub minimum wages rather than issued to individual workers, and are valid for either a 12 or 24 month period on an annually renewable basis. Employers apply for certificates by submitting Forms WH-226 "Application for Authority to Employ Workers with Disabilities at Special Minimum Wages" and WH-226A "Supplemental Data Sheet for Application for Authority to Employ Workers with Disabilities at Special Minimum Wages" to the Wage and Hour Division of the United States Department of Labor at the following address:

U.S. Department of Labor
Wage and Hour Division
230 South Dearborn St. Room 530
Chicago, Illinois 60604-1757
Telephone: (312) 596-7195

Web Address for Informational Guides and Fact Sheets:
http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,4601,7-154-11407_59886---,00.html

Approval of an application takes approximately 30-45 days. Employers applying for the first time or who have not submitted a timely renewal application must pay wages consistent with the state minimum wage, the federal minimum wage or, if there is a government contract, the Service Contract Act (SCA) wage determination rate (whichever is the higher applicable rate) for any work performed until the certificate is issued. Certificates are valid for either a 12 or 24 month period from the approval date. As a courtesy, the U.S.D.O.L. Wage and Hour Division

Wage Deviation Other Programs

sends renewal applications to employers approximately 60 days prior to the expiration of certificates. Certificate holders are responsible for submitting renewal applications in a timely manner, and failure to receive a renewal application from the Wage and Hour Division is not a valid reason for failure to submit the application. Unless employers renew their certificate or obtain an extension, sub-minimum wages may not be paid beyond the expiration date.

Counselors may assist employers in completing applications for certification. Assistance can include the gathering of prevailing wage rate information in the local area, or assessing employee productivity.

On the form WH-226, a state agency or the U.S. Veterans Administration may authorize Temporary authority for the vocational rehabilitation programs they administer. This temporary authority for an employer to pay sub-minimum wages will exist for 90 days and cannot be extended or renewed by the issuing agency. This may assist counselors in arranging on-the-job evaluation or training programs, schoolwork experiences, and transitional or temporary employment for individuals who perform at non-competitive rates. Employers must apply for a regular certificate if they agree to hire an individual permanently. Applications should be submitted as soon as the decision to hire has been made rather than after the Temporary Certificate has expired, if one has been authorized.

State of Michigan Certification

A Michigan Individual Wage Deviation Certification is required before an employer may pay a sub-minimum wage to a worker covered by the Michigan Minimum Wage Law of 1964. The state law applies to establishments with gross annual receipts under \$500,000.00 unless engaged in interstate commerce, and must employ at least two individuals sixteen (16) years or older.

Michigan wage deviation certificates are issued for individual workers rather than for all employees of the certified establishment, and are renewed annually. An employer requests certification for a specified employee and wage rate on an "Application for Individual Wage Deviation Certification". The application is signed by both the employer and employee, and mailed to:

Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA)
Wage & Hour Division
PO Box 30476
Lansing, MI 48909-7976
Telephone: (517) 322-1825

Web Address for Informational Guides and Fact Sheets:
<http://www.michigan.gov/lara/0,1607,7-154-27673---,00.html>

Wage Deviation Other Programs

Applications for deviated wage certification are forwarded to the Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) Policy unit, along with a "Wage Deviation Appraisal Report" by the LARA Wage and Hour Division. The "Wage Deviation Appraisal Report" form is forwarded to the local MRS district office to be completed by a counselor within two weeks. The counselor may open a case file to purchase diagnostic services if needed to appraise the work capacity of a non-client.

Prior to completing the "Wage Deviation Appraisal Report", the counselor is required to conduct an on-site appraisal of the worker's productivity, and determine the resulting commensurate wage rate. The counselor then recommends whether the employer's proposed wage rate should be approved, modified, or denied. The signed "Wage Deviation Appraisal Report" is forwarded to the MRS Policy Unit for review and returned to the LARA Wage and Hour Division. The Wage & Hour Division determines approval of a wage deviation application.

Information:

A "commensurate" wage is that which reflects the productivity of the worker with a disability proportionate to both the productivity and prevailing wages of non-disabled workers performing similar work. If, for example, a housekeeper with a disability cleans only half as many rooms per shift as non-disabled housekeepers who receive \$9.00 per hour, the commensurate wage would be 50% of the prevailing wage, or \$4.50 per hour.

Both federal and state certifications require the employer to document worker productivity and prevailing wages for the types of work being performed at sub-minimum rates. Employers must also periodically adjust deviated wages to reflect changes in performance, or in the wages being paid to local non-disabled workers performing similar work. If such adjustments result in a wage that meets or exceeds the minimum wage, certification is no longer necessary.

Establishments may use the prevailing wages paid to their own non-disabled employees when computing a commensurate wage rate. Employers who hire disabled workers only, must use a prevailing wage, which is representative of the local economy. In either case, the sources from which prevailing wage information is obtained must be documented.

Forms:

- ✓ WH-226 – Application for Authority to Employ workers with Disabilities at Special Minimum Wage
- ✓ WH-226A – Supplemental Data Sheet for Application for Authority to Employ Workers with Disabilities at Special Minimum Wages
- ✓ RA-8200a – Application for Individual Wage Deviation Certification
- ✓ RA-8200b-temp – Wage Deviation Appraisal Report

Workers Disability Compensation Other Programs

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Section VIII

Rev. 1/2000

Policy:

Applicants for services with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) who are receiving Workers' Compensation benefits should be referred to MRS' Disability Management Program. A case shall also be referred to the Disability Management Program if an insurance carrier elects to pay for rehabilitation costs during litigation.

Procedure:

Individuals with Workers' Compensation claims may be served in MRS' General Program if:

- The claim is in litigation,
- The claim has been redeemed, or
- They are receiving Workers' Compensation, but it has been determined by the Disability Management Program that they require rehabilitation services that are not the responsibility of the insurance carrier or self-insured employer.

Form RA-140, Workers' Disability Compensation Case Information Report is required to be sent to the Bureau of Worker's Disability Compensation when a case is opened in the General Program, if the case is in litigation or the case will be served concurrently in the Disability Management Program.

The client's written permission should be obtained to exchange any information, other than the RA-140, with the Bureau of Workers' Disability Compensation.

Information:

Under the Michigan's Workers' Compensation Act, injured workers are entitled to weekly benefits and medical and vocational services if the employer is legally responsible for the injury.

For consultation and assistance, the Vocational Rehabilitation Division, Bureau of Workers' Disability Compensation can be contacted at:

Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
Workers' Disability Compensation Bureau
P.O. Box 30016
Lansing, MI 48909
1-(888) 396-5041

Workers Disability Compensation Other Programs

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Staff of the MRS Disability Management Program can also be consulted.

A litigated case is one that is involved in some type of legal proceeding. If a dispute occurs, the claimant (client) or the carrier may petition for a hearing before a magistrate. This dispute might revolve around the injury itself, the payment of weekly benefits, the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, or other issues.

Carriers cannot be required to provide vocational rehabilitation in those cases where they have filed for a hearing to determine their responsibility to provide Workers' Compensation benefits.

Neither is a carrier obligated to provide vocational rehabilitation in those cases where an order to pay Workers' Compensation is appealed and awaiting a decision.

Counselors can call the Vocational Rehabilitation Division of the Bureau of Worker's Disability Compensation to determine the status of an individual's claim.

Individuals whose cases are redeemed receive a complete and final cash settlement. The carrier is not responsible for further costs. The client and counselor should determine the client's ability to contribute to rehabilitation costs from the settlement.

Under the Workers' Disability Compensation Act (Section 418.319) employers and insurance carriers are responsible only for services needed to address the work-related injury. They are not responsible for services needed to address other disabilities or for services to family members. They may not be responsible for training programs of more than 52 weeks.

Forms:

The forms related to this manual item is the RA-140 – Workers' Disability Compensation Case Information.

SECTION IX

**Purchased Services
Fiscal Processes**

Policy:

All purchased services for applicants or eligible individuals shall be authorized prior to or simultaneously with the initiation of services and according to all legal, State purchasing and Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) requirements.

Only vocational rehabilitation services for individuals that are required to determine eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs, develop an IPE, or implement an IPE or IPE amendment may be purchased.

The counselor shall not authorize for services that have been completed, or for bills that were previously incurred.

Procedure:

The justification for an authorization of MRS funds must be documented in an AWARE Case Note.

Purchased services after an IPE has been developed require an IPE Amendment when they meet the criteria for an IPE Amendment identified in Policy 5150, IPE Amendment.

Authorizations must be paid in full prior to case closure.

Rates of Payment Fiscal Processes

Policy:

The maximum rate of payment for services shall be the usual, customary and reasonable (UCR) rate charged for the service not to exceed that charged other public agencies. The service that will meet the individual's vocational rehabilitation need at the least cost to Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) shall be the service purchased. MRS shall not place an absolute and arbitrary dollar limit on specific service categories or on the total services provided to the individual.

MRS shall not be responsible for the cost of out-of-state services in excess of the cost of in-state services if either service would meet the individual's vocational rehabilitation needs.

Information:

When a lower rate than UCR is charged to other public agencies for a service, the lower rate is the rate to be paid.

The interaction between consumer informed choice and the policy on rates of payment is detailed in procedure related to Policy 2225 on Informed Choice.

When an individual chooses a service or service provider whose cost is higher than another service or service provider that will also meet the individual's vocational rehabilitation need, the counselor is not required to pay the higher cost because it is the individual's choice. Individuals have the right to choose a higher cost service or service provider. One of the disadvantages of that choice is that MRS payment will not exceed that of the lower cost service or service provider that also meets the individual's vocational rehabilitation need. The individual or other resources are responsible for the difference.

Service Provider Standards

Fiscal Processes

Policy:

Service providers from whom Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) purchases services shall be licensed, certified, registered, or accredited as applicable for the occupation, facility or service to be provided. In the absence of these requirements, other equivalent competency assurances are required. Any facility in which services are provided shall meet the accessibility standards required by law, have staff or make arrangements to meet the special communication needs of applicants or eligible individuals, shall take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment individuals with disabilities and assure MRS that policies and procedures are in place to prevent fraud, waste and abuse.

Independent Contractors Fiscal Processes

Policy

Independent Contractors are persons who are employed and paid directly by the applicant or the eligible individual for whom they provide a service. Such arrangements may be needed for legal or tax reasons and/or to advance self-direction for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Examples are life skills coach, personal care attendant, job coach, mentor, and advisor.

Procedures:

These providers and services have arisen due to the intensive nature and scope of services which may be necessary for persons with the most significant disabilities to take their place in the competitive work environment. Such services generally do not have a national or state credentialing standard. If no provider standards exist for these service providers, they shall meet minimum education and training requirements for their practice. Training for such services is often offered by community service organizations, such as United Cerebral Palsy and community mental health providers, or may be available through a university or community college. Any assistants whom the independent contractor hires shall be qualified to perform the duties assigned.

The independent contractor assumes all fiscal obligations and must maintain liability insurance. When the individual and counselor decide on a service and provider requiring independent contracting, the individual and the independent contractor are to agree on services to be provided and payment for the service. The counselor may assist in reaching an agreement with the independent contractor, if called upon by the eligible individual. If Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) assists in making payment to the individual to support the services of an independent contractor, a copy of a signed purchase agreement must be in the case record. If the service is being provided as part of the employment goal, the service must be included in the IPE.

Each service shall be separately documented with a Purchase of Service Agreement, RA-4589 for a specific service, over a specified period of time at a pre-determined cost. The counselor shall maintain a copy of any such Agreement in the individual's service record.

Information:

Independent contractors, by definition, are not employed by, or under contract to an accredited rehabilitation facility or other private or public entity which assumes liability for its employees and/or persons under contract. They perform work or provide a service for which there is no national or state approved or recognized standard, and the services they provide do not fall within the scope of practice of other occupations for which a service or national standard exists.

Independent Contractors
Fiscal Processes

Forms:

The form related to this manual item is the RA-4589 – Purchase of Service Agreement.

Purchase of Services and Priority Order Fiscal Processes

9/2014

Policy:

Services for clients shall be purchased in the following priority order:

1. An individual-group authorization to vendor
2. A direct or recurring payment to a client, when a vendor authorization is not possible
3. Use of the emergency payment fund, when neither a vendor authorization nor direct authorization are possible
4. Use of a third party, when none of the above are possible.

Procedure:

The case record shall document the rationale for an exception to the priority order.

Authorization to Vendor Fiscal Processes

9/2014

Policy:

Authorizations to vendors are the primary means of purchasing services for individuals. It is federally required that they be issued prior to or simultaneously with the initiation of services.

Procedure:

The AWARE 4-Step Vendor Authorization process shall be followed to draft, issue and pay a vendor authorization.

The vendor must be registered in MAIN before a payment can be processed.

To Generate an Individual Authorization:

The following information is necessary to generate an individual authorization:

1. The beginning and ending dates of each service (the actual projected end date shall be used whenever possible);
2. Budget to be used;
3. The name of the vendor who will provide the service(s);
4. Where the authorization is to be mailed (i.e. individual, vendor, or other location);
5. A service category and detailed written description of the good(s) and/or service(s) to be provided;
6. The amount authorized per service;
7. Cost of each specific unit of service and the number of units authorized;
8. Individual authorizations shall be issued as a one-page document.

An individual authorization, including amended or edited authorizations, shall be signed by the primary counselor of the caseload or any counselor or supervisor on the caseload group. The signature also verifies the accuracy of the authorization. Counselors may not sign an authorization that exceeds their approval authority (security limit).

Two copies of the individual authorization are to be printed. One **signed** copy will be provided to the vendor, one **signed** copy is kept in the file.

Authorization to Vendor Fiscal Processes

9/2014

To Generate a Group Authorization

Prior to authorization, each customer file shall contain a case note reflecting the need for the good(s) or service(s). A group authorization is limited to the approved categories of service as outlined in 9125a-DD: Data Dictionary for AWARE-Vendor, Direct and Recurring Authorizations.

In addition to procedures 1-7 for an individual authorization identified above, the following information is necessary to generate a group authorization.

- Customer(s) identified that will be included in the authorization.
- Budget identified that will be utilized for each customer.
- Unlike the individual authorization, when a group authorization is issued it will be a multiple page document.

The Site Manager or District Manager shall be responsible for issuing a group authorization and Drafting of Payment. Release of payment shall be made by individual with the appropriate approval authority (security limit).

One signed copy will be provided to the vendor and one signed copy is kept in the district office. Additionally, an individual electronic copy of the group authorization will automatically be recorded in the AWARE authorization page for each individual customer receiving goods or services under the group authorization process.

Authorization Amendment

Individual Authorization

AWARE permits the following authorization information to be amended:

- End date of services,
- Fund source,
- Change of a service or addition of a service,
- Units of purchase and/or rate of purchase.

1. Adding an additional service to an individual authorization

Services that are added to an authorization must be authorized prior to the service being rendered. To add a service to an authorization, the authorizer must document:

- Justification for the additional service in a case note,
- Description of the service to be added,
- Beginning and ending dates of the service, and
- Amount of the added service.

Authorization to Vendor Fiscal Processes

9/2014

2. Increasing an individual authorization

An amendment is not necessary if the final payment is increased by 10% but does not exceed \$2,500 more than the original authorized amount.

If the payment amount is over 10% of the original amount or exceeds the original authorization by more than \$2,500, amendment of the authorization is necessary. An increase of an authorization must be authorized prior to the service being rendered. To increase an authorization, the authorizer must document:

- Justification for the increase in a case note, and
- Amount of the increase.

Increases may only be for the service originally authorized and within the same fiscal year, and should be approved by the counselor in advance. Increases that cause the total amount of an authorization to exceed the authorizer's approval level must be approved by a manager with the appropriate approval level.

3. Decreasing an individual authorization

To decrease an authorization, the authorizer shall document in a case note:

- Specific service(s) to be adjusted, and
- Amount and type of adjustment.

4. To cancel an individual authorization, the authorizer shall document in a case note:

- Specific service(s) to be cancelled, and
- Reason for the cancellation.

Group Authorization

1. Amendments to a group authorization are not permissible.
2. Edits to a group authorization may occur in the following instances.

- A customer may be cancelled from a group authorization.
- Additional new customers may not be added to an open group authorization. However, if a customer(s) is cancelled from the group authorization, other customer(s) may be added to the authorization to replace those that have been removed.

Authorization to Vendor Fiscal Processes

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3. To cancel a group authorization, the authorizer shall document in a case note:
- Specific service(s) to be cancelled, and
 - Reason for the cancellation.
 - In a group authorization, each customer listed on the authorization is required to have a case note indicating the reason for cancellation

The customer “signature is required” box must be checked in those instances when only the individual can verify that a good or service has been received or provided, or no other formal documentation can be provided to verify that a good or service has been received. The “signature is required” box need not be checked when other documented verification that the individual is to receive the intended good or service will be produced by the vendor, such as an invoice or receipt signed by the customer, or a written report written by the vendor.

**Letter of Intent
Fiscal Processes**

Procedure:

When circumstances do not permit an authorization to be issued prior to the start of a service, an interim letter of intent or a verbal authorization shall be given to the vendor. Verbal authorizations shall be followed up in writing no later than one working day. Letters of intent shall include the service(s) being authorized, the dates of service(s), the amount authorized, and be signed and dated by the counselor. An RA-Z40 authorization shall be sent as soon as possible to complete the authorization process.

Retroactive Authorizations

Fiscal Processes

8/2007

Policy:

Retroactive authorizations are prohibited.

Procedure:

A retroactive authorization is one that is issued after services have been initiated or received. Since this is prohibited by federal regulations, a retroactive authorization constitutes an audit exception that could result in the forfeiture of Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) funds unless prior written or verbal approval was given to the provider. A retroactive authorization may be issued only when oversight or other unavoidable circumstances prevented the authorization from being issued in a timely manner. Retroactively issued authorizations must be accompanied by a case note that documents the reason why the authorization was retroactive, and steps to be taken to correct the recurrence of such an audit exception.

Site Manager approval and signature on retroactive authorizations is required.

Billing – Payment for Services Fiscal Processes

Policy:

The counselor must verify that the authorized goods or services have been received and are satisfactory before approving payment.

Procedure:

The AWARE 4-Step Vendor Authorization process shall be followed to draft, issue and pay a vendor authorization.

Verification of Receipt and Approval for Payment

Prior to approving a billing document for payment, the billing needs to be reviewed for completeness and accuracy as described below:

- The amounts and dates of service entered by the vendor are accurate;
- The billing reflects the receipt of the specific goods or services authorized;
- The applicant or eligible individual has signed the billing, if required, to attest to receipt of the goods or services;
- The vendor has signed the billing in ink (rubber-stamp signatures are not accepted) or attached a separate company/vendor billing document;
- In the event a vendor faxes a signed Authorization for Purchase, an original signature should always be obtained and made a part of the case record, as stated in Manual Item 2325;
- Information requested from the vendor (itemized lists, reports, etc.) has been received; and
- The Partial Billing/Final Billing box has been marked for each service code. If final billing is checked, any remaining balance for that service will be canceled.

Verification of receipt of goods or services is documented in the case record when the customer returns to the office an official receipt that matches the goods or services and amount authorized.

In the event a receipt is not returned to the office by the customer, the assigned counselor shall document in case record multiple attempts and the multiple methods used to obtain verification of receipt of goods or services.

Billing – Payment for Services Fiscal Processes

Examples of methods used to obtain verification of goods or services:

- Following up with the customer to request the receipt (phone and/or letter).
- Following up with the vendor to request a copy of the receipt.
- Requesting the customer to return to the vendor to obtain a copy of the receipt.

In the event that a receipt is missing or lost, an Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form (RA-2920) may be submitted in place of an official receipt. This form is an alternate verification method and, when completed, documents the goods or services have been received. In the event the RA-2920, Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form is used, it shall be approved by the Site Manager. *Note: Direct or Recurring Authorizations missing receipts shall be resolved prior to purchasing additional services.*

If a Direct or Recurring Authorization is missing receipts and/or is in the process of being verified, supervisory approval is required for the issuance of additional authorizations during the investigatory time period. Supervisory approval shall be documented in a case note.

Examples of instances when the *Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form* may be utilized:

- Merchandise purchase: Customer loses the receipt/unable to obtain a copy. Customer brings in merchandise and counselor verifies that item(s) have been purchased. Counselor completes a case note documenting the meeting and verification of item(s) purchased and the Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form.
- Mileage payment: Customer loses the receipt/unable to obtain a copy. Counselor verifies the service for which the mileage was provided has been completed. This may include a report from a vendor or a log of miles submitted by the customer. Counselor completes a case note documenting the completed service for which the mileage was provided and completes the Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form.

Examples of visual verification of receipt of purchased item(s) when alternate receipt is required:

- Computer purchase – bring the computer into the office
- Clothing purchase – bring clothing into the office
- Books purchase – bring books into the office

Billing – Payment for Services Fiscal Processes

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- Gas to search for a job – mileage log
 - Gas to go to/from school – grade report
 - Incidental allowance at MCTI – MCTI records of attendance
 - Food purchased during attendance at a training – verification of the customer's completion of the training

If the Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form is unable to be completed and there is an inability to verify that the goods or services was received, the Site Manager is to be notified. Upon investigation if there continues to be an inability to account for the goods or services being delivered the MRS Policy Unit is to be notified of the occurrence for possible fraud investigation.

The individual's signature or witnessed mark is required on the Authorization and Billing document, or an attached document, to verify that services were received and satisfactory, except when another document or report, which substantiates that the authorized services were provided, is submitted. For example, written supporting documentation is usually available and acceptable for the following services:

- Medical, psychiatric, or psychological evaluations;
- Hospitalization and related services (i.e., copy of hospital records);
- Community rehabilitation program services; and,
- Postsecondary training and adult education services (i.e., grade reports).

The amount approved for payment must reflect the extent to which authorized goods or services were rendered or delivered. When goods or services were not rendered to the extent authorized, amounts approved for payment should be adjusted accordingly. Payment for missed appointments may not exceed 50% of the amount authorized. If the amount billed by the vendor for any service is not approved by the counselor, the counselor should contact the vendor to reconcile the difference(s) before signing the billing. A case note shall document the contact with the vendor, the outcome, and the amount approved.

When services to family members are provided, the signature of the family member receiving the service is required. If the family member is a minor, the parent or guardian shall sign the billing document.

If the counselor is unable to locate the applicant or eligible individual, the counselor may sign on behalf of the individual after it has been verified that the service was provided. When the counselor signs on behalf of the individual, a case note shall document efforts to locate the individual and the fact that the counselor signed their name verifying that goods were received or services were provided.

Billing – Payment for Services Fiscal Processes

An amendment is not necessary if the final payment is increased up to 10% but does not exceed \$2,500 more than the original authorized amount.

If the payment amount is over 10% of the original amount or exceeds the original authorization by more than \$2,500, amendment of the authorization is necessary.

Billing and Payment of a Group Authorization

In addition to what is referenced above and prior to approving a group authorization for payment, specific documentation requirements are necessary:

- The billing/invoice reflects the receipt of the specified goods or services authorized for each individual listed in the group authorization.
- Prior to releasing payment, a separate report/invoice shall be obtained for each customer reflected in the group authorization.

The Site Manager or District Manager shall be responsible for issuing the group authorization and drafting the payment.

Upon payment, each individual report reflecting the receipt of the service as it pertains to the customer, is to be placed in the corresponding customer file.

Two office files are to be maintained:

1. The first file is to retain the original, signed group authorization form that is generated at the time the authorization is issued and is retained until the final payment of the authorization is issued.
2. The second file is to retain the completed group authorization at the time of final payment. This file is to contain the following:
 - Final authorization signed by the vendor
 - Billing documents used to verify receipt of goods or completion of the services

Releasing Payments – All Authorizations

Release of payment shall be made by individual with the appropriate approval authority (security level).

- Prior to releasing payment for a vendor authorization, receipt of the specific goods or services authorized must be verified.

Billing – Payment for Services Fiscal Processes

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- Payments drafted by MCTI shall be released by MCTI. **Verification of receipt of the specific goods or services authorized must be retained by MCTI.**

Exemption from Sales Tax

Michigan Rehabilitation Services' (MRS) tax exempt number is printed on the Authorization and Billing document.

MRS is:

- Exempt from paying federal excise tax.
- Exempt from Michigan Sales Tax according to Rule 29 of the General Sales and Use Tax Rules; however, sales tax must be paid either by MRS or the customer whenever MRS funds are expended toward vehicle purchase.
- Not exempt from various federal taxes such as the U.S. transportation tax on airline tickets.

Authorization Amendment

Individual Vendor Authorization

AWARE permits the following authorization information to be amended:

- End date of services,
- Fund source,
- Change of a service or addition of a service,
- Units of purchase and/or rate of purchase.

1. Adding an additional service to an individual authorization

Services that are added to an individual authorization must be authorized prior to the service being rendered. To add a service to an authorization, the authorizer must document:

- Justification for the additional service in a case note,
- Description of the service to be added,
- Beginning and ending dates of the service, and
- Amount of the added service.

2. Increasing an individual authorization

An amendment is not necessary if the final payment is increased by 10% but does not exceed \$2,500 more than the original authorized amount.

Billing – Payment for Services Fiscal Processes

If the payment amount is over 10% of the original amount or exceeds the original authorization by more than \$2,500, amendment of the authorization is necessary. An increase of an authorization must be authorized prior to the service being rendered. To increase an authorization, the authorizer must document:

- Justification for the increase in a case note, and
- Amount of the increase.

Increases may only be for the service originally authorized and within the same fiscal year, and should be approved by the counselor in advance. Increases that cause the total amount of an individual authorization to exceed the authorizer's approval level must be approved by a manager with the appropriate approval level.

3. Decreasing an individual authorization

To decrease an individual authorization, the authorizer shall document in a case note:

- Specific service(s) to be adjusted, and
- Amount and type of adjustment.

4. To cancel an individual authorization, the authorizer shall document in a case note:

- Specific service(s) to be cancelled, and
- Reason for the cancellation.

Group Authorization

1. Amendments to a group authorization are not permissible.

2. Edits to a group authorization may occur in the following instances.

- A customer may be cancelled from a group authorization.
- Additional new customers may not be added to an open group authorization. However, if a customer(s) is cancelled from the group authorization, other customer(s) may be added to the authorization to replace those that have been removed.

Billing – Payment for Services Fiscal Processes

3. To cancel a group authorization, the authorizer shall document in a case note:

- Specific service(s) to be cancelled, and
- Reason for the cancellation.
 - In a group authorization, each customer listed on the authorization is required to have a case note indicating the reason for cancellation

The customer “signature is required” box must be checked in those instances when only the individual can verify that the goods or services have been received or provided, or no other formal documentation can be provided to verify that the goods or services have been received. The “signature is required” box need not be checked when other documented verification that the individual is to receive the intended goods or services will be produced by the vendor, such as an invoice or receipt signed by the customer, or a written report written by the vendor.

Receipt of Payment by Vendors

Vendors will receive payment approximately five working days after payment is processed.

A single vendor check may include payments for one or more applicants or eligible individuals if payments were processed on the same day for that vendor. When payments are combined, the check stub will list individual names, authorization numbers, payment amount per authorization, and the vendor invoice number, if provided by the vendor on the billing document and entered in AWARE during the billing process.

The payment browse screen displays the amount, voucher number and payment date.

Direct and Recurring Authorization Fiscal Processes

Policy:

Direct and recurring payments may be authorized to individuals for maintenance, transportation, and personal care assistance services, and other services when vendors cannot be found who will accept an authorization for the goods or services in question.

Procedure:

A case note shall document the justification for the use of direct or recurring payments and the basis for the amounts authorized.

All direct and recurring authorizations are entered in AWARE as transportation, or maintenance or personal assistance. In those instances where the direct or recurring mechanism in AWARE is used for other services, the case note shall identify the service and the reason a vendor authorization could not be used.

The maximum payment to an individual using a single or recurring authorization cannot exceed \$500 per day. Preparing a direct or recurring payment authorization requires the following information to be entered in AWARE:

- The beginning date of authorization,
- Fund source,
- Warrant mailing location: Checks may be mailed to the individual's mailing address as registered in AWARE, the office of the primary counselor, or Michigan Career and Technical Institute,
- A service category and detailed written description of the goods and/or services to be provided,
- The total amount authorized for each service,
- The frequency of payments for recurring authorizations (i.e., weekly, bi-weekly or monthly) for each service,
- The amount of a check, or checks.

AWARE direct or recurring authorizations shall be issued as a one-page document.

A Notice of Payment to Participant letter generated through AWARE shall be sent to individuals prior to receipt of their direct payment or first recurring payment check to

Direct and Recurring Authorization Fiscal Processes

advise them of the terms and conditions of their direct payment or recurring payment checks.

A case note shall document the justification for the use of recurring payments and the basis for the amounts authorized. The basis for the amount authorized provides detailed information specifying how the amount was arrived at.

Counselors shall periodically validate the continuation of recurring payment checks by verifying the individual's status for which checks were issued. The "Open Authorization Report" should be run weekly or biweekly for this purpose. To terminate or interrupt recurring payments to individuals, the appropriate amendments or cancellations must be entered in AWARE and in a case note documenting the termination and reason for it.

The State Treasury Department disburses checks according to instructions provided by the district office. Direct or Recurring payment checks are mailed to the location indicated on authorization screen according to the payment schedule entered. Five to seven days should be allowed for delivery of the first check.

Verification of Receipt

Verification of receipt of goods or services is documented in the case record when the customer returns to the office an official receipt that matches the goods or services and amount authorized.

In the event a receipt is not returned to the office by the customer, the assigned counselor shall document in case record multiple attempts and the multiple methods used to obtain verification of receipt of goods or services.

Examples of methods used to obtain verification of goods or services:

- Following up with the customer to request the receipt (phone and/or letter).
- Following up with the vendor to request a copy of the receipt.
- Requesting the customer to return to the vendor to obtain a copy of the receipt.

In the event that a receipt is missing or lost, an Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form (RA-2920) may be submitted in place of an official receipt. This form is an alternate verification method and, when completed, documents the goods or services has been received. In the event the RA-2920, Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form is used, it shall be approved by the Site Manager. *Note: Direct or Recurring Authorizations missing receipts shall be resolved prior to purchasing additional services.*

Direct and Recurring Authorization Fiscal Processes

If a Direct or Recurring Authorization is missing receipts and/or is in the process of being verified, supervisory approval is required for the issuance of additional authorizations during the investigatory time period. Supervisory approval shall be documented in a case note.

Examples of instances when the *Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form* may be utilized:

- Merchandise purchase: Customer loses the receipt/unable to obtain a copy. Customer brings in merchandise and counselor verifies that item(s) have been purchased. Counselor completes a case note documenting the meeting and verification of item(s) purchased and the Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form.
- Mileage payment: Customer loses the receipt/unable to obtain a copy. Counselor verifies the service for which the mileage was provided has been completed. This may include a report from a vendor or a log of miles submitted by the customer. Counselor completes a case note documenting the completed service for which the mileage was provided and completes the Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form.

Examples of visual verification of receipt of purchased item(s) when alternate receipt is required:

- Computer purchase – bring the computer into the office
- Clothing purchase – bring clothing into the office
- Books purchase – bring books into the office
- Gas to search for a job – mileage log
- Gas to go to/from school – grade report
- Incidental allowance at MCTI – MCTI records of attendance
- Food purchased during attendance at a training – verification of the customer's completion of the training

If the Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form is unable to be completed and there is an inability to verify that the goods or services were received, the Site Manager is to be notified. Upon investigation, if there continues to be an inability to account for the goods or services being delivered, the MRS Policy Unit is to be notified of the occurrence for possible fraud investigation.

Direct and Recurring Authorization Fiscal Processes

Information:

Direct Authorization: An authorization written to the individual for a one-time check that will be mailed by the Department of Treasury or a one-time check that is covered through the Emergency Warrant process.

Recurring Authorization: An authorization written to the individual for weekly, bi-weekly or monthly checks.

Emergency Payment - Direct Authorization Fiscal Processes

Policy:

Emergency manual warrants may be issued only to provide or support vocational rehabilitation services that are essential to determine eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs, develop an IPE, or implement an IPE or IPE amendment, when no other method of purchasing these services is possible.

To comply with State Accounting Rules, the district's Emergency manual warrants shall be used only to meet an applicant or eligible individual's immediate emergency vocational rehabilitation needs. Emergency manual warrants cannot be used if a vendor will accept a regular authorization. Emergency manual warrant procedures shall be used when the vendor is the State of Michigan.

Procedure:

When used to purchase maintenance or transportation, or any other vocational rehabilitation service, policies and procedures pertaining to these services must be followed.

A case note shall document the justification for the use of the emergency manual warrants procedure and its casework purpose.

The maximum amount for which a check can be written is \$500 per day per applicant or eligible individual. Refer to the Fiscal Process Manual for procedures regarding processing of emergency manual warrants.

Emergency manual warrants can be used to provide services to family members under the same conditions as to an individual.

Emergency manual warrants are used when making payments to other State of Michigan departments.

Verification of Receipt

Verification of receipt of goods or services is documented in the case record when the customer returns to the office an official receipt that matches the goods or services and amount authorized.

In the event a receipt is not returned to the office by the customer, the assigned counselor shall document in case record multiple attempts and the multiple methods used to obtain verification of receipt of goods or services.

Emergency Payment - Direct Authorization Fiscal Processes

Examples of methods used to obtain verification of goods or services:

- Following up with the customer to request the receipt (phone and/or letter).
- Following up with the vendor to request a copy of the receipt.
- Requesting the customer to return to the vendor to obtain a copy of the receipt.

In the event that a receipt is missing or lost, an Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form (RA-2920) may be submitted in place of an official receipt. This form is an alternate verification method and, when completed, documents the goods or services have been received. In the event the RA-2920, Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form is used, it shall be approved by the Site Manager. *Note: Emergency Payment – Direct Authorizations missing receipts shall be resolved prior to purchasing additional services.*

If an Emergency Payment – Direct Authorization is missing receipts and/or is in the process of being verified, supervisory approval is required for the issuance of additional authorizations during the investigatory time period. Supervisory approval shall be documented in a case note.

Examples of instances when the *Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form* may be utilized:

- Merchandise purchase: Customer loses the receipt/unable to obtain a copy. Customer brings in merchandise and counselor verifies that item(s) have been purchased. Counselor completes a case note documenting the meeting and verification of item(s) purchased and the Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form.
- Mileage payment: Customer loses the receipt/unable to obtain a copy. Counselor verifies the service for which the mileage was provided has been completed. This may include a report from a vendor or a log of miles submitted by the customer. Counselor completes a case note documenting the completed service for which the mileage was provided and completes the Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form.

Examples of visual verification of receipt of purchased item(s) when alternate receipt is required:

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- Books purchase – bring books into the office
- Gas to search for a job – mileage log

Emergency Payment - Direct Authorization Fiscal Processes

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- Gas to go to/from school – grade report
 - Incidental allowance at MCTI – MCTI records of attendance
 - Food purchased during attendance at a training – verification of the customer's completion of the training

If the Alternate Receipt of VR Goods or Services form is unable to be completed and there is an inability to verify that the goods or services were received, the Site Manager is to be notified. Upon investigation if there continues to be an inability to account for the goods or services being delivered the MRS Policy Unit is to be notified of the occurrence for possible fraud investigation.

Third Party Authorizations
Fiscal Processes**Policy:**

A third party can be used to vend cash to an applicant or eligible individual to purchase a needed service only when the service provider will not accept a Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) authorization, there is no other vendor available to provide the service, and direct payment or emergency payment cannot be used.

A third party may not be used as a secondary purchaser of goods or services for applicants or eligible individuals.

All policies related to purchase of services must be followed.

Competitive Bids and Price Quotations

Fiscal Processes

2/2019

Procedures:

Competitive Bid/Quotation

Three identical written, competitive bids are required for the purchase of all goods and services that cost \$3,000 up to \$150,000.

All specially constructed, or prescriptive devices, requires three price quotations.

Note: Goods/services over \$150,000 require a sealed bid process and are arranged through the Division Director.

MRS staff maintain documentation of all competitive bids/price quotations and associated materials.

Request for Competitive Bid/Quotation

The MRS-4587, Request for Bid/Quotation, is the preferred form to be used to request a bid or quotation. However, the vendor may provide the bid in their preferred format, including copies of current published lists or catalogs in place of bids.

When obtaining competitive bid/quotations, it is required that:

- Vendors are provided with identical written specifications.
- Warranties are to be included if stated in the specifications.

Note: A competitive bid is not required if it is documented that there are not three vendors who can provide the item(s) as specified. MRS staff are to document the effort to obtain three bids.

Note: A competitive bid/quotation is not required for services delivered under a MRS contracted agreement. MRS staff document compliance with contract specifications.

Price Quotation

Specially constructed or prescriptive devices require a price quotation.

MRS staff provide vendors with copies of prescriptions and/or specifications and request a written price quotation.

Competitive Bids and Price Quotations

Fiscal Processes

2/2019

Information:

Competitive Bid:

A competitive bid is a vendor's written offer to provide an item at a stated price according to specifications.

Price quotation:

A price quotation is a vendor's statement of the current price of an item. Price quotations may be based on general descriptions of items and are not typically legally binding.

Competitive Bids and Price Quotations

Fiscal Processes

2/2019

Price Quotation:

A price quotation is a vendor's statement of the current price of an item. Price quotations may be based on general descriptions of items and are not typically legally binding.

Forms:

The form related to this manual item is the RA-4587, Request for Bid/Quotation.

Approval Authority Fiscal Processes

Policy:

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) staff may not exceed their maximum delegated financial approval authority in authorizing for goods or services.

Procedure:

The district manager is responsible for delegating approval authority for authorizations to counselors on an individual basis, within the maximum limits set by AWARE staff security guidelines. Maximum delegated authority is documented through the “AWARE Access Request” forms submitted to and maintained at MRS Central Office.

Staff Security Guidelines for AWARE may be referenced on the MRS shared “s” drive. Exception may be requested via an “AWARE Staff Access Request” form and must be approved by authorized MRS personnel.

The use of separate authorizations to purchase the same goods or services in order to avoid approval authority limits is prohibited.

Services to Groups of Clients Fiscal Processes

Policy:

Services to groups of clients (SGC) may be authorized for services that will substantially contribute to vocational rehabilitation outcomes, but are not directly related to individual client rehabilitation programs.

Procedure:

A group of clients is defined as two or more. Individuals who are not Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) clients may also benefit from the services, but the primary beneficiaries shall be clients. Services that may be authorized for groups of clients are the same as that which may be provided to individual clients, as well as those specifically designated in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, for groups of individuals with disabilities.

The SGC authorization is to be issued when rehabilitation needs cannot be addressed in any other way. This process does not replace the community rehabilitation organization construction and establishment grants, nor innovation and expansion grants. Neither does it replace requirements for the use of comparable benefits and services before MRS funds are used.

Services may not be provided for groups of clients that are the legal responsibility of other parties under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

An authorization for a service for a group of clients may be for a one-time occurrence, or for a time-limited service but not for continuing activities such as salary and wages or utilities.

Funds for services to groups of clients are assigned solely to the district manager. The manager is responsible for all decisions relative to purchasing services for groups of clients, the authorization process and for maintaining adequate records to support case service expenditures.

If another agency or organization is involved in the purchase of a service for a group of clients by MRS, there must be a written agreement which:

- Describes the service(s) to be provided and how they will help achieve employment outcomes for clients;
- Estimates the number of clients to be served and the percentage this represents of the total number to be served;
- Estimates the cost to be incurred; and
- Prescribes the methods for disposal of equipment purchased by MRS, or describes the financial adjustment when equipment is to be jointly purchased, in the event the service

Services to Groups of Clients
Fiscal Processes**Section IX**

ceases to be available to clients. Principles which govern the disposal of equipment purchased under this authority are the same as those governing the disposal of equipment by public or nonprofit agencies or organizations under the community rehabilitation organization establishment grant authority.

A file must be maintained for each purchase of a service for a group of clients that contains all fiscal documents, agreements and related correspondence and reports for audit purposes. Files should be organized by fiscal year.

Bulk Authorizations Fiscal Processes

10/2006

Policy:

Bulk authorizations may only be used to purchase bus tickets/tokens/passes, orientation services, orientation interpreter services, MCTI Caps and Gowns and MCTI Drug Screenings.

Procedure:

- Procedures for authorization to vendor identified in RSM 9125 shall be followed.
- A record of individuals who receive services under bulk authorizations and the quantity received shall be kept in the district to provide an audit trail.
- Special Supported Employment funds may not be used as a budget source.
- Total amount of the authorization may not exceed \$10,000.
- The Site Manager or District Manager shall sign the “Authorized Signature” field and the “Payment Approved By” field of the Authorization and Billing document. The signature also verifies the accuracy of the authorization.

