

Transition Bulletin - Winter Issue

To Coordinate... To Enhance... To Serve...Through Communication

MRS Transition Employment Outcomes Trending Upwards

By Cynthia Wright, MRS Rehabilitation Consultant

There is good news to report from Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) regarding Transition programs. The new interagency agreement between MRS (LARA) and Michigan Department of Education/Office of Special Education Services (MDE/OSE) is being implemented. This fiscal year (2011 – 2012), there are 103 cash-match agreements in place totaling \$11,474,082, 5 tri-party agreements and 18 cooperative staffing agreements. These agreements lay the foundation for a strong partnership facilitating young people with disabilities to achieve employment.

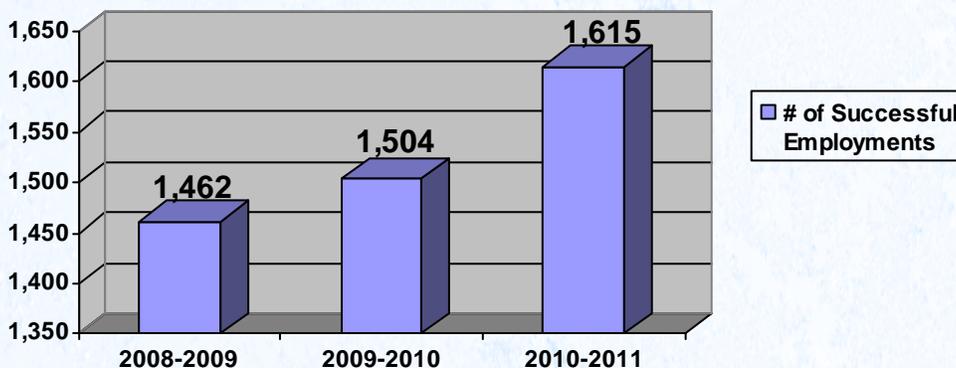
Transition youth will benefit this year from five Innovation Projects funded by MRS. Following are the five projects:

- Youth Innovation Project
MRS Detroit Renaissance District
- Giving Eaton County Kids Opportunities (GECKO 2)
MRS Lansing District Office
- Oakland Autism Project
MRS Oakland District Office
- Work Occupational Readiness Collaboration Project
MRS Oakland District Office
- Wayne RESA Blended Staff
MRS Wayne District Office

Transition employment outcomes (32.2% of MRS caseload) have been trending upward for the last three years. This means that in spite of Michigan’s unemployment rate of 11.1% (Sept 2011, Michigan Department of Technology, Management & Budget), more young people with disabilities have become employed and are earning more per hour than in the previous two years.

In addition, MRS customers Transition employment outcomes suffered during the recent economic and employment crisis in Michigan which began in 2008. At the same time, the State of Michigan offered an “early out” and many MRS staff retired creating staff vacancies.

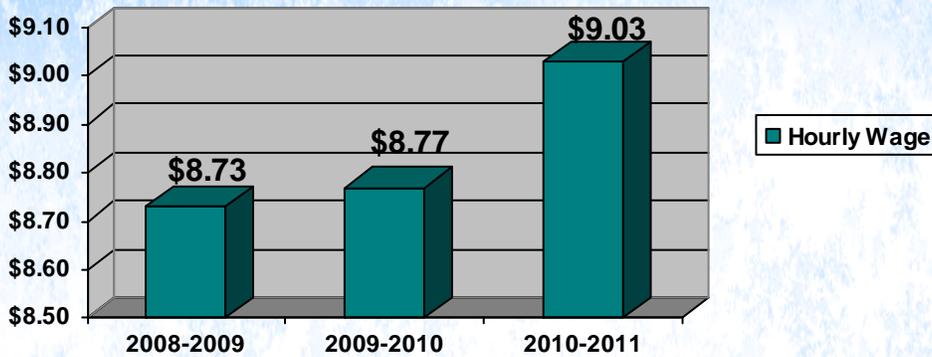
Since then MRS has worked to rebuild it’s infrastructure by replacing and training staff to serve Transition customers. MRS counselors have been working hard to successfully assist youth into jobs. The graph below shows the steady increase in employment outcomes from 2008 to the present.



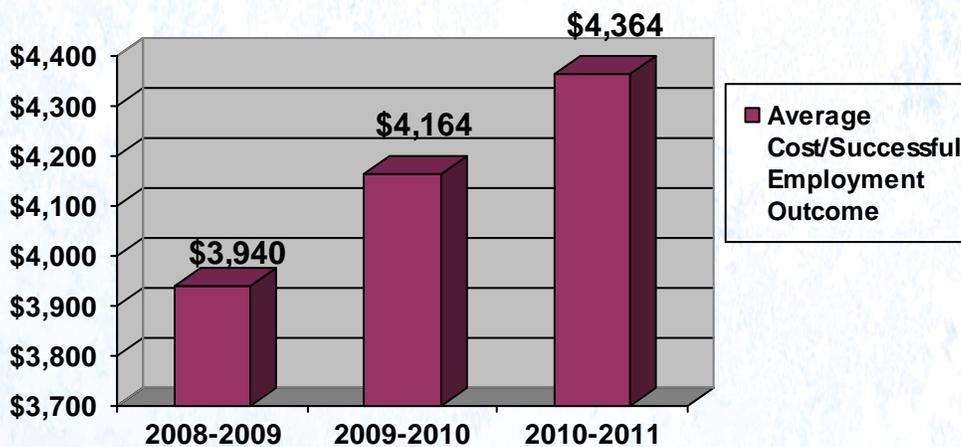
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Transition youth (ages 14 – 21 at application) are earning more per hour which is good news (especially for our customers). The graph below demonstrates the growth in hourly wage.



MRS supports Transition customers in a variety of ways depending upon the individual needs of the person. Typical Transition services include but are not limited to: vocational assessments; job coaching; work clothes; work tools; job preparation activities and job development/placement. The average costs per successful employment outcome are on the rise for transition youth (ages 14 – 21 at application). The graph below illustrates the costs.



MRS is Focused on Enhancing Employment Outcomes

By Julie Eckhardt, MRS Training Consultant

The MRS mission is to partner with individuals and employers to achieve quality employment outcomes and independence for people with disabilities. MRS is in the second year of a project designed to achieve this mission with laser sharp focus.

Does this sound familiar?

Job developers say they can find job openings, but the people who are referred to them for placement either aren't qualified for the jobs they find or are not "job ready." Counselors, on the other hand, say that job developers are not finding appropriate jobs for the people on their caseload. Counselors also admit that some MRS customers say they want to work but their behavior suggests otherwise.

The MRS Enhancing Employment Outcomes project is a two pronged approach designed to address this dilemma. Motivational Interviewing training is teaching counselors to assess and support customer intrinsic motivation to change. Job Development training is honing job developer skills and teaching counselors both how to do job development themselves and how to be responsible purchasers of job development services.

It's All About Change

Think about a big change you are considering in your life. Suppose you want to eat healthier to lose weight or lower

cholesterol. What if someone said to you, "Today you are starting on a strict diet. From now on you cannot have coffee, chocolate, snack foods or meat (and other favorite foods)." Would you resist? Would you get angry? But you said you wanted to eat healthy, right? It's not that you are not motivated to eat healthy, but you are also motivated for your favorite foods. You might say, "I want to eat healthy, but I'll start the diet after we have dinner out on Friday night." This is ambivalence and it is very normal.

For a young person who has never worked before, employment means a big change in their life. The youth may not know what the work world is about or may lack confidence that they can be successful. This can create ambivalence. "I want to work, but..." That word "but" is a cue that the person is not sure they want to make a big change. If the counselor is sensitive to the ambivalence, they can help the young person discover their own reasons for stepping out and facing the unknown. If the counselor, on the other hand, tries to push the youth toward a job according to some external time line, they are likely to resist.

Motivational Interviewing teaches counselors to meet the person where they are, to be empathetic regarding the process of change, and to help the individual to move through the stages of change toward a desired outcome. Counselors skilled in motivational interviewing learn how to elicit the individual's own values and motivation to move forward.

Motivational Interviewing is an evidence-based counseling approach that has been successfully used to support behavior change for more than 20 years, primarily in the substance abuse and medical fields. In recent years, vocational rehabilitation practitioners are discovering great success with this person-centered approach to counseling. Currently, MRS is training all counselors and field managers in this counseling approach. To learn more about Motivational Interviewing visit: www.motivationalinterview.org

Job Development the EOP II Way

The second prong of Enhancing Employment Outcomes is Job Development training. The EOP II workshop was designed by Allen Anderson to address the employment needs of people with significant disabilities. Allen trained many MRS staff members last year. Allen also trained a small group of MRS employees to conduct the EOP II workshops for MRS staff and partners. These workshops are now being conducted statewide, coordinated by each district office.

The EOP II job development method provides very specific steps for uncovering the hidden job market, interacting with employers, and creating job opportunities for people with disabilities. The approach is very specific and targets the employer's need for motivated, reliable and dependable employees. This approach has a proven track record as it is being used in disability related organizations throughout the United States and Canada.

MRS counselors are refining their focus on effective job development. Specifically, job development is defined as interaction with potential employers. While activities such as resume writing and interviewing skills may be useful for some MRS customers, there are many others who will never be able to make a strong first impression, will not have a competitive resume, and who are not going to be good at interviewing no matter how many times they practice. These customers will be best served by an assertive job developer who is out meeting employers and uncovering opportunities, often in unlikely places. If you are interested in attending an EOP II workshop, talk to your local MRS office.

If you would like more information about the MRS Enhancing Employment Outcomes project, attend one of the sessions scheduled for the Michigan Transition Association Conference in March or contact Julie Eckhardt at eckhardtj@michigan.gov.

10 Things To Know About EEO

By Julie Eckhardt, MRS Training Consultant

Michigan Rehabilitation Services is in the second year of a project called **Enhancing Employment Outcomes (EEO)**. The following are the top 10 facts you need to know about EEO.

- 1. MRS still follows the traditional Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) process from intake to employment.** What will change is how we approach counseling and job development within that process.
- 2. EEO is a two pronged project.** **Motivational Interviewing** enhances customer readiness for work and **Job Development** uncovers employment opportunities.



3. **Motivational Interviewing** is a person-centered, evidence-based counseling approach that helps people resolve ambivalence to change.
4. **Motivational Interviewing** helps the individual to clarify their own values. Highlighting the discrepancy between values and behavior helps the individual to move toward their own goals.
5. **MRD is the baseline required by employers.** If a person does not want to work, does not show up when expected or does not do the work assigned, they will not be able to maintain employment no matter how highly skilled. Therefore, job seekers must at least be **Motivated, Reliable and Dependable**.
6. **Motivated employees are more likely to be reliable and dependable**, which is why MRS counselors are learning the counseling approach known as **Motivational Interviewing**.
7. **MRS counselors continue to do comprehensive assessment and vocational counseling, to assist the customer in selecting a realistic employment goal.**
8. **Job Development** refers to direct interaction with businesses and employers. Job seeking skills classes, resume development, and other preparation services may still be utilized, but are distinct from job development.
9. People with visible barriers will have a more difficult time obtaining employment independently because of employer perception. Therefore, **job seekers with visible barriers will be referred to job development**, unless they prefer to search independently.
10. **The job developer seeks first to understand the employer's priority business needs**, then refers candidates who can meet those needs. Job orders and job descriptions describe the "ideal candidate" and are therefore not emphasized by the job developer.

Can MRS Provide Customized Employment to Transition Students?

By Cynthia Wright, MRS Rehabilitation Consultant

At the October Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP) Workshop, Ellen Condon, the Transition Projects Director at the [University of Montana Rural Institute on Disabilities](#) and consultant with Marc Gold & Associates (MG&A), Griffin-Hammis Associates, presented the Customized Employment job placement model. Transition Coordinators may be wondering if MRS can partner with schools to provide Customized Employment to Transition students. MRS counselors may be wondering if Customized Employment differs from how MRS partners with schools and Community Mental Health (CMH) Agencies to provide Supported Employment. This article is focused on exploring and answering those questions.

What is Customized Employment?

Customized Employment is "individualizing the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both. It is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the person with a disability, and is also designed to meet the specific needs of the employer. It may include employment developed through job carving, self-employment, or entrepreneurial initiatives, or other job development or restructuring strategies that result in job responsibilities being customized and individually negotiated to fit the needs of individuals with a disability. Customized employment assumes the provision of reasonable accommodations and supports necessary for the individual to perform the functions of a job that is individually negotiated and developed." (Federal Register, June 26, 2002, 2002, Vol. 67, No. 123 pp. 43154-43149)

What is Supported Employment?

Supported Employment is established in Michigan as part of the range of MRS service delivery options for Transition students. MRS is directed by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to provide Transition services which means "a coordinated set of activities for a student designed within an outcome-oriented process that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, **vocational** training, integrated employment (**including Supported Employment**), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.

The coordinated set of activities must be based upon the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and must include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional **vocational** evaluation”.

Is MRS' approach to Supported Employment different from the Customized Employment Model?

Supported Employment is a well established vocational rehabilitation service that has been available in Michigan for many years. Unlike Customized Employment, Supported Employment is recognized in the Rehabilitation Act as a VR service with its own rules and funding. Supported Employment utilizes many of the same strategies that are used in Customized Employment. MRS receives line item funding from RSA that is distributed to local MRS district offices that can only be used to provide Supported Employment services to customers. MRS currently has 44 cash match agreements in place with the Community Mental Health (CMH) Agencies to provide Supported Employment services to individuals that are dually eligible for both MRS and CMH services. In addition to this, there are five tri-party interagency agreements in place that include education, MRS and CMH agencies designed to provide Supported Employment services to Transition students.

Can MRS provide Customized Employment to Transition students?

MRS provides individualized vocational rehabilitation services including assessment, eligibility determination, vocational counseling, employment plan development and supports and services needed to achieve employment. MRS is not adopting the Customized Employment Model per se, but if a school partner is using a Customized Employment approach for an individual student who is eligible for MRS, MRS can provide individualized vocational rehabilitation services in support of the student's employment goal that has been identified in the student's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

If you have any questions, please contact Cynthia Wright at wrightc1@michigan.gov or by phone (517) 241-3957.

MICHIGAN TRANSITION SERVICES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL SPRING CONFERENCE - "Transition-The Next Generation"

By Joetta Cherry, MTSA President-Elect

Over the last two years, MTSA has explored the conference themes of "Reimagining Transition" and "Universal Transition". This year's theme builds upon our previous work, focusing on "Transition-The Next Generation". Not only are we providing transition services in different and creative ways, but also embedding transition in the core content areas. The main focus of this year's conference will be earlier access to transition programming for students and parents.

Come and join the MTSA transition community of presenters and learners at the annual conference in Frankenmuth, March 14-16, 2012. It promises to be a good one!! Don't let time and \$\$ slip away! The early registration deadline is quickly approaching ~ January 31. Late registration runs from February 1 through February 28. Also, we are accepting displays for the poster session on Wednesday evening and exhibitors for Thursday.

The Michigan Transition Outcomes Project from the Office of Special Education will open the conference with a session by Jeff Diedrich, Director of Michigan Integrated Technology Supports. A welcome reception will follow his presentation. Thursday's keynote will be Tim Cusack, motivational speaker with something for all! Of course, there will be an opportunity for networking with your old and new friends at Thursday evening's gala. On Friday, Teri Johnson, Assistant Director in the Office of Special Education will give us an update on current happenings at the state level.

For more information and to register, go to our website www.michigantsa.com or contact Mary Glovak, Conference Chair at mglovak@gmail.com. See you in Frankenmuth!

FROM CONFLICT TO COLLABORATION: Northern Michigan's Youth Transition Services

"Conflict can be good," says Jessie Bachmann, Program Manager at Disability Network Northern Michigan.

Just a few years ago, Disability Network Northern Michigan, Traverse Bay Area Intermediate School District, and Michigan Rehabilitation Services were stepping all over each other in their common goal: to assist students with disabilities to successfully transition from school to the world of work. Each group was trying to do everything, resulting in duplication of services, competition, and frustration.

Realizing they needed to align, the group engaged in a variety of strategic efforts to help build trust and plan together as equals. As a result, each partner now acknowledges and plays to their strengths in a coordinated approach. Disability Network Northern Michigan's LIFE (Learning Independence From Experience) program develops student readiness: disability awareness, self-advocacy, self-esteem, stress management, and problem-solving, as well as banking and other hands-on skills. MRS counselors provide vocational guidance and counseling, connecting with teachers, parents, and students. Finally, the ISD, MRS, and others provide a variety of services that lead to employment. The ISD also links teachers from its 16 school districts with monthly transition meetings. "The process results in value and outcome for all of the stakeholders, especially students," adds MRS Consultant Bill Colombo.

Supported by funds from a cooperative-match agreement between the ISD and MRS, the CIL provides services consistent with their philosophy, focusing on people's gifts, talents, and interests. "We see disability as a natural part of life, not something that defines you. It's easy for us to empower our students because we believe this philosophy. Our role is to connect people to the community and to each other," says Annie Campbell, Community Development Manager, who has been working with Jessie to provide these services since 2004.

Northern Michigan's collaborative approach to youth transition services pays off as students become—using terminology from Alan Anderson—motivated, reliable, and dependable. To get there, students begin with LIFE 101 and LIFE 102, become a customer with MRS, engage in a summer work experience, participate with job development and job coaching, and achieve competitive employment.

According to Jim Moore, Executive Director of Disability Network Northern Michigan, the conflict that led the group to focus on organizational strengths has made all the difference. "Thinking you can do everything positions you to miss opportunities. We know where we are solid—on self-advocacy and understanding the disability experience."



Students learn to support each other on the high ropes course.

SAVE THE DATES

MI-TOP Workshop
Ramada Inn Hotel and Conference Center
7501 W. Saginaw Hwy
Lansing, MI 48917
January 26 and 27, 2012

MTSA Conference
Bavarian Inn
713 South Main Street
Frankenmuth, MI 48734-1694
March 14 – 16, 2012

MI-TOP Workshop
Ramada Inn Hotel and Conference Center
7501 W. Saginaw Hwy
Lansing, MI 48917
April 19 and 20, 2012

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