

# Transition Bulletin - Spring Issue

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

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## MRS Launches New Definitions of Youth

By Marcie Alling, State Coordinator, MT-21

Michigan Rehabilitation Services has developed and launched new definitions to describe its youth customers!

Early in March a cross-functional team conducted three statewide webinars with the goal to highlight revisions that have been made in Transition-related policies, AWARE and the Data Dictionary. The revisions reflect the new Michigan-specific definitions for Transition Youth and Young Adults. The webinar presenters were staff from the MT-21 Project Team (Michigan Transition for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century) and the MRS Policy and AWARE Support Units. MRS staff from around the state tuned in to learn about the new information and to ask questions related to implementation.

What led MRS to redefine youth? A series of events and circumstances came together to create a "perfect storm" that, very unexpectedly, led MRS to develop a new definition for Transition Youth.

In partnership with Project Excellence from Michigan State University, MT-21 is identifying promising & effective Transition practices that can be transferred into the rehabilitation process. The goal is to improve MRS youth employment outcomes. Before MT-21 could start gathering information about Transition practices, a baseline of MRS youth data needed to be established. In other words, MRS needed to understand who MRS youth customers were.

As a result, the MT-21 Project Team discovered that the Transition Youth definition in place for a number of years was being inconsistently applied in local offices throughout the state. The deeper the team dug, the better they understood that there were multiple factors leading to these inconsistencies such as staff turnover, lack of training for new staff, differing interpretations of the existing definition, and issues with the AWARE data system itself.

Another factor was the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) monitors' visit in 2009 that resulted in two findings related to Transition. For example, RSA commended MRS on the large number of youth that are served, but noted that a lot of youth customer cases are closed without a positive employment outcome.

The second RSA finding was related to the Federal requirement that an IPE (Individual Plan for Employment) must be completed prior to a student's exit from school.

Complicating these findings was the fact that RSA defines youth customers using only an age range. This presents a number of challenges, not only because of Michigan's unique special education eligibility criteria that allows students to stay in school until age 26. RSA has never provided consistent guidance to states about youth definition, yet it continues to place a priority on improving service delivery to youth customers.

After considering all of the findings, MRS concluded that it should: a) re-establish a common definition to be used by all staff, and b) develop and adopt new definitions for its youth customers. The new definition should be a key strategy to address the scope of challenges. Furthermore, it was important that a new

definition reflect the Michigan context, while honoring the intent of the Rehabilitation Act, which emphasizes the school part of “Transitioning from school to adult life.” It should enable MRS to track and report data more accurately. It should also recognize the unique needs and circumstances presented by young people between the ages of 14 and 26.

MRS has been implementing a variety of strategies to address the RSA monitors’ findings ever since their visit. Therefore, the timing was perfect to establish the new definitions while addressing critical Transition-related changes in Policy and the AWARE system.

### New Definitions

**Transition Youth** is an individual with a disability:

- Age 14-26 at application **AND**
- Enrolled in the K-12 education system
  - ⇒ including students in traditional public schools, intermediate school districts, private schools, charter schools (public school academies), alternative schools or schools for individuals with disabilities such as the Michigan School for the Deaf, as well as 504 students, home-schooled students and students in education programs in correctional facilities.

**Young Adult** is an individual with a disability:

- Age 14-26 at application **AND**
- **NOT** enrolled in the K-12 education system
  - ⇒ including students in traditional public schools, intermediate school districts, private schools, charter schools (public school academies), alternative schools or schools for individuals with disabilities such as the Michigan School for the Deaf, as well as 504 students, home-schooled students and students in education programs in correctional facilities.

There are several benefits of the new definitions including:

- They ensure that each population (Transition Youth and Young Adults) has access to and receives the most appropriate services for their group
- They position MRS to identify and promote effective and promising practices for all youth customers
- They allow for **accuracy** in data collection, performance measurement & continuous improvement
- Students with 504 plans are counted along with students in special education
- They enable MRS to compare Michigan data to regional and national data

The new definitions allow MRS to more appropriately serve and track youth customers. For example, a youth who has dropped out of high school is developmentally similar to a youth of the same age who is still in high school, but the youth who drops out no longer has the support of the K-12 education system to help him/her prepare for adult life. “Support of the K-12 education system” means the many different services and experiences high school students receive such as IEPs or 504 plans, work experiences and Transition planning. MRS is involved with a Transition Youth as part of a whole team of people and therefore the rehabilitation approach is highly collaborative. For a Young Adult who has dropped out of the K-12 education system, the resources and experience for that individual are much different, so the rehabilitation process and approach would vary.

Another example might be that of a 19 year old college student who acquires a disability. An MRS customer in this situation, now defined as a Young Adult, has much different needs than a Transition Youth therefore the rehabilitation approach would be different.

Many questions were generated by MRS staff during and after the webinar. These questions, with re-



sponses, are being compiled in one document that will be posted on E-Learn together with the Power-Point from the webinar. Please feel free to contact any on the following MRS staff with additional questions:

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## **MRS Strong Presence at the MTSA Conference Strengthens Educational Partnerships**

The Michigan Transition Services Association (MTSA) Annual Conference – “Transition the Next Generation,” in Frankenmuth, was a huge success. The weather was fabulous, the presentations informative and the spirit of the participants was upbeat. MRS had a strong presence at the conference this year including over 60 counselors, blended staff, consultants, managers and presenters. The stage was set for MRS and education to have a great opportunity for networking and professional growth.

A variety of MRS staff representing different areas of the state were involved in presentations and breakout sessions. Bill Colombo, MRS Consultant, Program Innovation Unit, was a co-presenter at the Preconference at a session entitled “Technology – Next Generation.” Bill challenged the audience to rate their technology skills and comfort zone. He provided information about technology myths such as, technology always being expensive, etc as well as the role that MRS can play in providing Assistive Technology to Transition Youth eligible for MRS services.

On Thursday, Marcie Alling, MT-21 Project Coordinator, MRS Program Innovation Unit, presented along with Ginny Thielson PhD, MRS Project Excellence a breakout session titled, “Boldly Going Where VR has Never Gone Before.” In keeping with the conference theme of “The Next Generation”, Marcie and Ginny presented MRS data using a Star Wars theme, making the data presentation as interesting as possible. The informative presentation compared MRS youth data by applying the old definitions of youth to the new definitions. Emphasis was placed on MRS outcome data in FY2011 under the new definition of Transition Youth and Young Adults. The adjusted rehabilitation rate (after an IPE or Individualized Plan for Employment) for Transition Youth is 37% and for Young Adults is 45%. Both of these outcomes are lower than the employment outcomes for MRS’ general customers.

Don Dees, MRS Site Manager, Flint District Office, presented “Job Development – the EEO Way.” EEO stands for “Enhancing Employment Outcomes, which is something that MRS is **very** interested in achieving. The presentation informed the audience about the job placement approach that MRS is in the process of implementing. Don compared former job placement approaches to the EEO model emphasizing the importance of developing relationships with employers to understand their priorities and matching employer opportunities to MRS customers. Don shared that the model has a clearly defined process, is easily replicated and is readily measurable. Don had a big audience primarily consisting of individuals from education that were eager to learn about the EEO model that MRS is implementing.

On Thursday afternoon, Julie Eckhardt, MRS Consultant, Staff Development Unit, presented “Motivational Interviewing in MRS.” A packed room of participants engaged in a discussion with Julie on Motivational

Interviewing. Julie did a fantastic job of discussing motivational interviewing in the context of youth to meet the interests of the audience.

The next morning, Cynthia Wright, MRS Consultant, Program Innovation Unit, co-presented a breakout session with Dave Malott, Consultant to the Michigan – Transition Outcome Project (MI-TOP), “Journey to MRS and Education Collaboration.” In this breakout session, three local MRS/education teams (Traverse Bay Area, Saginaw County and Eaton County) talked about how they make their partnership work for the benefit of Transition students. Each of these teams was identified by their district manager as having a long history of collaboration, good communication and problem solving and strong employment outcomes. The audience was asked to listen for consistency among the three teams and they observed the following themes:

- Willing to trust and engage
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Respect, understanding of each system and roles
- Student focus
- High expectations
- Proactive planning and innovation
- Common goals and transparency
- Established systems and processes for communication and engagement
- Successful problem solving and negotiation (failure is not an option)
- Management support and intervention from education and MRS

MRS wishes to thank the MTSA board for being inclusive, supportive and collaborative in their approach to the conference. “Thank you MTSA!”

## **State Level Work Group Forms to Improve Employment Outcomes for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)**

By Dave Malott (MI-TOP), Amy Matthews (START), & Cynthia Wright (MRS)

The number of individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is increasing at alarming rates in Michigan and across the nation. In addition, it has been forecasted, based on the rising incidence of the disorder, that in the next 15 years, more than 500,000 Americans with ASD will enter adulthood nationwide.

Due to this rising rate, educational and adult service agencies are reviewing data relative to adult outcomes for individuals with ASD including employment. One of those studies, completed by Easter Seals, found that although individuals with ASD have equal access to work training, in comparison to individuals with other disabilities, individuals with ASD are less likely to be hired for permanent positions. As such, overall employment outcomes are lower for this population. In fact, a University of Wisconsin – Madison study in 2002 found that of the 405 individuals with ASD studied, only 10% were in competitive employment. In addition, for those individuals with ASD who are employed, many work fewer hours for a lower wage as compared to individuals in other disability groups. A study by Barnard in 2002 found that as few as 6% of individuals with ASD had fulltime employment.

To address these poor employment outcomes and the increasing demand for both educational and vocational rehabilitation services for students with ASD, a state level work group has been formed. The primary goal of this group is to explore ways to increase employment outcomes for individuals with ASD.

A broad range of stakeholders are represented on the work group including the, the Michigan Transition



Outcomes Project (MI-TOP), Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), Medicaid Infrastructure Grant Project (MIG), and the Statewide Autism Resources and Training (START) Project.

Given that the group is just getting started, the focus right now is to learn more about the various groups represented and to find areas of common agreement and purpose as well as common language and definitions. As the group moves forward, the focus will shift to strategies, supports, cross training, and policies to improve employment outcomes for individuals with ASD.

## **What You Should Know: Questions and Answers about the EEOC and High School Diploma Requirements**

**Background:** On November 17, 2011, the EEOC issued an informal discussion letter about how the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to qualification standards for jobs. The letter can be found at [http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/foia/letters/2011/ada\\_qualification\\_standards.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/foia/letters/2011/ada_qualification_standards.html). There has been significant commentary and conjecture about the meaning and scope of the letter. The following questions and answers are meant to clarify these issues.

**Question:** Have you just made it illegal for businesses to require a high school diploma?

**Answer:** No. Nothing in the letter prohibits employers from adopting a requirement that a job applicant have a high school diploma. However, an employer may have to allow someone who says that a disability has prevented them from obtaining a high school diploma, to demonstrate qualification for the job in some other way.

**Question:** Are you telling people that they are protected by the ADA if they decide not to graduate from high school? Wouldn't this create a disincentive to finish high school?

**Answer:** No. The ADA only protects someone whose disability makes it impossible for him or her to get a diploma. It would not protect someone who simply decided not to get a high school diploma.

Employers may continue to have high school diploma requirements and, in the vast majority of cases, they will not have to make exceptions to them. However, if an applicant tells an employer they cannot meet the requirement because of a disability, an employer may have to allow them to demonstrate the ability to do the job in some other way. This may include considering work experience in the same or similar jobs, or allowing them to demonstrate performance of the job's essential functions. The employer can require the applicant to demonstrate, perhaps through appropriate documentation, that they have a disability and that the disability actually prevents them from meeting the high school diploma requirement.

**Question:** So, does that mean the employer must hire the person with a disability?

**Answer:** No. Even if the applicant with a disability can demonstrate the ability to do the job through some means other than possession of a high school diploma, the employer may still choose the best qualified person for the job. The employer does not have to prefer the applicant with a disability over someone who can perform the job better.

**Question:** Is the informal discussion letter a new interpretation of the law?

**Answer:** No. Like all of EEOC's informal discussion letters, the letter simply applies the existing standards under the ADA and the EEOC's regulations. The EEOC's informal discussion letters are meant to provide assistance for employers in complying with the laws. In this case, the letter was intended to

explain how the ADA applies when any job requirement (although a high school diploma was the specific example that we were asked about) excludes someone with a disability from a job.

**Question:** Is this the first time that a high school diploma requirement has been questioned as a possible violation of employment discrimination law?

**Answer:** No. The U.S. Supreme Court decided in 1971 that a high school diploma requirement was discriminatory because it had a disparate impact on African Americans who had high school diploma rates far lower than whites in the relevant geographical area, and because the requirement was not job related for the position in question and consistent with business necessity. *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.*, 401 U.S. 424 (1971). The courts and the EEOC have consistently applied the Supreme Court's interpretation of the law ever since, and Congress confirmed it in the Civil Rights Act of 1991.

Additionally, in 2003, EEOC brought a lawsuit on behalf of an employee with an intellectual disability who was fired from her job as a nursing assistant in a residential care facility when the employer adopted a requirement that nursing assistants have high school diplomas. She had worked successfully in the job for four years and had several times tried to obtain her GED, but could not do so because of her disability. Her GED instructors offered to work with the employer to find an alternative way to assess the employee's ability to do the job, but the employer refused. The employer settled the case with EEOC.

## ***IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!***

### **3rd Annual MRS Transition Training and Networking Workshop**

Mark your calendars for August 7, 2012!!

You can register on E-Learn.

Location is the LCC West Campus  
5708 Cornerstone Drive  
Lansing, MI 48917



A diverse design team of counselors are convening to plan the workshop and they look forward to seeing everyone there!



## Motivational Interviewing: An approach to improve cross-cultural counseling and outcomes with minority populations

By Julie Eckhardt, Staff Development Consultant

Michigan Rehabilitation Services is conducting Motivational Interviewing training with all counseling staff and managers. Motivational Interviewing (MI) is an evidence-based counseling approach that is well established in the substance abuse and medical arenas. In recent years, MI has been successfully implemented in several state vocational rehabilitation programs. Based on the experience of other state VR programs, consistent use of the MI counseling approach can be expected to improve customer employment outcomes, reduce the number of customer complaints and hearings, and improve counselor retention and job satisfaction. This brief review of literature further suggests that counseling conducted in the true Spirit of MI can be expected to improve MRS outcomes with culturally diverse and minority populations.

Motivational Interviewing is far more than a set of techniques. Rather, MI has been described as “a way of being with people.” William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick have identified three key indicators for the Spirit of Motivational Interviewing. The following table contrasts the MI approach with a more common approach.

The Spirit of Motivational Interviewing	
Fundamental approach of motivational interviewing	Mirror-image opposite approach to counseling
Collaboration. Counseling involves a partnership that honors the client’s expertise and perspectives. The counselor provides an atmosphere that is conducive rather than coercive to change.	Confrontation. Counseling involves overriding the customer’s impaired perspectives by imposing awareness and acceptance of “reality” that the customer cannot see or will not admit.
Evocation. The resources and motivation for change are presumed to reside within the customer. Intrinsic motivation for change is enhanced by drawing on the customer’s own perceptions, goals, and values.	Education. The customer is presumed to lack key knowledge, insight, and/or skills that are necessary for change to occur. The counselor seeks to address these deficits by providing the requisite enlightenment.
Autonomy. The counselor affirms the customer’s right and capacity for self-direction and facilitates informed choice.	Authority. The counselor tells the customer what he or she must do.

At face value, this highly respectful approach that depends on collaboration, evocation and autonomy would seem to be a strong foundation for successful cross-cultural counseling. A review of literature on the effectiveness of MI in various cultural settings supports this observation.

### Research on Stages of Change Across Cultures

The Stages of Change, as identified by DiClemente, guide MI practitioners’ counseling strategy. According to Miller and Rollnick [bold emphasis is mine throughout this document]:

“The stages of change have been examined with a number of different behaviors and in a variety of populations in various countries around the world. Motivational interviewing has also been translated into different languages and thus transported into cultures beyond the confines of the United

States, Great Britain, and Australia where it was developed. Initial data and reports of application from various parts of the world support the contention **that the same basic process of change occurs cross culturally**. Contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance tasks appear to present similar challenges in addiction treatment, for example, in both Western and Eastern cultures. If this is true, the challenge is to understand how to facilitate movement through the stages among various ethnically and culturally diverse population (Suris, Trapp, DiClemente, & Cousins, 1998). It is clear that the types of consideration, the nature of commitment, and the specific strategies in action and maintenance plans would differ. The challenges lie in measuring the stages of change (Carey, Purnine, Maisto & Carey, 1999) and in understanding which strategies of the motivational interviewing approach can be used cross culturally to promote stage transition and which need significant adaptations by practitioners in the different cultures in order to be sensitive to their needs, as well as the needs of clients.”

### Cross-Cultural Applicability of MI

Miller and Rose, in “Toward a Theory of Motivational Interviewing” summarize a meta-analysis of MI:

**“...the effect size of MI was doubled when the recipients were predominantly from minority populations**, as compared with White non-Hispanic Americans (Hettema, Steele & Miller, 2005).”

A recent study evaluated the effectiveness of clinical training in MI across various cultures:

“Free clinical training in MI was offered in separate targeted workshops for 86 African American, Native American, and Spanish-speaking addiction treatment providers. Audio taped pre- and post-training clinical work samples were coded for indexes of MI competence. In all 3 samples, post-training gains in MI proficiency were at least as large as those found earlier with predominantly non-Hispanic White providers. **Combined with evidence for the efficacy of MI in minority populations, these findings support the cross-cultural applicability of MI.**”

A number of studies point to the success of MI with various populations addressing a variety of behavioral issues. For example:

- The Omari Project provides treatment to heroin users in Kenya. Findings of a study using motivational interviewing with the population indicate that MI is “acceptable and useful to study participants.”
- A study of motivational interviewing to address heavy drinking among Hispanics “supports the acceptability and relevance of this adaption from participants’ perspectives.”

Notably, “*Motivational Interviewing: Enhancing Motivation for Change- Learner’s Manual for the American Indian/Alaska Native Counselor*” recommends adapting materials for Native American culture and language and reports:

“Research on the implementation of Motivational Interviewing and Stages of Change at the Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest, Inc. in Portland, Oregon, and at the Seattle Indian Health Board in Seattle, Washington, found that the Motivational Interviewing counseling approach **is consistent with many AI/AN values and enhances traditional healing methods, such as Talking Circles and Sweat Lodge Ceremonies** (Grover, 2003).”

The Stages of Change Research Project is an extensive study of the impact of MI within a Canadian vocational program that serves “unemployed or underemployed individuals who face motivational barriers to work. These individuals may be long-term or multi-generational recipients of Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), people returning to work after lengthy absences for reasons such as injury, child rearing, or mental health issues, to name a few. They include Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, youth



at risk, single parents, newcomers, and ex-offenders.” The study used a control group and included voluntarily offered demographic data. According to the final report for the project, “the following table includes the sub-groups that benefited most strongly in regards to obtaining and maintaining employment for six months or longer and includes the percentage increase as a result of taking part in the model”:

	<b>Study Group Increase Over Control Group</b>
<b>Very Strong Evidence</b>	
Those whose First Language was not English	28.80%
Single Participants	18.10%
<b>Strong Evidence</b>	
Immigrants	27.40%
Participants feeling they had Substance Abuse Employment Barriers	25.10%
Participants Diagnosed with Mental Health Issues	23.50%
Those of European Decent	22.40%
Participants feeling they had Gang Member Employment Barriers	22.20%
Singles with Children	18.10%
Parents/Guardians Of Children	14.90%
Visible Minorities	14.50%
Singles without Children	12.30%
<b>Moderate Evidence</b>	
Those of African Decent	30.90%
Those Separated (relationship related)	27.40%
Participants feeling they had Gambling Employment Barriers	24.00%
Those With Children Over the Age of 12	23.10%
Those that have Lost Employment Due To Substance Abuse	18.70%
Mature Workers	17.00%
Participants feeling they had Language Employment Barriers	15.80%
Participants feeling they had Illegal Conviction Employment Barriers	15.60%
Victims of Domestic Violence	12.10%
Those with direct Family Members on EIA	10.80%
Ex-Offenders	7.90%

## Conclusion

Motivational Interviewing is a counseling approach that has demonstrated effectiveness with individuals from a wide range of demographics , ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. It is important to note that counselors working cross-culturally need to know how to adapt motivational interviewing to be culturally and linguistically appropriate. To do this, counselors need to understand cultural difference and should be trained to understand general cultural trends. Counselors who speak the same language as their customer will be most effective in using this approach, whether the language is Spanish, Arabic, American Sign Language or another language. Within any culture there can be wide variance in values, belief and behaviors. To address this variance, culturally aware counselors will be most successful who use the core skills of Motivational Interviewing in the true Spirit of MI.

## End Notes

- 1 Miller, William R., & Rollnick, Stephen. (2002) Motivational Interviewing (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press (page 34).
- 2 Miller & Rollnick (2002) (page 35).
- 3 Miller & Rollnick (2202) (page 215).

- 4 Miller, W. R. & Rose, G. S. (2009) Toward a Theory of Motivational Interviewing. American Psychology September; 54(6); 527-537.
- 5 Miller, W. R.; Hendrickson, S.; Venner K; Bisono, A.; Daugherty, M.; Yahne, C. (2008). Cross-Cultural Training in Motivational Interviewing, Journal of Teaching in the Addictions, V7 n1 p4-15 2008.
- 6 Beckerieg, S. (2001). Counselling Kenyan heroin users: cross-cultural motivation? Health Education, Vol. 101 Iss 2, pp. 69-73.
- 7 Lee, C. S.; Lopez, S.R; Hernandez, L.; Coby, S. M.; A cultural adaptation of motivational interviewing to address heavy drinking among Hispanics Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, Vol 17 (3), Jul 2011, pp 317-324.
- 8 Tomlin, K; Walker, R. D.; Grover, J.; Arquette, W.; Stewart, P.; Motivational Interviewing: Enhancing Motivation for Change- A Learner's Manual for the American Indian/Alaskan Native Counselor page 7.
- 9 Stage of Change Research Study: External Review 2010  
<http://www.ofe.ca/myfiles/SOC%20Documents/SOC%20Research%20Final%20External%20Review.pdf>
- 10 Opportunities for Employment ▪ Stages of Change Project ▪ Final Report (2010) pp. 110-111.  
<http://www.ofe.ca/myfiles/SOC%20Documents/The%20Stages%20of%20Change%20OFE%20Final%20Report.pdf>

### **SAVE THE DATES**

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

MRS Transition Training & Networking Workshop  
LCC West Campus (M-Tec)  
5708 Cornerstone Drive  
Lansing, MI 48917  
Monday, August 7, 2012

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