



Transition Bulletin - Fall Issue

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



A Word from MRS' New Director Sue Howell

I appreciate this opportunity to share with dedicated colleagues working in the field of transition services, a bit of personal information about myself, as well as MRS' value of building strong, fortified partnerships that assist helping persons with disabilities to achieve their employment goals and highest level of self-sufficiency.

I have over 30 years of experience in the field of rehabilitation. That experience includes working in a mental health setting, as well as, working as a teacher. The majority of my experience has been in vocational rehabilitation. Not only does my experience cover a broad exposure to various disabilities, but I have and continue to work within different service delivery systems. Each system has its own unique way of addressing issues, different infrastructures for getting work done, and different work cultures. Despite these differences, we can all work together within a common mission of assisting persons with disabilities to achieve their employment goals. In fact, it is often the synergy that comes from a diverse group of team members, working in transparency, facing the difficult decisions together, willingly taking the risk to try a unique approach that has never been entertained before, that creates new and innovative practices which enhance outcomes.

This is exactly what I mean by building strong, fortified partnerships! No one entity can do the work alone. Our partnerships, which consist of members with diverse talents, experience and backgrounds, yield exponential results when we work from a framework of transparency, trust and integrity. I understand the challenges that educators face in preparing students for living independently. I experienced those as a teacher myself. I also understand the personal commitment and financial contribution teachers make to serve their students well, and the frustration that is experienced when there seems to be limited resources. Education is not that different from vocational rehabilitation, in that regard, and yet we often have the perception that the two fields couldn't be farther part. The common factor for both education and vocational rehabilitation is we both have a passion for what we do. We both see the value in what we do. But, it is only when we harness those two teams together, creating and finding common ground, that education and vocational rehabilitation, become a force in multiplying the available resources. Doing this leads to a greater impact upon the success of each and every student with a disability.

Each of us has a responsibility to bring the best of what we have to serve our customer and each other together. While we may be good at what we do, good is not good enough. I challenge each of us to be great! Where we have not-so-good partnerships, let's commit to make them great! Where we have great partnerships, let's commit to making them greater! May we never be satisfied with what we have achieved, but continue our quest to build open, honest working partnerships that better serve our mutual customers!

President Obama Signs the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

By overwhelming margins, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) bill passed the senate and the house. On July 22, President Obama signed the bill which includes improvements to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The new legislation emphasizes Transition and will have a significant impact on the future of Transition Services across

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the nation and in Michigan.

ACCSES (the voice of disability service providers) has summarized the changes to required Transition services as follows:

- 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.



The amendments will be written into regulations for Vocational Rehabilitation to follow. The process may take up to two years upon which time MRS will be held accountable to the changes in the act. Stay tuned.

MT-21 Continues Research on Evidence-Based Practices in Transition

MRS and Project Excellence at Michigan State University (PE-MSU) are continuing to implementing a research project called, Michigan Transition for the 21st Century Project (MT-21). Phase One of the project (Discovery) was completed in 2013. During this phase, transition data was collected and analyzed from five highest performing MRS District Offices in the provision of Transition services to Transition Youth customers. MT-21 ranked MRS district offices in terms of performance achieving employment outcomes with transition youth. MRS staff and their educational partners (e.g., transition coordinators, special education teachers) from these offices participated in a research process to identify and document promising and emerging Transition practices throughout Michigan. The initial findings have been disseminated to MRS staff as well as educational partners.

The MT-21 project is now in Phase Two which is the implementation phase. The goal of this phase is to build a systemic, working base of knowledge that will be utilized to create job aids, influence policy, and identify programs or initiatives to promote increased employment outcomes. Among other promising practices reported in the Phase One study, the MT-21 team selected “Work-Based Learning programs” as the most effective practice that would lead to successful employment outcomes. The emphasis on pre-employment services for transition youth of the most recently amended Rehab Act (i.e., WIOA) was also used in supporting the decision to focus on work-based learning.

MRS and PE-MSU will be creating a promising practice checklist, focusing on Work-Based Learning (WBL), for all district offices based on their local Transition Inter-agency Cash Transfer Agreements. This checklist will be used by the MRS staff to conduct a self-assessment. Districts will indicate if they employ the promising practice and, if not, why. For those who have not implemented but would like to implement it, MRS and MSU plan to create protocols or handbook designed to be used to develop a new WBL program in their local community in FY 2015. To accomplish this, a case study will be conducted with a couple of successfully prevailing programs



(i.e., MRS-DNR and MTSA projects).

In the end of the Phase Two, district offices will be encouraged to use the protocol/handbook when they want to develop WBL programs. Detailed implementation plans will be developed after the second phase. However, PE-MSU will be tracking transition outcomes to see if the practices prove to improve transition youth employment outcomes, comparing with control groups.

In addition, MRS and PE-MSU plan to conduct additional study during FY 2015. The case study conducted during the discovery phase also reported disconnection of vocational goals specified in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). A study will be conducted to investigate whether transition youth's goals between IEP and IPE are aligned.

MRS and MTSA Collaborative Project – Year 3!

MRS and MTSA have agreed to continue with the MRS and MTSA Collaborative Project for a third year. This partnership is made possible by a generous donation to MRS from the Michigan Transition Services Association (MTSA). The resulting budget this year is \$148,148. Five projects will be funded, one in each MTSA region. Each project will be awarded **\$30,000**.

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|-------|------|-----------|
| MTSA | 27% | \$40,500 |
| MRS | 73% | \$109,500 |
| Total | 100% | \$150,000 |

Five work-based learning projects have already been initiated as a result of this partnership in Hillsdale, Kent, Washtenaw, Oakland and Roscommon counties.

The goal of the project is to work collaboratively to utilize MRS case service funds to increase work-based learning opportunities to Transition students in secondary settings who are preparing for and seeking employment. The Project Measurement is:

- ✓ Number of students served using project funds,
- ✓ Number of work-based learning opportunities,
- ✓ Specific transition services provided, and
- ✓ Number of students competitively employed.

A project description, application and additional information will be available on September 22nd, on the MTSA website at <http://www.michigantsa.com/>. In addition, an Email Blast will go out to MRS and education staff. The deadline for applicants is November 21, 2014.

Project SEARCH Opens in Adrian

Eight students began the Project SEARCH program on September 2, 2014 at ProMedica Bixby & Herrick Hospitals in Adrian Michigan. Lenawee Intermediate School District Goodwill Adrian, Lenawee Community Mental Health, Goodwill Adrian and the Michigan Rehabilitation Services Ann Arbor District Office are partnering to create this program. The students and staff are very excited and becoming oriented to each other and to the Project SEARCH program. Below is a picture from the ribbon cutting ceremony that was held along with a picture of the students as they get ready to start their year of internships.





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Cynthia Wright wrightc1@michigan.gov or call 517-241-3957

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