



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

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## Michigan Transition Outcome Project (MI-TOP) Institute - Strengthening Interagency Collaboration and System Alignment is a Success!

On June 16 -17, the MI-TOP, Office of Career Technical Education (OCTE), Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), and Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP) joined forces to host the MI-TOP Institute - Strengthening Interagency Collaboration and System Alignment. Approximately 300 people were in attendance, including 100 MRS counselors and managers.

Providing the welcome on the first day of the institute was Teri Johnson Chapman, Office of Special Education; Patty Cantu, OCTE; Suzanne Howell, MRS; and Ed Rodgers, BSBP. Each director spoke about their vision and priorities regarding the provision of transition services to youth with disabilities.

- ◇ PowerPoints from the institute can be accessed at <https://mitransition.org/>.
- ◇ E-Learn Link: <http://mrselearn.org/Home/MRSPrograms/>

## Let's Thank the Directors for Their Support



**Teri Johnson Chapman**, the Director of the Office of Special Education, Michigan Department of Education (MDE). She holds an Ed. S. in Special Education Administration from Saginaw Valley State University, and both an undergraduate and Master's Degree in Special Education from Eastern Michigan University.



**Patty Cantú**, the Director for the OCTE, MDE, provides direction and leadership to department staff and to constituents in the field. This assures Career and Technical Education programs and Educational Development Plans are aligned with the goals and mission of the Department and the State Board of Education.



**Suzanne Howell**, was appointed on February 3, 2014, as the Director of MRS. She is responsible for ensuring that people with disabilities are able to find meaningful employment all over Michigan. Howell has been with MRS for 29 years. She began her career with MRS as a certified rehabilitation counselor and site manager. Most recently, she was the district manager of the Eastern Michigan District Office.



**Ed Rodgers**, was appointed in 1979 by Governor Milliken as an Administrative Law Judge for the Michigan Insurance Commission. From 1979–2012, Ed served as an Administrative Law Judge for the State of Michigan. In 2012, he was selected as the first State Director for the newly created BSBP and he continues to serve as the Director of the Bureau today.

## **Keynote Speakers**

Jennifer Segal

&

David Hoff

Two keynote speakers were big draws for the event; Jennifer Segal, Esquire, Brustein & Manasevit, PLLC and David Hoff, Program Director for The Institute for Community Inclusion, School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, UMass Boston. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) that was passed on July 22, 2014 was a big topic of conversation by both of the keynote speakers. Jennifer Segal spoke from a legal perspective while David Hoff spoke more from an implementation point of view.

## A Big THANK YOU

A big THANK YOU to all of the individuals that helped pull the institute together, including many MRS staff that served on the design team. This includes Rebecca Hill from the Kalamazoo District Office, Melissa Harding from the Flint District Office, Rick Webster from the Grand Rapids District Office, Staci Anderson from the Lansing District Office, Jennifer Hirst from the Battle Creek District Office, Monica Robbins from the Ann Arbor District Office, and Stacy Janusz from the Grand Rapids District Office.

Thank you to Valerie Felder from the CTE, Shannon McVoy from BSBP, and BSBP counselors who participated on the Design Team.

Thank you to MI-TOP for your leadership: including Maria Peak, MI-TOP Coordinator, Laurie Bradley, Jennifer Brandenburg, and the MI-TOP Core Planning Team.

### **Michigan Rehabilitation Services Says Thank You to Laurie Bradley**

On the final day at the Michigan Transition Outcomes Project (MI-TOP) Institute - Strengthening Interagency Collaboration and Systems Alignment, Maria Peak, MI-TOP Coordinator asked the audience, “Who do you call if you have a question about Transition?” Completely unscripted, the audience responded in unison, “LAURIE BRADLEY!”

This must be validating for Laurie, who has served almost 18 years in the field of Transition as the MI-TOP grant coordinator. MI-TOP is under redesign by the Michigan Department of Education/Office of Special Education resulting in the end of contracts for several staff, including Laurie Bradley.

Prior to joining the Transition Services Project (TSP), Laurie worked as a manager in the restaurant business and often hired and supervised young people with disabilities. She saw the value that youth with disabilities brought to the workforce. In addition, Laurie has a son with a disability who has become very successful as an adult. Both of these experiences laid the foundation for her perspective as a leader in the field of Transition.

Laurie has served the Transition Community with passion, compassion, and undying commitment for the past 18 years. The Transition Services Project morphed into MI-TOP in 2004. Laurie was the only individual that was continuously involved through the days of TSP and MI-TOP.

Over the years, Laurie has been instrumental in forging positive relationships between education and vocational rehabilitation, which she recognizes as being critical to develop a strong infrastructure to support students. She has continuously reached out to MRS, gone above and beyond the call of duty to include MRS in TSP, MI-TOP, and the transition community in every way. As a result, MRS and MI-TOP have been able to reach a very high level of collaboration resulting in joint training, improved understanding and processes between MRS and education, and increased opportunities for students with disabilities leading to employment.

In 2014, Laurie was chosen by her peers to win the C. David Anderson Award at the Michigan Transition Services Association Conference in Frankenmuth. This high honor is bestowed upon individuals that exemplify outstanding support and promotion of Transition services through leadership, advocacy, and/or innovation.



This change marks the end of an era for MI-TOP, and the future path for MI-TOP is unclear at this time.

Thank you, Laurie Bradley, for everything you have done for students with disabilities. You have made a difference.

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## **The MTSA Board Votes to Continue the MRS and MTSA Collaborative Projects**

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The Michigan Transition Services Association (MTSA) generously voted, at their board meeting in May, to donate \$40,000 to MRS in order to support MRS and MTSA Collaborative Projects. This is the fourth year in a row that the MTSA board has voted to support this effort.

The \$40,000 allows MRS to draw down federal matching funds in the amount of \$108,148, resulting in \$148,148 total budget. Five projects will be funded, one in each MTSA region. Each project will be given a \$30,000 budget. Projects can be written to utilize the funding in one or two year increments.

- Applications available in Early August
- Completed Applications due in November 2015
- Funding will be Allocated in January of 2016

Due to the passage of WIOA and the emphasis on Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS), the MTSA board has decided to expand the scope of the project from just work-based learning to any PETS. This decision by the board is in alignment with MRS priorities to increase and expand transition services to students with disabilities. This will allow local communities to develop project concepts around work-based learning, job exploration, postsecondary exploration, workplace readiness, self-advocacy, and peer mentoring.

Applications for projects will be made available in early August. MRS will send an email announcement to MRS staff and applications will also be available on the MTSA website at [www.michigantsa.com](http://www.michigantsa.com). Completed applications will be due in November of 2015. Project funding will be allocated in January of 2016.

Thank you MTSA for your vision, support and participation in this collaboration!

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## MRS Conducts PETS Pilot

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Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Transition services to Students with Disabilities are strongly emphasized to increase, strengthen, and expand the services provided. The cornerstone of these changes is the introduction of PETS. WIOA requires MRS to spend 15% of the MRS federal vocational rehabilitation (VR) allotment on the provision of PETS to Students with Disabilities prior to their exit from secondary education.

### PETS Includes

- 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.

In Michigan, 15% of the federal VR allotment is approximately \$15 million. WIOA allows MRS to count services that MRS counselors or managers provide themselves, coordinate, or purchase. MRS Central Office staff is able to track PETS purchases without counselors or managers making any changes to local practices. In order to reach the full 15% requirement, MRS will need to count counselor and manager time providing PETS because the amount of funds spent on the purchase of PETS may not reach \$15 million.

To create a system that allows MRS to track time, MRS is conducting a pilot that involves approximately 30 staff and managers. The MRS AWARE case management system has been modified allowing counselors and managers to enter time that they spend providing and/or coordinating PETS.

The pilot has been going on for six weeks and a date has been set later this summer to debrief with the participating counselors and managers. The MRS Policy Unit will be conducting case reviews to look at issues that need to be addressed before the pilot is implemented statewide.

**PLEASE FORWARD OR PRINT TRANSITION BULLETIN**

E-mail your contributions or ideas and subscription requests for "Transition Bulletin" to Cynthia Wright [wrightc1@michigan.gov](mailto:wrightc1@michigan.gov) or call 517-241-3957

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