

Transition Bulletin - Spring Issue

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

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MI-TOP/MRS Purposeful Collaboration Workshop

A day of sharing, networking and learning...

By Cynthia Wright, Rehabilitation Consultant

On January 27th educators and rehabilitation professionals from all over the state came together to strengthen transition partnerships and relationships. Over 250 people attended the workshop from as far away as Copper County. The day was jam packed with information and conversation.

Eleanor E. White PhD from the Michigan Department of Education/Office of Special Education-Early Intervention Services (MDE/OSE-EIS), Jaye Porter from the Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth-Michigan Rehabilitation Services (DELEG/MRS) and Pat Cannon from the Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth-Commission for the Blind (DELEG/MCB) kicked off the day welcoming all of the participants. It was wonderful to have all three of the directors talk about their perspectives from their respective agencies and the importance of working together.

Dr. Pattie Noonan from Kansas State University was the keynote speaker and she spoke eloquently about collaboration. Pattie is an Assistant Research Professor in the Department of Special Education/Center for Research on Learning at the University of Kansas and Co-Director of Research Collaboration, a research entity focused on utilization-focused evaluation and collaboration. Dr. Noonan has been working in secondary special education/transition and evaluation for over a decade, and currently focuses her efforts on large scale evaluation of tiered school improvement efforts, developing and researching community transition teams at the state and local levels, and providing professional development for secondary special educators. Her research interests center around strategies and barriers to collaboration (both intra- and inter-agency), education systems-change, and secondary school improvement through teaming and collaboration.



Pictured from left to right: Cynthia Wright-MRS Rehabilitation Consultant, Jaye Porter-Director of MRS, Pat Cannon-Director of Commission for the Blind, Eleanor E. White-Director of MDE/OSE-EIS, and Chuck Saur-Director of MI-TOP

Pattie shared many tools, based on her research, to evaluate the level of collaboration in any given community. In addition to the keynote presentation, Pattie conducted a breakout session where participants could use the tools to assess their local partnership to identify areas of strength and possible gaps.

The strategies that have been identified in Pattie's research that are used by high-performing local school district and communities that promote effective collaboration are:

Strategy 1: Flexible Scheduling and Staffing

Strategy 2: Follow-Up after Transition
 Strategy 3: Administrative Support for Transition
 Strategy 4: Using a Variety of Funding Sources
 Strategy 5: State-Supported Technical Assistance
 Strategy 6: Ability to Build Relationships
 Strategy 7: Agency Meetings with Students and Families
 Strategy 8: Training Students and Families
 Strategy 9: Joint Training of Staff
 Strategy 10: Meetings with Agency Staff and Transition Councils
 Strategy 11: Dissemination of Information to a Broad Audience



Partners from Shiawassee, Ingham and Clinton County work on their community transition vision.

Other breakout sessions were offered as well that were very well attended. Dennis Hart, DELEG-MRS Western Division Director, Tina Fullerton, DELEG-MRS Program Innovation Manager, Bill Colombo, DELEG-MRS Rehabilitation Consultant and John Mans, Transition Coordinator from Menominee County ISD/MI-TOP Core Planning Team delivered a presentation called, “Nuts and Bolts of Funding Collaborative Services and Programs”. Participants reported that this presentation was extremely helpful in understanding the different ways in which educational partners can work with MRS to capture funds to provide vocational rehabilitation services to transition youth.

Another breakout session called, “Sharing Student Information: Respecting Confidentiality and Making it Meaningful”, conducted by Garrett Pazur, DELEG/MRS Deputy Director of the Southeast Division and Larry Stemple, Transition Coordinator focused on student documentation that schools are responsible to provide to students and how it can be used for vocational planning purposes. Participants reported that one of the benefits of this session was to help to strategize how to obtain relevant student information from schools in lieu of counting on updated psychological reports which are no longer a school responsibility under IDEA.

The day ended with an activity where regions and local communities came together to create a vision for their partnership. This process brought together the missions and goals of MRS and MCB staff and education into one collective purpose.

The most fun of all was being in the same room with so many friends and fellow colleagues who work in the field of Transition. The energy that was generated felt amazing. One of the participants summed up the day on their evaluation with the following comment, “The Transition Training was a home run. Keep up the good work!”

“The transition training was a home run.”



Statewide Interagency Agreement Gets an Update

Michigan Department of Education/Office of Special Education-Early Intervention Services (MDE/ OSE-EIS) and Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) Revise and Update their Interagency Agreement

By Tina Fullerton, Manager, Program Innovation Unit

When Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) came to Michigan last year they reviewed MRS transition practices. One of the findings indicated that it was time to update the Interagency Agreement between MRS and MDE/ OSE-EIS. The existing agreement had been in place for ten years and much had happened in the last decade in the field of Transition so an updated agreement was warranted.

A team was formed including MRS and MDE/OSE-EIS staff to forge ahead with the charge of updating the agreement. Interagency Agreements were gathered from around the country to look at how other states conceptualized their partnerships. The team that worked on the Michigan agreement was Chuck Saur and Laurie Bradley from Michigan – Transition Outcome Project, Cheryl Diamond from MDE Policy, Dennis Hart, MRS Program Innovation/ Western Division Director, Tina Fullerton, MRS Program Innovation Manager, Garrett Pazur, MRS Policy Manager and Cynthia Wright, MRS Rehabilitation Consultant.

The team agreed that the new agreement will:

- Be streamlined
- Set the tone for local agreements
- Be student centered
- Use user-friendly language
- Be specific to Michigan

After many meetings, much discussion and collaboration, the new agreement was signed on March 1, 2011. Soon, MRS will be joining a new state department. Once this occurs, language in the agreement will be modified to reflect the change.

MRS wishes to extend a **big thank you** to the individuals from MDE/OSE-EIS that assisted with the development of the new agreement.

Counseling Techniques for Improving Customer Motivation: A Change Affecting Framework

Are we dancing or wrestling with our customers?

By Julie Eckhardt, Training Consultant & Cynthia Wright, Rehabilitation Consultant

The strategic priorities of Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) include improving the quality of vocational rehabilitation services provided to persons with disabilities. To this end, MRS has embarked on training to understand and work with customer motivation more effectively. Elizabeth [Liz] Fabiano, Executive Director of P.N.A. Change Consultants, is providing MRS counselors with in-depth training regarding Cognitive Motivational Tools for Negotiating Behavior Change. The following is a summary based on the one-day overviews conducted in December of 2010.

In her presentation, Liz described motivation as an “often misunderstood concept.” It is not an effective strategy for counselors to act as external motivators, continually trying to “pump up” job seekers. Instead, working with intrinsic motivation is more effective and will produce more positive employment outcomes.

Liz identified a common problem among counselors and job developers. To evaluate if this problem exists, one must ask the question, “Am I working harder than my customer on their job search?” Unfortunately, in the field of vocational rehabilitation the answer is often, “yes.”

Counselors can develop a skill set to work more effectively with customer's internal motivation. Without these skills, customers may be moved forward in the vocational rehabilitation process before they are ready. When this happens, an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) may be developed prematurely, resulting in customers with plans who are unable to progress toward employment. They may also be receiving job development services before they are serious about job seeking, acquisition and maintenance. Liz points out that there is a big difference between, “wanting to go to work and wanting to get a job”. The idea of a job and career often seems idyllic, but the reality of actually working may not be so rosy.

There are many faulty assumptions and myths about motivation that may limit counselor's effectiveness. Myths include:

- Motivation is a “fixed personality characteristic.”
 - **Reality** - Motivation is a state, not a trait, that can change and develop.
- Motivation can be improved by applying techniques to people.
 - **Reality** – Motivation needs to be built from the inside out.
- Everyone who comes to MRS is motivated to work if they say they are.
 - **Reality**- Readiness for change occurs at the individual level and cannot be assumed.

Liz identified other faulty assumptions that may interfere with the rehabilitation process:

- Individuals ought to change and should change.

- **Reality** - Individuals may not feel that they need to change at all.
- Work is acceptable and needed to function.
 - **Reality** – From their own point of view, many people function fine without working.
- A customer's situation and past experiences should have an impact on wanting to change. For example, many counselors feel that being on food stamps should be motivation to seek employment.
 - **Reality** – Many people feel that being on food stamps is a benefit. What a counselor may perceive as a problem may not be perceived by the individual as a problem at all.
- People who come to MRS are ready to change!
 - **Reality** - Many people struggle profoundly with change and/or are not invested in changing at all.
- Counselors need to assess and reduce customer barriers before a person can work.
 - **Reality**- Barriers become challenges when a person is motivated.

Fortunately motivation can be dealt with in a productive way. Liz will be teaching MRS counselors the cognitive motivational tools to help customers develop intrinsic motivation rather than relying on external motivation. External motivation methods have limits in that counselors have to constantly “feed” external motivation to keep customers moving. When behavior is mandated, another external motivator, people are much less likely to be successful than when behavior is chosen. Guilt and shame is another external motivation tactic. Any of these methods may impact in the short term but do not produce long-term behavior change.

To assess customer motivation, counselors need to listen carefully to what customers are saying about going to work. For example, how serious is the job seeker that says that they want to work but only on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons and never on the weekend? Or the individual that says they only want to work at one particular place and nowhere else?

Customers that are serious about employment demonstrate self-efficacy and problem awareness. This is because these individuals have given thought to working, have imagined themselves working and have thought through many of the implications of employment. Another trait of a motivated worker is that they possess internal self-talk about job seeking and employment that encourages and supports them through the process. This happens when internal motivation has been integrated into their thought process.

By listening and assessing a customer's intrinsic motivation, counselors can intervene more effectively to support customers toward motivation to work. The counselor response is individualized and sets the stage for change.

In order to influence intrinsic motivation one must first look at why people change. People change when the pain of staying where they are is greater than the pain of moving to something different. Persuading someone to change doesn't work in the long run. It is better if counselors validate the individual's concerns about where they are, which allows customers to gain problem awareness. Problem awareness will help to tip the decisional balance toward change. Dissonance and discomfort are indications of problem awareness, and may signal that the person is getting ready to move forward. When there is a self-perceived need for change, change is more likely to be lasting. So the main strategy that counselors should use, according to Liz, is “problem awareness, not purchasing stuff”. Liz puts it another way, “You can't lead a horse to water, but you can salt the oats”.

Using this strategy is about managing dialogue with customers and listening carefully to the direction of the language they use. Is the talk moving backward, staying the same or forward? By responding to the customer where they are, rather than trying to push them forward according to the counselor's agenda, counselors can help customers recognize their own motivations. Liz describes this as, “wrestling or dancing with customers”. When customer and counselor are dancing together, the customer has raised awareness and is more likely to be an internally motivated job seeker.

In conclusion, job seeking, acquisition and maintenance are serious business for MRS customers. Individuals who are eligible for MRS services have significant barriers to employment and often feel trepidation about working. Part of the job of the MRS counselor is to help customers work through their concerns so that when they participate in the development of their IPE they are more confident of success. Customer intrinsic motivation to work is the key to a successful job search and career, and in the long run will undoubtedly improve MRS outcomes.

Poem

Read by Eleanor E. White, Director of MDE/OSE-EIS, at the MI-TOP/MRS Purposeful Collaboration Workshop

There was a most important job that needed to be done,
And no reason NOT to do it, there was absolutely none.
But in vital matters such as this the thing you have to ask,
is WHO exactly will it be who'll carry out this task.
ANYBODY could have told you that EVERYBODY knew,
that this was something SOMEBODY would surely have to do.
NOBODY was unwilling, ANYBODY had the ability,
but NOBODY thought he was supposed to be the one.
It seemed to be a job that ANYBODY could have done,
If ANYBODY thought he was supposed to be the one.
But since EVERYBODY recognized that ANYBODY could,
EVERYBODY took for granted that SOMEBODY would.
But NOBODY told ANYBODY that we are aware of,
That he would be in charge of seeing it was taken care of.
And NOBODY took it on himself to follow through and DO,
What EVERYBODY thought that SOMEBODY would do.
When what EVERYBODY needs so did not get done at all,
EVERYBODY was complaining that SOMEBODY dropped the ball.
ANYBODY then could see it was an awful crying shame,
And EVERYBODY looked around for SOMEBODY to blame.
SOMEBODY should have done the job and EVERYBODY would have,
But in the end NOBODY did what ANYBODY could have.

SAVE THE DATES

MI-TOP Workshop
Ramada Inn Hotel and Conference Center
7501 W. Saginaw Hwy
Lansing, MI 48917
April 28-29, 2011

Autism Symposium Presented by Oakland University's Center
for Autism, Research, Education & Support and the Department
of Human Development and Child Studies
Marriott at Centerpoint
3600 Centerpoint Parkway
Pontiac, MI 48341
May 12-13, 2011

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