

Monday Bulletin on Services to Youth

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

MICHIGAN ROLLS OUT MT-21

By: Marcie Alling, State Coordinator, MT-21

How often have you wished you could find new or better ways to provide transition services? Or that you knew more about what other youth service providers around the state are doing? Or that you had more ideas or resources at your fingertips for working with youth who seem to face an increasing number of challenges and barriers?



Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) and the Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) of the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth, have been grappling with these and related questions over the past few years. As a result, they're rolling out

a cooperative initiative called "Michigan Transition for the 21st Century" or "MT-21" for short. Its purpose is to build a working base of knowledge and promising practices that will be transferred into the rehabilitation process. A unique feature of the project is its vocational rehabilitation (VR) focus.

Why MT-21? MRS and MCB know that Michigan's employment outcomes for youth with disabilities need improvement. Despite the great strides Michigan made for many years supporting innovation in youth transition, outcomes have plateaued. MRS and MCB recognize that they don't have a good handle on the current "state of the state" with regard to transition practices.

They also don't know what factors impact vocational rehabilitation youth outcomes, or which transition practices really make a difference for youth and why. In fact, VR counselors in most states - not just Michigan - lack a systematic, comprehensive and evidenced-based approach to working with transitioning youth. This issue has become even more important because of the strong focus on transition-age youth at the federal level, including the Rehabilitation Services Administration which oversees the federal/state VR system.

The MT-21 Project will address these issues using a multi-year, multi-phase approach. Its design is based on the experiences of the MiConnections Project which used the research-based *Guideposts for Success* as its framework in a model of coordinated, collaborative service delivery (www.miconnections.org/summarychart.php). The *Guideposts* will serve as the common language of MT-21.

Phase I will be a statewide discovery or self-assessment process to identify assets, promising practices and gaps in transition practices. It will be the building block for subsequent phases. The *Guideposts* will be the navigation tool for collecting, analyzing and reporting quantitative and qualitative data. The MT-21 staff will try to answer the question: "What's making a difference?" They will analyze all aspects of each practice, tool or process to determine what works or does not work, and why. Staff at all levels of MCB and MRS (including the Michigan Career & Technical Institute), partners, youth and their families, projects, practices and other sources will be included in the discovery process. MT-21 will also seek out intersection points with other similar statewide transition improvement initiatives such as the Michigan Transition Outcomes Project within Michigan's special education system.

"...What's making a difference?"

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The data gathered will be organized into a database of knowledge and practices. Future phases will focus on developing “portable” models of evidence-based and promising practices. A plan for disseminating and integrating these practices will be implemented. A multi-system learning community will be created. Its purpose will be to share current and emerging practices in a timely way and be mutually supportive.

“A multi-system learning community will be created.”

MT-21’s desired impacts will be increased youth employment outcomes and an improved system of youth services. Michigan will also have contributed to the state-of-the-art of evidence-based transition services.

Watch for periodic updates in future issues of the *Monday Bulletin* as MT-21 unfolds. In the meantime for more information, contact Marcie Alling, MT-21 State Coordinator, at 517-335-0390 or AllingM@michigan.gov.

REFLECTIONS OF THE PAST YEAR

By: Cynthia Wright, MRS Transition Consultant

It’s been a little over one year that I have been serving as your Transition Consultant in the MRS Program Innovation Unit and as your editor of the *Monday Bulletin*. It’s time to take a breath and reflect on the great work that is being done to assist and empower young people with disabilities to transition into adult life. I’m in awe of the creativity, energy and passion of professionals in Michigan who work tirelessly to provide guidance and support to young people. I’m also in awe of our young people with disabilities and their families that continue to inspire us to try innovative approaches and challenge us to think in new ways to improve opportunities for quality outcomes. The past year has flown by and has been a whirlwind of discovery and learning.



A big part of my job has been connecting at the state level with partners in transition and as a result I have been very busy serving on several transition work groups and interagency teams including:

- Transition Outcomes Project (TOPS)
- Michigan Transition Services Association (MTSA)
- Michigan Transition Services Association Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC)
- Michigan National Career Readiness Certificate Implementation Team (MI-NCRC)

Many of you have welcomed me to visit your local communities and I have enjoyed talking with you and learning about unique transition programs that are being offered from the U.P. to Kalamazoo to Detroit and everywhere in between. You have shared concerns and given me many questions to research and problems to work on. I appreciate all the feedback and information that has been shared with me about your successes and challenges. It helps me keep my perspective sharp and allows me to focus my work on issues that are the most relevant to field work that directly impacts upon customers.

“I appreciate all the feedback and information...”

I’ve also been asked by many of you to do presentations on a variety of topics relevant to transition. It has been fun and challenging to create presentations for various groups and I look forward to improving them in the next year.

Several new tools and documents have been added to E-Learn to make your jobs easier including:

- MCTI Checklist,
- College Checklist and
- Youth Transition Services – Frequently Asked Questions.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to make these documents relevant and useful. The MRS Policy Unit issued the new Transition Policy which pulls all the transition manual items into one place. Because of this, looking for MRS policy guidance is much easier and more efficient.

Many Monday Bulletin readers were surveyed to take a look at ways to improve the publication. Thanks to all who gave feedback and ideas about how to improve the Bulletin. A full 91.5% find the contents of value in helping individuals with disabilities transition into employment. Many of you reported that you wanted to read about success stories, promising, innovative and effective practices, current trends and information and LINKS to transition resources. You sent the message loud and clear that you want the Monday Bulletin to be user friendly and a quick read. Every effort will be made to respond to your feedback to keep the publication readable, fresh and relevant to your work.

Starting with this summer issue, the Monday Bulletin will be published four times per year, one issue for each season. This will give more time to research and produce a quality publication. I would like to reserve the option of putting out “Special Editions!” if there is information of particular relevance or urgency that needs to be communicated.

Please stay in touch with me and keep me in the loop regarding your challenges, innovations and successes. Feel free to send any ideas you have for articles or topics for the Monday Bulletin. If you have a program or practice that you think others can benefit from, call or email me so I can communicate this information to others.

It has been an honor and a pleasure working with you and I hope you enjoy our beautiful Michigan summer weather.

Take care,

Cynthia Wright, MRS Consultant, Program Innovation Unit

MONDAY BULLETIN GETS A NAME CHANGE

By: Cynthia Wright, MRS Transition Consultant

After 11 years of being called the Monday Bulletin, this newsletter is changing its name to the Transition Bulletin beginning in the Fall.

When Transition was a new initiative, the Monday Bulletin started as an MRS publication to communicate ideas, information and policy guidance regarding Transition Services to MRS counselors every Monday. The publication has grown significantly and currently has a very large readership beyond MRS. The reason for the name change is two fold. Firstly, the name “Transition Bulletin” reflects more on what the Bulletin is about. Secondly, the Bulletin no longer comes out on just Monday.

Hopefully the Transition Bulletin will live up to the high standards set by the Monday Bulletin and will continue to be valued by its readership. Stay tuned!

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“...newsletter is changing its name to the Transition Bulletin in the fall.”

ALERT! YOUTH TRANSITION SERVICES - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS GETS AN ANNUAL UPDATE

Because each year brings new challenges our way, this summer the Youth Transition Services – Frequently Asked Questions will be getting its annual update for release in the Fall 2009. The purpose of the F&Q is to provide guidance to the most frequently asked questions from MRS counselors and educators regarding transition and emphasizes how MRS and education work together.

Your thoughts and ideas are requested to make sure that your concerns are addressed in the FAQ. If you have any questions that you think should be answered in the document, please contact Cynthia Wright at wrightc1@michigan.gov or (517) 241-3957.

SAVE THE DATES

**Michigan's Integrated Technology
Supports (MITS)
2009 Summer Institute
June 22 - 25
Hagerty Center on the campus of
Northwestern
Michigan College in Traverse City**

**Career Planning For Individuals
With Autism Spectrum
Disorders Conference
October 26-27
East Lansing**

**LDA of Michigan Annual Conference: *Learning in the 21st Century Classroom*
November 16-17
Kellogg Center, East Lansing
Contact: LDA of Michigan (517) 485-8160
E-mail: ldamich@sbcglobal.net**

PLEASE FORWARD OR PRINT MONDAY BULLETIN

E-mail your contributions or ideas and subscription requests for "Monday Bulletin on Services to Youth" to Cynthia Wright wrightc1@michigan.gov or call 517-241-3957

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