

Transition Bulletin – Fall Issue

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

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Michigan Rehabilitation Services Hires 26 New Counselors to Provide Pre-Employment Transition Services

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act is changing how MRS traditionally provides vocational rehabilitation services to students in secondary and postsecondary education with the introduction of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Pre-ETS are to be provided to all students with disabilities in need of the services regardless of whether or not they have applied for or have been determined eligible for MRS.

Pre-Employment Transition Services Pre-ETS are:

- Job exploration counseling - Experiences provided in a group setting or on an individual basis that are intended to foster motivation, consideration of opportunities, and informed decision making in regards to career options. Real-world activities ensure that students recognize the relevance of a high school and post-secondary education for their futures, both in college and/or the workplace;
- Work-based learning experiences – Services that are provided in a group setting or an individual bases; services consist of real-world career experience opportunities that may be provided during school or post-secondary. One of the main goals is to ensure services are provided in an integrated community environment to the maximum extent possible. Work-based learning experience is an educational approach or instructional methodology that uses real workplace example to provide students with the knowledge and skill that will help them connect school experiences to early-life work activities and future career opportunities. It is essential that the direct employer or community partner involvement be a component of work-based learning to ensure in-depth student engagement. These opportunities are mean to engage, motivate and augment the learning process:
- Counseling on postsecondary education – Counseling provided in a group or on an individual basis that includes information services and discussion on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education. This includes gaining an awareness of the wide range of career pathway options and labor market realities and projections.
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living - Provided in a group or on an individual basis and includes opportunities to learn about and develop social skills and independent living. Work readiness skills are sometimes called soft skills, employability skills or job readiness skills.

- Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring - Provided in a group or on an individual basis including opportunities to learn about rights, responsibilities, and how to request accommodations or services and supports needed during the transition from secondary to post-secondary education and employment (i.e. peer mentoring program, self-advocacy or self-determination workshop, leadership training, peer guidance, and when/how to disclose disability).

In order to meet the demand to provide Pre-ETS, MRS has hired 26 new counselors (two per MRS district) referred to as Pre-ETS counselors that will be 100 percent devoted to the provision of Pre-ETS. MRS is in the process of training these new counselors, orienting them to MRS and connecting them to community partners such as education, the Disability Networks and Community Rehabilitation Organizations.

Pre-ETS may be provided, purchased or coordinated prior to application, in application, eligibility, or Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) status. MRS transition counselors, MRS general counselors and MRS managers may also provide Pre-ETS as long as the student meets the definition of Students with Disabilities:

- 14-26 years of age
- Attending secondary or postsecondary education
- Special Education eligible, 504 Plan eligible, or an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504.

Examples of secondary education programs include but are not limited to public schools, private schools, charter schools, alternative high schools and home schools. Examples of postsecondary education may include but are not limited to vocational and technical training such as Michigan Career and Technical Institute, community colleges and universities.

MRS is working hard to implement Pre-ETS including the executive team, all of the MRS units, MRS managers and especially counselors. The process is creative, exciting and challenging. The outcome is inspiring in that students with disabilities will have increased opportunities and experiences to achieve competitive integrated employment.

The Disability Networks and Michigan Rehabilitation Services Train Together to Develop and Provide Pre-Employment Transition Services

On Thursday, October 13, 2016 at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Lansing, statewide representatives from the Disability networks and Michigan Rehabilitation services met to learn about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the required provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities.





Pictures: Attendees sit and take notes on the presentations.

The interactions and experiences that occurred during the training were inspirational. It was acknowledged that the historical changes in WIOA could impact the lives of many students with disabilities, making the meeting that much more important. After learning the basics of WIOA, the mission of MRS and the Centers for Independent Living, the ins and outs of working with younger teens, the history and philosophy of the CILs, and the importance of collaborating/partnering with the CILs, the local CILs and MRS staff spent time in teams sharing, discussing and planning the next steps to begin providing Pre-ETS programs to students with disabilities.

Pre-ETS expand the vocational rehabilitation service delivery system to provide early intervention in a continuum of developmentally appropriate experiences ultimately leading to competitive integrated employment. Pre-ETS are provided to any student with a disability in need of the services, regardless of whether the student has applied for or been determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. This broad approach expands the student pool beyond students that are eligible for special education to include students with 504 plans and students that are considered individuals with disabilities for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. WIOA requires that MRS reserve at least 15 percent of the total vocational rehabilitation

allotment to coordinate with education to provide, purchase, and arrange for the provision of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities, potentially eligible individuals (those who have not yet applied for services but may be eligible), and those who have applied for vocational rehabilitation services. Part of this 15 percent is not only dedicated to Pre-ETS in general, but a portion is dedicated to the Disability networks so that they may be the service provider of Pre-ETS.

The big picture and intent of Pre-ETS prior to application is a dramatic departure from how VR services have been provided in the past. In addition, WIOA permits MRS to provide transition services to groups of student with disabilities as well as individual students. This provision allows MRS to provide services in an efficient way because more than one student is being served at the same time.

WIOA creates a huge and exciting opportunity for the Disability Networks and MRS to develop and provide new and creative programming that sets students with disabilities on a trajectory toward competitive integrated employment in such a way that the student may not need the individual VR services that MRS traditionally provides.

Several additional trainings are being developed for the Pre-ETS counselors and additional MRS staff including transition counselors and the Disability Networks. The partnership/collaboration with the Disability Networks and MRS in the provision of Pre-ETS is a work in progress - Stay tuned.

Project SEARCH Updates

The Mental Health and Wellness Commission is continuing to fund the expansion of Project SEARCH Programming in Michigan. Project SEARCH was developed at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, a research environment that fosters visionary thinking and innovation. In the last year of a student's secondary education, students go to "school" in a business, and, after attending class in the morning to learn about job readiness skills, they participate in internships in the afternoon where they learn specific job skills. The internships last 10 weeks and the student participates in three during the year. The goal of the program is competitive integrated employment at the host site or in another business environment.

After a whole year of planning, this fall, four new Project SEARCH sites launched including:

- Ottawa Area Intermediate School District at Spectrum Health
- Midland Educational Service Agency at Dow Chemical
- Ingham Intermediate School District at Michigan State University

- Berrien Regional Education Service Agency at Lakeland Health

With the addition of the four sites, Michigan has a total of 16 Project SEARCH sites up and running. Several teams are meeting and planning to launch in the fall of 2017. Susie Rutkowski and Erin Riehle from Project SEARCH are providing training, technical assistance and support to the communities that are working toward establishing their program.

This past August, the Project SEARCH Conference was held at the Rosen Shingle Creek Hotel in Orlando. Several representatives from Michigan attended the training and our very own Nickco Dixon, site manager from the MRS Detroit Renaissance District Office, conducted a well-received breakout on preparing students for a successful Project SEARCH experience. The training was attended by hundreds of people from across the country and was very informative.



Picture: Nickco Dixon presented at a Michigan Project SEARCH conference in Orlando (left). A Michigan Project SEARCH Team in Orlando (right).

Three Project SEARCH programs in Michigan received placement awards at the conference including: the Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo at 100 percent placement for the second year in a row, the Promedica Health System in Lenawee, and Beaumont Hospital in Troy both at 80-90 percent placement. Congratulations to

Rebecca Hill, Counselor at the Kalamazoo District Office, for the impressive repeat 100 percent placement award.



Cathy Schmidt, transition coordinator from Oakland Intermediate School District, accepts a Project SEARCH Placement Award with Erin Riehle and Susie Rutkowski.

The 2017 Project SEARCH Annual Conference will be July 25-28, 2017 at Kalahari Resort and Conventions in the Poconos Mountains in Pennsylvania. **Registration opens January 9 and closes July 10, 2017.**

Michigan Sends Susie Rutkowski Get Well Wishes

Shortly after attending the Michigan State University Project SEARCH opening ceremonies and a meeting with the Lieutenant Governor Brian Calley about the possibility of expanding Project SEARCH to State government, Susie Rutkowski, from Project SEARCH, was in a serious hiking accident in Ohio.

Susie was hiking with an old college friend when she slipped from a ridge and fell approximately 25 feet breaking her femur, pelvis and jaw. Hikers in the area attended to her immediately and a helicopter flew her to the hospital where she underwent surgery.

Erin Riehle, from Project SEARCH, let us know that Susie is recovering well, is in good spirits and will be in rehabilitation for several weeks. It is comforting to know that Susie is surrounded by her family, friends and Erin who is a nurse!

We respectfully ask that you do not send food or flowers or call or text. Susie needs to focus on her own healing. She would love to hear from the Michigan teams through texts or e-mails.



Picture: Susie Rutkowski

Send any communication for Susie to:

Project SEARCH
333 Burnett Avenue
E-5030
Cincinnati, OH 45229

MCTI PERT Program Continues to Expand

Another successful year of the Michigan Career and Technical Institute Post-Secondary Education Rehabilitation Transition program is in the books completing the third year of implementation. This past summer, 160 students participated in the experience, an increase from the summer before.

The PERT Program is a school to work transition initiative that assists students to answer the following questions:

- What's out there for me?
- What are my talents, interests?
- What types of jobs might I enjoy?
- What skills do I need to become employed?
- What do I need to learn to live on my own?

Program services are provided on the MCTI campus where students reside in dormitories. This gives students an opportunity to be independent in a supportive environment and interact with peers while engaging in comprehensive career exploration.

Students receive:

- Vocational Assessments
- Allows the students to explore areas of interest through “hands-on” situational/work assessments.
- Vocational Evaluation
- Aptitude testing, Evaluation on learning styles, and Work Keys and CASAS testing
- Independent living Skills Assessment
- Evaluates the students' current knowledge and skills for living independently.
- Residential/Leisure Skills Assessment
- Promotes students exploration of recreational activities and provides information on leisure and social skills development through participation in structured activities and Dormitory supported living.

MRS is proud of the growth of the program from a “concept for a Transition Program” five years ago to the successful program that it is today. PERT is truly a TEAM effort and MCTI would like to recognize:

- MRS counselors for all the referrals;
- MRS managers for support of the program and approving visiting staff; and
- MCTI staff for all their hard work preparing, working with the students (in MANY capacities) and writing reports.

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Please forward or print the Transition Bulletin

Email your contributions, ideas, or subscription requests for the Transition Bulletin to Cynthia Wright at wrightc1@michigan.gov or call 517-241-3957.

