

# Welcome to MICHIGAN REHABILITATION SERVICES (MRS)

*Thank you for considering MRS; we hope you will apply!*



**Customer Handbook**  
Revised 2023

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This handbook is designed to explain the MRS process and services. If you have any questions, please reach out to your local MRS office, or contact MRS Customer Service.

**MRS CUSTOMER SERVICE**  
**Toll-Free Phone:** 800-605-6722  
**Email:** MRS-CustomerAssistance@michigan.gov

# Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)

## Welcome

Thank you for your interest in learning how MRS may assist you. As a federal and state-funded program, we work with you to achieve, maintain, retain, advance-in or regain employment and/or to meet your business needs in attracting, hiring and retaining a qualified and diverse workforce. The services we provide address barriers and other needs in employment due to a physical, cognitive or mental health impairment or diagnosis. Referred to as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), our trained staff will work with you to prepare for, obtain and maintain while competing in quality employment that is suitable with your abilities, capabilities, expressed interests and concerns, and resources available to you.

Unlike programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), MRS is an eligibility-based program, not an entitlement program.

## Mission & Vision

### MISSION

**Develop customized workforce solutions for businesses and individuals with disabilities.**

### VISION

**A diverse and inclusive workforce that unites businesses and individuals with disabilities toward a common good.**

## Serving Eligible Applicants

Currently, MRS serves all applicants determined eligible for services for employment. In the event we are unable to do so, we are required by federal law to enter what is referred to as Order for the Selection of Services (OSS). Under OSS, all eligible individuals will be served in order of priority of their disability while other eligible individuals may go on to a waiting list. That means MRS will first serve individuals with the “most significant” disabilities. OSS can occur if MRS lacks either the funding or personnel needed to serve all eligible individuals.

## About MRS Counseling Staff

MRS counselors are highly trained and have a master's degree or higher in a human service-related field. MRS counselors help about 7,000 Michigan residents obtain employment each year. They have educational backgrounds and vocational rehabilitation (VR) training in:

- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Assessment and planning
- Career exploration
- Facilitation of vocational evaluation and work adjustment
- Job placement and service coordination
- Community resources
- Other employment-related services such as consultation, advocacy, access to rehabilitation technology and case management.

In addition to counselors, MRS has rehabilitation assistants, occupational therapists, job placement specialists and other support staff that assist MRS counselors in providing services to you. We look forward to helping you achieve your job goal!

If you apply with MRS and are determined eligible, a counselor will:

- Work with you to identify an appropriate employment goal.
- Help you decide the services needed to achieve your employment goal.
- Share information about service providers.
- Assist with delivery and coordination of services.
- Help address employment needs once you are hired to assure you are able to maintain employment.

MRS may provide or purchase services and goods required for you for employment. Services and goods provided or purchased are done so at the least cost to MRS that meet your employment needs. MRS will also consider other providers or resources that may cover the cost of required services and goods which you will require. Depending on the total cost of a service, MRS may require multiple bids. Your counselor will work with you in this process. In identifying services and goods, your financial participation is encouraged but is not required. Where MRS is unable to assist you in the cost of services and goods, we will provide you known resources that may be able to. It is important to remember that any services provided must support your employment goal. More information on "employment goal" may be found under the section "Your Individualized Plan for Employment" on page 10.

## What You Can Expect when Working with MRS

Together with your counselor, you will discuss information and options to help you make informed decisions as you progress towards your goal.

MRS trained staff can help you:

- Discover a career based on your interests, abilities and your local labor market information.
- Identify strategies, accommodations or assistive technology that will reduce barriers.
- Coordinate with area resources available to you.
- Stay in touch once you're employed to ensure the job is a good fit and strategies are effective.
- Coordinate benefits planning.
- Provide information of Social Security work incentives and the impact working has on your benefits.
- Identify your employment skills.
- Apply labor market information in the development of your employment goal.
- Identify, address and/or coordinate your employment goal.
- Identify resources available to you.
- Choose your type of employment goal.
- Make choices about your plan for employment.

If you are an individual receiving Social Security due to a disability, your counselor will coordinate benefits planning, information and assistance to best support you in your employment goal decisions.

## Confidentiality

MRS respects your privacy. All personal information about you, including your name or photograph, will be kept confidential. MRS will not give information about you to any individual or organization without your knowledge and signed permission, or in other words, your “informed, written consent”. Informed, written consent means you know the name of the third party to whom information is to be provided, the purpose or need for providing the information, and the extent or nature of the information to be released.

There are situations where information may be released without your informed, written consent.

Examples are as follows:

- To protect you from physical harm, whether to yourself or to others,
- In response to law enforcement, fraud or abuse investigations,
- In response to a judicial order,
- When required by federal statute or regulation,
- For audit, research or evaluation purposes, or
- In a suspected case of abuse, neglect, exploitation or endangerment of you or others.

Information obtained from another agency or organization shall be released only by, or under the conditions established by the other agency/organization. Further, medical, psychological and other information that may be potentially harmful to you cannot be directly released to you. Instead, information may be released to a third party for whom you have chosen. Examples include a qualified medical or mental health professional, an advocate, family member or legal guardian.

If you are a minor, information may be released to your parents or legal guardians, under the same conditions as it may be released directly to applicants who are 18 years of age and their own guardian. Information about how MRS safeguards your personal information will also be provided to you in writing.

Working with MRS is a process involving several steps. The process takes time and is based upon your employment service needs. To begin the employment process, it is important that you:

- Provide MRS with specific personal information
- Participate in provided services.

## Informed Choice

Your counselor will discuss all available services and who provides them so you can decide which service would be most helpful and who you would like to provide it. We call this informed choice and it's your right to make those decisions that are right for you. You can also ask to get these options given to you in writing. The following are some examples of areas your counselor will discuss with you to help you make an informed choice:

- Assessment services and providers
- Your employment goal.
- Service providers for the services outlined in your Individual Plan for Employment.

Information about potential services can include cost, accessibility, duration of services, the qualifications of the providers, the types of services offered by those providers, the degree to which the services are provided in an integrated setting, and as available, information about user satisfaction.

There may be times when MRS will not be able to support your choice. For instance, when there are two similar options that will meet your need, MRS is required to opt for the option with the lowest cost. If you choose to go with the more expensive option, you will have to cover the remaining cost.



MRS is not allowed to pay for goods or services provided by other public programs, such as Financial Aid, Medicaid, Medicare and services available through other public programs or educational programs. Although MRS encourages your financial participation, it is not required.

If you disagree with any decision made by MRS and that decision is not resolved with your counselor or the counselor's manager, you have a right to appeal that decision. Appeals are made by writing to the director of MRS. You may also contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP). CAP is available to help you understand your rights and responsibilities as an applicant or eligible customer of MRS. Information about MRS, CAP, the appeals process and your rights and responsibilities will also be provided to you in writing. **Please see page 13 for more information.**

MRS wants you to be successful in your employment goal! Read on to learn more.

## Six Steps to Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational rehabilitation is a six-step process. Each customer who comes to MRS for services is teamed up with a vocational rehabilitation counselor who will walk you through each step.



### Step 1: Applying for Services

To begin, you will need to complete an MRS Application for Vocational and Employment Services and submit it to an MRS office.

If you are a student between the ages of 14-25 years who is seeking to learn more about a career, your special education instructor and an MRS counselor will work with you to assist in this process. To learn more about pre-employment services, refer to "Pre-Employment Transition Services" described below. The remaining steps (2-6) apply to applicants who have submitted an MRS Application for Vocational and Employment Services.

### Step 2: Determining Eligibility

To determine if you are eligible for services, MRS will need information about you and the barriers you face when at work. This information can come from you, members of your family, physicians, therapists or others who know about your disability.

You may be eligible for services with MRS if your physical or mental health diagnosis:

- Creates a barrier for you when attempting to get or keep employment.
- MRS services are needed for you to overcome the barriers that interfere with your success in employment.
- You can benefit from services.



### “What is a Trial Work Experience?”

Sometimes people are not sure they are able to work. One way MRS can help someone decide if they are ready is to participate in a Trial Work Experience. A trial work experience is an opportunity to explore your abilities, capabilities and capacity to work. Trial work experiences can last up to 12 months and may be extended further.

Trial work experiences may include:

- An evaluation of identified areas of concern you might have.
- Trying out different types of supports, such as accommodation or assistive technology, in a specific work setting.
- Volunteer work experiences in community settings.

If you and your counselor feel a trial work experience is necessary, a detailed plan will be written that outlines why this is necessary, what kind of evaluation is being done, and what services are being provided. Once the trial work experience is completed, your counselor will meet with you to discuss the results and together you will make the decision on whether you are ready for work and if so how to move forward.

Once eligibility is determined, you will receive a notice in writing. In some cases, this process may take up to 60 days. If the condition of your impairment changes, or if you acquire another disability, your counselor will talk with you about these changes and how they impact your ability to work. If it is determined you are no longer able to maintain employment, your case may be closed.

## Step 3: Career Exploration and Developing a Plan

**Career exploration** is your chance to learn about yourself and to:

- Identify types of work or career pathways to consider based on your values, interests and abilities.
- Discover employment and career opportunities, including locations, work conditions, wages, education level and market growth.
- Learn of work and training requirements and resources available to you.
- Discover and explore accommodations and/or assistive technology to address environmental barriers.

**A career assessment** is a helpful way for your counselor to support you in choosing a job that will match your experience and interests. You may be offered to participate in job interest surveys, aptitude assessments and job-related evaluation tools.

The assessment is an important step in your case. Your counselor will work closely with you to determine which assessments would work best for you. You will have options choosing service providers and choosing the date and time of your appointments. You can also choose to participate in community-based work experiences, job shadowing and other on-the-job services. Your counselor will work with you to determine the hours, weeks or months needed to evaluate your work abilities. This service will provide you with hands-on work experience to learn about the work environment.



### “Who is hiring, and what are the qualifications?”

An essential step in searching for your employment goal is to look at labor market information (LMI). You will have employer options to choose from. LMI will provide you with details from a variety of different jobs throughout Michigan and the U.S. Your counselor will have ideas on how you can obtain information from the local labor market.

## Your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

Once you and your counselor have decided on a career goal and the services needed to get there, a written plan will be created outlining all the services needed to help you enter your new career. We call this plan your Individualized Plan for Employment or IPE.

In some cases, this process takes up to 90 days from the date you are determined eligible for MRS services. Your IPE serves as your “roadmap” to achieving your career or employment goal.

Information described in your IPE can include the following:


- Reason for selecting the employment goal
- Services identified that will help you achieve your employment goal.
- Who will provide the service
- How long the service will take
- Any comparable benefits like financial aid or medical insurance
- Costs
- Who is responsible for costs, your responsibilities and a way to track your progress

Here are some examples of vocational services that might be included in your plan:

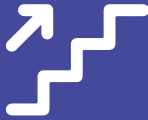
- Vocational rehabilitation guidance and counseling
- Job search, placement assistance and retention services
- Community referrals
- Interpreter services
- Occupational license
- Support Services
- Pre-employment transition services
- Rehabilitation and other assistive technology devices and/or services
- College or vocational training
- Hearing aids, artificial limbs, braces and other health services
- Mental and/or physical appointment
- Follow-ups to help you manage your disability.

## Step 4: Following Your Plan


Your individualized plan for employment is a guide of all the services that will be provided to you and when you can expect them to start. As you begin to follow your plan, it will be important to:



**Follow each step of your IPE to ensure progress.**



**Discuss the purpose, frequency and method in maintaining continual contact with your counselor.**



**Keep appointments with your counselor and service providers. Contact them as soon as possible if you are unable to keep an appointment.**

Your counselor will regularly review your IPE with you to make sure you are on the right road to a career.



## Step 5: Finding Work

MRS provides a variety of services to assist you with finding and keeping work in your chosen employment goal. Services include but are not limited to:

- Cover letter and resume writing
- Application assistance
- Interviewing skills
- Job seeking skills
- Job coaching
- On-the-job-evaluation
- Work adjustment
- On-the-job-training
- Referrals to other job placement agencies or private providers

You and your counselor will work together, along with your chosen service providers, to identify and pursue work opportunities.



### **“Who is hiring, and what are the qualifications?”**

The response to this question varies with each person and depends on the area you live in and the type of job you are seeking. The best advice MRS can give is to work closely with your counselor and the service providers outlined in your plan. By following your plan, you will be a prepared and desirable candidate when the right job opportunity comes along.

## Step 6: Case Closure

Once you become employed, your counselor will want to contact you prior to moving your case forward to case closure. For your counselor to successfully close your case, they will need to complete the “Employment Verification”. This form allows MRS to document that you are employed, your job is a good fit, and you are happy with your employment. This may include a copy of a recent pay stub or letter from your employer verifying your employment. Once your case is closed with MRS, you will be notified in writing. The case closure letter will include the reason for the case closure, information about your right to appeal the case closure decision, and the availability of the Client Assistance Program (CAP) to help you.

### **Case Closure after Successfully Employed**

After you have worked at least 90 days, your counselor will usually close your case after filling out the Employment Verification with you. It will be important for you to stay in touch with your counselor during this time. Sometimes, once you start working, additional problems can arise that you might need help with. Your counselor can quickly step in and help you resolve it before it gets too big. Once you are settled in your job, your counselor will talk with you about closing your case.

### **Case Closure without Employment**

Sometimes MRS must close cases before someone gets employed. Reasons for this may include:

- You do not keep in contact with your counselor. This means you are not answering calls, texts, emails or letters from your counselor.
- The severity of your disability worsens and you are unable to participate in your plan.
- You do not follow through with your plan.
- You make threats or show threatening behavior to your counselor or other MRS staff.

# Pre-Employment Transition Services

Pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) are available to qualifying students interested in developing career awareness and preparedness for future services offered by MRS, in preparation for competitive integrated employment. There are five categories of Pre-ETS described below which also include service examples. Availability of service examples may vary in your area. A counselor will work with you to help you identify Pre-ETS that meet your needs and develop a Services Agreement describing what you've chosen:

- Pre-ETS categories selected
- Specific services within the selected categories
- Service providers
- Estimated service dates
- Consent
- Counselor approval

As a qualifying student, you can choose whether to complete the MRS Consent for Pre-Employment Transition Services to receive Pre-ETS, or you can choose to complete the MRS Application for Employment Services to receive Pre-ETS and other employment related services and supports as described in this booklet. A counselor can also work with you to help you decide which route best meets your current employment needs.

## Job Exploration Counseling

Job exploration counseling provides students the opportunity to learn about different jobs, consider which jobs interest you, and what skills you need to gain to be successful. Examples include:

- Career awareness
- Career workshops
- Career student organizations
- Job interest inventory
- Labor market information
- Vocational counseling
- In-demand occupation information
- Starting a career portfolio

## Work-Based Learning Experiences

Work-based learning experiences provide students with activities to learn about the workplace. Examples include:

- Worksite tours
- Volunteer work
- Job shadowing
- Exploring apprenticeships
- Informational interviews
- Internships (paid or nonpaid)
- Trial work experiences
- Work experience

## Counseling on Post-Secondary Education Programs

Counseling on post-secondary education programs (i.e. college or vocational training programs) provides students the opportunity to learn about options for continued education and training after high school. Examples include:

- Identifying interests and abilities.
- Exploring vocational training programs, colleges and universities.
- Understanding financial aid options.
- College visits/tour.
- Information on how to apply for college and what classes are required for a degree.

## Workplace Readiness

Workplace readiness provides students the opportunity to learn about and gain skills to be ready for employment. Examples include:

- Communication skills
- Job seeking skills
- Job readiness programs
- Learning how to budget your money
- Learning about how work affects your social security benefits
- Employment friendly social media practices
- Technology skills for the workplace
- Soft skills development

## Self-Advocacy and Peer Mentoring

Self-advocacy and peer mentoring provide students opportunity to learn about and gain skills to advocate for themselves and request accommodations that they need to be successful. Examples include:

- Peer mentoring program
- Peer guidance
- Developing self-advocacy skills
- Self-advocacy or self-determination workshop
- When/how to disclose disability
- How to request accommodations
- Decision making
- Goal setting
- Knowing your rights and responsibilities
- Leadership skills

## Special Programs

### Benefits Counseling

If you are concerned about what happens to your Social Security and other benefits when you start earning a paycheck, benefits counseling is available. We help you learn about how employment impacts your Bridge Card (food stamps), subsidized rent, health care eligibility, attendant care and income. MRS works with a network of specialists who can review your situation and help you make the most of your benefits.

### Work Incentives

Work Incentives make it easier for people with disabilities to work and still receive medical benefits, and in some cases, cash benefits from Social Security. They are designed to help you succeed! Work Incentives can help you through the transition to work and maintain financial independence:

- You may be able to keep your Medicaid/Medicare while you work
- You have access to individualized support services.
- You can try work with confidence, knowing you may be able to keep some or all your benefits during your transition period.

Social Security has many Work Incentives designed to fit your individual situation. For more information about all of Social Security's Work Incentives and how they can work for you, review *The Red Book – A Guide to Work Incentives*.

## Ticket to Work Program

The Ticket to Work (Ticket) Program offers people who receive Social Security benefits the choices and opportunities to go to work. For more information go to <https://choosework.ssa.gov/about/index.html>.

## Business Network Division

The Business Network Division (BND) in MRS serves both client and business customers throughout the state. BND is comprised of Business Relations Consultants, Rehabilitation Specialists and Occupational Therapists.

## Disability Management Unit

The Disability Management Unit is comprised of Rehabilitation Specialists and Occupational Therapists who provide assessments, recommend accommodations, and consult with businesses and counselors on behalf of client customers throughout the state.

## Small Business/Self-Employment

If you are interested in starting a small business, please discuss this matter with your counselor so they may share self-employment information.

# Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI)

The Michigan Career & Technical Institute (MCTI) is an educational center for adults with disabilities. It is the second largest rehabilitation training center in the country.

MCTI is located on Pine Lake Road in the city of Plainwell, in southwestern Barry County, Michigan. MCTI's campus has 72 acres of land and access to 700 feet of Pine Lake. MCTI's classrooms, dorm rooms, cafeteria and other services are all located in one building.

MCTI offers a Career Readiness Center that assists students in exploring trade and employment options. MCTI also offers the following services:

- Medical and counseling services
- Occupational therapy
- Interpreters for deaf students
- Accommodations
- Job placement services

## MCTI Mission Statement

MCTI conducts vocational and technical training programs and provides the supportive services needed to prepare Michigan citizens with disabilities for competitive employment.

## Why Choose MCTI?

- Accommodates individual learning needs.
- Offers interpreters for students.
- Works one-on-one with each student to help them reach their goals.
- Uses a hands-on learning method.
- All programs use similar technology and equipment required of each job.
- All programs teach in environments very similar to each job.
- On average, at least 80% of MCTI graduates get jobs in their vocational training area.

## Additional MCTI Information

Prospective students can obtain additional information about MCTI by:

- Calling the Admissions Office at 877-901-7360.
- Visiting their website at [www.michigan.gov/MCTI](http://www.michigan.gov/MCTI).
- Emailing the Admissions Office at [leo-mctiadmissions@michigan.gov](mailto:leo-mctiadmissions@michigan.gov).
- Writing the Admissions Office at MCTI, 11611 West Pine Lake Road, Plainwell, MI 49080

MCTI is recognized by the Council on Occupational Education (COE) located at 7840 Roswell Road, Building 300, Suite 325, Atlanta, GA 30350, and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) located at 6951 East Southpoint Road, Tucson, AZ 85756.

## Your Rights

As a MRS customer, you have the following rights:

- You have the right to be told if there will be a delay in MRS services or if MRS cannot provide services. Situations such as these may be caused by a reduction in funding, staff or openings at facilities or schools.
- You have the right to make informed choices about your IPE.
- You have the right to an annual review of your IPE to see if any changes are needed.
- You have the right to obtain written information from MRS about service options available to you.
- You have the right to review information in your case file if you make the request in writing. However, there are two circumstances when more than your written request will be required:
  - Information that has been provided by other agencies may be disclosed only with their permission.
  - Certain information - such as technical, medical or psychological reports - may have to be provided through a health professional or other representative.
- You have the right to confidentiality.
  - All discussions with your counselor are kept confidential. Your counselor will release information in your case file only to those agencies directly involved in your IPE.
  - MRS will not release information in your case file to other agencies or persons unless you give your permission in writing.
  - MRS will release information in your case file without your written consent only if:
    - Required by federal law or regulation
    - Required by court order.
    - In response to investigations for law enforcement, fraud or abuse.
    - In situations involving abuse, neglect, exploitation or safety to protect you or others.
- You have the right to appeal any agency action regarding your rehabilitation program if you disagree with an MRS decision.
- You have the right to have someone assist you in the appeals process.

## Your Responsibilities

Working with MRS is a partnership. Outlined below are several responsibilities your counselor may need you to provide:

- Provide information MRS may need to determine your eligibility and develop your rehabilitation program. If you do not make needed information available, MRS will be unable to provide services to you.
- Be an active partner with your counselor. Being an active partner means you participate by staying in contact with your counselor and by making informed choices throughout your program.
- If you can, you have a responsibility to participate financially in your vocational rehabilitation plan to the best of your ability. If you are unable to do so, you will not be denied services. This does not apply to you if you are on Social Security benefits, but you will need to assign your Ticket to Work to MRS.
- Notify your counselor of any change in your address or telephone number. You should also notify your counselor of any other changes in your circumstances that could affect your ability to participate in the services being provided.
- If other community services and benefits are available to you, MRS will work with you to make sure you are able to take advantage of existing supports as part of your IPE. For example, if you are eligible for Medicaid benefits, you will need to use your medical coverage toward any medical needs identified in your IPE.
- Keep all appointments with your counselor and other persons involved in your IPE. If you cannot keep an appointment, you should notify the person as soon as possible and reschedule your appointment.
- Report any changes in your circumstances that could affect your ability to maintain contact with MRS or follow through with your IPE.
- Participate to the best of your ability in training or in any other activity related to your rehabilitation. This includes regular attendance.
- Provide written documentation to your counselor verifying your employment (pay stubs) at the time your services have ended.

## Client Assistance Program (CAP)

The Client Assistance Program (CAP), which is operated by Disability Rights Michigan (DRM), is available to advise and inform individuals with disabilities of the available services and benefits under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and of the services and benefits available to them under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Some of the services include advising, advocacy and informing individuals of their rights in direct connection with the Rehabilitation Program.

You have a right to access the CAP if you want to file a formal complaint about your case. CAP provides you with advocacy and support during an investigation. They can also help you understand what your rights are and provide you helpful information.

CAP may help you with your MRS case, including:

- Disputes about services in your employment plan.
- Disagreements about decisions and actions taken on your case.
- Barriers to working with your rehabilitation counselor.

CAP may be able to:

- Support you in choosing options to obtain customized vocational rehabilitation services.
- Help you review and understand what your choices are regarding services.
- Assist you with understanding your rights according to the Rehabilitation Act.
- Consult with you in developing your IPE.
- Guide you in pursuing legal, administrative or other solutions when a determination has been made that your CAP case has valid merit.

Additional information may be found at [www.drmich.org](http://www.drmich.org) or by calling a CAP advocate toll free at 800-288-5923 (voice/TTY).





## Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act
<b>BND</b>	Business Network Division
<b>CAP</b>	Client Assistance Program
<b>CARF</b>	Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities
<b>COE</b>	Council on Occupational Education
<b>DRM</b>	Disability Rights Michigan
<b>IPE</b>	Individualized Plan for Employment
<b>LEO</b>	Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity
<b>LMI</b>	Labor Market Information
<b>MCTI</b>	Michigan Career and Technical Institute
<b>MRS</b>	Michigan Rehabilitation Services
<b>OSS</b>	Order for the Selection of Services
<b>Pre-ETS</b>	Pre-Employment Transition Services
<b>VR</b>	Vocational Rehabilitation

