

Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP)
DSU Update
Michigan Council for Rehabilitation Services (MCRS)
Thursday, February 9, 2023

BSBP Budget – Mike Pemble, Administrative Services Division
Director:

For the period ending 12/31/2022, BSBP's budget is adequately funded. BSBP also anticipates being able to fully match available Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living federal grants with State GF/GP funds as required.

Grant Awards for FY23 have not been updated since the Budget Continuing Resolution passed in late 2022 to keep the government running through December 16, 2022. Since that time, the Omnibus bill was passed which funded the government through the end of its fiscal year 9/30/2023. According to RSA, the grant awards for the remainder of FY23 should occur this week. Accordingly, BSBP reports:

FY23 Grant	FY23 Initial award	FY23 Expected remaining award	FY23 Total Anticipated
VR	\$4,039,887	\$15,106,498	\$19,146,385
Pre-ETS Expend and Reserve Requirement – 15% VR Grant			\$ 2,871,958
ILOIB	\$ 207,420	\$ 780,719	\$ 988,139
SE Adult	\$ 6,388	\$ 25,781	\$ 32,169
SE Youth	\$ 6,388	\$ 25,781	\$ 32,169

* The 6.4% increase in FY23 VR funding over FY22 represents an approximately \$1,152,000 increase (inclusive of the 15% Pre-ETS reserve).

BSBP also started FY23 with a substantial amount of federal funds that will be available for expenditure in FY23. Those FY22 federal carryover funds were as follows:

VR (excluding Pre-ETS reserve)	\$13,632,295
Pre-ETS reserve and expend requirement	\$ 2,635,489
ILOIB	\$ 823,328
IL Part B	\$ 127,674

Pre-ETS:

MRS and BSBP continue to coordinate their pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) reserve and expend requirement. This is a State mandate. Each State must reserve and expend a minimum of 15% of its VR Grant on Pre-ETS. As of 1/31/23, BSBP's unexpended FY22 Pre-ETS reserve carryover was estimated at \$2,258,750.

Field Services Division (FSD) – Lisa Kisiel, FSD Division Director:

During the first quarter (Q1) of Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 which includes October, November, and December 2022, and the second quarter (Q2) of Program Year (PY) 2022, BSBP data is as follows:

Description	Q1 FY23/ Q2 PY22	Q1 FY22 / Q2 PY21	Percent change
Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)	21	18	16.67%
Average hourly wage	\$16.61	\$25.91	-35.89%
Active VR customer	925	828	11.71%
Eligibilities	61	50	22.00%
Benefits planning	14	19	-26.32%

Program year to date (7/1/2022 – 12/31/2022)

- BSBP has assisted 38 individuals in obtaining competitive integrated employment

Last program year to date (07/01/2021 – 12/31/2021)

- BSBP assisted 27 individuals in obtaining competitive integrated employment.

Occupations and average hourly wage: \$16.61 for individuals who exited successfully during the Oct to Dec quarters of FY23 and PY22.

- Broadcast News Analysts
- Cashiers
- Child Care Workers (2)
- Cooks, Restaurant
- Counseling Psychologists
- Counselors, All Other

- Customer Service Representatives
- English Language and Literature Teachers, Postsecondary
- Executive Secretaries and Administrative Assistants
- Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers, All Other
- Food Preparation Workers
- Helpers--Production Workers
- Managers, All Other
- Merchandise Displayers and Window Trimmers
- Office and Administrative Support Workers, All Other
- Pharmacy Technicians
- Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Operator
- Retail Salespersons
- Sales Agents, Financial Services
- Social Sciences Teachers, Postsecondary, All Other

Occupations and average hourly wage: \$25.91 for individuals who exited successfully during the Oct to Dec quarters of FY22 and PY21.

- Business Operations Specialists, All Other
- Clinical Psychologists
- Community Health Workers
- Cooks, Institution and Cafeteria
- Healthcare Support Workers, All Other
- Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners
- Legislators
- Logistics Analysts
- Massage Therapists
- Occupational Therapist Assistants
- Property, Real Estate, and Community Association Managers (2)
- Public Relations Specialists
- Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Operator
- Social Workers, All Other
- Stock Clerks, Sales Floor
- Teacher Assistants
- Teachers and Instructors, All Other

BSBP Field Services highlights for FY23 Q1:

- Supported Employment technical assistance with the VRTAC-QM continues. Training is in progress.

- A new counselor has been hired for the Lansing field office. Alexis Freed started in early January and is actively onboarding.
- FSD is recruiting for additional counselors in Lansing and Kalamazoo areas.
- A general office assistant is being recruited for the Grand Rapids office to backfill an open administrative support position.
- Consistent commitment to the Customized Employment project, continues with scheduled training from Griffin-Hammis and Associates. The Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) training includes rehabilitation professionals and providers and is scheduled to begin the latter part of February 2023, or early March 2023.
- The tri-annual comprehensive statewide needs assessment surveys have been conducted and data has been provided by BSBP to assist in generating a comprehensive report.
- BSBP has been invited by MRS to include two people in the MI Business Resource System (MiBRS) training beginning in February. MiBRS will allow BSBP to easily capture BSBP business engagement activity and enhance efforts to accurately complete the WIOA annual report. BSBP access to MiBRS should also generate more opportunities for BSBP business networking and placement as well as coordination with MRS.
- BSBP, MRS and our Workforce development partners have scheduled a series of webinars for business that promotes retention services, mental health awareness, youth employment and other topics.

Pre-ETS Highlights:

- Student numbers at the end of September 30, 2022: 319 students who can receive Pre-ETS services, 94 being served as Potentially Eligible and 225 being served with a VR case open.
- Planning for implementation of FY23 Pre-ETS programs both in-person and virtual
- Family Engagement training and outreach activities-December 2022
- Inclusion Community Advocacy Networking (iCan) is a new program to promote self-advocacy, networking and accessing resources in the community. Four sessions throughout the year.
- MDE-LIO and BSBP joint programming focused on career exploration and financial literacy that was so successful last fiscal year.

Pre-ETS Challenges:

- Referrals to programs continues to be a challenge.

VR Priorities for FY23

- Customized Employment (CE) Pilots and translating to specific CE outcomes
- Supported Employment (SE) technical assistance and translating knowledge to specific SE outcomes
- Quality and Assurance focus for Individualized Plans for Employment
- Benefits Planning and Counseling
- Financial Literacy Instruction
- CSNA
- Migration to Libera's inFormed case management system

FSD Pre-ETS Priorities for FY23

- Credential Attainment and MSG for Pre-ETS
- Development and Implementation of Statewide programs
- Coordination with MDE-LIO
- Support of Regional Programs
- Provider partnerships to enhance outreach and targeted services
- Benefits planning and counseling
- Financial literacy programming
- Program monitoring and communication of policies

BSBP Training Center (TC) - Juan Ortiz, TC Division Director

BSBP Training Center Fiscal Year Census Data.

BSBP Training Center overview

FY 23 YTD			
VR	IL	Pre-ETS	MINI
35	39	2	26

Referrals by Region	
Central	48%
Western	30%
Eastern	22%

Self-Identified Ethnicity	
White	58%
Black	36%
Asian	4%
Hispanic	2%

TC Highlights:

- Continue VR, IL, Pre-ETS, and Financial Literacy training engagements with participants.
- Business Enterprise Program training provided in October for 3 candidates.
- Continued monthly TC open chats for Field Services Staff.
- Culinary program rescheduled from November to March 2023 due to bad weather. This reschedule will allow capacity increase by 25%.
- Mini-Adjustment Program held in Mt. Pleasant in November went well.
- One WMU Rehabilitation Counseling graduate completed her internship requirement at TC.
- TC now has the ability to provide benefits counseling and benefits planning services in-house.

TC FY Goals

- Increase VR referrals by 20%
- Data mining from newly implemented report
- Grow use of Citrix ShareFile software
- Benchmark programs
- Implement new report review tool
- Cross training staff
- Refine staff onboarding and training
- Launch workgroups for internal process improvement
- Increase business engagement
- Continue/grow Pre-ETS engagement opportunities
- Increase participant exit survey respondents
- Modernization (facility improvements & automation)
- Explore untapped resources/opportunities

Administrative Services Division (ASD) – Mike Pemble, ASD Division Director

Modernization:

BSBP obtained a one-time State of MI IT Innovation Fund allotment of \$588,400 several years ago, which has since been fully matched with Federal VR funds to total \$2,547,381 for the distinct purpose of modernizing BSBP's IT resources to use current technology to create

organizational efficiency. BSBP continues to implement its multi-year IT Modernization Project.

Current developments:

- BSBP and its contractor, Libera, Inc., have completed work on an upgrade to its Business Enterprise Program Case Management System that will streamline some manual processes, adding to the efficiency of the program. BSBP was provided with the Authority to Operate the system by the State of Michigan Chief Security Officer as of 10/28/22. The final two deliverables (equipment repair and transfers, as well as complaint tracking) have been successfully tested and accepted and are scheduled to go live on 2/3/2023.
- BSBP has also successfully completed testing new functionality to its existing System7 VR Case Management System consisting of the addition of an interface between System7 (VR) and the State Wage Interchange System (SWIS). The SWIS provides the agency an opportunity to request reported wage data for clients the program provided services to and who subsequently gained employment outside the state of Michigan. This data has not been available to BSBP in the past and will assist BSBP in requesting financial reimbursements from the Social Security Administration and improved data for required federal reporting on customers served.
- BSBP has kicked off another significant IT project as of 1/24/23 to upgrade its electronic case management system (ECMS) that tracks data regarding vocational rehabilitation, independent living and youth low vision clients served by BSBP. BSBP currently utilizes a 20+ year old ECMS solution with the trade name System7 through its contractor, Libera, Inc. BSBP is upgrading to the next generation Software as a Service (SaaS) platform called inFormed CMS. inFormed CMS is a modern, intuitive approach to case management. The new platform is accessible to users of assistive technology, through multiple web browsers, and from mobile devices. It has been designed to enable BSBP users, administrators, and executives to better serve customers, improve agency outcomes, and accelerate its technology modernization efforts. This upgrade project is projected to go live on 10/01/2023.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP):

- The BEP has 2 licensed operator candidates who have completed formal and on-the-job training with fully licensed business operators. These 2 candidates have both been awarded facilities. Neither candidate will begin operations until February while they obtain proper security clearance.
- BEP is working on the redesign and reopening of the Cadillac Place Snack Bar. We will be turning the facility into a grab and go convenience store with no food production. The current counters and service line must be removed, and BEP is working with DTMB on this process. The projected reopening date is March 2023.
- Sales through December 2022 are reporting significantly higher than for this same reporting period/sales for same month from previous year (estimated): **\$480,519.54** in 2022/ **\$420,354.00** in 2021.
- BEP has begun a work group with the Elected Operator Committee for the update of the program rules. This group will meet bi-weekly to update the rules and present them to the full EOC for consideration in modernization.
- BEP has initiated a work group with the EOC to update and improve the Vending Stand Training program. The focus is to move to a competency-based training that properly ensures that candidates have the skills to be successful.

Braille Talking Book Library (BTBL):

- The BSBP Braille and Talking Book Library (BTBL) provides audio and braille books as well as specialized playback equipment to registered Michigan patrons who have a visual, physical, or print disability.
- A challenge BTBL is attempting to overcome through outreach efforts is a declining patron population. In the 1st quarter of FY23 BTBL:
 - Added 369 patrons to the service.
 - 170,246 audio books and 120 braille books were sent to patrons.
 - 622 machines and 394 accessories were sent to patrons.

BTBL staff participated in the following outreach events.

- Livingston County Consortium on Aging
- Adaptive Umbrella Workshop
- Presentation to Saint Clair County Library all-staff meeting

Other outreach efforts, Marketing/PR

- Monthly e-mail to schools

- VI Teacher listserv post on braille on demand and braille music materials
- BTBL tagged in multiple public library Facebook pages
- BTBL poster campaign to International Dyslexia Association, MI branch, Children's Dyslexia Center SE-MI
- Michigan Paralyzed Veterans Association, Discussion with President, Michael Harris
- Quarterly demo site e-mails
- WILX TV interview with Bridgid Turner on Currency Reader bulk project

BTBL New Initiatives:

- Currency Reader Bulk Project: In December of 2022 BTBL implemented the Currency Reader Bulk project. This project will provide talking currency readers to Michigan residents who are unable to read the denominations of U.S. currency due to a visual disability. This project has formerly been operated by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, a division of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. BTBL will be able to respond to requests for currency readers more efficiently, decreasing the processing time to a few days instead of a few weeks. Seven currency readers have been sent out to registered patrons since the start of the project.
- Facebook ad campaign: Outreach librarian Stephanie Wambaugh is collaborating with LEO Communications to design a campaign to place ads on the BTBL and Michigan Talent Facebook pages to attract more patrons who have a physical and print disability as well as our veterans. We anticipate this ad campaign will go live in the next month.

Wrap-up and questions – Bill Robinson, Bureau Director