

**Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP)**  
**DSU Update**  
**Michigan Council for Rehabilitation Services (MCRS)**  
**Thursday, May 11, 2023**

**BSBP budget – Mike Pemble, Administrative Services Division Director:**

For the period ending 3/31/2023, 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:**

FY23 Grant	FY23 Initial award 10/21/22	FY23 remaining award 1/17/23	FY23 Total
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	\$ 775,612	\$ 983,032
SE Adult	\$ 6,388	\$ 23,884	\$ 30,272
SE Youth	\$ 6,388	\$ 23,884	\$ 30,272

\* The 6.4% increase in FY23 VR funding over FY22 represents a \$1,152,647 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 3/31/23, BSBP's unexpended FY22 Pre-ETS reserve carryover was estimated at \$1,914,390.

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

For the months of January, February, and March 2023 BSBP FSD data is as follows:

Description	Q2 FY23 Q3 PY22  1/1/23 - 3/31/23	Q2 FY22 Q3 PY21  1/1/22 - 3/31/22	Percent change
Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)	21	17	23.53%
Average hourly wage	\$20.00	\$20.53	-2.58%
Active VR customer	941	848	10.97%
Eligibilities	64	60	6.67%
Benefits planning	10	27	-62.96%

Program Year to date (7/1/2022 – 3/31/2023)

- BSBP has assisted 59 individuals in obtaining competitive integrated employment.

Last Program Year to date (7/1/2021 – 3/31/2022)

- BSBP assisted 44 individuals in obtaining competitive integrated employment.

Occupations and average hourly wage: \$20.00 for individuals who exited successfully during the Jan. to March quarters of FY23 and PY22.

- Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other (2)
- Community Health Workers
- Computer Occupations, All Other
- Customer Service Representatives

- Dining Room and Cafeteria Attendants and Bartender Helpers
- Dishwashers
- Food Preparation Workers
- Healthcare Support Workers, All Other
- Low Vision Therapists, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, and Vision Rehabilitation Therapists
- Medical Secretaries
- Nursing Assistants
- Quality Control Analysts
- Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Operator (3)
- Service Station Attendants
- Social and Community Service Managers
- Team Assemblers
- Training and Development Specialists
- Web Developers

Occupations and average hourly wage: \$20.53 for individuals who exited successfully during the Jan to Mar quarters of FY22 and PY21.

- Chemists
- Child, Family, and School Social Workers
- Customer Service Representatives
- Dishwashers
- Food Preparation Workers
- Food Service Managers
- Information Technology Project Managers (2)
- Instructional Coordinators
- Law Clerks
- Librarians
- Logistics Managers
- Packers and Packagers, Hand
- Rehabilitation Counselors
- Stock Clerks, Sales Floor
- Transportation Planners
- Web Administrators

#### BSBP Field Services highlights for FY23 Q2:

- Supported Employment technical assistance with the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center – Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE) training is completed. BSBP will continue to work with VRTAC-QE to implement the training that will assist rehabilitation professionals in identifying appropriate customers to receive supported employment services. The technical assistance will also provide tools to enhance collaborative relationships with providers.
- FSD is recruiting for additional counselors in Lansing and Kalamazoo areas.
- A General Office Assistant has been hired for the Grand Rapids office and will start May 15, 2023.
- Consistent commitment to the Customized Employment project, continues. The Association of Community Rehabilitation Educators (ACRE) training was provided to five providers.
- The tri-annual comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) is in progress and should be completed by late summer 2023. MRS and BSBP will review results with the Council when the report is complete.
- BSBP has two staff that are participating MRS MI Business Resource System (MiBRS) training, one from Field Service Division and Training Center. 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. An MOU is in process and RSA must sign off on the agreement.
- 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: BSBP is currently serving 325 students who are eligible to receive Pre-ETS.

**Current Students:**

Region/Office	Potentially Eligible	VR	Total
<b>Central Region</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>108</b>
Escanaba	2	5	7
Flint	10	21	31
Gaylord	2	22	24
Lansing	11	35	46
<b>East Region</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>102</b>
Detroit	30	72	102
<b>West Region</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>115</b>
Grand Rapids	32	51	83
Kalamazoo	5	27	32
<b>State Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>325</b>

January to March 2023, students received both vended and internally provided Pre-ETS. BSBP ran 10 Pre-ETS programs in the months of January to March. BSBP partnered with the Michigan Department of Education-Low Incidence Outreach on two programs, “Growing through Career Conversations” and “It’s All about the Money.” Both had virtual sessions and an in-person component. The Pre-ETS unit also offers a monthly virtual educational session for families, students, and professionals on a variety of topics.

Vended Services by Category	
Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities	0%
Instruction in Self-Advocacy	20%
Job Exploration Counseling	12%

Internal Services by Category	
Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities	20%
Instruction in Self-Advocacy	21%
Job Exploration Counseling	21%

Workplace Readiness Training	40%
Work-based Learning Experiences	21%
Supportive Services	7%

Workplace Readiness Training	31%
Work-based Learning Experiences	7%
Supportive Services	0%

Students who received  
vended services 66

Students who received  
internal services 132

Number of vended  
services provided 141

Number of Internal  
Services provided 260

#### 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
- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

#### 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 (BSBPTC) - Juan F. Ortiz, TC Division Director**

BSBP Training Center Fiscal Year Census Data.

<b>FY 23 YTD (3/31/2023)</b>			
<b>VR</b>	<b>IL</b>	<b>Pre-ETS</b>	<b>MINI</b>
58	56	19	57

<b>Referrals by Region</b>	
<b>Central</b>	30%
<b>Western</b>	20%
<b>Eastern</b>	51%

<b>Self-Identified Ethnicity</b>	
<b>White</b>	72%
<b>Black</b>	18%
<b>Asian</b>	2%
<b>Pacisle</b>	2%
<b>Hispanic</b>	2%
<b>Not Self-Identified</b>	5%

### **TC Highlights:**

- Continue VR, IL, Pre-ETS, and Financial Literacy training engagements with participants.
- Conducted statewide TC virtual Family Engagements meet & greets February and March.
- Continued monthly TC open chats for Field Services Staff.
- Culinary weekend program in partnership with KVCC held during the weekend of 3/31/2023. Largest weekend program to-date.
- Mini-Adjustment Program held in Detroit in March.
- One WMU Rehabilitation Counseling graduate completed her internship requirement at TC.
- Two WMU VRT students completed their practicum at the TC.
- TC is able to provide benefits counseling and planning services in-house.

## **TC FY Goals**

- Increase VR referrals by 20%
- Continue data mining
- Benchmark programs
- Implement new report review tool
- Continue staff cross-training
- Increase business engagement
- Continue/grow Pre-ETS engagement opportunities
- Increase participant exit survey respondents
- Modernization (facility improvements & automation)

## **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 has streamlined 6 manual processes, adding to the efficiency of the program. The system upgrades are in place and working as designed.
- BSBP has also successfully completed its first request for wage information through 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. The first wage response file provided approximately 60 wage records for successfully employed BSBP customers whose wage information BSBP had not previously been able to obtain. Several of the cases appear to qualify for financial reimbursements



from the Social Security Administration. The success of this interface also provides improved data access for required federal reporting on customers served.

- BSBP continues to make timely progress toward migrating its electronic case management system (ECMS) that tracks data regarding vocational rehabilitation, independent living and youth low vision clients served by BSBP. BSBP staff have begun to become familiar with how the new system is structured by accessing a Beta version of the new system, inFormed and a training platform called inFormed Academy. Staff have also begun reviewing data in the current case management system to ensure it is complete and accurate prior to this information being migrated to the inFormed system (Data Grooming). In addition, training sessions are ongoing to familiarize BSBP staff with the new system. BSBP is also working with Libera, other LEO staff, and DTMB to set up system interfaces in the new inFormed system to allow BSBP to continue to obtain wage information from the MI Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA), the State Wage Interface System (SWIS), and to pay invoices for customer services through the State Accounting System, SIGMA. 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 two newest graduates of the BEP have commenced operations of their facilities. They have taken over facilities in Battle Creek and Warren and are working directly with BEP staff to grow their businesses.
- 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 demolition has been completed and DTMB is updating the flooring. Counters and fixtures

are being selected and the projected reopen date has been pushed back to July 1.

- Sales through March 2023 are reporting significantly higher than for the same reporting period from the previous year: **\$2,535,285** in 2022/ **\$3,307,581** in 2023.
- BEP continues with its work group with the Elected Operator Committee (EOC) for the update of the program rules. This group meets bi-weekly to update the rules and present them to the full EOC for consideration in modernization.
- BEP continues with its 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. The updates are planned to be presented to the full EOC by their June meeting.

### **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.

- **Circulation**
  - 173,985 audio books sent.
  - 121 braille books sent.
  - 379 patrons added.
- **New initiatives:**
  - Braille eReaders: In March, BTBL received its first shipment of 400 braille eReaders. A braille eReader is a portable device that allows a patron who is a braille reader to download an electronic braille book(s) to the device and read it using the refreshable braille display portion of the device. Currently there are approximately 125 BTBL patrons on the eReader wait list. We expect to begin shipping eReaders the second week of May.
- **Outreach**
  - Facebook ad campaign: Outreach librarian Stephanie Wambaugh has collaborated with LEO communications to design an ad campaign to target potential patrons such as veterans, people who have a physical disability, or people with a print disability. This campaign went live in March. Here are the totals for March:

- 148,916 individuals reached.
  - 1,345 link clicks
  - 1,508 engagements
  - 93 reactions
  - 58 shares
  - 1 comment
- Outreach efforts, marketing, and Public Relations:
  - Presentation on BTBL services to Frankenmuth Lions Club
  - Virtual presentation to Huntington Woods Public Library
  - Virtual presentation to Delta Township District Library
  - Presentation at Detroit mini adjustment
  - Monthly BTBL e-mail to schools
  - Wilcox School, Braille Literacy Month
  - Quarterly BTBL demo site e-mails (includes 5 marketing promos)
  - VI Teacher listserv post, targeting students with physical or print disabilities.
  - MDE-LIO newsletter, Library Lovers Month - eligibility
  - Disability Network MI locations, Mass Mailing
  - Area Agency on Aging MI locations, Mass Mailing
- Website and BTBL Facebook page:
  - 5,406 unique page views
  - 507 followers
  - 2,173 Gov Delivery subscribers
- **Machines:**
  - 470 machines sent.
  - 299 accessories sent.
- **Currency readers:**
  - 61 currency readers sent.

**Wrap-up and questions – Bill Robinson, Bureau Director**