

Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP)
DSU Update
Michigan Council for Rehabilitation Services (MCRS)
Thursday, August 10, 2023

BSBP budget – Mike Pemble, Administrative Services Division Director:

For the period ending 6/30/2023, 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 Awards Thru 6/20/23	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	\$ 787,145	\$ 994,565
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 have been available for expenditure in FY23. Those FY22 federal carryover funds were as follows:

VR (excluding Pre-ETS reserve)	\$13,958,205
Pre-ETS reserve and expend requirement	\$ 2,630,001
ILOIB	\$ 839,543
IL Part B	\$ 127,674

Pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) reserve and expend mandate:

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 7/1/2023, BSBP's unexpended FY22 Pre-ETS reserve carryover was estimated at \$1,282,906.

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

For the months of April, May, and June 2023 BSBP FSD data is as follows:

Description	Q3 FY23 Q4 PY22 4/1/23 - 6/30/23	Q3 FY22 Q4 PY21 4/1/22 - 6/30/22	Percent Change
Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)	20	16	25.00%
Average Hourly Wage	\$19.87	\$16.50	20.42%
Active VR Customer	967	893	8.29%
Eligibilities	68	61	11.48%
Benefits Planning	14	34	-58.82%

Program Year 2022 (7/1/2022 – 6/30/2023)

- BSBP assisted 79 individuals in obtaining competitive integrated employment.

Last Program Year 2021 (7/1/2021 – 6/30/2022)

- BSBP assisted 60 individuals in obtaining competitive integrated employment.

Occupations and average hourly wage: \$19.87 for individuals who exited successfully during the April to June quarters of FY23 and PY22.

- Auditors
- Chemical Engineers
- Customer Service Representatives (4)
- Food Preparation Workers
- Food Service Managers

- Insurance Sales Agents
- Low Vision Therapists, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, and Vision Rehabilitation Therapists
- Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners
- Massage Therapists
- Media and Communication Workers, All Other
- Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Vocational Education
- Production Workers, All Other
- Quality Control Analysts
- Stock Clerks and Order Fillers
- Teacher Assistants
- Transportation Workers, All Other
- Veterinary Technologists and Technicians

Occupations and average hourly wage: \$16.50 for individuals who exited successfully during the April to June quarters of FY22 and PY21.

- Assessors
- Community Health Workers
- Cooks, Fast Food
- Executive Secretaries and Administrative Assistants
- Food Preparation Workers
- Intelligence Analysts
- Interpreters and Translators
- Managers, All Other
- Office Clerks, General
- Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Operator (2)
- Recreation Workers
- Retail Salespersons
- Social and Human Service Assistants
- Stock Clerks- Stockroom, Warehouse, or Storage Yard (2)

BSBP Field Services Highlights:

- As reported last meeting the technical assistance related to off-site training for Supported Employment (SE) with the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center – Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE) was completed. FSD and TIPP are working with VRTAC-QE to finalize a SE policy and provide an onsite training in October to reinforce previous virtual trainings.

- The field continues to be challenged by human resource needs. The Central Regional Manager left for another opportunity with the school system and there continue to be open counselor positions.
- BSBP remains committed to the Customized Employment (CE) service delivery model. BSBP is working towards the fifth placement and serves as an example to other blind agencies. In June, BSBP participated in a CoP on CE sponsored by NCSAB's employment committee. Additional referrals for CE continue.
- 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. We are now considering topics for FY24 such as services to business from VR.
- The 2024 Unified State Plan development will commence this fall. Meetings have already begun to assist in setting timelines and coordination among the partners.
- The BSBP Director, with input from FSD and TIPP, has contracted with the Institute for Community Inclusion at UMASS-Boston to turn attention to engagement of VR customers and our workforce development partners. Anticipated to launch in FY24, BSBP is very excited about this project. More to come at the next update.

VR Priorities:

- 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
- Utilizing the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) to inform planning for FY24 services

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Highlights:

BSBP is currently serving 325 students who are eligible to receive Pre-ETS. BSBP successfully hosted a family engagement program at the Great Wolf Lodge in June of 2023. While students toured the resort, learned about the hospitality industry, and participated in workplace readiness training, the families were exposed to technology for visually impaired students, skills of

blindness and family sessions with a national expert in family engagement. Thirty-three students and their families attended this event.

BSBP has developed a monthly family and student newsletter to promote upcoming programs and activities and provide resources to students who are blind and visually impaired. Newsletters are sent monthly to individuals on our distribution list and can also be found on the BSBP Transition website. [LEO - Transition/Pre-Employment Transition Services \(michigan.gov\)](http://LEO-Transition/Pre-Employment-Transition-Services/michigan.gov)

BSBP, along with Michigan Rehabilitation Services, Disability Rights Michigan, and the MSU Stride Center, attended the National Capacity Building Institute hosted by the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition – the Collaborative (NTACT-C). The focus of the Institute was on state-level transition goals, addressing Michigan’s engagement of the Michigan Interagency Transition Team (MITT). One of the state goals is to include the student voice on the MITT team.

Current Students:

Region/Office	Potentially Eligible	VR	Total
Central Region	23	85	108
Escanaba	5	8	13
Flint	9	22	31
Gaylord	2	18	20
Lansing	7	37	44
East Region	23	77	100
Detroit	23	77	100
West Region	34	83	117
Grand Rapids	28	54	82
Kalamazoo	6	29	35
State Total	80	245	325

For the period April to June, students received both vended and internal services. There were 16 BSBP programs in this period with a total of 275 attendees. BSBP continued the partnership with Michigan Department of Education-Low Incidence Outreach (MDE-LIO) concluding two programs, “Growing through Career Conversations” and “It’s All about the Money” (both

had virtual sessions, an in-person component and included family engagement).

In this quarter, BSBP provided 421 vended services to 104 students.

Vended Services by Category	
Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities	3%
Instruction in Self-Advocacy	19%
Job Exploration Counseling	14%
Workplace Readiness Training	35%
Work-Based Learning Experiences	17%
Supportive Services	12%

BSBP also provided 314 internal services to 137 students.

Internal Services by Category	
Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities	20%
Instruction in Self-Advocacy	22%
Job Exploration Counseling	20%
Workplace Readiness Training	26%
Work-Based Learning Experiences	12%

FSD Pre-ETS Priorities:

- Credential Attainment and MSG for Pre-ETS
- Increase Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Family Engagement Initiatives
- 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:

FY 23 YTD (6/30/2023)				
VR	IL	Pre-ETS	MINI	Potentially Eligible
59	64	43	66	3

Referrals by Region	
Central	36%
West	30%
East	34%

Self-Identified Ethnicity	
White	56%
Black	35%
Asian	2%
Pacific Islander	2%
Hispanic	1%
Identified with 2 Ethnicities	2%
Not Self-Identified	2%

TC Highlights:

- Mini adjustment program held in Clare, MI - June
- Post-Secondary Readiness Program completed
- Hosted open house in April for Pre-ETS participants and families
- Hosted “All about the Money” program - April
- Hosted MCRS meeting - May
- Hosted Project Search, YWCA, and TCVIs - April/May
- Hosted MCTI - April
- Staff professional development - MAER
- Provided VR, ILOB, and Pre-ETS Workplace Readiness Training
- Intro to Workplace Readiness program completed
- Facility improvement with elevator modernization and new bedding for all dorm rooms
- Continued monthly TC open chats for Field Services Division

TC FY Goals:

- Increase VR referrals by 20%
- Continue data mining to inform and improve services
- Benchmark programs
- Implement new report review tool
- Continue staff cross-training & professional development
- 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:

- As reported in the last meeting, BSBP and its contractor, Libera, Inc., completed work on an upgrade to its Business Enterprise Program Case Management System. A "Project Closure Report" was executed by all relevant parties concluding that the project was completed successfully, on time, and under budget.
- 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. The System 7 VR Upgrade to inFormed Project Management Plan has been completed. BSBP staff are continuing to become familiar with the structure of the new system by accessing a Beta version of the new system, called inFormed, and a training platform called inFormed Academy, as well as training sessions for the Super User groups from BSBP and some initial training activity for the Field Services Division. Libera has successfully migrated the bulk of the VR case services data over to the new system.

Independent Living and Youth Low Vision case services data will follow once Libera is prepared for them. BSBP and DTMB staff continue working with Libera to create 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. In addition, Data Configuration and Business Process Mapping meetings have begun. **Background information:** 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):

- BEP has started a new training class with three new candidates. These candidates will go through 8 weeks of online training through the National Association of Blind Merchants (NABM)/Chicago Lighthouse courses, as well as supplemental classes taught by BEP staff. They will then spend one week at the BSBP Training Center for practicum work in food service. Following their time at the Training Center, they will be the first class to travel to Iowa to spend one week training on vending machines at National Vending's (BSBP Contractor) training facility in Des Moines. They will complete their BEP training by participating in two On-The-Job Experiences (OJE) lasting up to 5 weeks each; one OJE focused on the business of running a snack stand, and one OJE focused on a vending route business.
- BEP continues to work on the redesign and reopening of the Cadillac Place Snack Bar. The facility will transition to a grab and go convenience store with no food production. The demolition has been completed, DTMB has updated the flooring, and counters and fixtures are being selected. A building-wide open house will be held in the Cadillac Place lobby on August 2nd. BEP will have a table with marketing material and will talk to attendees about the new concept for the shop in the building. BEP operators have generously donated

snacks and drinks to be available at our table. The current projected open date for the new c-store is September 5th.

- Collective BEP Program sales through June 2023 are reporting significantly higher than for the same reporting period from the previous year: **\$4,400,123** in 2022 compared to **\$5,019,568** in 2023.
- BEP worked closely with the Elected Operator Committee (EOC) to create new On-The-Job Experience (OJE) Evaluations. The new evaluations are competency based. Therefore, a BEP student may complete their OJE sooner than 5 weeks if the trainer deems it appropriate. The evaluations have over 20 standards and competencies the student must be proficient in. Additionally, the student must demonstrate their knowledge and ability of several competencies to BEP staff on the day of their evaluation. These evaluations will help ensure the candidates have the skills to be successful in the program. The new evaluations were presented and accepted by the full EOC.
- BEP continues with its work with the Elected Operator Committee (EOC) to update the Program Rules. This group meets bi-weekly to update the Rules and present them to the full EOC for consideration in making the Rules more relevant to the Program's current business practices.
- BEP is excited to announce the first in-person workshop since the beginning of the pandemic. The workshop will be taking place September 15 – 17, 2023 in Mt. Pleasant, MI. In addition to training sessions, the workshop will incorporate a food show as well as the return of the EOC banquet and awards ceremony.

Braille and 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. BTBL activity for the 3rd Quarter of 2023 includes:

Circulation:

- 105 hard copy braille books sent
- 155 electronic braille books sent (to patrons with the new braille eReader)
- 172,063 audio books sent
- 447 patrons added

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 and ran until the end of April. Totals for April:

- Total spent: \$1,271.54
- 210,049 individuals reached
- 1,841 link clicks
- 2,044 engagements
- 139 reactions
- 45 shares
- 17 saves
- 2 comments

Summer Reading Program

- 44 individuals signed up for SRP pre-June 30th
- 1 camp was visited pre-June 30th - Camp T with 10 individuals
- First year allowing adults in program – 19 adults were signed up as of June 30th

First year with NLS virtual events – attendance numbers not yet available from NLS

**Outreach Efforts, Marketing, and Public Relations
Presentations and Events: 11**

Bay Arenac ISD Staff Meeting	4/13/2023	Presentation (Virtual)	General Info on BTBL - Reading Disability Focus	Stephanie Wambaugh
MAER Event	4/20/2023	Vendor Talk and Table	General Info - SRP - eReaders	Stephanie Wambaugh

Senior Alliance (Area Agency on Aging 1C)	4/21/2023	Presentation (Virtual)	General Info on BTBL	Stephanie Wambaugh
Midlands Conference- Various Presentations	5/17/2023	Presentations (In-Person)	Steph - Summer Reading, Caitlin - Veterans	Stephanie Wambaugh Caitlin Wolfe
Visions 2023	6/7/2023	(In-Person)	Table in Vendor Area	Bridgit Turner, Meagan Daniels, and Scott Norris
BSBP Mini Adjustment	6/8/2023	Presentation (In-Person)	General Info on BTBL	Scott Norris
CareWell Services Southwest (Region 3B Area Agency on Aging)	6/9/2023	Presentation (Virtual)	General Info on BTBL	Stephanie Wambaugh
MDOC Presentation	6/13/2023	Presentation (In-Person)		Bridgit Turner
Community Resource Fair - Farmers Market	6/14/2023	Event, Table	General Info on BTBL	Bridgit Turner Betsie Branch
Lansing Area Veterans Coalition	6/26/2023	Veteran Resource Fair	General Info on BTBL	Stephanie Wambaugh
Camp T (MDE-LIO)	6/26/2023	Camp T, Providing		Stephanie Wambaugh

		Summer Reading Craft		
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Marketing and PR: 13 initiatives/messages (outside Gov Del and Facebook channels)

Certifying Authority Mass Mailing	4/3/2023	We Offer More Than Books - List of Other Opportunities.	Stephanie Wambaugh
Monthly BTBL School Email	4/7/2023	Topic: Braille eReader Announcement	Stephanie Wambaugh
Michigan Parkinson Foundation	4/7/2023	Emailed general box regarding support groups mass mailing coming up. Asked for newsletters/other opportunities.	Stephanie Wambaugh
MRS's Business Network Division: April is Occupational Therapy Month	4/12/2023	Emailed staff listed in E&T newsletter as a part of MRS OT group. Included flyers.	Stephanie Wambaugh
Quarterly BTBL Demo Site Emails	4/14/2023	Topic: Basics, ways our patrons can read our books (eReader included).	Stephanie Wambaugh
Family Connect - APH Blog	5/2/2023	Submitted Blog article to APH. Release date to come in August.	Stephanie Wambaugh
VI Listserv Post	5/4/2023	Topic: Summer Reading Program	Stephanie Wambaugh

Monthly BTBL School Email	5/8/2023	Topic: Summer Reading Program (and eReader)	Stephanie Wambaugh
MI Parkinson Foundation Support Groups, Mass Mailing	5/10/2023	Mass mailing of letter, brochures, and apps to approx. 60 locations.	Stephanie Wambaugh
Follow-Up: MI Parkinson Foundation Support Groups	5/16/2023	Topic: follow-up to mass mailing via email (not all locations had emails).	Stephanie Wambaugh
Monthly BTBL School Email	6/2/2023	Topic: Summer machines info, BES location announcements, SRP.	Stephanie Wambaugh
VI Listserv Post	6/7/2023	Topic: SRP Pen Pal	Stephanie Wambaugh
Quarterly BTBL Demo Site Emails	6/28/2023	Topic: Braille Enhanced StoryWalks	Stephanie Wambaugh

Other Initiatives:

- **Book Buzz (Betsie)** - 3 issues released in this timeframe
- **Wednesdays@1**, Meetings every other week with AOC locations to help provide training, updates, general support (6 meetings during this timeframe).
- InFocus - April issue released
- **GovDelivery** - increased with 9 bulletins and 2294 subscribers
- Braille Enhanced StoryWalk kits released

Machines:

- Audio players sent: 607
- eReaders sent: 202
- Accessories sent: 311

Currency Readers:

- 36 currency readers sent

Wrap-up and questions – Bill Robinson, Bureau Director