

**Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP)**  
**DSU Update**  
**Michigan Council for Rehabilitation Services (MCRS)**  
**Thursday, February 8, 2024**

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

For the period ending 12/31/2023, BSBP's budget is adequately funded. BSBP has received only a portion of its federal grants from RSA as of 2/1/24. For example, FY24 Vocational Rehabilitation grant total is projected to be \$20,486,632 (7% increase) and the Independent Living Older Blind grant total is anticipated to be \$988,000 (<1% decrease). BSBP has a substantial amount of carryover funding from FY23 available to spend in FY24 that will adequately meet our needs while we await further federal action on our grant awards.

Grant Awards for FY24:

| <b>FY24 Grant</b>  | <b>FY24 Initial Award as of 2/1/24</b> | <b>FY23 Remaining Awards as of 12/31/23</b> | <b>FY24 Total</b> |
|--|--|---|-------------------|
| <b>VR</b>  | \$5,557,717                            | \$15,238,260                                | \$20,795,977      |
| <b>Pre-ETS Expend and Reserve Requirement – 15% VR Grant</b> | \$ 980,774                             | \$ 1,587,340                                | \$ 2,568,114      |
| <b>ILOIB</b>   | \$ 335,705                             | \$ 994,565                                  | \$ 1,330,270      |
| <b>SE Adult</b>  | \$ 10,338                              | \$  | \$ 10,338         |
| <b>SE Youth</b>  | \$ 10,338                              | \$  | \$ 10,338         |

**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 12/31/2023, BSBP's unexpended FY23 Pre-ETS reserve carryover was estimated at \$1,587,340.

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

BSBP is serving 945 active VR customers including students. We determined 48 individuals eligible during the 10/1-12/31/23 reporting quarter. Currently there are 43 people in an employed status. BSBP is working with our newly migrated case management system to optimize performance to obtain the comparative data we typically provide.

#### **BSBP Field Services Highlights:**

- BSBP worked with the Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment in October while they conducted an onsite training with BSBP rehabilitation professionals providing direct service to customers that can benefit from customized employment. The Training Innovation Policy and Procedure team, which is part of the Performance Accountability Quality and Assurance Division has incorporated suggestions and take aways to update the Supported Employment policy that will be reviewed with FSD soon.
- BSBP has hired a new manager in our Central Region. David Klenk comes to us with more than 13 years of service in the VR profession. He began his work with BSBP in mid-December. BSBP's West Region hired a new VR counselor to begin her work on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Christen is new to the VR community and is excited about working with BSBP. Most recently, Sharday Lawrence from the West Region is moving on to her next journey and Shannon McVoy has been temporarily assigned to the West to assist until this position can be filled. BSBP also welcomes an MSU rehabilitation counseling intern to the West Region. BSBP continues to recruit for vacant positions.
- BSBP remains committed to the Customized Employment (CE) service delivery model. BSBP and MRS are adjusting the fee schedule for CE to become a more viable and attractive service to be provided by participating providers.
- BSBP, MRS and our workforce development partners have scheduled a series of short video clips focusing on job retention.
- BSBP's portion of the combined state plan was finished and shared with LEO E&T on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The plan was reviewed and

made available for public comment on January 5<sup>th</sup> with public comment closing on February 5<sup>th</sup>. The council was provided with the plan for their review, and they will provide their input at the February 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- 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 which is anticipated to launch in FY24 and BSBP is very excited about this project.
- Field Services is working with the Performance Accountability Quality and Assurance team to re-address policies and procedures to accommodate the migration to inFormed.

### **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 guide planning for FY24 focus areas.

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

BSBP has increased our team with two transition consultants representing our East and West Regions. BSBP is hiring a consultant for our Central Region to round out the state. The purpose of this is to provide additional support to regional staff as they work toward providing quality Pre-ETS services.

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 \(michigan.gov\)](https://www.michigan.gov/leo/transition/pre-employment-transition-services)

BSBP is once again working with MDE LIO to provide programs teaching financial literacy services in the More About the Money, and Career Conversations programs. BSBP will facilitate the College Prep program in

the summer of 2024, which is one of the oldest transition programs in the state. The Survivor program will begin in March and the TC has a host of programs designed to fill our center this summer populated by students being served by Field Services. Great Wolf Lodge's program focused on hospitality programs where both families and students are engaged in this experience. This program is slated to begin on May 31<sup>st</sup>. We are continuing to work on developing program concepts for those with more significant disabilities.

**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 FY 24 Q1 Data:**

| <b>FY 23 (10/01/2023-12/31/2023)</b> |           |                |             |                             |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>VR</b>                            | <b>IL</b> | <b>Pre-ETS</b> | <b>MINI</b> | <b>Potentially Eligible</b> |
| 22                                   | 9         | 15             | -           | -                           |

| <b>Referrals by Region</b> |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| <b>Central</b>             | 37% |
| <b>West</b>                | 27% |
| <b>East</b>                | 36% |

| <b>Self-Identified Ethnicity</b> |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| <b>White</b>                     | 50% |
| <b>Black</b>                     | 44% |
| <b>Asian</b>                     | 0%  |
| <b>Pacific Islander</b>          | 0%  |

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| <b>Hispanic</b>                      | 3% |
| <b>Identified with 2 Ethnicities</b> | 0% |
| <b>Not Self-Identified</b>           | 3% |

### **BSBPTC Highlights:**

- Hosted an Intro to Culinary Arts program in partnership with KVCC and the PreETS unit.
- Launched an afterhours AT helpdesk for participants in training.
- Continued provided training to participants enrolled in VR and IL programs.
- Continued providing tours to families, students, potential customers, and professionals.
- Hosted various managers, program coordinators, corporate trainers, from the KVCC Career and Continuing Education Department
- BSBPTC underwent an MSP Security Assessment in December- receiving very positive verbal remarks- pending final written report and debriefing.
- Finalized and submitted a grant proposal to help with infrastructure needs of the TC campus.
- Hosted tech students interested in accessibility from Kalamazoo College and provided tour of facility.
- Reviewed relevant results of the CSNA with staff.
- Assisted in drafting pertinent sections of the State Plan
- Implemented new Referral Review Tool
- Continued monthly TC open chats for Field Services Division

### **BSBPTC FY Goals:**

- Continue Community Partners/Employer Engagement Outreach
- Increase PreETS summer enrollment by 30%
- Maintain a high level of VR referrals.
- Begin work on automating TC Referral Form in new case management system-inFormed.
- Continue work on automating class scheduling.
- Deploy new intro to 3D printing class and Intro to CAD Design
- Finalize and deploy new Audio Recording class.
- Continue work on increasing participant exit survey respondents.

- Continue discussions on modernization of facility and infrastructure improvements.
- Continue staff cross-training & professional development.
- Separate summer programming into three components: Summer 1, 2, & 3
- Deploy new summer programming marketing campaign.
- Continue Benchmarking Programs

### **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:**

- On November 13, 2023, BSBP migrated to the new electronic case management system (ECMS), called Libera inFormed, that tracks data regarding vocational rehabilitation, independent living and youth low vision customers served by BSBP. BSBP staff are continuing to become familiar with the structure of the new system by using the system to complete the data required to conduct business and for federal reporting purposes for both the Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Programs. Staff were well prepared for this change to a new system due to extensive use of a Beta version of the new system, 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. The inFormed system is working and staff are able to conduct business using this program. However, there are areas where the system is in need of refinement. Libera migrated the bulk of the VR case services and Independent Living data over to the new system, but staff have discovered areas where the migration was not complete. Libera is working diligently with BSBP to continue this process and fix any areas that staff identifies as irregular or problematic. While staff is not

entering new data into the former system, staff do have access to data in the former system to obtain any missing or incomplete data. BSBP and DTMB staff continue working with Libera to refine 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. This is not an unusual occurrence when making large scale system changes. The next major test is to complete and submit to RSA the Federally required RSA-911 data report without any errors, which is due 2/15/24. **Background information:** BSBP previously utilized a 20+ year old ECMS solution with the trade name System7 through its contractor, Libera, Inc. BSBP upgraded 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.

### **Business Enterprise Program (BEP):**

- BEP has completed the most recent training class with three new candidates. These candidates participated in 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 then spent one week at the BSBP Training Center for practicum work in food service. Following their time at the Training Center, they were 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 completed 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. Each of these individuals has been awarded a BEP facility and 2 of the three have already commenced operations. The next BEP Training Class is scheduled to start on February 26, 2024.
- 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. The current projected open date for the new c-store is March 1, 2024. The reopening was delayed due to a low building population in the fall.

- Collective BEP Program sales for FY 23 were significantly higher than for FY 22: \$6,580,929 in 2022 compared to \$7,919,705 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 used in the most recent class and all trainees and trainers provided positive feedback on the tool.
- 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.

### **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 1st Quarter of 2024 includes:
  - Circulation:
    - Number of braille books sent out - **490 Volumes.**
    - Number of e-Braille books sent out - **261 titles on 18 Cartridges.**
    - Number of audio titles sent out - **611,143.**
    - Number of patrons added in the specified time period – **469.**
  - Machines:
    - Number of audio player sent out = **609**



- Number of eReaders sent out = **31**
  - Number of accessories sent out = **437**
- Currency readers
  - Number sent out = 25
- Clubs
  - Technology Club:
  - Total attendance - 51
- Book Club
  - Total attendance - 13
- Tech Tidbits
  - Total attendance - 13
- Outreach
  - Paid ads campaign
    - \$413.82 spent on ads.
    - 104,724 individuals reached.
    - 714 engagements
    - 658 link clicks
    - 38 reactions
    - 12 shares
    - 5 saves
    - 1 comment
- Outreach Events / Presentations – 10
  - Foster Library- CADL, Tell a Tail program.
  - Alfreda Schmidt Community Center
  - Michigan Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired (MCBVI)
  - Red Cedar Lodge in Lansing
  - Foster Library- CADL, Tell a Tail program.
  - Military OneSource, Resource sharing
  - Veteran Resource Sharing event
  - Foster Library- CADL, Tell a Tail program.
  - CharEm ISD meeting
  - Area Agency on Aging GR office

- Outreach Other – mass mailings, email blasts, etc. -12
  - Certifying Authority Mass E-Mailing
  - Monthly BTBL School Emails
  - VI Listserv post
  - Mass Mailing to Optometrists in greater Lansing area
  - Monthly BTBL School Emails
  - VI listserv post
  - Paid Ad Campaign starts end of November.
  - Monthly BTBL School Emails
  - VI listserv post
  - Quarterly BTBL Demo Site Emails
  - Mich-Lib post
  - MAER newsletter article
- Studio
  - Two in-person narrators
- Collaborations with SOM departments/agencies
  - December 5, Department of Natural Resources Accessibility Advisory Council Meeting BTBL manager, Scott Norris, Chair
  - December 13, Michigan Braille Transcribing Fund board meeting; BTBL manager elected to board of directors.

## **Wrap-up and questions – BSBP Team**