

Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP)
DSU Update
Michigan Council for Rehabilitation Services (MCRS)
Thursday, May 8, 2025

BSBP Budget – James Hull, Acting Director, Administrative Services Division

For the period ending 4/30/2025, BSBP's budget is adequately funded. BSBP has received its federal grants from RSA. FY2025 Vocational Rehabilitation grant total was \$19,146,385 for VR funds. For the Independent Living Older Blind grant, the total was \$977,729. BSBP had a substantial amount of carryover funds from FY2024, which has not yet been exhausted in FY2025. In addition, BSBP is well situated to request additional federal funds during the reallocation period, however, it is anticipated that requests will exceed available funds during reallocation and BSBP will not be able to capture the full amount requested.

Grant Awards for FY2025:

FY2025 Grant	FY2025 Award as of 3/31/2025
VR	\$16,124,427
Pre-ETS Expend and Reserve Requirement – 15% VR Grant	\$ 2,871,958
ILOIB	\$ 977,729
IL Part B	\$ 191,885

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 requirements. This is a federal mandate. Each state must reserve and expend a minimum of 15% of its VR grant on Pre-ETS.

Field Services – Lisa Kisiel, Division Director, Field Services Division

Success Story:

BSBP's Detroit office Counselors Stephanie Kimmins and Shawnese Laury are celebrating the graduation of a student from Laurence Technical Institute. This student will receive their diploma on May 10th in Information and Technology and has made such an impression that the president of the university has offered the opportunity for them to participate in graduate school with the full support of LTI. They shared with their counselor that being a person from Iraq, they would have been considered unable to do anything. Their dream is to live and work and have a family like anyone else. Both Stephanie and Shawnese will be escorting them across the state at LTI's graduation ceremony. If there is ever a reason to wonder the importance of what we do, this is it. Stephanie Kimmons, the current Counselor, shared that this student has done everything they need to be successful and continues to do so. The FSD Firector received this excited call at 5:10 PM on a Friday evening. What a great way to celebrate the end of a week, and what an amazing start to fantastic journey of success for this customer.

BSBP was also represented at the Project Search Statewide Meeting held in Livingston County, engaging in meaningful conversations to support the identification and enrollment of BSBP students in current and future sites.

BSBP was placed on a Corrective Action Plan on October 1, 2024 related to timely determination of eligibilities and the timely development of individual plans for employment. BSBP needs to 2 quarters of successful performance of 90% in these areas to conclude the CAP by June 30, 2025. BSBP is requesting to extend CAP to 12/31/2025 to successfully meet this expectation. BSBP acknowledges that the implementation of the new case management system in November of 2023, the assimilation of a signatureless application and the management of vacant positions has created challenges and opportunities. The implementation of a signatureless application process allows a letter of acknowledgement of application to eliminate the need to obtain signatures and makes the referral to application more seamless. It also brings with it a need to move very quickly to obtain diagnostic information to meet the 60-eligibility determination deadline. BSBP is working with our teams to assist in learning rapid engagement techniques to move this process along more quickly and navigate the case management system that is still creating

some challenges as updates and improvements also bring adjustments to the work of the day.

BSBP Training Center Director Juan F Ortiz shares that BSBP Partnered with AER (*Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired*) and WMU to draft a proclamation recognizing April 13-19 as Vision Rehabilitation Therapist Appreciation week. The proclamation was approved and signed by the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, and we held a small celebration at the Training Center recognizing VRTs for their great work. As part of the celebration, several customer success stories were featured highlighted positive outcomes and shedding light on the great work of VR Professionals.

Performance, Accountability, Quality, and Assurance - Danielle Smith, PAQA Division Director

Notable changes within the Performance, Accountability, Quality, and Assurance Division include formally restructuring from two units (Training, Innovation, Policy and Procedure, and the Transition Services Unit) to one team. This restructuring allowed for the resulting vacancies to be repurposed as a Statewide Rehabilitation Consultant and Rehabilitation Services Coordinator to increase capacity to complete the review, development, training, and implementation of BSBP policy and procedure at varying levels, supporting the BSBP goal to increase performance metrics and quality assurances.

The Performance, Accountability, Quality, and Assurance Division continues to support all divisions in recruiting and onboarding new BSBP team members, as we recognize the stress placed on teams when positions are unfilled. During quarter 2, BSBP was able to backfill two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and a Transition Consultant position within the Field Services Division, and the Administrative Services Division was able to backfill their Department Analyst, Executive Secretary, and Promotional Agent positions.

BSBP continues to work towards the recruitment of a Licensed Practical Nurse and Cook for the BSBP Training Center. The recruitment of two Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling positions in the Field Service Division continues, along with finalizing the backfilling of the Administrative Services Division Director position.

BSBP received a total of 75 Potential Referrals for BSBP programs or services through our webpage during this quarter.

Program Selection	Total Number of Referrals
Information and Referral	15
Youth Low Vision	2
Pre-Employment Transition Services	2
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	21
Independent Living Part B	10
Independent Living Older Blind	25

In reviewing BSBP's overall performance metrics, it was identified that BSBP determined 83 customers to be eligible for services, 68 were completed within 60 days, and 7 extensions were put in place. Eligibility determination was met with success but will continue to be monitored as BSBP has a goal to increase this metric to 87% or above, and we are currently at 90%. BSBP performance metric for Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) development fluctuated this quarter at 83%. This includes 71 IPEs developed of which 58 were completed within the 90-day timeframe, and only 1 IPE extensions were completed.

Additional performance metrics highlights include 13 competitive integrated employment closures and 14 customers receiving benefits planning services to support their informed decision-making process. BSBP will continue to investigate causes associated with customers exiting from programming prior to the successful attainment of competitive integrated employment, as we develop and conduct customer satisfaction tools to survey both active and closed customers.

The PAQA Division, in coordination with the System Administrators from the Administrative Services Division, is working to revise current Eligibility and Individualized Plan for Employment policies and standard operating procedures to align with our current electronic case management system's functionality.

Performance Metrics Comparison Chart

Description	FY2025 Q2	FY2024 Q2	% Change
Closures Resulting in CIE	13	9	44%
New VR Applications	120	109	10%
Eligibility Determinations	83	82	1%
Initial IPEs Developed	71	59	20%
VR Customers	1280	1257	2%
Average Caseload	49	41	20%
Number of SWD Receiving Pre-ETS Services	77	104	-26%
Exited from VR Without CIE	68	39	74%
Post-Secondary Sponsorship Expenditures	\$306,604.79	\$559,890.50	-45%
Benefits Planning	14	16	-13%
Enrolled in Secondary/Post-Secondary Programming	293	313	-6%

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

BSBP Training Center FY2025 Q2 Data:

FY2025 (10/01/2024 - 03/31/2025)				
VR	IL	Pre-ETS	MINI	Potentially Eligible
36	16	3	38	-

of Financial Literacy Course Modules Provided: 90

BSBPTC Highlights:

- Engagement event and tour for students and staff from Macomb ISD (37 students and staff) and Tuscola/Sinilac ISD– October.
- Hosted BSBP Excellence Awards and Open House – October.
- Continued VR, IL and PreETS training.
- Continued DEIA monthly engagement events for participants and staff.
- Lean Process Improvement workgroups continue.

- Co-present with FSD at the Annual MI NFB Conference.
- In partnership with MRS, provided Disability Awareness and Etiquette training to LEO-E&T staff – October.
- Instituted participant departure celebrations.
- BSBP Tech Team held the first Assistive Technology vendor fair – December.
- Continued providing tours to families, students, potential customers, and professionals.
- Professional staff continue serving on boards at KVCC, WMU, and Pine Lake Fund.
- Hosted the Detroit Mini Adjustment Program March 2-6.
- 16 participants attended the Employment Readiness Seminar following the Mini Adjustment Program in Detroit.
- Training Center Virtual Family engagements held- February 20 & March 22.
- Instituted a new electronic referral program for summer program referrals.
- Heritage Schools ISD Engagement Event- April 22
- Hosted Pathways to Potential PreETS Program May 3-4.
- Lincoln Parch ISD Engagement Event- May 1
- Other ISD Engagements Scheduled: Northwest & Shiawassee ISDs.
- GVSU Staff Tour and Engagement Scheduled: May 23.

BSBPTC Summer Programs Open:

- Post-Secondary Assessment- Session 1: June 9-20, Session 2: June 16-27.
- Workplace Readiness- July 7-August 1.
- STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, & Medicine)- July 27-August 1.
- Practice Adulting- August 3-8.
- R U Ready?- August 4-8.
- Intro to Culinary- August 8-9 (registration opens end of May).

BSBPTC FY Goals:

- Continue Community Partners/Employer Engagement Outreach.
- Continue working with employers to provide work-based learning opportunities for participants in training.

- Continue working with the field to maintain VR, IL, and Pre-ETS referrals.
- Continue work on increasing participant exit survey respondents.
- Complete roof and courtyard project.
- Continue staff cross-training & professional development.
- Implement new class benchmarks.
- Implement new referral process.
- BSBPTC restructuring to enhance capacity- Newly established Departmental Manager 13 position has been posted for recruitment.

BSBPTC Completed Projects:

- Kitchen renovation project completed.
- Referral process for summer programming.

Administrative Services Division (ASD) – James Hull, Acting ASD Division Director

The Administrative Services Division has hired a Departmental Analyst with the primary duty of managing the Social Security Administration Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work programs. This staff person will manage and monitor BSBP requests to SSA for reimbursements, allowing BSBP to receive Program Income that can be utilized for additional consumer services. To support this position, we are working with Libera to develop and generate a report tracking system to ensure that all possible SSA Cost Reimbursements are captured.

Modernization:

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

Current Developments:

- BSBP has begun reviewing the form letters that can be generated in Libera inFormed to modernize the letters and ensure that they are populating with the correct information for vendors and consumers. The automatic generation of these letters will allow BSBP staff to improve communications with vendors and consumers while reducing staff time on these tasks.
- BSBP continues work on the upgrade to the Libera Business Enterprise Program (BEP) inFormed platform. This will replace the

current System 7 application and will provide advanced features for BEP staff. Current forms are being reviewed to ensure that relevant data is being captured while minimizing the fields and forms that are redundant or unnecessary. Additionally, current records are being reviewed to ensure that the SOM retention schedule is applied, reducing the amount of data that needs to be migrated to the new system and lessening the opportunities for data conversion errors.

- BSBP has begun the process of migration for software for the distribution of books from the Braille and Talking Book Library. The BTBL will be migrating to the KLAS system from Keystone, Inc., and we have begun the initial migration work to avoid a disruption of services during the conversion. The projected go live date for the KLAS system will be on or before October 1, 2025.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP):

- The Public Comment Period for proposed updates to the regulations implementing the Randolph Sheppard Act has closed. Neither BSBP nor the Elected Operator's Committee submitted comments beyond support of comments submitted by the National Association of Blind Merchants supporting the updates.
- BEP continues work with the EOC on the BEP Assessment for potential candidates. The BEP Assessment is required by promulgated rules and ensures that potential licensees have the necessary skills of blindness to be successful as a BEP licensee.
- BEP has hired a new Promotional Agent to fill the current vacancy. This individual will be working primarily in the southeast part of the state, filling the vacancy created in January 2025.
- The BEP Secretary has taken a new position within BSBP. This vacancy has been posted, and it is hoped that a new staff person will be onboard by July 2025.
- BEP continues to work with the EOC on a TAC authorizing the use of federal funds during the initial establishment period. Policies related to the initial inventory of stocks and supplies as well as operation costs during the initial establishment period are being crafted to address the authorized use of federal funds outlined in the TAC.

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 2nd Quarter of 2025 includes:

Circulation

- 55,354 audio books sent
- 119 braille books sent

Clubs

- Book Club attendance – 20
- Technology Club attendance – 86
- Craft & Chat – 2
- Tech Tidbit - 1

Machines

- Digital Talking Book Machines sent – 552
- Braille E-Readers sent – 21
- Accessories sent – 453

Outreach

The BTBL staff participated in the following outreach activities for the period of this report:

Brettenwoods Lions Club	1/2/2025
Braille Literacy Month Rotunda Passive Program	1/6/2025-1/22/2025
Foster Library- CADL, Read to Dogs Program	1/14/2025
MiYouth Meeting	1/14/2025
CASB Meeting	1/14/2025
Monthly School Email Blast	1/14/2025
Great Lakes and Southeast ADA Centers	1/15/2025

Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)	1/23/2025
Monthly Demo Site and Michlib Email Blast	2/7/2025
Lions Club Winter Camp	2/8/2025
DNR Lansing Customer Service Center	2/11/2025
Portage District Library	2/11/2025
Foster Library- CADL, Read to Dogs Program	2/11/2025
St. Clair County Library System	2/14/2025
Monthly School Email Blast	2/14/2025
Ontonagon Township Library	2/18/2025
Bloomfield Township Public Library	2/24/2025
Huron Intermediate School District – Sarah Green	2/27/2025
BSBP Mini	3/4/2025
Herrick District Library	3/6/2025
Monthly Demo Site Email Blast	3/7/2025
WKAR Interview - Studio	3/11/2025
Foster Library- CADL, Read to Dogs Program	3/11/2025
Meeting with Ingham Health Dept. Rep	3/14/2025
Monthly School / VI Listserv Email Blast	3/14/2025
Lions Club - Muir Michigan	3/18/2025
Glacier Hills Foundation	3/19/2025
Lansing Area Veterans Coalition	3/26/2025
Brecon Village - Saline MI	3/31/2025

Wrap-up and questions – BSBP Team