

TRANSITION AHEAD

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*A bimonthly newsletter
for teachers and administrators involved
in the special education transition process.*

Dear Friends in Education:

Welcome to the inaugural edition of "Transition Ahead," Berrien Regional Education Service Agency's transition newsletter. We hope readers will not only find this information useful for Individual Education Program compliance and guidance, but will also serve as a resource tool for educators who are helping students acquire the academic and life skills needed in order to secure their independence. Working with Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) and Community Mental Health, our Transition Coordinators are dedicated to assisting students, their families and their teachers through every step of the educational journey (including guidance toward apprenticeship training, post-secondary vocational instruction and college/university degrees). We are here to help!

-Craig A. Blasko, Supervisor of Ancillary Programs and Services

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The views and perspectives shared in "Transition Ahead" do not necessarily reflect those of the Berrien Regional Education Service Agency, affiliated schools, staff or board members.

To receive "Transition Ahead" electronically, please visit www.berrienresa.org and visit the Communication page. Additional newsletters are also available.

Berrien RESA complies with all federal and state laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination, and with all requirements and regulations of the United States Department of Education and the Michigan State Department of Education.



Caution: Information Ahead

Transitioning through the School Year

In the near future, Berrien RESA's new electronic format Individual Education Program (IEP) will go live. The new system is called Illuminate. Trainings have been taking place for Berrien RESA staff and local district personnel since mid-summer. The Transition Coordinators have also been working with the crafters of the Illuminate tool to make sure the Transition Plan section will include all the compliance elements. This should make the [State Performance Plan \(SPP\) B13](#) file review next spring easier to complete. We are now required by the state to review every district every year. The state (Michigan Department of Education) selects the names for the file review and posts them on a secure website. The selected files are usually made known in March. The file review begins in April and must be completed by October 1, 2011. Berrien RESA's goal is to complete all file reviews and corrections by the end of the 2011 school year.

Cruise Control: Using Assistive Technology

Submitted by Berrien RESA Assistive Technology Specialist, Rosanne Burden

If your student has difficulty taking notes in class there may be a piece of assistive technology that can be a huge help! The Echo Smartpen (formerly known as the Pulse Smartpen) from www.livescribe.com. The Echo™ smartpen records everything you hear, write and draw. Later, simply tap on your notes to replay the recording so you can find what you need, instantly! The 4GB of memory can hold over 400 hours of audio. Actual recording time varies by the audio quality setting. If you have difficulty taking notes, then this may be for

you. Jotting down key words, phrases, or short sentences along with the audio from the pen will help you capture the information you need. The pen does require special paper that is available in notebook form from Livescribe for about \$20 per 4-pack. Notes can also be uploaded and shared to the Livescribe website. The cost of the pen is approximately \$170 and often times can be found at large retail stores and is also available online. For classes that require a lot of note-taking, this tool could be well worth the money!

Click It!

Helpful Websites

Berrien RESA created a website just for you – look no further for your transition needs, it is all right here. Add it to your website favorites! <http://www.berrienresa.org/specialeducation/transitionplanning/>. You are encouraged to visit Berrien RESA's website often as information and resources are updated daily.

Looking for additional resources? Look no further. The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center <http://www.nsttac.org/LessonPlanLibrary/Main.aspx> provides information about Indicator 13 and lessons for your class.

A Look Down the Road

Submitted by *Sekenah Daye, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS).*

Everyone needs a road map to go where they have never been before. To help juniors and seniors reach their job goal, MRS uses a "map" called an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). The MRS counselor helps transition students write their plan once we work together to make choices about the services needed and who will provide them. When completed, the plan will state the job goal and services and supports needed to reach the goal. The student's responsibilities as well as the responsibilities of MRS will be spelled-out in the plan. MRS works very closely with transition coordinators, case load teachers, students and parents.

When is it appropriate to open an MRS case?

It is appropriate for a student's case to be opened if they have a documented disability that may make it more difficult for them to find, obtain and maintain employment, or if they are already employed and need supports (due to a disability) to maintain employment.

The best candidates for our program demonstrate a certain level of ownership of their academic career, by attending school on a regular basis and participating in school requirements. Students show motivation toward work and personal growth.

Natural supports are very important in aiding students in the transition process. Parent involvement helps a lot in moving students from school to work. Parents are often their source of transportation and encouragement. When students do not have an active parent involved in their lives, we focus on finding other supports such as close family members, teachers and even good friends.

Guidelines and expectations from MRS

Although we have worked hard at MRS (along with Berrien RESA and our very valuable job developers) to provide a system that will move students through the transition process as promptly and efficiently as possible, the process is not at all quick. In fact, it is reasonable to expect the process to take several months. This is due to a number of factors, including student availability, job readiness, maturity, natural supports and resources, changes in student health, independent living issues, and the economic climate. MRS works with a number of businesses and agencies in the community to deal with these issues as they arise.

How the MRS case process works:

1. The student meets with the transition coordinator.
2. The coordinator passes information about the student to the counselor.
3. The counselor meets the student and discusses an individualized plan (IPE) for employment.
4. The IPE is put in place.
5. The coordinator, student, case load teacher, counselor and parents meet to review and sign the IPE.
6. Services begin.

Services MRS provides:

- Guidance and counseling
- Job readiness class
- On the job evaluations
- Mentoring
- Independent living help
- Social Security Income benefits planning
- Vocational evaluations
- Mental health counseling
- Driver's training
- Job development & coaching

To learn more about MRS and its services, please visit www.michigan.gov/mrs.



Transition Q&A:

"What qualifies as an outside agency at an Individual Education Program (IEP) meeting, and what is the process for inviting one to attend?"

An "outside agency" is any office or organization whose staff is not employed by either the local school system or Berrien RESA. Transition Coordinators are not considered to be from an outside agency. Representatives from other school districts are not outside agency personnel. Examples of persons from an outside agency would be Michigan Rehabilitation Services counselors, Riverwood or Woodlands (Community Mental Health) personnel, college representatives, Michigan Alliance For Families, adult foster care home directors, Head Start and private practice counselors.

The school must have written consent from the parent, or the student if 18 or older, prior to inviting the outside agency to the IEP. This document should be kept with the school's copy of the IEP invitation. The parent does not need prior consent to invite whomever they feel would be helpful to the IEP process. If an outside agency representative attends the IEP at the request of the parent, indication of such must be documented on the comment section of the IEP for auditing purposes.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) is located in downtown Benton Harbor in the Michigan Works! building. Students with physical, mental, or emotional disabilities can get help in discovering their interests and talents through MRS.



Compliance Corner

Please be aware that Addendums to IEPs will now be called "Amendments".

State Performance Plan B13

- Confirm all the components of the [checklist](#) are in the Transition IEP.
- Update each student's Transition Assessment every year.
- The district is required to obtain consent from a parent or an adult student prior to inviting an outside agency to an IEP meeting.
- Transition-age students must have their own letter of invitation to the IEP meeting.

State Performance Plan B14

- Complete student [SPP B14 Exit Data Form](#) for any student graduating or otherwise leaving the K-12 system. The state will follow-up with these students one year after they leave school.
- Retain a copy of this information in the district high school office/student's educational file (CA 60).

For an explanation of the State Performance Plan (SPP), click on the attached [Focus on Success article, "Understanding Michigan's State Performance Plan"](#).

Additional items:

- Be sure the Career Pathway on the Educational Development Plan (EDP) matches the post-secondary vision statement on the Transition Plan.
- Provide students leaving the system with a [Summary of Performance Document](#).

