

# **Supported Employment Services**

## ***Frequently Asked Questions***



**Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP)**

**Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS)**

**Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH)**

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## **Introduction**

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This document is a collaborative effort and was written by representatives from the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP), Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) and the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) to assist professionals in all three organizations by providing responses to the most frequently asked questions regarding how Supported Employment (SE) is provided.

Different responses are sometimes necessary from one of the partners (BSBP, MRS or MDCH). When this is the case, the response makes it clear which partner the response is affiliated with. When one response is provided, all three partners have agreed with the same response.

This FAQ is a companion piece to the Joint Interagency Agreement between BSBP, MRS and MDCH. The information in this document may be useful to other rehabilitation partners such as Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRO) that provide SE to our mutual customers.

## **Foundation of the BSBP/MRS/MDCH Partnership**

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### **What is the Joint Interagency Agreement between BSBP, MRS and MDCH?**

In 2009, MRS, BSBP and MDCH signed a Joint Interagency Agreement to improve competitive employment options for job seekers with disabilities that are mutually eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and MDCH. The Agreement is a state-level collaborative document intended to serve as a guide for regional and local systems that is based on the following principles:

- Utilizes a person-centered approach;
- Assumes each individual is employable;
- Maximizes use of natural supports;
- Targets competitive employment;

- Uses existing information and past work experience to determine eligibility and to conduct vocational planning;
- Values timely community-based placement with supports as optimum strategy;
- Provides follow-along services;
- Understands that employers are customers/stakeholders whose employment needs must be recognized and met;
- Views employment as a means of gaining independence and community integration; and
- Supports development of meaningful careers.

### **What is Supported Employment (SE)?**

SE is paid competitive work that offers ongoing support services in integrated settings for individuals with the most significant disabilities. It is intended for individuals for who competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, or has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of significant disability, and who need ongoing supports to maintain their employment. The employment outcome is attained by providing intensive service and is maintained through the provision of Extended Services (follow-along) which is provided by another community agency (other than BSBP or MRS), such as a Community Mental Health Service Provider (CMHSP). The level of employment participation may be full- or part-time based on the interests and abilities of the individual.

SE is also a term commonly referencing “services” available to achieve the outcome of competitive employment. SE services are individualized to meet the unique needs of each customer as they work towards attainment of their job goal.

### **What is Evidence Based Supported Employment (EBSE)?**

#### Definition

SE (also known as 'Individual Placement and Support' or 'IPS') is an evidence based practice endorsed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). That means that it is a model that has been well researched and found to be effective. IPS SE helps people with serious mental illnesses find regular jobs of their choice with individualized and long-term support. In IPS SE, no

one is excluded based on degree of illness, addiction, or what's often called "work readiness."

### Principles

Key components of SE include the following eight principles:

- **Zero exclusion criteria:** Any person who has serious mental illness and is interested in a job is eligible for SE services.
- **Client preferences are important:** People decide on the type of job, number of work hours, etc. People also decide how the job search will be conducted and how follow-along supports will be provided.
- **Work incentive planning is offered to all:** People are provided accurate information about their benefits (e.g., Social Security) before they start work and subsequently as they need to make decisions about jobs.
- **The focus is on competitive jobs:** These are jobs in the community that pay at least minimum wage. These are not jobs created especially for people with disabilities.
- **SE services and mental health services are integrated:** Employment specialists and mental health practitioners meet frequently to think of ways to support a person's goals.
- **Rapid job search:** People are not asked to go through vocational evaluation, situational assessment, work-readiness groups, or work-adjustment programs. Instead, they are assisted directly in the job search.
- **Employment specialists build relationships with employers:** Employment specialists develop relationships with employers through multiple visits aimed at learning about the needs and preferences of each employer. They do not focus on quickly learning about job openings but view the employer as another customer who they will work with over an extended period of time.

- **Follow-along supports are continuous:** Employment specialists and other treatment team members provide individualized supports for as long as the person wishes. Typically, the employment specialist is involved for at least a year before mental health practitioners assume the responsibility for helping with job supports.
- **Systematic Job Development:** Employment specialists build an employer network based on clients' interests, developing relationships with local employers by making systematic contacts.

### **What is the difference between BSBP and MRS?**

Because BSBP and MRS are both governed by the Rehabilitation Act, most of the services provided by both BSBP and MRS are the same because they are both VR. Both MRS and BSBP can refer customers to Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI) for vocational training. The biggest differences are:

- Eligibility for BSBP is different than MRS.
- BSBP facilitates the Youth Low Vision (20/70 best correction or worse in both eyes) program, providing head-borne devices (glasses, telescopes, microscopes) to youth registered with an Intermediate School District (ISD) up to age 26.
- BSBP has a training center called the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons Training Center (BSBPTC), in Kalamazoo that provides extensive independent living skills for consumers, including technology, world-of-work exploration, assessments, etc.
- BSBP commonly starts working with individuals at age 14. Although MRS can open a case as early as age 14, it is not a common practice for MRS.
- BSBP provides a holistic approach in assisting consumers. In addition to BSBPTC, BSBP has Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Therapists on staff in each local office to work individually in a person's home and community providing independent living skills training.

## **What is the difference between MDCH and Community Mental Health (CMH)?**

MDCH is one of 18 departments of state government. The MDCH is one of the largest in state government and is responsible for health policy and management of the state's publicly-funded health service systems.

The department was created in 1996 by consolidating the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Health and the Medical Services Administration, the state's Medicaid agency. The Office of Drug Control Policy and the Office of Services to the Aging were later consolidated with MDCH.

The department's Mental Health Services are primarily provided through contracts with 46 Community Mental Health Services Programs (CMHSPs or CMHs) and 18 Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans (PIHPs). These programs are located in local communities and provide comprehensive outpatient behavioral and mental health services and supports to persons with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities and addictive disorders throughout Michigan.

## **What is an Interagency Cash Transfer Agreement (ICTA)?**

Formally known as “cash match” agreements, an ICTA may be established that uses non-Federal local dollars as a contribution for the purpose of capturing Federal VR funds to provide VR services to a targeted group of individuals with disabilities, such as persons with mental illness, developmental disabilities and addictive disorders.

Local cooperating community partners (such as local CMHs) contribute funds that are used by VR to capture Federal funds. These combined funds are then used by VR to provide individualized VR services leading to employment for individuals dually eligible for VR and MDCH from that local community.

A formula is used to determine how much funding is able to be captured to create an ICTA. For every local State or non-Federal

dollar that is contributed, VR is able to capture about 3 Federal dollars. One of the restrictions placed on these local dollars is that they must not be Federal dollars. In other words, Federal dollars cannot be matched with Federal dollars.

ICTAs specify the amount of funding in the agreement, roles and responsibilities of partners, and the goals that are to be accomplished. Expectations of the working relationship between VR and MDCH are often detailed in the agreement. Agreements are reviewed, updated and signed each year.

The availability of ICTA funds is dependent upon the total number of VR dollars available within the county, state, etc. and the number of ICTAs filed each fiscal year.

### **What are Special (Title VI b) SE funds?**

Special SE funds are Federal funds that are given directly to state VR agencies to provide SE services to customers. These funds may not be used for SE assessments prior to an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and are limited only to services after an IPE is completed.

### **What can SE funds be utilized for?**

After an individual is determined eligible for VR services, SE dollars can be spent on all VR services necessary to assist the person in obtaining competitive employment.

### **How is it determined how ICTA funds are utilized?**

VR is responsible for ICTA. Once non-Federal local funds are pooled with matching Federal dollars, they become the responsibility of VR and must adhere to VR rules, regulations and policy under the guidance of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). When local SE teams meet to discuss yearly progress, VR can share information about the services that are being provided using the funds. If this is not occurring, CMH can ask for the information. Local CMHs contribute 27% of the funds with the intention that the funds will benefit CMH customers who are also eligible for VR. When

ICTA's are established and renewed, partners have the opportunity to discuss who will be served using the funds, how the funds will be utilized and what the goals of the ICTA entail.

### **What happens when ICTA funds are not spent out by the end of the fiscal year?**

In some cases, funding is not fully spent at the end of the fiscal year. When this occurs funds are carried forward to the new fiscal year.

### **Can BSBP enter into ICTA Agreements?**

As the State VR agency for the blind, or those suffering rapid vision losses, regardless of any secondary disabilities, BSBP has the ability to enter into ICTA agreements. BSBP is encouraging more extensive dialogue with CMH to develop these agreements, particularly in larger urban areas, where we know that the joint populations are underserved and can benefit from our collaboration.

If there are instances where funds are not spent during the fiscal year they can be carried over to the next. Every effort is made to spend the funds on programs and services as outlined in the agreement during the current fiscal year.

### **What happens to ICTA funds when the funds cannot be fully expended with a good-faith effort and due diligence as was stated in the ICTA written agreement?**

In the event that the expenditure of funds is running slow and will not be able to be used, MRS communicates with the ICTA partner that this is an issue. When this occurs prior to August 1<sup>st</sup> in any given year, the funds can be moved to other parts of the state where SE services are being provided that can use the funds.

### **Can BSBP or MRS provide individually detailed information about the expenditure of funds?**

Both MRS and BSBP are interested in accountability and demonstrating a Return on Investment (ROI) to agreement partners. It is a best practice for local partners to meet quarterly to update each

other on progress or issues and exchange program information, including financial data. At a minimum, mid- and year-end summary reports should be shared and reviewed for program evaluation purposes.

Detailed information may be provided but it is left to the discretion of the MRS/BSBP counselor and must comply with all State and Federal confidentiality provisions. General vocational service areas such as job coaching, job placement, transportation, etc. can be broken out to specify the amount or percentage of funds spent in each service area. MRS or BSBP can also provide the year-to-date count for customers that have:

- Applied for services
- Been determined eligible for services
- Developed IPEs
- Entered employment
- Successfully achieved an employment outcome

### **Does MDCH have SE funding or another source for paying for Extended Support Services?**

All CMHs provide services primarily to people who receive Medicaid, meet the CMHSP eligibility criteria, and request a specific service in their person centered plan. CMHSP must make certain Medicaid-funded supports and services available through the authority of 1915(b)(3) of the Social Security Act (often referred to as B3s).

The intent of the “B3s” is to fund medically necessary supports and services that promote community inclusion, participation, independence, and/or productivity when identified in the individual plan of service. One of the medically necessary services can be SE (including long-term follow-along) if it is determined by CMHSP that the individual cannot obtain or maintain employment without SE due to the significance of their disability.

In essence, there is funding to support the provision of extended support services (long-term follow along). Discussions need to occur at the local level to determine the local CMHSP’s funding situation.

**Given that each county is unique and has a variety of different contractors, how can consistent information be provided regarding access to CMHSP services, SE, job coaching, job placement, etc.?**

It is the intent of MDCH to designate one contact person at every local CMHSP for employment service access questions.

If the question is regarding access to CMHSP services in general, please go to this link: [CMHSP Customer Service](#)  
Each local CMHSP operates individually under broad guidelines. The customer service coordinator is responsible to explain how that specific CMHSP operates.

**Why are there differences in the provision of VR services and CMHSP services in different areas of the state? Are there standards that each local VR office or CMHSP must adhere to regarding the provision of SE?**

VR services are mandated by the Rehabilitation Act and there is policy that covers the whole state. VR has no such thing as local policy. Communities are different and sometimes these differences influence services that are provided.

However, CMHSP do establish local policy.

**What is Order of Selection for Services (OSS) and how would OSS impact on ICTAs and individuals receiving services from MRS?**

Currently MRS does not have a waiting list under the OSS. A waiting list would be initiated by MRS if there are not enough resources within MRS to serve all eligible customers. When this happens, a waiting list is developed and customers who are categorized as the most significantly disabled are served first.

Individuals who are categorized as significantly disabled or not significantly disabled may be put on waiting lists for MRS services.

Under the OSS no customer group or disability group is exempt, that would include those customers served under any agreement, arrangement or contribution.

## **Referrals and Eligibility**

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### **What are BSBP eligibility criteria?**

In order to be eligible for BSBP rehabilitation services:

- A. An individual must have a visual impairment as defined by Public Act 260.

Definition of Legal Blindness:

The individual's visual acuity with best correction must be 20/200 or worse in the better eye or his/her visual fields must subtend an angle of less than 20 degrees in each eye.

Or

The individual must have a visual acuity with the best correction 20/100 or worse in the better eye with a prognosis of rapid deterioration.

- B. The impairment must constitute or result in a substantial impediment to employment and/or independent living for the individual.
- C. It is presumed that the individual can benefit in terms of an employment and/or independent living outcome.
- D. In the case of VR consumers, a determination is made that the individual requires VR services to prepare for, enter into, engage in, or retain gainful employment.

Individuals who are allowed Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries or are Social Security Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients and meet the BSBP definition of visual impairment are automatically eligible for VR services without

additional tests or procedures to assess "intent" of applicants that would hinder speedy access to VR services. These individuals are considered to be an "individual with a significant disability and should be presumed eligible for services." This information must be documented in the Certification of Eligibility.

There is no state residency requirement for the provision of rehabilitation services. Aliens may be eligible for services if they have the appropriate work permit; non-immigrant aliens may work if they have certain permits and may therefore be eligible for VR services. The Director of Client Services must be consulted in any matters relating to eligibility of BSBP staff or their families, to ensure appropriate handling and confidentiality.

Eligibility for VR services is based on an assessment of an individual's functional limitations as they relate to impediments to employment. Functional limitations in the following areas should be considered when determining the impediments to employment:

- A. Mobility – the physical and psychological ability to travel to and from destinations in the community. This includes orientation – the ability of the individual to know where he/she is, where he/she wants to go and how to get there, as well as the ability to adapt and adjust to new environments;
- B. Communication – the ability to effectively exchange information through spoken or written words, sign, Braille concepts, gestures or any other means. This includes language – the ability to place labels and meaning to objects, actions and concepts such as who, what, where, when, and how. This also includes Braille literacy – the ability for an individual to read and write Braille or written words at a level appropriate for his/her age;
- C. Self-care – the ability to manage one's own living situation, thereby allowing participation in training or work activities. This includes management of special health and safety needs;
- D. Self-direction – the ability to plan, initiate, problem solve and carry out goal-directed activities;

- E. Interpersonal skills – the ability to make and maintain personal, family and community relationships;
- F. Work tolerance – the capacity to effectively perform job requirements with or without accommodations; and
- G. Work skills – the ability to do specific tasks required for a particular job.

Where possible, it is absolutely necessary to use pre-existing information and thorough counseling interviews to determine the individual's functional limitations. Regardless of the age of the information, it must reflect the current functioning of the individual. To document a substantial impediment to employment, the counselor/teacher may obtain information from a variety of sources, such as direct observation; statements from the individual, the individual's family or others involved in the individual's activities; medical, psychological and other diagnostic reports; and/or records from the Social Security Administration, Veteran's Administration and educational institutions. Assistive technology and services must be used to the extent possible in gathering additional assessment information. To the extent possible, additional assessment should be obtained in realistic, integrated employment settings.

In the special case of the BSBP, it is important to obtain visual acuities where there is a question regarding the individual's legal blindness. If this information is not available from currently existing sources, an optometric or ophthalmological exam must be obtained. In the case of an obvious visual disability, such as a person who has two enucleated eyes or a person who has been known to the BSBP in the past, it is not necessary to obtain these reports for determining eligibility.

If an individual is determined eligible, a Certificate of Eligibility must be completed and signed by the appropriate counselor. If the counselor believes the individual is not eligible due to the severity of the impairment such that the individual cannot benefit from services, the procedures for a trial work experience must be followed. If the individual's visual impairment does not meet the criteria for eligibility

stated above, the individual must be referred to the appropriate office of MRS within the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Only individuals who are considered most severely impaired, i.e., who have three or more functional limitations based on the list above, are eligible for SE service. If appropriate, this must be documented in the Certification of Eligibility.

### **What are MRS eligibility criteria?**

- Existence of a physical or mental impairment
- Impairment(s) create(s) a substantial impediment to employment
- Requires MRS to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment; and
- Be able to benefit from MRS unless it is determined the person is unable to benefit by clear and convincing evidence.

Note: Individuals who are legally blind shall not be served by MRS but will be referred instead to BSBP.

For more detailed information regarding MRS eligibility and the eligibility process go to the MRS Rehabilitation Services Manual at: [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcd/Rehab\\_Manual\\_Total02-08\\_247114\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdcd/Rehab_Manual_Total02-08_247114_7.pdf)

### **What are CMHSP eligibility criteria?**

CMHSPs shall serve individuals with serious mental illness, serious emotional disturbance and developmental disabilities, giving priority to those with the most serious forms of illness and those in urgent and emergent situations. Once the needs of these individuals have been addressed, MDCH expects that individuals with other diagnoses of mental disorders with a diagnosis found in the most recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of Mental Health Disorders, will be served based upon agency priorities and within the funding available.

### **Are MDCH consumers automatically eligible for BSBP/MRS?**

No. Each agency has its own criteria that must be met in order to be eligible for that specific program.

### **Are MDCH consumers who receive SSI or SSDI presumed eligible for BSBP/MRS?**

All applicants for BSBP or MRS (including applicants that receive SSDI and/or SSI) are presumed to be able to benefit from VR in terms of an employment outcome unless they are ineligible for services due to the significance of the disability by clear and convincing evidence, including applicants who have been determined to have a disability under SSDI and SSI.

### **How does a CMHSP caseworker determine who should be referred for SE? Are there specific criteria or standardized measures that a CMHSP caseworker can use to define an appropriate SE referral?**

In the CMHSP system, SE is a service that is designed to be available to those individuals who want to work. Through the individualized, person-centered planning (PCP) process an individual should be able to comprehensively explore what employment would mean to him/her personally. If that individual determines that employment is a goal, a referral to a CMHSP SE program is appropriate.

Similarly, for VR services, individuals who are referred should express an interest in becoming employed. A practice that may be helpful is for CMHSP caseworkers to discuss potential referrals with VR counselors to determine readiness for referral to VR.

Once individuals are made eligible for VR services, BSBP or MRS will provide a comprehensive assessment of the individual's rehabilitation needs to determine if SE services are appropriate for the individual. Establishing a strong collaborative partnership including on-going communication between the CMHSP and BSBP or MRS local offices

can assist in understanding the priorities of each agency that influence referral practices.

As a result of strong partnerships between local CMHSP and BSBP or MRS, some local offices have established a “fast-track” process for access to SE.

Many individuals who are appropriate for SE services have legal guardians. In these cases, the legal guardian needs to be involved in the decision to refer an individual for SE.

### **How does BSBP or MRS assess for appropriateness of SE?**

A comprehensive assessment of the individual’s rehabilitation needs is conducted to determine the appropriateness of SE. Assessments are individualized and should be conducted in integrated settings (not workshops) and are part of eligibility assessment for VR services and the development of the IPE. SE assessments can be viewed as a general matching of SE to the needs of the individual and potentially draws on the variety of information resources available to the rehabilitation counselor including work and training histories, formal evaluation procedures and the informed choice of the individual. Further assessments such as a vocational assessment can be carried out after the determination of eligibility in order to provide a match of the worker to the most suitable job and to identify support services that will be needed.

***All efforts will be made to avoid duplication in services unless there is a need i.e., if a medical exam was provided and remains valid, another medical exam should not be repeated unless someone has had a significant change in their condition.***

### **Can “Special” VR SE funds be used to purchase needed assessments to determine eligibility for SE or to assess for appropriate job goals?**

Use of Special (Title VI b) SE (Federal) funds are limited to services provided after an IPE has been developed. These services are:

- Assessment, diagnostic and evaluation services needed after IPE services have begun;
- Job site accommodations;
- Assistive technology evaluation, and assistive technology devices and services; Job development/placement assistance and/or follow-up;
- Restoration services; and
- Training services such as job coaching, on-the-job training, and work adjustment.

General funds (Title I) or local ICTA funds may be used for SE assessments prior to an IPE and for any appropriate SE service.

### **Can an individual who is blind and has a learning disability qualify for MDCH services?**

Typically an individual with a learning disability alone will not be eligible for CMHSP services. However, many individuals have co-existing conditions. If an individual has a learning disability in addition to a developmental disability, mental illness, serious emotional disturbance or substance use disorder they may be determined eligible for CMHSP services.

CMHSPs serve individuals with serious mental illness, serious emotional disturbance, and developmental disabilities, giving priority to those with the most serious forms of illness and those in urgent and emergent situations. Once the needs of these individuals have been addressed, MDCH expects that individuals with other diagnoses of mental disorders with a diagnosis found in the most recent DSM of Mental Health Disorders, will be served based upon agency priorities and within the funding available.

### **Can CMHSP Boards in each county set-up their own guidelines and eligibility criteria for CMHSP services?**

To a certain extent, after the MDCH-designated, contractually mandated service array has been established. CMHSP boards in each county may provide additional services based on the particular needs presented by the member of their local community. Each board

is responsible for a different amount of public dollars that is designated to their community and each community has a different focus on what services are important to meet the unique needs of their residents.

Though each CMHSP is governed by an individual board, all must ensure access to public mental health services in accordance with their contracts with MDCH and:

- Then Mental Health and Substance Abuse chapter of the Medicaid Provider Manual, if the individual is a Medicaid beneficiary.
- The Adult Benefits Waiver (ABW) Chapter of the Medicaid Provider Manual, if the individual is an ABW beneficiary.
- The MIChild Provider Manual if the individual is a MIChild beneficiary
- The Michigan Mental Health Code and the MDCH Administrative Rules, if the individual is not eligible for Medicaid, ABW or MIChild.

CMHSPs serve individuals with serious mental illness, serious emotional disturbance and developmental disabilities, giving priority to those with the most serious forms of illness and those in urgent and emergent situations. Once the needs of these individuals have been addressed, MDCH expects that individuals with other diagnoses of mental disorders with a diagnosis found in the most recent DSM of Mental Health Disorders, will be served based upon agency priorities and within the funding available. If and as the expansion of Medicaid coverage occurs as part of national health reform efforts, service eligibility criteria may shift.

### **Can an individual receive SE services without being dually eligible for both BSBP or MRS and CMHSP?**

Yes. A customer eligible for BSBP/MRS services may receive SE services without qualifying for CMHSP services as long as BSBP/MRS have provided for the extended follow-along.

A customer may also benefit from CMHSP-funded SE services without being eligible for BSBP/MRS.

## **If an individual is interested in employment support only, can that individual receive SE?**

No. If an individual only needs employment supports, that individual will not be eligible for CMHSP services. There must be a more significant impairment related to the individual's disability.

## **Planning for Employment**

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### **How does the Person-Centered Planning (PCP) process and the VR planning for employment process work together?**

The PCP process begins when someone enters CMHSP services. The plan is reviewed regularly and updated when needed (at a minimum, annually). The plan indicates the choices an individual makes regarding their services, including employment.

In the majority of situations, when an individual is interested in working, he/she is referred to a SE program. The SE team (CMHSP provider, employment specialist, CMH case manager and VR counselor) work with the individual on the PCP employment goal, developing a vocational profile that further describes the individual's preferences, strengths, support needs and skills pertaining to employment. The PCP, along with the vocational profile, can provide the VR counselor with a great deal of information to use in the development of the customer's IPE. When an individual is receiving SE services from a collaborative team, they all work together with the individual to achieve the employment goal. This collaborative relationship often offers individuals a host of resources not otherwise available to the individual.

In other situations, an individual may not choose SE services via the CMHSP, or they may not be available. The case manager may refer this individual directly to BSBP/MRS or he/she may choose to self-refer. Similar to above, the PCP can be part of the referral packet that the CMHSP caseworker prepares for the VR counselor when they make a referral. If possible, it is helpful for the VR counselor to attend PCP meetings when invited by the person served. When this

type of coordination is practiced, the customer's IPE can flow out of the PCP process.

**Is every customer dually eligible for CMHSP and MRS or BSBP required to participate in a work evaluation?**

No. All eligible VR customers receive a vocational needs assessment that determines the goals, nature and scope of rehabilitation services to be included in the IPE. Work evaluations in integrated settings including community-based work experiences or on-the-job evaluation may be provided on an individualized basis but are not automatically required.

**How do VR counselors work with customers receiving SE services to select job goals?**

Selecting job goals is a process and is ultimately between the customer and the VR counselor. Customers that are receiving SE services also may rely on their caseworker for advice regarding job goal selection. Job goals are selected taking into consideration an individual's interests, abilities, capabilities, priorities, concerns, strengths, resources and informed choice. In addition, VR counselors provide labor market information to make sure that customers are preparing for jobs that are available in the community in which they live.

**Can customers who are receiving SE receive more VR services than just job coaching and job placement?**

Yes, the full range of vocational services is available and considered to determine what services will be necessary to assist the individual to achieve their job goal.

**Does the number of hours per week that a customer is planning on working need to be specified in the IPE?**

Yes. The goal of SE is that each individual works as many hours as they can. The IPE should reflect the number of hours per week that is appropriate and the individual prefers. Many VR counselors specify a range of hours such as 15-20.

Remember that the IPE is just that - an Individualized PLAN for Employment. Planning is extensive at the beginning including assessing and targeting the number of hours per week that an individual can and prefers to work. As no one can predict the future, IPEs have amendments to allow for changes when an actual job is found. If the targeted number of hours identified in the IPE needs to be changed, a plan amendment can be completed.

**Why is VR SE services only to last 18 months, and can services last longer than 18 months if the customer needs additional time?**

RSA directs VR to provide SE services for a period not to exceed 18 months, unless under special circumstances (additional services are needed for a specific period of time). If the individual has made substantial progress toward meeting the hours per week work goal specified in the IPE and a longer period of time is needed to achieve job stabilization, the 18 months can be extended. When this is the case, the IPE should be amended to reflect the additional services that are needed for job stabilization.

**Does Extended Services (long-term follow-along) always need to be a part of an IPE for an individual receiving SE?**

Yes. An IPE must include a provision for appropriate long-term follow-along services and “other appropriate services” after the VR case file is closed. Those long-term services are typically provided by a State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer or any other appropriate resource from funds other than SE funds. “Other appropriate services” includes:

- Any particular assessments needed to supplement the comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs;
- Service provision by skilled job trainers who accompany the individual for intensive job-skills training at the work site;
- Job development and placement;
- Social skills training;
- Regular observation or supervision of the individual;

- Follow-up services such as regular contact with the employers, the individuals, the parents, family members, guardians, advocates or authorized representatives of the individuals, And/or other suitable professional and informed advisors, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement; and
- Facilitation of natural supports at the worksite.

**What should a VR counselor do when they are not sure how Extended Services will be provided at the time that the IPE is developed?**

In instances where a provider for long-term follow-along cannot be identified at the time the IPE is developed, a statement should be included in the IPE explaining the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that services will become available.

**If a customer is interested in pursuing self-employment, can SE funds be utilized to provide the necessary services and supports to achieve that job goal?**

Yes. Both BSBP and MRS can use SE funds to assist customers to achieve successful microenterprises or self-employment ventures on an individualized basis.

## **Employment**

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**What is considered competitive employment?**

BSBP, MRS, and MDCH all have the same definition of competitive employment, which is:

Work performed on a full- or part-time basis, in an integrated setting for which the individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.

## **What constitutes an integrated employment setting?**

A setting typically found in the community at which the individual with the most severe disabilities interacts with non-disabled individuals, other than non-disabled individuals who are providing services to that individual, to the same extent that non-disabled individuals in comparable positions interact with other persons.

Self-employment, home-based employment, telecommuting, and other forms of employment in which individuals communicate regularly from separate locations satisfy this requirement for an integrated setting as long as it meets the definition of competitive employment.

RSA has determined that settings established specifically for the purpose of employing individuals with disabilities (e.g. sheltered workshops) do not constitute integrated settings since there are no comparable settings for non-disabled workers.

## **What constitutes Transitional Employment that is used in SE?**

Transitional employment is a series of temporary job placements in an integrated work setting with ongoing support services for individuals with the most severe disabilities due to mental illness. In transitional employment, the provision of ongoing support services must include continuing sequential job placements until job permanency is achieved.

In situations where multiple placements are needed for SE customers, VR can provide time-limited transitional employment services until job stability is achieved. After transition, any additional placements needed until job permanency is achieved are the responsibility of the Extended Service Provider.

Prevocational services involve the provision of learning and work experiences where a beneficiary can develop general, non-job-task-specific strengths and skills that contribute to employability in paid employment in integrated, community settings. Services are expected to occur over a defined period of time and provided in sufficient amount and scope to achieve the outcome, as determined by the

beneficiary and his/her care-planning team in the ongoing PCP process. Services are expected to specifically involve strategies that enhance a beneficiary's employability in integrated, community settings. Competitive employment or SE are considered successful outcomes of prevocational services. However, participation in prevocational services is not a required prerequisite for competitive employment or receiving SE services.

### **What constitutes a SE “successful outcome?”**

#### BSBP

An individual who is determined rehabilitated has, at a minimum, maintained, for a period of 90 days, an employment outcome that is:

- The result of services provided under the individual's IPE;
- Commensurate with the individual's abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice;
- In the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the individual's informed choice; and
- The individual and the counselor/teacher agree that the employment outcome is satisfactory and that the individual is performing well on the job.

#### MRS

When individuals are in SE, MRS closes cases positively when:

- The customer maintains a SE placement for a minimum of 90 days after making the transition to extended services, and employment is competitive employment in an integrated setting; or
- The individual is working toward competitive employment and is in an integrated work setting; or
- The individual is part of a work group of no more than eight employees with disabilities and regularly interacts with individuals who do not have disabilities, including the general public, while performing job duties; and
- There is confirmation of extended follow-along services after MRS closes the individual's case by a third party identified in the IPE.

## MDCH

MDCH views SE as a **service** (not an outcome) that assists individuals in attaining their goal of employment.

A successful employment outcome is one that is determined in the individual's PCP.

The preferred outcome for individuals served is one of competitive/integrated employment; however, as stated above, the PCP will determine what the individual's choice is regarding their employment goal and status.

### **Can BSBP or MRS count a positive employment outcome when customers are employed in enclaves?**

Yes. An SE outcome is defined as gainful work in an integrated setting with the maximum number of hours possible based on the individual's unique strengths, resources, interests, concerns, abilities and capabilities.

SE is not work therapy or work activity, and requires competitive wage, except in circumstances in which the individual is working towards competitive wage and has a reasonable expectation of achieving competitive wage.

This definition includes group job placements in enclaves of no more than 8 workers in integrated employment settings.

If the enclave position is in an integrated setting and the wage is at least minimum wage with benefits commensurate with the non-disabled employees, a successful closure can be taken.

### **Can VR count a positive employment outcome when customers are employed under deviated wage arrangements?**

## BSBP

No. Sheltered workshops, piece-rate employment or deviated wage jobs are not considered competitive employment.

## MRS

In rare occurrences individuals can be placed in jobs providing income below the legal minimum wage if the:

- Job is in an integrated setting;
- Position is suitable and consistent with the job goal identified in the IPE;
- Position conforms to government wage and hour regulations; and
- The involved wage is commensurate with the individual's production rate.

When a deviated wage is being utilized, the employer must obtain wage-deviation certification.

## MDCH

No. Sheltered workshops, piece-rate employment or deviated wage jobs are not considered competitive employment.

However, if the wage for the specific industry is one where piece-rate is the standard, then an individual earning at this level is considered to be competitively employed.

## **Are there a minimum number of hours per week that a person needs to obtain to be considered a successful SE outcome?**

SE promotes placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible, based on the unique strengths, resources, interests, concerns, abilities and capabilities of the individual. There is no minimum number of hours required for an individual to receive SE services. The number of hours per week that an individual works is determined on an individualized basis.

## MDCH

In the case of working in a competitive job, it is the individual's choice to work as few or as many hours as is consistent with their preferences which are identified in their PCP.

**I have heard CMH and VR use the terms ‘Supported Employment’ and ‘employment with supports’ differently, can you define the terms?**

SE is defined in question #2. An individual can benefit from employment with supports such as job coaching, have significant, long term supports and not be a SE customer.

**What is Customized Employment (CE) and are there differences between CE and SE?**

The term CE can be used to describe a model to assist individuals in finding employment. SE is a program funded by Federal dollars and sometimes local ICTAs to assist eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities in obtaining employment. A customer who receives SE may also benefit from a CE strategy.

CE is “individualizing the employment relationship between employees and employers in ways that meet the needs of both. It is based on an individualized determination of the strengths, needs, and interests of the person with a disability, and is also designed to meet the specific needs of the employer. It may include employment developed through job carving, self-employment, or entrepreneurial initiatives, or other job development or restructuring strategies that result in job responsibilities being customized and individually negotiated to fit the needs of individuals with a disability. CE assumes the provision of reasonable accommodations and supports necessary for the individual to perform the functions of a job that is individually negotiated and developed” (Federal Register, June 26, 2002, Vol. 67, No. 123 pp. 43154-43149).

## **Extended Services (Follow-Along)**

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**What constitutes Extended (Long-Term) Follow-Along Services?**

After a customer receiving SE services has stabilized on their job and VR has closed the case, Extended Services must be provided.

Extended Services means ongoing support services that are needed to support and maintain a customer in SE. These services are:

- Needed to support an individual with the most significant disabilities to maintain their job,
- Delineated in the IPE,
- Provided by VR up until the time that the customer transitions into Extended Services, and
- Provided by an Extended Service Provider after VR closes the case.

Specifically Extended Services:

- Must include, at minimum, twice-monthly monitoring at the work site of each individual in SE to assess employment stability,
- Or under special circumstances, (especially at the request of the individual), can be provided by off-site monitoring which must, at a minimum, consist of two meetings with the individual and one contact with the employer each month, and
- Can include natural supports.

Extended Services may consist of:

- Any particularized assessment needed to supplement the comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs;
- The provision of skilled job trainers who accompany the individual for intensive job skill training at the work site;
- Job development and placement;
- Social skills training;
- Regular observation or supervision of the individual;
- Follow-up services such as regular contact with the individual, employers, parents or other family members, guardians, advocates or authorized representatives of the individual, and/or other suitable professional and informed advisors, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement;
- Facilitation of natural supports at the worksite; and
- Any other service identified in the scope of rehabilitation services.

## **What are “natural supports” and can natural supports be used as the Extended Services that are part of SE?**

Natural supports refers to utilizing the natural work environment for support through social integration by connecting customers with others in the work setting in ways that will be self-sustaining for the individual. The goal for the customer is to belong socially and be fully integrated in their work environment and as a result, receive natural supports. Examples of natural supports include carpooling or job training provided by a co-worker.

Natural supports can be identified as the method where long-term follow-along services will be provided. In cases where natural supports will be utilized, the IPE should specify how natural supports will be provided.

## **How does MDCH provide Extended Support Services? Can they differ from CMHSP to CMHSP?**

Long-term follow-along services vary from customer to customer but should not vary from provider to provider. If long-term supports are identified as a need, each CMHSP must determine how those services will be funded and provided, consistent with known standards.

## **Can BSBP or MRS provide post-employment services to customers receiving SE?**

Yes. Post-Employment Services that are non-complex and short in duration can be provided by VR if the support that a customer needs is not available from the Extended Support Service provider. Typical post-employment services include supports to intervene when a customer’s job is in jeopardy.

## **Acronyms**

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ABW – Adult Benefits Waiver

BSBP – Bureau of Services for Blind Persons

BSBPTC – Bureau of Services for Blind Persons Training Center

CE – Customized Employment  
CMH – Community Mental Health  
CMHSP – Community Mental Health Services Provider  
CRO – Community Rehabilitation Program  
DHS – Department of Human Services  
DSM – Diagnostic and Statistical Manual  
EBSE – Evidenced Based Supported Employment  
ICTA – Interagency Cash Transfer Agreement  
IPE – Individualized Plan for Employment  
ISD – Intermediate School District  
MCTI – Michigan Career and Technical Institute  
MDCH – Michigan Department of Community Health  
MRS – Michigan Rehabilitation Services  
OSS – Order of Selection for Services  
PCP – Person-Centered Plan  
PIHP – Prepaid Inpatient Health Plans  
ROI – Return on Investment  
RSA – Rehabilitation Services Administration  
SAMHSA – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services  
Administration  
SE – Supported Employment  
SSDI – Social Security Disability Insurance  
SSI – Supplemental Security Income  
VR – Vocational Rehabilitation

## **Contacts**

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**BSBP** [www.michigan.gov/BSBP](http://www.michigan.gov/BSBP)

**MRS** [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs)

**MDCH** [www.michigan.gov/mdch](http://www.michigan.gov/mdch)