

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

Michigan Rehabilitation Services: the employment resource nobody mentions

Michigan Rehabilitation Services is federally mandated to provide free employment services to people with disabilities, autism included, starting years before graduation. Most families never hear the name until it's almost too late to use it well.

BY JIM PALASTY · 13 MIN READ · FREE HELP MOST FAMILIES DON'T KNOW TO ASK FOR

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THE AGE PRE-ETS STARTS

Vocational rehab services most families never hear about start years before graduation, not after.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

Pre-Employment Transition Services begin

Available to students 14 to 21, still enrolled in school, at no cost to the family.



STEP 2

MRS builds an Individualized Plan for Employment

A VR counselor works with your family member to define a specific employment goal and the services to reach it.



STEP 3

Job coaching and follow-along continue into adulthood

Support doesn't end at hire date. Long-term follow-along keeps the placement stable.

MRS programs worth knowing by name

Pre-ETS	Transition services for students 14-21 still in school
Project SEARCH	Internship-based transition training in real business settings
MCTI	Michigan Career and Technical Institute residential training
Ticket to Work	Connects to employment networks while protecting SSI/Medicaid
Customized employment	Jobs developed around an individual's specific strengths

THE COUNSELOR WHO SAID "NOT APPROPRIATE"

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Vincent's family hadn't heard of MRS until a school transition coordinator mentioned it in his final semester, years later than ideal. A VR counselor initially suggested Vincent "wasn't quite ready" for services. His mother asked directly what specific criteria he failed to meet and requested it in writing. The eligibility determination was reversed within two weeks.

"NOT APPROPRIATE" IS AN OPINION. A WRITTEN, SPECIFIC ELIGIBILITY CRITERION IS SOMETHING YOU CAN ACTUALLY RESPOND TO.

What matters, at a glance

MICHIGAN SPECIFIC

Pre-Employment Transition Services

Job exploration counseling, work-based learning, workplace readiness training, and self-advocacy instruction for students 14 to 21.

Job coaching and supported employment

Job search support, on-the-job training, employer communication, and long-term follow-along once employed.

Benefits counseling

Fear of losing SSI or Medicaid stops more families from pursuing employment than any actual rule does. Benefits counseling explains work incentives like 1619(b) before that fear derails the plan.

Named programs worth knowing

Project SEARCH, Michigan Career and Technical Institute, Ticket to Work, and customized employment all operate under or alongside MRS.

No cost to the family

MRS is federally mandated vocational rehabilitation. Families are not billed for eligible services.

Assistive technology

MRS can fund devices and assessments specifically tied to an employment goal, not just general daily living needs.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

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|---|--|
| ☐ Disability documentation for the application | ☐ School IEP or transition plan records |
| ☐ A specific employment goal to discuss at intake | ☐ Questions about Pre-ETS, Project SEARCH, and Ticket to Work |
| ☐ A written eligibility determination if services are denied | |

YOUR MOVE

When you're ready to access MRS, here is the process in order

- 1 Find your local MRS office by county online.
- 2 Complete the application with disability documentation.
- 3 Attend intake for eligibility determination.
- 4 Develop an Individualized Plan for Employment with your VR counselor.
- 5 Coordinate MRS with school transition services and CMH.
- 6 Request benefits counseling before the first paycheck arrives.

MRS is free, federally mandated, and years from being fully used by most families who qualify for it. The application is the hardest part, and it's genuinely not that hard.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

choosework.ssa.gov · <https://choosework.ssa.gov>
projectsearch.us · <https://www.projectsearch.us>

Informational only. Not legal or medical advice. Verify current program rules before acting.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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