

TRANSITION PATHWAY SERVICES

JULY 2018 | ISSUE 1

WWW.EXPLOREVR.ORG/TRANSITION-PATHWAY-SERVICES-PROJECT



TPS Staff Left to Right: Jill Richard, Jennifer Stewart, Teri Koopman, Aisha Nakazibwe, & Alecia McNish

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A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM COMMISSIONER TONI WOLF

Implementation is in full swing and it has been fantastic to watch the Transition Pathway Services (TPS) Grant in the Roxbury, Lawrence and Springfield Area Offices work with students. The students participating in this grant project have significant disabilities and are benefiting from a coordinated approach to transition planning while still in school. I was excited to learn MRC had obtained this demonstration grant that focuses on innovation, partnerships and creative team planning for employment success.

LEARN ABOUT TRANSITION PATHWAY SERVICES STAFF

Jill Richard, Roxbury TPS VR Counselor

Jill has worked as a vocational counselor at MRC Roxbury for over 12 years. Her primary focus is working with transition-aged youth and the local school districts. She is passionate about supporting students and families through the transition from high school to post-secondary education and employment by encouraging students to find the path that best suits them.

The TPS Counselors, Area Office staff, schools and community partners are learning how to embrace and explore the TPS Career Discovery Team Model as a new way to support students in moving toward their vision for employment and/or post-secondary education.

The concept of the Career Discovery Team embraces an integrated team approach to thinking about resources and opportunities for students. I believe this is the future for supporting people with disabilities by providing comprehensive services.

Moving forward, I hope to see more partners come on board with the TPS grant project and reach out to other MRC Area Offices with goals of collaboration.

Thank you to all who have been involved.

Toni Wolf
MRC Commissioner



" I believe this is the future for supporting people with disabilities by providing comprehensive services."

— TONI WOLF,
MRC COMMISSIONER

Transition Pathway Services uses a Career Discovery Support Team to coordinate transition services that...



ABOUT THE TRANSITION PATHWAY SERVICES (TPS) DEMONSTRATION GRANT

The Transition Pathway Services (TPS) demonstration grant is funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The goal of the TPS demonstration grant is to improve competitive integrated employment and post-secondary enrollment outcomes for students with significant disabilities age 16 to 22 years through an enhanced transition service model that coordinates vocational rehabilitation services and strategies with high school career planning and business engagement strategies.

The services provided through the TPS demonstration grant are:

- Vocational Counseling
- Career Assessment
- Work Readiness Training
- Assistive Technology
- Transportation Coordination
- Benefits Counseling
- Family Support Transition Planning
- Peer Mentoring
- Customized Job Placement
- Work Experience (at least one paid)

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Aisha Nakazibwe, Lawrence TPS VR Counselor

Aisha has worked as a Senior Vocational Counselor for TPS project since May 2017. Before joining MRC, she worked for more than four years as a VR Counselor II for New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation. Additionally, she worked as an Independent Living Specialist with Northeast Independent Living Center. Aisha states, "I love my job and working with individuals with disabilities because as a person with a disability, I have utilized these services and if it weren't for VR services, I wouldn't be where I am today. I'm grateful for the guidance I received from all my VR counselors over the years."

Students enrolled in the TPS demonstration project must receive eight out of the ten services provided. The TPS model will use work-based learning experience activities for each participating student with a disability according to their abilities, skills, needs, choices, interests, and local opportunities. Innovative features of the design include a coordinated team approach, rapid entry into service, close person-environment fit into work experiences, and close collaboration with both employers and peer mentors.



Jill Richard with TPS Students and OFCCP Personnel

TPS STUDENTS ATTEND OFCCP JOB FAIR

In May, students enrolled in the Transition Pathway Services Project attended the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) job fair at the Massachusetts State House. The OFCCP job fair gave employers the opportunity to discuss with the students their career goals and interests. The students learned about federal careers, as well as vital job search skills such as networking, informational interviewing, and company research.

Attending job fairs allows students to gain confidence in presenting their skills the more they engage with different employers.

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Alecia McNish, Springfield TPS VR Counselor

Alecia has over nine years of experience working within the human service field. She has worked in a variety of roles including vocational counseling, case management, and direct care. She is enthusiastic about working with transition-aged youth due to the tremendous impact she can have during this critical stage of growth in the lives of young people.



Jill Richard, Roxbury TPS Counselor, stated, "After the first few interactions the students became more confident and based on feedback, were able to modify their presentation to the next employer. It was exciting to see the employers engaging with the students, treating them like professionals providing advice. By the time we left, the students had each spoken to almost every employer present."

" Individuals who attend job fairs gain an advantage over other job seekers because they learn about opportunities that may not be advertised. "

— JILL RICHARD,
TPS VR COUNSELOR

Exposure to a variety of employers and employment opportunities gives students an advantage over students that do not participate in job fairs.

Richard explains, "Individuals who attend job fairs gain an advantage over other job seekers because they learn about opportunities that may not be advertised or can open up opportunities for customized employment. When students are given access to this opportunity, they can test the job market and gain confidence in speaking with employers about their abilities, skills, and experience and asking questions related to the jobs which will help them better focus their post-secondary goals."

Job fairs are one of many employment learning opportunities provided to students through the TPS grant project. The OFCCP job fair was a success due to the collaborative teamwork of Jill Richard, Roxbury TPS Coordinator and Teri Koopman, Transportation Coordinator.

LEARN ABOUT TRANSITION PATHWAY SERVICES STAFF

Teri Koopman, Transportation & Community Partnership Coordinator

Teri has 30 years of experience working in the human service sector, both domestically and internationally. Her expertise includes working with diverse populations with an array of issues from refugees, internally displaced, children's advocacy, emergency response, corporate social responsibility, and employment. Throughout her career she has worked closely with Native American and Latino communities. In the past 5 years, she worked as a Travel Training Coordinator at Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA) where she assisted seniors and individuals with disabilities in riding public transportation safely and independently.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Building strong community partnerships is a vital component of the TPS project. We have formed partnerships with three Independent Living Centers—the Northeast Independent Living Program, Stavros, and the Boston Center for Independent Living—to assist with peer mentoring. The Federation for Children with Special Needs is helping us with family support transition planning. Career centers (Valley Works, Future Works, Boston Career Link) and pre-employment transition services vendors have helped us to develop work-based learning experiences.

We also have partnered with over a dozen school districts and high schools to coordinate and implement services. Finally, we have partnered with the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston to assist with program evaluation.

KEYS TO SUCCESS: PARTNERSHIPS & ACCESS IN MULTIPLE AREAS

MRC’s dedicated TPS VR Counselors serve students in the catchment areas and neighboring towns and cities. The list below is where you can find TPS services:

Roxbury	Lawrence	Springfield
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hyde Park Dorchester Roxbury Mattapan South End of Boston 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amesbury Andover Boxford Bradford Byfield Georgetown Groveland Haverhill Lawrence Merrimac Methuen Newbury Newburyport North Andover Rowley Salisbury West Newbury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agawam Blandford Chester East Longmeadow Feeding Hills Granville Hampden Huntington Longmeadow Montgomery Russell Southwick Springfield Tolland West Springfield Westfield Wilbraham



TPS End Notes

The TPS Staff would like to express our gratitude for all the support from our community partners and MRC colleagues for making the past ten months of the TPS project a success. The last few pages of this newsletter include some of our key accomplishments.

We have completed a recruitment video including TPS project information on the ExploreVR website:
<https://www.explorevr.org/transition-pathway-services-project>

Additionally, we are recruiting young adults for our Youth Advisory Board. Please check the last page of the newsletter for more details.

Transition Pathway Services Recruitment Video



Austin Carr, MRC TPS advisory board member, filming TPS recruitment video.

Did You Know?

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission is one of five state vocational rehabilitation agencies awarded the Disability Innovation Fund - Transition Work-Based Learning Model Demonstrations grant from Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The other states awarded include California, Maine, Maryland, and Vermont.

EARLY NUMBERS: TPS BEGINNINGS

A summary of 2018 early milestones shows that all three MRC Area Offices are making progress with enrolling students in the TPS Project and working toward the overall recruitment goal.* Additionally, students enrolled in the project have received a variety of work experiences, which include paid employment.

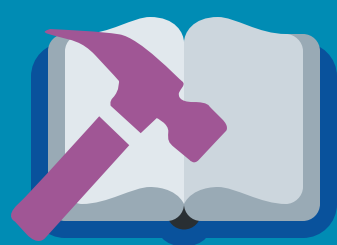


TOTAL STUDENTS ENROLLED

93 TPS students have enrolled during the first ten months. Early enrollees are youth across racial and ethnic groups, are more likely to be young men (69%) and have learning disabilities (53%) or developmental disabilities (23%).

TOP 3 MOST FREQUENTLY PROVIDED SERVICES

The most frequently provided TPS service was vocational counseling with 50 students served. 38 students received peer mentoring, and 15 students received benefits counseling.



WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES (WBLE)

15 students have completed their first WBLE including as Sales Associates, Student Interns/Admin Assistants or Student Artists.

ABOUT WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES (WBLE)

8 WBLEs were paid with an average wage of \$11 per hour. Most students spent 6-16 hours per week at WBLE.



LEARN MORE ABOUT TPS

Please visit:
<https://www.explorevr.org/transition-pathway-services-project>



*Data last updated July 9, 2018



Gain research experience! Serve on a youth disability advisory board.

The Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston is looking for **young adults with disabilities** who work or attend college to help with a project that prepares youth with disabilities for college and jobs after they leave high school.

We're looking for new board members who...

- Are 18 to 22 years old
- Have completed high school and are either working or in college
- Are engaged with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (or have in the past)
- Are interested in conducting research
- Can commit to joining this effort for at least 6 months
- Live in the Boston metro area and can participate in in-person meetings

You'll get a chance to...

- Experience first-hand what it's like to be part of a professional research team
- Learn about every aspect of evaluation research--the kind of experience most people don't get until graduate school!

Here's more about how it'll work.

- You'll participate in 3 board meetings, either in person or remotely. Each 2-hour meeting will be facilitated by one of our researchers, and will focus on a different issue related to the project.
- You'll be reimbursed for your time (up to \$200.00 gift card), as well as for any project-related travel expenses.

Interested in joining us, or have questions? Get in touch:

Tracy Beard, Research Assistant | Tracy.Beard001@umb.edu

Disability accommodations will be provided upon request

www.mass.gov/service-details/transition-pathway-services



This effort is part of the Transition Pathway Services Project, run by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC). The Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston is partnering with MRC to conduct research to evaluate the effectiveness of this project.