



**Employer-Based-Transition Training
and
Project SEARCH
Handbook**

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Introduction and Program Overview

Employer-Based-Transition Training/Project SEARCH (EBTT/PS) programs are one-year school-to-work transition training programs for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) eligible youth (age 18-21) with a variety of intellectual and developmental disabilities who meet the VR criteria for most significant disabilities (MSD). Youth must be enrolled in a public school district that has an approved EBTT/PS program, must have completed credits necessary for high school graduation, be in their final year of high school, and have a goal of attaining competitive integrated employment.

EBTT/PS programs are a collaboration of required partners at the local level, which includes the host business, a special education teacher/certified instructor (school district), a VR counselor (VRC), and an employment/job development specialist from a community rehabilitation provider (CRP).

EBTT/PS programs are typically hosted in a healthcare, government or business setting where total immersion in the workplace facilitates the teaching and learning process, as well as the acquisition of employability and marketable job skills. Youth participate in one to three internships/rotations (based on program requirements) in various departments within a host business over the course of one school year. There is no expectation for the host business to hire, and the host business is not obligated to offer youth an employment opportunity before, during or after the training program has been completed.

Training milestones are based on individual interests, skills, and abilities, as well as a local labor market analysis of jobs within the local community. In addition to on-site training provided by the host business, program services include career exploration, employability skills training, benefits counseling, job development, job placement, job supports, and retention services to assist the youth in maintaining a successful employment outcome.

EBTT/PS programs are not based on financial need. However, any secondary services provided in association with these programs are based on VR agency financial guidelines, and appropriate documentation is required in the VR case file.

A local memorandum of understanding/agreement (MOU/MOA) outlining each partner's roles/responsibilities and individual program objectives is required for each EBTT/PS site. The MOU/MOA must be signed by a designee from each required partner prior to program implementation. The signed MOU/MOA will remain in effect unless terminated. Significant amendments, such as required partner changes, will require an updated and signed MOU/MOA.

Program Objectives

The goal of EBTT/PS is competitive, integrated employment in a job that is at least 20 hours per week, based upon the individual's unique strengths, skills/abilities, interests and skill progression.

Although skill acquisition will vary depending upon the youth's specific disability and support needs, the objective is for each youth to meet the training and performance expectations of the host business by building upon existing employability skills through a progression or layering of job skills learned during training throughout the year.

Selection Process

VR eligible youth are selected for the EBTT/PS program by the partner team (including school, CRP, VR, host business) through a comprehensive, competitive application and interview process. A representative of each entity will have input in youth selection. Youth will have existing pre-vocational skills but require additional work experience to enhance their employability.

After the youth has been selected to participate in the EBTT/PS Program, a vocational goal will be identified based on school district assessments which identify their interests, skills, and abilities, the VRC comprehensive assessment of the youth's rehabilitation needs, and a local labor market analysis of jobs.

Program Requirements

- The purpose of the program is to maximize the potential of the youth referred and to enhance abilities while training for careers.
- The age of the participant will be 18-21, and the youth must have completed four years of high school and require continued services to meet transition goals.
- This program will be considered participants' fifth and final year of school (VR cannot fund fourth-year students). They will graduate upon completion of the program.
- Youth must be classified as MSD.
- Youth must be eligible for Regional Office or SB40 follow-along funding, or the CRP must agree to provide follow-along supports without funding.
- Youth should NOT have a history of successful competitive integrated employment. Questions regarding this should be referred to the VR district supervisor and/or regional manager.
- If youth should obtain competitive integrated employment prior to the start of the program, they would no longer meet eligibility requirements.
- Youth and parents must want to pursue competitive integrated employment upon completion of the program.
- Benefits counseling should be included as a portion of the onboarding process and continued throughout the training program.
- Youth and family must have viable options for transportation to the employment setting and a plan identified for continued transportation upon completion of the program.
- Youth must be willing to follow the guidelines of the host business.
- A **Work Readiness Inventory** will be completed by the individual at the referring school district who best knows the youth and be provided to the VRC upon application to the program.
- Youth must maintain at least 90% attendance in the program, or a team meeting will be held to decide if the program is the appropriate placement for the youth.
- Youth must demonstrate progression of skills or the milestone can't be paid by VR.

Program FAQ

May multiple school districts participate in a single EBTT/PS program?

Yes, multiple school districts may send students to an EBTT/PS program site. However, one school district must take the lead and agree to be the fiscal agent for the program.

May multiple host businesses participate in a single EBTT/PS program?

The EBTT/PS program is designed to approximate an actual work experience to encourage and promote youths' total immersion into the culture of the host business. An additional host business should only be added if it is directly connected to the primary host site, has a similar culture, and allows for a continuation of the program's immersion into the work culture of both businesses. An example would be businesses that were connected by a breezeway or that provided a similar service within the immediate vicinity.

Selection FAQ

Who should be referred to the EBTT/PS program?

Based upon the VRC comprehensive assessment, youth who are in need of an additional 9 months of training and support beyond what is offered in traditional SE are appropriate candidates for this program. If the youth would benefit from SE immediately, it is unnecessary for them to participate in the 9 month program and delay obtaining competitive integrated employment. EBTT/PS is designed for youth age 18-21 who have completed their graduation requirements and are in their final year of high school.

When should the intake for VR services be completed?

Ideally, the intake should occur prior to the end of the school year to allow the VRC to determine if the youth meets the criteria for the program. However, once a youth has been selected by the team, including the VRC who has reviewed documentation to determine eligibility for VR services, the intake may be completed the summer before the beginning of the EBTT/PS program.

What about a youth who has started and/or completed Discovery and Exploration prior to being considered?

If a youth has completed D/E and has been determined job ready, they would not be appropriate for this program.

What happens if a youth has started Discovery and Exploration and is then identified as appropriate for EBTT/PS?

Discovery and Exploration should be placed on hold while the team determines if the EBTT/PS program would be an appropriate alternative.

If a youth completed Discovery and Exploration and employment was not recommended, can they be recommended to EBTT/PS?

A meeting should be held by the team to determine if this program would be appropriate based on the recommendations of the D/E report.

May a youth participate in a Summer Work Experience program and EBTT/PS?

No, potential EBTT/PS youth would not be candidates for the Summer Work Experience. EBTT/PS is designed to be an intensive, nine-month training program for youth who are not yet ready for competitive integrated employment. The structured experience and skill development the youth will gain through the EBTT/PS program are similar to those achieved through the Summer Work Experience. Any requests for an exception must be approved by the regional manager team.

Is it ok to go for a site visit or tour (youth, teacher and/or parents) before selection?

Absolutely! A site visit or tour is strongly encouraged for all interested parties. This must be set up through the school district liaison.

Is there an interview for the program?

There may be an interview or a confidential data review to help establish potential eligibility for the program.

Referrals for Benefits Counseling

Benefits counseling should be a part of every youth's EBTT/PS program. Discussion of the impact of employment on benefits should begin before the start of the program and as changes in benefits occur (i.e. changing from disabled child benefits to adult disability benefits). A referral may be made to a benefit specialist in order to understand how SSI and/or SSDI benefits might be affected by employment earnings.

Benefits Counseling FAQ

When should benefits counseling begin?

Benefits counseling should begin prior to acceptance into the program and can be updated during the life of the case based upon benefit changes.

What community resources are available for benefits counseling?

***DB 101** is a website that can be used by the youth and family or the CRP provider to get basic benefit information. The website may be accessed at: <https://mo.db101.org/>*

***Mo P&A WIPA (Work Incentives Planning and Assistance)** services are provided by trained community work incentives coordinators (CWICs). WIPA is not an employment agency; but provides detailed information about work and benefits to assist SSDI and SSI beneficiaries in their efforts to become self-sufficient. For questions about how work affects benefits and to request WIPA services in your local area, please contact the Ticket to Work Hotline at 866-968-7842. Additional information is available at: <http://www.moadvocacy.org/>*

Paraquad's Show me Employment Project (WIPA): To participate in the Show Me Employment Project, you must meet the following requirements:

- Receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Live in the Show Me Employment Project service area (see list below).
- Be 14 years of age or older.
- Be currently working or engaging in self-employment, or be actively pursuing employment or self-employment

SERVICE AREA: Paraquad's Show Me Employment Project serves the city of St. Louis and the following Missouri counties: Audrain, Bollinger, Butler, Callaway, Cape Girardeau, Carter, Crawford, Dent, Dunklin, Franklin, Gasconade, Howell, Iron, Lincoln, Jefferson, Madison, Maries, Mississippi, Monroe, Montgomery, New Madrid, Oregon, Osage, Pemiscot, Perry, Phelps, Pike, Pulaski, Ralls, Ripley, St. Charles, St. Francois, St. Louis, Ste. Genevieve, Scott, Shannon, Stoddard, Texas, Warren, Washington and Wayne.

For more information about the Show Me Employment Project, contact Paraquad at (314) 289-4200 Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. If you need general information about the Ticket to Work or Social Security's work incentives, please contact the Help Line Monday-Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. (Central Time) at (866) 968-7842 (voice) or (866) 833-2967 (TTY).

Who is responsible for benefits counseling?

The VRC and/or CRP should be able to connect the youth and family with community resources that offer ongoing benefits counseling after case closure.

IPE (Individualized Plan for Employment)

The VRC will develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) with the youth prior to the start of services, in coordination with the goals and objectives listed in their Individual Education Program (IEP). The youth will have input regarding possible training sites within the Host Business. The IPE may be amended to a more specific employment goal as appropriate.

IPE FAQ

What planned services should be authorized on the IPE?

Planned services on the IPE should include the following Service Categories:

Job Readiness Training;
Job Search Assistance;
O- the-Job Supports (Short Term);
Pre-ETS: Counseling on Enrollment Opportunities;
Pre-ETS: Instruction in Self-advocacy;
Pre-ETS: Job Exploration Counseling;
Pre-ETS: Work-based Learning Experiences; and
Pre-ETS: Workplace Readiness Training.

Other planned services may also be added as appropriate (uniforms, transportation, background checks, certifications, immunizations, etc.) based upon VR financial guidelines.

Who should sign the IPE?

If the youth is their own guardian, and are over the age of 18, they may sign their own plan. If the youth is over 18 and has a guardian, the guardian must be in agreement and sign the plan.

What happens at the end of the EBTT/PS program if the intern has not obtained employment?

In the event the youth has not obtained employment by the end of the school year, the CRP is responsible for continued job development and providing on-the-job supports necessary for successful employment. The CRP may bill placement, 30-day retention, and 90-day successful employment outcome as outlined in the CRP Agreement. A quarterly staffing must occur if the youth has not obtained employment within 90 days of program completion.

What if a youth gets a job that does not match his/her employment goal?

An IPE with the amended job goal should be agreed upon by all parties involved. The job goal should be related to the specific job skills learned during the youth's EBTT/PS program.

Authorization

EBTT/PS programs are not based on financial need. However, any secondary services provided in association with these programs are based upon VR financial guidelines and appropriate documentation is required in the VR case file.

The VRC will develop an IPE with the youth, and the authorization will be issued prior to the start of services, in coordination with the goals and objectives listed in the youth's Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Services will be authorized and fees made payable to the participating CRP in accordance with the six milestones.

Authorization FAQ

Can job coaching be authorized in addition to EBTT/PS milestones?

No, on-the-job supports are already included in the existing fee structure.

What happens if the youth chooses not to continue working with the EBTT/PS provider after completion of the program?

A staffing will be held to discuss the situation. If the VRC agrees it is appropriate to move forward with a new CRP, all the information collected in the EBTT/PS program will be shared with the new provider at that time. The VRC may determine which of the ES milestones of ES placement, ES 30-day retention, and ES 90-day successful employment outcome (payable after successful closure) to authorize.

Transportation

Transportation details should be arranged and agreed upon prior to the start of the program. Some programs may require the youth to provide their own transportation to and from the EBTT/PS site. Transportation may also be provided to the EBTT/PS site by the school district. Once the youth has obtained employment, the youth and family are responsible for arranging transportation.

A comprehensive plan should be in place that includes available resources and transportation options after completion of EBTT/PS program. The school district **is not responsible** for transportation after the youth completes the program and/or begins in paid employment.

Transportation FAQ

Can a youth be transported by family to the training site?

With prior approval by the sending school district, alternate modes of transportation may be considered (family, metro, city bus, etc.).

Is the school district responsible for providing transportation during the program?

The IEP team will determine if transportation is required as a related service.

Can VR pay for transportation during the EBTT/PS program?

No. However, once employment is secured, other comparable services will be explored.

Uniforms/Clothing/Other Services

Uniforms, required certifications, and other financially based services are the responsibility of the youth and family unless the youth meets VR financial guidelines. Services must be outlined on the IPE and authorized **PRIOR** to purchase.

Billing/Payments

Payments for the first three milestones are based on the youth's successful acquisition and progression of skills identified through a task analysis, and the ability to meet the performance expectations of the host business.

1. Employer-Based-Transition Training #1: First Training Milestone

Requires 10 weeks of participation in the department

Documents required for CRP billing:

- EBTT/Project SEARCH Monthly Progress Report
- Milestone Billing Requirement Form

2. Employer-Based-Transition Training #2: Second Training Milestone

Requires 10 weeks of participation in the department

Documents required for CRP billing:

- EBTT/Project SEARCH Monthly Progress Report
- Job Development Plan
- Milestone Billing Requirement Form

3. Employer-Based-Transition Training #3: Third Training Milestone

Requires 8-10 weeks of participation in the department

Documents required for CRP billing:

- EBTT/Project SEARCH Monthly Progress Report
- Youth Resume
- Milestone Billing Requirement Form

4. Employer-Based-Transition Training #4: Job Placement

Documents required for CRP billing:

- The youth must have worked in an integrated competitive job for a minimum of three days. Billing documentation must include the Placement Letter and verification of three days of employment. Three days of employment must be verified by one of the following:
 1. A copy of the youth's pay stub(s), or
 2. A verification letter from the youth's employer, or
 3. Verification by the Work Number.
- Milestone Billing Requirement Form

5. Employer-Based-Transition Training #5: 30-Day Retention

Documents required for CRP billing:

- 30-Day Retention – payable after 30 days on the job with the same employer, receipt of the Monthly Progress Report and VRC verification with the youth, guardian, family member and/or employer.
- Milestone Billing Requirement Form

6. Employer-Based-Transition Training #6: Successful Employment Outcome

Documents required for CRP billing:

- Employment Outcome – payable upon successful employment outcome after 90 days on the job with receipt of the Employment Verification Form and VRC verification with the youth, guardian, family member and/or employer.
- Milestone Billing Requirement Form

See EBTT/Project SEARCH Monthly Progress Report and Employer-Based-Transition Training/Project Search Milestone Billing Requirements Form in **Forms/Attachments** section.

Billing/Payments FAQ

When can a CRP bill for successful 90-day employment outcome?

The youth must be employed and working successfully at least 90 days AND his/her case must be Closed-Rehabilitated by VR.

What if a youth is hired by the host business after the first or second milestone?

The case will move into employed status and can progress with placement, 30-day retention, and successful employment outcome milestone. No additional milestones may be billed.

What if a youth is hired by a different business (or offsite) after the first or second rotation?

The case will move into employed status and can progress with placement, 30-day retention, and successful employment outcome milestone. No additional milestones may be billed.

What if the youth drops out of the program during first or second milestone?

A staffing would be held to determine the appropriate VR service moving forward. If the youth has not completed a milestone, the CRP would not be paid for the milestone.

What if the youth is not positively progressing in the program?

A staffing will be held to discuss how to proceed.

What if the youth quits very early in the program? Can the school have a replacement? If so, is there a deadline?

No new starts will be allowed after October 1 of the current school year in order to allow the youth to obtain full benefit from the program. Any new starts must be approved by all partners prior to admission.

What if a graduate has lost their job after their VR case has been closed?

Additional services will be based on individualized needs and discussed with VRC.

What if a youth does not complete a milestone?

If the youth does not complete a milestone, there would be no payment for that milestone. This includes no pro rating or partial payments.

Any unusual circumstances should be discussed with the VR regional manager.

Retention Services

Retention services are provided by the CRP and/or Senate Bill 40 funding after VR services are complete. If the youth does not receive SB 40 funding for follow-along/retention services, the CRP must agree at the start of the EBTT/PS program to take responsibility for retention and follow-along duties.

Team Meetings

Monthly team meetings should be held to include the school district personnel, employment advisor (CRP), VRC/representative, and host business/site liaison. Other members may include the CRP site supervisor, VR district supervisor, host business HR representative, and other agencies/staff as appropriate.

Team meetings should address youth's progress in the program, and any concerns should be discussed with all team members at this time. Information reviewed should include progression of percentages, a review of hard and soft skills, any additions to the Task Analysis, and discussion about the continuation of positive progression through the program. If there are concerns that the youth is not making adequate positive progress, this will be the time to identify issues, brainstorm solutions, and develop strategies to support development of employment skills. This may include simulations of job tasks, assessments on new skills, job shadows or job site visits with transferable skills review, community resource exploration, and other strategies as appropriate.

Other partners may be invited to the meeting to help develop strategies to support each youth. This may include a school social worker, previous year teacher, and other resources as deemed appropriate.

Employer Evaluations

An employer evaluation should be completed once during each training milestone and is intended to review the youth's progress within the milestone. This evaluation is designed to capture honest feedback from the host business staff regarding progress of the youth. The members attending this meeting may include the VRC, CRP staff and/or teacher and will include the host business liaison and/or the mentor, or a representative from the business who is familiar with the progress of the youth if the mentor is not available. Use of the Employer Evaluation form is required prior to the end of each milestone.

Discussion of the youth's progression of skills and review of barriers and/or areas of improvement will be beneficial to support the continued progress of the youth in the program. This information may be used to target specific goals. The employer should be asked if they see the youth as a viable employee once they reach 80%. If not, they should be asked to help identify the youth's current strengths, what areas they need to improve, and the skills that still need to be developed.

The information gathered through the employer evaluation will be reviewed with the teacher and youth to develop strategies and accommodations that can inform the youth's progression of skills.

Best case practice: With the exception of the signature page, the host business liaison and/or the mentor should be provided with a blank Employer Evaluation form during each milestone and should not have access to information in previous evaluations.

See *Employer Evaluation in **Forms/Attachments** section.*

Youth Meetings

In addition to team meetings, the VRC should maintain monthly contact with the youth to discuss progression in the program, as well as any issues or concerns. This may also include observation of the youth while participating in work activities (if allowed). If necessary, additional staff meetings may be requested by the team to include youth and family, or to address behaviors or issues that have been identified by the mentor/department/classroom staff that require additional strategies or accommodations. These meetings should be documented in the AWARE case file.

Data Collection

Data must be collected at least once per week by CRP staff for reporting to VR. Data may be collected more often if deemed appropriate by program staff. The school district is required to collect data toward IEP goals.

The EBTT/PS Monthly Progress Report will be submitted to VR **monthly** and with each milestone billing. Substantial services provided by the CRP **must be** documented on this report.

Task Analysis (TA) skills should be added/modified if the youth struggles to progress in any particular area or if the youth has mastered tasks identified.

This information should be discussed in the Monthly Data Team meetings.

Data Collections FAQ

Who should be collecting data for the VR required data collection?

The CRP is responsible for collecting the data and identifying the substantial services the CRP has provided to the youth. This is documented on the EBTT/PS Monthly Progress Report.

Definitions

Business Site: Location of the program

Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP): A non-profit corporation that provides services for clients through an array of outcome based and fee-for-service options and is accredited by The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in the following areas: Community Employment Services, Job Development, and Employment Supports.

EBTT/PS: Employer-Based-Transition Training/Project SEARCH (EBTT/PS) programs are one-year school-to-work transition training programs for VR eligible youth (age 18-21) with a variety of intellectual and developmental disabilities who meet the VR criteria for most significant disabilities (MSD) and who have completed graduation requirements and are in their final year of high school.

Internship: Temporary positions either in for-profit or nonprofit organizations, with an emphasis on job training.

Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): VR is a program that assists eligible persons with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining quality employment. Please visit <https://dese.mo.gov/adult-learning-rehabilitation-services/vocational-rehabilitation/vr-faqs> for more information.

Youth: VR eligible youth (age 18-21) with a variety of intellectual and developmental disabilities who meet the VR criteria for most significant disabilities (MSD). Youth must be enrolled in a public school district that has an approved EBTT/PS program, have completed credits necessary for high school graduation and be in their final year of high school, and have a goal of attaining competitive integrated employment.

Forms/Attachments

1. WRI
2. Employer Evaluation
3. Milestone Billing Requirement Form
4. EBTT/PS monthly progress report
5. MOU

