

2026 EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Bureau of Services for Blind Persons

**Friday, October 23, 2026
from 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.**



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF
**LABOR & ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY**



About the BSBP Excellence Awards

The Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP) Excellence Awards are presented annually to BSBP customers who are exemplary in achieving their goals for post-secondary success, employment and/or independent living after vision loss. Business and community partners are recognized for their collaboration with BSBP and for increasing opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired to achieve or retain independence and/or employment. New this year are awards for Braille and Talking Book Library Advisory & Outreach Center, Braille and Talking Book Library Partner and the Business Enterprise Program Operator of the Year.

INTRODUCTION REMARKS

Danielle Smith

Division Director, *BSBP Field Services Division*

Mike Pemble

Director, *BSBP*

Susan Corbin

Director, *Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO)*

Stephanie Beckhorn

Director, *LEO's Office of Employment and Training*

Carol Bergquist

Chair, *Michigan Council for Rehabilitation Services*

AWARDS

Vocational Rehabilitation Customers

David Klenk, Central Region Manager, *Field Services Division*

Training Center Customer

Scott Lacey, Assistant Director, *Training Center Division*

Independent Living Customer

Gwen McNeal, East Region Manager, *Field Services Division*

Pre-ETS Students

Susan Root, Central Region Manager, *Field Services Division*

Community Partners

Rosemarie Van Ham, West Region Manager, *Field Services Division*

Business Partners

Shannon McVoy, West Region Manager, *Field Services Division*

Braille and Talking Book Library Advisory & Outreach Center (AOC)

Andrew Wilson, BTBL Manager, *Administrative Services Division*

Braille and Talking Book Library Partner

Andrew Wilson, BTBL Manager, *Administrative Services Division*

Business Enterprise Program

Ellen Kent, Business Enterprise Program Manager, *Administrative Services Division*

CLOSING REMARKS

Juan Ortiz, Division Director, *BSBP Training Center*

2026 BSBP Excellence Award Recipients

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CUSTOMERS

Awardees	Nominators
Erica Forster	Dan Mitchell
Sam Tocco	Thomas Heuerman

TRAINING CENTER CUSTOMER

Awardee	Nominator
Caiden Geiger	Pam Crooks

INDEPENDENT LIVING CUSTOMER

Awardee	Nominator
Cyril Hufano	Leah Avant

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES CUSTOMERS

Awardees	Nominators
Charlotte Morgan	Leah Avant
Joseph Weck	Brittany Hamilton-Reed Kellie Blackwell
Zaraiyah Bell	Kristen Taylor
Allison Hennessey	Evin Papuga

Community Partners

Awardees	Nominators
Patrick Draheim	Becca Flatt
Jackson Intermediate School District	Kellie Blackwell
Skill & Ability Education	Evin Papuga

Business Partners

Awardees	Nominators
Target	Leah Avant
Tent Craft	Kara Holland

Braille & Talking Book Library Advisory & Outreach Center

Awardee	Nominator
Washtenaw Library for the Blind and Print Disabled at AADL	Stephanie Wambaugh

Braille & Talking Book Library Partner

Awardee	Nominator
Gerry Garvelink	Susan Greene

Business Enterprise Program Operator of the Year

Awardee	Nominator
Zachariah Eagle	Amanda Lockwood



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BSBP provides training and services that empower people with vision loss to achieve their individual independence or employment goals. BSBP also helps businesses recruit and attract qualified employees, as well as retain experienced employees after vision loss.

For more information on the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons, visit
Michigan.gov/BSBP.

The programs described in this presentation are funded as follows: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funded 78.7% through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USD OE) and 21.3% through State funding; Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) funded 90% through a grant from the USD OE and 10% through State funding; Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) funded 100 percent through the USD OE VR grant. For the federal fiscal year 2025, federal grant funds were as follows: VR \$21,806,234; Pre-ETS reserve included in VR \$3,270,935; ILOB \$973,899.