

Rural Institute

For Inclusive Communities

RURAL SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities is increasing our outreach to Montana schools through our new Rural School Outreach Program. This program is funded by the Montana Office of Public Instruction. The Rural School Outreach Program supports schools through technical assistance, training and resources to help educational teams serve students with disabilities. Through this program we are working to spread awareness and access to services in the areas of transition, deafblindness, and Assistive Technology that could be beneficial to students.

PROGRAM AREAS: **Transition Outreach**

The transition outreach program supports families and schools to help youth with significant disabilities transition successfully into adulthood. The team can answer questions, provide training, and share resources for planning the shift from high school to adult life; customized employment; health care transition; and decision-making supports/alternatives to guardianship. Outreach staff are available to visit on-site or remotely.

Deafblindness Outreach

The Montana DeafBlind Project supports families and professionals who provide services to individuals with combined hearing and vision loss between the ages of birth through 21. The outreach team provides information and technical assistance in early identification and referral, family engagement, assessment and instruction, and IEP or transition planning. We also provide professional development for staff working with students with deafblindness, in addition to support on how to complete the National Child Count Census (critical information that informs the state's needs and activities provided to this population).

Assistive Technology Outreach

The Assistive Technology (AT) outreach portion of this program is aimed at increasing awareness and access to school-based assistive technology devices in our rural schools. The outreach process begins with a presentation for school staff introducing MonTECH and AT. Each school who schedules a presentation is given a free Basic AT Starter Kit. Following the presentation, we collaborate to create more customized kits that meet their students' needs for each school to have. It is our goal to form ongoing relationships with our rural schools to meet the needs of their students both now and in the future.

FOR QUESTIONS/SUPPORT WITH
**DEAFBLINDNESS AND TRANSITION
RESOURCES**, CONTACT:

Kari Tarter, MSpEd

kari.tarter@mso.umt.edu
(406) 241-1612
mtdeafblind.org
mttransition.org



Kari has worked in the special education field since 2018, first as a paraprofessional, then as a lead special educator. She has also supported young adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities as a peer mentor for a unique post-high school transition program. Kari is excited to have secured a position with the Rural Institute, where she gets to connect community members to valuable services and contribute to inclusion for everyone.

FOR QUESTIONS/SUPPORT WITH
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY, CONTACT:

Kendra Lewis, OTD, OTR/L

kendra.joyce@mso.umt.edu
(406) 217-1166
mt-at.org



Kendra is an occupational therapist and the Public Education Specialist/ Assistive Technology Ambassador for MonTECH. She grew up in rural Montana so she is very passionate about meeting the needs of our rural communities. She not only has the opportunity to do this in her role with MonTECH, but also founded the non-profit Cutting Fences Foundation, which serves farmers, ranchers, and Veterans in agriculture living with a disability or illness. She is grateful to get to be a part of the team at the Rural Institute to help meet the needs of our state and rural communities.