MRC Opportunities for Students and Youth to Achieve Brighter Futures

The Arc Transition Conference
November 4th 2017
What do you know about MRC?
MRC is a state agency that provides services to persons with disabilities. There are three Divisions of MRC:

- **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)**
  - Employment Supports for persons with Disabilities, ages 16 and up

- **Disability Determination Services (DDS)**
  - Determines eligibility for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits (funded by SSA)

- **Community Living (CL)**
  - Brain Injury and Specialized Community Services (BISCS)
  - Acquired Brain Injury, Money Follows the Person, and Home & Community Based Waiver Programs
  - Protective Services
  - Independent Living Programs
  - Assistive Technology Program
  - Home Care Assistance / Supported Living Services
  - Consumer Involvement Program
MRC works with students and adults that have many different types of disabilities. Our clients may have:

- Physical Limitations
- Emotional Difficulties
- Learning Difficulties
- Substance Abuse Difficulties

... Or a combination of the above.

Our job is to help students:

- Understand their disability and some of the difficulties they may face
- Identify their strengths and things they are good at doing, or would like to become good at
- Identify supports that they might need to reach their goals
How do Students get connected?

Referrals can be made for Students:

- Direct from school to the local MRC office
- Via a Chapter 688 Referral
- If the student is at least 18 years old, he/she can also refer himself directly, or a parent/guardian can refer them.

When:

- Ideally: Two years prior to Graduation or Turning 22
- Remember: MRC works with individuals with disabilities who range from 16 and up, with a vocational focus

While on the processing list, Students should:

- Begin to think about jobs that are of interest to them
- Start to think about, and talk to the people who know them well about, services and supports they might need to reach their goals
- Contact MRC if their address, telephone number, or any other contact information changes.
- Think about other people – teachers, doctors, family members- that are involved with them and who they would like to include as they plan for reaching their vocational goals
MRC and High School

While in high school, MRC counselors work with the young adults to help them plan for the transition beyond high school.

- **With students, VR counselors can:**
  - Coordinate with other adult service agencies and families
  - Provide Vocational Counseling and Guidance
  - Conduct Assessments/Vocational Exploration
  - Refer students for other Services
  - Coordinate Pre-Employment Transition Services (**Pre-ETS**) Opportunities
  - Coordinate and refer students and families to School Benefits Counselors for Work Incentives Planning and to the WIOA Family Support Planning for transition planning

- **Within the school/community, VR Counselors can:**
  - Coordinate with other adult service agencies and families
  - Participate in Parent Nights, Open House events or other school & community presentations
  - Attend IEP/other in-school meetings, as appropriate, to provide vocational transition consultation
  - Provide schools with MRC transition marketing materials
Student-Youth Opportunities

- VR Counseling, Supports and Services
- Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Family Support Transition Planning
- Internships
- Supported Living Program
- Youth Leadership Forum/Youth Leadership Network
- Independent Living Center-Projects
- Student Benefits Counseling
- Transition Pathway Services Demonstration Project
The VR Process

- Referral
- Processing List
- Intake & Application
- Eligibility Determination
- Plan Development (and ITP, if needed)
- Service Provision
- Case Closure
- Post-Employment Services
Determining A Vocational Goal

Once found eligible for services, the MRC counselor will work with students to develop vocational goal(s) and together with the student, will write the Individual Plan for Employment (“IPE”).

The IPE is a written document that outlines and reflects:
- The vocational goal
- All services that will be provided/needed to achieve the goal
- The time frame expected for the student to meet these goals, and
- The cost breakdown for the services the student will need.

If the student has some job goals in mind, the MRC counselor will help them explore their feasibility.

If the student does not have clear career direction, the counselor may recommend that they participate in career assessment testing at the office, or job exploration activities through Pre-ETS Services.
Services and Supports in the IPE may include:

- Vocational Guidance and Counseling
- Vocational Evaluations
- Interest and Aptitude Evaluations
- College or Job-Specific Training
- Accommodations at College (disability services, tutoring)
- Assistive and/or Rehabilitation Technology
- Assistance with building a Resume, Networking, and Interviewing Skills
- Assistance with applying for jobs and talking to employers about support needs
- Job Placement Assistance
- Job Coaching/ Accommodations On the Job
- Follow-up and Referrals
Pre-ETS Services

To be eligible to receive Pre-ETS services, a student must be:

- A current consumer of the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, being referred from an MRC VR Area Office

- An enrolled high school student or a student enrolled in Post-secondary education or training with a disability; and

- Within the Ages of 16 to 22

Pre-ETS Services include:

- Work-Based Learning Experience
- Workplace Readiness Training
- Job Exploration Counseling
- Self-Advocacy/Mentoring Instruction
- Counseling on Enrollment in Comprehensive Transition or Post-Secondary Educational Programs
Pre-ETS Vendor: Highlight

- **Center for Living & Working, Inc.**

  - It is the mission of CLW to empower all persons with disabilities to take an active role in their lives and in the community they live.

  - TIP & TAP - Empower youth who are motivated and eager to be independent through the assistance of these programs.

Transitional Internship Program (TIP)

- The TIP program provides a pre-employment comprehensive and hands-on experience for students between the ages of 16-22 who are in high school or post-secondary education with a disability who are motivated and seeking to successfully develop their employment skills for future competitive employment.

- The TIP program is a **paid internship** that provides hands-on work experience to develop **basic employment skills such as soft and hard job skills** as well as the **interactive/comprehensive workshops**. Workshops are focused around specific topics such as: professionalism, work equate, appropriate communication, learning about accommodations, resume writing, etc.

- **Who can apply**: Youth between the ages of 16-22, in high school or post-secondary who has a disability, and is an active MRC consumer

- **Requirements:**
  - Work the required hours within the allowed weeks
  - Attend all six of the mandatory workshops
  - Two MRC meetings with their counselor, once in the beginning and the end of the program
Transition to Adulthood

- **Consumer directed program**: Allows consumers to self direct the services they want to receive.

- The program best benefits youth who are eager and motivated to be or gain independent living skills.

- **Who is eligible**: Students who are in high school between the ages of 14 to 22, who have a disability and who have an IEP.

- **4 four core services**:  
  - Information & Referral  
  - Skills Training  
  - Peer support  
  - Advocacy (self and group)

- *Transition to Adulthood (TAP) acts as a bridge between other agencies, schools, families and especially the students to ensure those who need additional support after high school has services in place to make for a smooth transition out of high school into independent living.*
Young Adult Supported Living (T22)

What is Supported Living?
The Supported Living Program provides ongoing services for young adults graduating from high school or turning 22 years of age to live independently in the community.

Students must live with:
1. Primary Physical Disability &
2. a Secondary (sensory, cognitive, or emotional) Disability which significantly impede on the individual’s ability to manage their day-to-day life.

The program is built on the independent living philosophy which empowers consumers to make their own decisions about their lives, based on informed choice.

Services Include:
- finding accessible housing
- managing:
  - PCA program
  - medication
  - personal health
  - finances
  - household
  - transportation
- requesting adaptive equipment
- accessing educational, vocational, social & recreational opportunities
- self-advocacy
**Young Leadership Forum (YLF) & Network (YLN)**

**What is YLF?**

- Annual multi-day conference for youth living with any type of disabilities during the summer organized by PYD.
- The workshops and activities foster employment readiness, independence, systems and individual advocacy, peer networking, and leadership skills.
- Students can either apply as delegates (16-22) or peer leaders (18-25)

**What is YLN?**

- Hands-on groups/activities/discussions about communication, teamwork, community service, disability rights, career interests and employment skills.
- Meetings are held in Boston (@BCIL), Springfield (@Stavros), Worcester(@CLW) & East Bridgewater (@IA).
Transition To Adulthood Program (TAP)

What is TAP?

Through Independent Living Centers, the TAP provides:
- skills training
- peer mentoring
- advocacy (individual & systems)

To support students to develop the skills to live independently in the community of their choice. The year-around program builds self-confidence & resources to prepare students for life after high school.

Ages 14-22

TAP Programs:

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**Benefits Planning Services**

- For students receiving SSI/SSDI benefits, who need help understanding eligibility and the impact work may have on their benefits: MRC has 3 Transition-focused Student Benefits Counselors across the state.

- Student Benefits Counselors are available to educate students and families regarding benefits and work incentives planning.

- Goal is to ensure family support of student employment goals.

- Student Benefits Counselors can arrange a school visit and individual meetings.

- After High School graduation, Benefits Planning services are still available through adult Benefits Planning Counselors.
Benefits Planning Counselors Contact:

Kathleen Kelly  
North Region/Somerville  
(617) 776-2662  
Cell: (857)-319-1021  
Kathleen.Kelly2@MassMail.State.MA.US

Elsa Jimenez  
South District/Braintree  
(781) 356-8840  
Cell: (857) 319-0983  
Elsa.Jimenez@MassMail.State.MA.US

Xeimirillys Burgos  
West Region/Springfield  
(413) 736-7296  
Xeimirillys.Burgos@MassMail.State.MA.US
Transition Pathway Services

- Transition Pathway Services Demonstration Project Grant
- Opportunity to explore, innovate, create
- RSA – Maine, Massachusetts, California, Vermont, & Maryland
- MRC – Springfield, Lawrence and Roxbury Area Offices
- 5 Years: 651 Students
Program Model & Sequence

Student enrolls

1st Career Discovery Team

First work experience

2nd Career Discovery Team

3rd Career Discovery Team

IPE developed

Start TPS Services:
- Vocational counseling
- Pre-ETS training
- Peer mentoring
- Travel training
- Assistive technology
- Family support
- Benefits counseling

*Infor talent science assessment

Second work experience

Customized job placement
MRC After High School

Once an individual has completed high school, MRC counselors will continue to work with the young adult in reaching his/her career goal. Upon graduating the following services can be offered to assist with obtaining and maintaining employment:

- Counseling and Guidance
- Interest and Aptitude Testing
- College or Vocational Training
- Tutors
- Assistive and/or Rehabilitation Technology
- Consultation to Employers
- Job Placement Assistance
- Job Coaching
- Follow-up and Referrals
Contact Information

Contact your local VR Area Office:

VR High School Coverage report:
Available Materials & Resources

https://www.mass.gov/mrc-transition-services-for-students-and-youth
What services do you believe to be most helpful?
Questions??
Thank you!