



MRC Opportunities for Students and Youth to Achieve Brighter Futures

The Arc Transition Conference

November 4th 2017



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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

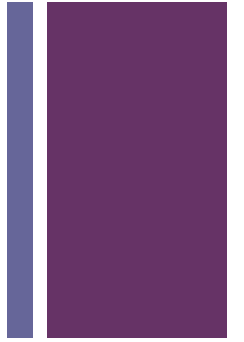
+ Student-Youth Opportunities

- 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.

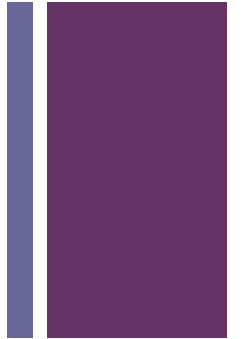
+ Services and Supports in the IPE may include:



- 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
- Self-Advocacy/Mentoring Instruction
- Workplace Readiness Training
- Counseling on Enrollment in Comprehensive Transition or Post-Secondary Educational Programs
- Job Exploration Counseling

+ 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 to roles 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)

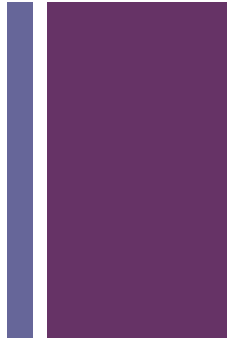


WHAT IS YLN?

- State-wide monthly meetings facilitated by **Easter Seals** to promote self-advocacy, self-awareness and life/employment skills for young adults ages 14-26.
- 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 **I**ndependent **L**iving **C**enters, 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:

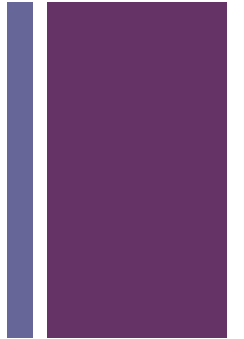
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BCIL	MWIL
CLW	NILP
CORD	SCIL
IA	Stavros

+ 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

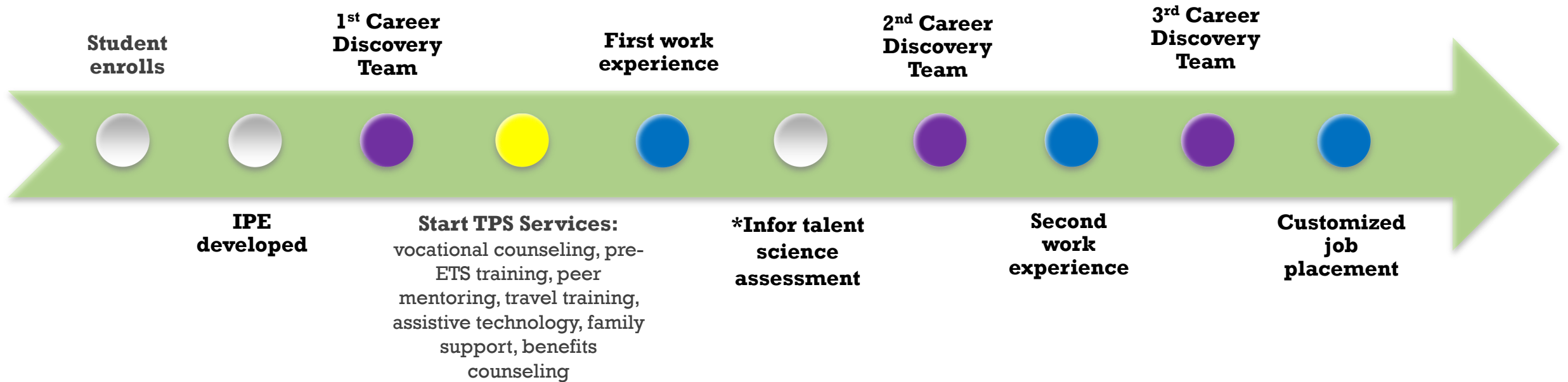
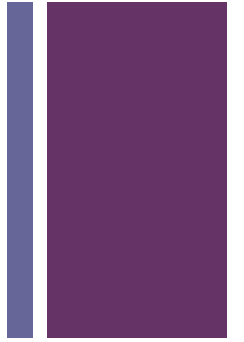


+ Transition Pathway Services



- 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



+ 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:

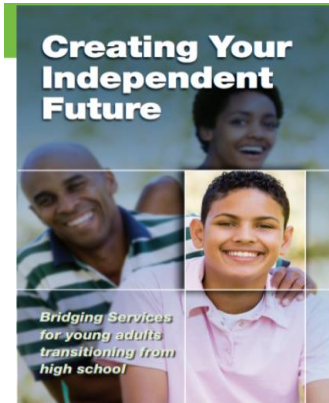
<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/vocational-rehab/vr-area-offices/>

VR High School Coverage report:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/vocational-rehab/vr-services-to-youth-in-transition.html>



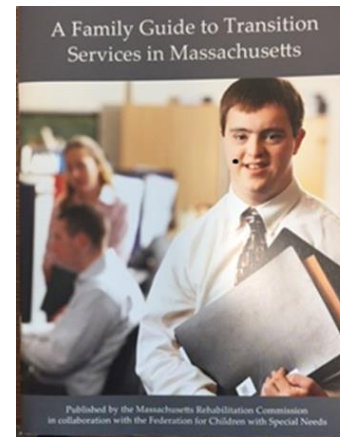
Available Materials & Resources



Steps to Develop a **SUCCESSFUL** MRC and High School **TRANSITION TEAM**

How MRC Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and High School personnel can support a student's vision toward employment and independent living

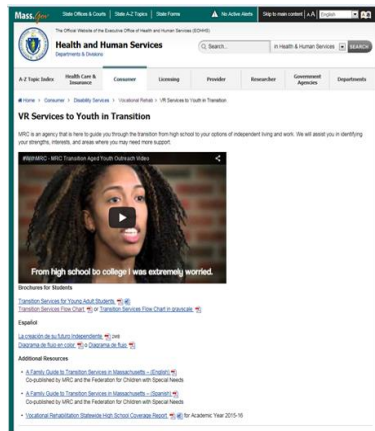
Collaboration	MRC	High School
1	Assign a VR counselor to work with the high school	Introduce the VR counselor to all key high school personnel involved with a student's transition
2	Set a specific schedule to be present at the high school to meet with students, families and high school personnel	Designate a space in the high school, if possible with internet access, for the MRC VR counselor to meet with students. Also, designate one main contact person that MRC VR counselor can contact for scheduling space, in-school student appointments, or questions regarding referrals
3	Provide training and information to high school staff (including special education/guidance/nursing staff/ teachers/ school psychologist/ adjustment counselors) regarding VR counselor's role in transition and the services MRC provides	Acquire an understanding of MRC services in order to be able to explain to parents and students why a referral can be to their benefit. Offer to help the VR counselor understand the IEP process, including student and parent role
4	Attend IEP meetings as needed and when possible to get to know the students and their needs	Invite the VR counselor to attend IEP and transition planning meetings for students that have been referred to MRC, giving as much advance notice of meeting date as possible
5	Provide high school personnel information about the status of student referrals	Help following up with students and parents to maximize the likelihood the students will invest themselves in the MRC process
6	Attend parent nights and career fairs to be available for questions and to take referrals	Invite assigned VR counselor to attend school events such as parent nights and career fairs



Program	Program Details
Vocational Rehabilitation Services Ages 16-adulthood	Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services can assist students and youth in obtaining and maintaining competitive employment. Some services may include: assessment, counseling and guidance, training, education, assistive technology, transition services and job placement.
Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Ages 16-22	Services include: job exploration counseling, workplace readiness training, work-based learning experience, counseling in post-secondary training opportunities, and self-advocacy.
Summer Internship Programs Ages 16-22	MRC offers paid internships and training opportunities at local companies and area offices.
Summer Workplace Readiness Training Ages 16-22	A classroom based program designed to expose and prepare students for future work, including employer briefings and workplace tours. Priority is given to Chapter 68B eligible students.
Transitional Internship Program (TIP) Ages 16-22	Through Independent Living Centers, the TIP program provides students with employment related skills, guidance, and paid internships to improve future employment opportunities.
Family Supports Services Ages 16-22	Training, technical assistance and individualized transition planning with students and families to connect to supports and resources as students prepare for life after high school.
Benefit Counseling Ages 16-adulthood	Consultation and information for those receiving SSI/SSDI benefits, who need help understanding eligibility and the impact work may have on their benefits.
Youth Leadership Forum (YLF) Ages 14-25	An annual multi-day conference for youth with disabilities during the summer. The workshops and activities foster employment readiness, independence, peer networking, and leadership skills.
Youth Leadership Network (YLN) Ages 14-24	Regional workshops throughout Massachusetts on topics such as leadership, self-determination, peer networking, assistive technology in the workplace, and employment skills.
Supported Living Program (SLP) Ages 16-adulthood	The Supported Living Program provides youth and adults with physical disabilities and an additional secondary disability with assistance in managing and organizing day-to-day life. Services may include case management, PCA surrogacy, assistance with managing health, finances, personal affairs, skills training and finding accessible housing. Services can start one year before high school completion and can be on-going.
Transition to Adulthood Program (TAP) Ages 14-22	Through Independent Living Centers, the TAP provides skills training, peer counseling, and mentoring to support young adults to live independently in the community of their choice.
Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP) Ages 18-adulthood (limited services available to consumers starting at birth)	Offers an array of services that are designed to assist youth with traumatic brain injuries maintain and increase their level of independence at home, work and in their community.

***Students are defined as 16-22 years old and enrolled in high school or postsecondary education or training programs.**

For more information, speak with your high school Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Liaison or call your local MRC Area Office for referral information.



<https://www.mass.gov/mrc-transition-services-for-students-and-youth>





+ What services do you believe
to be most helpful?



+ Questions??
Thank you!