

**Massachusetts Rehabilitation
Commission
(MRC)
Programs and Services for Transition
Age Youth and Young Adults**

November 12th, 2021

Outline for Presentation

1. Introduction

- i. Who we are and our roles

2. Overview of MRC

- i. Programs and services
- ii. Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- iii. Community Living Services
- iv. Disability Determination Services
- v. Protectives Services

3. Office of Individual and Family Engagement

- i. overview and priority initiatives

4. Questions and Feedback

5. Closing Remarks



MRC Mission Statement

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) promotes equality, empowerment and independence of individuals with disabilities. These goals are achieved through enhancing and encouraging personal choice and the right to succeed or fail in the pursuit of independence and employment in the community.

The MRC provides comprehensive services to people with disabilities that maximize their quality of life and economic self-sufficiency in the community.



MRC Services

Community Living
Division

Vocational
Rehabilitation

Disability
Determination



MRC

Vocational Rehabilitation Services



What are “Vocational Rehabilitation” Services?

- Benefits Counseling
- Job Placement Services
- Job Driven Training
- Counseling and Guidance
- Training Services
- Assessments
- Vocational Training
- Physical and Mental Restoration
- Post Secondary Education

Where Can you Find Us?

There are 22 offices statewide

Serve all cities and towns of Massachusetts

www.mass.gov/vocational-rehabilitation/locations



MRC Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Before students finish high school, pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) can help them get ready for a job. These services include:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work readiness training
- Work-based learning experiences
- Counseling in post-secondary education
- Self-advocacy

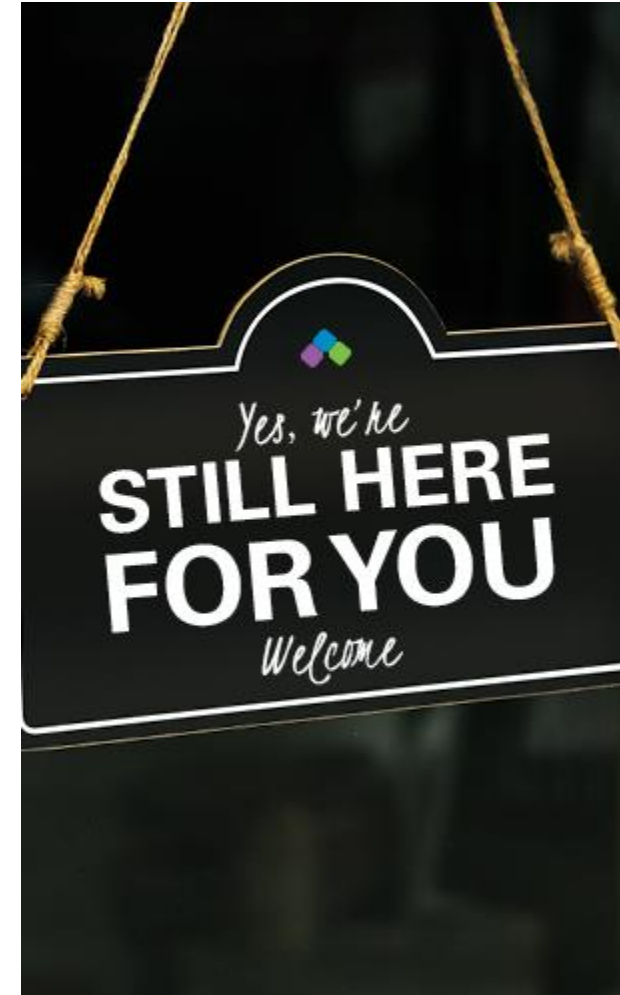
Pre-employment transition services can start at age 14 and are available until the student graduates from high school or turns 22. Individuals do not need to apply for Vocational Rehabilitation, instead they can connect directly to a pre-ETS community provider while still in high school and benefit from pre-ETS services.

MRC recommends that students take part in at least one pre-ETS service *before* applying for VR services.



How are we providing VR Services during the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic?

- **Option 1:** Due to COVID-19, MRC can now offer services remotely utilizing phone calls and Zoom meetings to conduct appointments.
- **Option 2:** We still offer in-person visits with an MRC staff person! Schedule in advance, by appointment only
- **Option 3:** We can meet you in a convenient community location.



Who is Eligible for VR Services?

Basic Requirements: Individual intends to achieve an employment outcome and;

1. Living with an impairment which constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and
2. Requires VR services to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment.

***For those receiving SSI or SSDI:** An individual will be presumed to benefit from VR services unless there is clear and convincing evidence that due to the severity of the individual's disability, he or she is not able to benefit from VR services.*



What could a VR services timeline look like?

- **Referral:** Just call any of our local offices!
- **Eligibility:** We will be seeking any documentation you have regarding your disability
- **Individualized Plan for Employment:** Delivery of services
 - Possible education or training services
 - Job Placement Services
- **Employment:** minimum of 90 days
- **Case closure:** “successful” or “unsuccessful”



MRC

Community Living Services



MRC Connect

- Purpose: Have a streamlined, easy to access way to apply to multiple services
- Support: Staff at MRC Connect can help you apply and collect needed eligibility paperwork
- Apply for services:
 - Vocational Rehabilitation
 - Statewide Head Injury Program
 - Home Care Assistance Program
 - Supported Living Program
 - Chapter 688



Programs & Services

- Statewide Head Injury Program
- Waiver Services (Acquired Brain Injury & Moving Forward Plan)
- Supported Living Programs (T22, ASL)
- Independent Living Centers (ILC)
- Transition to Adulthood (TAP)
- Youth Leadership Forum (YLF)
- Young Leaders Rising (YLR)
- Youth Leadership Network (YLN)
- ILAT
- MassMATCH
- Vehicle Modifications/Home Modifications
- Home Care Assistance Program



Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP)

SHIP supports individuals with traumatic brain injury and their families by funding services in the community that maintain or enhance independence in the home, community or at work.

Services Include:

- Skills Training
- Residential Services
- Shared Living
- Adult Companions
- Regional Service Centers
- Worcester Community Center
- Social/Recreational Programs
- Respite Services
- Family Assistance Program
- Substance Use Services
- Technical Assistance regarding TBI



Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) & Moving Forward Plan Waiver Program (MFP)

The **ABI** and **MFP** Waiver programs include 2 pairs of home and community-based waivers. These are designed to transition and support individuals with ABI from skilled nursing facilities (SNF) and other long-stay hospital settings, into community placements.

- MRC operated ABI and one MFP waiver, supports individuals in community settings (less than 24/7 support)
- Department of Developmental Services (DDS) operated ABI and one MFP waiver, supports individuals in 24/7 settings
- **ABI & MFP waiver services include:** day services, supported employment services, skills training services, in-house supports, home & vehicle modifications, assistive technology & specialized medical equipment, transitional assistance services



Supported Living (ASL & T22)

- 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.
- 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
 - Health
 - Finances
 - Household
 - transportation
- requesting adaptive equipment
- accessing educational, vocational, social & recreational opportunities
- self-advocacy



Independent Living Centers (ILCs)

The Mass Rehab Commission contracts with ten **Independent Living Centers (ILCs)** across the state, serving people of all ages regardless of the type of their disability.

At least 51% of the board and staff of ILCs are persons with disabilities. **ILCs** provide:

- Information & Referral
- Skills Training
- Advocacy (Individual & Systems)
- Peer Counseling
- Transition services



Transition to Adulthood (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
- For more information go to: <https://ma-tap.net/wp/> or <https://www.masilc.org/findacenter>



Youth Leadership Forum

- Free, three-day overnight conference, facilitated by **PYD** to promote self-advocacy, self-awareness and life/employment skills. Apply as a delegate (16-22) or peer leader (18-25).
- Workshops about: communication, teamwork, community service, disability rights/pride, career exploration, assistive technology, independent living, legislative advocacy, and community participation.
- YLF is held at the end of June @ Bridgewater State University. For more information go to:
<https://www.pyd.org/programs/youth-leadership-forum/>



Youth Leadership Network (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).
- **For more information go to: <http://www.easterseals.com/ma/our-programs/youth-services/youth-services.html>**



Assistive Technology (AT)

Assistive Technology for Independent Living (AT-IL)

- Provides Assistive Technology devices and services to individuals with disabilities so that they may maximize control over their environment and achieve self-determined independent living goals.
- MRC contracts with two regional providers, Easter Seals MA and United Cerebral Palsy of Western MA, for AT assessments, buy and set-up equipment, train and follow up.
- To qualify, individuals must not have access to similar AT services through another program or agency. The program has financial eligibility requirements.

MassMATCH program promotes the use of AT services to enhance the independence of people with disabilities. This is done through Assistive Technology Regional Centers and other partners. Consumers and families can visit an AT center to learn about, try out or borrow AT devices free of charge for up to four weeks.



Home Care Assistance Program (HCAP)

- The **Home Care Assistance Program** provides homemaking services to adults with disabilities whose ability to continue living in the community is at risk without such assistance.
- Services include:
 - Light housekeeping
 - Meal preparation
 - Medication pick-up
 - Laundry
 - Assistance with financial management
- **Eligibility:** between 18-59, living alone (or with others, who are also unable to perform these tasks), have a documented disability (other than blindness or low vision), meet fin. need;
- <https://www.mass.gov/home-care-assistance-program-under-60>



Disability Determination Services



Disability Determination Services is a Division of MRC that provides determination of disability for the Social Security Administration, on behalf of applicants for benefits based on disability. DDS does not provide services directly to individuals with a disability.



MRC
Office of Individual and Family Engagement



Development of the Office

- MRC went through a Business Process Redesign in Fall 2018, to develop a strategic roadmap and agency priorities to carry MRC forward. The MRC Roadmap project was the outcome.
- The Roadmap project identified **30 overall agency priority initiatives**, through interviews and focus groups with agency stakeholders across divisions, roles and regions, as well as external stakeholders. These initiatives were prioritized into 3 phases for implementation over 4 years (2019-2022).
- One of the Roadmap priorities was stronger, more effective engagement and collaboration with individuals with disabilities and their families.
- In summer of 2019, MRC established what is now known as the **Office of Individual and Family Engagement**.



Office of Individual & Family Engagement

Mission & Vision

Mission: The Office of Individual and Family Engagement is committed to ensuring development and delivery of comprehensive services, supports and community engagement opportunities across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for individuals with disabilities. To do this, we partner with individuals with disabilities and their chosen allies to inspire, educate, develop, and break down existing systemic barriers.

Vision: Our vision is based on the philosophy that individuals with disabilities have the same basic rights as people without disabilities. We aspire to become the model service delivery agency in Massachusetts and beyond. We will do this by breaking down barriers and ensuring individuals with disabilities have full and equitable access to the services and supports they want and need to live self-sufficient and fulfilling lives in the communities of their choice.



Who works within the Office?

- **Amanda Costa**, Director of Individual and Family Engagement
 - Responsible for developing foundation for the office, implementing strategies to improve individual & family engagement with MRC, promoting collaboration across agency partners, and ensuring the voices of individuals served by MRC and their families are actively incorporated into all planning and operations.
- **Manel Desvallons**, Family Partnership Coordinator
 - Responsible for outreaching, partnering, and collaborating with diverse families, individuals with disabilities, and key stakeholders to bring family voice and expertise to the decision-making table across MRC.
- **Mark Cowell**, MRC Ombudsman
 - Responsible for responding to complaints from consumers & families and assisting to resolve complaints in an impartial and confidential manner. Answer inquiries for information about MRC and assist agency staff, when requested.



Office Focus & Priorities

Focus: identifying and addressing the needs and concerns of individuals served by MRC and their families:

Top 3 Office Priorities:

1. Recruit, hire and train disability and family partners (office champions) to help lead the office in priority development and implementation.
2. Develop a quarterly newsletter and quarterly disability and family forum to connect with individuals and families and share resources, hear feedback, and partner to elevate services
3. Create a cultural shift in the way MRC addresses, thinks and talks about disability through development of training and tools.



Disability Champion Roles

- **Overview:** We are looking to hire individuals with lived experience of disabilities who want to provide ongoing feedback and lived expertise to MRC in improving our services and supports.
- **Hours:** These are contracted, part-time positions, starting around 12 hours/month.
- **Hourly rate:** \$25/hour.
- **Contract length:** 6-12 months.



MRC Listening & Learning Forums

- Quarterly two-hour virtual forum to bring together Disability community, family members, community partner, stakeholders and professionals
- Three primary goals
 - Educate- providing education about services at MRC and across the Commonwealth
 - Inspire- sharing stories of success and perseverance from the individuals we serve and staff
 - Learn- we learn from you, and you learn from us!
- October's Theme: National Disability Employment Awareness Month



Disability Community Newsletter

- Quarterly communication tool
- Audience: Disability Community, Families
- Template:
 - Success Stories
 - Services Information
 - Videos & infographics that highlight services/supports
 - Info YOU requested!
- First Newsletter: November 2021



Contact Info

Office of Individual and Family Engagement
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
600 Washington St., 2nd floor
Boston, MA 02111

Amanda Costa – Amanda.Costa@Mass.Gov
Manel Desvallons – Manel.Desvallons@Mass.Gov
Mark Cowell – Mark.Cowell@Mass.Gov
Anna Hermann – Anna.Hermann@mass.gov
Amy Partelow – Amy.Partelow@mass.gov



Connect with MRC

Website:

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-rehabilitation-commission>

Facebook:

@MassRehabCommission

Twitter:

@MassRehabComm

Instagram:

@massrehabilitationcommission

LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/massachusetts-rehabilitation-commission-mrc/>



Thank You!