



Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

STATEWIDE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2015

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LETTER FROM STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON

Dear Governor Baker,

I am pleased to represent the Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) regarding the submission of the Annual Report for 2015.

Members of the SRC include a wide range of volunteers dedicated to the improvement of the lives of citizens with disabilities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. SRC members bring with them a multitude of skills developed in the public and private sectors that are most valuable in the advisory role which the SRC plays. This Annual Report provides an accurate picture of the important work being done by the Council.

The SRC serves as a partner to the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission in an advisory capacity, working closely with the Commissioner and MRC staff to promote the organizations mission: service to the disabled community to obtain and maintain meaningful employment and independence.

The SRC holds four quarterly meetings, which are located in the Boston area, and the southern central, and western regions of the Commonwealth. The agenda for these meetings is established by the SRC Executive Committee. During the quarterly meetings, issues and deliberations are discussed, with the goal of ensuring that the disabled population receives the necessary services to maximize employment possibilities and thus lead to a lifestyle of independent living.

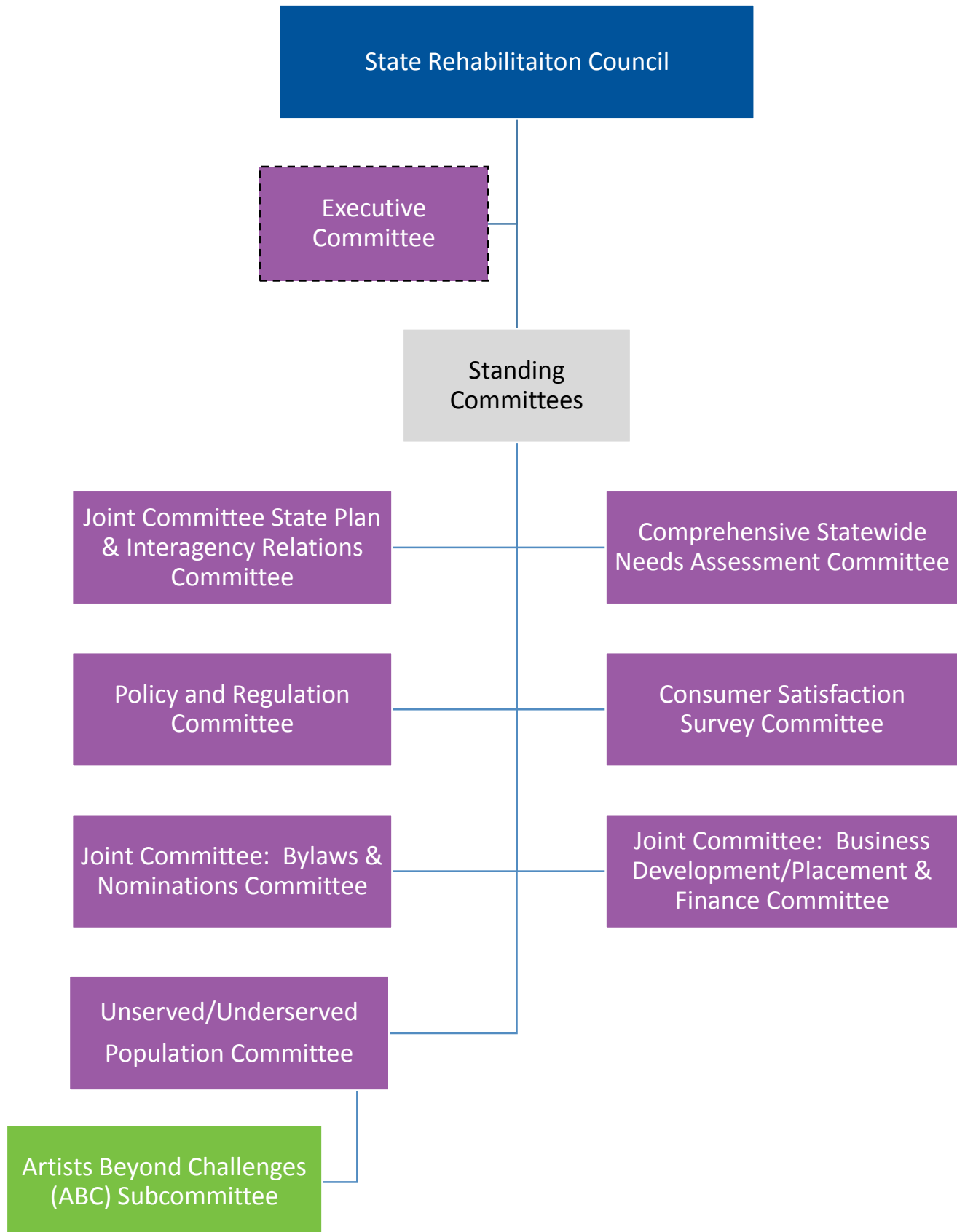
I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the members of the SRC for their dedication and time expended to achieve our goals. I am gratified in my position as SRC Chair to view the variety of skills and attributes that our members utilize in their most important advisory role to the Mass. Rehabilitation Commission.

It has been a pleasure to serve the Commonwealth as Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council. We all wish you continued success now and in the future as governor of our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Alan Greene
Chair, MRC State Rehabilitation Council

COUNCIL ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



SRC Executive Committee:

Chairperson: Alan Greene

Alan is a retired Human Resources professional with over 20 years' experience in the HR field. He is currently working as an Independent Educator/Substitute Teacher at the secondary level for the towns of Canton, Sharon, and Easton. Alan holds a B.A. from the University of Massachusetts Boston and an MS from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Vice Chairperson: Dawn Clark, D.Min

Dawn has served many years in a variety of community and pastoral positions. She currently works for the City of Worcester as the Disability Intake Coordinator and lives with the life long experience of having a disability. Dawn holds a B.A. from Ricker College, Houlton, Maine, a Master of Divinity from Boston University School of Theology, Boston, Massachusetts, and a Doctorate of Ministry from Bangor Theological Seminary, Bangor, Maine.

Secretary: Dr. Lusa Lo

Dr. Lo is an Associate Professor at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, Massachusetts. Dr. Lo holds a B.A. in Liberal Arts, an M.A. in special Education from Holy Name University, Oakland, California and an Ed. D in Learning and Instruction from the University of San Francisco, California.

Member at Large: Lisa Chiango

Lisa has a long employment history in the media and communication fields. Ms. Chiango holds a technical degree from Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York, a B.A. in Computer Science from Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C. and an M.A. in visual Media Arts-Video Production from Emerson College, Boston, MA.

Member at Large: Naomi Goldberg

Naomi is the Assistant Director, Client Services, Massachusetts Office on Disability and is the Director of the federally-mandated and funded Client Assistance Program (CAP) in Massachusetts. CAP specifically addresses information and advocacy concerns for clients and applicants of the Commonwealths Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Independent Living Programs (IL) Services.

Governor Appointed Members:

Paula Peters	Matthew Bander
Ms. Lisa Chiango	Stephen Aalto
Rosanna Woodmansee	Dr. Matilde Castiel
Naomi Goldberg	Heather Watkins
Dawn Clark	Roxanne Hoke-Chandler
Bonnie Jones	Mr. Alan Greene
Dr. Lusa Lo	

Ex-Officio Members:

Anne Marie Paulson	Amy Partelow
Edna Pruce	Joseph Panciotti
Hang Lee	Christiana Erekosima
Kevin Goodwin	Rita Sagalyn
Carol Menton	Ruth Unger
Faith Behum	Kristin Britton
Jenna Knight	Susan Coughlin

ABOUT THE MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION

MRC Mission:

The 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.

MRC Vision:

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

MRC Programs:

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has three divisions that provide programs and services for citizens of the commonwealth to work and live independently in their community of choice.

Community Living Division (CL):

The Community Living Division is comprised of a variety of programs, supports, and services that address the diverse needs of adults and transition age youth with disabilities to fulfill their desire/need for community integration, to gain maximum control of their destiny, and to participate fully in their community. These programs include Consumer Involvement, Independent Living & Assistive Technology, Home Care Assistance, Home and Community-based Waiver Management, Protective Services, the Statewide Head Injury Program, Nursing Home Initiative, and Transition for Youth with Disabilities.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR):

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program assists individuals with physical, psychiatric and/or learning disabilities in facing the challenges of the modern workplace. This may include identifying job goals based on individual interests and aptitudes, providing funds for college and vocational training, assessing worksite accommodations, educating an employer about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or assisting an individual returning to work. Vocational rehabilitation services can often reduce or remove

barriers to employment. Priority is given to those individuals who have the most significant disabilities in areas such as communication, learning disabilities, mobility, work tolerance and work skills.

Disability Determination Services (DDS):

The Disability Determination Services (DDS) Division is funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and determines the initial and reconsideration applications (first level of appeal after a denial), and continued eligibility for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits. Special outreach efforts are made to homeless clients, individuals with HIV/AIDS, and veterans injured during military service.

MASSACHUSETTS REHABILITATION COMMISSION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In fiscal year 2015, the MRC divisions and programs were able to produce the following results for serving citizens of the commonwealth with disabilities.

Community Living Divisions:

The community living division was able to successfully provide the following services to citizens with disabilities across the state of Massachusetts.

Community Living Service	Number of Consumers Served
Independent Living Centers:	6,679
Turning 22 Services:	643
Assistive Technology:	2,062
Housing Registry:	397
Supportive Living Services:	189
Brain Injury Services:	1,409
Home Care Services:	1,285
Protective Services:	448
Acquired Brain Injury-Non Residential and Money Follows the Person –Community Living Waivers:	244
Grand Total	
Total consumers actively receiving services:	13,356
Total funds expended:	\$47,928,257
Cost per consumer served:	\$3,588.50

Disability Determination Services (DDS):

The MRC Disability Determination Services was able to provide the following services for the Social Security Administration Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI):

Massachusetts SSI/SSDI Summary	
Total MA Population:	6.69 Million
MA SSI Recipients, 2013:	187,998
MA SSDI Recipients, 2013	233,260
Annual SSDI Benefits Paid	3.19 Billion
Annual SSI Benefits Paid:	\$1.16 Billion
Total Budget:	\$18,594,475
Cost Per Case:	\$549.04
Accomplishment	Total Number
Total Receipt of Cases	86,232
Total Disposition of Cases	88,508
Initial Claims Filed:	52,503
Initial Claims Disposed:	56,343
% Allowed:	40.60%
Continuing Disability Reviews Receipts:	16,301
Continuing Disability Reviews Dispositions:	18,616
Accuracy of Decisions:	97.00%

Vocational Rehabilitation Program:

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commissions Program currently serves 23,311 consumers. The following chart illustrates the breakdown by the type of disability that is being served.

Type of Disability	% of Consumers
Psychiatric Disabilities	39.80%
Substance Abuse	8.80%
Orthopedic Disabilities	11.60%
Learning Disabilities	22.20%
Developmental Disabilities	2.30%
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	6.70%
Neurological Disabilities	2.70%
Traumatic Brain Injury	1.70%
Other Disabilities	8.50%

The MRC vocational rehabilitation program also showed success in the following accomplishments:

- 3,737 citizens with disabilities have been successfully placed in competitive employment based on their interests, needs and skills
- The successfully placed workers are working an average of 26.8 hours a week and making an average of \$12.98 per hour.
- The earnings of the rehabilitated citizens totals \$67.5 million and has provided an estimated public benefit savings of \$28 million to the state of Massachusetts.

The following chart represents the statistics of the total number of consumers served in Massachusetts.

Services Received	Total Number
Consumers actively receiving services	23,611
Consumers enrolled in training/education programs:	16,074
Consumers with disabilities competitively employed	3,737

STANDING COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Committee

Chairperson: Richard Colantonio

Mission: The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Committee works in collaboration with the MRC to conduct and Annual Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The MRC conducts the assessment on an annual basis with the information and findings incorporated into MRC's State Plan, strategic planning, and quality assurance activities. The CSNA provides the agency with detailed information regarding the needs of the consumers served by MRC and to fulfill the federal requirements that the agency conducts a needs assessment at least every three years.

Accomplishments:

- Collaborated with the MRC to enhance the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) process to ensure that it best captured the needs of individuals with disabilities served by MRC.
- Enhancements to the CSNA process in order to meet new requirements from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014.
- CSNA committee ran a focus group at the Annual Consumer Conference which consisted of a diverse group of MRC consumers representing all of the Commonwealth.

Recommendations:

- Continue efforts to enhance information to consumers and potential consumers on available services.
- Focus on improving communication between consumers and councilors
- Continue to promote on-the-job training, increase employer engagement, and industry-based trainings to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

The consumer satisfaction survey results have not been finalized, but will be distributed to State Rehabilitation Council members upon completion for FY2015. An executive summary of the FY2014 Results have been added to the appendix of this document.

Consumer Satisfaction Committee

Chairperson: Terry McLaughlin, (*council member has resigned*)

Mission: The mission of the Consumer Satisfaction Committee (CSC) is to ensure consumer perspectives are included in the process of evaluating MRC consumer satisfaction and to serve in an advisory capacity to improve services provided to consumers. On an annual basis, the MRC surveys all consumers with closed cases on their satisfaction of MRC's services.

Accomplishments:

- In order to increase efficiency and accuracy, the survey was moved onto a digital platform and only emailed to consumers with a closed case.

Recommendations:

- The committee recommended to the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission to create a digital platform for monthly index surveys.

Joint Committee: Business Development, Placement, and Finance Committee

Chairperson: Alan Greene

Mission: The SRC Finance, Budget, Placement and Marketing Joint Committee will provide support and guidance to the MRC and the full Council on related matters while identifying innovative solutions for, and the advancement of, vocational rehabilitation programs and the placement of people with disabilities into competitive employment.

Accomplishments:

- Provided advice to placement group regarding large scale programs, such as CVS. The placement rate at CVS Health is 93% for Pharmacy Technicians, though this number is somewhat fluid if consumer(s) do not stay employed or move to other entities for employment other than CVS Health.
- Made recommendations to MRC regarding training in the "soft skills" arena for consumers.
- Discussed adaptive technology opportunities and the educating of organizational Human Resources staff on appropriate applications within their organizations.

Recommendations:

- MRC should continue to work to train consumers in the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)

- MRC should utilize relationships with employers who have been partnering with local community colleges and training programs for fields such as Certified Nursing Assistants, pharmacy technicians, and other healthcare jobs as this field is flourishing.
- Increase cooperation between job placement staff and vocational counselors on a weekly basis to discuss leads. This arrangement will require a change in structure, which will mean the hiring of three placement managers to best service consumer placements.

Joint Committee: Bylaws and Nomination Committee

Chairperson: Naomi Goldberg

Mission: The SRC Joint Committee of the By-Law and Nominations mission is to work toward determining and selecting interested persons eligible for membership in the State Rehabilitation Council in accordance to the SRC By-Laws. Further this committee meets with the MRC Consumer Involvement Director to develop a roster of interested persons who would be appropriate for future SCR needs.

2015 Update: This committee did not meet as no new by-laws were passed or nominations were conducted for the 2015 fiscal year.

Joint Committee State Plan & Interagency Relations Committee

Chairperson: Joe Bellil

A copy of the recommendations that were added to the Massachusetts Combined State Plan can be found in the Appendix of this document. Additional recommendations were given by community members of the council.

Mission: The mission of this Committee is to assure the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) meets its obligations regarding input from consumers in the development of both the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Public Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan and the Unified Workforce State Plan.

Accomplishments:

- The Joint Committee on the State Plan and Interagency Relations and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission staff are working together to learn more about The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. We are trying to understand the changes that are occurring and how best for to prepare for them.

- The 2015 Consumer Conference, Building Careers -- Building Lives co-hosted by: Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, Massachusetts, Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Statewide Independent Living Council was a great success. Well over 400 people attended this training filled conference in Norwood.

Recommendations:

- We look forward to the ability for the public to provide input at the various MRC offices throughout the state via videoconferencing in future years. This includes public hearings and the work that the State Rehabilitation Council does.
- We also would like MRC to utilize social media more and other internet tools such as Skype, Google Hangouts, text messaging and other high technology communication resources.
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Policy and Regulation Committee

Chairperson: Dr. Matilde Castile

Mission: The mission of the SRC Policy and Regulation Committee is to advise and assist in the development of the agency's policies and regulations, including, but not limited to, scheduling procedures for public input and publications in the Massachusetts Register by the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

2015 Update: This committee did not meet as no policies or regulations needed to be reviewed during the 2015 fiscal year.

Unserved/Underserve Population Committee

Chairperson: Dawn Clark

Mission: The mission of the Unserved/Underserved Population Committee is to identify unserved or underserved populations within the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Program and advise the agency on programs and services that may help meet the needs of these populations.

Accomplishments:

- The Unserved/Underserved has begun outreach efforts to the find populations that are being underrepresented by the MRC. One area that increased interest has been fostered is the Mental Health community.

Recommendations:

- The committee agreed that all recommendations should support those of the subcommittee, Artists Beyond Challenges.

Artists Beyond Challenges Subcommittee

Chairperson: Kimball Anderson

Mission: Artist Beyond Challenges advises the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission on how to provide artists with disabilities assistance to achieve their vocational goals.

Accomplishments:

- Conducted a survey of ABC members; completed a calendar filled with ABC artists' work; worked through issues with the website to get it to the point where it is usable; clearly defined the potential function of the website; created informational materials on the nature of ABC; defined five overarching goals of the committee.

Recommendations:

- Artists Beyond Challenges suggests the recommendation that the MRC VR counselor training program creates training on the topic of artistic careers. This training would be focused on leading clients to success in their occupational goals, without redirecting them to other career paths.
- Artists Beyond Challenges suggests the recommendation that an apprenticeship program is formed for artists with disabilities. These clients would be matched with established local artists for 12 months at a time to achieve their vocational goals. The program would be styled after apprenticeship programs that already exist: The Department of Labor Work Force Development has a company paid apprenticeship program for workers, and the US Department of Education paid for 43 artist with disability apprenticeships from 2001-2004.

2015 ANNUAL CONSUMER CONFERENCE

The 2015 Annual Consumer Conference was hosted by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, and the Massachusetts Statewide Independent Living Council at the Four Points by Sheraton in Norwood, MA on Thursday, June 18, 2015. The event was attended by 404 consumers, staff, and exhibitors. Of those in attendance of the conference, consumers of the agencies services accounted for over 70% of the total attendees.

Consumers attended workshops that included topics such as student's transition to the community, social security, mentoring, financial planning, community resources, and how to become work ready. Of the consumers surveyed at these workshops, they were surveyed on a scale of not being satisfied (1) to highly satisfied (5), the results showed the consumers were between very satisfied to highly satisfied with all of the workshop choices (average score was a 4.5).

The keynote Speaker was Oswald Mondejar, Senior Vice President Mission and Advocacy, Partners Continuing Care. He spoke of personal anecdotes and how to become employed through hard work and advocacy.

To end the day of learning to go to work and live independently in the consumer's community of choice, the consumers were requested to fill out an evaluation regarding their experience. The overall satisfaction ranged between a 4.31 and a 4.71 average (1 is for not being satisfied and 5 equates to being highly satisfied). Consumers were also requested to note if they would attend a future conference of similar material, 98% advised they would return. The overall conference survey results are as follows:

Accessibility of Facility:	Conference Center Location:	Ease of Transportation to the Conference:	Helpfulness of the Conference Staff:	Guest Speakers:	Exhibit Hall	ASL Registration Video:	Assistive Technology Room:
4.64	4.32	4.39	4.71	4.55	4.65	4.61	4.31

Consumers are excited for the planning of the 2016 event and look forward to more information on going to work and resources in their communities!

APPENDIX

2014 COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) in conjunction with the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) conducted its annual Comprehensive Statewide VR Consumer Needs Assessment (CSNA) in the fall of 2014. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) requires the MRC to conduct a Comprehensive Statewide VR Consumer Needs Assessment least every three years, but the MRC administers it on an annual basis with the information and findings incorporated into the MRC's State Plan, Strategic Planning, and Quality Assurance Activities. The findings on consumer needs listed in this report are presented and shared with MRC Senior Management and VR staff, the entire body of the SRC, and other key stakeholders as part of the MRC's State Plan and continuous quality improvement processes. It is also publicly distributed via the MRC website. The 2014 CSNA process constituted a number of areas, including: a consumer survey; focus groups; analysis of key statistical and demographic information and facts; findings from other reports and surveys including the Consumer, Provider, and Counselor Satisfaction surveys, among others; and collaboration and discussion with the SRC and other key stakeholders.

The MRC 2014 Needs Assessment Survey was administered electronically via Survey Monkey in September and October 2014. A focus group of consumers was also conducted at the Consumer Conference in June 2014. 1,325 consumers responded to the survey out of a total of 5,157 possible consumer recipients, for a response rate of 25.2%. The number of responses again exceeded the amount required to make statistically significant conclusions at a 99% confidence level according to the Raosoft.com sample size calculator by a wide margin. There was a 12.7% increase in the number of consumer respondents from the 2013 Needs Assessment Survey and a 19.4% increase in the number of consumers offered the opportunity to participate in the survey compared to 2013.

The main findings of the 2014 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment can be summarized as follows:

1. The CSNA again confirms the fact that the majority of consumers served by the MRC are people with the most significant disabilities. The findings indicate that a majority of MRC consumers require multiple Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, transportation, and Community Living (CL) services and supports to assist them in their efforts to prepare for, choose, and obtain competitive employment. The need for multiple VR services was found to be slightly greater amongst individuals of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds

and for individuals with cognitive or psychological disabilities. The findings suggest that many consumers also require supported employment and ongoing and extended employment supports. The need for multiple CL services was greatest among individuals with physical or sensory disabilities. (See Pg. xx for a key to disability groupings)

2. Overall, the majority of MRC consumers believe MRC services are addressing all or most of their needs. 80% of consumers feel MRC services are at least somewhat effective in meeting their vocational service needs (up 2% from 2012) The majority of consumers (79.3%) are somewhat or very satisfied with the development of their Individualized Plan for Employment. Many of those who feel MRC services are not meeting their needs indicate they have difficulty maintaining contact with their counselor, have not been provided consistent or adequate information on services, or have experienced changes in their assigned counselors due to high levels of staff turnover.
3. Many consumers expressed strong praise and gratitude for the hard work and support provided by the MRC and its counseling staff. It is clear that MRC and its staff make a significant positive impact on the lives of many of its consumers. A need raised by consumers included better contact with their counselor and more information about available services and MRC procedures, including information and referral to other agencies. Some consumers may not have a complete understanding of what the MRC can and cannot do for them.
4. The most important and needed VR services listed by consumers were job placement (89%), career counseling (84%), supported employment (80%), benefits planning (78%), ongoing supports to assist in retaining employment (74%), On-the-Job Training or Job Coaching (71%), and College Education (68%). School to work transition, obtaining a high school diploma, and college education were the most needed services by consumers of transition age.
5. The most important job characteristics that MRC consumers indicated they are looking for in a job include a friendly job environment (95%), job satisfaction and personal interests (95%), earning a living wage (94%), an adequate number of hours worked per week (94%), vacation and other leave benefits (89%), and promotional opportunities (88%).
6. The most common occupational areas of interest listed by MRC consumers included Community/Social/Human Services (36%), Administrative (29%). Health Care (29%), Self-Employment (26%), Customer Service (25%), and Computers/Information Technology (23%). All but Self-Employment are amongst the top 10 occupational goals by Standard Occupational Code (SOC) in consumer employment plans in the MRCIS Case Management System. The high interest amongst consumers in Self-Employment may be a function of the economy driving more people to go into self-employment. A number of consumers desired additional information on self-employment.

7. Only 32% of consumers indicated they are aware of the Independent Living Center in their area. Individuals with psychological disabilities, younger consumers, and those in the South and North District tended to be less aware of ILCs compared to consumers with other types of disabilities.
8. Transportation continues to be an area of great need for MRC consumers. The most important and needed transportation services and options listed by consumers are public transportation (21%), the Donated Vehicle Program (18%), driver's education and training (10%), the Transportation Access Pass (10%), information about transportation options (7%), and the Ride/paratransit (7%),
9. 36% of consumers find transportation to be a potential barrier to obtaining employment. Common reasons for how transportation is a barrier include inability to access jobs via public transportation, the cost of transportation, reliability and the time required to travel via public transit or paratransit, lack of access to a vehicle, lack of a driver's license, and the distance to available jobs.
10. The most important and needed Community Living services indicated by responding consumers were affordable, accessible housing and the Mass Access Housing Registry (59%), accessible recreational services (48%), the consumer involvement program (40%), the Individual Consumer Consultant (ICC) program (39%), home care (33%), assistive technology (33%), and home modification (32%).
11. When factoring out consumers who indicate they do not require Community Living services, approximately 86% of MRC consumers indicated that MRC's services were somewhat or extremely useful in assisting them to maintain independence in the community. Many consumers reflected how the MRC's assistance has been tremendously valuable. Many consumers, however, were not aware of some or all of the CL services provided by the MRC. Others indicated they do not require CL services.
12. Finding affordable and accessible housing remains a challenge for many consumers due to economic conditions and the high cost of living in Massachusetts. The Independent Living Centers may be able to assist consumers in this area, and counselors may be able to refer consumers to other resources as well.
13. A total of 18% of consumers feel they require additional services and supports. This number has fallen by about 5% since 2011. These services include job placement and job training, financial assistance, transportation, affordable and accessible housing, information on available service, assistive technology, and services and supports from other state agencies.
14. The most important single service consumers are receiving includes job placement and job search services, assistance with college education, job training, vocational counseling and guidance, assistive technology, transportation, and assistance with obtaining supplies for school and work.

15. The majority of MRC counselors are satisfied with their ability to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining competitive employment based on their skills, interests, needs, and choices. MRC counselors are at least somewhat satisfied with most services provided to consumers, including internal job placement services, services from Community Rehabilitation Providers, and education and training provided to consumers by schools and colleges. Communication with consumers and providers was also identified by counselors as an area for improvement. Counselors identified some areas that would assist them in doing their job better, including improved support and resources for job placement, including increased information on job leads for consumers, additional job readiness trainings, continued enhancements to the MRCIS system, among others.
16. Most consumers appear to be satisfied with services received from Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs). The majority of MRC staff also are somewhat or very satisfied with CRP services. Improved communication and information flow between CRPs and MRC staff may assist in improving service delivery to consumers and lead to more successful employment outcomes. Recent vendor expansion efforts appear to have addressed CRP capacity needs, but there still appears to be additional capacity needed in certain geographic areas and for certain populations.
17. There are areas where additional MRC staff training may assist in improving the quality and effectiveness of VR services delivered to consumers. Specific areas include refresher trainings on the MRCIS case management system as well as on VR best practices, policies, and procedures and proper documentation of records.
18. The MRC has identified Asian and Pacific Islanders as being slightly underserved by the MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation program compared to their proportion in the overall state population. It is important to note that proportionally Asians have been the fastest growing group amongst all ethnic and racial groups served by the MRC's VR program over the last 10 years. This is also true in the state's general population. It is recommended that the MRC continue its outreach efforts to Asian communities. MRC has translated key agency marketing and information materials and is also working on translating all MRCIS correspondence letters into several Asian languages common in Massachusetts including Mandarin Chinese, Vietnamese, and Khmer as part of its Language Access Plan.

STATE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS SUBMITTED TO MRC:

- Continue to provide soft skill training to consumers;
- Review the definition of an individual with the most significant disability and the order of selection for services;
- Improve communication to consumers and potential consumers;
- Promote on- the- job training, increased employer engagement and industry based trainings to expand the placement of consumers into previously untapped industries including opportunities in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields;
- Partner with community colleges and appropriate employers for consumer training in such fields as certified nursing assistant, medical assistant and pharmacy technician;
- Train counselors to provide basic information to consumers interested in artistic careers about freelancing, self- employment, apprenticeship programs and other employer based paths.