**CSNAC FY26 Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1:**

The SRC recommends that MassAbility collaborate with relevant community transportation providers to develop and implement a streamlined, unified process for eligibility and access to vehicles, vehicle modifications, and transportation services. This system should prioritize affordability, accessibility, and reliability for individuals with disabilities receiving MassAbility services.

1. **What problem is this trying to solve or what issue is this trying to address?**

This recommendation addresses the barrier of limited and complicated access to reliable and affordable transportation for individuals with disabilities, which is essential for accessing competitive and sustainable employment. Participants in vocational rehabilitation programs often struggle to secure transportation that is both accessible and affordable, hindering their ability to attend work, interviews, training, and other vocational activities. The complexity and restrictive eligibility criteria for transportation services further exacerbate this challenge, preventing many individuals from achieving greater independence and full participation in the workforce.

1. **The intended value and purpose as it relates to vocational rehabilitation. In other words, how will this help achieve “competitive and sustainable employment for all people with disabilities”? (The quote is from the SRC mission.)**

The intended value of this recommendation is to facilitate easier and more equitable access to transportation, which is a critical component of vocational rehabilitation. By simplifying the eligibility process and improving access to reliable transportation, individuals with disabilities will be better positioned to participate in employment and training opportunities. This support will help reduce transportation-related barriers, allowing individuals to travel to job sites, interviews, training programs, and other activities that are essential for achieving competitive and sustainable employment. In turn, it will promote greater independence, enhance employment outcomes, and empower individuals with disabilities to successfully engage in the workforce.

**3.a) Expected Outcome or Deliverable:**

The expected outcome of this recommendation is an improved and streamlined process for accessing transportation services, making it easier for individuals with disabilities to secure vehicles or other transportation options.

**Deliverables:**

* A centralized, streamlined application and intake process for transportation assistance, accessible to all eligible individuals receiving MassAbility services.
* Increased availability of accessible vehicles, vehicle modifications, and ride services specifically designed to support vocational training and employment.
* A comprehensive outreach and education toolkit that includes a transportation resource directory tailored to vocational rehabilitation participants. This toolkit would provide user-friendly materials and guidance on understanding transportation options, alongside a directory listing transportation providers, services, eligibility requirements, and contact information in accessible formats. The goal is to ensure that participants are well-informed and can easily access and navigate available transportation resources.

**b) Expected Impact:**

* **Increased Access to Employment and Training:** By streamlining access to transportation services, individuals with disabilities will have a more reliable way to attend job interviews, vocational training, and work, increasing their chances of securing and maintaining employment.
* **Enhanced Independence:** With improved access to affordable and accessible transportation, individuals will experience greater autonomy in managing their travel needs, reducing reliance on others for mobility and enhancing their overall independence.
* **Improved Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes:** The reduction of transportation barriers will lead to higher engagement in vocational rehabilitation programs, allowing participants to more actively participate in employment opportunities, job readiness training, and career development activities. This, in turn, will result in better employment outcomes and long-term career growth.
* **Reduced Stress and Confusion:** Simplifying the transportation access process and providing clear, accessible resources will reduce frustration and confusion, making it easier for participants to navigate their transportation options and focus on their employment goals.
* **Stronger Community Collaboration:** Through partnerships with local transportation providers, MassAbility can foster stronger relationships with community organizations, ensuring a more holistic and sustainable approach to addressing transportation needs for individuals with disabilities.

**Recommendation 2:**

To address participant concerns about communication, the SRC recommends forming a working group of MassAbility staff from various roles to identify and implement strategies that improve communication with participants throughout the vocational rehabilitation (VR) process.

1. **What problem is this trying to solve or what issue is this trying to address?**

This recommendation responds to feedback from the Participant Experience Survey, which indicates that some individuals experience dissatisfaction or confusion regarding communication with MassAbility staff. Poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, delays in services, decreased engagement, and lower satisfaction with the VR process.

1. **The intended value and purpose as it relates to vocational rehabilitation. In other words, how will this help achieve “competitive and sustainable employment for all people with disabilities”? (The quote is from the SRC mission.)**

Clear, timely, and consistent communication is foundational to building trust, setting expectations, and maintaining participant engagement in VR services. By improving communication, participants are more likely to stay informed, feel supported, and remain actively involved in their employment journey. This fosters stronger working relationships and increases the likelihood of achieving competitive and sustainable employment outcomes.

**3.a) Expected Outcome or Deliverable:**

* Formation of a staff and participant working group to assess communication gaps and propose solutions.
* Development and implementation of strategies such as communication protocols, staff training, clearer written materials, or technology enhancements.
* Creation of feedback loops to monitor effectiveness and gather ongoing input from participants.

**b) Expected Impact:**

* Increased participant satisfaction and engagement.
* Enhanced understanding of the VR process and individual roles within it.
* Improved service coordination and follow-through.
* Ultimately, better employment outcomes for people with disabilities due to more effective collaboration between staff and participants.

**Recommendation #3**

The SRC recommends that MassAbility collaborate with the SRC to develop methods that help participants better understand what MassAbility can and cannot do for them, both at the beginning of their vocational rehabilitation process and throughout their engagement with MassAbility.

1. **What problem is this trying to solve or what issue is this trying to address?**

Many complaints handled by the Ombuds and CAP (Client Assistance Program) arise from participants' misunderstandings about the scope of services MassAbility offers and the limitations of those services. These misunderstandings often lead to frustration, unmet expectations, and confusion.

1. **The intended value and purpose as it relates to vocational rehabilitation. In other words, how will this help achieve “competitive and sustainable employment for all people with disabilities”? (The quote is from the SRC mission.)**

By collaborating with the SRC to provide clear, consistent, and accessible information at the start of the vocational rehabilitation process and throughout the participant’s engagement, MassAbility can help manage expectations, reduce confusion, and foster a better working relationship between staff and participants. This clarity will lead to greater engagement and participation in services, ultimately helping individuals achieve competitive and sustainable employment. Helping participants better understand the scope of services available will also empower them to take an active role in their employment journey.

**3.a) Expected Outcome or Deliverable**

* Development of clear, easy-to-understand materials that outline what MassAbility can and cannot do for participants, provided at the start of the vocational rehabilitation process and regularly updated as needed.
* Training for MassAbility staff on effective communication methods to ensure consistent messaging and reduce misunderstandings about service availability.
* Feedback mechanisms to assess how well participants understand MassAbility's offerings and identify areas for improvement.

**b) Expected Impact**

* Reduced participant complaints regarding unmet expectations, leading to fewer cases handled by the Ombuds and CAP.
* Increased participant satisfaction and trust in MassAbility's services, as clearer communication will help participants better navigate their vocational rehabilitation journey.
* A more efficient use of resources, as participants will have a clearer understanding of the support available to them, leading to better decision-making about which services to pursue.
* Improved employment outcomes as participants will have a clearer understanding of how to engage with the services that best support their employment goals.