2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission:

Analytics and Quality Assurance Department

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Executive Summary

As part of an annual review of MRC services, the MRC Analytics and Quality Assurance (AQA) department conducts the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), a sweeping study investigating the needs of individuals with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in their pursuit of competitive employment. While being required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to perform this process once every three years, MRC has chosen to conduct this study yearly in order to more effectively assess consumer needs and maintain high quality service effectiveness. In a practice of performing modern quality assurance and data analytic methods, this report presents the findings of the CSNA process in order to advise future policy and decision making within MRC in order to best serve consumers and meet their Rehabilitation needs.

The findings included in this report are incorporated into the MRC's section of the Massachusetts Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan, as well as in MRC's strategic planning, and Quality Assurance activities. The findings presented in this report are shared with MRC Management, Staff, and the public, in a continuous quality improvement process. The CSNA process includes a number of areas in order to canvas a broad range of consumer needs using several relevant tools: A detailed analysis of MRC Consumer Demographic data, Needs Assessment Survey, Consumer Satisfaction Survey, Consumer Focus Groups, and the Pre-Employment Transition Survey for Youth. This in-depth process also includes discussion and collaboration with MRC Stakeholders, and the State Rehabilitation Council.

The FY19 survey utilized a sampling frame that included all individuals in active service Status (12, 16, 18, 20, 22, and 24) as of October 15, 2018, consistent with past years' Needs Assessment surveys. Using the 8,054 valid mailing addresses obtained from MRCIS, a link to an electronic survey using the online survey platform Survey Monkey was distributed, opened, and completed by 1,727 individuals for a response rate of 21.44% (a slight decrease from 22.4% in FY2018). The number of survey responses exceeds the amount required to make statistically significant conclusions at a 99% confidence interval. A margin of error of approximately 2.75% was calculated, a result of a decreased possible sample population in the number of active consumers with valid email address.

The main findings of the FY2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment can be summarized as follows:

1. The 2019 CSNA confirmed that the MRC consumer population is highly diverse, and that a majority of individuals being served possess the most significant disabilities. Many of these individuals require multiple Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and supports in order to prepare for, search for, obtain, and maintain competitive employment in the community. A need for services related to transportation and Community Living (CL) was also identified, while the reported need for these CL services declined from previous CSNA results. Respondents to this years' Needs Assessment survey were found to more accurately represent the overall consumer population than previous years, with similar proportions of gender, race/ethnicity, and geographic distribution.

2. This year saw a significant increase in the number of youth participating in the Needs Assessment survey. Nearly one-third of respondents were under the age of 24, with nearly 25% of individuals representing the second largest group being between 20 and 29. This increase in the number of youth responses was reflected in the average education level, primary source of support, and referral source. The average level of education was found to decrease when compared to the FY2018 CSNA, largely driven by the increase in younger individuals still in, or having recently completed, High School. An increase in referrals from elementary and secondary educational institutions was attributed to this rise in youth response, as well as a rise in the proportion of respondents who rely on family and friends as their source of support.

3. Less than 30% of consumers report working with One-Stop Career Centers. Older individuals were found to be more likely to use Career Centers, with an average of 42% of consumers over 50 years of age reporting they utilize services provided by Career Centers. Younger respondents, under the age of 30, were found to be significantly less likely to use Career Centers, with under 20% reporting having been to a Career Center.

4. Just under half of MRC consumers were found to be living with either family or friends. Several different groups were found to live with family or friends more frequently, including Males and those with Psych. or Cognitive disabilities. Rates of homeownership and apartment rentals without subsidy were found to have decreased since 2018, consistent with the reported difficulties faced in the Massachusetts housing market. Non-minority individuals, and those with higher levels of education, were observed owning their own housing most frequently.

5. Email remains the most preferred form of communication amongst MRC consumers, with a majority of respondents choosing this as their primary method of communicating with MRC. While some methods including Cell Phone calls, Face to Face communication, and Traditional Mail fell as preferred methods, Text Messaging increased in level of preference. This increase in Text Message preference was driven by the increase in youth participation in the Needs Assessment survey, with nearly half of those preferring this method being under 30 years old.

6. All VR service areas were found to be important to a significant portion of MRC consumers. Job Placement Services (JPS) continues to be recognized as the most important VR service category (90%), followed by Career Counseling (89%), Supported Employment (85%), Benefits Planning (85%), Soft Skills Training (78%), Ongoing Supports (75%), On the Job Trainings (74%), and Vocational Skills Training (73%).

7. An increase in the reported importance of services related to college and high school education was seen in addition to the rise in youth responses to the 2018 survey. The reported levels of importance of these services by consumers with higher levels of education remained similar to previous years' responses, suggesting that the increase in youth responses influenced the importance of educational support services.

8. Consumers with Physical Disabilities were found to be older on average (45.1 years old) than other individuals, report having higher levels of education, and view education relates services as less important than individuals with both Sensory and Psych. or Cognitive disabilities. Consumers with Sensory disabilities reported that career planning services were most important, including Benefits Planning and Supported Employment Services. Consumers with Psych. or Cognitive Disabilities were found to report services related to education and training as more important than other VR services, including Vocational Skills Training, Transition Services, and services related to Obtaining a College Degree.

9. Importance of VR services was found to differ by consumer's education level. Those with higher levels of education reported services related to obtaining education, such as a high school diploma or GED or a college degree, as less important than consumers with less than a college education. Consumers with less than a college degree, including some college or an associate's degree, said training services and services related to finding employment as most important.

10. Consumers who use Career Centers, or American Job Centers, reported nearly all VR services as less important than consumers not working with career centers, except for those related to training such as Vocational Training or Soft Skills Training. Education related services, and services related to transitioning from school to work, were especially viewed as less important by those working

with Career Centers than consumers who are not. Consumers working with Career Centers were found to place more importance in VR services than other individuals, including Job Placement Services and Supported Employment Services.

11. Youth consumers were found to hold importance in distinctly different categories of VR services from older consumers. Youth reported holding the most importance in all services related to education and transitioning from school to work, as well as services which provide individuals with active work experiences and training such as On the Job Trainings. These training service categories focus on developing consumer's skills while also providing exposure and work experience to those who may have either limited working background or skill development. This include ongoing supports, which are meant to assist consumers in maintaining employment once it is obtained, allowing them to continuing improving their skills in their employment.

12. Minority consumers reported services including Benefits Planning and Soft Skills Training as more important than Non-Minority individuals, suggesting the desire for these individuals to understand how to prepare for their possible employment after receiving services from MRC. Services related to obtaining a College Education were also found to be more important to Minority individuals, specifically African American consumers, who were observed having lower rates of completing college than Non-Minority consumers.

13. The importance of Job Characteristics significantly increased in this year's Needs Assessment Survey, with consumers reporting every characteristic as more important than previous years. Job Hours and Wages saw the most dramatic increase, with both seeing greater than 2.5% increases in the reported importance from 2018. This marks the first time in five years that such a significant increase has been recorded in the importance of job characteristics by the CSNA process. Increases in the importance of Access to Transportation, Job Hours, and Wages, was seen to be driven largely by the increase in youth responses. Youth were more likely to report these characteristics as being important than individuals over 25 years old, and less likely to view things such as Retirement Benefits and Vacation Time as important than older consumers. Minority consumers were found to find job characteristics that rely on having disposable income, including access to transportation and access to health care.

14. A total of 75% of consumers report being either Always or Sometimes satisfied with the effectiveness of VR services provided by MRC in meeting their needs (36.8% Always, 38.2% Sometimes). Consumers living in the South district reported being rarely satisfied with their VR services approximately 5% more frequently than those from the North or West districts. Older respondents were also found to be satisfied with the effectiveness of MRC's VR services more than youth consumers. Individuals considered Transition Age (14 to 22 years old) were observed reporting the highest rates of being rarely satisfied with their VR service effectiveness. Satisfaction with the VR service effectiveness is seen being higher in consumers who are further in the process, with those participating in job search and placement as reporting the highest levels of satisfaction. These individuals are in the action stages of their quest to obtain and maintain competitive employment, and are actively seeing results, report higher satisfaction.

15. Many consumers provided open comment on the positive impact MRC VR services have, including the effectiveness of VR staff. Responses outlined helpful and caring staff who are knowledgeable about the area in which they work, who have strong community and employer connections, who work with consumers individually to accommodate each individual's unique needs. Comments also indicated that services related to education are incredibly helpful in allowing for individuals to obtain the education they need to progress in their career. Consumers reported some difficulties, including some obstacles related to obtaining funding for materials and classes in college settings and in enrolling in training.

16. A majority of consumers report being either Very or Somewhat satisfied with the development of their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Younger individuals displayed higher levels of satisfaction with this process. Satisfaction with the development of an individual's IPE was found to be strongly associated with a consumer's view on the effectiveness of VR service effectiveness, with 98% of consumers who reported VR services as effective as also reporting high levels of satisfaction with their IPE. For the first time, a difference in the satisfaction of IPE development was observed between geographic regions. Consumers in the South District reported lower levels of satisfaction overall, by approximately 7% on average compared with the entire statewide population.

17. Consumers expressed high praise for MRC staff and their effectiveness in the development of each IPE. Consumers reported that staff were knowledgeable and helpful, guiding consumers through the sometimes confusing process. These comments described an individualized process that established unique goals according to each person's needs. More consumers expressed their satisfaction and positive experiences with staff than any other subject. However, several consumers also commented on their lack of personal knowledge about the IPE process.

18. Two-thirds of consumers report Community Living services as either Somewhat or Very important to them. Accessible Recreation Opportunities (57%), and Waiver Programs (46%), were found to be the two most important CL services to consumers. Age was found to play a significant role in consumer's view of the importance of CL services. Younger respondents were found reporting Recreation Opportunities, Waiver Programs, and Supported Living Services as more important than older individuals. The perceived level of importance of these services decreased as age increased. Minority consumers were also found to report all CL service categories as more important than Non-Minority individuals. Additionally, those with Sensory disabilities found these services as more important than those with Physical or Psych./Cognitive disabilities.

19. Consumers reported a drop in satisfaction with CL service effectiveness, down 6.5% from last year. Minority consumers reported these services as effective more frequently than Non-Minority individuals, with Asian and Hispanic individuals having the highest levels of satisfaction. Those with a High School education and some College were observed having higher levels of satisfaction with CL services than others as well.

20. Awareness of Independent Living Centers (ILC) continues to decrease among consumers, following a trend observed over three years of Needs Assessment analysis. Just over one-quarter of consumers report being aware of their local ILC, with individuals residing in the West district reporting the highest likelihood of working with these ILCs. Individuals with Sensory disabilities utilize ILCs nearly 20% more frequently than those with Physical and Psych. or Cognitive disabilities. While consistent with previous year's Needs Assessment findings, the gap between ILC use reported within disability categories has grown between those with Physical disabilities and others by nearly 15%. Youth consumers were found to have similar rates of ILC use to other age groups.

21. Reported transportation use by consumers continues to shift under patterns observed in the past five years of Needs Assessments. Consumers were found to be increasingly reliant on Family or Friends for their transportation needs, a pattern found to be largely driven by the increase in youth responses to the 2018 survey. Over two-thirds of consumers under 20 years old report using family or friends as their primary form of transportation. Those who rely on Public Benefits or Family and Friends as their primary source of support also report using Family or Friends for transportation more frequently. Individuals with more disposable income reported using both their own transportation and public transport more frequently. South District consumers were seen to use public

transportation most frequently, as well as ride share and taxi services. The proportion of those who use ride share services significantly increased, with 12% more consumers report using these services since 2015.

22. Nearly all transportation services, with the exception of Driver's Education and Taxi/Ride Share services, were reported as needed less frequently or at the same rate as prior year's Needs Assessments. Since 2015, the need for both Driver's Education and Taxi/Ride Share services have increased year after year, 2% and 4% respectively. While the need for donated vehicle programs has declined, it continues to be identified as the most needed transportation service by consumers. Different regions of Massachusetts were found to have different transportation needs; the South district was most likely to report a need for transportation services in general, and the West district reported the lowest need. The North and South districts reported the highest needs for Public Transportation and TAP services. Minority individuals reported a higher need for Donated Vehicle services, driver's education, and Public Transit services than non-minority respondents.

23. 39% of consumers indicate that transportation poses a barrier to employment – more than any other year. This is 4% increase from last year. Those with Psych. or Cognitive disabilities reported transportation as a barrier most frequently, while consumers possessing Sensory disabilities displayed the lowest frequency. Source of Support proved to be a factor in transportation posing a barrier to work; those relying on Public Benefits and Family or Friends report transportation as a barrier significantly more frequently than individuals who rely on their own income. Youth response was found to play a significant role in increasing consumer likelihood in viewing transportation as a barrier to work, with youth respondents reporting this to be true greater than 5% more frequently than any other age group. This was seen to be largely the result of possessing a lack of disposable income, and having the ability to pay for transportation such as a vehicle or public transportation. As a result, consumers relying on public benefits and many Minority respondents reported high frequencies of transportation posing a barrier.

24. Consumers continue to report needing services that are already provided by MRC are services that they think MRC should provide and would assist them in their vocational goals. This follows trends and patterns observed in previous years, and suggests that consumers could require more information on the range of services available to them.

25. To assist in determining the statewide need for pre-employment transition services, MRC analyzed statewide data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) (http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/state_report/selectedpopulations.aspx). According to DESE data, there are 173,843 students with disabilities enrolled in public high schools in Massachusetts as of October 1, 2018, all who may be potentially eligible for VR services and/or who may benefit from Pre-ETS services. Based on this data and the high need for Pre-ETS services demonstrated throughout the CSNA as described above, MRC forecasts that its entire 15% reservation of VR funding set aside to provide Pre-ETS services as required under WIOA is necessary (approximately $6.3 million) to provide the five required Pre-ETS services to students with disabilities (work-based learning experiences, job exploration counseling, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in post-secondary education and other comprehensive training programs, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy). MRC forecasts that due to the fact that the entire set-aside is required, that no funding will remain to provide authorized pre-employment transition services beyond the five required services due to the high need for Pre-ETS services as demonstrated in this year's CSNA findings and the DESE data. See page 53 for details on MRC's fiscal forecasting process for Pre-ETS.

26. The most important and needed pre-employment transition services listed by MRC consumers of transition age (14 through 21- up to their 22nd birthday) included internships/work-based learning experiences (92%), followed by learning about

education/jobs/careers (job exploration counseling) (88.7%), transitioning from high school to college/work (86.7%), assistance with college education (85.2%), work-readiness training (85.1%), and college/career counseling (81.5%) and mentorship/peer counseling/self-advocacy (81%). 74% of consumers of transition age indicate they have received some pre-employment transition services from MRC. Some consumers report they receive pre-employment transition services from schools outside of MRC, the frequency of the responses range from 17% for advocacy/peer counseling to 49% for work-based learning experiences.

27. The majority of transition age consumers indicate they are satisfied with pre-employment transition services provided by MRC and their partners in meeting their needs towards future education and employment (71% satisfied/very satisfied, and 91% somewhat satisfied/satisfied/very satisfied), and nearly half of those who are receiving these services (47.3%) indicate these services are effective in preparing them for their future career.

28. A majority of MRC counselors and supervisors (78% Satisfied/Very Satisfied) are satisfied with their ability to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining, maintaining, and advancing in competitive employment based on their skills, interests, needs, and choices. This satisfaction rate is down slightly from 2016. The majority of MRC counselors are generally 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. One area of improvement identified by counselors was the need to improve communication with both consumers and providers. Counselors identified areas that would assist them in doing their job better, such as improved support and resources for job placement, more full time job placement specialists, increased information on job leads for consumers, additional on-the-job training and other training resources, continued enhancements to the MRCIS system, more resources for vocational assessment and vocational training for consumers, and training on policies, procedures, and pre-employment transition services, amongst others.

29. 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. 92% of CRPs indicated they are satisfied with services they provide to MRC consumers. Improved communication as well as information flow between CRPs and MRC staff may assist in improving service delivery to consumers and lead to more successful employment outcomes. Some CRPs have asked for MRC to provide additional information on client referrals for CRP services. Recent vendor expansion undertaken appears to have addressed CRP capacity needs, but there still may be a need for additional capacity in specific geographic areas, client population focus areas, and in particular service areas such as assessment based on counselor and provider feedback. MRC is also using CRPs to roll out new procurements to provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities. Feedback on these services from vendors will be incorporated in the FY 2020 CSNA.

30. A survey of MRC employer partners through MRC's account management system and those employers participating in the MRC Annual Hiring Event indicate a very high level of satisfaction with MRC job placement services amongst employer partners (88% satisfied/very satisfied) including satisfaction with the job performance of employees hired through MRC (93% satisfied/very satisfied). Most responding employers indicated that MRC meets their recruitment needs and would recommend MRC to other businesses for employment and recruitment. These findings suggest that MRC's efforts to work with employers are effective towards accommodating the needs of our consumers and employer partners. It is recommended MRC expand these surveys to other employers.

31. 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 trainings on the MRCIS system, as well as on VR best practices, policies, and procedures, strategies for maintaining communication with consumers and time management, internal controls, WIOA common measures and requirements, trainings on autism, and on pre-employment transition services and transition services under WIOA

32. MRC is increasing its collaboration with other core partners under WIOA to survey and further identify the needs of individuals working with other components of the Workforce system. Some of the identified needs include: interviewing skills, resume development, job specific skills (CVS Pharmacy Technician training, Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Program, Advance Auto Parts, Lowes, Home Depot retail training, customer service jobs skills training, food service training, and human service training). MRC will continue to consult with core partners on the identified needs of their consumers as it relates to accessibility and access to employment opportunities, employment training, and provide employer trainings on disability awareness and job accommodations. MRC is reaching out to its core partners as part of its next needs assessment to gather additional data on the needs of individuals in the overall workforce system to complement and further enhance the CSNA process going forward. MRC will be reaching out to its core partners in FY 2020 to gather additional data on the needs of individuals in the overall workforce system to complement and enhance the CSNA.

Introduction

As required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) must conduct a comprehensive study of consumer needs at least once every three years. In an effort to maintain effective programming and decision making tailored to the relevant needs of its consumers, MRC conducts this study on an annual basis. This year marks the 12th annual Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) of those enrolled in Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. This survey includes questions related to VR services, Community Living (CL) needs, and services exclusive to youth and students with disabilities.

There are two main purposes of this study: to provide agency leadership and management with detailed information regarding the needs of consumers served by MRC, and to fulfill the federal requirements set by RSA to conduct a comprehensive study of consumer needs at least once every three years. MRC and the Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) have determined that conducting an assessment of consumer's needs every year provides the agency with a more in depth and timely set of results and information, promoting more informed decision making by leadership and management.

Conducted in cooperation with the SRC and the Needs Assessment Committee, the CSNA and associated findings are incorporated into the VR section of the Massachusetts' Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan, Strategic Plan, and Quality Assurance activities. MRC continuously works to update and refine the CSNA process and survey in order to gather more relevant and accurate information from consumers each year. This constant revision and adaptation of the study's tools allows MRC to continue staying up to date with best practices and quality assurance methods in an effort to continue providing useful information to the agency relevant to its goals to assist individuals with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The CSNA allows MRC staff to be provided with data, both short and long term, on consumer needs in order to drive internal progress and promote improvements to VR services and related MRC programs. Additionally, the CSNA seeks to identify the needs of: individuals with the most significant disabilities, those from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, groups in the community who may be underserved by MRC, and individuals with disabilities served through the Massachusetts workforce investment system who may benefit from participating in MRC programming. The CSNA also seeks to collect information on and evaluate community rehabilitation programs and the needs of youth or student consumers of VR services. While a separate survey is distributed to students which is tailored to younger consumers and the services they are eligible to receive, this study includes measures investigating the extent to which students and youth with disabilities participate in VR programming as a whole. Services such as Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), and services related to Transitioning from School to Work, are included in this inquiry of student's use of VR services, and the potential opportunities that could be generated through the utilization of these services with local and state educational agencies and institutions under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA).

MRC will utilize the results of the CSNA in order to assist with the ongoing process of creating new goals and priorities for the agency as a whole. These goals are in turn used to guide program development and resource utilization across programs and special projects, promoting growth and service improvement far into the future. The information obtained from this process also assists in the collection of documentation stating the need for federally funded programs, and various intra-agency cooperation's.

The CSNA process is managed by Graham Porell and William Noone of the MRC Analytics and Quality Assurance Department.

Special thanks to those who help make the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment process possible:

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Needs Assessment Survey Methodology

The 2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, conducted by the MRC's Analytics and Quality Assurance Department, utilizes an online survey platform in order to distribute surveys and collect response from MRC VR Consumers. Survey Monkey, an online based survey tool that is both accessible to individuals with disabilities and user-friendly for participants and researchers alike, is the primary method of distributing the Needs Assessment Survey. The 2019 edition of the Needs Assessment marks the 9th consecutive year using this method to conduct this assessment.

The Needs Assessment survey is comprised of 20 questions, including questions related to demographics, living situation, service needs, career interests, and transportation needs. Questions are structured using multiple formats, including yes/no, multiple choice, rating scales, and lists. Participants who choose to complete the survey are given an unlimited period of time to input their responses once they initiate the survey. The survey is available on all electronic platforms, including smartphones, tablets, and computers. Participants are encouraged to complete the electronic survey in order to assist MRC in providing services to better fit the needs of the individuals it serves. For anyone who cannot complete the survey using a computer, phone, or other electronic device, an email and phone number are provided in order to arrange accommodations for the survey to be completed according to said individuals' needs. This includes conducting the survey over the phone and distributing paper survey forms. From the time of original distribution, weekly reminders are scheduled and sent via email to those who have not yet submitted a response.

Questions have been continually added, removed, and edited with input from the SRC, SRC Needs Assessment Committee, and MRC Analytics and Quality Assurance staff members. The Needs Assessment survey is always a work in progress, and questions are adapted to meet changing needs and environmental conditions. Information from previous years' surveys, including feedback from consumers themselves, is used in order to help guide improvements.

In order to collect the email addresses of consumers for survey distribution, MRC conducts a query within its own databases to retrieve contact information for all consumers enrolled in MRC services. Using the MRC Information System (MRCIS), MRC's in-house case management system, contact and demographic information is collected by MRC staff upon each consumer's initial enrollment. This information is retrieved by the MRC Analytics and Quality Assurance staff and compiled into a list for survey distribution. Addresses are then validated and collated for input into the electronic survey platform. This enables the demographic information to be linked to individual responses, enabling in-depth statistical analysis of the response distribution for each question.

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 survey utilized a sampling frame that included all individuals in active service Status (12, 16, 18, 20, 22, and 24) as of October 15, 2018, consistent with past years' Needs Assessment surveys. Using the 8,054 valid mailing addresses obtained from MRCIS, a link to an electronic survey using the online survey platform Survey Monkey was distributed, opened, and completed by 1,727 individuals for a response rate of 21.44% (a slight decrease from 22.4% in FY 2017). The number of survey responses exceeds the amount required to make statistically significant conclusions at a 99% confidence interval. A margin of error of approximately 2.75% was calculated, a result of a decreased possible sample population in the number of active consumers with valid email address.

Additional Collection Methods

The CSNA consists of multiple information collection tools designed by the MRC's Analytics and Quality Assurance team. While the largest tool utilized by this report is the Needs Assessment Survey, which is distributed to all active MRC VR consumers with an email address, several other methods are taken advantage of in order to best collect information and discern the needs of consumers in Massachusetts.

In parallel to the Needs Assessment survey, a Consumer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) is distributed to all active MRC consumers whose cases have been closed in either Status 26 (Successful Closure) or Status 28 (Unsuccessful Closure) in a similar process. This survey focuses on the satisfaction of consumers in the VR services themselves, including questions pertaining to consumers' views on effectiveness, efficiency, staff performance, and availability. The CSS provides MRC a more in depth perspective into the views of consumers' individual experiences during the VR process.

Focus groups are one additional method that is used in the collection of information related to consumer needs and satisfaction. These focus groups are conducted in small settings, and focus on gathering information of groups who have been found to be traditionally underserved in the community. These discussion-based platforms allow for a more informal and neutral collection of information. Other focus groups are also conducted internally, gathering information and opinions from MRC staff on various issues they encounter in the field.

A youth survey for Pre-ETS consumers, students under 22 years of age, is sent to consumers receiving this specific set of services. With a large and steady increase in the proportion of students served by MRC since 2014, this survey has become a particularly important tool in gauging the needs and effectiveness of youth services provided to students across the commonwealth. This survey is provided in addition to the Needs Assessment survey with is distributed to all consumers with an open case and valid email address, enabling an additional level of analysis specifically focused on youth programming.

Both Counselor and Provider surveys are distributed as part of the CSNA process in addition to probes on consumer needs. These surveys include questions about organizational structure and process efficiency, enabling MRC to gain insight and possible suggestions on improving or streamlining cooperation and organizational activities. Valuable insight can be gained from differing perspectives in the VR process, and these responses are part of a larger effort to assist staff and providers in providing high quality and individualized services to all consumers in Massachusetts.

In addition to collecting primary source information from consumers in the form of surveys, demographic data is also retrieved on all MRC VR consumers in order to compare survey and agency demographics. The MRCIS Case Management systems serves as the source of this demographic information, which is collected by MRC staff from all perspective VR consumers upon the application and eligibility determination in order to assist in the planning and development of a service plan for each individual based upon their needs and goals. Analysis is conducted in order to verify proportions of survey respondents and compare demographic landscapes to ensure that the information in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment process maintains similar proportions to the actual population of MRC consumers.

Limitations

The Needs Assessment Survey, Consumer Satisfaction Survey, and Youth Satisfaction Survey, are conducted electronically, which limits the scope of potential participants to those who have access to internet and email, as well as those who can use technology. While these surveys are offered in multiple formats, including by phone and paper copy, the vast majority (> 90%) of responses are submitted through the electronic collection tool, in this case Survey Monkey. Approximately 55% of MRC consumers have indicated having a personal email address upon enrollment in MRC services, which immediately reduces the initial target population by that amount each year. MRC acknowledges that this is a major hurdle in collecting responses from MRC consumers, and has been actively pursuing additional collection tools and solutions in order to include larger proportions of the consumer population in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment process each year.

Other information that is collected through the MRCIS Case Management system relies on accurate input from MRC staff throughout the Commonwealth. Human error is a possibility in the collection of information, both by MRC staff and from survey respondents. However, the information collected from all sources is validated prior to analysis in order to ensure minimal errors or discrepancies. MRC Analytics and Quality Assurance department continues to develop and test new and current methods to overcome this challenge in order to include larger portions of the consumer population each year. All information collected is to remain whole and in its original form.

Findings and Results from FY2019 Needs Assessment Survey

Demographics and Respondents

Demographic information of respondents is extracted directly from the MRCIS case management system, which is then directly linked to the survey responses in Survey Monkey using a unique MRCIS Client ID, and each respondent's provided email address. By performing this step, the need for asking respondents demographics questions through the Needs Assessment survey is negated. This reduces the survey length while at the same time ensuring the integrity of responses for these demographic questions, allowing for a more accurate understanding of survey respondents composition to the whole MRC consumer population.

Geographic Distribution

Responses to the Needs Assessment come from individuals across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, including all three of MRC's operating Districts (North, South, and West). Using the unique Client ID, each response is able to be paired with an MRC District and Area Office where that consumer is receiving MRC services. Survey responses indicate the three MRC Districts are represented in the following way: North District (33.5%), South District (41.1%), and West District (25.5%). These district representations are comparable to the actual ratio of active cases recorded as of June 1, 2019, as outlined in *Table 1*.

Vocational Rehabilitation Status

In terms of Vocational Rehabilitation status, the majority of respondents were recorded as being in Status 18 (Job Training and Education), or 66.4% of all survey responses. This figure represents a continued trend found in previous year's responses to the annual Needs Assessment survey, with Status 18 being the largest group of consumers represented in responses collected. This was followed by Status 20 (Job Ready/Job Search) consumers representing 17.8% of responses, Status 16 (Physical and Psych. Restoration Services) consumers representing 6.9% of responses, and Status 22 (Job Placement) representing 4.6% of responses.

		Count	Column N %
District	South	709	41.1%
	North	578	33.5%
	West	440	25.5%
		Count	Column N %
VR Status	12 (IPE Complete)	55	3.2%
	16 (Restoration)	119	6.9%
	18 (Training/Education)	1,147	66.4%
	20 (Job Search/Ready)	308	17.8%
	22 (Placement)	79	4.6%
	24 (Interrupted)	19	1.1%

Table 1: Survey Responses by District (top) and VR Status (bottom)

Gender

Of the 1,727 respondents, just over half (51.3%) were female. The proportion of female to male responses has become more balanced in recent Needs Assessments. While the ratio among actual MRC VR case numbers indicate more male consumers, the Needs Assessment survey has regularly attracted more female responses. This year's responses shows a 2% decrease in total number of female responses from 2017; a shift closer to the actual demographics of MRC consumers. Additionally,

Age

Age of respondents to the 2019 Needs Assessment survey ranged from 16 to 79, with the largest category of respondents being those ages 20 to 29 (26.7%). This was the largest age group for both male and female respondents, followed by 50 to 59 year olds (18.0%),

30 to 39 year olds (17.3%), and 40 to 49 year olds (15.5%). Youth, defined as individuals age 14 to 24 years old, was the largest age group represented (31.7%) outside of the general 10 year groupings. 26.8% of respondents also fall into the Transition age rage, being between 14 and 22. It has been observed that female respondents of the annual Needs Assessments have a higher average age than that of male respondents. Female participants were observed to be an average of 37.79 years of age, while Male respondents were observed to have an average of 35.41 years.

Race/Ethnicity

While the Needs Assessment does not inquire about respondent's race/ethnicity, this information is collected in MRCIS when an individual's case is opened with MRC. Of those individuals who responded to the 2019 Needs Assessment Survey, a majority of respondents identified as White/Caucasian (78.2%), followed by African-American (18.2%), Hispanic/Latino (9.9%), Asia/Pacific Islander (3.7%), and American Indian (1.4%). The distribution of race amongst respondents is the most consistent with the MRC consumer population as a whole that has been observed in Needs Assessment analysis. While age distribution amongst different races and ethnicities was generally even across age groups, African-American respondents were found to be underrepresented in the youngest age group (Under 20 years old).

		Age Groups							Total
		Under 20	20 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 - 69	70 - 79	
Asian/Pacific Islander	Count	14	24	13	6	5	2	0	64
	% within Asia/Pacific Islander	21.9%	37.5%	20.3%	9.4%	7.8%	3.1%	.0%	100.0%
	% within Age Groups	5.6%	5.2%	4.4%	2.2%	1.6%	1.5%	.0%	3.7%
	% of Total	.8%	1.4%	.8%	.3%	.3%	.1%	.0%	3.7%
American Indian	Count	3	9	5	6	2	0	0	25
	% within American Indian	12.0%	36.0%	20.0%	24.0%	8.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
	% within Age Groups	1.2%	2.0%	1.7%	2.2%	.6%	.0%	.0%	1.4%
	% of Total	.2%	.5%	.3%	.3%	.1%	.0%	.0%	1.4%
African-American	Count	34	94	63	52	50	21	0	314
	% within African-American	10.8%	29.9%	20.1%	16.6%	15.9%	6.7%	.0%	100.0%
	% within Age Groups	13.6%	20.4%	21.1%	19.4%	16.1%	15.9%	.0%	18.2%
	% of Total	2.0%	5.4%	3.6%	3.0%	2.9%	1.2%	.0%	18.2%
White	Count	206	342	224	208	253	110	7	1,350
	% within White	15.3%	25.3%	16.6%	15.4%	18.7%	8.1%	.5%	100.0%
	% within Age Group	82.4%	74.2%	75.2%	77.6%	81.4%	83.3%	100.0%	78.2%
	% of Total	11.9%	19.8%	13.0%	12.0%	14.6%	6.4%	.4%	78.2%
Hispanic	Count	26	61	32	27	20	5	0	171
	% within Hispanic/Latino	15.2%	35.7%	18.7%	15.8%	11.7%	2.9%	.0%	100.0%
	% within Age Groups	10.4%	13.2%	10.7%	10.1%	6.4%	3.8%	.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	1.5%	3.5%	1.9%	1.6%	1.2%	.3%	.0%	9.9%
Not Identified	Count	0	1	2	0	2	1	0	6
	% within No Race Identified	.0%	16.7%	33.3%	.0%	33.3%	16.7%	.0%	100.0%
	% within Age Groups	.0%	.2%	.7%	.0%	.7%	.2%	.0%	.3%
	% of Total	.0%	.1%	.1%	.0%	.1%	.1%	.0%	.3%

Table 2: A breakdown of respondents to the 2018 Survey by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group

Disability Category

Respondents represented a wide variety of disability categories. Within the MRCIS Case Management System, each individual's primary disability is identified and categorized by codes established by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), and are defined within the policy directive RSA-PD-16-01, published September of 2016. A full list of these codes published by RSA and the distribution within the MRC consumer population can be found in *Attachment 6*. These disability codes can be categorized into three primary categories: Physical Disabilities, Sensory Disabilities, and Psych. or Cognitive Disabilities. Psych. or Cognitive Disabilities represented the largest proportion of the respondents with 72.0% of individuals, followed by Physical Disabilities (19.3%), and Sensory Disabilities (8.7%). As consumer age increases, the likelihood of that individual possessing a Physical Disability was observed to increase. These proportions are similar to the overall population of MRC Consumers.

Education Level

Results of this year's Needs Assessment exhibited a drop in reported education levels. 76.5% of respondents were found to have at least a High School Education or GED, a decrease of over 5% from 2017. However, the number of individuals with some college education increased over 10% in 2018, with other categories remaining relatively consistent with previous years' findings: Associates Degree or Vocational Certificate (13.3%), and Bachelor's Degree or higher (17.1%). While the proportion of respondents having obtained up to a High School Diploma, GED, or Special Education Certified Diploma decreased 13.2%, an explanation for this reduction can be observed in the higher rates of individuals enrolling in post-secondary education as described.

	Count	Column N %
Less than HS	406	23.5%
HS Diploma or GED	457	26.5%
Some College	339	19.6%
Associates/Vocational Degree	230	13.3%
Bachelor's and above	295	17.1%

Table 3: 2018 Respondents by Education Level

As expected, younger respondents indicated possessing lower levels of education than individuals who were older. 68.9% of individuals under the age of twenty reported having less than a High School Diploma, a figure which decreased rapidly as the age of respondents increased. As the age of respondents increased, so did their reported average level of education; individuals between the ages of 30 and 59 indicated having the highest levels of education, 75.7% of individuals with some college, 65.8% of those with and Associates or Vocational Degree, and 75.9% of those with a Bachelor's or above. Transition Age, of which the cutoff is 23 years old, has been observed to be the greatest cutoff indicator for possessing at least a High School Diploma or GED which is also statistically significant ($P\ (X^2 > 789.266) > 0.001$), as seen in *Table (4)*.

			RE: Education Level by Group					
			Less than HS	HS/GED	Some College	Associates or Vocational	Bachelor's and above	Total
Transition Age	23 and over	Count	87	345	309	228	295	1,264
		% within Transition Age	6.9%	27.3%	24.4%	18.0%	23.3%	100.0%
		% within Education Level	21.4%	75.5%	91.2%	99.1%	100.0%	73.2%
		% of Total	5.0%	20.0%	17.9%	13.2%	17.1%	73.2%
	14 - 22	Count	319	112	30	2	0	436
		% within Transition Age	68.9%	24.2%	6.5%	.4%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Education Level	78.6%	24.5%	8.8%	.9%	.0%	26.8%
		% of Total	18.5%	6.5%	1.7%	.1%	.0%	26.8%

Table 4: Composition of respondent's Education Levels separated by Transition Age

When Race/Ethnicity was taken into account, Caucasian individuals were found to be more likely to complete a post-secondary level of education, with 18.3% of respondents having obtained a Bachelor's or higher. African-American respondents were equally, or more likely, than individuals of any other Race/Ethnicity to have obtained either their High School Diploma/GED (23.9%), completed some college (20.7%), or completed an Associates or Vocational Degree (13.4%).

Primary Source of Support

Information provided upon enrolling for MRC services includes indicating their primary source of support, or finances, at the time of their application for services. Analysis of respondents cases in the MRCIS Case Management system found those who participated in this year's Need Assessment obtained support in a manner consistent with prior year's survey participants. 41.5% of responding consumers relied primarily on public benefits at the time of this analysis. Family and Friends (37.8%) was the second largest source of support, followed by Personal Income (17.3%), and Other (3.5%). A majority of those who identified their primary source of support as being Family and Friends are considered Youth, between the ages of 14 and 24. Additionally, while individuals relying on public benefits were observed at all age levels, the highest concentration of those relying on public benefits were between the ages of 28 and 60. Minority respondents were observed to rely on Public Benefits slightly more frequently, with Hispanic/Latino individuals reporting the highest rate of dependence (46.8%), followed by African American (42.4%), and Caucasian respondents (41.9%). Additionally, Asian/Pacific Islander respondents were found to rely on Family and Friends as their primary source of support significantly more frequently that individuals of any other race/ethnicity, with over half (56.3%) indicating they rely on this method of support.

Health Insurance Coverage

98.8% of 2018 survey respondents reported having some sort of Health insurance, either from public or private sources. Over half of all respondents indicate they receive either Medicare (18.3%) or Medicaid (59.8%). An increasing number of respondents are reporting possessing other private insurance options, a trend observed in previous year's Needs Assessment. This increase in private insurance possession has been attributed to the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which mandates that individuals have health insurance, and that health insurance be available on the public exchange. Prior to the mandate established by the Affordable Care Act, Massachusetts had in place its own health care mandate which raised the percentage of those with health care above the national average. This has also increased the rate of insured respondents as a whole. No respondents indicated that they were unaware of their insurance status, with 100% of individual's reporting they knew if they had or did not have insurance.

	Count	Column N %
Has Insurance	1,707	98.8%
Medicare Recipients	316	18.3%
Medicaid Recipients	1,032	59.8%
Employer Insurance	61	3.5%
Workers Compensation	4	.2%
PPACA Exchange Insurance	21	1.2%
Other Public Insurance	97	5.6%
Other Private Insurance	490	28.4%
No Insurance	20	1.2%

Table 5: Respondents reported healthcare coverage

Minority respondents, particularly those who identified as African American, were found to be utilizing Medicaid far more than respondents of any other race/ethnicity. 72.3% of African American respondents report they receive Medicaid, 16.5% more than Caucasian respondents ($P\ (X^2 > 37.530) > 0.001$). Additionally, Female individuals were identified as receiving Medicaid more frequently at a level identified as being statistically significant, with 62.1% of female respondents receiving Medicaid. Differences in insurance coverage were also observed between geographic areas. While 59.8% of all respondents receive Medicaid, individuals residing in the North District were enrolled in Medicaid programs 5% less than average while being enrolled in some other form of

Private Insurance more frequently (32.7%). These individuals were also enrolled in other Public Insurance options at a higher rate, 8.3% more than South District Respondents, and 30.9% more than West District respondents. All of these variations between North District insurance coverage rates and the rest of the Commonwealth were found to be statistically significant with greater than a 95% confidence interval.

Public Benefits Utilization

Just over half of all 2019 survey respondents (50.1%) indicated that they receive some form of public benefits, including SSI, SSDI, or Public Unemployment Insurance. This includes 23.4% of individuals receiving SSDI (n = 404) and 17.0% receiving SSI (n = 294). Other forms of public benefits were found to be enrolled in at significantly lower rates than SSI or SSDI, with fewer than 100 recipients being enrolled in any other one particular public benefits program.

Within the population receiving SSDI, significant differences were found in enrollment rates between demographic groups. Female respondents reported receiving SSDI greater than 5% more frequently than males (P (X^2 > 10.648) = 0.001). Large variations were also observed between age groups, with older individuals (40 years and older) receiving SSDI at rates in excess of 25% more than those under 30 years of age (P (X^2 > 266.745) > 0.001). Those with Physical Disabilities also received SSDI at much higher rates than those with Sensory (16.0%) or Cognitive/Psych. Disabilities (18.8%), with 43.8% of individuals with Physical Disabilities reporting SSDI enrollment. Minority individuals reported receiving SSI benefits more frequently; while 15.2% of Non-Minority individuals reported being enrolled in SSI, 20.2% of African American, 22.2% of Asian/Pacific Islander, and 24.9% of Hispanic/Latino individuals indicated receiving SSI benefits (P (X^2 > 18.895) = 0.002).

Primary Referral Source

MRC consumers are referred for Vocational Rehabilitation services from a wide variety of sources. The RSA has established 36 categories that uniquely identify various referral sources, found in the policy directive RSA-PD-16-01. These sources of referral are recorded at time of enrollment for MRC services within the MRCIS Case Management System. Respondents from the 2018 Needs Assessment survey were found to have four primary sources of referral, with two accounting for the majority of consumers. Both Self-Referral (37.9%) and Elementary/Secondary Educational Institutions (21.2%) composed nearly 60% of respondent referral sources. An additional 31.4% of respondents were referred by the following sources: Other source (9.5%), Community Rehabilitation Programs (7.8%), Family/Friends (4.8%), Psych. Health Provider (5.0%), and Medical Health Provider (4.3%). The remaining 9.5% was divided between the remaining 21 sources. These findings are largely consistent with previous year's Needs Assessment Surveys. However, an increase in the overall number of referrals from elementary or secondary educational institutions from 18.4% in 2017, reflects the increase in youth/student engagement by MRC, achieved through a higher level of partnership and cooperation with schools throughout the commonwealth to provide training and transitional services to students and youth with disabilities.

Respondents were found to be more likely to be referred from particular sources depending on their geographic location. Respondents residing in the South District were found to be nearly 3% more likely to be self-referred to MRC than individuals in the West, and 10% more likely than those in the North. Differences in referral rate were also seen between male and female respondents, with more males being referred by elementary or secondary institutions (25.3% vs. 17.3%) and females being significantly more likely to be self-referred (42.9% vs. 32.9%).

Enrollment Period

Consumers were asked to indicate how long they had been receiving services from MRC. Over half reported being a consumer with MRC for fewer than two years (Less than one year = 27.7%, One to two years = 34.9%). Responses were similar to previous year's Needs Survey, with the remaining half indicating they have been consumers with MRC for greater than two years. 23.3% reported having been enrolled with MRC for two to four years, 7.8% five to nine years, and the remaining 4.7% indicate they have been receiving services from MRC for ten or more years.

Consumers Working with MassHire Career Centers/American Job Centers

Vocational Rehabilitation agencies are a core partner of Career Centers under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). In accordance with WIOA, MRC continues to work in partnership with Career Centers across Massachusetts to increase opportunities for consumers to develop necessary and career based skills by developing systems and strategies to share and integrate information on shared consumers. When asked if utilizing the services of One Stop Career Centers or American Job Centers, 29.2% of respondents indicated they were working with said centers. When compared with 2018 survey results, this represents a 2% reduction in the reported utilization of Career Centers by respondents.

Respondents from the South District were found to be more likely to be using Career Centers than individuals in either the North or West Districts, with utilization of One-Stop Career centers in the South representing 43% of statewide Career Center usage (North = 34.1%, West = 23.0%). Additionally, it was found that younger individuals were less likely to be working with One-Stop Career Centers. Individual's under thirty represented only 21.9% of individuals who reported working with a Career Center, while comprising 41.2% of the Survey's respondents. The rate at which individuals reported working with Career Centers generally increased with age, with respondents age forty and up were found to report more consistent usage. Those in Status 18 (Training and Education) were found to be the most likely to be working with a Career Center, constituting 56.4% of all reported Career Center Use.

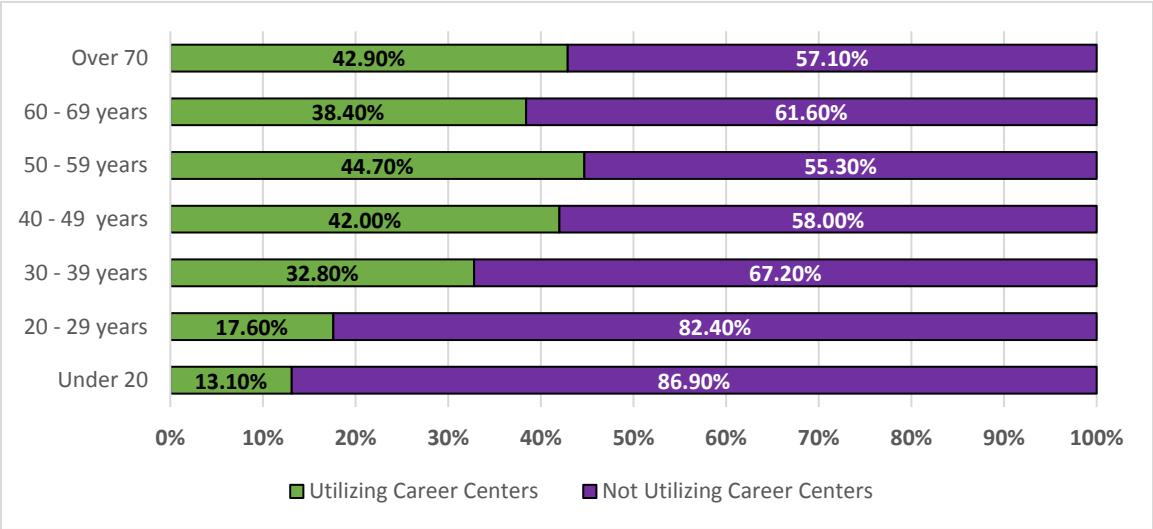

***Figure 1**:* Distribution of Career Center use by Age Group

Utilization of Career Centers was observed to increase in older respondents. Transition age individuals (14 to 22) were found to use these centers significantly less than older individuals, with only 12.8% of those under 23 years of age reporting Career Center usage. Compared with those 23 and over, who used Career Centers nearly 90% of the time (88.7%), this difference in utilization was found to be statistically significant (P (X^2 > 85.397) > 0.001). Respondents between the ages of 50 and 59 were the most likely to use Career Center services, with 44.7% of these individuals using Career Centers.

Consumer Housing Arrangements

In order to assess the living situation of individuals responding to the Needs Assessment survey, a question is posed asking respondents to describe the scenario that best fits their circumstances. Questions are also designed to gauge the importance and need of services such as finding affordable and accessible housing. While housing affordability and accessibility have become areas of concern and importance in the Commonwealth in recent years, MRC has increased its effort in understanding and providing relevant services to individuals with disabilities to assist with finding and obtaining stable housing arrangements.

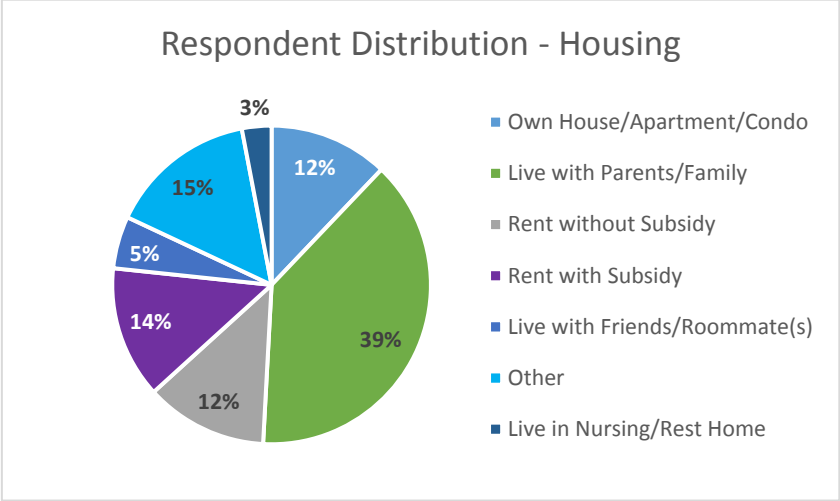

Figure 2: Distribution of respondent's reported Housing Situations

The 2019 Needs Assessment survey found that a large proportion of respondents report living with parents or family (39%), consistent with previous year's results. Male respondents reported significantly higher rates of living with parents or family members (48.8%), more than 10% more frequently than female respondents (35.5%; (P (X^2 > 61.147) > 0.001)). Individuals with Psych. or Cognitive disabilities were also found to be as little as 8%, or as much as 19%, more likely to live with their parents or family (P (X^2 > 114.572) > 0.001). However, reported levels of homeownership (13.1%) and renting apartments, either at market rate (13.4%) or with subsidized rent (14.5%), have reduced as much as 5% from 2018. These reduced rates of ownership and renting follow statewide trends outlining the difficulties Massachusetts residents face in the dynamic housing market, especially among those individuals with disabilities. This highlights the importance of these services provided to MRC consumers.

Minority individuals were observed more frequently renting with a subsidy, while Non-Minority individuals were most likely to own their own house/condo/apartment (15%). Asian/Pacific Islander respondents most frequently lived with their Parents/Family (58.5%), more than any other living situation. Individuals with higher levels of education were also observed to be more likely to own their own house/condo/apartment at a statistically significant rate.

Individuals who selected Other as their response described several different living situations. While some of these responses indicated one of the other presented options, consumers also reported other diverse housing arrangements. These arrangements included living in Sober Homes, Homeless Shelters, or in housing provided by an Educational Institution.

Consumer Preferred Method of Communication

MRC includes a question in the Needs Assessment survey about consumer's preferred method of communication in order to evaluate the importance of communication methods used between staff and consumers. Since the introduction of this question, a theme of consumers requesting increased levels of electronic communication methods has emerged. Improving the quality of communication between MRC Staff and consumers is an important aspect of improving service delivery and effectively serving individuals with disabilities.

			Age Group							Total
			Under 20	20 – 29	30 – 39	40 – 49	50 – 59	60 – 69	70 – 79	
Email Communication	Not Preferred	Count	79	155	100	107	127	52	4	624
		% within Email	12.7%	24.8%	16.0%	17.1%	20.4%	8.3%	.6%	100.0%
		% within Age Groups	31.6%	33.6%	33.6%	39.9%	40.8%	39.4%	57.1%	36.1%
		% of Total	4.6%	9.0%	5.8%	6.2%	7.4%	3.0%	.2%	36.1%
	Preferred	Count	171	306	198	161	184	80	3	1,103
		% within Email	15.5%	27.7%	18.0%	14.6%	16.7%	7.3%	.3%	100.0%
		% within Age Groups	68.4%	66.4%	66.4%	60.1%	59.2%	60.6%	42.9%	63.9%
		% of Total	9.9%	17.7%	11.5%	9.3%	10.7%	4.6%	.2%	63.9%
Text Message Communication	Not Preferred	Count	195	360	238	217	263	110	7	1,390
		% within Text Message	14.0%	25.9%	17.1%	15.6%	18.9%	7.9%	.5%	100.0%
		% within Age Groups	78.0%	78.1%	79.9%	81.0%`	84.6%	93.3%	100.0%	80.5%
		% of Total	11.3%	20.8%	13.8%	12.6%	15.%	6.4%	.4%	80.5%
	Preferred	Count	55	101	60	51	48	22	0	337
		% within Text Message	16.3%	30.0%	17.8%	15.1%	14.2%	6.5%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Age Groups	22.0%	21.9%	20.1%	19.0%	15.4%	16.7%	.0%	19.5%
		% of Total	3.2%	5.8%	3.5%	3.0%	2.8%	1.3%	.0%	19.5%

Table 6: Reported preference of Email and Text communications from MRC by Age Group

As seen in 2018, email communication remains the most popular communication option amongst respondents with over 60% of individuals indicating that email is their preferred method of communication with MRC (63.9%). Several other methods fell in terms of respondent preference, including cell phone communication (28.4%), face to face communication (35.6%), traditional mail communication (16.3%), and home/work phone communication (11.3%). The only exception to the decreasing rate of preference was text message communication, with 19.5% of respondents indicating they would prefer this method. Although a slight increase of 3%, the constant increase of this method as a valid form of communication with consumers is becoming more relevant as the increased use of texting applications, including WhatsApp, Facebook, iMessage, and others are more frequently used by younger generations. This is the third year in a row that this increase in text message communication preference has been observed, as well as being voiced by counselors and MRC staff. Of the individuals who indicated they would prefer text communication, 46.3% of those respondents were under the age of 30 (under 20 = 16.3%, 20 – 29 = 30.0%).

It should be noted that this survey was conducted electronically through email, and that these responses may contain some bias by those who participated, thus this question may contain bias in favor of more electronic communication between MRC and consumers. Future versions and improvements to the MRCIS Case Management system have been suggested to collect this information from all MRC consumers, and not only the individuals who participated in the Needs Assessment Survey every year.

Analysis of MRC Consumer Needs

One of the primary goals of the annual Needs Assessment process is to collect information and analyze the service needs of MRC consumers. This includes asking survey respondents about programs and services currently being provided by MRC, as well as what services that are not currently provided. The importance of these services are rated by consumers (Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Important, and Not Applicable) in terms of their needs to obtain competitive employment. While questions pertaining to this subject include WIOA Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities, a separate survey targeting students age 14 to 22 is distributed (p. 53).

		Count	Column N %
Job Placement Services	Important	1,365	89.9%
	Not Important	153	10.1%
Career Counseling	Important	1,344	88.7%
	Not Important	171	11.3%
Supported Employment	Important	1,286	84.6%
	Not Important	234	15.4%
Benefits Planning	Important	1,295	84.5%
	Not Important	238	15.5%
Soft Skills Training	Important	1,181	77.7%
	Not Important	339	22.3%
Ongoing Supports	Important	1,140	74.6%
	Not Important	389	25.4%
Obtaining College Degree	Important	1,101	71.7%
	Not Important	434	28.3%
Completing High School or GED	Important	434	28.6%
	Not Important	1,084	71.4%
On the Job/Job Driven Training	Important	1,125	73.8%
	Not Important	400	26.2%
Vocational Training	Important	1,113	73.1%
	Not Important	410	26.9%
College Disability Office Services or Support	Important	990	65.2%
	Not Important	529	34.8%
Self-Employment Services	Important	773	50.7%
	Not Important	751	49.3%
Transition Services	Important	699	45.7%
	Not Important	829	54.3%
Pre-ETS Services	Important	623	41.1%
	Not Important	891	58.9%

Table 7: Reported importance of 14 different Vocational Rehabilitation service categories by 2018 survey respondents

Survey respondents displayed their perceived importance of all core VR services in their responses, continuing a pattern observed previously. While some services were identified as being more important to individuals than others, results suggest that the large majority of MRC consumers require multiple VR services while seeking to obtain or maintaining competitive employment; a pattern that has been observed in prior year's Needs Assessments. Consumers were not required to provide a response pertaining to the importance of each service, therefore some individuals did not indicate their opinion in each category. While there was not a 100% response rate for any of the listed services, a response rate of approximately 88.3% (+/- 1.2%) was recorded, enabling an effective comparison between the VR service areas and their reported importance.

Respondents indicated that the most important VR services were Job Placement Services (89.9%), Career Counseling (88.7%), Supported Employment Services to assist in choosing, obtaining, and maintaining employment (84.6%), Benefits Planning (84.5%), Work Readiness and Soft Skills training (77.7%), Ongoing Supports to assist in maintaining employment (74.6%), On the Job or Job Driven Trainings (73.8%), Vocational Skills Training (73.0%), Obtaining a College Degree (71.7%), and Obtaining Services/Supports from a College Disability Services Office (65.2%).

The rest of the services received less than 60% of respondents indicating they view these services as important: Self-Employment Services (50.7%), Transitioning Services from School to Work (45.7%), Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for Students and Youth (41.1%), and Obtaining and High School Diploma or GED (28.6%). These results are consistent with patterns observed in past survey responses, with some exceptions. Within several service categories, differences have been identified in who finds each set of services important, including: between genders, between Races/Ethnicities, etc.

The following analysis of each individual VR Service Category has been organized in order of reported levels of importance:

1. Job Placement Services

Job Placement Services are identified as being the most important service category to 2019 Needs Assessment survey respondents, with 89.9% of individuals rating these services as either Somewhat (16.0%) or Very Important (73.9%). This was identified as being unanimous across demographic groups, with no significant difference in the level of importance being identified through a detailed analysis of survey responses. 10.1% of individuals who responded to this question rated JPS services as Not Important or Not Applicable.

2. Career Counseling

Respondents also identified Career Counseling as a highly important set of services. While 88.8% of individuals indicated these services are important, one discrepancy within a demographic group was identified. All demographic groups held this service category in very similar levels of importance, with the exception of individuals whose primary source of support is their own personal income. While an average of 88.7% of individuals who identified other sources as their primary source of support (Family/Friends, Public Supports, and Other), those relying on their own income identified Career Counseling as important at a reduced rate of 82.9% (P (X^2 > 13.579) = 0.004).

3. Supported Employment

While Supported Employment services were identified as being important by 84.6% of respondents, some demographic groups were found to be less likely to rate them as important. Particularly, individuals with Physical Disabilities and Psych. or Cognitive Disabilities were found to report these services as being less important than those with Sensory Disabilities. Those utilizing Career Centers were also more likely to indicate these services were important them

4. Benefits Planning

Benefits Planning was viewed as important by 84.5% of 2019 Needs Assessment survey respondents overall. Individuals with a Bachelor's degree or higher, however, were found to view benefits planning as less important as a whole; 79.3% of those with some kind of post-secondary education indicated that these specific services are important. While not a large reduction, this 5.2% decrease was identified as statistically significant (P (X^2 > 10.352) = 0.03). Additional discrepancies between Disability Categories was again identified, with individuals with Sensory Disabilities being more likely to view these services as important.

5. Soft Skills

77.7% of all respondents indicated Work Readiness and Soft Skills training as an important VR service category. Younger individuals, and those who reported lower education levels, were more likely to view Soft Skills Training as important. 85% of individuals with less than a High School Diploma, and 88.5% of individuals under twenty years old, indicated this service category is important. As both age and education level increased, the reported level of importance decreased. Only 68.5% of individuals with the highest reported education levels (Bachelor's and above) reported viewing these services as important, while 31.5% indicated they are not important or not applicable. Additionally, those who reported their primary source of support as 'Family and Friends' were found to be significantly more likely to rate this service category as important by nearly 7% (P (X^2 > 16.271) > 0.001).

6. Ongoing Supports

Younger individuals were found to rate Ongoing Support Services as important more frequently, with 86.3% of respondents under twenty years old, compared to 74.6% of all respondents, indicating these as important services. In terms of Race/Ethnicity, individuals who identified as Asian/Pacific Islander rated this category of services as important significantly more frequently (94.1%). Education level was also found to be a statistically significant factor in individual's response about this category (P (X2 > 18.525) > 0.001). Respondents with lower levels of education indicated Ongoing Supports as important more frequently, with those with less than a High School Diploma or GED most likely to find these important (82.3%), and those with

a completed post-secondary education reporting these important less frequently (68.8%).

7. On-the-Job or Job Driven Trainings

On the Job Trainings (OJT) or Job Driven Trainings (JDT) were reported to be important to 73.8% of respondents. Younger respondents (under twenty) reported this category as being important more frequently, with all other age groups being generally consistent in their reported level of importance (69% - 73%). In terms of Race/Ethnicity, several demographic groups found these services to me significantly more important than others; Asian/Pacific Islander, African Americans, and Mixed Race individuals more frequently reported OJT/JDTs as important (P (X^2 > 21.160) > 0.001) than Caucasian individuals by greater than 10% on average. Those who reported their primary source of support as 'Family and Friends' (77.4%) or 'Public Supports' (75.0%) also reported that these services were important more frequently at a rate that was found to be statistically significant (P (X^2 > 17.604) > 0.001).

8. Vocational Skills Trainings

Approximately 73.1% of respondents reported Vocational Skills Training as important. This was largely consistent across demographic groups, with three exceptions: Race/Ethnicity, Disability Category, and Education Level. Minority respondents were found to view these services as significantly more important than Non-Minority individuals (P (X^2 > 18.076) = 0.003), while those with Cognitive or Psych. Disabilities (76.5%) were observed reporting Vocational Skills Training as more important than the other two disability categories by approximately 10% each. Additionally, individuals with at least a Bachelor's degree viewed these services as important about 10% less than those with other education levels.

9. Obtaining a College Degree

1,120 respondents, or 71.7% of individuals, reported that services related to Obtaining a College Degree are important to them. In terms of age, younger individuals were more likely to report these services as important. In addition, those with less education were generally more likely to find these services important; a pattern which has been seen in the past, and is expected given the structure of the educational system. However, those with at least some college education completed found this category the most important out of all the education level demographic groups, with 84.7% indicating these services as important. Differences between Race/Ethnicities were also observed. Caucasian individuals (67.6%) reported these services important nearly 5% less than Asian/Pacific Islander respondents (73.1%), and approximately 15% less than African American (82.6%) and Mixed Race individuals (81.4%).

		Obtaining College Degree		
		Not Important	Important	Total
Under 20	Count	41	173	214
	% within Age Groups	19.2%	80.8%	100.0%
	% within Obtaining College	9.4%	15.7%	13.9%
	% of Total	2.7%	11.3%	13.9%
20 - 29	Count	82	325	407
	% within Age Groups	20.1%	79.9%	100.0%
	% within Obtaining College	18.9%	29.5%	26.5%
	% of Total	5.3%	21.2%	26.5%
30 - 39	Count	60	212	272
	% within Age Groups	22.1%	77.9%	100.0%
	% within Obtaining College	13.8%	19.3%	17.7%
	% of Total	3.9%	13.8%	17.7%
40 - 49	Count	76	166	242
	% within Age Groups	31.4%	68.6%	100.0%
	% within Obtaining College	17.5%	15.1%	15.8%
	% of Total	5.0%	10.8%	15.8%
50 - 59	Count	111	163	274
	% within Age Groups	40.5%	59.5%	100.0%
	% within Obtaining College	25.6%	14.8%	17.9%
	% of Total	7.2%	10.6%	17.9%
60 - 69	Count	59	62	121
	% within Age Groups	48.8%	51.2%	100.0%
	% within Obtaining College	13.6%	5.6%	7.9%
	% of Total	3.8%	4.0%	7.9%

Table 8: Reported importance of services related to Obtaining a College Degree by respondent Age Group

10. Services from a College Disability Office

65.2% of respondents indicated that obtaining Services/Supports from a College Disability Office as being important. Large differences in the frequency of being reported as important was observed between groups within Age Groups and Education

Level. Both younger respondents and those with lower reported levels of education at a level that was found to be statistically significant. Additionally, Caucasian individuals were found to report these services more important less frequently than all other races by greater than 15%. Individuals not receiving Public Benefits were also found to report these services as important more often (P (X^2 > 11.305) > 0.001), with 72.3% responding either Very or Somewhat important.

11. Self-Employment Services

While a total of 50.7% of respondents indicated that Self-Employment services are important, some Races/Ethnicities viewed Self-Employment Services as important more frequently than others. African American individuals indicated these services are important as important 6% more than the next closest group (Hispanic/Latino), and greater than 20% more frequently than Caucasian respondents (P (X^2 > 47.326) > 0.001). Those receiving Public Benefits were also found to report these services as important more than those who do not, with 52.4% of individuals receiving benefits reporting Self-Employment Services as important. Respondents who reported their primary source of support as 'Family and Friends' were found to be more likely to indicate these services as important at a statistically significant level (P (X^2 > 131.612) > 0.001), nearly 30% more than those receiving support from other sources.

12. Transition Services

These services are primarily used by individuals either exiting High School or College, as they first attempt to enter the workforce. While services related to Transitioning from School to Work was reported as important by less than half of all respondents (46.2%), younger individuals (under 30) and those with less than some college, reported these services as important at a significantly higher rate. These services are also more frequently seen as important by individuals who are not receiving services from One-Stop Career Centers (49.3%) and individuals who rely on Family and Friends as their primary source of support. This was also true of individuals who report living with either their Parents or Family.

13. Pre-Employment Transition Services

With 41.1% of respondents indicating they found Pre-ETS as an important set of services, a majority of those individuals were young and/or less educated. 70.7% of respondents who marked Pre-ETS as important were of Transition Age (14 – 22), and 67.7% of individuals had either less than a High School Education (39.0%) or had only obtained their High School Diploma or GED (28.7%). Of those respondents who were actively enrolled in High School at the time these responses were collected (n = 210), 83.8% of those students indicated that these services were important to them. Given that information, it is not unprecedented that 55.5% of those who view these services as important live with their parents or family.

14. Obtaining a High School Diploma or GED

28.6% of respondents indicated that services related to obtaining either a High School Diploma or a GED were important to them. Generally speaking, minority respondents viewed these services as being important more frequently than Non-Minority individuals (21.7%) by an average of approximately 25%. Additionally, individuals with either a Physical or Psych./Cognitive Disability were observed viewing these services as important at a significantly smaller frequency than those with Sensory Disabilities.

Consumer Needs Responses: Patterns and Observations

While some VR service categories had relatively unique frequencies of importance among demographic groups, several patterns emerged during a comprehensive analysis of survey results. The following patterns and observations are discussed in no particular order in terms of frequency or importance, and are framed with relevance to a specific demographic category, not an individual service category. Categorical observations by VR Services can be found on pages 25 – 27 above.

Variance between Disability Categories

While the three broad Disability Categories had varying response representation to the 2019 Needs Assessment Survey, the proportion of individuals indicating each VR service as important was not uniform by any means. Considering several other factors including age, education level, etc., patterns emerged which distinguished some VR services as having more importance to some groups of individuals than others.

In examining the characteristics of individuals with Physical Disabilities (n = 304), it was found that this group of consumers possess a higher average age (45.1 years) than either of the other two Disability Categories. Additionally, respondents with Physical Disabilities were found to have completed more education than other consumers, with 21.6% having an Associates or Vocational Degree ($\bar{x}$ = 21.1%) and 23.9% having completed a Bachelor's Degree or higher ($\bar{x}$ = 16.6%). In proportion to each categories total number of individuals, these figures are significantly higher than what is observed in individuals with Psych./Cognitive or Sensory Disabilities. With this in mind, individuals with Physical Disabilities were found to view services related to education generally as less important. Respondents with Physical Disabilities were found to view services related to Obtaining a High School Diploma/GED as important 12.3% less frequently (P (X^2 > 18.029) > 0.001), Obtaining a College Degree 13.4% less frequently (P (X^2 > 22.171) > 0.001), and Transition Services 18.9% less frequently (P (X^2 > 35.114) > 0.001) than those without a Physical Disability. Individuals with Physical Disabilities were also found to view Ongoing Supports as less important than those in other Disability Category, by about 9.3% (P (X^2 > 9.779) = 0.002).

			Disability Category			Total
			Sensory	Physical	Cognitive	
High School or GED – Important	Not Important	Count	74	247	763	1,084
		% within Disability Category	58.7%	81.3%	70.1%	71.4%
		% of Total	4.9%	16.3%	50.3%	71.4%
	Important	Count	52	57	325	434
		% within Disability Category	41.3%	18.8%	29.9%	28.6%
		% of Total	3.4%	3.8%	21.4%	28.6%
College Degree – Important	Not Important	Count	43	121	270	434
		% within Disability Category	33.9%	39.0%	24.6%	28.3%
		% of Total	2.8%	7.9%	17.6%	28.3%
	Important	Count	84	189	828	1,101
		% within Disability Category	66.1%	61.0%	75.4%	71.7%
		% of Total	5.5%	12.3%	53.9%	71.7%
Transitional Services – Important	Not Important	Count	60	211	558	829
		% within Disability Category	46.9%	69.4%	50.9%	54.3%
		% of Total	3.9%	13.8%	36.5%	54.3%
	Important	Count	68	93	538	699
		% within Disability Category	53.14%	30.6%	49.1%	45.7%
		% of Total	4.5%	6.1%	35.2%	45.7%

Table 9: Frequencies of services related to Obtaining a High School Diploma/GED, College Degree, and Transitions being important to consumers of the three major broad Disability Categories.

Sensory Disabilities are observed to be the lowest incidence disability category within respondents to the 2018 Needs Assessment Survey (n = 165). Several patterns emerged within responses from individuals in this category. Services found to be less important by those with Sensory Disabilities were observed to be mainly related to the planning of an individual's career path, and entrance into the workforce; services designed to help individuals organize themselves and prepare for work. This includes Supported Employment, where those with Sensory Disabilities reported viewing the VR service category as important less frequently than the rest of respondents. 25.4% of consumers with Sensory Disabilities indicated they viewed Supported Employment Services as not important 10.9% more than those within other Disability Categories, an amount that was found to be statistically significant (P (X^2 > 12.963) = 0.002). Benefits Planning was another service area that individuals with Sensory Disabilities found less important, with 23.3% of respondents reporting these services as not important, compared with only 15.5% of consumers who do not have a Sensory Disability. This was also found to be a statistically significant difference (P (X^2 > 7.387) = 0.025).

Those identified as having Psych. or Cognitive Disabilities were found to report VR services more important than those of any other category. Of the fourteen VR services listed in the corresponding Needs Assessment survey question, individuals with Psych. or Cognitive Disabilities were found to report five of them as significantly more important than respondents with either Sensory or Physical Disabilities. The service categories that individuals with Psych. or Cognitive Disabilities found as more important generally did not follow any one theme or pattern, and were instead services that spanned across the spectrum of VR services. These included: Transition Services (49.1%), Obtaining a College Degree (75.4%), Ongoing Supports (77.0%), Supported Employment (86.3%), and Vocational Training (76.5%).

Difference between Education Levels

Education Level of the consumer was found to impact several aspects of respondents' VR experience and needs relative to other individuals. In terms of importance of VR services, this was seen to be especially true. Generally speaking, those with higher levels of education were found to indicate VR service categories as important less frequently. Individuals who possessed a Bachelor's Degree or Higher specifically were found to indicate nearly all VR service categories more important less frequently than all other respondents. *Table 10* displays the only 2 VR service categories which those who possess a College Degree or Higher indicated more important at a higher rate than respondents without a College Degree.

			Education Level		Total
			No College Degree	College Degree	
Job Placement Services	Important	Count	1,121	244	1,365
		% within College Deg.	89.3%	92.8%	89.9%
Supported Employment	Important	Count	1,056	230	1,286
		% within College Deg.	84.5%	84.9%	84.6%

Table 10: Importance of Job Placement Services and Supported Employment by education

Individuals with lower levels of education, particularly those with less than a High School Diploma or GED, were found to indicate several VR services as important more frequently than those with other levels of education. Many of these service categories involved education and skills training. With a majority of individuals who reported having less than a High School Diploma also being under 20 years of age (p. 17), it is not unexpected that these individuals find training and education related services as more important. Given lack of life and working experience, these individuals potentially have the most to gain from services such as these, including: Ongoing Supports (82.3%), and Services related to Obtaining High School Diploma (49.1%).

Differences with those Utilizing Career Centers

MassHire Career Centers, or American Job Centers as they are referred to in WIOA, are meant to centralize services provided by multiple Commonwealth Agencies in order to increase outreach and effectiveness of services available to individuals. While 30% of all respondents indicate utilizing these Career Centers, those who use them and individuals who do not were observed to have differences in what VR services they view as important.

Respondents utilizing Career Centers were found to view multiple VR services as important less frequently than the overall average. These services held a common theme: education level. A majority of the services that individuals utilizing Career Centers found less important related to obtaining, maintaining, or transitioning from education/training at statistically significant levels. Individuals who reported working with a Career Center found the following services as important less frequently than the overall average consumer response: Services related to Obtaining a College Degree (-13.3%), to Obtaining Support/Services from a College Disability Office (-9.0%), to Services related to Transitioning from School to Work (-12.4%), and Pre-ETS (-6.6%). With the utilization of these centers being higher amongst older individuals (p. 21), a decrease in the perception of these VR services as important is predictable, with education levels of older respondents far outweighing those under 23 years of age. Of those over 23, 78.1% of respondents have at least a High School diploma or GED, as seen in *Table 4*.

Individuals working with Career Centers were also observed reporting several service categories as important more frequently than the average across all respondents. Again, these services produced a common theme, which involved training and education. While the services these individuals found more important did not necessarily pertain to formal education, they did involve job training and employment supports. Those working with Career Centers were found to be significantly more likely to find Job Placement Services (93.9%), Supported Employment (89.8%), and On the Job Training/Job Driven Training (78.0%) as important VR services. All of these service categories involve receiving some training or support either on a job site or in direct response to possible work environments and tasks that may be encountered. While these are not exclusively the three categories which individuals working with Career Centers found to be important most frequently, they are the three categories which saw the largest difference when compared with the average level of importance reported.

Youth Needs

Responses to the 2019 Needs Assessment survey illustrate a continuing increase in the demand for services specifically targeting student and youth populations across the Commonwealth. This is in line with MRC efforts to expand outreach and enrollment targeting students and youth for services, specifically: Pre-Employment Transition Services, Transition from School to Work Services, Obtaining Support/Services from College Disability Offices, On the Job or Job Driven Trainings, and services related to obtaining a College Degree. These six service categories were predominantly rated as Very Important or Somewhat Important by younger individuals, particularly those considered Youth (Ages 14 to 24). 71% of Youth indicated viewing services related to Obtaining College Degree as either Somewhat or Very important. Youth respondents also overwhelmingly viewed Obtaining Services/Supports from a College Disability Office as an important service category, with nearly 60% indicating it as Very Important (58.5%).

With a recorded rise in responses from youth who were referred from elementary and secondary education institutions to this year's Needs Assessment survey, a predictable increase in the importance placed upon Obtaining a High School Diploma or GED and related services was observed. Nearly half of individuals under twenty years old indicated that these services related to Obtaining and High School Diploma were either Somewhat or Very Important. However, it should be noted that over one-third (37.9%) of respondents

under twenty also responded that these services are not important or not applicable to them. Several reasons have been identified which could explain this high rate of responses, including students who responded are not in need of these services, these individuals have already completed High School and are either entering the workforce or enrolling in some post-secondary education, or that if enrolled in High School these individuals simply do not require services related to their education.

Younger individuals, those with less job experience and fewer developed skills than individuals with potentially years of working experience, were also found to place more importance in OJT/JDT and Ongoing Support Services. Individuals under twenty reported OJT/JDTs as important more frequently than other age groups (82.8%). These services provide consumers with training at the beginning of their time at a place of employment, assisting with the building of the initial skills required to perform job related tasks. Similar to OJT/JDTs, Ongoing Supports are services designed to help consumers maintain employment. 501 individuals under thirty years old (between 14 and 29) indicated that they found Ongoing Support Services to be either Somewhat or Very Important, representing 32.8% of all responses to this question. Designed to be temporary supports, Ongoing Supports enable individuals to become acquainted with their new work environment and to develop accommodations and/or modifications which allow them to be successful in their position.

Variations between Race/Ethnicity

Within the responses, differences between various races/ethnicities were observed. African-American respondents and those who identified as being Hispanic/Latino were found to view Benefits Planning as important more frequently than other races/ethnicities, with 72% of African-American and 66.7% of Hispanic/Latino respondents indicating Benefits Planning as being Very Important. African-American and Hispanic/Latino respondents were also more likely to report Soft Skills, which includes skills such as mock interviewing and resume building, as being important. 83.2% and 83% respectively reported that these services are important. In terms of obtaining education, minority respondents were also significantly more likely to view Obtaining a College Degree and associated services as important to them, with greater than 80% of all minority individuals (excluding Asian/Pacific Islander) providing this response.

Minority respondents were also found to view Self-Employment services, or services supporting consumers while they establish and maintain their own business, as more important than Non-Minority individuals. African-American and Hispanic/Latino consumers, as well as those who identify as Asian/Pacific Islander and American Indian, were found to rate Self-Employment services as important at a rate between 37.5% and 66.5% of respondents, while 45.2% of Caucasian respondents reported these services as important. Services in this category were also seen to be rated as important more frequently in respondents over the age of thirty ($\bar{x}$ = 55.48%).

It should be noted that while an analysis of service importance by geographic region was conducted, no significant difference between consumer responses in each region was identified. Service importance was found to be statistically even across all three districts in each VR service category no matter respondent's race or ethnicity.

Importance of Job Characteristics to Consumers

As part of the Needs Assessment survey, respondents are asked to indicate which job characteristics they find important when searching for employment. Provided with nine characteristics, including Wages or Salary, Job Hours, and Job Satisfaction, individuals' rate these characteristics either not applicable, not important, somewhat important, or very important. Results from the 2019 survey reveal a reoccurring pattern observed in previous years' Needs Assessment surveys; respondents view all provided characteristics with similar levels of importance.

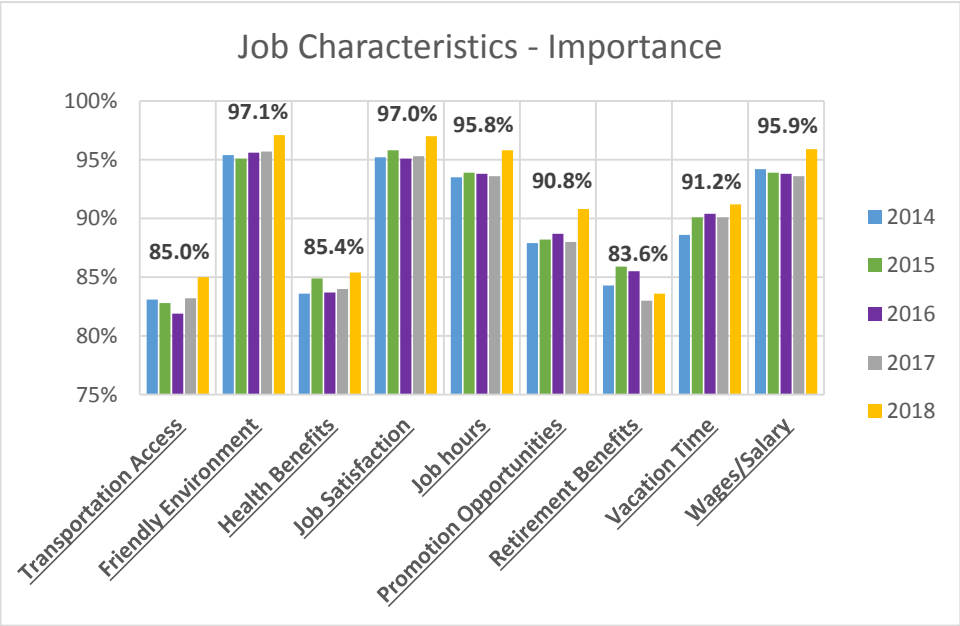

Figure 3: Importance of different Job Characteristics as reported by respondents 2014 to 2018

For the past five years, results of this section of the Needs Assessment Survey have shown little to no change within Job Characteristics in terms of reported levels of importance by respondents, with the exception of this year (2018). Responses to the 2018 survey revealed an increase in the frequency of reported importance for all job characteristics. While these increases are large relative to previous years' stability in reported importance levels, they are not unprecedented.

With a large increase in the number of youth consumers (between ages 14 and 24) responding to this year's Needs Assessment survey, an increase in the perceived importance of characteristics such as Access to Transportation and Job Hours are being driven by these younger respondents, while a smaller increases in the reported importance of Retirement Benefits, is justifiable. 79.7% of youth were found to indicate Retirement Benefits as important, compared to 85.3% of those over 25, a difference found to be statistically significant ($P(X^2 > 7.515) = 0.006$). This included 77.4% of those under the age of 20. Transportation Access and Job Hours were two other job characteristics which were found to be more important to youth consumers than those over the age of 24.

		Job Characteristics	
		Important	Not Important
Access to Transportation	Not Minority	82.4%	17.6%
	Minority	91.4%	8.6%
Access to Health Insurance	Not Minority	81.9%	18.1%
	Minority	93.5%	6.5%
Retirement/Pension Benefits	Not Minority	80.3%	19.7%
	Minority	91.1%	8.9%

Table 11: Importance to three major characteristics by Race/Ethnicity

Following a trend seen in previous analysis of prior Needs Assessment Surveys, middle-aged individuals (30 to 59) were found to place more value and be more interested in retirement benefits and promotion opportunities within employment, especially compared to those under 30 years old. Individuals in this age range were also slightly more likely to view Health Benefits as more important in their job search.

In terms of Race/Ethnicity, Minority respondents were observed reporting that some characteristics are more important than Non-Minority individuals, at rates which were found to be statistically significant at a greater than 95% confidence interval. These characteristics heavily rely on possessing expendable income, and experiencing a stable economic environment: Access to Transportation, Accessibility to Health Benefits or Insurance, and Retirement Options or Pension Benefits. For all of these major employment characteristics, Non-Minority individuals indicated these categories as important between 5.2% and 12.5% less than minority respondents, despite having proportional response rates. This outlines an often overlooked set of challenges and hurdles that individuals from low-income and minority communities face when searching for employment, and suggest that MRC should investigate strategies to help consumers overcome these barriers.

Jobs/Occupational Areas of Interest to Consumers

In order to assess consumer's interests in specific fields of work, the Needs Assessment Survey asks respondents to select occupations of interest from a list of twenty different choices, all of which are general standard occupational categories proposed by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), with the exception of Self-Employment. These occupational areas can be directly linked with Standard Occupational Codes (SOC codes) that enables MRC staff to better investigate employment opportunities in their consumer's geographic location more specific to their interests.

	Count	Column N %
Administrative	378	21.9%
Arts/Entertainment	359	20.8%
Customer Service	337	19.5%
Education	242	14.0%
Finance	128	7.4%
Food Service	191	11.1%
Health	375	21.7%
Human Services	505	29.2%
IT	364	21.1%
Legal	117	6.8%
Management	216	12.5%
Manufacturing	95	5.5%
Repair	128	7.4%
Retail	180	10.4%
Safety	79	4.6%
Sales	137	7.9%
Science	0	.0%
Self-Employment	347	20.1%
Stock Clerk	198	11.5%
Transportation	110	6.4%

Table 12: Indicated level of interest in different occupational areas

In 2012, MRC's Research, Development, and Performance Management Department (now Analytics and Quality Assurance) began developing annual data reports seeking to examine the difference between the types of occupations consumers are seeking versus the types of occupations consumers are becoming successfully employed in. Comparisons are conducted using SOC Codes and Standard Occupational Code group categories of the vocational goals of current actively served consumers (Statuses 12-22) compared to the SOC code and SOC group categories of the jobs consumers are being placed into (Status 22) as well as successfully employed in (90 days or more of employment or Status 26). Analysis was conducted on a statewide, regional, and area office basis for SFY2018.

Additionally, this information was compared with labor market information, and information on jobs in demand, to compare jobs consumers are interested in, and being placed into, with the demand for these jobs in Massachusetts based on the most recent data available. These findings are being used to assist MRC counselors and placement staff in better matching consumers' job interests and skills to available job opportunities and occupational areas. In addition, these findings suggest that some consumers may not have the skills to obtain a job in a particular occupational area. These findings can assist MRC counselors in directing consumers to education and skills training services which may assist them in obtaining jobs in some of these areas. Detailed findings have been drafted and shared with MRC senior management and placement staff.

MRC believes that analyzing and looking at labor market information is useful to ensure a quality and effective VR program. MRC's robust account management system is designed for us to hear first from employers regarding their specific labor market needs. MRC has several employer advisory boards strategically located across the Commonwealth through which we receive labor market information.

MRC also develops labor market summaries on a metropolitan, state, and national level, which are shared with staff on a monthly basis. As of September 2019, data from the Massachusetts Office of Labor and Workforce Development indicated the state's seasonally adjusted employment rate was 2.9%. This is 0.6% below the national rate of 3.5% from the same time period. The state and federal unemployment rate have both dropped slowly over past 12 months. The state and federal unemployment rate recently became closer after a period when the state unemployment rate was further apart (lower) from the federal rate. Since the 2008-2010 recession, Massachusetts has an unemployment rate lower than the Federal rate. In September 2019, Massachusetts gained 10,300 jobs and has achieved a net gain of 51,200 jobs (or 1.4%) in the past year. There is somewhat of a spread between unemployment rates across

Massachusetts between and within geographical statistical areas, although the spread has narrowed considerably in the past five years, ranging from 2.2% in Nantucket County, 2.3% in the Framingham metropolitan division, to 2.5% in the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy metropolitan division, to 3.2% in the Brockton-Bridgewater-Easton NECTA Division and Leominster-Gardner MSA, to 3.3% in the Springfield NECTA, 3.7% in the Lawrence-Methuen-Salem (NH) metropolitan division and 4.0% in the New Bedford NECTA. Based on Workforce Investment Area (WIA), unemployment rates range from 3.2% in Metro North WIA to 5.6% in the Hampden County WIA. Massachusetts has in past years had one of the largest spreads between the lowest and highest unemployment rates of all national metropolitan employment divisions. This has changed over the past several years. The good news is that the unemployment rate remained steady or fell in 2018 and 2019 across most geographical statistical areas in Massachusetts.

MRC continues to work to develop ways to continue to increase and expand its use of labor market information to improve services to MRC consumers and employer partners and increase employment of individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts. MRC is also developing strategies to collaborate with other WIOA core partners to increase usage and sharing of Labor Market information, including sharing Labor Market information with consumers through a dashboard known as Workforce Connect, which is in preliminary development.

MRC Vocational Rehabilitation Service Effectiveness

Needs Assessment respondents are asked to evaluate how effective MRC is in meeting their VR service needs. To measure the perceived effectiveness of MRC service implementation, respondents are asked to rate the VR services they received on a 1 to 4 scale (Always, Sometimes, Rarely, Unsure/Don't Know). *Table 13* details respondents rating of MRC services meeting their VR needs in 2018, and for the previous 3 years beginning in 2015.

36.8% of 2018 Needs Assessment survey respondents rated MRC as 'Always' meeting their VR service needs. This figure has dropped 8.9% since 2015, when 45.7% of individuals indicated that MRC was meeting their VR service needs. This also represents a 6.0% drop in respondents indicating MRC 'Always' meets their service needs from 2017. The number of respondents who both identified MRC as 'Sometimes' (38.1%) or 'Rarely' (17.6%) meeting their VR Service needs has increased, 5.8% and 3.0% respectively, in the past 4 years. The overall rate of individuals reporting that their VR needs are met by VR services (Always or Sometimes) decreased 2.8% from 2017 to 2018. This is the largest year to year decrease in the satisfaction VR service effectiveness of recorded by the Needs Assessment, and the largest decrease in those reporting 'always' being satisfied.

	Effectiveness of VR Services				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	Variance
Always	45.7%	47.0%	42.8%	36.8%	-8.9%
Sometimes	32.3%	32.9%	34.9%	38.1%	5.8%
Rarely	14.6%	12.5%	15.0%	17.6%	3.0%
Unsure/Don't Know	7.4%	7.7%	7.4%	7.5%	0.1%

Table 13: Reported effectiveness of MRC in meeting respondent VR service needs

Respondents in the South District were found to be more likely to indicate that MRC services 'Rarely' met their VR service needs, with 21.6% of respondents from this region, or 9.1% of all respondents (n = 131) providing this response (P (X^2 > 15.979) = 0.014). Individuals from the West District were found to have the highest frequency of high satisfaction with VR services meeting their needs, with 41.2% of individuals rating MRC's service implementation as 'Always' meeting their VR needs.

In terms of age, younger consumers provided a rating of MRC 'Always' meeting their VR service needs at a lower rate , than individuals of any other age group which was found to be statistically significant. 25.9% of respondents under 20 years old reported that their VR service needs are 'Always' met (P (X^2 > 38.050) = 0.004). Individuals in this age group were also found to have the highest rate of responses indicating they are not sure about the effectiveness of MRC in meeting their needs, with 14.8% (n = 48). This is 6.8% higher than the average frequency of these responses across all age groups. Specifically, individuals categorized as transition age (14 to 22) had the lowest rating of MRC services meeting their needs, with 28.2% overall rating their experience as 'Always' having their needs met (P (X^2 > 20.862) > 0.001). The observed general decrease in overall satisfaction of MRC's VR Service implementation, and particularly the decrease in youth satisfaction, may be in part the result large number of Status 28 closures in Fiscal Year 2018, and a decrease in funding for specific MRC VR programs. Open-ended comments indicate that many consumers were disappointed in the constant lack of funding availability, especially in regards to financial assistance for educational purposes.

Lower rates of respondents viewing MRC as meeting their VR needs were also observed in individuals with lower rates of education. 42.9% of individuals with less than a High School education reported their needs as being met 'Sometimes,' while 29.0% reported their needs being met 'Always.' This is similar to the rates observed by those with some college, with 35.9% reporting their needs are 'Always' met. As reported above, a majority of students within these two education levels were actively pursuing their education at the

time of this survey, not employment. Many of these individuals also lie within Status 18, or training and education, where they receive services primarily surrounding their educational pursuit.

When VR status was taken into account, it was found that as individuals progress through the VR process, from completion of their IPE to successfully being placed in employment, the general level of satisfaction with MRC services in meeting their needs increased, as seen in *Table 14*. Respondents who have just begun receiving services corresponding to their IPE or Individual Plan for Employment (Status 12) have the lowest reported view of the effectiveness of MRC services with 26.3% saying their needs are 'Always' met. Individuals in this stage of the VR process have only just formulated goals and interests with their counselor, working with MRC staff to determine which services they will receive in order to put them on the path to obtaining gainful and competitive employment. Beginning in Status 16 and beyond, individuals are participating in programs and services which provide physical or Psych. restoration (Status 16), training and education (Status 18), and job searching (Status 20). These three statuses provide consumers with the skills and education required to eventually set out on their job search with their counselor. This process also enables the counselor and MRC staff to become more acquainted with each individual's strengths, allowing them to better assist with placing them in an employment environment that suits them. Reported view of the effectiveness of VR services provided to individuals in these three statuses have approximately the same rates of those who view MRC as 'Always' meeting their needs.

			Effectiveness of VR Services				
			Unsure/Don't Know	Rarely	Sometimes	Always	Total
VR Status	12	Count	6	5	17	10	38
		% within VR Status	15.8%	13.2%	44.7%	26.3%	100.0%
		% within MRC Effectiveness	5.5%	2.0%	3.1%	1.9%	2.6%
		% of Total	.4%	.3%	1.2%	.7%	2.6%
	16	Count	10	22	31	35	98
		% within VR Status	10.2%	22.4%	31.6%	35.7%	100.0%
		% within MRC Effectiveness	9.2%	8.7%	5.6%	6.6%	6.8%
		% of Total	.7%	1.5%	2.1%	2.4%	6.8%
	18	Count	81	171	367	354	973
		% within VR Status	8.3%	17.6%	37.7%	36.4%	100.0%
		% within MRC Effectiveness	74.3%	67.3%	66.7%	66.5%	67.3%
		% of Total	5.6%	11.8%	25.4%	24.5%	67.3%
	20	Count	8	47	104	100	259
		% within VR Status	3.1%	18.1%	40.2%	38.6%	100.0%
		% within MRC Effectiveness	7.3%	18.5%	18.9%	18.8%	17.9%
		% of Total	.6%	3.3%	7.2%	6.9%	17.9%
	22	Count	<5	7	23	28	61
		% within VR Status	n<5	11.5%	37.7%	45.9%	100.0%
		% within MRC Effectiveness	n<5	2.8%	4.2%	5.3%	4.2%
		% of Total	n<5	.5%	1.6%	1.9%	4.2%

Table 14: Perceived level of MRC effectiveness in meeting respondents' VR needs by VR Status

It should be noted, however, that there is a large increase in the frequency of those who view their needs as 'Sometimes' being met in 2018. As consumers approach their search for employment and eventual placement at a place of employment, there is a stark increase in those who have their needs met 'Sometimes' and a large decrease in the frequency of respondents reporting they either are 'Unsure/Don't Know' or have their needs 'Rarely' met. The number of individuals reporting their needs are 'Sometimes' met by MRC increased approximately 9% between Status 16 and Status 20 individuals.

In open ended comments, individuals indicated a number of service areas that they believed MRC was either effective or ineffective in serving their VR needs. Of the 1,429 who provided a response to this question, 627 respondents provided comments. Many of these comments reflected MRC consumer experiences with VR services and staff members throughout the commonwealth. As in previous years, several themes and subjects were relatively prominent in these open-ended responses.

	Count
Financial Assistance	30
Education	91
Difficulty Finding Employment	18
Career Counseling	12
Assistive Technology	7
Helpful Community Connections	9
Dissatisfied	4
Lack of Communication	76
Helpful Staff	14
Job Readiness	19
Personal Health	17
Positive Communication	28
Job Experience	4
Helpful Services	52
Transition Services	8
Soft Skills	8
Found Own Employment	9
Helpful and Knowledgeable Staff	65
High Turnover	16
Individualized Services	13
Unhelpful staff	11
Transportation services	5

Table 15: Themes observed in open comments related to the service effectiveness

More than 50 consumers indicated that they experienced 'Helpful and Knowledgeable Staff' and 'Helpful Services.' These comments reflect the positive impact made by MRC VR Staff on consumers:

- "MRC has provided services to assist me with my career needs from the beginning. They helped me receive my driver's license which helped me by being self-sufficient with transportation. They recently helped me obtain a job by referring me to force to have extra help finding a job that fits my needs."
- "MRC is a huge help, I work with the public, and often hear how helpful and important people think MRC is."
- "[My counselor] has been great helping me with my complicated situation and we have made much progress..."
- "Every time I go to Mass Rehab office, I find [my counselor] is very helpful to me. He gives me advice about my major and beyond that such as searching for other opportunities. "
- "[My counselor] is the best! She's been a positive role-model and great advocate."

The theme with the most comments was education and education related services. An increase in the number of comments on these services was observed from 201, which was mainly driven by the increase in youth respondents to the 2019 Needs Assessment survey:

- "MRC helps with education costs and sometimes transportation costs so I can reach my goal and eventually support myself. There is no other agency that has provided the help that MRC has given me and let me take this opportunity to say thank you!"
- "MRC was extremely helpful in giving advice and financial assistance that led to going back to school after having taken a long time off. I am enjoying the drug and alcohol counseling program at UMASS and am looking forward to working in the field."
- "I started working with MRC my senior year in high school at West Roxbury High and since then I've been helped when needed. With College so far only! Lately I have been meeting up with my worker to talk more on some of these things listed (mainly job searching)."
- "MRC has always provided me with some amount of grant money to support my educational endeavors."
- "I have been followed by MRC since high school. MRC has helped me obtain a certificate for an entry level job and also my associate's degree. I am currently working with MRC VAC to obtain a job."

Several themes also emerged by some consumers indicating their various reasons for being dissatisfied with the effectiveness of MRC's VR services. These include lack of funding, lack of communication with MRC staff, and high turnover of VR staff and office closures:

- "I was told the funds would be granted in June 2018. I called my caseworker in June and was told that MRC could only provide $1000.00 per student."
- "Not always easy to get in contact with whom you feel can actually help you."
- "My caseworker left due to going back to school-I'm not even sure who my new caseworker is and I was told if I wanted assistance I had to be the one to reach out…"

Satisfaction with the IPE Process

After being referred to and determined eligible for MRC services, consumers work with MRC staff to formulate an IPE, or Individual Plan for Employment. Each consumer's IPE contains a plan for their service path with MRC that includes unique goals and service recommendations that will build each individual's skills and assist them in finding competitive employment. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the process of generating their IPE on a 1 to 4 scale (Always, Sometimes, Rarely, Unsure/Don't Know).

Overall, 75.3% of all respondents (n = 1,068) are satisfied with the IPE process. This includes 42.4% 'Very Satisfied' and 32.9% 'Somewhat Satisfied.' Generally speaking, the frequency of those who reported being 'Very Satisfied' fluctuated very little or within the expected range across most demographic groups. There were some varying levels of satisfaction that will be noted below:

Older individuals, particularly those over the age of 50, were observed to have a lower overall level of satisfaction, either Very or Somewhat Satisfied. Respondents under the age of 50 (14 to 49) reported an average of 76% either Somewhat or Very Satisfied, while individuals over 50 (50 to 79) were satisfied approximately 4% less frequently.

Statistically significant differences by geographic regions were found during analysis, with those in the South District reporting higher levels of dissatisfaction ($P(X^2 > 19.764) = 0.003$). While a statewide level of dissatisfaction (somewhat or very dissatisfied) was 24.7%, respondents from the south district indicated that they were dissatisfied approximately 7% more frequently (30.3%). This marks the first time MRC has identified a large difference in the level of IPE satisfaction between geographic regions. This will continued to be closely monitored following the release of this report, and investigated further.

Satisfaction with IPE development is observed to be strongly associated with reported satisfaction with VR Service effectiveness. 98.1% of individuals who reported viewing VR Services as effective All of the Time indicated they were either Very (79.7%) or Somewhat Satisfied (18.4%) with the IPE development process, while 79.1% of those who reported VR Services as being Rarely effective said they were either Somewhat (33.5%) or Very Dissatisfied (45.6%) with the IPE development process ($P(X^2 > 896.000) > 0.001$).

	Count
Satisfied	57
Unaware	43
Positive Staff Experience	54
Positive Experience	11
Lack of Communication	17
Lack of Funds	16
Individualized	9
High Turnover	4
Helpful Staff	30
Health Difficulties	8
Found Own Employment	4
Dissatisfied	8
Helpful Services	16
Perusing Education	14
Helpful Services	14

Table 16: Themes observed in open comments related to the service effectiveness

Respondents were also asked to provide comments on the IPE process. While some comments indicated that individuals may have experienced some difficulties, a majority of comments indicated that they had positive experiences, including helpful and informative staff interactions and in-depth individualized IPE development:

- "Kind, friendly, don't judge. Make sure [consumers] understand what is expected of us. [Counselors] work closely to help us gain our goals or searches… Great people working there."
- "[My counselor] has been more than willing to help me as needed."
- I felt like, and still feel like, counselors at MRC are very [knowledgeable] about programs for people with disabilities. They are also familiar with what jobs could be best for people looking for employment. They take the time to get to know you so you do not feel alone in reaching whatever goals you try to set for yourself."

Some respondents indicated in their comments that they were unaware of the IPE process, something that has been observed in past years' Needs Assessment surveys. The content of these comments suggest that individuals may not be fully informed on what an IPE is, and how it relates to their VR services. Comments indicate that reasons for this vary, including being under informed and having not reached the IPE stage of their VR services due to education or other factors. These comments suggest that the IPE process should be better defined.

- "I don't even know what my IPE is all about."
- "I don't even know what this is but that may be because I am focused on education right now more than obtaining employment right away."
- "I don't even understand what this is…"

Community Living Service Needs

		Count	Column N %
Accessible Recreation	Important	757	57.2%
	Not Important	567	42.8%
Affordable Housing	Important	879	66.0%
	Not Important	453	34.0%
Assistive Technology	Important	470	35.4%
	Not Important	857	64.6%
Statewide Head Injury Program	Important	356	26.8%
	Not Important	973	73.2%
Accessible Housing	Important	442	33.4%
	Not Important	880	66.6%
Home Care Assistance Program	Important	515	38.8%
	Not Important	811	61.2%
Waiver Programs	Important	611	45.9%
	Not Important	719	54.1%
Personal Care Assistant	Important	320	24.1%
	Not Important	1,008	75.9%
Supported Living	Important	511	38.7%
	Not Important	810	61.3%
Vehicle Modification	Important	324	24.5%
	Not Important	1,000	75.5%

Table 17: Reported importance of 10 different Community Living service categories by 2018 survey respondents

While the main purpose of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment is to evaluate the needs of Vocational Rehabilitation consumers, MRC asks respondents about their need for Community Living services as well. Community Living services can be vital in enabling consumer's participation in their community, securing accessible housing and transportation, as well as promoting healthy living. Similar to Needs Assessment survey questions related to VR service needs, consumers are asked to rate CL services on a scale of 1 to 4, 1 being Very Important, 2 being Somewhat Important, 3 being Not Important, and 4 being Not Applicable. With an average response rate of approximately 76.8%, responses to this question were found to be statistically significant and reliable for accurate analysis.

Of the ten CL need categories respondents are asked about, Affordable Housing is rated as important the most frequently with 66.0% of individuals reporting this as a need that is either Very or Somewhat Important. This is followed by: Accessible Recreation Opportunities (57.2%), Waiver Programs (45.9%), Home Care Assistance Program (38.8%), Supported Living (38.7%), Assistive Technology (35.4%), Accessible Housing (33.4%), Statewide Head Injury Program (26.8%), Vehicle Modification (24.5%), and Personal Care Assistant (24.1%).

Age appears to play a significant role in how important these service categories are to respondents. Younger respondents reported higher levels of importance for a majority of the ten service categories with a level that was identified as being statistically significant. Three service categories had higher needs among younger respondents, with the levels of importance reducing as the age of respondents increased: Recreation Opportunities, Waiver Programs, and Supported Living Services. Of these, Accessible Recreation Opportunities was indicated as the most important overall. Individuals under the age of thirty reported this category important most frequently, with 66.0% consumers 20 - 29, and 62.1% of those under twenty, indicating these services are either Very or Somewhat Important. The difference in importance between the youngest and oldest respondents was found to be statistically significant ($P(X^2 > 23.176) > 0.001$), in addition to the other two CL service categories noted previously.

Minority respondents were found to report all of the listed CL service categories as more important than Non-Minority Individuals. Specifically, African American and Hispanic/Latino individuals reported importance of these services at what in some cases, was found to be greater than double the rate of Caucasian respondents. This trend has been observed in previous year's Needs Assessment survey results. The Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP), Personal Care Assistant (PCA), and Vehicle Modifications all had greater than a 50% difference in the reported rate of importance between minority and Caucasian respondents.

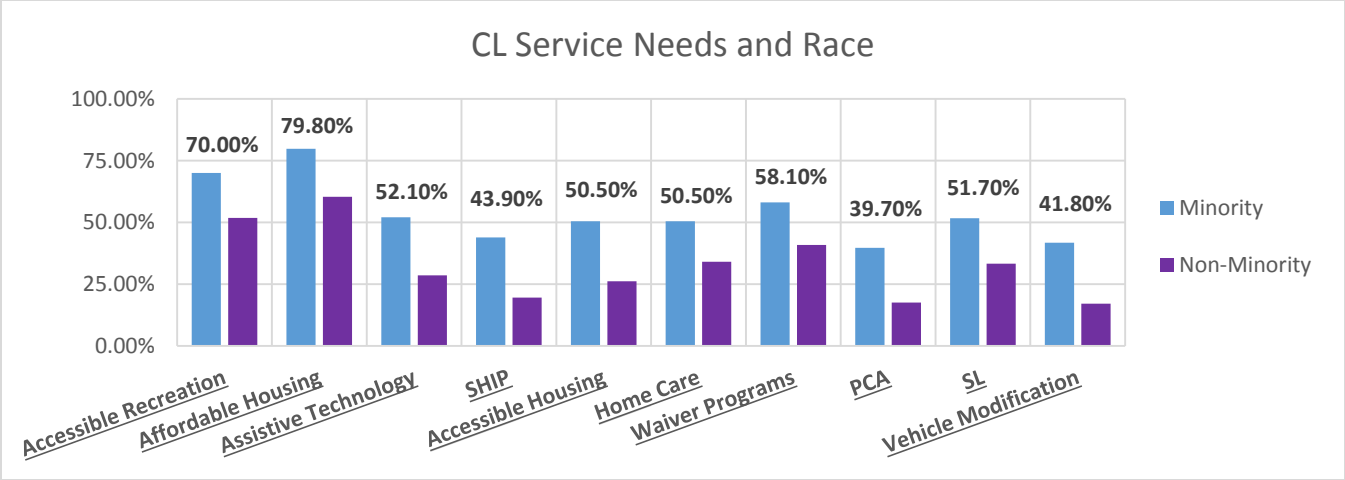

Figure 4: Levels of CL service importance in Minority and Non-Minority individuals

As observed for several consecutive years, differences between the reported levels of importance of CL services in men and women was observed to be significant within the responses on several CL service categories. While no service category had identical results between men and women, a majority of the service categories were identified as possessing relatively similar levels of interest between men and women. Two CL service categories were an exception to this: Assistive Technology (AT) and Accessible Housing. Both of these categories were viewed as important significantly more frequently by women than men, with 56.3% of women viewing AT as important, and 57% viewing Accessible Housing as important.

Several CL service categories were also found to be viewed as more important to some disability categories than others. Individuals with Sensory Disabilities in particular were observed reporting multiple CL service categories as more important than those with Physical or Psych./Cognitive disabilities at a significant level. AT, SHIP services, Accessible Housing, Personal Care Assistants, and Vehicle Modification services were all found to be viewed as important more frequently by those with Sensory Disabilities at a level of over 95% confidence. All other services saw the level of importance as relatively proportionate, with no one disability category reporting a significantly higher level of importance than another.

A majority of the CL services were found to be viewed as relatively equally important by individuals regardless of their primary source of support. Those relying on public benefits reported several CL service categories as more important, all of which related to housing or home care. Affordable Housing, Accessible Housing, Personal Care Assistant, and Home Care services were all found to be reported as important by individuals primarily relying on public benefits as significantly higher levels.

MRC Community Living Service Effectiveness

As with the effectiveness of VR services, respondents are asked to rate their perceived effectiveness of CL services in meeting their independent living needs using a four-point scale (Extremely, Somewhat, Not at All, Not Applicable). Approximately 60% of respondents to the 2018 Needs Assessment survey rated CL services as either Extremely (30.5%) or Somewhat (29.4%) meeting their independent living needs. This includes a sharp decrease in the frequency of respondents rating CL services as being extremely effective since 2015.

	Effectiveness of CL Services				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	Variance
Extremely	37.9%	36.7%	36.3%	30.5%	-7.4%
Somewhat	28.5%	27.5%	28.7%	29.4%	0.9%
Not At All	8.6%	9.4%	8.3%	11.2%	2.6%
Unsure/Don't Know	25.0%	26.5%	26.8%	28.9%	3.9%

Table 18: Reported effectiveness of MRC in meeting respondent VR service needs

Several differences in reported effectiveness were observed within demographic groups. Minority respondents were found to rate CL services as being extremely effective the most frequently, especially Asian (40.9%) and Hispanic (40.7%) individuals. African American (31.3%) and Caucasian (28.1%) respondents were found to rate these services as extremely effective at a much lower rate identified as being statistically significant (P (X^2 > 18.400) = 0.031). Differences in the frequency both somewhat and not at all ratings were found to be much smaller (Not at All [0.079, 0.124]).

Individuals with specific levels of education were found to be satisfied with the effectiveness of CL services at different rates, however no pattern was observed in terms of levels of education and satisfaction with CL services. Individuals with a High School education or GED were found to have the highest levels of satisfaction, with 35.1% of individuals reporting they were extremely satisfied with the effectiveness of CL services. Consumers with some college were the most likely to report being satisfied with the effectiveness of these services, with 65.9% of individuals reporting being either Somewhat or Extremely satisfied (P (X^2 > 27.079) = 0.008).

Other demographic groups reported generally even levels of satisfaction with CL service effectiveness, and no other notable differences were observed in computing cross tabulations between these groups and their levels of satisfaction.

Consumer Awareness of Independent Living Centers

Independent Living Centers (ILCs) are independent, not for profit, organizations that work in collaboration with MRC's Community Living (CL) programs. ILCs provide services and advocacy for individuals with disabilities, promoting those working with their organizations to live to their own highest level of independence either with family or in the community. Some services that ILCs provide include skills training and programming, accessible housing searches and referrals, and consumer advocacy.

Among respondents to the 2019 Needs Assessment survey, approximately 25% of individuals were aware of the ILC in their community, which represents a slight decrease in previous years' results. In 2017, 27% of individuals reported they were aware of their local ILC, and 30% in 2016. Those residing within the West District were most likely to have knowledge of their local ILC, with 32.7% of individuals in this geographic area reporting they knew of their local organization ($P(X^2 > 11.102) = 0.004$).

There was also a significant difference between disability groups; individuals with a Sensory Disability are observed being much more likely to be aware of their local ILC than each other disability category by nearly 20% ($P(X^2 > 21.539) > 0.001$). This finding is consistent with past findings, with individuals with Sensory Disabilities having more reported knowledge of ILCs near them. This difference has become more significant since the last Needs Assessment analysis, with the variance between Sensory Disabilities and those with Physical Disabilities has increased by nearly 15%. The rate at which those with Cognitive/Psych. Disabilities are aware of their local ILC has remained largely consistent with past findings, remaining within 2% of previous year's results in this category.

While ILCs remain important partners with MRC, these findings suggest that these organizations are underutilized. With the wide variety of services that they provide, more information could be distributed about ILCs to consumers in order to assist individuals who require more independent living skills. It should be noted that while the rate of youth responding to this survey significantly increased as discussed previously, youth were not found to be more or less knowledgeable of local ILCs than other age groups, with 25% of those under 24 years of age and 26.2% of those 25 and up being aware of the ILC closest to them.

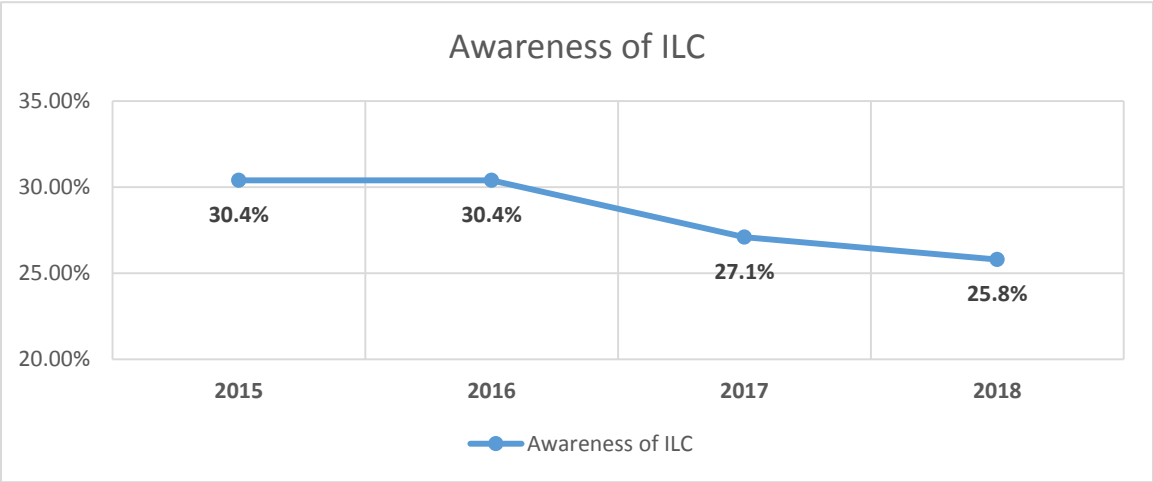

Figure 5: Levels of Independent Living Centers as reported by respondents from 2015 to 2018

Consumer Transportation Use

As part of the Needs Assessment process, respondents are asked to identify their primary forms of transportation used day to day. Transportation has been identified by respondents as a common and repeated barrier to employment in the past. Results of the 2019 Needs Assessment survey indicate that this continues to be the case, with new and existing relationships being observed in the transportation needs of consumers in various demographic groups.

	Transportation Use				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	Variance
Own Car	51.4%	52.9%	49.8%	45.7%	-5.7%
Public Transit	42.8%	41.3%	38.3%	38.3%	-4.5%
Family/Friends	30.6%	29.8%	33.0%	32.6%	2.0%
Walk	31.6%	29.0%	29.0%	27.7%	-3.9%
Ride Share/Taxi	7.9%	8.8%	15.8%	19.7%	11.8%
TAP	8.9%	8.5%	7.8%	8.9%	0.0%
RIDE/Assisted Van	6.4%	7.7%	8.4%	7.4%	1.0%
Car Pool	7.9%	7.8%	7.4%	6.5%	-1.4%
Bike	8.4%	7.2%	7.3%	6.5%	-1.9%
None	4.2%	4.7%	4.7%	4.0%	-0.2%
Adaptive Van	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	1.7%	0.5%

Table 19: Reported transportation use by 2018 survey respondents and 4-year variance.

Among the categories of transportation used by respondents, utilization of various transportation methods were identified to vary between demographic groups, including: Gender, Age, Disability, Source of Support, Race/Ethnicity, Education Level, and Geographic Region. These relationships are used in order to help better understand transportation service needs within various demographic groups and communities throughout the Commonwealth.

Respondent's age was found to have a strong relationship with the use of several different forms of transportation. Younger individuals were found to rely more heavily on Family or Friends for their transportation needs, with 64.9% of respondents under 20 years old reporting they rely on these individuals for transportation (P (X^2 > 198.589) > 0.001). While these younger individuals are found to more heavily rely on Family and Friends as their primary source of support (p. 18), it is not unexpected that those whose primary source of support is in fact their Family or Friends are also more likely to rely on them for transportation as well, at a rate of more than 10% more frequently than those who rely on other sources of support including Public Benefits or Personal Income. Both of these associations have been observed in previous years' analysis, and have been attributed to a lack of income and employment by individuals who make up the 'Youth' population; primarily those in High School or College who have yet to enter the workforce and who do not possess a disposable income. Inversely, older individuals are more reliant on transportation methods such as Public Transportation, their own vehicles, and programs such as the Transportation Access Pass (TAP). Respondents between the ages of 30 and 49 were found to most heavily rely on TAP ([0.0.119, 0.0.137]; P (X^2 > 20.455) = 0.002).

Individual's source of support was also found to have a significant relationship with the type of transportation being utilized. Those who rely on their own income are not only more likely to use their own vehicle than those who rely on Family and Friends or Public Supports, but they are also less likely to take advantage of programs and initiatives such as TAP and The RIDE. Individuals who are mainly self-sufficient and reliant on their own income were observed utilizing their own car 30% more than those relying on Family and Friends, and 22% more than those relying on public supports (P (X^2 > 68.520) > 0.001), while depending on transportation services and programs such as The RIDE as much as 53% less than individuals supported by public supports (P (X^2 > 17.531) > 0.001).

Geographic location within the Commonwealth was found to heavily influence transportation usage. Regions with higher density urban areas, like is seen in the South District, saw significantly higher rates of walking and public transportation utilization compared to the West District, where larger distances between destinations and a less developed public transportation system require individuals to more heavily rely on their own car or other services. North and South District rates of walking were significantly higher than what was

reported by those residing in the West District by 8% (P (X^2 > 11.533) = 0.003), while South District rates of public transportation use surpass the other two districts by at least 5% ([0.254, 0.4499]; (P (X^2 > 34.122) > 0.001)). Rates of Taxi/Ride Share use were also significantly higher in the North and South Districts, 11% greater than that of respondents in the West (P (X^2 > 18.686) > 0.001).

			District		
			South	North	West
Public Transportation	Do Not Use	Count	314	271	247
		% within Public Transportation	37.7%	32.6%	29.7%
		% of Total	23.3%	20.1%	18.3%
	Use	Count	256	175	84
		% within Public Transportation	49.7%	34.0%	16.3%
		% of Total	19.0%	13.0%	6.2%
Walking	Do Not Use	Count	403	308	263
		% within Walking	70.0%	69.1%	79.5%
		% of Total	29.9%	22.9%	19.5%
	Use	Count	167	138	68
		% within Walking	29.3%	30.9%	20.5%
		% of Total	12.4%	10.2%	5.0%

Table 20: Rates of Walking and Public Transportation use within VR Districts

Those with lower levels of education were found to be more likely to rely on particular modes of transportation. These methods of transportation were also observed to be ones which require a higher level of disposable income, including Taxi/Ride Share, one's Own Vehicle, and Family or Friends. While it was found that individuals with lowers of level of education are more likely to rely on Family and Friends or Public Benefits as their primary source of support (p. 18), as well as being younger on average, this finding was expected to an extent. Similar to previous years' findings, which found levels of car ownership to be highest in individuals with a Bachelor's Degree and above. The highest rates of car ownership were in those who either already possessed a college degree or above, or who are currently perusing one. Those with either an Associates or Bachelor's Degree and above used their own car as their transportation approximately 36% more than those with less than a high school education or GED, and 22% more than those with only a high school education or GED (P (X^2 > 104.987) > 0.001).

A surge in the use of Ride Share methods of transportation, such as Uber and Lyft, suggest that services involving this type of transportation may be investigated in the future. With 11% more individuals reporting using these services since 2015, and this number expected to continue to increase in the coming years, this transportation category may become a significant mode of transportation for an even larger proportion of MRC consumers.

Consumer Transportation Service Needs

In addition to analyzing the transportation use of respondents, the Needs Assessment survey asks participants about that types of transportation services they require as part of their VR service package. Respondents are provided with a list of specific services they are able to indicate they need, in addition to providing an open ended response. 42% of respondents indicated that they do not require any transportation services, 8% fewer than in 2018. This represents a significant shift in the level for transportation services needed by VR consumers, a need that was observed as being relatively stable in prior year's Needs Assessment surveys. This was observed to be in part a result of the increase response rate of youth consumers, who may not have the means to access transportation themselves.

Donated Vehicle programs, services provided to match and provide used vehicles to consumers, were most frequently indicated to be needed by 2018 respondents, with 15.5%. This was followed by the need for Public Transportation services (15.1%), Drivers Education Services (14.3%), and Taxi or Ride Share services (10.5%). While the reported need for Vehicle Donation programs has declined 5.3% since 2015, it remains the most needed service by VR consumers as reported in the Needs Assessment survey.

Transportation Service needs were seen to vary by geographic regions. Individuals in the South District were the most likely to report needing some form of transportation services from MRC, with 63.4% of respondents (n = 1,349). West district respondents were found to be less likely to need services at a rate which was observed to be statistically significant, with just under half of respondents (47.9%) reporting their lack of need for transportation services (P (X^2 > 11.934) = 0.003). While this figure may be surprising, upon further analysis of the needs of specific transportation services within districts, a stark increase in the need for services including public transportation and TAP, specifically in the North and South Districts, is seen to influence this result. With 9.8% and 7.6% of South and North District respondents respectively indicating a need for TAP, and over 15% of respondents from both of these districts reporting a need for public transportation services, a statistically significant increase in the need for services related to publicly provided options is observed. With more transportation options to choose from in a geographic region and higher population area, a higher need for services involving mass transportation methods is seen.

	Transportation Service Need				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	Variance
Adaptive Vehicle	2.0%	2.4%	3.1%	2.0%	.0%
Donated Vehicle	20.8%	17.9%	17.8%	15.5%	-5.3%
The RIDE	9.4%	7.9%	9.2%	9.6%	.2%
Transportation Information	8.6%	7.5%	9.6%	8.8%	.2%
Car Pool	5.6%	6.4%	5.6%	5.2%	-.4%
Driver's Education	12.1%	12.6%	14.8%	14.3%	2.2%
Public Transportation	18.2%	17.6%	13.9%	15.1%	-3.1%
Taxi/Ride Share	6.2%	5.5%	10.7%	10.5%	4.3%
TAP	9.8%	8.4%	9.2%	7.9%	-1.9%
Travel Training	4.0%	.5%	4.4%	3.8%	-.2%
None	50.4%	50.2%	50.5%	41.7%	-8.7%

Table 21: Transportation Service needs as reported by 2018 survey respondents and 4-year variance

Respondent's race/ethnicity was found to impact the likelihood they would report needing various transportation services. Minority respondents were seen to be more likely to report needing services including Donated Vehicle services, Drivers Education, and Public Transportation services to a statistically significant degree. Transportation services, especially those involving public transportation, were reported as being needed at higher rates by Hispanic/Latino and African American respondents at a rate of greater than 5% more than Caucasian individuals. These are results that have been observed in similar levels in past year's survey results. Additionally, African American respondents were found to be more likely than individuals of any other race/ethnicity to indicate they need some form of transportation services, with only 28.1% reporting they need not transportation services (P (X^2 > 21.578) > 0.001). In contrast, Caucasian individuals were the most likely to indicate they do not need any form of transportation services. 44.3% of Caucasian

respondents indicated they need none of the services in this category, or greater than 8% more frequently than respondents of other race/ethnicities (P (X^2 > 14.077) > 0.001).

Several service categories were identified as being more frequently needed by individuals with different disabilities. Some findings, such as adaptive vehicle services being more frequently needed by individuals with physical disabilities, were expected and found to be true in previous versions of the Needs Assessment survey analysis. Others, however, were more unexpected. Respondents with sensory disabilities were found to report needing several transportation service categories at a significantly lower rate than those with physical or Psych. and cognitive disabilities, including: The RIDE or Assisted Transportation, Travel Information, Taxi or Ride Share services, and Transportation Services more generally. Those with Psych. or Cognitive disabilities identified needing Driver's Education courses (16.8%) and taxi or Ride Share services (11.3%) most frequently. This group of individuals was also the least likely to report *not* needing transportation services, with 59.7% reporting they do in fact need general transportation services.

While respondents who reported being primarily reliant on their own income were the most likely to report *not* needing transportation services, those relying on public benefits were more likely to report needing nearly all forms of transportation services, with the exception of Driver's Education and Travel Training services. Individuals relying on public benefits indicated they needed the following services more frequently at a rate that was found to be statistically significant compared to those relying on other sources of support: Donated Vehicle services, The RIDE or Assisted Transportation services, TAP services, and Transportation services in general.

Transportation as a Barrier to Employment

In an effort to better understand the use and needs of transportation discussed in this report, and how they affect individual's ability to obtain and maintain employment, respondents of the Needs Assessment survey are asked if they view transportation as a barrier to employment. 39.1% of respondents to the 2019 survey reported that they view transportation as a barrier to employment. This represents a 4% increase from 2018. While this is a relatively sizeable increase, many patterns and trends observed in past year's analysis remain true in the most recent survey results.

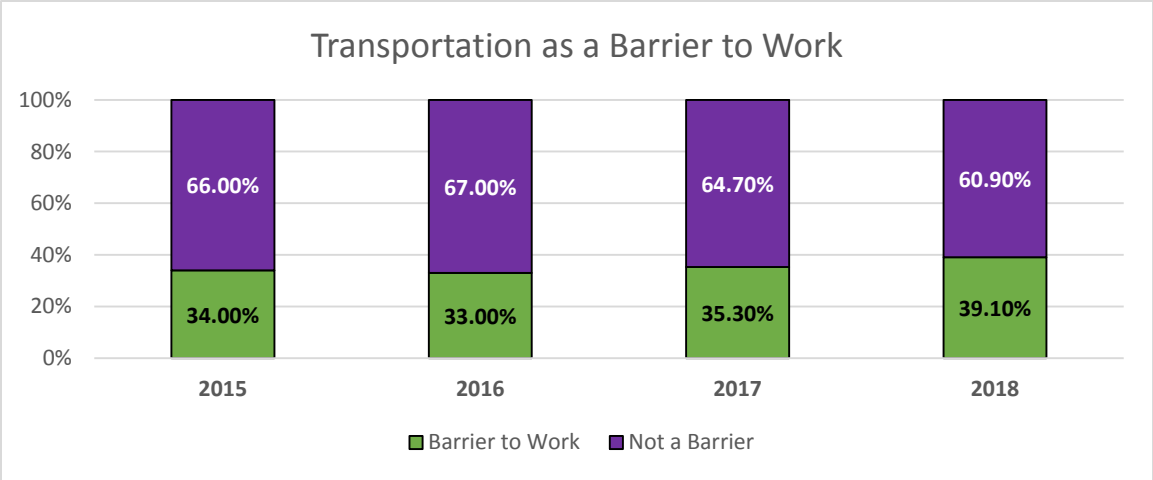

Figure 6: Visual representation of reported view of transportation as a barrier to work from 2015 to 2018

Individuals with Psych. or Cognitive disabilities were found to indicate that transportation poses a barrier to obtaining employment more frequently than individuals with either physical or sensory impairments. 41% of respondents with Psych. or Cognitive disabilities report transportation as a barrier to work, compared to 37% of individuals with Physical disabilities and 27.8% of those with Sensory disabilities. These findings, while continuing trends previously observed, also displays an increase in the frequency that individuals with physical and Psych. or Cognitive disabilities find transportation as a barrier to employment. 5% more individuals with Psych. or Cognitive disabilities and 4% more individuals with physical disabilities responded 'yes' to this question on the 2018 Needs Assessment survey than in 2017.

Primary source of support also appeared as a significant indicator of weather an individual would report transportation as being a barrier to securing employment. Those who relied on public benefits or family and friends reported transportation as a barrier approximately 42% of the time, while those who rely primarily on their own income were significantly less likely to do the same. 25.4% of those who rely on their own income reported transportation as a barrier to employment, more than 15% less frequently than other respondents (P ($X^2 > 23.546$) > 0.001). Those who owned their own home or apartment were also less likely to report transportation posing a serious barrier to employment. As individuals who rely on public benefits and family or friends for support are also those most likely to live with family and rent their accommodations; this result was not unexpected.

Age was also observed effecting the rate at which transportation is viewed as a barrier. Younger individuals, particularly those under the age of 30, reported transportation as a barrier to obtaining competitive employment approximately 5% more frequently than the next age group (P ($X^2 > 12.302$) = 0.031). As discussed in *Consumer Transportation Use*, younger respondents were found to more heavily rely on family or friends as their primary form of transportation, a result of either not having obtained a license or not having access to a vehicle of their own.

Consumer comments show continuing themes that have been observed in previous years, including high transportation costs, lack of available options, need for personal vehicles and training, and distance from employment opportunities, all overarching themes described by 2019 Needs Assessment survey respondents. Many of these barriers are also represented in respondents reported transportation use and needs (p. 46). There is a reported clear and present need for consistent and reliable transportation, particularly in situations where individuals must travel longer distances to reach employment opportunities. Distance, from both places of employment and other transportation options (i.e. distance from public transportation station/stop), was frequently commented on by respondents in 2019. Those in more rural areas, outside of urban centers or areas with easy access to public transportation, indicated that this inability to reach public transit is the main factor in what is preventing them from using it.

Cost is also observed to be a differentiating factor in whether transportation poses a barrier to an individual obtaining employment. Open-ended responses show that many respondents have access to transportation methods, but cannot afford the needed upkeep or subscription costs to frequently use them. Many individuals pointed to the potentially high cost of maintaining a personal vehicle, using a car or ride share service, or regular public transportation, as their main deterrence from primarily relying on those forms of transportation. The cost of also obtaining required materials, such as a driver's license, was also described by several respondents as posing a significant barrier to obtaining work.

Many consumers reported not possessing a reliable form of transportation as a serious barrier to obtaining work. There were several different ways this obstacle was posed: unreliable family and friends, public transportation, and personal vehicles. Several consumers reported that while they rely on their family or friends, they are not always able to rely on these individuals being on time or available when they need transportation to or from a destination. Some reported having access to family and friends only one way to or from a destination, but not round trip. Additionally, consumers reported that while they may have access to public transportation in the form of busses or trains, they cannot always rely on them arriving on time in order to prevent being late for work. The same was found to be true with those who have their own vehicles, many of whom indicate they own older cars or trucks that may not make long distance trips.

Needs for Additional Services

In addition to asking consumers about the services that they currently are receiving, or services that MRC currently provides, respondents are asked to whether they require any additional services in order to work and be an active member of their community. An increasing proportion of respondents indicate that they are either unsure or don't know what other services they could use or need, suggesting that much of the need is met during consumer's time receiving services.

	Need for Additional Services				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	Variance
Yes	17.8%	18.5%	16.7%	18.0%	0.2%
No	36.4%	34.0%	35.1%	29.6%	-6.8%
Unsure/Don't Know	45.9%	47.5%	48.1%	52.4%	6.5%

Table 22: Proportion of MRC Consumers who report needing additional services

In addition to being asked yes or no, whether they need additional services or not, respondents were provided the opportunity to write what services they would need in a free-response section. 236 respondents provided open-ended comments, listing services as well as describing they need nothing more from MRC. Of the services listed, nearly all of them are services described earlier in the survey and provided by MRC at all Area Offices. The most mentioned services included Affordable Housing (n = 24), Job Training/Education (n = 20), Financial Services (n = 19), and Academic Services (n = 15).

As seen in previous years, the reporting of the need for services suggests that information should be more readily available to consumers on the services that MRC provides. While not all consumers need every service, a majority of VR consumers require multiple VR services as discussed earlier in this report. This reinforces the idea that communication between MRC staff and consumers, and even possibly perspective consumers, is a potential area in need of improvement.

Pre-ETS Survey for Students 14 to 22

A separate survey was sent to all students aged 14 to 22 designed to assess the needs of students with disabilities, including the need for pre-employment transition services. Last year this was included as part of the main survey and based upon the fact it appeared to reduce the number of complete responses for consumers in this age group it was decided to administer these questions separately. This section of the survey included specific questions related to pre-employment transition services provided by MRC, its partners, and local educational agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). A total of 196 responses were received by MRC consumers aged 14 to 22, a response comparable to the prior year.

		Count	Column N%
Received Pre-ETS Services	Yes, have Received	143	73.7%
	No, have not Received	51	26.3%

Table 23: Proportion of Respondents who reported receiving and not receiving Pre-ETS services from MRC

Youth consumers were asked to rate the importance of 7 pre-employment transition services which fall into the five required categories of Pre-ETS services (work-based learning experiences, job exploration counseling, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in post-secondary education and other comprehensive training programs, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy). Consumers were asked to rate how important these Pre-ETS services are to them on a 5 point rating scale (Very Important, Important, Somewhat Important, Not Important, or Not Applicable).

Overall, the vast majority of responding consumers of transition age indicated that all of the listed Pre-ETS services were Very Important or Important needed services. Over 80% of responding consumers found all 7 service options to be Very Important or Important. Consumers rated work-based learning experiences as the most important/needed Pre-ETS service (91.8% Very Important/Important), followed by learning about education/jobs/careers (Job Exploration Counseling) (88.7%), transitioning from high school to college/work (86.7%), assistance with college education (85.2%), work-readiness training (85.1%), and college/career counseling (81.5%) and mentorship/peer counseling/self-advocacy (81%). These findings suggest a strong need for Pre-ETS service amongst MRC consumers of transition age, a theme which is consistent throughout the Needs Assessment Survey.

	Pre-ETS Service Needs				
	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	No Opinion
Internships/Work Experience	70.1%	21.7%	5.2%	0.0%	3.1%
Assistance with College Edu.	64.0%	21.2%	10.8%	4.7%	1.4%
Work Readiness Training/Soft Skills	57.4%	27.7%	9.7%	2.1%	3.1%
Assistance Transitioning from School to Work	64.6%	22.1%	8.2%	2.1%	3.1%
Learning about Education, Training, Careers	59.0%	29.7%	7.2%	1.5%	2.6%
College/Career Counseling	54.4%	27.1%	13.5%	1.5%	2.6%
Mentorship/Job Shadow/Peer Counseling	52.8%	28.2%	13.3%	1.0%	4.6%

Table 24: Reported importance of Pre-ETS services by Youth respondents

Consumers aged 14 to 22 were asked to indicate whether they had received any of the Pre-ETS services discussed in the prior question (related to the 5 required Pre-ETS service categories) from MRC as of the time of the survey. A total of 74% of respondents in this age group noted that they had received Pre-ETS services from MRC, compared to 77% in the prior year's survey. Consumers age 14 to 22 were also asked whether they received any Pre-ETS services from high schools or other educational agencies (Local Educational Authorities or LEA's) outside of MRC. The responses indicate that fewer MRC consumers of transition age are receiving pre-ETS services from LEAs. Based on the particular service, the proportion of respondents indicating they receive Pre-ETS services from schools

ranged from 49.3% for internships/work experiences, to 32.9% for learning about education, training, careers, and jobs, to 28.1% for work readiness training, and only 17.1% for mentorship/peer counseling/self-advocacy. Most of these proportions increased notably from 2016.

It is possible that the terminology used in the survey related to these services may be confusing to consumers and it is possible the way these services are provided by LEAs are different than how they are provided by MRC. Therefore, it is possible the prevalence of consumers receiving these services from LEA's is higher than reported by this sample of responding MRC consumers. This should be looked into further. Nevertheless, these findings reinforce the high need for Pre-ETS services amongst MRC consumers and the need for MRC to continue collaborating with LEAs on the provision of Pre-ETS services, including those provided under IDEA.

	Count	Column N %
Internships/Work Experiences	49.3%	72
Learning about Education, Training, Careers, Jobs	32.9%	48
Assistance with Transitioning from School to Work	31.5%	46
College/Career Counseling	31.5%	46
Work Readiness Training/Soft Skills	28.1%	41
Assistance with College Education	23.3%	34
Mentorship/Job Shadow/Peer Counseling	17.1%	25

Table 25: Frequency of youth respondents receiving Pre-ETS through an LEA

Consumers of transition aged were asked to rate their satisfaction with Pre-Employment Transition Services provided by MRC on a five point scale (Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied). Overall, the majority of transition age consumers indicated they are satisfied with pre-employment transition services provided by MRC and their partners in meeting their needs towards future education and employment. A total of 71% of respondents were Satisfied or Very Satisfied, and 91% were Somewhat Satisfied, Satisfied, or Very Satisfied. These results are very consistent and did not change much from 2016. Consumers were also asked if the Pre-ETS services they are receiving from MRC are effective in preparing them for their future job/career. When factoring out those who answered not applicable, the majority who are receiving these services (47.3%) indicated the Pre-ETS services provided by MRC are effective in preparing them for their future career, a slight increase from 2016.

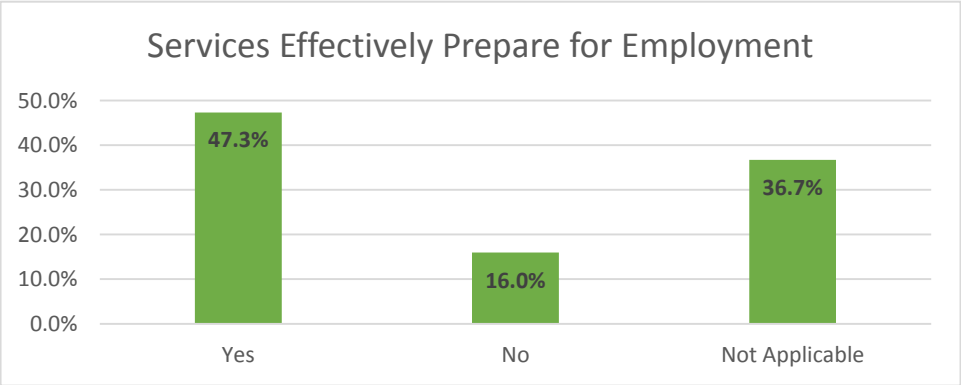

Figure 7: Respondent's reported view on MRC Pre-ETS preparing them for Employment

Consumers of transition age were also asked to provide additional comments about the Pre-ETS services they have received from MRC and if they have any recommendations for MRC in terms of how it can improve Pre-ETS and other services for youths and students with disabilities. Overall, many of the comments were positive and reflected many of the themes in the overall Needs Assessment Survey. As with the comments in the main survey, it is very clear that MRC and its staff have a significant impact on young consumers' lives. A number of young consumers expressed their appreciation and gratitude for the assistance the MRC and its staff have provided as they work towards achieving their goals of transitioning into school and/or employment. Additionally, some constructive recommendations were made on how MRC and its partners can improve services to youths and students with disabilities.

Below are a selection of Consumer comments on Pre-Employment Transition Services:

- "My internship at the ARC helped me to gain experience in my desired field and my boss helped me to update my resume on my last day at the internship."
- "I have gotten a lot of help from MRC by way of testing to help confirm my learning deficits and tools to help me with preparing to go to college including options for financial help for college. Thank you!"
- "The summer internship I received through MRC helped me determine what sorts of jobs I would like to have in the future, as well as what I need to do to get those jobs."
- "I'll say over the past year, I have been receiving tons of great help and services from MRC and CWS (Community Work Services) about my future careers and work employment."
- "It was very helpful for when I was transitioning from high school to college, I wasn't very sure what to do or what I needed. So it was helpful. I also had an internship working at the Y. It was a great experience to put on my resume."
- "I did an internship and soft skills training at NEBA and Loraine's soup kitchen and it was a great experience. I learned a lot of new skills and I really appreciate it. I learned how to do a resume, cover letter, how to call and receive calls from a potential employer and many other things. My favorite internship was at Big Y. I got to learn how to bag groceries and work with customers and learn when to bite my tongue. I have even applied the skills I learned at Big Y to my everyday life. I am grateful for these opportunities. I really appreciate my Mass Rehab counselor. She is really nice and always goes the extra mile for me. She has helped me get into college and helped me to get internships and I can't say how helpful she and MRC has been."
- "I am still in high school and have not heard much from MRC. I hope to receive more services from MRC as I get closer to graduation."
- "MRC should offer mentoring to older high school students, my son was looking for a mentor but was told they only provided mentors for people under 17."
- "It would be nice to see more follow-up after an internship to meet with student to see what may be useful support as the next step. For example, is there another internship opportunity or is there employment assistance support?"
- "I would have appreciated continued outreach from MRC even after being placed at an internship, and through the school year. Since I am going to a state school, most of those things are now being handled by the school itself, but it would have been nice to have a point person to check in with every now and then."
- "My internship helped me to be prepared for a job and helped me become more independent for college. The services also included job readiness and assessments, interview practices and an internship. All of these skills have greatly helped me in preparing for the future."

Overall, results throughout the CSNA demonstrate a significant need for pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) among high school students with disabilities and youth consumers of transition age and MRC is working to address this need through its various transition and Pre-ETS initiatives. MRC continues to develop strategies to work more closely with local school districts on transition

and Pre-ETS services, including coordinating services with those provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). MRC has a counselor assigned to every public high school in the Commonwealth, has developed strong working relationships with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and has a Transition Team to oversee transition and coordination with educational authorities. MRC is also in its fourth year of a 5 year demonstration grant on work-based learning experiences by RSA for students with disabilities entitled Transition Pathway Services which will also assist with needs in this area. This grant continues to ramp up and will be used to develop additional best practices in this area. As of late 2018, MRC now provides Pre-ETS to students who are potentially eligible for VR services in addition to those who are VR eligible in collaboration with vendors and school districts. MRC has also expanded work-based learning to include job tours, job shadowing, volunteering, and other work-based learning areas based on RSA and WINTAC guidance.

To assist in determining the statewide need for pre-employment transition services, MRC analyzed statewide data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) (http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/selectedpopulations.aspx). According to DESE data, there are 173,843 students with disabilities (consisting of 18.1% of all high school students statewide) enrolled in public high schools in Massachusetts as of October 1, 2018, all who may be potentially eligible for VR services and/or who may benefit from Pre-ETS services. Based on this data and the high need for Pre-ETS services demonstrated throughout the CSNA as described above, MRC forecasts that for FY2020 that its entire 15% reservation of VR funding set aside to provide Pre-ETS services as required under WIOA is necessary (approximately $6.3 million) to provide the five required Pre-ETS services to students with disabilities (work-based learning experiences, job exploration counseling, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in post-secondary education and other comprehensive training programs, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy). MRC forecasts that due to the fact that the entire set-aside is required, that no funding will remain to provide authorized pre-employment transition services beyond the five required services due to the high need for Pre-ETS services as demonstrated in this year's CSNA findings and the DESE data.

Please see below for MRC's fiscal forecasting process for Pre-ETS funding.

Pre-ETS Fiscal Forecasting

Massachusetts: 173,843 students with disabilities enrolled in high school

Minimum 15% spending requirement for FY2019 award is $6,300,000

Identify the number of students with disabilities to which you are **currently** providing Pre-Employment Transition Services, and determine the average cost per student to provide Pre-ETS this year.

- MRC provided Pre-ETS services to 5,221 students during FY2018. This number is from the VR Youth Fact Sheet and is calculated from MRCIS.
- MRC spent $7,045,124 on Pre-Employment Transition Services on the FY2018 award. This number is from our WIOA spending tracking report from our accounting department
- The average cost for MRC to provide required activities under Pre-ETS per student in FY 2018 using FY 2017 award was $1,455 ($7,596,209 divided by 5,221)
- MRC spent $0 on Pre-Employment Transition Coordination Activities (this will be tracked going forward with a modification to our SSTA Time in Attendance System.
- Total reserve expenditures on the FFY 2017 award was $7,045,124

Project the number of students with disabilities you think you will be able to provide Pre-Employment Transition

Services to this year, based on all the ways you will be providing or arranging for Pre-ETS.

- MRC projects it will be able to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services to 5,500 students with disabilities (both eligible and potentially eligible) in FY2020 using FY2019 award funds. This is based on a 10% increase from the previous year due to increased numbers of potentially eligible.
- MRC projects it will spend $6,300,000 of reserve funding on required Pre-ETS activities and Pre-ETS coordination activities during FY 2020 charged to FY 2019 reserve funds. The average cost per student is projected for FY 2018 to be $1,096 per student. The decrease in average cost is due to increased number of potentially eligible served counselor resources to provide Pre-ETS as well as use of comparable benefits in coordination with schools.

Subtract the total Pre-ETS expenditures from the VR agency's 15% reserve amount and the remainder is what you have to spend on authorized activities.

- $6,300,000 (FY18 minimum reserve) minus $6,300,000 in projected required Pre-ETS and Pre-ETS coordination activities = Equals $0. Therefore MRC projects it will not have any remaining reserve resources to provide authorized Pre-ETS activities as all reserve funds will be required to provide required Pre-ETS and Pre-ETS coordination activities. Based on the large number of students with disabilities in Massachusetts and the high need for Pre-ETS services as demonstrated in our Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, MRC project that all reserve funds will be needed for required and coordination Pre-ETS activities and that no funds will remain for authorized activities for the foreseeable future.

Other Findings

Consumer Satisfaction Survey - Summary

Overall, 78% of consumers were satisfied with MRC services in 2018. Of these, a very high 41% were Very Satisfied with MRC services. There were 404 survey responses (the highest response rate since the beginning of the Satisfaction Survey) out of a possible 2,000 survey recipients, achieving a response rate of 20% and statistical validity (at a confidence level of 95% and a 5% margin of error). It is expected that this number will continue to increase due to the continued collection of consumer emails.

The 2018 survey was conducted completely online using a web-based survey tool. The strong response rate indicated the viability of conducting an all-online satisfaction survey using consumer email addresses. In addition, new survey questions yielded valuable data on VR consumer outcomes.

- Out of the online survey responses received 54% were closed out in status 26 while the remaining 46% were closed in status 28.
- A vast majority of MRC consumers, 78% of respondents, indicated they were satisfied with the services they received at MRC. Very Satisfied (41%), while the remaining 37% indicated being Satisfied (21%), or Somewhat Satisfied (16%).
- 71% of respondents indicated they would encourage other individuals with disabilities to go to MRC employment or training services.
- Nearly 73% of respondents indicated that they felt satisfied that the services they received through MRC assisted them in becoming more independent, with 35% of respondents stating they were Very Satisfied (17% Satisfied, 18% Somewhat Satisfied).
- 237 individuals, 60% of respondents, indicated that they possessed employment. This is an overall decrease of 11% compared to last year when 71% of respondents indicated that they were employed.
- 92% of respondents, 204 total individuals, indicated that they were satisfied with their current employment. (43% Very Satisfied, 27% Satisfied, and 22% Somewhat Satisfied). Approximately 61% of respondents indicated they were satisfied that their current job matched the goals they developed in their MRC employment plan (38% Very Satisfied, 23% Satisfied).
- When asked to identify how many hours' individuals work per week at their current place of employment, 41% of respondents stated they work more than 35 hours per week (a 1% increase from last year's result). Another 25% indicated they worked between 21 and 35 hours weekly, and nearly 21% indicated working between 11 and 20 hours weekly.
- A majority of respondents (54%) with jobs indicated they earn between $12 and $17 per hour (38% earn $12 - $14 an hour, 16% earn $15 - $17). Out of the remaining survey respondents 7% earned $11 an hour, 13% earn $18 - $21 an hour, 16% earned $22 - $36 an hour and less than 10% earned $37 - $47 or more an hour.
- 73% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the amount of information they received regarding the range of services available to them, which were provided by MRC.
- 73% of respondents indicated they were satisfied with the ability of the MRC to identify their interests, strengths, and employment goals (33% Very Satisfied).

- 53% of respondents indicated they were satisfied that their employment plan developed with their MRC counselor met their employment goals (32% Very Satisfied, 21% Satisfied).
- A total of over 71% of respondents indicated they were Satisfied with their level of participation in the development of their employment plan, with 33% being Very Satisfied, 24% being Satisfied, and 20% being Somewhat Satisfied.
- 64% of all respondents stated they were satisfied with the job leads they received through the MRC. 27% being Very Satisfied, 19% being satisfied, and 18% being Somewhat Satisfied.
- Over half (57%) were Satisfied with the number of job interviews they received through the MRC.
- 68% of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the promptness of services they received from MRC, with 35% indicating they were Very Satisfied.

Counselor Satisfaction Survey

MRC's Analytics and Quality Assurance Department, as part of the CSNA process and its Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance activities, conducts a Counselor Satisfaction Survey on an annual basis. The goal is to evaluate counselor satisfaction and obtain input from MRC's VR counseling staff on their experiences and how MRC can best address the needs of its consumers and individuals with disabilities. The findings are used in conjunction with the Needs Assessment Survey, Consumer Satisfaction Survey, and Provider Satisfaction Survey, and other components as part of the CSNA process. The findings from this survey are also shared with MRC staff and management and other stakeholders as part of its quality assurance, strategic planning, and WIOA Combined State Planning processes. Direct input from counselors is an important and critical aspect of the CSNA and these other processes. This report contains the most recent Counselor Satisfaction Survey results. Information included in this report consists of information and analysis of responses to the 2018 Counselor Satisfaction Survey. 42% of MRC counselors and unit supervisors responded to the 2018 Counselor Satisfaction Survey, which is consistent with past year's response rates. 2018 findings of the survey are summarized as follows:

1. The vast majority of MRC counselors are satisfied with their ability to assist individuals with disabilities in obtaining, maintaining, and advancing in competitive employment based on their skills, interests, needs, and choices. Overall, 98.5% of responding counselors indicated they were at Somewhat Satisfied, Satisfied, or Very Satisfied with the services provided by their office. This is consistent with 206 (96.7%). 78.5% of responding counselors were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with services provided by their office, a slight decrease from 2016.

2. The majority of MRC counselors are generally satisfied with most services provided to consumers. This includes most case management and counseling services, skills training, post-secondary education, job placement and job support services, and other services delivered to consumers. In all service-related question areas, 98% or more of respondents were at least somewhat satisfied, consistent with previous year's results. As with previous years, higher levels of satisfaction were found in certain areas and with specific services compared to others. Some of the highest satisfaction areas were in the VR case management and counseling area, consistent with past results.

3. Specific areas with high satisfaction levels included all but one case-management related area, including consumer involvement in developing services in their IPE (78.7% Very Satisfied/Satisfied), providing information and referral to other resources and programs (78.7%), consumer ability to choose their own vocational goal (75.2%), consumer understanding of the appeals process (72.7%), and assessment of vocational rehabilitation needs (72.7%). There also was high satisfaction with post-secondary education services (75.4% Very Satisfied/Satisfied), job search skills (73.8%), soft-skills trainings (72.1%), post-employment and ongoing support services (69.7%), job leads available for consumers (61.2%), initial job placements made for consumers (60.3%), and promptness of service delivery (55.4%).

4. In terms of transition services to students (including WIOA Pre-Employment Transition Services), 66.1% of counselors were Very Satisfied or Satisfied (with 91.7% at least somewhat satisfied). Additionally, 68% of counselors were satisfied with the amount and availability of pre-employment transition services (with 87.1% being at least Somewhat Satisfied). These both represent large increases in satisfaction from 2016.

5. Areas with lower satisfaction levels included the amount and availability of skills training for consumers the ability to adequately serve caseloads (36.1% Satisfied/Very Satisfied), and on-the-job training for consumers (49.2%), and the availability and amount of on-the-job supports (45.9%). More counselors were Somewhat Satisfied than Satisfied in many of these areas.

6. The proportion of counselors reporting they are Very Satisfied or Satisfied in terms of maintaining contact and engaging with consumers on their caseload increased slightly to 47.4%. Additionally, 28.2% of counselors were Somewhat Satisfied with their ability to maintain contact and engage with consumers on their caseload. It is clear that this is an area of improvement, which is consistent with findings from the Needs Assessment and Consumer Satisfaction surveys.

7. The majority of MRC counselors believe they are meeting most of their consumers' expectations (69.6 %), and nearly all indicate they are at least meeting some of their consumers' expectations (97.7%). The range of services and supports available to VR consumers allows counselors to provide individualized and flexible services based on consumer needs. Reasons that some consumer expectations are not met include: that consumers at times may have unrealistic expectations and may not understand what services MRC provides; that retirements, staff turnover, resource limitations, and high caseloads may impact consumer experiences; that many consumers may require services from other agencies and programs outside of MRC to meet their needs; and other barriers such as transportation, language, and job availability in some areas.

8. Most counselors are Satisfied with MRC's internal job placement services. Overall, 87% are at least Somewhat Satisfied and 63.9% are Very Satisfied or Satisfied with internal placement resources. These both are slight increases from 2016 (the third year of increases in this area). A need for additional or full time placement staff in certain offices, improved communication and collaboration between JPS, ESS, and counselors, improved job matching, need for a greater variety of the types of jobs and employers for the MRC account management system, and more focus on higher level positions was suggested by MRC staff. Once again, the team model used in some offices where the JPS, ESS, and the counselor work together to assist consumers in obtaining employment is a best-practice model that can be adopted across offices.

9. The majority of responding counselors (92.6%) were at least Somewhat Satisfied with the services provided to MRC consumers by Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) through the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program. 60.3% were Satisfied or Very Satisfied. Satisfaction in this area increased 3% from 2016, and is up 23% from 2013, demonstrating MRC's efforts to focus on performance in its CIES and Pre-ETS vendor programs have addressed consumer need. A need for additional vendor capacity to meet the needs of consumers in some areas/regions was again mentioned. A need for more provider resources for assessments was also voiced by a number of counselors. Some also mentioned that quality of services can vary notably by provider and that sometimes provider communication could be improved, and that staff turnover amongst providers affects the quality of services rendered to MRC consumers. Improved communication between vendors, supervisors and counselors, and working with CRPs to ensure continued improvement in CIES outcomes and service quality was also recommended.

10. Staff should be reminded that job coaching and skills training services are available through CIES and that any issues with vendors should be communicated to their supervisor and the District Contract Manager.

11. Most counselors are Satisfied with services provided to consumers by schools, colleges, and universities. Overall, 90.2% of counselors were at least Somewhat Satisfied, and 56.6% Very Satisfied or Satisfied in this area, a slight decrease from 2016. Once again, it was clear that counselors' experiences with schools and colleges can vary notably by institution. This appears to be at both the high school and post-secondary levels. Efforts to improve collaboration with college disability service offices, continued improvements in services for transition-age youth including continued coordination with local schools and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on pre-employment transition services, continued development and expansion of relationships with high school staff, and improved communication between educational institutions and MRC were recommended by some

counselors. A number of counselors indicated the need for increased and pre-employment transition services for high school students with disabilities, including coordination with high schools. It was also suggested MRC revisit caps for tuition supports or work with state colleges/universities to offset fees as well as tuition for MRC consumers.

12. Counselors were highly Satisfied (87.6%) with products and materials purchased from vendors for consumers. This is a slight decrease from 2016 in this area. A total of 69.4% of staff were Very Satisfied or Satisfied in this area. Once again, many counselors indicated they would benefit from additional information about available vendors and the materials they supply. It is recommended that a guide or list of resources to assist in purchasing products be developed. Some counselors also indicated that some materials or products for consumers can take some time to be delivered and that more vendors that provide competitive pricing would be helpful to MRC staff. More vendor choices for assistive technology was also suggested

13. Counselors provided a variety of suggestions for how MRC could assist them in their efforts to assist consumers in their efforts to obtain employment. Common suggestions included:

- Increased and improved clerical support for counselors such as hiring case aides.
- Improvements and enhancements to MRCIS.
- Efforts to reduce caseload sizes.
- Create dedicated transition/student caseloads.
- Eligibility unit.
- More opportunities and trainings to provide input on policy and practice changes.
- Additional resources for evaluation and assessments.
- Increased Job Placement Specialist and Employment Service Specialist resources including ensuring every office has a full time JPS.
- Technology to assist counselors in maintaining contact with consumers including tablets, Wi-Fi-cards and cellphones.
- Improved support and resources for job placement, including increased information on job leads for consumers.
- More training for staff, including on WIOA topics.
- More transportation resources for MRC consumers.
- Improved supervision of counselors.
- Additional vendor capacity in the CIES program.
- Additional resources for bilingual consumers.
- Alternative work options.
- Improved services for youth and high school students and additional Pre-ETS resources and vendors.
- Support resources for staff such as team building and stress reduction groups.
- Resources to make the process of finding approved vendors for purchased services and materials easier.
- Continued improvements in internal communication.

Community Rehabilitation Provider Satisfaction Survey

As part of MRC's ongoing Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement processes, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) conducts an annual satisfaction survey of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) participating in MRC's Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program to assist in evaluating the need to create and improve community rehabilitation programs in the Commonwealth in 2017. The findings from this survey are shared with MRC staff and management and other stakeholders as part of its quality assurance, strategic planning, provider contract monitoring, and WIOA Combined State Planning processes. Direct input from provider agencies is an important and critical aspect of these processes.

A total of 45 provider organizations responded to the most recent provider satisfaction survey for a response rate of 40%.

1. Most Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) are satisfied with the services they are providing to MRC consumers referred for services through the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) program. Overall, 99% of providers were at least somewhat satisfied with services delivered by their agency/organization. This was consistent with the 2016 survey (99%). Additionally, 93% of respondents were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with CIES services they delivered.

2. The findings of the survey demonstrate that CRPs play a significant role in assisting MRC consumers towards obtaining and maintaining competitive employment. Many CRPs are able to provide significant employment and other services to consumers with very complex needs, including one-on-one services that lead to strong job matching and placement ability.

3. Given these strengths, the large majority of CRPs feel they are meeting the expectations of consumers referred for CIES services. 91% of providers indicated they believe they are meeting these consumers' expectations all or most of the time, and 100% of responding providers noted they are meeting at least some consumer expectations. Reasons why consumer expectations are being met includes strong communication between MRC counselors/offices and providers, and providers' strong commitment to consumer involvement and consumer choice. Reasons why expectations may not be met included complex needs or difficulty on the part of the consumer remaining engaged for various reasons, that consumers may require other support services, that it is difficult to place some consumers due to high employer expectations, and that complicated cases can take a long time for job placement, among others.

4. Nearly all providers responding to the survey provide services in the CIES Job Development and Placement, Assessment, Initial Employment Supports, and Ongoing Supports program components. Only 63% of providers provide services in the Skills Training component, and about 64% provide Interim Supports. This is consistent with the fact that these components have lower utilization compared to the other components. Referral for CIES component services are based on consumer need. Some consumers may require all components while others may only need one. Other associated services that can be provided as part of the CIES components that providers indicate they deliver to MRC consumers included job search assistance (75%), information and referral (38%), and vocational counseling (45%).

5. The majority of CRPs were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with their agency's delivery of services to MRC consumers in all six CIES components. Satisfaction was highest for Initial Employment Supports Component (84.6%), Ongoing Employment Supports (82.3%), Assessment (74.4%), and Job Development and Placement Component (71.8%). Lower levels were found for Interim

Supports (64%), and Skills Training (60%). However, a number of providers chose "not applicable" for these components, which is consistent with component utilization as these components are not heavily utilized compared to the other components.

6. In terms of serving and supporting MRC consumers referred for CIES services, 75% or more of providers were Satisfied or Very Satisfied in all 5 question areas, with 80% or more in 4 of the 5 question areas. Satisfaction was highest in terms of the ability to assess consumers' vocational rehabilitation needs (95%), prompt service delivery to consumers (95%), ability to adequately serve CIES referrals (88%), and the ability to assist consumers in overcoming employment barriers (85%).

7. Providers were Very Satisfied with job search skills, their capacity to match consumers to available jobs based on their skills and interests, job leads available for consumers, the number of job opportunities for consumers, and the number of job interviews for consumers and soft skills trainings provided. Somewhat lower levels of satisfaction was found in terms of ability to provide skills trainings for consumers. However, in all of these cases, over two thirds of providers were Satisfied or Very Satisfied.

8. A total of 71.5% of providers were Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the number of successful employment outcomes, achieved for MRC consumers through the CIES program, there was lower satisfaction for the number of initial job placements with a 61% satisfaction rate. These both decreased from the previous survey.

9. In the most recent survey, providers reported they are Very Satisfied with their level of communication with MRC consumers. 97% of responding CRPs were at least Somewhat Satisfied with the level of communication with MRC consumers, while 71% indicated they were Satisfied or Very Satisfied. This is consistent from the prior survey.

10. Most providers appear to be satisfied with communication with MRC counselors, supervisors, and other agency staff. Overall, 94% of providers were at least somewhat satisfied with communication from MRC, and 71% were very satisfied or satisfied in this area. It is clear from open-ended responses that many providers are satisfied with communication with MRC staff. A number of providers expressed that they have an excellent relationship with MRC due to professional and timely communication. There appears to be some differences in satisfaction with communication with MRC between individual providers in some instances. Some providers did express a need for improved communication with MRC and its staff, and some indicated they have difficulty contacting MRC counselors at times, and that the level of communication with MRC varies by MRC area office.

11. Responding CRPs provided a variety of suggestions and recommendations for how MRC can assist them in improving CIES service delivery to MRC consumers. The most common suggestions included:

    - More information and documentation on referred consumers from MRC VR counselors.
    - More communication and information from counselors about consumers' needs.
    - More CIES referrals who are job ready and/or strongly motivated to work.
    - Ensuring that Contract Orders and fiscal documentation related to CIES is processed efficiently and delivered to providers in a timely fashion.
    - Continued improvement in communication between MRC staff and providers.
    - Increased use of the assessment and skills training components.
    - Continued opportunities for vendors to present to groups of MRC counselors on their programs and to improve communication.
    - Ensuring MRC counselors attend initial meeting between provider and consumers.

12. Once again, a team process of communication should be emphasized with CRPs and MRC staff. This team process involves the counselor, their supervisor, the District Contract Manager, and representatives from the provider. Continued utilization of this team process will improve communication between MRC and the provider and ensure any issues or questions are easily resolved.

13. Improvements in the flow of documentation and contract materials was also suggested as an area of improvement, although this was much less pronounced, suggesting there has been progress made in this area. MRC has reminded staff of the need to process contract orders and other documentation in a timely fashion at all times, including around the beginning and end of each fiscal year.

Lowell Focus Group

In an effort to perform outreach to previously identified underserved populations in Massachusetts, MRC Research, Development, and Performance Management (now Analytics and Quality Assurance) conducted a focus group in September of 2018, in cooperation with the Lowell Area Office. This focus group was designed to address the potential needs and concerns held by the Asian population in Lowell, the Cambodian/Khmer community in particular. Through a discussion with 16 participants from the community, and 7 MRC staff members, a conversation was facilitated aimed at gathering information which could lead to the development of strategies and actions that could be taken in order to engage with this community more. A list of 7 questions was developed to guide the discussion:

1. **How did you hear about MRC?**

   Participants reported learning about MRC through a variety of sources, but primarily from family and friends. Other sources included community-based providers including the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell and former MRC staff in the community.

2. **What do you know about MRC?**

   Participants indicated that they were aware of, or had received, several services MRC provides. These included school based services, job placement, driver's education, and vocational training (i.e. CVS Pharmacy Technician training). Most of the younger participants had indicated completing the CVS Pharmacy Technician program and having enjoyed the experience. Several individuals indicated that they would have liked to know more about the services MRC provides, especially those provided by the Community Living Division.

3. **What services did we provide for you?**

   Participants discussed receiving the services they knew MRC provided. One participant included a personal anecdote, discussing being hired by CVS and investigating the possibility of obtaining a vehicle through Good News Garage's vehicle donation program. Another individual gave testimonial about recently completing their driver's education program provided by MRC.

4. **Were the services helpful?**

   There was a mutual consensus amongst all of the participants that the services they had received were very helpful to them, and expressed their appreciation for MRC and the Lowell staff.

5. **Could we have done or can we do anything else?**

   The participants all agreed that their preferred method of communication is text message, and that communication between themselves and MRC staff was good and consistent.

6. **What can MRC do to outreach to the Cambodian community?**

   Participants suggested several things that MRC could do in order to continue enhancing their outreach to the Cambodian/Khmer communities:

   - Sponsoring community events
   - Communicate with community organizations and providers to include MRC events in their calendars

- More promotion using community based assets (i.e. television or radio)
- Have multiple/diverse Cambodian/Khmer counselors (female and male)
- More language services and native speakers involved in MRC services and community relations
- Increased social media presence
- Develop and distribute feedback material in cooperation with the Bilingual Committee in order to avoid using culturally offensive or confusing words/phrases in marketing materials in the community

7. How can we of more help to the community?

Participants discussed that in order for MRC to provide more assistance in the community, that they should increase their presence. Additionally, providing English as a Second Language training to MRC staff could enable MRC staff to provide more resources to not only the Asian/Khmer community, but also communities of other minorities in other areas of Massachusetts.

Performance Based Contract Review and Evaluation

As part of its efforts to evaluate and improve community rehabilitation programs in Massachusetts, MRC continuously evaluates and manages provider outcomes and performance quality to ensure that MRC consumers are given the opportunity to achieve the best possible employment outcomes. Using data and information collected through tools and methods such as site visits, data analysis and reporting, quarterly review meetings, and annual provider and consumer surveys, MRC conducts quarterly and annual performance evaluations on provider performance.

The main program that MRC purchases services for consumers from CRPs is the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) Program, a performance-based contract program providing vocational evaluation, training, placement, and supported employment services for participants. CIES consists of six unique service components, each associated with a specific service outcome. Through the component based system, consumers are able to receive the individualized and targeted combinations of services and supports they need to achieve successful employment. This system, adopted by MRC in 2010 as part of a larger state procurement, revolves around service components. Provider payments are based on performance for initiation and completion of specific services. MRC has recently completed a new procurement for CIES services which took effect on July 1, 2019. MRC made adjustments to the CIES model based on lessons learned and input from its staff, CRP partners, and other stakeholders, and to incorporate provision of CIES services to mutually served consumers between MRC and the Department of Psych. Health's Adult Clinical Community Services (ACCS) program. These adjustments are designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of CIES services for MRC consumers. MRC also incorporated peer support and flexible supports into the CIES procurement and has developed key performance indicators for CIES. The CIES procurement is set to be a rolling RFR which opens four times a year to allow recruitment of additional vendors providing flexibility and maximum access for services.

Performance evaluations of the CIES program are used to assess consumer needs, demand for services, and the quality of services provided by CRPs and to determine areas for improvement. Adjustments to provider contracts are made based on these evaluations based on performance, need, demand, and available resources. MRC also utilizes the information to develop recommendations for improvement of CRPs and to determine the need for additional CRPs to meet consumer needs, both for specific populations and geographically. There are some areas of the state which could benefit from new or expanded CRPs and this is reflected in the results of the Counselor Satisfaction Survey. MRC continually monitors the program to identify additional areas where additional vendor capacity is needed or to make course corrections based on performance and consumer need.

Additionally, MRC contracts with CRPs to provide pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to both eligible and potentially students with disabilities as part of its WIOA-related initiatives. These contracts provide the 5 core pre-employment transition services (work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training, counseling on enrollment in post-secondary education, instruction in self-advocacy/mentoring, and job exploration counseling) to MRC consumers who are students with disabilities age 14 to 22 enrolled in high school or post-secondary education or training programs.

MRC recently completed a new procurement for contracted Pre-ETS services which took effect on July 1, 2019. This new procurement is designed in the long term to allow MRC be able to serve more students and provide students with exposure to the world of work. This approach focuses on: 1) increasing the student's awareness of the world of work and their own employment interests, skills, and needs; 2) providing exploration and exposure opportunities related to work experiences; and 3) better preparing students for employment and

postsecondary success. This approach is tiered to ensure that students of all abilities can access and engage in Pre-ETS services based on their interests and needs.

The structure for managing and monitoring these contracts is based on MRC's CIES process and involves monthly narrative and statistical reporting and quarterly site visit meetings, among others. The contracts have performance measures involving completion of Pre-ETS services offered under the procurement. The procurement is cost-reimbursement but the goal is to collect data on best practice models for the provision of Pre-ETS services and to ultimately develop a unit rate structure. MRC will continue to conduct performance evaluations of results from the first several years of the program to lead to the development of best practices and to ensure quality services are provided to students.

Employer Survey

In 2017, MRC conducted its most recent survey of employers it maintains a relationship with. The survey focused on statewide and regional employer accounts managed by MRC's Job Placement Specialists and Employment Service Specialists. A total of 16 employers responded to the survey for a response rate of 18%.

The survey results indicates a very high level of satisfaction with MRC job placement services amongst responding employer partners (88% Satisfied/Very Satisfied, including satisfaction with the job performance of employees hired through MRC). 93% Satisfied/Very Satisfied in terms of meeting the needs of employers, the vast majority of responding employers (87%) indicated that they are Satisfied with MRC meeting their recruitment needs and 94% would recommend MRC to other businesses for employment and recruitment. These findings suggest that MRC's efforts to work with employers are effective towards accommodating the needs of our consumers and employer partners. MRC has reviewed the survey findings with its Job Placement team and will refine the survey and discuss on how it can be expanded to additional employer partners going forward.

MRC also continues to seek ways to partner with its WIOA core partners to gather additional feedback and information from its employer partners.

Analysis of Staff Training Needs

MRC utilizes an ongoing and continuous process to assess the training needs for all agency VR staff, including counselors, supervisors, and managers, among others. This process includes multiple methods and is managed by the MRC Training Department. The process consists of a staff training needs assessment survey sent to managers, supervisors, and all VR staff on at least an annual basis, an advisory committee for staff training representing all levels of VR staff that meets regularly with the Training Department to provide ongoing feedback on training needs, post-training questionnaires given to staff on additional training needs after training sessions and New Counselor Training, as well as direct feedback from managers, the SRC, and other stakeholders. Findings from the CSNA including the Needs Assessment Survey, Consumer Satisfaction Survey, and Counselor Satisfaction Survey are also shared with the advisory committee and the Training Department to inform on the development of trainings.

In conjunction with agency management and the training advisory committee, the Training Department uses the findings of its process to assess training needs to develop a staff training plan to guide training priorities on an annual basis. This training plan is shared with senior management and is incorporated into MRC's CSNA and Unified/Combined State Planning process.

- In the most recent training plan, some of the training priorities identified (among others) included:
- More trainings on Pre-Employment Transition Services and WIOA requirements
- Job readiness/job placement activity trainings (resume writing, local job markets/labor market information, career assessments, etc.)
- Technology trainings: Accessing MRCIS, Career Scope, COPS system with consumers
- Using Excel; sort and filter, formulas
- Stress management, case management strategies
- Technical writing skills for more effective case notes
- Transferable skills analysis
- Labor market information/hiring trends in Massachusetts by industry and occupation
- Psych. health disorders: resilience, positive psychology
- Traumatic brain injury
- Health conditions and/or physical disorders: autoimmune disorders, fibromyalgia, chronic diseases
- Review of MRC policies, procedures and best practices
- Financial eligibility, financial need form, policies on college and trainings
- Consumer dealing with substance abuse
- Supervisory and management development: "Managing Up" working with management effectively
- Perspectives on supervision: exploring the move from employee to supervisor
- Supervision for graduate student interns
- Tactics for dealing with difficult behaviors
- Techniques for supervising and managing different types of people
- Capitalize on personal style for more effective communication
- Goal setting for peak performance
- Transgender consumers and employment

- Educating employers on reasonable accommodations
- Group facilitation
- Team building
- Advanced leadership trainings
- Working with consumers on the Autism Spectrum
- Refresher training and trainings on system updates for the MRCIS case management system.
- Trainings on how to best assist consumers with criminal histories including those with sex offender status (CORI and SORI)
- Time management and on how to effectively communicate and remain in contact with consumers
- Continuation of annual new staff orientation for new hires
- Training on finding comparable benefits for consumers
- Trainings related to the agency's new initiatives with the Department of Psych. Health and the Department of Transitional Assistance
- Trainings on MRC's revamped CIES employment services procurement and its linkage to the new MRC-DMH Employment initiative
- Substance abuse training in partnership with the Department of Public Health, Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Trainings related to finding quality employment outcomes for consumers

MRC has and will continue to work closely with the various national RSA/VR technical assistance centers going forward to assist with implementation of WIOA and other training initiatives. MRC has also worked with the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) on a series of staff development efforts related to Pre-ETS and transition services, Integrated Resource Team (IRT) approach, career pathways, and trainings on the Common Performance Measures and understanding and using data. MRC is also working on trainings for staff and consumers in partnership with Work Without Limits, a program run by the University of Massachusetts, and is also coordinating training with MRC employer partners and MRC providers.

MRC also continues to offer ongoing professional development for VR counselors, managers, supervisors, as well as aspiring supervisors. These trainings are ongoing and address 21st century labor trends, high growth occupations skills that are in demand, trainings on job accommodations and employment tax credits, amongst other topics. MRC is also conducting Change Management Training to support its staff with changes related to WIOA and focusing on improving practices to better serve the needs of MRC consumers and to improve consumer satisfaction. MRC also makes trainings available in cooperation with staff labor unions on professional development, including computer software training and online training via LinkedIn's Learning Online training site.

Through its training department, MRC acquires and routinely disseminates rehabilitation materials and research to staff such as the latest publications from the Institute on Rehabilitation on Issues, training materials from the Research and Training Centers, training guides and resource materials produced by recipients of RSA grants, and products from the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials, as well as information and knowledge from RSA VR Technical Assistance centers such as the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC), the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), the Vocational Rehabilitation Youth Technical Assistance Center (Y-TAC), the Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JDVRTAC), and the Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance Center for Program Evaluation and Quality Assurance (PEQATAC). MRC also disseminates materials and information from the National Rehabilitation Association, the Association of People

Supporting Employment First, Explore VR, and other sources. These information and materials are also discussed and utilized in training and staff development meetings and webinars.

Case Review Process

As part of its quality assurance processes and to assist with the CSNA process and the development of the State Plan, MRC conducts case record reviews of VR cases. The reviews not only measure compliance with RSA and MRC regulations, but also are used to develop recommended areas for improvement and inform efforts to improve the quality of case management services provided by MRC staff. Findings are shared with senior management and incorporated into the CSNA, strategic planning, and State Plan process. MRC is currently in the process of completing an electronic case review for FY 2019 case closures.

Based on the findings of the most recent case reviews, it was recommended that follow up training should be conducted on the procedure of presumption of eligibility for consumers receiving SSI and SSDI benefits.

Refresher staff trainings should also be conducted as needed on MRC policy and procedure on eligibility standards, timeliness, WIOA pre-employment transition services, backup documentation for data validation purposes, and substantiality of services. Improvement was seen in most of these areas from past years. Supervisory staff should be reminded to routinely evaluate cases to ensure proper documentation of services and supports.

MRC will be revamping and enhancing its Case Review process in FY 2020 and beyond as part of its internal quality assurance process and to ensure compliance with RSA requirements.

Performance Management

One of the main aspects of MRC's Performance Management and Quality Improvement System which informs the CSNA and the State Plan is MRC's Performance Management System. Since mid-2016, MRC has one agency strategic measure for each of its three divisions as part of this system.

MRC FY2019 Progress Update and FY2020 Proposed Performance Goals and Metrics

AGENCY	METRIC	FY2019 TO DATE RESULTS	FY2020 MEASURE/TARGET
MRC (VR Division)	% annual growth in the number of high school and post-secondary education students with disabilities aged 14 to 22 receiving VR and/or pre-employment transition services, including potentially eligible students (FY2019 baseline 3,650)	As of December 31, 2018, MRC is serving 5,167 students with disabilities in its VR program. This represents a 41% increase from the FY2019 baseline of 3,650. MRC continues to outreach to school systems and underserved populations including students with Psych. health needs as part of our Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) initiatives. MRC has redesigned its Pre-Employment Transition Service program to incorporate services to potentially eligible students with disabilities through a vendor-based model to increase the number of students within the availability of resources. MRC is on track to meet its target for FY2019.	88% of MRC consumers placed into competitive employment maintain employment for greater than 90 days. (Baseline for FY2020 will be 3,800)
MRC (CL Division)	% annual growth in individuals with disabilities transitioning from skilled nursing homes and facility-based care to the community and receiving ongoing support services in the community (1,183 FY2019 baseline)	As of December 31, 2018, 1,042 individuals had been transitioned from skilled nursing homes and facility-based care and are receiving ongoing supports in the community. MRC's waiver programs continues to focus on self-determination strategies. MRC's goal is to continue providing effective and efficient quality services to assist people with disabilities to live independently in the community. MRC is on track to achieve its target goal for FY2019 by the end of the fiscal year.	10% annual growth in individuals with disabilities transitioned and supported in the community (Baseline for FY2020 will be 1,215)
MRC (DDS Division)	% of SSA disability claim decisions for Massachusetts Citizens processed accurately by MRC Disability Determination Services. (Target: 97% accuracy)	As of December 31, 2018, MRC-DDS has a 97% accuracy rate for SSA disability claims processed for Massachusetts Citizens. This is meeting the target for this goal and is also higher than the 90.6% SSA national accuracy standard. MRC-DDS's goal is to provide quality and timely claims services to MA citizens, and this performance demonstrates effectiveness and efficiency in processing claims. MRC is on track to meet its target for FY2019.	80% percent of MRC-DDS SSA disability claims to be shared with the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation Division to improve quality, effectiveness, and timeliness of services provided to individuals with disabilities across MRC divisions.

Replacement for Standards and Indicators

During PY2017 and PY2018, MRC reported baseline data to RSA for the WIOA Common Performance Measures as specified in the state plan requirements. As required by RSA, MRC began collecting data for the Common Performance Measures as of July 1, 2017, replacing the prior Vocational Rehabilitation Standards and Indicators. As the VR program only began reporting data in the fall of 2017, MRC will continue reporting baseline data for RSA on these measures for PY19, and for all measures except Measurable Skills Gains for PY2020 and PY2021. MRC will have a negotiated adjusted performance goal established for Measurable Skills Gains for PY2020 and PY2021, and performance goals will be developed by RSA for the remaining measures for PY2022 and beyond once PY2020 and PY2021 data is submitted.

As the VR program only began reporting data for the common measures as of July 1, 2017, MRC only has initial data for PY2017 and PY2018 for Measurable Skills Gains and PY2018 for Employment Rate at 2nd Quarter after Exit and Median Earnings during 2nd Quarter after Exit, and for Effectiveness of Serving Employers. Data for the 4th Quarter after Exit Employment Rate and Credential Obtainment will be available after the completion of PY2019. MRC has and will continue working with its workforce partners to complete the Statewide Performance Report for the Common Measures.

MRC's Analytics and Quality Assurance department will continue to analyze the data as it becomes available and create a report for management on the common measures. A data dashboard of this information will also be pursued to push data down to staff at the office and counselor level as applicable. This will allow the agency to work on strategies to increase performance on the common measures.

	PY17 (FY18)	PY18 (FY19)
Employment Rate at 2nd Quarter After Exit	N/A*	48.2%
Employment Rate at 4th Quarter After Exit	N/A*	N/A*
Median Earnings at 2nd Quarter After Exit	N/A*	$4,332.83
Credential Obtainment Rate	N/A*	N/A*
Measurable Skills Gains	13.1%	8.4%
Effectiveness of Serving Employers – Retention from 2nd to 4th Quarter after Exit	N/A*	75%
Effectiveness of Serving Employers - Repeat Business Customers	15.0%	11.6%

*__Note__- Complete Employment at Fourth Quarter after Exit and Credential Obtainment Rate are not available for PY17 and PY18, and were not included by RSA in the PY17 and PY18 WIOA Annual Report Data for Vocational Rehabilitation

Table 26: WIOA Common Performance Measures and most current data gathered on those measures

MRC has established an electronic reporting and performance measurement system to monitor, analyze, and report on the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs. This system will allow the agency to make improvements to ensure performance on the WIOA common performance measures. MRC continues to establish baseline data on these measures and began reporting data to RSA in the fall of 2017. MRC has also developed and provided several trainings in coordination with WINTAC on the Common Performance Measures which has been delivered to MRC managers, staff, and the SRC. MRC also participates in a cross-agency workgroup with workforce partners on performance measurement under the Common Measures.

MRC continues to developing strategies designed to improve MRC's performance on the WIOA Common Performance Measures. MRC is focusing on the development of strategies to promote the placement of consumers into high quality careers with higher wages and benefits. MRC will also be developing training strategies for staff and its provider network to focus on high quality employment outcomes and seek ways to increase the median wage by focusing on more full-time jobs rather than part-time jobs. MRC will also strive

to provide benefits planning on the front end of the placement process to ensure consumers understand work benefits that are available for them to obtain high paying and self-sustainable employment.

MRC is also conducting ongoing training on the Common Performance Measures with counselors, managers, supervisors, the SRC, and providers to ensure team-orientated outcomes that will improve performance on the Common Performance Measures. MRC will also develop internal performance reports to track performance on the caseload, office, district, and statewide level to assist in these efforts using data from its Case Management System.

Analysis of Facts and Statistics: Massachusetts and MRC

Overall State Demographics	
2019 Massachusetts Population Estimate	6,902,149
Female Persons, percent 2019	51.5%
Persons Under 5 years, percent 2019	5.2%
Persons Under 18 years, percent 2019	19.8%
Persons Under 65 years, percent 2019	16.5%
Veterans, percent 2019	5.5%
Race and Ethnicity	
White alone, percent 2019	77.3%
Black/African American alone, percent 2019	7.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent 2019	0.2%
Asian alone, percent 2019	6.8%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent 2019	0.0%
Hispanic or Latino, percent 2019	12.3%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent 2019	70.7%
Education, Language, Other Facts	
High School or equivalent, percent 2019	24.3%
Some college, no degree, percent 2019	15.5%
Associate's degree, percent 2019	7.5%
Bachelor's degree, percent 2019	23.9%
Graduate or professional degree, percent 2019	19.5%
English only at home, percent 2019	76.0%
Housing and Income	
Housing Units, 2019	2,894,590
Homeownership rate, percent 2019	62.3%
Median housing value, 2019	$385,400
Median gross rent, 2019	$1,208
Median household income, 2019	$77,385

Table 27: Massachusetts demographic information, as reported by the United States Census Bureau, 2019

The MRC's CSNA process incorporates analysis of the following overall facts, long term trends, statistics, and demographics into the analytical process to both complement and provide additional context to this report and its findings. This includes broader information on the Massachusetts labor market and employment situation for individuals with disabilities, demographic information and facts on the MRC VR consumer population and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a whole, and outcomes of the MRC VR program, amongst other data. The additional data was collected from various sources to enhance this report, including labor market data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Massachusetts Department of Labor, statistical data from the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, the US Census Bureau, as well as data and statistics from the MRCIS Case Management System on the MRC's VR consumer population, and other key reports. This information remains a vital part of the CSNA process, enabling MRC to gain context to the information that is collected from consumers, providers, staff, and other government agencies.

Summary of MRC VR Long Term Trends and Patterns (FY2015-FY2019)

MRC has identified the following trends and patterns based on 5 year and 10 year trends (all are based on the MRC State Fiscal Year unless noted).

In this year's report, the following trends and patterns have been identified based on 5 year and 10 year trends:

1. Between FY 2010 and FY 2019, MRC has achieved and exceeded its previous year's results for successful consumer employment outcomes. In FY 2019, employment outcomes dropped from year to year for the first time since FY 2009. The average hourly wage for FY 2019 was the highest achieved during the past 10 years. The average number of hours worked per week by employed consumers increased slightly over the past 5 years, and reached a 10 year high in FY 2019. As a result of increased outcomes and wages, the aggregate annual earnings for successfully employed consumers in their first year of employment has increased by 12.8%, or $9.9 million, since FY 2013.

2. The number of consumers successfully employed increased from 3,737 in FY 2015 to 4,053 in FY2018, before falling back to 3.695 in FY 2019. The average hourly wage for employed consumers increased by $1.71 or 11.6% from FY 2015 to FY 2019. The average number of hours worked per week increased slightly, climbing by 0.62 hours from 26.8 hours in FY 2015 to 27.42 hours in FY 2019.

	5 Year Changes in Employment Outcomes				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Consumers Successfully Employed for 90 Days + (Status 26)	3,737	3,816	3,973	4,053	3,695
Average Hourly Wage for Employed Consumers	$12.98	$13.18	$14.11	$14.65	$14.69
Average Worked Per Week by Employed Consumers	26.8	26.8	26.7	27.3	27.42

Table 28: Five years of changes in MRC Consumer Employment Outcomes

3. Initial job placements in Status 22 decreased in FY 2019 after several years of increases. This trend should be monitored closely as the number of Status 22s can be a predictor of successful employment outcomes in the near future. The decrease in FY 2019 is likely resulted in the overall drop of consumers served by MRC in FY 2019, which coincided with implementation of a maximum obligation policy which seems to have led to a drop in referrals.

4. The number of consumers actively served (Status 12-22) fell by 17.9% from FY 2018 to FY 2019. As mentioned above, there was a reduced number of referrals which impacted overall served numbers in late FY 2018 and FY 2019. The number of served consumers is still up 5.5% over a 5 year period from FY 2015. Consumer referrals, applications, eligibilities, and Individualized Plans for Employment fell in FY 2018 and FY 2019 after remaining relatively steady over the prior 4 or 5 years, and remain high. Referrals fell 20% from FY 2013 to FY 2019, Applications fell by 13.5%, and Eligibilities by 22.2%. It is recommended MRC continue to monitor trends and patterns in this area. This period of decreased coincided with implementation of a maximum obligation policy which likely is a factor in the decreases.

5. The number of consumers served annually in Status 18 (Training and Education) fell in FY 2019 after several years of increases and is down 22% looking at the 5 year period. It remains the most common status for active MRC VR consumers. Consumers served annually in Job Ready Status (Status 20), Physical and Psych. Restoration (Status 16) also decreased in FY 2019. Status 20 numbers had increased over the past 5-10 years while Status 16 cases had remained steadier. The number of consumers receiving

physical and Psych. restoration services in Status 16 decreased slightly (-1.3%) in FY 2017, while looking at a 5 year trend, consumers in Status 16 are up 7% since FY 2013 but remain below peak levels seen between FY 2010 and FY 2012.

6. The number of consumers served annually in post-employment services fell back in FY 2019 for the 3rd straight year. Consumers served in state-funded ongoing support services remained steady from FY 2018 to FY 2019.

7. The disability profile of MRC consumers (based on primary disability) continues to change over time. Over the past decade, psychiatric disabilities has consistently remained the highest category (+2.1% since FY 2015). There have also been increases in consumers served with learning disabilities (+4.3% since FY 2015) while there has been a decrease over the past five years in consumers with primary disabilities related to substance abuse issues, traumatic brain injuries, and more recently individuals who are deaf/hard of hearing. Since FY 2017, the proportion of consumers served with intellectual/developmental disabilities has leveled off and began to go back up after decreasing for a period of many years

8. MRC continues to serve a greater number of transition-aged youth at time of intake for services. Over the past several years, MRC has placed a strong emphasis on providing Pre-Employment Transition Services to high school and post-secondary education students as it implemented the requirements of the WIOA law. Both the number and proportion of transition-youth aged consumers aged 14 to 22 and youth aged 14 to 24 both at application and age during the fiscal year has increased steadily over the past decade.

9. As the Commonwealth's population continues to become more ethnically and racially diverse, MRC's consumer population is also following this pattern. Over the past ten years, MRC has seen an increase in consumers from minority backgrounds, particularly African-American and Hispanic consumers. There also has been a slight growth in the proportion of Native American consumers, reaching a 10 year high of 1.3% in FY 2019. Numerically and proportionally, the largest growth is in Hispanic consumers, who reached a 10 year high in FY 2019, which is consistent with Census Bureau American Community Survey estimates for Massachusetts.

10. Hispanic consumers have been growing the fastest over the past 5 years (+2.7%), while African-Americans served has grown by 0.5% over the same period. African-Americans are served by the MRC at a much higher rate than their rate in the overall population and Hispanic consumers are served by MRC at a rate slightly above their rate in the general population. Since FY 2013, MRC has seen a flat pattern in Asian consumers served (remaining between 3.4% and 3.8%) after seeing a major increase in Asians served between FY 2006 and FY 2012. It continues to appear that Asians are slightly underserved in comparison with their rate in the overall state population (3.6% of MRC consumers compared to 7.1% for all MA population)

11. Over the past 5 years, and particularly since FY 2016, there continues to be a trend of a slight but steady increase with consumers coming to MRC with a high school or below level of education at application. This has coincided with a decrease in the number of consumers coming to MRC with some post-secondary education and or completion of post-secondary education. This is likely related to the increase in transition-age consumers served by MRC.

12. The proportion of consumers successfully employed with Health Insurance benefits has increased significantly over the past decade, most likely coinciding with the state Health Care Reform Act enacted in 2007 and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. The proportion of consumers with any form of health insurance at time of closure reached a peak of 99.6% in FY 2019. However, there has been a decline over the past decade, especially since the passage of the Federal Affordable Care Act, in consumers employed with employer-sponsored health insurance benefits. It appears that an increasing number of employers are passing

purchasing health care benefits on to their employees. This trend appears to have leveled off around FY 2015 and the proportion of consumers employed with employer-sponsored insurance has gone back up in FY 2018 and FY 2019.

13. The numbers of consumers closed unsuccessfully after receiving services in Status 28 has increased over the past decade, and is up 35.5% since FY 2015. The number of Status 28s has negatively impacted MRC's ability to achieve the Federal Rehabilitation Rate performance goal of 55.8%. MRC passed the Rehabilitation Rate in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013 and FFY 2014, and came very close in FFY 2016 as the number of Status 28s dropped during the last 3 months of the Federal Fiscal Year, but failed looking at the 9 month FFY 2017 period from 10/1/16 to 6/30/17 prior to the implementation of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2018 and SFY 2019, MRC also fell short of the target as there were more Status 28 than Status 26 closures.

14. The WIOA Common Performance Measures, which were implemented July 1, 2017, include both Status 26 and Status 28 closures in looking at employment rates at 2nd and 4th quarter after closure, and median wages in the 2nd quarter after closure. Therefore, Status 28 closures will impact MRC performance on the Common Measures going forward. The Rehabilitation Rate remains an important quality measure. In order to increase the rehabilitation rate and positively impact MRC's performance on the common measures in the future, the number of Status 26 closures must increase, the number of Status 28 closures must be reduced, or a combination of increases in Status 26s and decreases of Status 28s must take place. The third option seems to be the most viable solution.

15. Since FY 2015, there has been a major decline in the number of cases closed after eligibility but before service delivery (Status 30), representing a 121% decrease from FY 2013. This change is likely related to two factors: the new WIOA law stating IPEs have to be completed in 90 days, and a major reduction in cases overdue in Status 10. The result is that more consumers appear to be moving efficiently through the system from eligibility to plan, and less are being closed out prior to IPE development. The long term implications of this change need to be monitored – as it could lead to increased Status 26 outcomes, but also could result in a greater number of Status 28 closures.

16. Since FY 2015, there has been a 6.7% decrease in the number of cases closed before plan development in Status 08, after peaking between FY 2010 and FY 2012. However, Status 08 closures remain higher than they were a decade ago. The vast majority of Status 08 closures are Status 00 to 08 closures. These are consumers closed prior to becoming applicants to VR. Closures in this status do not impact performance standards and may be due to a variety of reasons.

17. The Long Term Trends report will continue to be modified as needed to account for recent programmatic changes and to add in data for new programs and initiatives to will allow establishment of a baseline for ongoing monitoring of trends and patterns in these areas going forward.

Recommendations

1. **Focus on improving communication between consumers and counselors, including developing strategies to improve communication on caseloads where staff vacancies occur:**

In this year's report, findings throughout the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) including the Consumer Needs Assessment Survey, Counselor Survey, Consumer Satisfaction Survey, suggest that some consumers may experience difficulties staying in contact with their counselor and vice versa with counselors having difficulty maintaining contact with VR consumers. This is also evident when looking at the closure reasons for consumers closed unsuccessfully from the VR program. However, this was much less pronounced than in prior years.

It is recommended that MRC develop a workgroup to focus on engagement with consumers and to develop additional strategies to reduce unsuccessful closures and to further review the area of communication and develop strategies to improve communication between counselors and consumers on their caseload. Staff training on remaining engaged with consumers is also recommended. Engagement strategies developed by MRC through its Kessler Grant Career Pathway Services project, the new MRC-DMH Employment Initiative and the DTA-MRC Empower to Employ program could be used as best practices to assist in this area.

A focus on continued use of electronic methods of communication including email and text message may also assist in improving communication. Communication is a two-way street, and the results suggest a need for improvement in communication on both the counselor and consumer end.

It is also recommended that MRC should also look at ways to improve communication with consumers on caseloads where there are vacancies while they are being refilled, including having Unit Supervisors and Area Directors assist with communicating with consumers on these caseloads to ensure consumers remain engaged. Findings in the CSNA suggest this is an area where improvement is needed as well.

2. **Continue ongoing efforts to improve services to youth consumers including high school and post-secondary students with disabilities:**

As transition-aged youth comprise a large portion of MRC VR referrals, and with the strong emphasis on serving youth and students with disabilities under WIOA, including pre-employment transition services, it is very important that the agency continue to focus on how to best serve these consumers, whose needs often differ from traditional adult VR cases. MRC should continue its efforts to expand and coordinate pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities, including potentially eligible students through its revised Pre-ETS procurement with community-based providers. MRC should continue its efforts to improve services to youths and students with disabilities through identifying and promoting best practices, continuing collaboration with local schools and community colleges, and ensuring that information on pre-employment transition services and the transition planning process is available to consumers and their families and to staff, MRC offices, and schools through contracts, initiatives, partnerships, and other efforts. MRC should also continue its staff training in this area. MRC should continue to participate in webinars and trainings on transition services, research strategies and models to continue to expand pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities, including potentially eligible students, and come up with strategies to refer additional youth consumers for supported employment services.

Finally, MRC should continue to use lessons learned from its Transition Pathway Services grant to develop innovative best practices that can be replicated throughout the state in terms of Pre-ETS services.

3. Modernize MRC's Technology Systems and Case Management Systems and Databases to provide a more user-friendly, streamlined, and modern system, including a frontal facing portal for consumers and job seekers:

MRC should continue its efforts to replace its MRCIS Case Management system with a more modern, mobile, and user friendly data system that integrated with Community Living programs. This will help improve the efficiency of service delivery by utilizing a more user friendly platform, and will assist the agency in developing data tools and analytics to make data-informed decisions to improve service delivery for MRC consumers across the agency. This system should include a frontal facing platform for job seekers and providers and should eliminate all paper records for the VR division.

4. Continue to develop pre-employment transition services for high school students with disabilities in coordination with local educational authorities:

It is recommended that MRC continue its efforts to develop and coordinate the delivery of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to VR eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities (including potentially eligible students) with local educational authorities and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and MRC Pre-ETS contracted service providers, including those services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). MRC has developed an agreement and worked with DESE to issue guidance to schools on the provision and coordination of individualized transition services for students with disabilities that lead to successful post-school outcomes in competitive integrated employment, post-secondary education and training, and community living.

5. Continue to expand services to employers and coordinate employer services with other core workforce partners:

MRC should continue to expand its efforts to provide services to employers through its account management system, employer advisory boards, the annual statewide hiring event, any local hiring events being planned, and other efforts designed to assess and meet the needs of employers and consumers alike. MRC also participates in a business strategy workgroup between key workforce partners as part of the Commonwealth's effort to coordinate services to employers amongst partner agencies. This effort will also assist with MRC's implementation of the WIOA Common Measure related to effectiveness of services to employers. It is also recommended MRC expand its pilot Employer Survey beyond its major employer accounts. MRC should also share the findings of the CSNA with its employer advisory boards and employer relationships to assist employer partners in best serving the needs of individuals with disabilities.

6. Continue efforts to enhance information to consumers and potential consumers on available services:

Based on the results of the Needs Assessment survey and focus group, it appears some consumers are not fully aware of some of the supports and services provided by the MRC, especially Community Living services. In addition, the findings of the Needs Assessment

Survey, Consumer Satisfaction Survey, and the Counselor Satisfaction Survey all suggest some consumers do not fully understand what the MRC can and cannot do for them, and that some consumers may not completely understand their role and participation in the VR process. The good news is that this theme has continually become less pronounced over the past several years in the CSNA suggesting that there is continued improvement in this area. MRC's updating of a basic service list which has been published to its website which had been recommended in previous CSNA's is a big accomplishment in this area. Despite these improvements, it is suggested that MRC should continue to address this finding. First, it is recommended that MRC update its Consumer Handbook and Orientation Video on an ongoing basis to make sure it remains up to date and accounts for any agency policy and procedural changes. Beyond this, MRC should continue to look at ways to provide more comprehensive information about services beyond its consumer orientation video(s), service lists, and consumer handbook, including training staff both on what other internal MRC services are available to consumers, and consider creating or obtaining an inventory, guide, or list of external resources and agencies the MRC counselors can refer consumers to. MRC can also continue to provide additional information on services through its marketing resources as well as through the use of social media and other methods. MRC's new office of Consumer and Family Engagement may also be able to assist in these efforts.

There also appears to be some uncertainty on the part of consumers regarding self-employment assistance that MRC can provide. An update or revision of any documentation or handbook on self-employment services should be considered. These efforts should be beneficial to consumers.

7. Continue Efforts to collaborate with other components of the Workforce Investment System in Massachusetts to serve the needs of individuals with disabilities:

The MRC should continue its efforts to collaborate with other core partners in the workforce investment system to reduce unemployment of individuals with disabilities and to provide effective services to employers throughout the state; to seek out collaborative opportunities including possible projects and grants that may assist individuals with disabilities across Massachusetts in obtaining competitive employment; and to continue to work closely together on WIOA implementation including common performance measures, and developing methods to track shared consumers across the workforce system, among others. MRC should continue its efforts through workgroups such as the WIOA Steering Committee, the WIOA Systems Integration Workgroup, and other committees to align services and continue to increase its presence at the career centers. MRC should also continue with its partners to complete the development of Workforce Connect as a consumer-facing and staff-facing dashboard and case management overlay to track shared consumers across the workforce system.

It is recommended that MRC continue to work in collaboration with other core partners under WIOA to survey and identify the needs of individuals working with other components of the Workforce system. MRC should expand and continue its efforts to consult with core partners on the identified needs of their consumers as it relates to accessibility and access to employment opportunities, employment training, and provide employer trainings on disability awareness and job accommodations. Additionally, MRC should work with its partners to collect additional data on the needs of individuals in the overall workforce system to further align services and complement and enhance the CSNA.

8. Continue staff trainings and workforce planning efforts to assist in improving service delivery to VR consumers:

The CSNA has identified areas where additional MRC staff training may assist in improving the quality and effectiveness of VR services delivered to MRC consumers. Based on these findings, trainings on serving consumers with psychiatric health challenges, trainings on pre-employment transition services (including those to potentially eligible consumers) and group transition services, job readiness/job placement activity trainings (resume writing, local job markets/labor market information, career assessments, etc.), ongoing trainings on the MRCIS case management system, counselor, supervisor and management trainings on VR best practices, policies and procedures, and effective practices for supervision, updated training on recording data such as measurable skills gains connected to WIOA common performance measures, best practices from new projects such as the MRC-DMH Employment Initiative, the Empower to Employ Program, and trainings on effective communication with consumers and time management are recommended. In addition, the agency should continue its efforts to create webinar trainings for staff on a variety of topics and continue to seek input from staff on areas where training can improve service delivery. It is also recommended MRC continue its successful workforce planning efforts to continue recruitment of new staff through VR counseling graduate programs and continue to provide ongoing manager, supervisor, and aspiring supervisor trainings and workshops to assist in preparing current staff for promotional opportunities within the agency.

9. Continue to promote job driven trainings to increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities:

MRC has demonstrated over the past several years that job driven trainings and on-the-job (OJT) trainings are important and effective tools for training and employing consumers in competitive jobs in many industries and occupations. These are also effective tools to assist in eliminating stigma against consumers with disabilities by demonstrating the abilities and skills of individuals with disabilities directly to employers in their workplace. OJT and Job Driven Trainings were identified as important services by a large portion of consumers in the Needs Assessment survey and counselors have also identified the need for additional OJTs and Job-Driven Trainings. MRC should also continue to evaluate the outcomes of its Job Driven Training programs with its employer partners. MRC should continue its efforts to build off of these collaborations as a model to use with other companies to establish similar programs with the goal of increased employment outcomes for consumers and as a way to market the skills and abilities of individuals with disabilities to the private sector and to meet employer needs. MRC should also consider expansion of its hiring event to include additional employers and consider partnering with other core workforce partners to develop new employer partners for job-driven trainings. MRC could also use these programs to develop joint efforts with MassHire Career Centers and other key workforce partners.

10. Utilize Needs Assessment and data from the MRCIS Case Management System to conduct a longitudinal analysis of vocational rehabilitation service needs to determine service gaps:

The CSNA report has a multi-year baseline of data that can be used by MRC to look at service needs and potential service gaps on a longitudinal basis. When combined with MRCIS data, this could be a strong source of data to conduct analysis on a long term basis to determine service gaps, to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of MRC VR programs. Use of new data analytics tools could also assist with this process. It is recommended that MRC begin the process of utilizing Needs Assessment and MRCIS data to look at consumer needs and service gaps on a long term basis.

11. **Continue to utilize findings to promote program development, assist with ongoing policy development and planning within the agency:**

The findings and recommended alternatives from the CSNA should continue to be used by agency management and the SRC for planning purposes and remain an integral part of its strategic planning and WIOA Combined State Plan efforts for short and long range resource planning activities and future program development activities. The CSNA has and should continue to be used to inform agency planning efforts relative to the implementation of new innovative projects to meet the needs of consumers and to drive future agency planning efforts.

12. **Continue to increase consumer awareness of transportation options and explore efforts to assist consumers with transportation:**

This year's Needs Assessment once again demonstrates that transportation remains a significant need for many MRC consumers. MRC should continue to work with the SRC on transportation and seek out partnerships and collaboration with other stakeholders. MRC has begun meeting with MassMobility on strategies and ideas to address the transportation issues facing MRC consumers and individuals with disabilities and how MRC can work with MassMobility and other agencies to address needs in this area. Development of other informational materials and training should be considered to assist consumers in learning about other available resources including local Councils on Aging and the EOHHS Human Service Transportation (HST) Office, and other resources, as well as innovative pilots. In addition, MRC should continue to research collaboration with MassMobility, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Career Centers, the HST office, local and regional planning boards, and other organizations on projects or programs that might be able to assist consumers with transportation, given that transportation is a systemic issue requiring collaboration on multiple levels. MRC should also do a survey of its offices to find out more about how its local staff are connected to the local transportation regional coordinating councils. MRC should also consult other VR agencies on how they address transportation challenges for individuals with disabilities.

13. **Continue outreach to communities of ethnic and diverse backgrounds on vocational rehabilitation and other MRC service offerings, especially in the Asian community:**

The MRC has made a commitment to reach out to individuals with the most significant disabilities who are also ethnic and cultural minorities through its Diversity Committee and through its Language Access Plan. The MRC should continue these outreach efforts to ethnic and cultural minorities, especially to the Asian community, which continues to be identified as slightly underserved by the VR program in Massachusetts. As growth in the Asian community continues to be seen in the state's general population, it is recommended that MRC continues its outreach efforts to Asian communities in particular. There was growth in the number of Asian consumers served by MRC during FY2019. MRC conducted a focus group during PY2018 in its Lowell Office, which has a higher concentration of Asian consumers. MRC will also be conducting additional focus groups in two of its offices with higher concentrations of Asian consumers to gather further information on how MRC can better address the needs of this underserved population. Based on the results of the Lowell Focus group and from SRC input, MRC has also developed a workgroup and work plan to focus on outreach efforts to Asian and other minority communities. Strategies and resources for outreach efforts will be developed as part of this workgroup. It is recommended MRC completion of Focus Groups or community meetings in Braintree and/or Boston, and/or other areas with high population

concentration of Asian communities, with consultation of the diversity and bilingual committees to review results and to develop best practices in collaboration with community organizations for increasing outreach efforts and services to the Asian community based on the comprehensive needs assessment survey conducted by the SRC, to present to agency leadership. It is also recommended that MRC continue to develop and implement a new consumer engagement program which will include coordination of outreach services to community organizations in areas with underserved populations.

14. Continue to further refine the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment process for WIOA requirements and reach out to additional consumers:

The agency should continue its process of continuous improvement to the CSNA process with input from the SRC Needs Assessment Committee, and should continue to review RSA guidance, information from RSA Technical Assistance Centers such as WINTAC, and best practices from other states as part of this process. The process of continuous improvement has been very beneficial and has led to a strong annual product that has resulted in actions being taken to address its recommendations and findings. Other states have also come to MRC to learn about our CSNA process. Consumer needs are a dynamic, a moving target, and as new policies and new priorities are established, consumer needs will continue to evolve. The CSNA has been enhanced and modified to assist with the implementation of new WIOA reporting, performance, and state planning requirements, and MRC should continue to refine the CSNA accordingly going forward. MRC should also continue to use the CSNA to inform further studies and analyses based on its findings. MRC should also revise and update the CSNA process with the use of new analytical tools as they become available to the agency such as Qualtrics and Tableau.

Finally, it is recommended that the MRC continue to work with the SRC to discuss how to reach out to more consumers to identify their needs, especially in underserved populations. MRC should also consider researching ways the Needs Assessment Survey could be sent to consumers via text message in addition to email (to consumers who authorize MRC to send text messages). The translation of the Needs Assessment survey into Spanish and other languages should also be considered. Recommended refinements for the process include efforts to collect data from WIOA core partners on the needs of their clients to develop a greater understanding of the needs of the overall workforce investment system as well as efforts to gather additional data from schools on transition services provided under IDEA beyond the transition survey conducted in FY2018. MRC is also working with the SRC to implement a scaled down version of the survey that can be taken by consumers at the area office.

15. Continue increase utilization of electronic resources to communicate with consumers:

Once again, a number of consumers recommended that MRC utilize more electronic methods to communicate with consumers, such as e-mails, text messages, social media, Skype, and other similar methods. This continue to increase on an annual basis. Counselors also indicated they would like more tools to communicate with consumers including email to text messaging. It is recommended that MRC should continue to consider ways to increase electronic communication with consumers, including expanded use of text messaging. MRC has trained staff regarding email to text communication. Increased use of electronic communication may also improve consumer to counselor communication and may potentially assist in reducing the number of consumers closed out unsuccessfully because they cannot be located. This will continue to become more important as consumers become more and more versed in communicating

electronically and as MRC moves towards a more modern VR case management system. The Workforce Connect dashboard which will include a consumer-end dashboard with secure messaging features may also be a tool which can have benefits in this area. It is also recommended that MRC consider a front facing customer portal as part of a potential new modern case management system. Other states have used text messaging and online dashboards as communication tools and should researched as potential alternatives as well

MRC should continue its emphasis on the importance of collecting, recording, and maintaining valid email addresses in the MRCIS system. While the proportion of consumers with email addresses has increased significantly over the past five to ten years, notable variations between some area offices in terms of the proportion of consumers in each office with an email address in the MRCIS system still exist. In addition, as job search processes have become more electronic, it is important that consumers have a valid and appropriate email address to apply for positions online and communicate with employers. A certain percentage of MRC consumers may not have an email address when they begin services. In these situations it is important for MRC counselors to assist the individual with setting up a free email account such as Gmail. Obtaining more email addresses will benefit consumers in improving their ability to find competitive employment as well as assisting counselors in maintaining regular contact with their consumers. This will also assist in improving quality of data stored in MRCIS, leading to improved communication with consumers and facilitating higher response rates to electronic surveys. It is recommended that MRC complete a refresher training for staff on email addresses and continue to emphasize the importance of recording addresses in relevant trainings and bulletins.

16. Continue to enhance methods and products to assist with job matching and providing additional job leads to consumers and counselors:

The MRC should continue its efforts to enhance efforts to match consumers' interests and skills with potential occupational areas and job opportunities. This could also be something that could be incorporated in a new data and information management system that is being considered for the agency. MRC counselors and consumers expressed the desire for improved job matching and increased sharing of job leads that could lead to employment outcomes for consumers. The team model used in some offices where the JPS, ESS, and the counselor work together as a team to assist consumers in obtaining employment should be considered as a best-practice model that can be adopted across offices.

17. Continue to improve collaboration with Independent Living Centers:

The Independent Living Centers (ILCs) remain important partners to MRC who can provide additional peer-driven supports to MRC consumers to assist them in their efforts to obtain employment and maintain independence in the community. Given that about only 25% of consumers are aware of the ILC in their area, the MRC should continue to improve referrals and collaboration between VR offices and the ILCs, In addition, MRC should consider efforts to increase consumer awareness of the ILCs, especially among individuals with psychological and cognitive disabilities. MRC should also consider open houses, joint orientations, or other meetings and presentations in collaboration with the ILCs. Joint marketing efforts could also be considered. Collaborations such as the Transitional Internship Program, the Pre-ETS procurement, Career Pathway Service grant, and the Transition Pathway Services grant, are good examples of beneficial collaborations with the ILCs, and MRC should continue to explore new possibilities for collaboration with the centers.

18. Continue to assist Community Rehabilitation Programs:

It is recommended the MRC continue its efforts to assist and improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) across Massachusetts. CSNA findings suggest that vendor capacity for MRC in its CIES and Pre-ETS procurements have assisted in meeting needs for CRP capacity to serve MRC consumers. However, it appears additional CRP capacity may be needed in some areas, both geographically and to serve specific populations. MRC's recently reissued Competitive Integrated Employment Service (CIES) which procurement should assist CRPs. MRC sought input from vendors, counselors, partner agencies, the SRC, and other key stakeholders as part of this process. MRC is also working with CRPs to provide pre-employment transition services to high school students with disabilities and should continue to build in best practices for serving both eligible and potentially eligible consumers, based on outcomes and results in collaboration with providers.

It is also recommended that MRC continue efforts to improve communication and information flow between CRPs and MRC using a team communication approach with the provider, counselor, supervisor, and regional contract supervisor or other contract manager, and continue regular meetings and communication with the Providers Council and other provider trade groups.

19. Consider creation of a guide or list to assist in procuring products and materials from vendors:

In the Counselor Satisfaction Survey, some counselors again indicated they would benefit from additional information about available vendors and the materials they supply. While the MRC has developed some lists of vendors for particular procurements, and is conducting trainings on procurement which should assist counselors with this and other concerns and issues in this area, development of a guide or list of resources to provide more information about available vendors for purchasing items for consumers may be beneficial to staff. This guide would list available vendors and the particular products/materials that are provided by each vendor.

20. Conduct a study of how resource limitations impact service provision:

Given resource limitations on the VR program in general, conducting a study on how resource limitations impact service provision to consumers could be useful at this time. This study would assist MRC management to better monitor the quality of services during times of financial need and would be useful in making decisions on how best to serve consumers during challenging times.

MRC
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
COMMUNITY LIVING • WORK • DISABILITY BENEFIT ELIGIBILITY

Massachusetts and U.S. Disability Facts & Statistics: 2018

- In 2017, there were 6,785,622 individuals living in the community in Massachusetts, of which 803,977 were persons with disabilities; a prevalence rate of 11.8%.
- In 2017, there were 320,775,014 individuals living in the community in the U.S., of which 40,678,654 were persons with disabilities; a prevalence rate of 12.7%.
- In 2017, 26% of individuals with disabilities living in the community in the US were below the poverty line, in Massachusetts this rate in 2017 was 25.5%, compared to 11.1% of individuals without disabilities in the US, and 8.2% in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts Residents by Disability Category (ages 18-64 living in the community)

Disability Category	# of MA Residents	% of MA Residents	% of Disabled in MA
Cognitive Disability	318,805	4.7%	39.5%
Ambulatory Disability	377,597	5,6%	46,9%
Independent Living Disability	296.580	4.4%	36.9%
Self-Care Disability	159,266	2.3%	19.8%
Hearing Disability	228,804	3,4%	28.4%
Vision Disability	125,477	1.8%	15.6%

Change in the Number of People with Disabilities in MA (individuals living in the community)

2016	2017	2016 to 2017 % Change
786,595	803,977	+2.2% (17,382 more individuals)

MA & U.S. Employment For Individuals With Disabilities (age 18-64, living in the community)

2017	# With Disability	# With Disability & Employed	% With Disability Who are Employed
MA	396,597	149,633	37.7% (-0.9% from 2016)
U.S.	20,444,249	7,572,805	37.0% (+1.1% from 2016)

MA & U.S. Employment For Individuals Without Disabilities (age 18-64, living in the community)

2017	# Without Disability	# Without Disability & Employed	% Without Disability Who are Employed
MA	3,950,382	3,167,434	80.2% (+0.2% from 2016)
U.S.	177,320,890	136,960,269	77.2% (+0.5% from 2016)

- Employment rates for individuals with disabilities lag far behind those for individuals without disabilities.

The information above is taken from the 2018 Disability Statistics Compendium, developed by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics at the University of New Hampshire. The annual Disability Statistics Compendium uses data from the most recent American Community Survey (U.S. census Bureau). Access the Disability Compendium here: http://disabilitycompendium.org/

MRC VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Year in Review
July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

3,695 citizens with disabilities have been successfully placed into competitive employment based on their choices, interests, needs and skills.

The earnings of these rehabilitated employees in MA in the first year were **$77.4 million.**

Estimated public benefits savings from people rehabilitated in MA were **$27.7 million.**

Average Hourly Wage	**$14.69**
Average Work Hours Weekly	**27.4**

*The returns to society based on increases in lifetime earnings range from $14 to $18 for each $1 invested in the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation program.
*$5 is returned to the government in the form of increased taxes and reduced public assistance payments for every $1 invested in the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation program.
**Based on Commonwealth Corporation Study.*

Who Are Our Consumers?

Psychiatric Disabilities	41.9%
Learning Disabilities	26.5%
Orthopedic Disabilities	8.1%
Substance Abuse	7.2%
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	5.7%
Other Disabilities	4.9%
Neurological Disabilities	2.2%
Developmental/Intellectual Disabilities	2.0%
Traumatic Brain Injury	1.6%
Average Age	31.0
Male	55.0%
Female	45.0%
White	79.5%
Black	17.6%
Hispanic	13.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.6%
Native American	1.3%

FACTS AT A GLANCE

The goal of our services is to promote dignity through employment and community living, one person at a time. We hope all citizens with disabilities in Massachusetts will have the opportunity to contribute as a productive member of their community and family as a result of services provided by the MRC.

Consumers actively receiving services	**24,991**
Consumers enrolled in training/education programs	**13,174**
Consumers with disabilities employed in competitive, integrated employment	**3,695 (100%)**
Consumers employed with medical insurance	**99.0%**
Consumers satisfied with services	**78.0%**

MRC VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Vision and Mission:
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.

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

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Division:
The MRC Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind serve eligible individuals with disabilities who are available and able to attain employment as a result of vocational rehabilitation services.

The MRC Vocational Rehabilitation Program is the federal-state vocational rehabilitation program focused on assisting individuals with disabilities to obtain, maintain, and advance in employment. Some of the MRC-VR services provided include:

- Vocational counseling, guidance, and assistance in job placement;
- Training programs, including job-driven partnerships with employers, including college and vocational certificate programs, if appropriate, to attain competitive employment;
- Assistive technology and rehabilitation technology services;
- Job Coach services;
- Community based employment services;
- Interview preparation and direct job placement services;
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities.

What MRC Consumers Have To Say:

- "I was and still am satisfied and very grateful for the help I received from Mass Rehabilitation and my counselor, having taking the time and did all the research needed to guide me towards my goal in life. I am forever grateful for my counselor's amazing ability, patience and professionalism during this process."
- "I am very thankful for the opportunity that MRC gave me, to be back on my feet, I couldn't do by myself. My counselor was on top of everything and He make sure I did get what I needed."
- "MRC has been extremely supportive towards me. The agency has provided assistance with college degree; and employment advocacy when I was having difficulties with my employer. MRC is extremely devoted to their clients. I am very pleased with the assistance I have received from them."
- "MRC has been incredible and I would be where I am today without them. I went to community college and MRC was there every step of the way."
- "Through the MRC I obtained a certificate in Medical Assisting and a certificate of completion in an online Microsoft Computer course. Because of this training I was able to transition from a $9.50 hour food service job to an administrative assistant position in a medical office and earn $17.75 per hour."

- "I have recently found through the aid of MRC a position related to my medical background as a pharmacy technician at a local CVS which I find to be excellent."
- "My MRC counselor has been a vital asset on my journey to getting my future plans secured. She has been there every step of the way and now that I am settled in school/work-study she continues to support me and encourage me along the way. She has been incredible and has made this transition as smooth as it could possibly be."
- "MRC has met my needs more than I could've ever thought. They have offered me more resources than I ever knew to be available to me."

MRC DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Year in Review

October 1, 2018 – September 30, 2019

SSI/DI Claims Processed
Disability Determination Services

Total Receipt of Cases:	75,330
Total Disposition of Cases:	76,620
Initial Claims Filed:	44,306
Initial Claims Disposed:	42,724
% Allowed:	42.9%
CDR Receipts:	16,478
CDR Dispositions:	19,684
Accuracy of Decisions:	96.9 %

Purchased Services

Consultative Examinations Purchased:	17,117
Consultative Examination Rate:	22.3%
Medical Evidence of Record Purchased:	67,694
Medical Evidence of Record Rate:	88.4%
Total Medical Costs:	$ 6,873,768

Massachusetts SSI/SSDI Summary

Total MA Population:	6.90M
MA SSI Recipients, 2018:	183,889
MA SSDI Recipients, 2018:	226,065
Annual SSDI Benefits Paid:	$3.33B
Annual SSI Benefits Paid:	$1.19B

Facts at a Glance

Total Budget:	**$46,971,951**
Cost Per Case:	**$613.05**
Total Disposition of SSI/DI Cases:	**76,620**
Accuracy of Initial Decisions:	**96.9%**
Federal Accuracy of Decision Standard:	**90.6%**

Vision and Mission:

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.

Who We Serve:

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

Disability Determination Services (DDS) Division:

Handles disability claims on behalf of the Social Security Administration.

- Determines Eligibility for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Determines Eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Processes Continuing Disability Review Claims (CDRs)

MRC VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Top 10 Jobs

SOC Code	Top 10 Jobs Written on IPEs	Location Quotient	Median Wage
43-5081	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	0.92	$13.26
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	0.92	$12.26
21-1093	Social and Human Service Assistants	1.57	$14.74
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	0.92	$19.34
21-1099	Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other	0.38	$20.73
41-9099	Sales and Related Workers, All Other	0.54	$20.29
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	0.82	$17.88
15-1199	Computer Occupations, All Other	1.19	$42.63
43-9199	Office and Administrative Support Workers, All Other	0.39	$21.04
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	0.75	$13.18
	Average	**0.84**	**$19.54**

SOC Code	Top 10 Jobs for Initial Placement	Location Quotient	Median Wage
43-5081	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	0.92	$13.26
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	0.92	$12.26
41-2011	Cashiers	0.85	$11.92
41-9099	Sales and Related Workers, All Other	0.54	$20.29
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1.03	$16.01
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	0.75	$13.18
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	0.92	$19.34
35-9099	Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers, All Other	0.49	$13.38
21-1293	Social and Human Service Assistants	1.57	$14.74
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	0.55	$14.61
	Average	**0.54**	**$14.90**

SOC Code	Top 10 for Successful Employment Outcomes	Location Quotient	Median Wage
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	0.92	$12.26
43-5081	Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	0.92	$13.26
41-2011	Cashiers	0.85	$11.92
41-9099	Sales and Related Workers, All Other	0.54	$20.29
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1.03	$16.01
35-9099	Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers, All Other	0.49	$13.38
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	0.92	$19.34
35-2021	Food Preparation Workers	0.75	$13.18
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	1.09	$15.54
21-1293	Social and Human Service Assistants	1.57	$14.74
	Average	**0.91**	**$14.90**

MRC VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Top 10 Occupational Categories

SOC Code	Top 10 Jobs Written on IPEs	Location Quotient	Median Wage
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	0.92	$20.14
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	1.57	$21.33
41-0000	Sales and related Occupations	0.88	$14.74
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	1.20	$14.14
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	0.93	$12.82
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	1.05	$16.51
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	1.07	$27.27
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	1.31	$45.52
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	1.14	$38.66
25-0000	Education, Training, and Library Occupations	1.13	$30.04
	Average	**1.12**	**$24.12**

SOC Code	Top 10 Jobs for Initial Placement	Location Quotient	Median Wage
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	0.92	$20.14
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	1.57	$21.33
41-0000	Sales and related Occupations	0.88	$14.74
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	1.20	$14.14
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	0.93	$12.82
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	1.05	$16.51
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	1.07	$27.27
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	1.31	$45.52
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	1.14	$38.66
25-0000	Education, Training, and Library Occupations	1.13	$30.04
	Average	**1.12**	**$24.12**

SOC Code	Top 10 for Successful Employment Outcomes	Location Quotient	Median Wage
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	0.92	$20.14
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	1.57	$21.33
41-0000	Sales and related Occupations	0.88	$14.74
39-0000	Personal Care and Service Occupations	1.20	$14.14
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	0.93	$12.82
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	1.05	$16.51
27-0000	Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	1.07	$27.27
15-0000	Computer and Mathematical Occupations	1.31	$45.52
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	1.14	$38.66
25-0000	Education, Training, and Library Occupations	1.13	$30.04
	Average	**1.12**	**$24.12**

MRC
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
COMMUNITY LIVING SERVICES

Year in Review

July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019

Consumers Served Community Living Programs	
Independent Living Centers	5,769
Turning 22 Services:	927
Assistive Technology:	2,924
Housing Registry:	1,477
Supported Living Services:	169
Brain Injury Services:	1,260
Home Care Services:	1,165
Protective Services:	452
ABI-N/MFP-CL Waivers:	1,005 244

Services Purchased Community Living Programs	
Independent Living Centers:	$8,926,545
IL Turning 22 Services:	$1,996,436
Assistive Technology:	$2,573,805
Housing Registry:	$80,000
Supported Living Services:	$1,545,261
Brain Injury Services:	$32,935,969
Home Care Services:	$4,345,720
Protective Services:	$97,825
ABI-N/MFP-CL Waivers	$1,040,000

FACTS AT A GLANCE

The goal of our services is to promote dignity through employment and community living, one person at a time. We hope all citizens with disabilities in Massachusetts will have the opportunity to contribute as a productive member of their community and family as a result of services provided by the MRC.

Total consumers actively receiving services:	**15,148**
Total funds expended:	**$53,541,561**
Cost per consumer served:	$3,535

Vision and Mission:

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.

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

Community Living (CL) Division:
The MRC 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.

- Independent Living Center Services
- Community Supported Living Services
- Accessible Housing Registry
- Home Care Assistance Program for Eligible Adults with Disabilities
- Turning 22 Youth Transition to Adult Human Services
- Assistive Technology Training and Devices
- Community-Based Residential, Day and Support Services for Persons with Brain Injuries
- Home and Community Based Waiver Programs

What our Consumers Say…
"The Counselor has been an excellent advocate and has been extremely helpful to me and my family in developing a service plan that best suits our needs." – *SHIP/TBI Waiver Consumer*

"I want you to know that I am so thankful for all that you've done. Frankly I don't know what I would have done without my home care assistant this year. This is just a really well rounded program". – *Home Care Consumer*

"I would not be able to maintain my life without the assistance of HCAP. I am very grateful for the assistance that keeps me healthy and maintain independent living." – *Home Care Consumer*

"I'm very satisfied with SHIP services. Everyone has been great and my service coordinator is terrific with providing information." – *TBI Waiver Consumer*

"MRC is a very caring place. They really care about their consumers and they go beyond their line of duty of service." – *Community Living Consumer*

"Thanks for everything [to my Case Manager]. I greatly appreciate you and Mass Rehab. You have been nothing but wonderful to me." – *Home Care Consumer*

MRC Consumer Population Make Up

	Race and Ethnicity by District					Disability Category by District			
	Asian/Pacific	African American	Caucasian	Hispanic/ Latino	Native American	Sensory	Physical	Psych./ Cognitive	
South District	2.5%	24.5%	9.6%	73.4%	1.4%	8.2%	20.7%	71.1%	South District
North District	7.0%	12.9%	12.6%	81.0%	0.9%	7.1%	17.8%	75.1%	North District
West District	1.8%	14.7%	17.7%	84.5%	1.3%	11.6%	18.9%	69.5%	West District
Statewide	3.7%	17.9%	12.9%	79.0%	1.2%	**8.7%**	**19.3%**	**72.0%**	**Statewide**
	Race and Ethnicity by Area Office					Disability Category by Area Office			
	Asian/Pacific	African American	Caucasian	Hispanic/ Latino	Native American	Sensory	Physical	Psych./ Cognitive	
Greenfield	2.5%	9.0%	9.2%	90.0%	2.6%	10.9%	15.6%	73.4%	Greenfield
Holyoke	2.7%	12.7%	24.3%	86.2%	2.1%	2.4%	26.2%	71.4%	Holyoke
Pittsfield	0.3%	11.3%	5.0%	90.1%	1.1%	10.6%	19.1%	70.2%	Pittsfield
Springfield	2.0%	24.6%	30.3%	73.4%	1.7%	16.7%	15.4%	67.9%	Springfield
Fitchburg	1.6%	8.5%	12.8%	90.3%	1.0%	1.9%	25.9%	72.2%	Fitchburg
Milford	0.9%	4.7%	8.6%	94.9%	0.6%	1.4%	21.7%	76.8%	Milford
Worcester	2.9%	18.0%	23.9%	80.1%	1.3%	18.5%	18.5%	63.1%	Worcester
Framingham	5.5%	10.1%	7.3%	84.1%	2.2%	2.5%	19.3%	78.2%	Framingham
Lawrence	1.8%	13.8%	34.0%	86.6%	0.5%	17.2%	13.8%	69.0%	Lawrence
Lowell	8.9%	8.1%	10.4%	83.8%	0.5%	7.5%	15.7%	76.9%	Lowell
Salem	12.5%	13.7%	10.5%	74.9%	1.1%	1.4%	14.5%	84.1%	Salem
Somerville	4.2%	18.7%	8.8%	77.2%	1.0%	12.1%	17.9%	69.9%	Somerville
Boston	4.1%	32.9%	19.6%	63.5%	1.0%	.7%	19.9%	79.5%	Boston
Roxbury	2.1%	68.0%	20.6%	30.3%	1.5%	2.1%	19.8%	78.1%	Roxbury
Braintree	5.8%	20.1%	6.1%	73.6%	0.9%	26.5%	14.7%	58.8%	Braintree
Brockton	1.8%	27.4%	11.8%	72.1%	1.3%	1.9%	26.9%	71.2%	Brockton
Fall River	1.8%	11.8%	9.3%	86.7%	1.8%	.0%	35.0%	65.0%	Fall River
Hyannis	1.5%	7.3%	3.2%	90.3%	2.9%	1.8%	32.1%	66.1%	Hyannis
New Bedford	0.8%	18.9%	10.3%	81.3%	1.4%	17.6%	19.1%	63.2%	New Bedford
Plymouth	1.8%	4.7%	2.6%	94.2%	0.5%	3.5%	21.1%	75.4%	Plymouth
Taunton	1.5%	9.8%	4.0%	88.6%	0.6%	11.2%	17.8%	71.0%	Taunton
S.E.S.	3.6%	14.8%	9.6%	83.5%	0.9%	.0%	20.0%	80.0%	S.E.S.
Statewide	3.6%	17.6%	13.6%	79.5%	1.3%	**8.7%**	**19.3%**	**72.0%**	**Statewide**

***Note – Not all values add to 100%, respondents may selected more than one option**

RSA Disability Cause Code Descriptions	# Consumers Served FY2019	% Consumers Served FY2019
Cause Unknown	2,468	9.9%
Accident/Injury (other than TBI or SCI)	546	2.2%
Alcohol Abuse or Dependence	551	2.2%
Amputation	43	0.2%
Anxiety Disorders	1,778	7.1%
Arthritis and Rheumatism	216	0.9%
Asthma and other Allergies	36	0.1%
Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	1,507	6.0%
Autism	2,455	9.8%
Blood Disorders	36	0.1%
Cancer	99	0.4%
Cardiac and other Conditions of the Circulatory System	107	0.4%
Cerebral Palsy	255	1.0%
Congenital Condition or Birth Injury	453	1.8%
Cystic Fibrosis	13	0.1%
Depressive and other Mood Disorders	4,053	16.2%
Diabetes Mellitus	130	0.5%
Digestive	46	0.2%
Drug Abuse or Dependence (other than alcohol)	1,235	4.9%
Eating Disorders (e.g., anorexia, bulimia, or compulsive overeating)	8	0.0%
End-Stage Renal Disease and other Genitourinary System Disorders	50	0.2%
Epilepsy	184	0.7%
HIV and AIDS	65	0.3%
Immune Deficiencies excluding HIV/AIDS	36	0.1%
Psych. Illness (not listed elsewhere)	519	2.1%
Developmental. Disabilities	510	2.0%
Multiple Sclerosis	104	0.4%
Muscular Dystrophy	55	0.2%
Parkinson's Disease and other Neurological Disorders	90	0.4%
Personality Disorders	81	0.3%
Physical Disorders/Conditions (not listed elsewhere)	856	3.4%
Polio	18	0.1%
Respiratory Disorders other than Cystic Fibrosis or Asthma	25	0.1%
Schizophrenia and other Psychotic Disorders	619	2.5%
Specific Learning Disabilities	5,116	20.5%
Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)	122	0.5%
Stroke	154	0.6%
Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)	352	1.4%

FY 2019 MRC Consumer Population categorized by RSA Disability Cause Codes

RSA Disability Impairment Code Descriptions	# Consumers Served FY2019	% Consumers Served FY2019
Blindness	16	0.1%
Other Visual Impairments	80	0.3%
Deafness, Primary Communication Visual	581	2.3%
Deafness, Primary Communication Auditory	105	0.4%
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Visual	103	0.4%
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Auditory	580	2.3%
Other Hearing Impairments (Tinnitus, Meniere's Disease, hyperacusis, etc.)	45	0.2%
Deaf - Blindness	11	0.0%
Communicative Impairments (expressive/receptive)	333	1.3%
Mobility Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	699	2.8%
Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	196	0.8%
Both mobility and Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	400	1.6%
Other Orthopedic Impairments (e.g., limited range of motion)	384	1.5%
Respiratory Impairments	54	0.2%
General Physical Debilitation (fatigue, weakness, pain, etc.)	563	2.3%
Other Physical Impairments (not listed above)	1,346	5.4%
Cognitive Impairments (impairments involving learning, thinking, processing information and concentration)	8,772	35.1%
Psychosocial Impairments (interpersonal and behavioral impairments, difficulty coping)	9,240	37.0%
Other Psych. Impairments	1,473	5.9%

MRC Consumer Population by RSA Disability Impairment Code

RSA Disability Impairment Codes	High Level Disability Category
Blindness	Sensory/Communicative
Other Visual Impairments	Sensory/Communicative
Deafness, Primary Communication Visual	Sensory/Communicative
Deafness, Primary Communication Auditory	Sensory/Communicative
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Visual	Sensory/Communicative
Hearing Loss, Primary Communication Auditory	Sensory/Communicative
Other Hearing Impairments (Tinnitus, Meniere's Disease, hyperacusis, etc.)	Sensory/Communicative
Deaf - Blindness	Sensory/Communicative
Communicative Impairments (expressive/receptive)	Sensory/Communicative
Mobility Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	Physical/Orthopedic
Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	Physical/Orthopedic
Both mobility and Manipulation/Dexterity Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	Physical/Orthopedic
Other Orthopedic Impairments (e.g., limited range of motion)	Physical/Orthopedic
Respiratory Impairments	Physical/Orthopedic
General Physical Debilitation (fatigue, weakness, pain, etc.)	Physical/Orthopedic
Other Physical Impairments (not listed above)	Physical/Orthopedic
Cognitive Impairments (impairments involving learning, thinking, processing information and concentration)	Psychological/Cognitive
Psychosocial Impairments (interpersonal and behavioral impairments, difficulty coping)	Psychological/Cognitive
Other Psych. Impairments	Psychological/Cognitive

High Level Disability Category grouping of RSA Disability Impairment Codes