

## Pathways to Independence

Community First, Community Continuously



# Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission



## Mission &

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) promotes equality, empowerment and productive independence for individuals with disabilities. We achieve these goals by enhancing and encouraging personal choice and the right to fail or succeed in the pursuit of independence and employment in the community.

## Vision

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



Charles Carr Commissioner (August 2007 - present)

## Senior Management Team



Kasper Goshgarian Deputy Commissioner (October 2007 - present)



Richard Arcangeli General Counsel (1995 - present)



Robert Perry Chief Financial Officer (May 2012 - September 2014)\*



**Debra Kamen** Assistant Commissioner of Community Living Division (April 2011 - November 2013)\*\*



Joan Phillips Assistant Commissioner of Vocational Rehabilitation Division (March 2008 - present)



Barbara Kinney Assistant Commissioner of Disability Determination Services Division (September 2008 - present)

Contributions from: Debra Kamen, Former Assistant Commissioner, CL Division Daniela Trammell, Communications and Marketing Director MRC's Research and Development Department

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\* position currently vacant

\*\* current Assistant Commisioner Kerri Zanchi (January 2013- present)

# Message from the Commissioner

*"What does success sound like to me?* I can hear the silos between our three divisions crumbling and consistently breaking down.*"* 

Over the past six years at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), I've witnessed profound change in our philosophy and business practices. We've strategically broken away from the traditional perception that MRC is a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency and flipped the paradigm to highlight work as an integral part of independent living. In fact, the growth of our Community Living (CL) division over the past two years is unprecedented. Our staff, consumers and public partners understand that unless people with disabilities have a firm and stable community life, going to work is virtually impossible. Thus, our divisions have to work with each other as seamlessly as possible to ensure that when a person with a disability comes to MRC for support they're going to get the best the entire agency has to offer, to assist in their journey to social and economic self-sufficiency.

This past year MRC worked closely with the Office of Medicaid, EOHHS and DDS to implement the Money Follows the Person (MFP) and the Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) waivers to serve consumers in nonresidential, community-based settings. In an effort to consolidate and strengthen our oversight and monitoring responsibilities along with providing case management consistently we created an HCBS Waiver Unit. The unit supports our community based Transition Entities as they work to get people out of nursing homes and into the community.

The number of people with significant disabilities that we placed in competitive integrated employment continued to grow over last year due to MRC's planned employer engagement and account management programs. Following Gov. Patrick's lead, MRC embarked on a Job Creation programmatic retooling in our VR division two years ago; we soon realized that we had to strengthen our relationship with public/private sector employers in order to "find the hidden jobs." Using stimulus funds, we hired a new class of employees called Employment Services Specialists who do not come from a human services background but from human resources which is much more aligned to the business community. By creating special relationships through account management, we've been able to open up a pipeline to employment opportunities that hadn't existed previously.

MRC DDS continues to serve as the foundation to financial stability for people who are or who have become disabled. Our programs and services need this foundation as a stepping off point. The challenge is to decrease reliance on SSI/SSDI over the long haul and reinforce community living and employment as the most sustaining and rewarding pathways out of poverty. Living on SSI/SSDI is living in poverty; MRC is collectively breaking that cycle every day.

I'm proud of our accomplishments this past year and am certain that our "One MRC" mantra and practice provides our consumers with the best possible choices that our agency can bring to bear as we solidify our position as the agency of choice for people with any disability who want to live independently and go to work.

Sincerely,

Charles Carr Commissioner



## **Community First**

Empower and support people with disabilities and elders to live with dignity and independence in the community by expanding, strengthening, and integrating systems of community-based long-term supports that are person-centered, high in quality and provide optimal choice.

# **Community First**



Back in 2008, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts announced the creation of the state's Olmstead Plan. This Plan was the Commonwealth's way of ensuring that residents with disabilities and elders have access to community living and long-term supports to address their individual and diverse needs, abilities, and backgrounds. The Olmstead Plan became the foundation for Governor Deval Patrick's administrative goal of **Community First**.

The Massachusetts model of **Community First** was not a strategy created to just comply with the U.S. Supreme Court<sup>1</sup> decision and focus on the results, but rather a strategy that was an important and considerate plan designed for individuals seeking to maximize their independence and gain control of their future. The Massachusetts Olmstead Plan truly promoted the notion of choice and opportunity.



The Olmstead plan grew into a comprehensive public-private collaboration with:

- A roadmap for future community-based supports for elders and people with disabilities
- Short-term objectives for an eighteen month time period
- Implementation of administrative, regulatory, fiscal, and program development

Since this implementation, Olmstead and Community First has continued to bring many consumers with disabilities from institutions into community-based living.

# **Community Living Services:**



# Independence





## Guiding People to Choose Independence

MRC embraced the Community First model long before the Olmstead Plan was written in 2008. In 2000, MRC partnered with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) to implement the Rolland Settlement Agreement. These efforts were focused on guiding people with developmental disabilities residing in nursing homes to transition to community settings. MRC's Community Living division spearheaded this initiative.

Before the agency's involvement in the Rolland Settlement Agreement, the Community Living division's statewide programs served individuals with a wide range of physical, cognitive, neurological and emotional functioning by developing and offering services that met a spectrum of need. These programs have been operating for over two decades and strive to support the diverse needs of people with disabilities by assisting them to fulfill their desire and need for community integration, to gain maximum control of their destiny, and to participate as fully as they choose in their community. The Community Living division maximizes available resources through collaboration within and beyond MRC to increase service, technology and support options; and works with consumers to address barriers to community access whether they are fiscal, technical, regulatory, or due to insufficient access to community-based resources or natural supports.

In 2008, the MRC was asked by MassHealth to assist in the implementation and monitoring of two home and community-based waivers that were a result of the Hutchinson Settlement Agreement. The waivers targeted eligible individuals with acquired brain injuries (ABI) residing in nursing homes, chronic and rehabilitation hospitals. The goal was to provide a broad range of waiver services that would support people to live safely in the community. This effort was initiated within the division as well and clearly supported the goals outlined under the Olmstead Plan.

In 2011, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) was awarded a Money Follows the Person (MFP) demonstration grant. MFP was pursued by EOHHS in an effort to "rebalance" the Massachusetts service system effectively moving funding from facility based settings to home and community based settings. This Community First model resulted in home and community-based waivers focused on transitioning individuals with a broad range of disabilities and the elderly from facility-based settings back to their homes and communities. MRC again played a critical role in the implementation of these waivers as well as the Demonstration Case Management only option under the grant. Thus getting more Massachusetts residents with disabilities out of institutions and back into the community.

# Creation of the MRC Waiver Unit





# Support

In 2013, the MRC Community Living division created a new department known as the Waiver Unit. This unit is responsible for all of the significant obligations and activities associated with the Commonwealth's ABI and MFP initiatives. Between 2011 and 2016, Massachusetts expects to assist over 1,400 eligible individuals to transition from nursing homes and hospital settings to the community. The MRC is proud to be part of these efforts and to continue to support the Commonwealth's Community First agenda which has been the driving philosophy of this agency for over 25 years.



# VR Employment Specialist Team:



# Empower





# Paving a Way to Independence

It is said that "a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step,"<sup>2</sup> and for many of our consumers the road to an independent life may seem daunting and infinite. But through self-advocacy, informed choice, and the guidance and support of our MRC Vocational Rehabilitation staff, the path becomes plausible and empowering. Our Employment Specialist Team continues to work hard to ensure that we offer as many diverse employment opportunities as our distinct consumers need.

Our Employment Specialist team, under the direction of William Allen, had a tremendous year in fiscal year 2013. The year was filled with innovation, expansion, and outreach as this team fully incorporated MRC's mission into their daily work. Our team was not simply finding new Massachusetts businesses to work with or placing qualified candidates into competitive employment opportunities, but rather they provided a firm step for many individuals with disabilities to anchor onto while embarking on their individual journeys to independence.

#### Innovation

Our Employment Specialist team spent this fiscal year bringing new and creative programs to our consumers in hopes of maximizing their employment success but also matching their individual employment needs. The team was able to develop partnerships with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Federal Contract and Compliance Programs (OFCCP) and CVS/Caremark.

Our partnership with OFCCP offered a fruitful inaugural hiring event this spring. The hiring event brought together 36 employers, all looking to diversify their workforce, and over 150 qualified candidates seeking employment. The day was filled with information sessions for employers, an exhibit hall for employers, and scheduled and on-the-spot interview opportunities. Overall, this day resulted in 80 consumers being placed into competitive employment opportunities. Some of these positions included, but are not limited to, administrative assistant, retail, security guard, and adaptive sports coordinator.

With our partners at CVS/Caremark, our Employment Specialist team was able to establish a new Pharm Tech program which will roll out in 2014. This original program trains eligible MRC candidates utilizing CVS/Caremark Pharm Tech curriculum, thus leveraging candidates' opportunities to secure employment within pharmacies. When a candidate successfully completes training and secures employment, they can earn hours toward their state licensure, which can ultimately lead towards application of federal licensure.

#### **Expansion**

While, it is important to stay ahead of the curve and forecast industry trends, it is equally important to keep working on our existing partnerships. With growth and expansion as our target, our Employment Specialist team was able to develop both our existing partnerships with the City of Boston and with Partners Network.

In the City of Boston, we have a wonderful working relationship with then Mayor Thomas M. Menino's Commission for Disabled Persons. This municipal commission is led by the fervent direction of Commissioner Kristen McCosh. Over the past three years, she has worked diligently with the MRC in placing some of our qualified Boston consumers into on-the-job trainings and internships in various city departments. These job preparedness programs are reciprocal because our consumers get to see and access "their" City Hall as residents of Boston, and in turn our consumers are able to empower themselves and build up their skill sets by performing various tasks.

This partnership grew from a small pilot program for Disability Mentoring Day, has led into an annual project with an increasing number of city departments involved and was replicated throughout the state as we head into our fourth year.



Equally, our work with the Partners Network has expanded into new key areas. The first rollout of this collaboration happened in February 2011 with Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital as our pilot site. Over the last three years, our Employment Specialist team fostered this collaboration into a program where we may capitalize upon the expertise and resources of our partners; support model employer practices; increase employment outcomes for people with disabilities; and provide a continuum of services and learning opportunities. Together, we have placed numerous qualified candidates in positions throughout the facility ranging from, but not limited to, environmental services, clerical positions, unit service aides, registered nurses, and certified nursing assistants. This partnership model received both national and local attention. Nationally, we presented the MRC Employer Account Management System. Embedded within this system is the "Call Us First" program which allows employers to share competitive job openings prior to general publication. Locally, we are able to bring this model to other Partners Network locations. We will start with the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) July 2013.

#### Outreach

For many of the Job Placement Specialists on this team, outreach comes naturally. However, the team thought strategically about how they wanted to employ their message about the MRC being the best kept secret. They also focused on how to inform companies about the benefits of working with MRC while also understanding what these companies were looking for in ideal candidates.

The team used both local and collective strategies to broadcast their message of inclusive employment for qualified candidates with disabilities. Locally, most MRC VR Area Offices participated in sales blitz campaigns to businesses in their service area to explain what the MRC is, what services we provide, and how their business would benefit from working with us. Collectively, the employment team brought this same message to the masses. In the spring of 2013, the team worked with the Greater Boston **Employer Advisory Council to incorporate this** message into their annual breakfast held at the Boston Marriott. Also, the team collectively worked with our Consumer Involvement department to support the theme of "Moving Beyond Barriers: Secrets to Successful Employment" at the Third Annual Joint Consumer Conference with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), Massachusetts Commission for Deaf and

Hard of Hearing (MCDHH), and the Massachusetts Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) as co-sponsors. By getting the message out regarding the services the MRC offers to Massachusetts businesses and what potential candidates can expect from the process, our employment team both cemented their philosophical foundation and aided candidates on a path to independence.

Fiscal year 2013 was a tremendous year for our Vocational Rehabilitation division which successfully placed 3,509 consumers into competitive employment based on their choices, interests, needs and skills. Our continued placement success despite the overall high unemployment rates in Massachusetts are partly due to the diligent and innovative work of the employment team to secure diverse and various employment opportunities to match the needs of our consumers. Looking forward to fiscal year 2014, we anticipate the new and pioneering prospects to come.



# **Disability Determination Services:**



# Resources



## Bridging the Gap

For some residents of Massachusetts with a disability, returning to work is not an option. They may have a condition that is too disabling or they can only work a limited number of hours due to their impairment. It is at this point when benefits from the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) Disability program bridge the gap in economic resources for people with disabilities.

The MRC Disability Determination Services (MRC/DDS) division is the program area which handles both the initial and reconsideration medical review for applicants in the Commonwealth seeking either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). The MRC/DDS also handles Continuing Disability Review cases and conducts face to face hearings, if the determination indicate benefits should cease.



Both SSI/SSDI can narrow the gap in one's limited income. The SSI program pays benefits to disabled adults and children who are eligible with limited income and resources. For residents seeking SSDI, they may be eligible for monthly Social Security payments for as long as they are disabled and cannot work. It is important to recognize the amount a recipient may receive varies depending on the applicant's age, number of years they have worked, and amount earned in Social Security covered employment.

The MRC/DDS assists the SSA with medical application review, but to learn more about Social Security and how you or someone you know with a disability may supplement income, please visit **www.ssa.gov**. Massachusetts residents who have questions about their application, appeal, or payment, should call the SSA Regional Office at **(800) 772-1213**.

# Inspire

# Creating Independent Futures for Our Young Adults

"Beloved colleagues in struggle, listen to the heart of this old soldier. Our lives, our children's lives, the quality of the lives of billions in future generations hangs in the balance. I cry out to you from the depths of my being. Humanity needs you! Lead! Lead! Lead the revolution of empowerment!"

(Justin Dart, Jr.)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Justin Dart, Jr. was an American activist who championed the equal rights of people with disabilities. He is often noted as the "Godfather of the American Disabilities Act."

<sup>4</sup> Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)





Leading the force of change by empowering people with disabilities was a strong concept which was conceived in the 1960s disability rights movement. This concept was what inspired leaders like Ed Roberts, Justin Dart, and Fred Fay, to name a few, and it is the same spirit needed for the next generation.

Our youth were bestowed the notion of equal access for people with disabilities. This generation lives in a post-ADA<sup>4</sup> world with diversity and inclusion being a priority for most institutions, whether it is in school, government buildings, or transportation. But issues of discrimination, prejudice, and bullying still impact our youth with disabilities. For many at this age, being "different" is not desirable. The MRC is excited to guide our youth by offering services and resources set to empower and encourage. We have worked collaboratively with our partners at Easter Seals of Massachusetts and Partners for Youth with Disabilities to offer innovative programs like the Youth Leadership Network (YLN). Internally, we have started to work on streamlining our transition services to better educate young adults, their families, and schools on the services that the MRC provides.

For upcoming fiscal year 2014, the MRC will present our revamped transition materials for distribution. These materials will address some of the gaps in knowledge regarding referrals, eligibility, services provided, and plan development. Equally, the materials in progress leverage formats and language that are current and able to resonate with the young audience we want to capture and inspire.



# **Consumer Liaison**



# Inclusion

The MRC has a staff member working within the Commissioner's Office as an Ombudsperson who serves as a consumer liaison, primarily to address concerns regarding delivery of services and to answer a variety of disability-related questions. People who typically contact the Ombudsperson include consumers, family members, advocates, legislators and their aides, other state government personnel and MRC staff members.

The Ombudsperson provides information and referral services and assists callers to better understand the services offered by the MRC.

If a complaint is brought forward, the Ombudsperson promptly reviews the matter and works with consumers and the MRC staff to find a solution. If this type of intervention does not bring about resolution, there is a formal appeal process. Mediation services are also available to MRC-VR consumers.

The Ombudsperson assists consumers across all service programs and may be contacted by telephone at (617) 204-3603 or (800) 245-6543 (voice and TTY), through the agency website at www.mass.gov/mrc or by writing to the MRC Administrative Office in Boston.

"The goal of our services is to promote dignity through employment and community living, one person at a time. All people with disabilities in Massachusetts must have opportunities to contribute as productive members of their communities and families as a result of services provided by the MRC."

~ Charles Carr, Commissioner



# State Rehabilitation Council

The purpose of the MRC State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is to advise the MRC about the delivery of effective rehabilitation services to promote employment and independence of people with disabilities (except those with blindness) in Massachusetts.

Council members are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The membership reflects a diverse representation of people with disabilities and disability advocacy groups; current and former consumers of vocational rehabilitation and independent living services; people in business and industry; the medical profession; education; and community rehabilitation programs. Members of the MRC State Rehabilitation Council are volunteers who donate their time to fulfill the mission of the SRC.



# Representation

## SRC Mission

Our mission is to function as the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council focused on supporting and advising the agency in the provision of high quality, value based training and services that lead to meaningful and sustainable competitive employment.

## SRC Vision

Our vision is to provide a dynamic pathway to economic self-sufficiency for all people with disabilities to break the historic bonds of poverty.

### 2013 SRC Members:

Charles Carr Ex-Officio MRC

**Alan H. Greene** Chair

*Matthew Bander Disabilities Representative 4* 

*Lisa Chiango Disabilities Representative 1* 

**Dawn E. Clark** Disabilities Representative 5

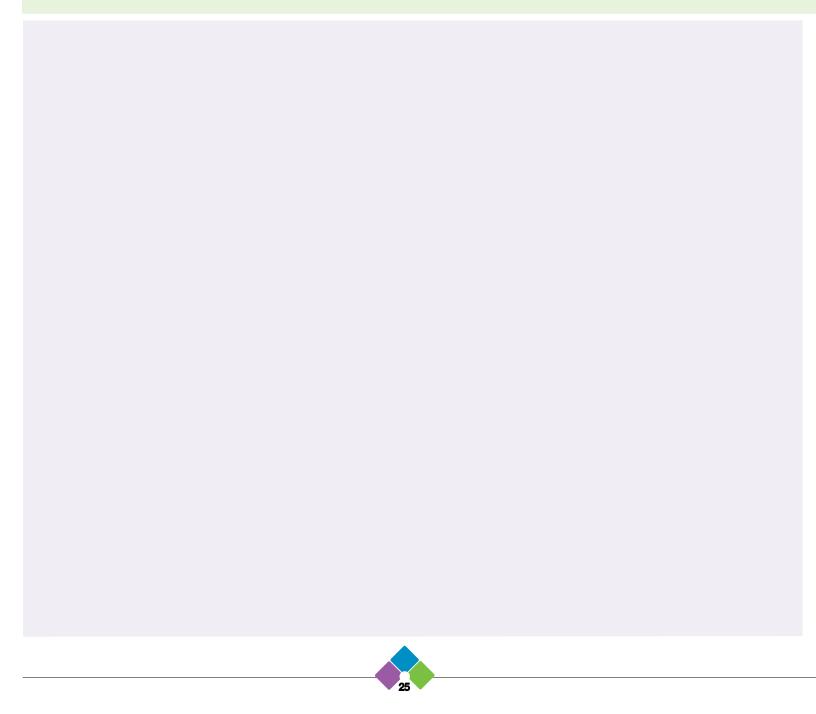
**Naomi Goldberg** Client Assistance Program

**Dr. Lusa Lo** Higher Education Representative 2

**Carmen Lopez** Disabilities Representative 2







## Community Living July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

### **CL: Consumers Served**

Independent Living Centers:	6,294
Brain Injury Services:	1,699
Home Care Services:	1,322
Assistive Technology:	641
Turning 22 Services:	535
Housing Registry:	411
Protective Services:	401
Supported Living Services:	180

### **CL: Services Purchased**

Brain Injury Services:	\$19,382,316
Independent Living Centers:	\$6,432,505
Home Care Services:	\$3,465,215
Supported Living Services:	\$1,771,425
IL Turning 22 Services:	\$1,393,305
Assistive Technology:	\$1,137,912
Protective Services:	\$701,908
Housing Registry:	\$80,000

CL: Facts at a Glance		
	Consumers Actively Receiving Services:	11,637
	Total Funds Expended:	\$34,406,737
	Cost Per Consumer Served:	\$2,957



## Vocational Rehabilitation July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

#### **VR: Competitive Employment in Massachusetts**

The MRC successfully placed 3,509 people with disabilities into employment based on their choices, interests, needs and skills in FY13.

These successfully employeed consumers earned \$61.6 million in their first year of employment.

Estimated public benefits savings from people assisted by the MRC in MA were \$26.3 million.

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 through income taxes and reduced public assistance payments for every \$1 invested in the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation program.

Average Hourly Wage	512.79
Average Weekly Hours Worked	26.4



### Who Are Our VR Consumers?

Psychiatric Disabilities	37.4%
Learning Disabilities	19.8%
Orthopedic Disabilities	10.7%
Substance Abuse	9.0%
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	7.1%
Neurological Disabilities	2.7%
Developmental Disabilities	2.2%
Traumatic Brain Injury	2.0%
Other Disabilities	9.1%

Average Age	
Female	47.1%
Male	52.9%
White	80.5%
Black	16.1%
Hispanic	9.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.8%
Native American	0.6%

### VR: Facts at a Glance

Consumers Actively Receiving Services	22,100
Consumers Enrolled in Training/Education Programs	15,086
Consumers Employed with Significant Disabilities	3,509
Consumers Employed with Medical Insurance	94.7%
Consumers Satisfied with Services	81.5%



## Vocational Rehabilitation Services to Youth

July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

Historically, the agency has just looked at the financial information for the three divisions within the MRC; however, this year Commissioner Carr wanted to look at the number of youth served, not simply referred. In alignment with his commitment to transition efforts and placing youth with disabilities within the community, he is making this a priority.

#### VR: Youth Served (Ages 16-22)\*

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program served 7,129 youth, ages 16 to 22, during FY13.

909 young consumers were placed in employment, with an average hourly wage of \$10.41.

Employed young consumers worked an average of 26.7 hours per week.

476 High School Students were served by the Transition Works Grant program which has completed its fifth and final year. Transition Works was a 5-year, \$500,000 demonstration grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education to develop best practices for transitioning youth with disabilities from school to work.

\* Age at application for MRC services.



#### **VR: Who Are Our Young Consumers?**

Males	59.3%
Females	40.7%

#### Age Profile (% served)

16	2.3%
17	14.3%
18	
19	25.5%
20	11.6%
21	7.8%
22	6.6%

### **Referral Source**

688 Referral	33.1%
Lead Education Agency	17.8%
TAC-Assigned	0.5%
Other Referral Source	48.6%

### **Disability Profile**

Sensory/Communicative	8.2%
Physical/Mobility	.10.1%
Cognitive/Psychological	.81.7%

# Youth: Facts at a Glance Youth Actively Receiving Services Youth Enrolled in Training/Education Programs Youth Enrolled in Training </



## Disability Determination October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013

### **DDS: SSI/DI Claims Processed**

Total Receipt of Cases	86,400
Total Disposition of Cases	85,854
Initial Claims Filed	57,906
Initial Claims Disposed	58,020
% Allowed	40.9%
Continuing Disability Review Receipts	8,968
Continuing Disability Review Dispositions	7,848

### **DDS: Purchased Services**

Consultative Examinations Purchased	. 20, 534
Consultative Examination Rate	23.9%
Medical Evidence of Record Purchased	.77,472
Medical Evidence of Record Rate	90.2%



### DDS: MA Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/ Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

MA SSI Recipients, 2012	Total MA Population	6.64M
Annual SSDI Benefits Paid\$3.10B	MA SSI Recipients, 2012	185,762
	MA SSDI Recipients, 2012	228,904
Annual SSI Benefits Paid\$1.17B	Annual SSDI Benefits Paid	\$3.10B
	Annual SSI Benefits Paid	\$1.17B

Total Medical Costs	\$8,550,725
Total Budget	\$44,412,263
Cost Per Case	\$517.30

### **DDS: Facts at a Glance**

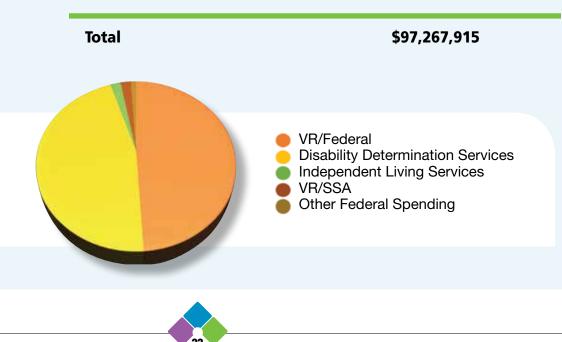
Total Disposition of SSI/DI Cases	85,854
Accuracy of Decisions	. 95%
Federal Accuracy of Decision Standard	. 90%



## Sum for Federal FY 10/1/12 - 9/30/13

Federal Funds Expended	FY2013	%
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Vocational Rehabilitation/Federal	\$47,431,218	49%
Disability Determination Services	\$44,541,789	46%
Independent Living Services	\$2,147,226	2%
Vocational Rehabilitation/SSA	\$1,719,476	2%
Other Federal Spending	\$1,112,364	1%
Supported Employment	\$315,842	0%





Sum for State FY  7/1/12 - 6/30/13 State Funds Expended	%
Community Services - All Other\$28,854,574	40%
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)\$11,977,312	17%
DDS – Department of Development Services (formerly DMR)	
Allocation - Rolland Case\$7,502,749	10%
Head Injury Trust Fund\$6,097,764	8%
Home Modification Loan Program\$4,000,000	6%
Waiver (Other Allocations)\$13,664,520	19%

Total\$72,096,920Image: Strain Strain



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES 600 Washington Street Boston, MA 02111 617-204-3600 (voice) 617-204-3868 (TTY) 800-245-6543 (toll-free) 617-727-1354 (fax) www.mass.gov/mrc



DEVAL L. PATRICK Governor

JOHN POLANOWICZ Secretary, Executive Office of Health & Human Services

**CHARLES CARR** Commissioner, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission