

# Consumer Handbook



Important information about  
services offered by the  
Vocational Rehabilitation Division



This handbook contains important information about how individuals with disabilities, who are determined to be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services, work with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) as look to keep or find a job. It also discusses the process for determining eligibility. If you need this information in another language please visit [www.mass.gov/mrc](http://www.mass.gov/mrc) is currently working to update the translations, please call to speak with one of MRC's bilingual counselors for additional information.

***Espanol (Spanish)***

Este librete contiene la información importante.  
Haga por favor que alguien lo traduzca para usted.

***Francais (French)***

Ce livret contient l'information importante.  
Veuillez faire le traduire à quelqu'un pour vous.

***Portugues (Portuguese)***

Este livreto contem a informação importante.  
Mande por favor alguém traduzi-lo para você.

***Chinese***

這本小冊子包含重要資訊。  
請讓某人翻譯它為您。

Our Mission

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission 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.

Our Vision

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

We accomplish the goals of our Mission and Vision through multiple programs and services offered within MRC by our three divisions:

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
- Community Living (CL)
- Disability Determination Services (DDS)

This Handbook is a product of the partnership between the State Rehabilitation Council and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.

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## Steps to enter the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation process

1	Referral	You are recommended to the program or refer yourself.
2	Orientation	You attend a meeting to learn about the program.
3	Interview	A Counselor will gather information from you to determine your eligibility and answer your questions.
4	Application	If you believe the VR program can help you, submit a formal application to be accepted by the program.
5	Eligibility Determination	We will let you know if you are eligible to receive MRC Vocational Rehabilitation services.

The following steps will occur if you are determined eligible for MRC services

A	Plan development	You and your Counselor develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) with a job goal and a list of services you may need to get a job.
B	Financial qualification	You will be required to use a “comparable benefit” if one is available for the service(s) you seek from the MRC. A college scholarship would be an example of a benefit you may have.
C	Preparation	Your IPE is activated and you prepare for finding a job.
D	Job application	When you are determined “ready for employment,” you apply for jobs.
E	Hiring	You enter part or full-time employment.
F	Accommodations	To the extent possible we make sure any reasonable additional services or supports you need to do your job are provided.
G	Case closed	You have completed the MRC VR program!

## **Making you comfortable with the process**

On the next page you will see the steps that are generally involved in applying for and using MRC services.

Our goal is to make you feel safe and comfortable throughout the process of interviewing with us and applying for and, if you are found to be eligible, using our services. Here are some of the ways we make this happen.

- If you desire to have an advocate and/or family member with you at any point in the process, let your Counselor know.
- In the event you do not want to be referred to MRC VR services, you do not have to submit an application.
- If, after applying, you find you are not interested in MRC VR services, you may withdraw your application.
- You can always request to speak to a Supervisor or the Area Director if there is an issue you feel your Counselor is not being helpful with.
- If anywhere in the process your Counselor cannot be of assistance, you can request advice and/or assistance from the Counselor's Supervisor, the MRC Ombudsperson or from the Mass Office on Disability's Client Assistance Program.
- If you and your Counselor disagree on your goal or the services to be included in your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) you have the right to appeal.
- You can negotiate to amend your Individual Plan for Employment at any time.
- If you need more services than what was offered to you, your Counselor can offer advice and describe additional services that may be available to you.
- If you need help after finding a job, or if you lose your job, you may receive "post-employment services" or re-enter the program in order to get or keep a job or to reach a new employment goal.

# Getting started in Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Every year the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) receives referrals from professionals, family members and other sources who believe job-related services for individuals with disabilities might be helpful for someone they know. You can also refer yourself. We try to help as many people as we can. This Handbook describes the services we offer and the process we go through to determine your eligibility.

## The first step – a formal referral

You are most likely receiving this Handbook at an MRC Orientation session. However, if you have received this Handbook but have not yet formally contacted us, you can call or visit a local MRC Vocational Rehabilitation office to sign up for an Orientation session and begin the process of meeting with a Counselor to determine your eligibility. A list of offices appears in the Appendix (see page 43).

## What will happen in the beginning?

Soon after your referral is received, you will be contacted by mail by our Vocational Rehabilitation division. This letter will either ask you to contact your Counselor or provide you with an appointment date and time. If you are assigned a particular date and time and it is inconvenient, please call your Counselor to arrange for a more suitable appointment.

## Preparing for the first interview

It will be very helpful to you and the Counselor if you prepare ahead of time to discuss certain information about your background.

Please read this Handbook, complete the VR CHECKLIST found in the Appendix and bring it with you to the meeting. Also, please bring recent medical, school and other records that will help us understand your disability(ies).

Your Counselor will need to know some facts about your disability, such as dates of any hospitalizations or specialty examinations and anything else about any of your disabilities that may be important.

You may bring someone along with you to this meeting, if you wish.

## What is the first interview about?

Because Vocational Rehabilitation is ultimately about employment, your Counselor will need to know about your work history, your legal ability to work and any details (such as a criminal record) or special skills you might have that

could influence the types of jobs you should begin thinking about. School records, job history, training and other information will be very helpful. Don't worry if you have never worked. Many people with disabilities seek assistance from our VR services to enter the world of work for the first time.

### Who can receive services?

To be eligible for MRC Vocational Rehabilitation services you must:

1. Have a physical, psychiatric or learning disability (or combination of disabilities) which severely limits your ability to get and keep a job
2. Be assigned to Order Of Selection Priority Category 1 (if this is in effect due to limited resources)
3. Have a desire to work
4. Be willing to be an active participant in your search for a job
5. Be available for meetings with your Counselor

## **Applying for services**

At the end of your first interview, if you believe the MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation services could help lead you to a job, you may choose to apply for services. Your Counselor will help you complete the application.

### What happens next?

Your Counselor's first task is to determine if you are eligible to receive services from the MRC. Being determined eligible is not automatic. The Counselor needs to review the information collected and gather additional details to understand the nature of your disability(ies) and your barrier(s) to employment in order to determine your eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation services.

In order for your Counselor to gather this information, he or she will ask you for written permission to collect diagnostic information about you. The information Counselors gather is strictly confidential and is shared only with those who are directly concerned with your vocational rehabilitation. While this information is necessary to determine your eligibility, it will also help you and your Counselor decide what services will be best for you should you find yourself working with us to develop a rehabilitation plan.

### Notification of your eligibility to receive services

Within 60 days after submitting your application, you will be notified in writing that you are either eligible or ineligible to receive services. If you are determined

to be ineligible for MRC services we will tell you why.

If you are notified that you are eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services, and if an Order of Selection is in effect at the time, you will receive a second letter assigning you to a priority category. The categories are based on how significant your disability is and your barriers to employment.

You may appeal your priority category assignment within 30 days if you believe it is incorrect by contacting one of the organizations below. Your options for appeal include an Administrative Review, Mediation or a Fair Hearing process.

#### MRC Ombudsperson

Voice/TTY: 617-204-3603

Toll-free: 800-245-6543 (Voice/TTY)

The Ombudsperson is an MRC staff member who is a customer relations specialist, linking the consumer and the MRC when the resources of a Counselor or other MRC staff are no longer helpful. Services provided by the Ombudsperson include case review, troubleshooting, problem solving and explaining the appeals process.

#### Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD), Consumer Assistance Program

Voice: 617-727-7440

Toll-free: 800-322-2020

The MOD may assist you in the appeals process and serve as your advocate.



# Working with the MRC once you are determined eligible

## What are the first steps?

You and your Counselor will generally start by having a series of meetings. We will tell you about each service that you are eligible to receive and how it will be tailored for you based on your skills, abilities, needs, and preferences.

## Determining any financial need you may have

As we get started, we are required to ask about any income you have to determine if you can assist in paying for any services you may receive. If you are under age 23, or if you are married, your parents' or spouse's income may be considered. If your income is over a certain limit, the MRC may not be able to provide funding to support your vocational rehabilitation.

If you qualify for financial support, your Counselor will ask for your cooperation in seeking other funding to help pay for some of your services. This may include financial aid for schools or participation in MassHealth to cover medical costs.

## Job goals and "Informed Choice" decision making

One of the first things you and your Counselor will do is conduct a Vocational Assessment. This process gathers information to help you choose a career goal and determine the services you will need to find a job. You and your Counselor will examine your interests, abilities, aptitudes, educational achievements, work history, strengths and weaknesses. We may recommend vocational testing to help you make better choices.

**Informed Choice** means you have read this Handbook and obtained all the information you need through the Vocational Assessment process to make sound decisions about your career path. You and your Counselor will work as partners and may have several meetings to discuss the details of your employment plan.

When the process is completed, you should have a thorough understanding of your job options and an awareness of all the services available to you. You and your Counselor will work together to finalize and agree on your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), the written plan that outlines your specific rehabilitation process.

## What does an Individual Plan for Employment contain?

The IPE is a document which identifies your employment goal and specifies your responsibilities as well as the services the MRC will provide to help you become employed and keep a job. It is a formal agreement between you and the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation program. To signify that you and your Counselor have developed this document together, you must both sign the IPE. You will receive a copy of the IPE and should keep it for your records.

The services outlined in your IPE may be:

1. provided directly by the MRC VR Program
2. purchased for you from a community provider
3. arranged for you with other organizations.

By the time you are ready to sign your IPE, you will know your exact employment goal and what services you will be receiving.

### **Before Signing Your IPE**

If you disagree with any parts of your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), you and your Counselor should discuss these disagreements before you sign the document.

You always have the right to bring your concerns to a Supervisor or Area Director. You have the right to appeal any unresolved disagreements to the MRC Ombudsperson.

## What happens once your IPE has been signed?

Once your Plan is signed, it is your responsibility to begin to work toward your goal of employment. You and your Counselor will meet periodically to review your progress and to discuss other aspects of your rehabilitation.

### A reminder about getting help if you need it

If you need to talk with your Counselor at any time, you should feel free to contact them, open communication is important! If something happens that slows down your progress, contact your Counselor immediately. You will most likely have important information to share. There might be some reasonable accommodations, equipment, or services that could assist you or your Counselor to resolve any problems that arise.

# Working with the MRC to prepare for a job

There are a variety of services that may be offered under the terms of your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). They are all designed to help you apply for the job you have chosen as your career goal. The services include:

## **Vocational Counseling**

Vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance includes personal adjustment counseling addressing medical, family or social issues, and other assistance necessary to get and keep a job.

## **Assessments**

This area includes services provided to determine eligibility for VR services and to determine the nature and scope of these services to be included in the Individual Plan for Employment.

## **Training**

Training services are designed to help an individual improve educationally or vocationally or adjust to the functional limitations of his or her disability.

## **Education**

Services in this area involve full- or part-time academic training, usually above the high school level, that lead to a degree or certificate or job skill and are provided by a business, trade or technical school.

## **Assistive Technology**

This is the application of technology to address barriers confronting people with disabilities in areas that include education, employment and independent living.

You can read more about assistive technology services on page 33.

## What types of jobs do people who have received VR services from the MRC typically find?

Consumers who find a job after receiving services from MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program do many different things. The most popular job categories include nursing, retail sales, office clerk, computer occupations, substance abuse counseling, and other social/community service jobs.

## What are the alternatives to working at a job site for an organization or company?

In addition to opportunities to work in an office or facility of an organization or company, VR consumers have the opportunity to explore and choose either self-employment or home-based employment as their job goal. While these

opportunities are often significantly more involved than working for a company or organization our Counselors have assisted some people in starting or expanding successful home-based or self-employment business enterprises.

### How can I know if opportunities like this are right for me?

The first thing to look at when thinking about opportunities like these is an inventory of your own strengths, experiences, resources and desires. It takes some unique personal and situational characteristics to manage a business or work alone. If you have an idea for a business, be sure to discuss it with your Counselor to see if it makes sense in light of your situation, potential financing needs and the risks you would be taking.

### What is the difference between “home-based” and “self” employment?

**Home-based employment** means working for an employer from your home based on a mutual agreement between you and the employer and includes provisions typically found in the workplace. These may include benefits, supervision, time or output requirements, and equipment or procedure requirements. Examples of home-based employment include “help desk” and call center work, word processing, taking reservations, computer work, medical and legal transcription, programming and professional advisory and managerial work.

**Self-employment** means controlling and being responsible for your own work. You are the boss, earning a living by working independently of an employer, either by free-lancing or running a business. As a business owner you have the option of working from home, at a store or at another location. Self-employment may allow you to provide paid services in your vocational field to business and government agencies with the objective of demonstrating your capabilities to obtain future employment.

Your VR Counselor can discuss these options with you.

## Getting and keeping a job

As the services portion of your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) comes to a close, you will prepare to begin interviewing for specific jobs. Your Counselor will help you learn about techniques to put your best foot forward while interviewing for a job.

The following resources are available at VR offices during your job search:

- Resume preparation
- Job seeking skills training
- Interview skills training
- Job leads

The MRC has available many resources to help you with your job search, such as outside Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) organizations or an in-house MRC Job Placement Specialist. Although there are resources to help you with your job search, your services in the end will depend on your willingness to take personal responsibility for doing the hard work.

### Will I know in advance if a new paycheck will affect my public benefits?

As you get ready to look for a job, you may wonder about the effects of earning a paycheck on any current benefits. Many consumers are concerned that a new income might cause the reduction or loss of payments for:

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
- Medicaid, Medicare, MassHealth, and CommonHealth
- Federal and state housing.

If you have questions about this, your Counselor can refer you to an MRC Benefits Specialist.

### A Benefits Specialist can help?

Benefits Specialists are trained and certified to provide individualized support services to Social Security beneficiaries, their families and the professionals who work with them. They understand the decision to enter or re-enter the workforce is a personal matter and may cause apprehension. They are prepared to offer the information you need in order to make an informed choice regarding employment.

## Confidential, free support

This service is confidential and free to MRC clients who currently receive SSI or SSDI payments.

After a referral by your Counselor, a Benefits Specialist will meet with you in either an MRC office near you or another convenient location in your area. You may need only one meeting to get your questions answered. In some cases, it may take longer to provide all the information you need to understand the relationship between your public benefits and a new job.

## What is Reasonable Accommodation and why is it important?

If you need some changes in a workplace in order to complete the tasks of your job, federal law describes to what extent and how these changes can be made.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 is a federal mandate which, in part, prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities when getting and keeping employment. Massachusetts state law also prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities when getting and keeping employment.

“Reasonable Accommodation” means modification or adjustment to the work environment or circumstances under which a job is customarily performed that is a “reasonable” expense for the company or organization to make, which will enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of that position.

You can discuss what changes to a workplace you may need to remain employed with your Counselor.

## Stay in touch! – notify us of changes in your contact information

It is important to stay in touch with the MRC and maintain contact with your Counselor. Report all changes in address, phone number and email so we can maintain up to date files and know how to reach you.

Always let your Counselor know as soon as you become employed.

## Disclosing a disability to your employer

It is important that you understand what your employer expects of you and, if you choose to disclose your disability, your employer understands how your disability might affect your performance.

## Once you are employed

If you have any difficulty on your new job, notify your Counselor immediately so they can assist you. Your Counselor may be able to help you with problems such as transportation, reasonable accommodations, additional training or support services like job coaching to help you on the job.

Once you have been successfully employed for 90 days your case will be closed.

### Post-employment services

If you are in need of assistance to keep your job, follow-up services are available for up to 3 years after your case has been successfully closed. These may include:

- Supplies and/or tools required for you to keep your job
- MRC staff working with your employer to resolve problems
- Job coaching to meet or maintain skills necessary to perform a specific job.

## People tell us how the MRC worked for them

We receive a lot of feedback from people we are able to help. We appreciate their taking the time to let us know we could help them achieve their goals. Here are some of the things they have told us.

“With assistance from MRC I was able to get the services I needed and received the education and training I wanted. I now have a job that I love and am in the process of applying for grad school. Thank you MRC.”

“My Counselor was very understanding and helpful. I thank her as she went over and beyond for me. She helped me through a lot, finding the right school and transportation. If it wasn't for her I wouldn't be where I am today.”

“My Counselor took the time to get to know me, really find out about my disabilities and develop a good plan to help me find employment. I didn't have much confidence in myself and my employment opportunities. MRC helped change that for me! After employment training I went out and found a job in a couple of days!!!”

“MRC was very helpful in making me believe that being disabled was not the end of my life.”

“MRC is very helpful for people who have a disability – are understanding, kind, have a lot of patience. They find the right job for you according to your disability and if you have a hard time at your job they will help you.”

“The help I received was very significant and targeted to improving my employability. It helped and made a difference positively – much more so than I expected.”

“The assistance MRC provides goes far beyond assisting you in finding a job. They prepare you to keep a job and they do this in a number of ways.”



## **Additional MRC services**

The programs listed on the following pages are often helpful to consumers participating in the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation program.

# Statewide Employment Services (SES)

## Support for those with the most severe disabilities

SES was formed in 1988 when the Rehabilitation Act initiated *Supported Employment*. Supported employment provides vocational rehabilitation services to individuals who have traditionally been unserved or underserved through public vocational rehabilitation programs. The individuals not only require comprehensive services to obtain employment, but also are in need of ongoing supports to maintain employment.

## What services does SES provide?

SES functions much like any other Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Area Office. However, in addition to counseling and guidance by VR Counselors, most of the individuals served also receive employment services through Qualified Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs). All vocational services provided through CRP's are authorized and overseen by SES Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. These services include, but are not limited to: assessment, skills training, job development and initial employment supports.

As the individuals served by SES are in need of supported employment services, SES provides customized, non-time limited, ongoing, supports to individuals with severe disabilities who have been employed for a minimum of 90 days, have reached stabilization, achieved a successful employment outcome, but who need additional supportive services to maintain employment.

SES also administers the MRC Partnership Plus/Advantage program and the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program. Both of these programs originated through the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Improvement Act (TWWII) of 1999.

Voice: 617-204-3854

Fax: 617-204-3847

## School Transition Services

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission works with local high schools to identify students with disabilities who may be appropriate referrals for MRC programs and services. Students eligible for services will receive an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) to determine goals based on their interests, strengths, and needs.

This is a collaborative process involving the student, family, school staff, and other state and community partners. Transition planning needs to begin while the student is still in high school (preferably two years prior to graduation) so referrals can be made to adult service agencies if necessary. Students, families, and school staff can contact the MRC area office that serves their city/town for more information.

During transition planning it is important to remember that when students with disabilities graduate from high school or turn 22 years of age, they are no longer entitled to special education services under IDEA, the federal special education law, and Chapter 766, the MA state special education law.

Unlike special education, adult services are **not** provided as an entitlement and they may have waiting lists, even for people eligible for services. Therefore, it is helpful to begin to explore post-school options while still in school before adult services will be needed.

Students with severe disabilities who are receiving special education services, are in need of continuing adult services, and are unable to work 20 or more hours/week in competitive employment may be eligible for help under Chapter 688, the MA transition planning law. This law provides a two-year transition planning process for eligible students and identifies services or supports that may be needed from the adult service system when the student graduates or turns 22. It is **not** a continuation of Chapter 766 and is **not** a guarantee of adult services.

Only the local school system (usually the Special Education Director or his/her designee) can make a 688 referral. The 688 referral is sent to the human service agency that can best meet the student's needs.

### Who may be eligible for school transition services?

High school students with disabilities who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and are also appropriate Chapter 688 referrals; an IEP and are not eligible for a Chapter 688 referral; a 504 plan (reasonable accommodations at school); and other students with disabilities who have neither an IEP nor a 504 plan.

Each MRC vocational rehabilitation (VR) area office has a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) liaison that will be in the public high schools that the area office serves. The Counselor is responsible for communicating information about MRC to the high school; developing working relationships and referral procedures with the appropriate high school personnel; coordinating all referrals from the high school; contacting high school personnel for information; and follow-up on referrals.

### How does high school graduation affect eligibility?

Chapter 766 provides special education services to students until the age of 22 or until the student earns a high school diploma. Services mandated in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be provided by the district. Once a person graduates from high school, he/she is no longer eligible to receive these services.

### What if I am determined not eligible? Is there an appeals process?

There is an appeals process if we do not find that you are eligible for School Transition Services. All appeals should be directed to the Bureau of Transitional Planning at the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS).

There are two kinds of appeals under Chapter 688. You may:

- appeal the eligibility decision that determined you ineligible for Chapter 688 or
- reject and appeal the Individual Transition Plan after it has been signed by the Secretary of EOHHS.

### What are the key points for caregivers to remember?

Be familiar with the adult services in your area before the student reaches graduation or turns 22. Participate in parent groups since parent advocates are often the stimulus for developing adult services. An application to the Social Security Administration for Supplemental Security Income eligibility determination is encouraged.

### How do I learn more about transition?

If you are interested in learning more about transition services at MRC, please review our online resources

at [www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/mrc/overviews-and-brochures.html](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/mrc/overviews-and-brochures.html), or contact us at:

Voice: 617-204-3618

# Services for teens and young adults

## The Turning 22 Independent Living Program (T22)

The Turning 22 Independent Living Program is intended to help young people with disabilities explore options and plan for independent living after graduating from high school or turning 22 years of age.

It uses the Independent Living philosophy which means having control over your life and being able to make decisions for yourself and choose the direction of your life to the fullest extent possible. There are three components funded by this program:

### **1. Supported Living Program**

The T22 Independent Living program contracts with several agencies across the state to provide supported living services to eligible individuals who want to live independently in the community. A Case Coordinator meets with consumers in their homes, from one to several hours a week, to help with such things as finding accessible housing, coordinating their Personal Care Assistant (PCA) support, and managing their finances. These services are consumer directed.

#### You may be eligible if you:

- are exiting from a Chapter 766 educational program and have not reached the age of 22
- are your own legal guardian
- have a severe physical disability
- have a Chapter 688 Individual Transition Plan (ITP) that includes supported living services
- are ineligible for comparable services from another Executive Office of Health & Human Services (EOHHS) state agency, such as Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Department of Mental Health (DMH), Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), or the MRC Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP).

For more information, contact the T22 Program Coordinator at:

Voice: 617-204-3618

TTY: 617-204-3815

It is extremely important to contact us early so an Individual Transition Plan can be scheduled prior to your graduation.

## **2. Transition To Adulthood Program (TAP)**

The MRC's T22 Independent Living Program contracts with Independent Living Centers (ILCs) to provide early intervention programs for students with a disability. Experienced disability skills trainers help you learn skills and self-confidence so you are better prepared for independence. In addition to learning new skills, having access to adult role models with disabilities will prepare you for taking on the responsibilities of living independently in the community of your choice. This program is not available in some parts of the state.

You are eligible if you:

- are age 14-21 and enrolled in special education, regardless of the type of disability and
- desire to learn independent living and self-advocacy skills.

How do I apply for these two programs?

If you are interested in receiving independent living skills training through the TAP while in school, please contact the T22 Program Coordinator who can make a referral to the appropriate Independent Living Center:

Voice: 617-204-3618

## **3. Transition Internship Program (TIP)**

The Transitional Internship Program (TIP) provides paid summer employment or internship placements to youth ages 16-22 who are still in high school or who have recently completed their studies. Some of the unique elements of the program include:

- **Intensive soft skills training** such as appropriate dress and work behavior, communication skills, disclosure, time management and organizational skills and conflict resolution
- **Paid internships** of at least 12 hours per week.
- **Regular meetings** with peer leaders
- **Job coaching** (if necessary). Many job coaches are themselves young people with disabilities.
- **Family orientation** – to educate families about the program and the responsibilities of the participants

## **Supported Living Program for individuals 18 and over**

The Adult Supported Living Program (SLP) was created to enable individuals age 18 and over who have physical disabilities in combination with a secondary disability to begin or continue living independently in the community with case coordination support. The program operates under the independent living philosophy in which the individual consumer has the right and responsibility to make informed choices, take risks and perhaps, at times, fail.

### What does the Adult Supported Living Program do?

The MRC contracts with several agencies across the state to provide these case coordination services. A Case Coordinator meets with the individual on an as-needed basis, generally in his/her home. A Case Coordinator is also available by phone on a 24 hour basis for emergencies and unforeseen problems. While the average individual requires approximately 3 to 4 hours per week of case coordination, the time required can range from a few hours per month to ten hours per week.

A Case Coordinator and an individual jointly develop a plan to address the specific aspects of daily life in which assistance is needed. The Case Coordinator does not make decisions for the individual or do any physical tasks. Rather, the emphasis is on organizing, finding resources, and problem solving.

Assistance can be provided in the following areas:

- Personal Care Assistant (PCA) management
- Personal health care
- Adaptive equipment
- Household affairs
- Financial management
- Social/recreation events
- Vocational/education opportunities
- Transportation
- Self-advocacy

### How do I apply for the Adult Supported Living Program?

You can contact the SLP, at 600 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111 at:

Voice: 617-204-3722

Fax: 617-727-1354

## Home Care Assistance Program (HCAP)

The Home Care Assistance Program provides homemaker services to eligible adults with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 59 who are functionally limited in meeting their own nutritional and environmental needs. The assistance of a homemaker helps individuals maintain their independence in the community.

Homemaking services are defined as direct assistance with:

- Meal preparation
- Grocery shopping
- Medication pick-up
- Laundry
- Light housekeeping (dusting, vacuuming, mopping floors, kitchen clean-up, bathroom cleaning and bed changing ONLY)

Homemaking services are provided either by homemakers trained and supervised by home care agencies in contract with the HCAP, or by individual Home Care Assistants selected and supervised by the consumers and paid for through contracts with the MRC. The HCAP Case Managers assess applicants for eligibility, coordinate service provision in conjunction with the home care agencies and assist consumers with information and referral as needed to advance independent living goals.

### How do I apply?

Applications for the HCAP are completed over the phone. If the referral is made by someone other than the applicant, the Intake Coordinator will confirm the information by calling the applicant.

Other comparable benefits for which the applicant may be eligible will be investigated.

The HCAP staff will collect financial data, medical documentation and in-home evaluation information before making a determination of eligibility and hours.

### Eligibility criteria:

- Disability conditions exist that prevent you from performing one or more homemaking tasks
- This assistance is required to prevent hospitalization or institutionalization
- You meet financial guidelines (300% of federal poverty level income)
- You live alone or with others who are unable to perform homemaking tasks
- You are between the ages of 18 and 59
- You are not legally blind.



Individuals with children under 18 years old may be eligible for services if they meet all other eligibility criteria. However, services are provided to only adults with disabilities.

For more information about the HCAP please call one of the numbers below:

Voice/TDD: 617-204-3853

Toll free: 800-223-2559

Fax: 617-727-2809

## **Independent Living Centers (ILC)**

### What is Independent Living?

Independent living means having control over your life and being able to choose the direction of your life to the fullest extent possible. People with disabilities have been historically denied the right and opportunity to make their own decisions. Independent living is also a philosophy which advocates for the availability of a range of services which maximize self-reliance and self-determination in all activities.

### What is an Independent Living Center?

ILCs are organizations that are run by and for people with disabilities. They provide a range of services to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve their self-identified goals. These services include:

*Peer counseling:* the opportunity to utilize the experience of other people with disabilities who have been successful in leading productive and meaningful lives in their communities. Peer counseling is carried out through a peer role modeling approach and typical issues include personal growth, problem solving, socializing, etc.

*Skills training:* the acquisition of skills needed for living independently, such as finding housing, managing Personal Care Attendants, budgeting, self-advocacy or managing benefits.

*Information and referral:* information on topics or resources related to disability such as affordable accessible housing, adaptive equipment, medical providers, transportation, legal assistance and a wide range of other programs and resources.

*Advocacy:* helping people with disabilities to know and assert their rights with, for example, the health care system, landlords, financial benefits and other community issues.

ILCs also carry out many community education and advocacy activities. Many ILCs offer services beyond these core services, including personal care, deaf and hard of hearing independent living services, and Recovery Learning Communities.

There is no cost for these services.

For more information contact an MRC Independent Living Program Coordinator at 617-204-3851 or contact an ILC from the following list.

# **Massachusetts Independent Living Centers**

## **Ad-Lib Center for Independent Living**

215 North Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201

Email: [adlib@adlibcil.org](mailto:adlib@adlibcil.org)

Voice: 413-442-7047

TTY: 413-442-7158

Fax: 413-443-4338

## **Boston Center for Independent Living**

60 Temple Place, 5th Floor, Boston, MA 02111

Email: [jmcdonough@bostoncil.org](mailto:jmcdonough@bostoncil.org)

Voice: 617-338-6665

TTY: 617-338-6662

Fax: 617-338-6661

## **Center for Living & Working**

484 Main Street, Suite 345, Worcester, MA 01608

Email: [opsearch@centerlw.org](mailto:opsearch@centerlw.org)

Voice/TTY: 508-798-0350

Fax: 508-797-4015

## **Cape Organization for the Rights of the Disabled**

106 Bassett Lane, Hyannis, MA 02601

Email: [cordinfo@cilcapecod.org](mailto:cordinfo@cilcapecod.org)

Voice/TTY: 508-775-8300

Toll-free: 800-541-0282

Fax: 508-775-7022

## **Independence Associates**

100 Laurel St, Suite 122, East Bridgewater, MA 02333

Email: [info@iacil.org](mailto:info@iacil.org)

Voice/TTY: 508-583-2166

Fax: 508-583-2165

Toll-free: 800-649-5568

**Independent Living Center of the North Shore & Cape Ann**

27 Congress Street, Suite 107, Salem, MA 01970

Email: [information@ilcnsca.org](mailto:information@ilcnsca.org)

Voice/TTY: 978-741-0077

Fax: 978-741-1133

**MetroWest Center for Independent Living**

280 Irving Street, Framingham, MA 01702

Email: [info@mwcil.org](mailto:info@mwcil.org)

Voice/TTY: 508-875-7853

Fax: 508-875-8359

**Multicultural Independent Living Center of Boston**

329 Center Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Email: [info@milcb.org](mailto:info@milcb.org)

Voice: 617-942-8060

TTY/Fax: 617-942-8630

**Northeast Independent Living Program**

20 Ballard Road, Lawrence, MA 01843

Email: [help@nilp.org](mailto:help@nilp.org)

Voice/TTY: 978-687-4288

Fax: 978-689-4488

**Southeast Center for Independent Living**

Merrill Bldg, 66 Troy Street, Fall River, MA 02720

Email: [SCIL@secil.org](mailto:SCIL@secil.org)

Voice/TTY: 508-679-9210

Fax: 508-256-2377

**Stavros Center for Independent Living**

210 Old Farm Rd, Amherst, MA 01002

Email: [info@stavros.org](mailto:info@stavros.org)

Voice/TTY: 413-256-0473

Fax: 413-256-0190

# Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP)

SHIP provides a range of community-based services that support individuals with externally-caused traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and their families.

## What is an externally-caused brain injury?

An externally-caused brain injury occurs when damage is done to the brain from an external physical force. The head may be hit, strike a stationary object or be shaken violently. This may occur in a car accident, serious fall, or by an act of violence. Soldiers in combat may sustain a TBI from a blast injury or shockwave. These kinds of events may result in cognitive, behavioral or social challenges.

## Are there types of brain injuries that are not covered?

Some examples of brain injuries that are not externally caused and would not meet eligibility criteria are strokes, lack of oxygen, drug overdoses and brain tumors.

## What services are available?

The budget for this program, and access to the Head Injury Treatment Services Trust Fund, are determined by the Legislature on an annual basis. Services available to anyone include:

- Information on brain injury and local resources and benefits
- Social and recreational programs for people with brain injuries
- General technical assistance and consultation by SHIP staff and clinical specialists for schools, agencies and programs
- Advocacy and guidance

Services that may be available to eligible applicants include:

- Service coordination and family consultation
- Residential and individual support services and trainings
- Case management
- Help from Regional Service Centers (Springfield, Pittsfield, Raynham, Hyannis and Quincy)
- 1-to-1 skills training and support
- Assistive technology
- Consumer-specific technical assistance and consultation to schools, colleges, employers and other agencies and programs

## Who is eligible?

You may be eligible for services if you:

- Are a resident of Massachusetts, regardless of age
- Have a documented, externally-caused traumatic brain injury
- Have related impairments in cognitive, physical and/or behavioral areas
- Are able to participate in community-based services

## How do I apply?

Anyone can contact us by phone or email and request an application. After an application is received, staff will determine eligibility by reviewing all available records related to your head injury. You will be sent a letter informing you of your eligibility.

Staff members are available to discuss the application process with you and to answer any questions about services. Assistance with filling out your application is available from staff and Regional Service Centers.

For information and other forms of assistance, contact SHIP:

Voice: 617-204-3852  
Toll-free: 800-223-2559  
Fax: 617-204-3889  
Email: [shipu@mrc.state.ma.us](mailto:shipu@mrc.state.ma.us)

## **Protective Services**

The Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) is responsible for investigating complaints of abuse against a person with a disability by a caretaker. Mandated and non-mandated reporters file reports in suspected instances of abuse of a person with a disability by calling the **DPPC Hotline at 1-800-426-9009** and following up with a written report to the DPPC.

Based on the person's reported disability, the report is then forwarded to the appropriate agency which conducts an investigation and provides services to the abused individual.

Under the legal authority and oversight of the DPPC, the MRC Protective Service Program (PSP) conducts civil investigations of allegations of abuse such as acts of physical, sexual, emotional, verbal abuse and omission by a caregiver of a person with a physical disability between the ages of 18 and 59. Protective services are provided to prevent further injury when it is determined that the abused individual was seriously injured as a result of an act and/or omission by the caregiver.

Investigations of instances of abuse are conducted in a community setting. The abused individual is interviewed at his/her home, a day program, a hospital (if admitted due to injuries sustained), or a mutually agreed setting if the home presents a risk to the individual.

As part of the investigative process, the allegations are addressed not only with the caregiver and reporter, but also with medical personnel, social workers, case managers, law enforcement, psychiatrists, personal care attendants and/or family members. All pertinent medical documentation and police reports are reviewed.

The MRC PSP works collaboratively with law enforcement officials and the District Attorney's office in cases of abuse involving criminal activity. When it is determined that the abused individual was seriously injured as a result of abuse, a case is opened and the MRC PSP Investigator is responsible to provide protective services to prevent further injury.

**To Report Abuse:**

All reports of suspected abuse of a person with a disability should be made to the Disabled Persons Protection Commission's 24 hour hotline at **1-800-426-9009.**

# Assistive Technology Services

The next four pages cover many aspects of assistive technology (AT) including eligibility, delivery, and financing.

Assistive Technology, or AT, is any device or service item that enhances or expands a person's ability to live more independently. Many different items are considered assistive technology, including adaptive computer equipment, walkers, hearing aids, memory enhancement aids, print magnifiers, wheelchairs, vehicle modifications and more.

The MRC offers assistive technology services to individuals participating in our Vocational Rehabilitation and Community Living programs. Some home modifications and vehicle modifications are also covered.

## Adaptive Assistance and Vocational Rehabilitation

For consumers who require AT in order to achieve a work outcome, a referral for AT services must be made by the individual's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. MRC's AT Coordinator will then contact one of the agencies contracted to perform AT assessments. This AT provider will evaluate the consumer's AT needs and submit a report to the AT Coordinator. If the device(s) or training is recommended as a service in the IPE, this will be authorized. The AT provider will purchase the adaptive device(s), customize it to the individual's needs and set it up at the location requested. The provider will train the consumer in using the AT.

## AT and Independent Living

The Assistive Technology Independent Living program provides assistive technology devices and training to help individuals reach their independent living goals. Assistive Technology (AT) devices help individuals maximize control over their environment and improve the opportunity to achieve self-determined goals. Assistive Technology helps people perform such tasks as driving, shopping, check or letter writing, money management, environmental control, computer use and communication with others.

The MRC contracts with community-based organizations to carry out AT assessments, purchase and set-up equipment and provide training and technical assistance. These organizations provide services on a regional basis and have on-site AT devices for use in evaluation and training.

- Easter Seals of Massachusetts (VR-related services statewide and IL-related services through offices in the northeast, central MA and greater Boston)
- United Cerebral Palsy of Berkshire County (VR and IL related services in Western Massachusetts)



- UMass Dartmouth Center for Rehabilitation Engineering (IL-related services in southeastern MA).

### How do I apply for AT services?

Individuals may apply for AT services by contacting their regional AT provider.

Because of funding limitations and the high demand for services, there may be a waiting list for services. Should this be the case, individuals are placed on the waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis after determination of financial eligibility.

Individuals with disabilities who are eligible to receive services from other Executive Office of Health and Human Services agencies should contact those agencies for AT services.

There are no age restrictions, although school age children with disabilities who are eligible for Chapter 766 services should apply through the Local Education Authority for school-related AT needs.

Clients of MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation Division may receive a range of rehabilitation technology services to meet their work-related goals. These include:

- Vehicle modifications
- Adaptive driving evaluation and training
- Environmental control systems
- Adaptive computers
- Augmentative communication devices
- Technical assistance to employers and service providers
- Home modifications
- Mobility devices
- Worksite modifications
- Training and follow-up on the use of any equipment provided

For more information, contact the MRC Assistive Technology program:

Voice: 617-204-3851

Fax: 617-727-1354

# The Massachusetts Assistive Technology Act Program

This program, known as MassMATCH, works to put assistive technology into the hands of people with disabilities. To accomplish this, MassMATCH provides opportunities to find, borrow, learn about and fund AT across the state.

MassMATCH funds two AT Regional Centers (ATRCs) which offer access to AT for consumers, family members, and professionals. This service includes:

## Device demonstrations:

AT Regional Centers provide demonstrations of the latest AT devices and software. People with disabilities, family members, educators, employers, therapists and others can learn more about AT through these hands-on opportunities.

## Device loans:

The AT Regional Centers loan out equipment for up to 4 weeks in order to 'test drive' devices. Devices can be borrowed prior to purchasing for help in deciding if the device meets your needs or for meeting interim needs when your device is out for repair.

## MassMATCH AT Regional Center Locations

### For Eastern Massachusetts contact:

Easter Seals Technology & Training Center  
89 South Street  
Boston, MA 02111  
Toll-free: 800-244-2756  
Voice: 617-226-2640  
Email: [ATRC@eastersealsma.org](mailto:ATRC@eastersealsma.org)

### For Western Massachusetts contact:

United Cerebral Palsy of Berkshire County  
208 West Street  
Pittsfield, MA 01201  
Voice: 413-442-1562  
Email: [ATRC@ucpberkshire.org](mailto:ATRC@ucpberkshire.org)

## **Massachusetts Assistive Technology Loan Program (MATLP)**

The MATLP provides funds for the purchase of assistive technology. MATLP's mission is to expand the independence of people with disabilities by making assistive technology devices more affordable.

### How does the program help?

The program offers lower interest rates than a traditional bank loan and repayment lengths are based on the expected useful life of the device purchased. For example, most loans for computers are repaid in three years, while vehicle modification loans can be repaid over a much longer time. This allows the borrower to keep lower monthly payments by stretching them over longer periods. The program staff is trained in helping people through the loan process, if that is required. Many community organizations can assist with an completing the application.

Long-Term Device Loans are also available. Eligible borrowers who demonstrate financial need can borrow devices valued at less than \$500 for as long as they need them.

For more information call Easter Seals Massachusetts:

Voice: 800-244-2756 ext.428 or 431

TTY: 800-564-9700

Website: [www.massatloan.org](http://www.massatloan.org)

Email: [info@massatloan.org](mailto:info@massatloan.org)

## **Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP)**

The HMLP provides loans for access modifications to the principal residence of elders, adults and families with children with disabilities. Examples of modifications that may be eligible under this program include the installation of sensory adaptations, wheelchair lifts or ramps, door widening, and bathroom modifications such as grab bars and/or roll-in showers.

### Who can apply for a loan?

Any homeowner who has a disability, has a household member who has a disability, or rents to an individual(s) with a disability may apply for a loan. Income requirements will be based on the total household gross income of the homeowner. Any household in a property with less than 10 units may be eligible. The owner of the property must apply. The unit requiring modifications must be

the primary, principal residence of the individual(s) with the disability. The modifications to be made must be directly related to the specific disability of the occupant and be necessary for them to remain living there.

### What are the income guidelines?

Income verification will be requested in the form of photocopies of earning statements, tax returns, benefit confirmation or pay stubs. Income guidelines will be utilized and those who show income in excess of 200% of the guidelines will be considered ineligible. If you are determined eligible, you will be informed of the type of loan for which you qualify. Households with up to 100% of median income will have a 0% interest loan; those from 100% to 200% of median income will receive a 3% interest loan.

The HMLP is operated by 6 community based organizations under the Administration of the Community Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC).

For more information refer to our website at [www.mass.gov/mrc/hmlp](http://www.mass.gov/mrc/hmlp) or contact Susan Gillam, Outreach Coordinator:

Email: susan.gillam@state.ma.us

Voice: 617-204-3851

## **Mass Access: The Accessible Housing Registry**

Mass Access is a website that provides information on vacant, accessible, and affordable housing. Mass Access, also known as The Accessible Housing Registry, catalogs accessible or adaptable units in the state and notes their availability. Operated by Citizens Housing and Planning Association, Mass Access links people with disabilities with owners and managers of accessible housing. The Mass Access database includes information about state- or federally-assisted housing, public and private housing, and market-rate housing.

Mass Access catalogs several items of information, including the type of housing, location by city or town, rent level, number of bedrooms, neighborhood features, and vacancy status.

The “What’s New” page on the Mass Access website also tracks open Section 8 voucher lists and other new housing opportunities.

### Who can use Mass Access?

Any person who has a disability, a family member or an advocate can obtain housing information through Mass Access, regardless of the age, income or

type of disability involved.

For more information visit [www.massaccesshousingregistry.org](http://www.massaccesshousingregistry.org) or call one of the following organizations:

**Citizens Housing and Planning Association:**

Voice/TTY: 617-742-0820

Fax: 617-742-3953

**Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission:**

Voice: 617-204-3851

TTY: 617-204-3815

Fax: 617-727-1354

State and Federal laws provide strong protections for people with disabilities against housing discrimination. The laws that protect the fair housing rights of people with disabilities include:

- Federal Fair Housing Act Amendments
- Massachusetts Housing Rights of People with Disabilities
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

What protections do these laws provide?

It is illegal to discriminate against someone in housing because of their disability, the disability of someone who lives with or plans to live with them, or the disability of someone associated with them.

For more information contact the MRC:

Toll-free: 800-734-7475

Voice: 617-204-3854

TTY: 617-204-3834

Fax: 617-204-3847

Website: [www.mass.gov/mrc](http://www.mass.gov/mrc)

## **REquipment Durable Medical Equipment Reuse Program**

REquipment is a durable medical equipment (DME) reuse program at MRC.

REquipment provides free refurbished wheelchairs (power and manual), scooters, bath seats, sling lifts, standers and other equipment to help people live safely and independently in their community. The list of available devices is

updated weekly at [www.dmeREquipment.org](http://www.dmeREquipment.org). Users are encouraged to select items online and request delivery if needed. There is no charge for the equipment.

REquipment appreciates and collects donated equipment that is in gently used condition. Donors can call REquipment at 1-866-244-6156 or 617-204-3636 to discuss a possible donation. REquipment can provide an itemized donation receipt for tax purposes.

### Who is eligible for REquipment?

REquipment provides free equipment to people with disabilities of all ages including seniors in Massachusetts who need equipment for community living, education or employment. There are no insurance requirements, which makes getting refurbished devices fast and easy. REquipment users must sign a release form and equipment may be returned when it is no longer being used.

### Contact REquipment:

Website: [www.dmeREquipment.org](http://www.dmeREquipment.org)

Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/dmerequisite](http://www.facebook.com/dmerequisite)

Email: [info@dmeREquipment.org](mailto:info@dmeREquipment.org)

Toll-free 1-866-244-6156

Local 1-617-204-3626

Fax: 617-204-3877

## **Waiver Unit**

The Waiver Unit is responsible for the day to day operation of two MassHealth Home and Community Based Waivers, oversight of the University of Massachusetts Medical School Provider Network and the Waiver Eligibility Unit. The Waiver Unit staff provide case management for persons utilizing the waivers, as well as, persons who are part of the Money Follows the Person Demonstration and are not in one of the waivers. The Unit works closely with the MassHealth Money Follows the Person (MFP) Project Office related to the legal requirements of the MFP Demonstration Project.

Money Follows the Person – Community Living (MFP-CL) and Acquired Brain Injury - Non Residential (ABI-N) Waivers

The MFP and ABI Waivers offer ongoing services in the community for individuals who have been residing in a nursing home or long term care hospital for 90 days or more. Consumers must also be eligible for MassHealth in the community and with support can move to their own home/apartment or the home of family or someone else. Individuals apply and if they are found eligible

for either of the waivers and they will be assigned a MRC Waiver Unit Program Coordinator to provide case management. The Program Coordinator works with the consumer to develop a person-centered plan that identifies and addresses the participant's individual needs.

The Program Coordinator is responsible for ordering, arranging and overseeing the delivery of the waiver services and other community long-term care services. The following are services which are included in each of the respective waivers.

ABI- N Waiver Services include the following:

- Adult Companion
- Chore Service
- Day Services
- Home Accessibility Adaptations
- Homemaker
- Individual Support and Community Habilitation
- Occupational Therapy
- Personal Care
- Physical Therapy
- Respite
- Specialized Medical Equipment
- Speech Therapy
- Supported Employment
- Transportation

MFP-CL Waiver Services include the following:

- Adult Companion
- Chore Service
- Community Family Training
- Day Services
- Home Accessibility Adaptations
- Home Health Aide
- Homemaker
- Independent Living Supports
- Individual Support and Community Habilitation
- Occupational Therapy
- Peer Support
- Personal Care
- Physical Therapy
- Prevocational Services
- Respite
- Shared Home Supports
- Skilled Nursing
- Specialized Medical Equipment
- Speech Therapy
- Supported Employment
- Supportive Home Care Aide
- Transportation
- Vehicle Modification
- Managed Behavioral Health Services

ABI Eligibility

To be eligible for the ABI Waiver the individual must be:

- Residing in a nursing facility or chronic rehab hospital for at least 90 consecutive days at the time of application ;
- Experienced an ABI at age 22 or older;

- 22 years old or older and be disabled, or be age 65 or older;
- Meet the clinical requirements and need of the waiver services available; and
- Meet the financial requirements to qualify for MassHealth.

### Money Follows the Person Eligibility

In order to be eligible for Money Follows the person, the individual must:

- Residing in a nursing home or long-stay hospital for at least 90 consecutive days, excluding Medicare rehabilitation days;
- Have at least the last day of the nursing home or long-stay hospital stay paid by MassHealth;
- 18 years old or older and be disabled, or be age 65 or older;
- Meet the clinical requirements and need of the waiver services available;
- Meet the financial requirements to qualify for MassHealth;
- Meet any other requirements for participation in the MFP Demonstration; and
- Transition to an MFP qualified residence in the community.

For more information, please contact the waiver unit at:

UMass MFP Waiver Unit

Tel: 855-499-5109

TTY: 800-596-1746

E-mail: [MFPinfo@umassmed.edu](mailto:MFPinfo@umassmed.edu)

## **Advisory Councils**

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's Consumer Involvement program make a special effort to form cooperative relationships with those individuals with disabilities who are recipients of services. The MRC reaches out to consumers for their input regarding the policy making process of the agency. Staff of each of the three MRC programs meet regularly with present, former, and potential consumers to seek their advice and feedback.

The primary mission of consumer involvement is to enhance and improve the agency's service delivery system by working cooperatively with members of the disability community on projects of mutual interest. The MRC's three divisions include:

- Community Living (CL)
- Disability Determination Services (DDS)
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)



### The Annual Consumer Conference (ACC)

This event is held each year for the purpose of sharing information, presenting educational material and networking. Representatives from the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) and Massachusetts Statewide Independent Living Council (MASILC), take an active part in planning and developing the agenda for this conference.

### The Individual Consumer Consultant (ICC) Registry

This paid, project-related service provides agency staff and Councils with assistance in areas such as:

- Program planning, development or evaluation
- Studies and surveys
- Staff and consumer training
- Consumer consultation in the Request For Response (RFR) process
- Consumer consultation in the development of state plans for public hearings

Sign language interpreters, Personal Care Attendants and travel reimbursement are provided to consumers when needed while performing ICC and/or SRC duties.

### The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

This Council is appointed by the Governor and mandated by Federal Law (the Workforce Investment Act and Title IV, section 105) and meets with the Commissioner and members of his staff a minimum of four times a year. Standing committees have been established on high priority issues and are directed by the full Council.

Membership includes a mix of consumers, employers, providers, advocates and other state agency representatives. The Council, often known by the acronym SRC, is charged with the responsibility of reviewing, analyzing and advising the MRC regarding the performance of its Vocational Rehabilitation services program under the Rehabilitation Act, Titles I and 6C.

### Other consumer advisory programs

The Independent Living Program, Statewide Head Injury Program, and the Home Care Assistance Program also hold regularly scheduled Advisory Council meetings. These meetings are attended primarily by parents, professionals and individuals with disabilities.

For more information on the Consumer Involvement Program, please call 617-204-3665.

# **Appendix**

- The VR Checklist
- Statewide Vocational Rehabilitation Offices
- Telephone Numbers
- Helpful Contacts
- Frequently Used Abbreviations

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**VR CHECKLIST**

**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

**Please fill out this Checklist and bring it with you to your first appointment. Also bring the most current medical records which document your disability(ies).**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

*Please indicate if you receive any of the following benefits:*

- Medicaid
- Medicare
- TAFDC
- Food Stamps
- Subsidized Housing
- EAEDC
- Workers Comp.
- Blue Cross
- Other Insurance or HMO/PPO
- Social Security\* SSI
- SSDI
- Both SSI/SSDI

*\* If you receive any of these benefits, please bring this documentation to your first VR meeting as it may speed up the eligibility process and delivery of services.*

*Please list below the professionals who have treated you for your disabilities within the past 5 years:  
(Name, Address, Phone#)*

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*(continued)*



*Please describe your disability and how it affects you.*

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*Please list any other information you think may be helpful to your counselor in assisting you to go to work.*

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*Have you had difficulty obtaining a job?*

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*Have you had difficulty keeping a job?*

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*Please sign that you have read this Consumer Handbook.  
If you have any concerns please discuss them with your counselor.*

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*SIGNATURE*

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# MRC Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Area Offices

Listed below are the VR area offices and the towns and cities they usually serve. You may receive vocational rehabilitation services from any area office, even when the office you choose is not listed as the service provider for the town or city where you live. You can locate the town/city nearest you in the index below.

North District	South District	West District
Fitchburg	Boston (downtown)	Greenfield
Framingham	Brockton	Milford
Lawrence	Cape and Islands	Pittsfield
Lowell	Fall River	North Adams
Malden	New Bedford	Springfield
Salem	Plymouth	Worcester
Somerville	Braintree	
	Roxbury	
	Taunton	

Visit the MRC website to find local contact information:

<https://www.mass.gov/vocational-rehabilitation/locations>

## **Telephone Numbers**

Listed below are the telephone numbers of the MRC's administrative offices and other statewide services. These numbers are accessible by voice or Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) as noted.

### **General Information/Reception**

Voice: 617-204-3600

TDD: 617-204-3868

### **Administrative Services**

Voice: 617-204-3860

Toll-free Voice 800-245-6543 (MA only)

Main Fax 617-727-1354

MRC Commissioner 617-204-3600

VR Assistant Commissioner 617-204-3608

VR Program 800-245-6543 (toll-free)

CL Assistant Commissioner 617-204-3655

CL Program 800-223-2559 (toll-free)

DDS Assistant Commissioner 800-882-2040 (toll-free)

617-654-1600

DDS Program 800-223-3212 (toll-free)

Legal Department 617-204-3816

Ombudsperson 617-204-3603

800-245-6543 (toll-free)

Massachusetts Relay Service 800-439-0183 (toll-free)

800-439-2370 (toll-free)

## **Website**

[www.mass.gov/mrc](http://www.mass.gov/mrc)

## **Helpful Contacts**

Brain Injury Association of MA	800-242-0030 (TTY - toll-free) 508-475-0042
Bureau of Transitional Planning	617-727-7600
Disability Law Center	617-723-8455 617-227-9464 (TTY)
Federation for Children with Special Needs	617-236-7210 (Voice/TTY)
MA Commission for the Blind	617-727-5550
MA Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	617-740-1600 (Voice/TTY) 800-882-1155 (toll-free)
MA Department of Children and Families	617-748-2000
MA Department of Developmental Services	617-727-5608
MA Department of Education, Special Ed. Division	781-388-3300
MA Department of Mental Health	617-626-8000
MA Department of Public Health	617-624-6000
MA Department of Transitional Assistance	617-348-8400
MA Department of Youth Services	617-727-7575
MA Developmental Disabilities Council	617-727-6374 617-727-1885 (TTY)
Social Security Administration	800-772-1213 (toll-free)
Statewide Independent Living Council	508-620-7452
United Cerebral Palsy	617-926-5480 617-926-8051 (TTY)



## Frequently Used Abbreviations

<b>ABI</b>	Acquired Brain Injury
<b>ADA</b>	Americans With Disabilities Act
<b>ADHD</b>	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
<b>AT</b>	Assistive Technology
<b>BISSCS</b>	Brain Injury and Statewide Specialized Community Services
<b>CAP</b>	Client Assistance Program
<b>CBES</b>	Community-Based Employment Services
<b>CHAPA</b>	Citizens Housing and Planning Association
<b>CRP</b>	Community Rehabilitation Providers
<b>CL</b>	Community Living
<b>DDS</b>	Disability Determination Services (also known as MRC  DDS); or Department of Developmental Services (formerly DMR)
<b>DMH</b>	Department of Mental Health
<b>DPH</b>	Department of Public Health
<b>DPPC</b>	Disabled Persons Protection Commission
<b>DTA</b>	Department of Transitional Assistance
<b>EAEDC</b>	Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children
<b>EEP</b>	Extended Employment Program
<b>EOHHS</b>	Executive Office of Health & Human Services (also known as EHS)
<b>ESS</b>	Employment Services Specialist
<b>HCAP</b>	Home Care Assistance Program
<b>HMO</b>	Health Maintenance Organization
<b>HMLP</b>	Home Modification Loan Program
<b>ICC</b>	Individual Consumer Consultant
<b>IDEA</b>	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
<b>IEP</b>	Individual Education Plan
<b>ILC</b>	Independent Living Center
<b>IMPACT</b>	Informed Members Planning and Accessing Choices Together
<b>IPE</b>	Individual Plan for Employment
<b>ITP</b>	Individual Transition Plan
<b>JPS</b>	Job Placement Specialist

*(continued)*

<b>LEA</b>	Local Education Authority
<b>MA</b>	Massachusetts
<b>MATLP</b>	Massachusetts Assistive Technology Loan Program
<b>MCB</b>	Massachusetts Commission for the Blind
<b>MCDHH</b>	Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
<b>MFP</b>	Money Follows the Person
<b>MRC</b>	Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
<b>OJE</b>	On the Job Evaluation
<b>OJT</b>	On the Job Training
<b>PAS</b>	Personal Assistance Services
<b>PCA</b>	Personal Care Attendant
<b>PPO</b>	Participating Provider Option
<b>RFR</b>	Request for Response
<b>SES</b>	Statewide Employment Services
<b>SHIP</b>	Statewide Head Injury Program
<b>SILC</b>	Statewide Independent Living Council
<b>SNAP</b>	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamps)
<b>SRC</b>	State Rehabilitation Council
<b>SSA</b>	Social Security Administration
<b>SSDI</b>	Social Security Disability Insurance
<b>SSI</b>	Supplemental Security Income
<b>TAFDC</b>	Transitional Assistance for Families with Dependent Children
<b>TAP</b>	Transition to Adulthood Program
<b>TBI</b>	Traumatic Brain Injury
<b>T-22</b>	Turning 22
<b>TDD</b>	Telecommunication Device for the Deaf
<b>TTY</b>	Text Telephone
<b>VR</b>	Vocational Rehabilitation
<b>VRC</b>	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

## Notes

**Charles D. Baker**  
Governor

**Karyn E. Polito**  
Lieutenant Governor

**Marylou Sudders**  
Secretary, Executive Office of Health & Human Services

**Toni Wolf**  
Commissioner, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission



**Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission**

Administrative Offices  
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