



Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Priority for Services Process



What is MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation program?

- MRC's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program helps people with physical, intellectual, and mental disabilities get and keep a job.
- VR services may include assistive technology, translation services, or education and job counseling. All MRC VR services are individualized based on consumers' needs towards achieving employment as specified in their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Paid Services (Max Obligations)	Assistive Technology/ Auto Modifications	Translation Services	Provider and Contract Services
College and Vocational Training	Software (Jaws, Dragon)	ASL Interpreters	Hearing Aids
Tools and Equipment	Vehicle Modifications	CDI Interpreters	Job Coaching
Transportation	Adaptive Computer Equipment	CART Services	Tutoring

What is Priority for Services?

- As of January 8, 2019, MRC prioritizes vocational rehabilitation services for people with the “most significant disabilities”. The federal term for this process is called Order of Selection; within MRC, we refer to this process as Priority for Services.
- VR applicants are placed into priority categories based on how their disability impacts their ability to work.
- If you were receiving VR services prior to January 8, 2019, your services will not be impacted.

How does MRC determine an individual's "ability to work?"

- An individual's ability to work will be evaluated by specially-trained VR counselors who will review if an individual has a physical, intellectual, or mental disability that is a barrier to employment in one or more of the following seven areas:

☐ Communication

☐ Mobility

☐ Self-direction

☐ Work tolerance

☐ Interpersonal skills

☐ Self-care

☐ Work skills

Priority Categories

- MRC is serving individuals with the most significant disabilities first. Individuals will be placed in one of three priority categories based upon how many barriers to employment they possess.
- **Priority 1:** An individual is considered to have a most significant disability if there are substantial barriers in four or more of the seven areas.
- **Priority 2:** An individual is considered to have a significant disability if there are substantial barriers in two or three of the seven areas.
- **Priority 3:** An individual is considered to have a disability if there are substantial barriers in up to one of the seven areas.

Open and Closed Categories

- Once the MRC application and eligibility process is complete, individuals will receive a letter noting their priority category assignment and if the priority category is currently open or closed.
- **If a category is open:** Individuals can begin receiving services immediately.
- **If a category is closed:** Services will not be immediately available. Individuals will be placed on a waiting list according to their application date.

Support for Individuals in Closed Categories

- MRC will continue to work with our partners to support those job seekers who may be in a closed category.
- MRC will strengthen the role that our MRC counselors have within the Career Centers to assist these individuals.
- MRC will work with our community partners (Independent Living Centers, Clubhouses, Recovery Learning Centers, etc.) to extend their services to these individuals, providing valuable resources.
- A list of resources outside of MRC is available online.

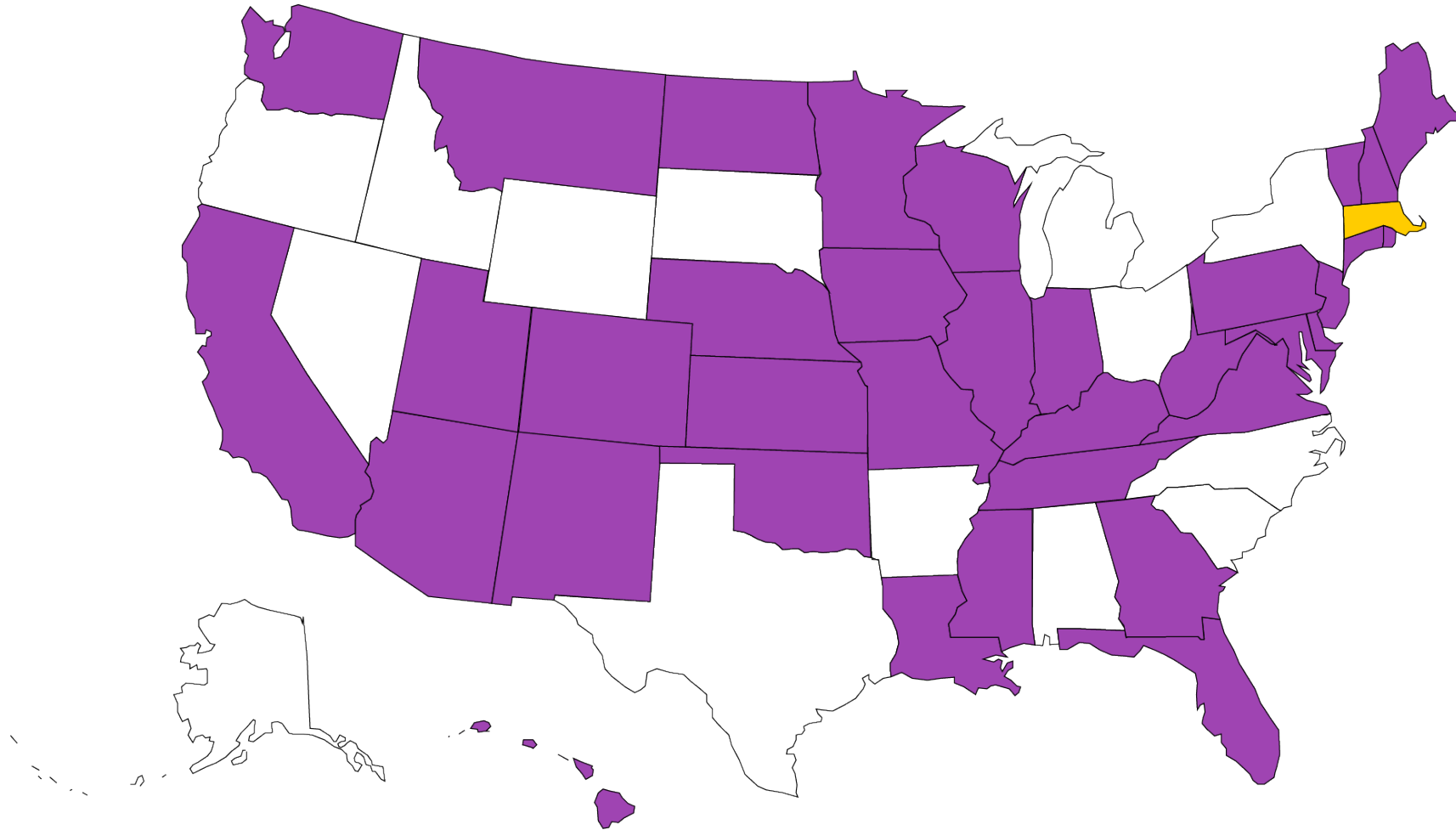
Appeal Process

- Individuals may appeal a priority category assignment.
- Appeal instructions are posted online and will be provided to MRC consumers in their VR eligibility letters.
- If you would like assistance with the appeal process, you may contact the MRC Ombudsperson at 617-204-3600 or 800-245-6543.

Why does MRC need a Priority for Services process?

- Federal funding challenges are a known obstacle for VR programs across the country, including MA.
- Increased cost for services and operations.
- Aligns with MRC's goal of ensuring a sustainable VR program that helps individuals with disabilities live and work independently.

States in Priority for Services (Order of Selection)



For Policy Development Purposes Only

MRC is Here to Answer Your Questions & Concerns

- Contact local office to talk to staff about Priority for Services process.
- Contact Commissioner@mrc.state.ma.us or call the MRC Ombudsperson at 617-204-3600.

APPENDIX

Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council

- In April 1994 an executive order was passed to create the MA State Rehabilitation Council, a partner of MRC.
- The Council provides a forum for consumer input about the state's vocational rehabilitation services resulting in recommendations and advice to MRC and is made up of 21 governor-appointed members.
- Summer 2018: The Council held 4 open meetings to review the current status of MRC and developed a recommendation that granted authority to MRC to develop and implement an Order of Selection policy until the process is no longer needed.
- The recommendation passed unanimously on September 11, 2018.

Timetable to implement Priority for Services

- ✓ State Rehabilitation Council recommendation – September 2018
- ✓ MRC Workforce Listening Sessions – September 2018
- ✓ Stakeholder Listening Sessions- October & November
- ✓ Public Hearings – December 2018
- ✓ Implement Service Prioritization– January 8, 2019