



Services Beyond High School

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Objectives



**Understand
MCB Services &
Eligibility**



**Explore
Transition Planning
& Support**



**Identify Vocational
Rehabilitation
Pathways**



**Learn About
Available Resources
& Next Steps**



Mission & Vision



Mission

To provide individualized training, education, and empowerment to people who are legally blind, and advocate for inclusive policies across the Commonwealth, with the goal of life-long independence and full community participation

Vision

All residents of the Commonwealth who are legally blind are empowered to live a fulfilling and independent life, with opportunities to work and thrive



Eligibility



Requirements

- Legal blindness diagnosis
- Massachusetts resident

Definition of Legal Blindness

- Vision with correction of 20/200 or less in the better eye; or
- Peripheral field of ten degrees (10°) or less, regardless of visual acuity

Individuals may also be eligible for services if they have low vision due to a progressive eye condition expected to lead to legal blindness, along with a vocational objective.



Registration Process



- 1** The individual is seen by an eye care provider, such as an optometrist or ophthalmologist.
- 2** The eye care provider determines the patient meets the criteria for legal blindness.
- 3** The eye care provider is legally required to submit a Mandatory Report of Legal Blindness to MCB within 30 days.
- 4** The newly registered individual is referred to a counselor, who will schedule an appointment to discuss available programs, services, and benefits.
- 5** The counselor will make referrals to the appropriate internal departments or external partners as needed.
- 6** Services begin, the consumer makes progress, and services are closed once goals are met.



Children's Services



- **Services begin at birth and continue until the child turns 14.**

Advocacy

Information & Referral Services

Case Management

Transitional Support

Assistance with Applications for Programming

Support Counseling

Flexible Family Support & Camperships *

* Dependent on income eligibility



Chapter 688 Referrals



"The primary goal of filing a Chapter 688 referral is to plan for needed adult services for students with severe disabilities. Filing a Chapter 688 referral creates documentation that students with severe disabilities will need adult services and supports. This documentation alerts Transition Agencies (e.g., the Department of Developmental Disabilities, the MassAbility, the Department of Mental Health)..."



MASSACHUSETTS
Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education

Students who are legally blind or have a diagnosis of progressive vision loss should have their Chapter 688 referrals sent to MCB.

Referrals sent to MassAbility will likely be redirected to MCB.

MCB and MassAbility can collaborate on a plan but cannot duplicate services.



Service Delivery Tracks

Aged 14-22



DeafBlind Extended Supports (DBES)



Potentially Eligible (PEL)



Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)



Potentially Eligible (PEL)



- **Individuals who may or may not be Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS)-eligible but are not necessarily college or vocational bound.**
- **May benefit from group programs or camperships.**
- **Serves as an extended evaluation period to better understand individual needs.**



Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Five service categories eligible students should receive to encourage better preparation for postsecondary education, independent living, and employment.

**Job Exploration
Counseling**

**Work-Based
Learning**

**Counseling on
Post-Secondary
Education & Training
Opportunities**

**Workplace
Readiness
Training**

**Instruction in
Self-Advocacy**



Service Delivery Tracks

Post Secondary



Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)



Social Rehabilitation (SR)



DeafBlind Extended Supports (DBES)



DeafBlind Extended Supports (DBES)



- **Individuals receiving DBES services at age 14 will continue with these services.**
- **New Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS)-eligible individuals will transition to DBES services.**
- **DDS is the primary agency, with MCB as the secondary agency.**



DeafBlind Extended Supports (DBES) Services



Case Management & Advocacy

Orientation & Mobility

Adaptive Technology

Communication Access Support

Homemaker Services

Recreation and Campership Funding

Supported Employment

Information & Referral Services

Rehabilitation Teaching

Low Vision Aids

Respite Services

Family Flex Funding

Community & Center-Based Day Supports



Social Rehabilitation (SR)



- **For individuals not seeking employment and who do not meet Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) eligibility.**
- **The goal is to help individuals gain independence at home while adjusting to vision loss.**
- **Services Include:**

Rehabilitation Teaching

Orientation & Mobility

Assistive Technology

Low Vision Evaluations

Peer Support Groups



Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)



- **For individuals 22 and older who seek to obtain or maintain employment.**
- **If eligible, individuals are assigned a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to develop an Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE).**
- **Employment goals may include:**

Competitive Integrated Employment

Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Program

Supportive Employment

Self-Employment



Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services



Vocational Counseling & Guidance

Low Vision Assessment

Rehabilitation Teaching

College/University Support

Job Development & Placement

Job Retention Services

Information & Referral Services

Orientation & Mobility

Assistive Technology

Job Readiness Training

Benefits Counseling



Determining a Vocational Path



- **Identify the individual's vocational goal.**
- **Determine the best path to achieve the goal:**
 - **College** – Is the individual prepared for and likely to succeed in a college setting?
 - **Trade School** – Would a certificate or hands-on training be a better fit?
 - **Direct to Work** – Is the individual ready to enter the workforce immediately?
- **Assess strengths, challenges, and necessary supports.**



Trade School

Certificate Program



- **MCB may be able to cover the full cost of the program, depending on duration and cost.**
- **Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor can assist with accommodations, such as adaptive tools.**



College/University



- **After acceptance, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) will work with the student to create a vocational objective.**
- **The VRC will encourage the student to meet with the college or university's disability services office to discuss accommodations. The VRC can attend this meeting for support.**
- **The VRC will refer the student for Orientation & Mobility, Rehabilitation Teaching, and Assistive Technology evaluations to support their success.**
- **VRC will ensure FAFSA is completed by April 1st.**
- **Once FAFSA is processed, the college or university will complete an Information Exchange Form to assess financial need.**



Information Exchange Form

Sample

Massachusetts Commission for the Blind
Information Exchange

Please print or type throughout

PART A - MCB COMPLETE AND FORWARD TO APPROPRIATE FINANCIAL AID OFFICE

From: _____ MCB
Counselor
Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____
Student Name: _____ SSN: _____
Address: _____

plans to attend _____ from: _____ to: _____
Major: _____
____ New Student ____ Undergraduate ____ Graduate ____ Continuing Ed ____ full-time ____ part-time

Student's Authorization for Exchange of Information
The undersigned hereby authorizes the exchange of information between the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and the Financial Aid Office (FAO) of the above-named school regarding aid awarded to me, my financial status, and/or that of my family for the purpose of determining the combined amount of financial aid for which I may be eligible. I also understand that the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind and the Financial Aid Officer may discuss aspects of my case as they pertain to my particular situation and my application for financial aid.

Student: _____ Date: _____
Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____
(as appropriate)
MCB Counselor: _____ Date: _____

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE THROUGHOUT

PART B - FINANCIAL AID OFFICER complete and return to the MCB office after the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) has been filed and action taken on this student's application for financial aid.

Has the student completed and submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for this school term? Yes ____ No ____ Unknown ____

Is the student eligible for Financial Aid? Yes ____ No ____ If "No", please explain (attach documentation if necessary)

1. Institutional Budget Based Aid Awarded	2. Expected Federal Family Contribution (EFC)	3. Type Need-Aid
Tuition \$	Family Contribution \$	Tuition Waiver*
Books \$	Other Student Resource	Access Grant
Fees	TOTAL	Federal Pell
Grant		
		FSEOG
		FWS
Personal college		Grants from
Transportation		Scholarships
Living Expenses		State
Scholarships		Stafford/Direct
Other		Perkins Loan
Loan		Other (specify)
TOTAL \$		
\$		

UNMET NEED: Column #1 less Columns #2 and #3 equals Total Unmet Need: \$

Remarks:

Financial Aid Officer Signature: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____

College: _____

eligibility, not based on need

* Tuition Waiver based on MCB



Information Exchange Form



- **The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) will review the submitted form and subtract any grants, scholarships, and the Expected Family Contribution (EFC), unless the student is SSI-eligible.**
- **The remaining financial need is what MCB can assist with, up to a certain amount.**
- **This year's maximum funding is \$17,772 per year or \$8,886 per semester.**
- **The maximum MCB can pay per calendar year is determined annually by UMASS Amherst. Regardless of MCB's contribution, students attending a Massachusetts state school receive a tuition waiver.**
- **Graduate programs and law schools have different funding maximums.**



Books & Supplies



- **MCB can contribute \$650 towards books and supplies each semester, regardless of the student's financial need.**
- **This contribution can be paid directly to the student or the bookstore.**



Reader Fees



- **MCB can contribute financially toward a reader to assist the student with extensive reading.**
- **The student can select the reader.**
- **MCB pays for up to 15 hours per month at the minimum wage rate (\$15.00/hour).**
- **The payment is made directly to the student, who then pays the reader.**



Student Responsibilities

College/University



- **Students sign a form acknowledging understanding of our policies.**
- **Key responsibilities include:**
 - **Maintaining a 2.0 Grade Point Average (GPA)**
 - **Staying in contact with their Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor monthly**
 - **Providing grades every semester**
 - **If the student's GPA falls below a 2.0, tuition assistance for the following semester will be suspended, but MCB can still provide support for books, supplies, and reader fees. Students can regain tuition assistance by improving their grades.**



Employment Services



- **For individuals who go directly to work after school, Employment Services specialists assist with job development and job search preparation.**
- **MCB also offers employment services for individuals who have completed their degrees or certificate programs.**
- **Services Include:**

Resume Writing

Cover Letter Writing

Mock Interviews

Employment Networking Strategies

Project LENS (mentorship program)

Job Fairs



Project LENS



- **Mentorship program for individuals aged 18-25.**
- **Participants are matched with a mentor who has a visual impairment and works in the same or similar field of interest.**
- **The mentor helps with:**

Adjusting to Blindness

Building Self-Confidence

Answering Career-Related Questions



Summer Internship Program



- **Each summer, MCB offers a 120-hour internship for college students or individuals seeking more on-the-job experience.**
- **Employment Services specialists help match participants with placements aligned with their job goals.**
- **\$1,000 stipend provided to each intern.**
- **Interns must attend:**

Soft Skills Training

Opening Ceremony

Closing Ceremony



Questions?





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