**Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council**

**Submitted draft recommendations for consideration-5/16/25**

**MassAbility Response – 11 June, 2025**

**FY26- 1- incorporating FY26-10**

**Submitted by Client Assistance Program**

MassAbility will create fact sheets for participants of career services to better understand and orient themselves to the services that they will receive.  Fact sheets would be written in plain language, be available in multiple languages, and would be distributed to participants upon engaging in services and at various points throughout the VR process. Subjects of fact sheet would include basic information on the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and employment goal, financial participation, eligibility, general rights and responsibilities, and due process. These materials should also be available on MassAbility’s website.

**MassAbility Response** – MassAbility agrees that having brief, easy to understand, materials explaining Career Services’ processes has value added for participants, potential participants, family members, and other invested stakeholders. MassAbility proposes that a select group of MassAbility CS and Communications staff work with identified SRC representatives to identify priority areas for this ask. The breadth and scope of agency capacity to address will be dependent on agency resources in FFY26.

* MassAbility is supportive of this recommendation.
* MassAbility suggests rephasing recommendation to read, “SRC will partner with MassAbility to identify priority areas to develop and disseminate fact sheets that explain core CS activities (e.g., IPEs) to job seekers and other key stakeholders.”

**FY26- 2- not moved forward**

**Submitted by Christine Tosti**

~~Similar to MRC’s NextGen program and Family Partnership forums, I recommend MRC reach out to Worcester County House of Corrections to explore outreach to incarcerated individuals with disabilities involved in their shelter dog training program. The purpose of this would be to let the inmates openly share their experiences with shelter dogs in a public forum and what kinds of career aspirations they have thought about as a result of being in the dog program. It would also be an opportunity for MRC to explain vocational rehabilitation and offer guidance on how to access MRC upon release.~~

**FY26- 3 not moved forward**

**Submitted by Christine Tosti**

~~Recommend MRC counselors identify if a consumer is financially struggling upon intake and educate the consumer about possible resources and barriers to access these resources. I also recommend that MRC staff and SRC members host publics meetings to discuss the impact of financial privilege to raise awareness and visibility for disabled individuals living below the poverty line.~~

**FY26- 4**

**Submitted by Client Assistance Program**

Create a process whereby job placement staff connect to staff of state agency employers who are knowledgeable about the details of the agency’s stock of jobs beyond what is included in a written job description. By connecting to such staff, it would be possible to understand the actual day-to-day work associated with a position, and what makes or doesn't make a good match for the position. This increases the likelihood that MBY can make effective recommendations of MassAbility participants who would be qualified for state agency positions.

**MassAbility Response** – MassAbility agrees with the value of having agency resources focused on supporting individuals with disabilities to find employment in the Commonwealth. MassAbility leads such an effort, the bi-monthly Commonwealth of Massachusetts Career Networking Event (CMCNE) – where agency HR reps, ADA officers, and DEI managers hear directly from candidates with disabilities who have applied for Commonwealth positions. Additionally, for any MassAbility job seeker applying for a state job, MassAbility reaches out to those agencies’ ADA coordinators to connect with and do follow up advocacy for interviews of candidates who meet MERs.

* MassAbility is supportive of this recommendation.
* MassAbility suggests rephasing recommendation to read, “SRC will partner with MassAbility CMCNE Team to learn more about and provide feedback on ongoing agency efforts to support individuals with disabilities seeking employment in the Commonwealth.”

**FY26- 5**

**Submitted by Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee**

The Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee will work with MassAbility to make available instructional materials relevant to MassAbility participants becoming certified holders of the Disability Employment Tax Credit (DETC). The Committee will advise MassAbility on strategies for marketing the DETC to participants, vendors and employers.

**MassAbility Response** – MassAbility is excited to continue working with the BEO on continued rollout of educational materials re: the Disability Employment Tax Credit (DETC).

* MassAbility is supportive of this recommendation.

**FY26- 6**

**Submitted by Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee**

The Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee will join MassAbility to improve the self-employment supports provided, based upon best practices from the State VR Programs of ME and VT.

**MassAbility Response** – MassAbility is excited to continue working with the BEO on strategies to inform and educate – both internally to our counselors and externally to all stakeholders - on best practices in self-employment/entrepreneurship.

* MassAbility is supportive of this recommendation.
* MassAbility suggests rephasing recommendation to read, “The Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee will advise and partner with MassAbility in ongoing efforts to improve self-employment supports based upon national best practices.”

**FY26- 7**

**Submitted by Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee**

The Business Employment and Opportunity (BEO) Committee will advise MassAbility on additional efforts to engage additional employers to support hiring people with disabilities in the Commonwealth.

**MassAbility Response** – MassAbility has been working with an external consultant to develop a marketing strategy specific to increasing employer engagement and awareness on the value of hiring individuals with disabilities in the Commonwealth. MassAbility recommends a presentation of this campaign to the BEO to facilitate awareness, discussion, and identification of next steps of partnership between MassAbility and the BEO.

* MassAbility is supportive of this recommendation.

**FY26- 8**

**Submitted by the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment & Consumer Satisfaction Committee**

The SRC recommends that MassAbility collaborate with community transportation providers to create a centralized, streamlined application and intake process for transportation assistance. Prioritizing affordability, accessibility, and reliability for individuals with disabilities, this process should include free and discounted access to vehicles, vehicle modifications, and transportation services such as public transit and paratransit. This collaboration should also produce a comprehensive outreach and education toolkit that includes user-friendly materials and a transportation resource directory. The toolkit will help participants, especially those in underserved areas, understand their options, navigate transportation services more easily, and access the support they need to pursue and maintain competitive, sustainable employment.

**MassAbility Response** – MassAbility acknowledges the importance and longstanding frustration regarding transportation for individuals with disabilities. Specific to employment, it creates challenges for our job seekers in their efforts to pursue, secure, and maintain employment. That said, MassAbility feels this recommendation is outside of the scope of Career Services as well as our RSA mandate.

* MassAbility does not support this recommendation.
* MassAbility CS staff versed in transportation initiatives are happy to meet with any interested SRC members to discuss possible resources and key stakeholders in this space if the SRC wants to pursue this area of interest outside of the formal SRC recommendations.

**FY26- 9**

**Submitted by the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment & Consumer Satisfaction Committee**

The SRC recommends that MassAbility identify and implement targeted strategies to reduce communication breakdowns between vocational rehabilitation counselors and participants, particularly the loss of contact that often leads to cases being closed unsuccessfully. These strategies may include, but are not limited to, reviewing and adopting best practices from offices with stronger communication outcomes; clarifying what information is provided to participants at intake about how to re-establish contact with their counselor if needed; and exploring whether an optional alternate contact person (distinct from the emergency contact) could be designated for use if contact with the participant is lost.

**MassAbility Response** – MassAbility appreciates the attention to the challenge that can happen if/when there are communication breakdowns between counselors and job seekers. The agency has instituted numerous efforts designed to continually enhance communication that include, but are not limited to: 1) including “Timely Responsiveness” as a performance goal area for all agency staff/managers; 2) introducing CS new counselor training that emphasizes the importance of and trains on customer service; 3) specialized customer service training for our MassAbility Connect staff – our front door to the agency and CS services; and 4) revamping our Ombudsperson page on our external website to provide additional clarity on how to ask for assistance - [MassAbility Service Disputes | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massability-service-disputes#:~:text=If%20the%20MassAbility%20Ombudsperson%20is%20unable%20to%20resolve,please%20refer%20to%20the%20appropriate%20program%20process%20below.). Data from our ongoing services experience survey finds that while “communication” is still identified as a concern from some job seekers, it is proportionately less so than in previous years. Additionally, our Ombudsperson reports that she is able to work quickly – usually within 1-3 days – to support participants looking to re-establishing contact with their counselors. As such, MassAbility feels there are sufficient ongoing agency efforts attentive to supporting enhanced communication between counselors and job seekers.

* MassAbility does not support this recommendation.
* MassAbility CS staff are happy to meet with any interested SRC members to discuss, in more detail, our ongoing efforts specific to supporting communication efforts if the SRC wants to pursue this area of interest outside of the formal SRC recommendations.

**FY26- 10- combined with 1**

**Submitted by the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment & Consumer Satisfaction Committee**

~~The SRC recommends that MassAbility collaborate with the SRC to develop methods that help participants better understand what MassAbility can and cannot do for them, both at the beginning of their vocational rehabilitation process and throughout their engagement with MassAbility.~~