

## Turning 22 Independent Living Program



*The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's Community Services Program (formerly the Independent Living Division) established the Turning 22 (T22) Independent Living Program in 1986 to design and implement transition services for young people who have a severe physical disability with mobility impairment, and who would need residential services after high school graduation or turning 22. The program utilizes the independent living philosophy in which consumers are empowered to make their own decisions about their lives, based on informed choice.*

### What We Do

The T22 Independent Living Program provides funding for three major components: Supported Living, Transition to Adulthood and Ancillary Supports.

### Supported Living Program

The T22 Independent Living Program allocates most of its funding toward supported living services, as there continues to be a great need to support young people with physical disabilities who have a mobility impairment and who want to live independently in the community. MRC contracts with several agencies across the state to provide case coordination services to eligible individuals. A case coordinator then meets with consumers in their homes, from one to several hours a week, to help them manage their daily activities.

MRC staff also work with special education departments to coordinate services for students who will be graduating and needing supported living services. Students can choose the supported living provider with whom they wish to work and should begin meeting with them during the last 6 months he/she is in school. The case coordinator will help with such things as finding accessible housing and hiring appropriate Personal Care Assistants (PCAs).

When the consumer is ready to move into an apartment, the case coordinator and consumer jointly develop a service plan to address the areas of daily life in which the consumer will need help. Assistance can be provided in the following areas:

- |                                    |                                  |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| *PCA Management                    | *Personal Health Care Management |
| *Housing                           | *Social/Recreation Management    |
| *Adaptive Equipment                | *Household Management            |
| *Financial Management              | *Self Advocacy                   |
| *Vocational/Educational Management | *Transportation Management       |

### Who is Eligible for Supported Living? Any individual who:

- Is exiting from a 766 educational program and has not reached the age of 22
- Is their own legal guardian
- Has a severe physical disability with a mobility impairment
- Has a 688 Individual Transition Plan (ITP) that includes supported living services
- Is ineligible for comparable services from another Executive Office of Health & Human Services (EOHHS) State agency, such as DDS, DMH, MCB, or the MRC Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP)

## **Transition to Adulthood Program (TAP)**

The MRC T22 Independent Living Program contracts with six Independent Living Centers (ILCs) to help students with disabilities prepare for the transition from special education to adulthood, regardless of their type of disability. Students receiving TAP services attend public, private, and residential schools throughout Massachusetts. Experienced skills trainers, who themselves have a disability, provide advocacy, skills training, and peer counseling to young people with disabilities in their school setting.

Students learn skills and self-confidence to better prepare them for independence. Exposure to adult peer role models, as well as skills training, helps students learn how to take on the responsibilities of living independently in the community of their choice. The ILC staff coordinates with supported living staff at the time of transition to the community and on an ongoing basis, as needed.

**Who is Eligible for TAP Services?** Any individual who:

- is aged 14-22 and enrolled in special education, regardless of the type of disability and
- desires to learn independent living and self-advocacy skills

### **Ancillary Supports**

As funding permits, the MRC T22 Independent Living Program can purchase adaptive equipment for items designed to increase a consumer's independence. These items can include adapted computers, computerized communication devices, automatic door openers or other adaptive equipment.

### **How to Apply**

#### **Supported Living:**

- Any consumer who meets the above guidelines and would like to receive case coordination services through the Turning 22 Supported Living Program should call MaryEllen MacRae, T22 Services Coordinator, at (617) 204-3618 (voice) or (617) 204-3815 (TTY). *It is extremely important to make the referral early so an Individual Transition Plan can be scheduled before the student graduates.*
- After eligibility is determined, the consumer will be asked to choose a provider with whom they will work. That provider will assess the individual's need for supported living services and evaluate the number of hours needed per week to support the consumer. Case coordination services will then be provided.

#### **Transition to Adulthood Program:**

- If a student is interested in receiving independent living skills training through the TAP while he/she is in school, please contact MaryEllen MacRae, T22 Services Coordinator, at (617) 204-3618 (voice) or (617) 204-3815 (TTY), who will make the referral to the appropriate Independent Living Center. Currently, there is funding for only six ILCs in Massachusetts, but it is hoped that funding will be expanded to include additional ILCs in the future.

*The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment and public services provided by government agencies. If consumers or employees of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission believe they have been discriminated against on the basis of disability, they should contact the Commission's Civil Rights Officer: Mary Connelly, MRC, 600 Washington Street, Boston; MA 02111, (617) 204-3736*