

# Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

FFY 2014 Annual Report

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The Honorable Charles D. Baker  
Governor of Massachusetts  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor,

I am pleased to represent the Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) with regard to the submission of the Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2014.

The SRC consists of volunteers with a wide array of backgrounds and skills from both the public and private sectors. This Annual Report, showcases the strong dedication of members to improving the lives of citizens with disabilities in our Commonwealth.

As a partner to the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the SRC serves as an advisory board and works closely with the Commissioner and staff to promote the organization's mission and vision. The mutual goal of the SRC and MRC partnership is the service to the disabled community to achieve meaningful employment.

During the course of the Fiscal Year, the SRC held four quarterly meeting located in the Boston area, and the southern, central, and western regions of the Commonwealth. Additionally, the Executive Committee established the agenda for the Quarterly Meetings. During these meetings, issues, and deliberations are discussed with the goal being to ensure that the disabled population receives the necessary services to maximize employment possibilities and independent living.

My sincere thanks is given to the members of the SRC for their dedication and time expended to achieve our goals. What is most rewarding in my role as SRC Chair is I am privileged to see the different skills and attributes that our members "bring to the table" and how they are utilized in the advisory role of the Council.

It has been a pleasure to serve the Commonwealth as Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council. As you plan to depart from your office as Governor of the Commonwealth, I wish you the very best in your future endeavors, and look forward to a continued positive relationship with the next administration.

Sincerely,

Alan Greene  
Chair, SRC

## 2014 State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Officers

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**Alan Greene**, Chairperson, is a resident of Canton, Massachusetts. He is a retired Human Resources professional with over 20 years of experience in the Human Resources field. He is currently working as an Independent Educator/Substitute Teacher at the secondary level for the towns of Canton, Sharon, and Easton. Alan holds a Bachelors of Arts from the University of Massachusetts Boston and a Master of Science from Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio.

**Dawn Clark, D. min.**, Vice Chairperson is a resident of Worcester, Massachusetts. Dawn has served many years in a variety of community and pastoral positions. She currently works for the City of Worcester as the Disability Intake Coordinator and lives with the life-long experience of having a disability. Dawn holds a Bachelors of Arts from Ricker College in Houlton, Maine, a Master of Divinity from Boston University School of Theology in Boston, Massachusetts, and a Doctorate of Ministry from Bangor Theological Seminary, Bangor, Maine.

**Dr. Lusa Lo**, Secretary, is a resident of Braintree, MA. Dr. Lo is an Associate Professor at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Dr. Lo holds a Bachelors of Art in Liberal Arts, a Masters of Art in Special Education from Holy Name University in Oakland, California and an Educational Doctorate in Learning and Instruction from the University of San Francisco in San Francisco, California.

**Ms. Lisa Chiango**, Member at Large, is a resident of Billerica, MA. Lisa has a long employment history in the media and communication fields. Ms. Chiango holds a technical degree from Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York, a Bachelors of Arts in Computer Science from Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C. and a Masters of Arts in visual Media Arts-Video Production from Emerson College in Boston, MA.

**Ms. Naomi Goldberg**, Member at Large, is a Massachusetts resident. Naomi is the Assistant Director of Client Services at the Massachusetts Office on Disability and the Director of the federally-mandated and funded Client Assistance Program (CAP) in Massachusetts. CAP specifically addresses information and advocacy concerns for clients and applicant of the Commonwealth's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Independent Living Programs (IL) Services.

# **Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council Standing Committees and Subcommittee Chairpersons**

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## **Committees**

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Committee  
Richard Colantonio, Paula Peters, Co-Chairpersons

Consumer Satisfaction Committee  
Terri McLaughlin, Chairperson

Joint Committee: Bylaws & Nominations Committee  
Naomi Goldberg and Heather Watkins, Co-Chairpersons

Joint Committee Business Development/Placement and Finance Committee  
Alan Greene, Chairperson

Joint Committee on the State Plan and Interagency Relations  
Joe Bellil, Chairperson

Unserved/Underserved Population Committee  
Dawn Clark, Chairperson

Policy and Regulation Committee  
Dr. Matilde Castile, Chairperson

## **Standing Subcommittees of the Unserved/Underserved Population Committee:**

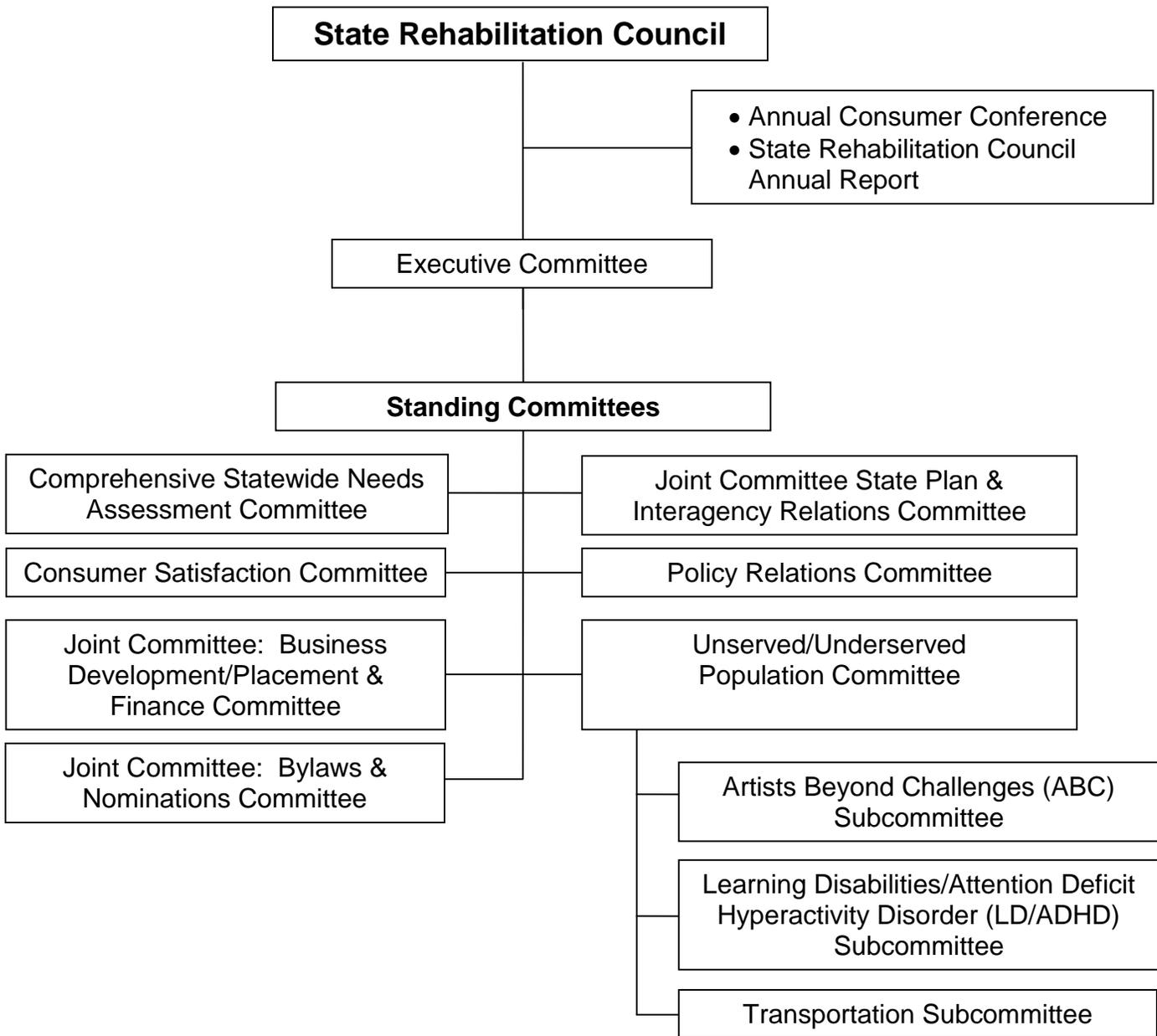
Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (LD/ADHD)  
Subcommittee  
Jenna Knight, Chairperson

Transportation Subcommittee  
Kevin Goodwin, Chairperson

Artists Beyond Challenges (ABC) Subcommittee  
Kimball Anderson, Chairperson

# State Rehabilitation Organizational Chart

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## About the MRC

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### MRC Mission

The MRC 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.

### MRC Vision

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

### About Us

The MRC consists of three Divisions, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Community Living (CL), and the Disability Determination Services (DDS).

**Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** assists individuals with physical, psychiatric and/or learning disabilities in facing the challenges of the modern workplace. This may include identifying job goals based on individual interests and aptitudes, providing funds for college and vocational training, assessing worksite accommodations, educating an employer about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or assisting an individual returning to work. Vocational rehabilitation services can often reduce or remove barriers to employment. Priority is given to those individuals who have the most significant disabilities in areas such as communication, learning disabilities, mobility, work tolerance and work skills.

In Fiscal Year 2014 there were 22,609 individuals with disabilities actively receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

- 15,086 consumers were enrolled in training/education programs
- 3,653 consumers with significant disabilities were employed in competitive integrated employment
- 95.9% of consumers employed were employed with medical insurance
- 80.3% of consumers were satisfied with services

The earnings of these persons with disabilities successfully employed in MA in the first year were \$63.8 million.

Estimated public benefits savings from people rehabilitated in MA were \$27.4 million.

Average Hourly Wage	\$12.67
Average Work Hours Weekly	26.50

#### Who Are Our Consumers

Psychiatric Disabilities	37.6%
Substance Abuse	8.8%
Orthopedic Disabilities	10.4%
Learning Disabilities	20.8%
Developmental Disabilities	2.2%
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	6.7%
Neurological Disabilities	2.6%
Traumatic Brain Injury	2.0%
Other Disabilities	8.9%
Average Age	34
Female	47.2%
Male	52.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.8%
Black	16.6%
Hispanic	10.2%
Native American	0.8%
White	80.2%

**The Community Living (CL) Division** is comprised of a variety of programs, supports, and services that address the diverse needs of adults and transition age youth with disabilities to fulfill their desire/need for community integration, to gain maximum control of their destiny, and to participate fully in their community. These programs include Consumer Involvement, Independent Living & Assistive Technology, Home Care Assistance, Home and Community-based Waiver Management, Protective Services, the Statewide Head Injury Program, Nursing Home Initiative, and Transition for Youth with Disabilities.

In Fiscal Year 2014 there were 11,698 individuals with disabilities served through

## MRC's Community Living programs in Massachusetts.

- 6,070 Independent Living Centers
- 613 Turning 22 Services
- 1,073 Assistive Technology
- 391 Housing Registry
- 190 Supported Living Services
- 1,418 Brain Injury Services
- 1,279 Home Care Services
- 417 Protective Services
- 247 Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Waiver

**The Disability Determination Services (DDS) Division** is funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and determines the initial and reconsideration applications (first level of appeal after a denial), and continued eligibility for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits. Special outreach efforts are made to homeless clients, individuals with HIV/AIDS, and veterans injured during military service.

In fiscal year 2014, there were 86,400 SSI/SSDI claims processed with the MRC/DDS.

- 85,854 total disposition of cases processed
- 57,906 initial claims filed
- 58,020 initial claims disposed
- 40.9% allowed
- 8,968 Continuing Disability Review (CDR) receipts
- 7,848 Continuing Disability Review (CDR) Dispositions
- 95% accuracy of initial decisions

## **Establishment of the Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**

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The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was created in March 1994 by an Executive Order of the Governor to implement the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by Public Law 102-569.

The Council carries out its purpose by performing the following duties and responsibilities:

- Advise the MRC regarding the administration of the public vocational rehabilitation program under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, particularly regarding eligibility and order of selection.
- Advise the MRC regarding its relationship with other state agencies that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve their vocational rehabilitation goals and objectives.
- Advise the MRC concerning the preparation of the Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan (which plans for vocational rehabilitation services), and amendments thereto, and any reports, needs assessments and evaluations required by Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.
- To the extent feasible, conduct review and analysis of consumer satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services and the functions performed by state agencies and other public and private entities serving.
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Governor on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within Massachusetts and make the report available to the public.
- Coordinate with other organizations in Massachusetts that plan or oversee the provision of services for people with disabilities, including the Statewide Independent Living Council established under Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act, the advisory panel established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Massachusetts Mental Health Planning Council.
- Advise the MRC concerning coordination and establishment of working relationships between the Commission and the Statewide Independent Living Council, and Centers for Independent Living within Massachusetts.

In pursuing these purposes, the Council encourages participation by all concerned individuals.

The Council is composed of twenty appointed members, the MRC Commissioner and one vocational rehabilitation counselor who are ex-officio members. The Council encourages public participation in its general Council meetings and has established 15

positions as ex-officio memberships. The ex-officio members serve to contribute in the business of the Council but shall not exercise the options to vote on Council decisions. Each ex-officio member is nominated annually and must represent a disability related advocacy group.

## **The SRC Executive Committee**

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The Executive Committee addresses major issues facing the Council and can make preliminary decisions to be considered by the Council.

- The Executive Committee also works through the State Rehabilitation Council's standing committees to review, analyze, advise, and partner with VR program and complete other Council requirements.
- The Executive Committee is composed of the SRC Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Member at Large, and the Chairs of the standing committees.

## **SRC Standing Committees**

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### **COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE**

The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Committee works in collaboration with the MRC to conduct an Annual Comprehensive Statewide Annual Needs Assessment (CSNA). The MRC conducts the assessment on an annual basis with the information and findings incorporated into MRC's State Plan, strategic planning, and quality assurance activities. The CSNA provides the agency with detailed information regarding the needs of the consumers served by the MRC and to fulfill the federal requirement that the agency conduct a needs assessment at least every three years.

The CSNA process consists of a survey of active consumers, focus groups, analysis of key statistical, demographic information, and discussion with the SRC and other key stakeholders. The committee is comprised of MRC staff, SRC representatives, and other stakeholders who manage the CSNA process to ensure it is comprised of a wide array of information to fully evaluate the service needs of citizens with disabilities within Massachusetts. The committee reviews the CSNA process each year to enhance and modify the process as needed to ensure it captures a wide range of information, both quantitative and qualitative, from a wide range of participants.

The goal of the committee is to provide the MRC and SRC with short and long term data on consumer needs to drive improvements to Vocational Rehabilitation and other MRC programs. In addition to assessing the overall needs of the MRC's consumer

population and individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts, the CSNA process seeks to identify the VR service needs of individuals with significant disabilities, including the need for supported employment; individuals with disabilities from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds; individuals who may be underserved or unserved by the MRC's VR program; individuals with disabilities served through the overall Massachusetts workforce investment system; and to evaluate the need to create and improve community rehabilitation programs.

#### **Recommendations made to SRC/MRC:**

The following recommendations were presented as part of the SRC's recommendations for the FFY2015 MRC State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation:

- Continued outreach to more diverse and ethnic communities including the Asian communities.
- Continuing to provide quality services to individuals with learning disabilities and transition aged consumers.
- As well, continuing to increase consumer awareness of Transportation Options such as the Transportation Access PASS (TAP) Program and to continue the Good News Garage donated car program to address consumer transportation needs.

MRC implemented a number of recommendations in 2014 as a result of Needs Assessment Recommendations, examples included:

- The one year extension of the Donated Vehicle Program operated by Good News Garage.
- Continued efforts to collect valid email addresses for VR consumers.
- Enhanced collaboration with the Centers for Independent Living, to conduct a summer employment and internship program for youth consumers.

#### **Year's Accomplishments:**

In FFY2014, the Needs Assessment Committee continued its work in collaboration with the MRC to enhance the CSNA process to ensure that it best captured the needs of individuals with disabilities served by MRC. During the year, additional members were added to the committee to enhance its membership, ensuring its effectiveness and adequate representation across all areas.

Once again, the committee worked with MRC to evaluate the CSNA process based on guidance and technical assistance from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

- A webinar regarding the CSNA process.
- A review of best practices from other states.
- A review of relevant literature, recommendations, and input from committee

members and other stakeholders.

The 2014 Needs Assessment Survey was sent out in September 2014 and was closed on October 14, 2014. The survey received 1,325 responses for a response rate of 26%, surpassing the number of responses needed to make statistically significant conclusions. The survey is currently being analyzed. The CSNA 2014 is being finalized by the committee and will be presented to the SRC at the March 2015 meeting.

Specific enhancements to the 2014 CSNA process included minor modifications and enhancements to the survey instrument. This was done to capture information about consumers' preferred method of communication.

In addition, a focus group continued as a regular component of the CSNA process. For the second straight year, a focus group session was conducted during the Annual Consumer Conference. The focus group consisted of a diverse group of MRC consumers representing all regions of the state. Consumers were asked a series of questions based on the questions contained in the Needs Assessment Survey. Once again the focus group yielded feedback and recommendations consistent to the Needs Assessment Survey.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) conducted a review of MRC in spring 2014. During the review meetings, RSA staff commended MRC on its CSNA process, particularly the successful implementation of an electronic survey process, and noted our process is among the strongest and most comprehensive in the country. Several other states have also contacted MRC for information on our CSNA process.

## CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY COMMITTEE

The mission of the Consumer Satisfaction Committee (CSC) is to ensure consumer perspectives are included in the process of evaluating MRC consumer satisfaction and to serve in an advisory capacity to improve services provided to consumers. On an annual basis, the MRC surveys all consumers with closed cases on their satisfaction of MRCs services. To achieve this mission, the CSC will:

- Work in collaboration with the MRC to develop and refine evaluation tools and analyze data collected for the purpose of assessing consumer satisfaction with services provided by vocational rehabilitation staff and contracted service providers.
- Make recommendations on the basis of the consumer satisfaction data collected annually and follow up with the MRC to facilitate the provision of high quality value-based training and meaningful and sustainable competitive employment opportunities.

## **Consumer Satisfaction Committee Accomplishments**

The committee reviewed the current year's survey and after the edits were completed, the survey was distributed to consumers with closed cases. The CSC is currently collecting data for the 2014 report. However, preliminary data received illustrates that 80% of the consumers are satisfied with MRC services.

In order to increase efficiency and accuracy, the survey was moved onto a digital platform and only emailed to consumers with a closed case. The electronic survey was based on previous recommendations by the CSC. Current responses show that this method will produce a statistically significant sample.

## **Consumer Satisfaction Survey Recommendations**

The recommendation proposed in the most recent Consumer Satisfaction Survey report include the creation of a digital platform to be used for the monthly index surveys. The monthly index surveys provide a snapshot of current satisfaction ratings from consumers with closed cases. Data from other similar assessments demonstrate that this method will still remain statistically significant.

## **JOINT COMMITTEE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT/PLACEMENT & FINANCE**

The SRC Joint Committee Business Development/ Placement & Finance Committee provides support and guidance to the MRC and to the full Council on related matters while identifying innovative solutions for, and the advancement of, vocational rehabilitation programs and the placement of people with disabilities into competitive employment.

The Joint Committee Business Development/ Placement & Finance met three times over the last year and advised the MRC in the following areas:

### **Joint Committee Business Development/Placement & Finance Accomplishments**

- Led the effort that produced a highly successful consumer conference at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel in Norwood in June 2013.
- Worked with the Director of Placement to advise in the effort to successfully increase the number of individuals with disabilities hired by the private sector.
- Took a strong stance against removing the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) from the Department of Education to the US Department of Labor. The Committee contacted Senator Elizabeth Warren regarding this issue.

- The committee continued to collaborate with the MRC Marketing Strategy Team (MST) as part of MRC's ongoing marketing initiatives.

### **Joint Committee Business Development/Placement & Finance Recommendations**

- Develop recommendations for the utilization of social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, etc., by the MRC.
- Recommend that MRC procure software that can be used for job matching, which was accomplished through the purchase of Resumate.
- Replace obsolete MRC staff computers as needed over a three-year period.
- Recommend that there is computer access for consumers at the annual consumer conference.
- Recommend the development of survey tools to identify areas of improvement for the MRC website.
- The MRC should include corporate and consumer testimonies on the public web site from the consumer needs survey, satisfaction surveys and other sources.
- Develop strong regional relationships/partnerships with regional transit authorities to address the MRC consumers' employment barriers regarding transportation.

### **JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE STATE PLAN AND INTERAGENCY RELATIONS**

The mission of this Committee is to assure the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) meets its obligations regarding input from consumers in the development of both the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Public Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan and the Unified Workforce State Plan.

Recommendations made to SRC/MRC: Please see *Appendix A: 4.2c SRC State Plan Recommendations*

#### **Accomplishments during 2013-2014:**

The Committee encouraged MRC to improve services by training counselors in soft skills to transition aged individuals and consumers with different kinds of disabilities including specific learning disabilities (LD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). In addition, the Committee suggested that MRC enhance relationship building with employers by using on- the- job training and that MRC improve service delivery by outreaching to more diverse and underserved communities including the Asian Community. The Committee stressed that MRC increase consumer awareness of Transportation Options such as the Transportation Access PASS (TAP) Program and to continue the Good News Garage donated car program to address consumer transportation needs.

Once the recommendations were finalized, they were submitted to MRC's State Plan under section 4.2c to be reviewed by the public. There were several opportunities for the public to provide input to MRC on the state plan and recommendations. There was a public hearing in Boston and an open input session during the SRC quarterly meeting in Lawrence in June. In addition, the public was offered other ways to provide input, including email, phone or written testimony. We look forward to the ability for the public to provide input at the various MRC offices throughout the state via videoconferencing in future years.

### **Joint Committee on the State Plan and Interagency Relations Accomplishments**

Based on committee recommendations, MRC is now using social to outreach to consumers. Efforts have also begun to review and enhance the agency public website to be more user-friendliness. The last technological advance that the agency has completed because of the recommendations of this committee was purchasing Resumate, software that can be used for job matching.

MRC staff continue to train on best practices for the Transition Works grant, continues development the Youth Leadership Network, and has begun work to improve information on transportation resources for consumers.

### **Joint Committee on the State Plan and Interagency Relations Recommendations**

The SRC recommends that MRC should continue to enhance its job matching software.

- The SRC recommends that the MRC work to foster strong partnerships with regional transit authorities to address consumer transportation barriers including the need for night and weekend transportation for people with disabilities who work in the late shifts and weekends. The SRC also recommends that MRC explore establishing a pilot program that may include a consumer small business to furnish transportation to individuals with disabilities who live in rural areas.
- The SRC recommends that the MRC continue to expand on LD/ADHD support programs.
- The SRC recommends that the MRC develop survey tools to improve the content and organization of the MRC website.
- The SRC recommends that the MRC continue to ensure that a smoother transition process for youth with disabilities is in place. The SRC encourages the MRC to continue incorporating best practices obtained from the Transition Works grant, to start the transition planning process while students are still in school and to support self-determination.

## UNSERVED/UNDERSERVED POPULATION COMMITTEE

The mission of this Committee is to advise the MRC regarding residents of the Commonwealth who are unserved/underserved due to their disability, culture, ethnicity, race, language, creed, religion, class, sexual preference, age or economic status.

### **Unserved/Underserved Population Committee Accomplishments**

The committee spent much of the year learning more about various resources within the Vocational Rehabilitation Department including details on MRC services and Statewide Employment Services.

In addition, the committee presented on MBTA transportation services for people with disabilities and the restructuring of MRC Consumer Involvement Regional Advisory Councils into three District Consumer Advocacy Councils.

The Unserved/Underserved Committee is comprised of three subcommittees; Learning Disabilities/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (LD/ADHD); Transportation; and Artists Beyond Challenges (ABC).

### **LD/ADHD Subcommittee**

The mission of the LD/ADHD Subcommittee is to promote education, advocacy for and by people with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (LD/ADHD), to enhance community inclusion, independence and economic self-sufficiency. The LD/ADHD Subcommittee aims to:

- Increase LD/ADHD consumer involvement in the LD/ADHD subcommittee that can assist in weaving in new aspirations for LD/ADHD consumers for better employment and independent living outcomes.
- Assist the MRC in enhancing its existing soft skills and Employment Readiness/Soft Skills program to ensure it meets the continuing needs of individuals with learning disabilities. As part of this effort, the committee will work with the MRC (Youth) Transition Planning group to ensure that such skills and training are consistent across all MRC Regional Districts.
- The committee will work with MRC to ensure that assistive technology is available for consumers with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and that employers understand the complex nature of learning disabilities.

### **LD/ADHD Subcommittee Accomplishments**

- The Committee coordinated training that provided an overview of Attention Deficit

Hyperactivity Disorders, including diagnosis functional limitations and implications for work and other facets of one's life.

- The Committee provided recommendations, based on findings from the consumer needs assessment, satisfaction survey, and counselor satisfaction surveys, for the MRC State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation.
- The Committee worked with MRC on the development of the Community College Disability Services Survey and report.
- The Committee represented consumers with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder on a variety of SRC Committees.

### **Transportation Subcommittee**

The Transportation Subcommittee's mission is to advocate, educate, and empower people with disabilities about transportation within their communities for work and recreation.

### **Transportation Subcommittee Accomplishments**

- Through the development of a new inter-agency relationship with the Human Services Transportation Program, transportation was made available for all SRC members to attend meetings.
- A list of transportation resources is being developed by the MRC staff to be used by agency staff and consumers. This information will include resources on the RIDE, transportation access program (TAP) plan, and general transportation resources.

The committee, with the assistance of the MRC, conducted a survey of consumer transportation needs.

This survey report was produced as an initiative of the Transportation Subcommittee of the Underserved and Unserved Consumers Committee. Transportation is often an identified as barrier to employment among people with disabilities. In the most recent Consumer Needs Assessment Survey, 32% of consumers identified transportation as a potential barrier to employment.

As part of its efforts to address consumer needs, the MRC has contracted with Good News Garage to provide refurbished, donated vehicles to eligible MRC consumers. Since 2010, the program has provided 277 vehicles to consumers to assist with gaining and maintaining employment. This program improves consumers' lives by allowing increasing access to employment and opportunities for longer hours and increased wages.

The survey results can be found in Appendix B of this document.

### **Artists Beyond Challenges (ABC) Subcommittee**

Artists Beyond Challenges advises the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission on how to provide artists with disabilities assistance to achieve their vocational goals.

#### **Years Accomplishments:**

It has been a year of adjustment for ABC. The committee spent much of our time clarifying our role, which resulted in a new mission statement and a more nuanced understanding of how to move forward. Projects that have been completed over the past year include:

- Creation of a twelve-month calendar, which showcases artwork that was chosen and selected by the ABC Committee.
- The committee also participated in events where consumers showcased their artwork.
- Progress was made on the update of the committee's website project. This project will allow consumers the ability to showcase artwork in a digital platform. The updated website should release by the end of the fiscal year.

## **2014 Consumer Conference**

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The 2014 Annual Consumer Conference educated past and present consumers on finding work opportunities and methods of living independently in the consumers' community of choice. The theme was based on "Building Careers, Building Lives." Approximately 400 people attended this conference at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel in Norwood, MA in June of 2014. This conference was co-hosted by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Statewide Independent Living Council. An evaluation of conference attendees indicated that there was overall satisfaction with the provided content, trainings and facilities.

# Appendix

# **Appendix A**

Attachment 4.2c  
SRC State Plan Recommendations

## State Rehabilitation Council Recommendations and Commission Responses

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission has an active and productive State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). SRC members through their area consumer advisory councils, SRC sub committees, task forces, quarterly meetings and the annual consumer conference have conducted surveys and needs assessments that have provided input to more effectively address the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Again this year, funds were deemed sufficient, for MRC to select all eligible individuals to receive vocational rehabilitation services regardless of priority category. Last year the SRC was consulted and supported the MRC in the decision to open all priority categories for services. In the event that future funding proves insufficient, the MRC in partnership with the SRC will re-evaluate the need to establish an order of selection in order to prioritize eligible individuals to receive services based on the severity of their functional limitations.

The SRC, through the SRC State Plan sub-committee, has made the following recommendations to the Commission:

**The SRC recommends MRC provide or improve consumer training in soft skills and exploring realistic artistic or creative vocational goals.**

**Soft skill training needs to be more consistent, use multiple formats and include transition aged individuals and consumers with different kinds of disabilities including specific learning disabilities (LD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).**

Soft skills training for staff have been completed by MRC Training Department in partnership with TACE New England. Many offices offer training in soft skills to all consumers, including transition aged individuals through job clubs and stand- alone programs open for all disability groups. Training is often delivered using PowerPoint and includes opportunities to role play. Soft skills are covered in multiple ways in offices across the state. Soft skill trainings have been offered in high schools and trainings have been offered for some disability groups such as the deaf and hard of hearing. Recommendations for more disability specific trainings including for consumers with LD/ADHD have been made by the SRC. Some area offices have done specific training in this area and additional offices plan to offer such training in the upcoming year.

MRC Training Department is planning to develop an e-Learning on soft skills to provide an easily accessible resource to VR counselors and Job Placement Staff. The e-

learning will offer consistency of content and provide an available resource for offices to work individually or in groups with consumers in area offices. Access to the E-Learning will be available on the Commonwealths' Learning Management System, PACE. *Soft skills will be added to the list of EOHHS mandatory training for all new counselors with an expectation that all training will be completed within 90 days. All other counselors will be required to complete the e-learning within one year. Staff will also have access for a refresher or as a reference as needed.*

Presently, Soft skills training materials (Power Point and other resources) for staff are listed on My MRC (MRC's intranet) under the section titles training unit.

The MRC Training Department will also explore offering workshops/seminars for VR staff to assist those consumers who are interested in creative or artistic careers in developing realistic vocational goals in those fields. It is the practice of the VR division to assist all consumers in making informed career choices in their field of interest.

**The SRC recommends MRC to update its technology by replacing the now obsolete Windows XP computers throughout the agency, improving and enhancing its public website, collecting valid consumer email addresses, expanding its use of social networks and by using job-matching software to facilitate the hiring process.**

MRC information technology staff is currently working to update all computers with Windows XP with the new platform of Windows 7 and Office 2013. MYMRC has been updated with some new links including reference cards with tips for all office applications-Word, Excel, Access and PowerPoint and there is also a link to a free on-line Office 2013 training. To date IT staff has completed updating the Administrative Office computer equipment and is working to replace obsolete equipment in the field offices. Rollout of the new equipment will be phased in with an initial eight offices receiving the new equipment with all field offices being completed by September or October, 2014.

The MRC public website is a major source of information about MRC services but there have been some complaints over the years that the website has not been as user friendly and accessible as it could be. The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) of which MRC is a part, consolidated all information technology (IT) services across the secretariat with the same goal to allow consumers more access to services and to allow EOHHS to become more efficient, cost effective and avoid unnecessary duplication of IT services. ITD (Information Technology Division) has implemented changes to Mass.gov the state website that makes the website more user friendly and accessible while allowing MRC more control over the organization of content and staff will continue to work closely on this issue.

MRC's Commissioner's Office, has been using social media like Facebook LinkedIn, and twitter for the past few years and blogs through the EOHHS site. MRC is open to exploring any additional social media as it becomes available to communicate with consumers and employers.

MRC developed a pilot project in 2013 to secure occupational web-based training, skills development and job matching for consumers in ten areas including: Microsoft Office Suite(2003,2007. 2010) Microsoft Word, Excel and Power; Customer Service; Call Center, Administrative Assistant and Receptionist, Office and Clerical support, Packing and Product Preparation, Shipping and Receiving, Materials Inspection, Preparation for Employment, and Equipment Assembly. MRC purchased a software program called RESUMate, a competitive tool utilized in the staffing and recruiting industries, to assist employment staff in basic job matching between available employment opportunities and consumer resumes and skills. The program was distributed to all placement staff and training provided.

Agency efforts to obtain email addresses for VR consumers has led to an increase in those addresses over the past four years As the job search process becomes more electronic it becomes more important for consumers to have the tools to communicate with employers and apply for jobs on line. Many VR Counselors have been working with their consumers in assisting them to get free Gmail or Hotmail accounts.

**The SRC recommends that MRC enhance relationship building with employers by using on- the- job training and having the MRC Marketing Strategy Team continue to outreach to employers about MRC services and job ready consumers.**

The VR Marketing Team which consists of the Employment Service Specialists in coordination with the Job Placement Specialists continue to outreach to employers especially to those in high growth industries and working with the Employment Team on project based items, As part of the marketing effort, each area office is equipped with table throws, pull-up screens, brochures and other marketing materials for any outreach program they wish to pursue. Materials have been developed with employer input about tax credits, on the job training and other MRC services. These will be available on the agency website. An updated tax credit brochure is in the final stages of editing and approval will be available in the near future.

MRC is continuing to target new employers, expand its employer account management system and its federal contractor employment initiative, (the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Federal Contractor Hiring Event was held on March 20, 2014) to assist MRC consumers with

securing competitive employment comparable with their interests and abilities. Over 170 consumers have gone to work as a result of these hiring events.

Use of the MRC's on-the-job training strategy has increased significantly. Approximately 60% of consumers who participate in an OJT obtain employment with the OJT employer and others are able to obtain employment elsewhere as a result of their participation in the OJT through which they gained a recent work experience.

MRC is also developing a program to train and employ consumers as Pharmacy Technicians using on-the-job training and classroom-based trainings with CVS. The program will be implemented over the next few months.

Incorporation of the Employment Service Specialists into the VR process has been instrumental in assisting the division in exceeding its state and federal employment goals even in these difficult economic times.

**The SRC recommends that MRC improve service delivery by outreaching to more diverse and underserved communities including the Asian community and continuing to provide quality services to individuals with learning disabilities and transition aged consumers.**

MRC has made a commitment to outreach to individuals with the most significant disabilities who also are ethnic and cultural minorities through its Language Access Plan, its Diversity Committee and Bi-lingual/bi-cultural counselor group. When MRC is not able to recruit professionals with a master's degree for caseloads that require special language skills MRC hires qualified staff with appropriate experience and a bachelor's degree who agree to work towards obtaining a master's degree in VR counseling.

Bi-lingual counselors and other staff with specific language skills have been hired in several offices to outreach more effectively to those communities including local agencies and organizations. They meet on a regular basis statewide to share resources, to develop and/or translate new or existing agency forms, brochures and other marketing materials. In addition, MRC uses a state vendor, Language Connections who do most of the language translations for the state. This ensures dialects and sentence structure is consistent across most state agencies.

Asian languages which are spoken by MRC staff include: Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese, Khmer and Vietnamese. MRC will continue to explore with the SRC unserved/underserved committee ways of expanding MRC's efforts in this area.

MRC continues to outreach to transition aged youth with disabilities through local schools. MRC has at least one VR counselor assigned to each high school in the state. Counselors work closely with the local school system to meet with students, teachers and parents to explain agency services and to open VR cases.

MRC was awarded a five year grant from RSA in October, 2007 (with a one-year no-cost extension to September, 2013) to assist in the transition of young adults (ages 16 to 26) with significant disabilities from school to work in the metropolitan school districts of Springfield, Worcester and Boston. Over the six year period staff provided outreach to over 2,500 students at selected high schools in the three regions over the grant period with specific emphasis on traditionally un-served and underserved populations. The program served a minimum of 750 youths and successfully transitioned 450 students from high school to post-secondary education.

As a result of this initiative, MRC gained extensive experience working with high school staff, youth based community resources, families and students to develop a best practices guide to working with transition age youth. MRC also plans to continue in EOHHS's youth summer work experience program for students in the state's human services agencies including MRC. The program includes: soft skills orientation training; paid summer work; specific skill development; peer and career mentorship; resume development; written employment references and graduation.

MRC has seen an increase in the number of consumers with disabilities of LD/ADHD coming to MRC for VR services over the past decade. In 2013, these individuals constituted the second highest disability grouping.

To assist VR counselors in providing high quality services to consumers the MRC has: expanded LD/ADHD support groups; completed soft skill training programs for VR staff working with LD/ADHD consumers; listed soft skill training and LD/ADHD informational materials for staff on My MRC. In addition, the MRC Training Department is planning an e-learning module for VR counselors and job placement staff to access for group or individual training.

MRC will continue to work with the SRC LD/ADHD subcommittee to enhance services to this population.

**The SRC recommends that MRC increase consumer awareness of Transportation Options such as the Transportation Access PASS (TAP) Program and to continue the Good News Garage donated car program to address consumer transportation needs.**

Transportation remains a significant need for many consumers. This program allows individuals with disabilities to use public transportation from the MBTA and other regional transit authorities across the state at a greatly reduced rate. Transportation fact sheets are on the agency web site. MRC is currently exploring a possible collaboration with the North Shore Career Center on transportation.

Good News Garage donated car program has been extended through FFY 2014.

This has been a very successful program over the past several years and was the number one ranked transportation need specified by consumers. Consumers receive a donated vehicle that is repaired and inspected for safety and receive training on how to maintain and register a vehicle. Consumers must have the resources to register, insure and maintain the vehicle. Annually over 45 consumers who reside mainly in rural areas receive a donated car for use in obtaining and maintaining employment.

The mission of this Committee is to assure the SRC meets its obligations regarding input from consumers in the development of both the MRC Public Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan and the Unified Workforce State Plan.

# **Appendix B**

Survey Results  
Unserved/Underserved  
Transportation Subcommittee

## Executive Summary

- This survey provoked a great deal of interest among work ready consumers. Fully 26% of all status 20 and status 22 consumers in SFY 2013 responded. Transportation problems were widespread.
- There were few differences between the characteristics of the sample and the respondents to the survey, with the exception of respondents being slightly older and concomitantly, somewhat better educated than the sample as a whole.
- Half the respondents had at least some college education, an Associate's degree or Bachelor's degree or higher.
- Slightly more than half of the respondents reported that their major source of income was public benefits such as SSI, SSDI or TANF.
- Two-thirds of the respondents said it was easy or somewhat easy to get transportation in their neighborhood, but this varied by geography. Respondents in the western part of the state were less like to find it easy to get around.
- Respondents who owned a car also were less likely to have transportation problems. About two out of five respondents owned a car and about 15% had access to one. Respondents in the western part of the state were most likely (of necessity) to own cars, as were older respondents and those with higher levels of education.
- Cars and walking were the two most frequent forms of transportation, followed by busses and trains.
- Nearly one third of the work ready respondents had already experienced unemployment or underemployment due to a transportation problem. This has significance since all respondents were at the point where they were looking for work and only 42.9% owned a car.
- Even though a large proportion of respondents owned cars, many of these cars were old and expensive to maintain. The cost of maintaining a vehicle, gas and insurance kept some car owners from being able to use them regularly.
- Nearly half the respondents felt restricted by the transportation options in their community and two out of five felt that public transit was not available to them.
- Respondents in the western part of the state and the Cape Cod area were most likely to feel that public transit was not accessible to them. This was least likely to be true for New Bedford and Greater Boston areas.
- Considering barriers to public transit, respondents most often agreed that they would use public transit more often if there were better routes near home, public transit was easier to access, if it operated during more convenient hours and didn't cost so much. Cost was a major barrier to transportation in general.
- Respondents were anxious to learn about travel training. At different points in the survey they expressed a need for help in getting information about transportation options, learning how to use public transit, and help them read schedules.

(Full report Available upon Request.)

