

## What is a Chapter 688 Referral?

A Chapter 688 referral is a way to help adult agencies, schools, and families to identify and plan ahead for needed adult services for students with severe disabilities. Schools send a Chapter 688 referral electronically to the adult agency that the IEP Team thinks might be able to meet a student's needs when the student graduates from high school or turns 22. There is a list and brief description of the adult agencies under Tip #2 inside this brochure. For a guide to which adult agency might be the right one for your child, based on individual needs, see "Guidelines for Referral" on this website: [www.doe.mass.edu/sped/iep/688](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/iep/688)

Please note: A 688 referral is not an application for agency eligibility. Schools submit the 688 referral, but *families* are responsible for submitting an application to the agency. Agencies must receive a complete application so they can decide whether the student will be eligible to receive adult services.

## Who should have a Chapter 688 Referral?

To have a Chapter 688 referral, a student must:

- Have an Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Need continuing services because of the severity of their disability
- Be unable to work 20 or more hours per week in competitive employment

## Why is Chapter 688 Referral Important?

The Chapter 688 referral process is important for two reasons: (1) It allows adult agencies to advocate for funding from the state legislature to serve students with disabilities when they exit from school. (2) The Chapter 688 referral also alerts the adult agency to work with the student, family, and school to complete an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) that will help to plan the supports the student may need after they exit school.

## Resources

The LINK Center, a transition project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs  
<https://fcsn.org/linkcenter/>

MA DESE Special Education Secondary Transition Website  
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/secondary-transition/>

MA DESE Guidance on Chapter 688  
<https://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/iep/688/>

Bureau of Transitional Planning  
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/bureau-of-transitional-planning>

### Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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Massachusetts Department of  
ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY  
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The Schrafft Center  
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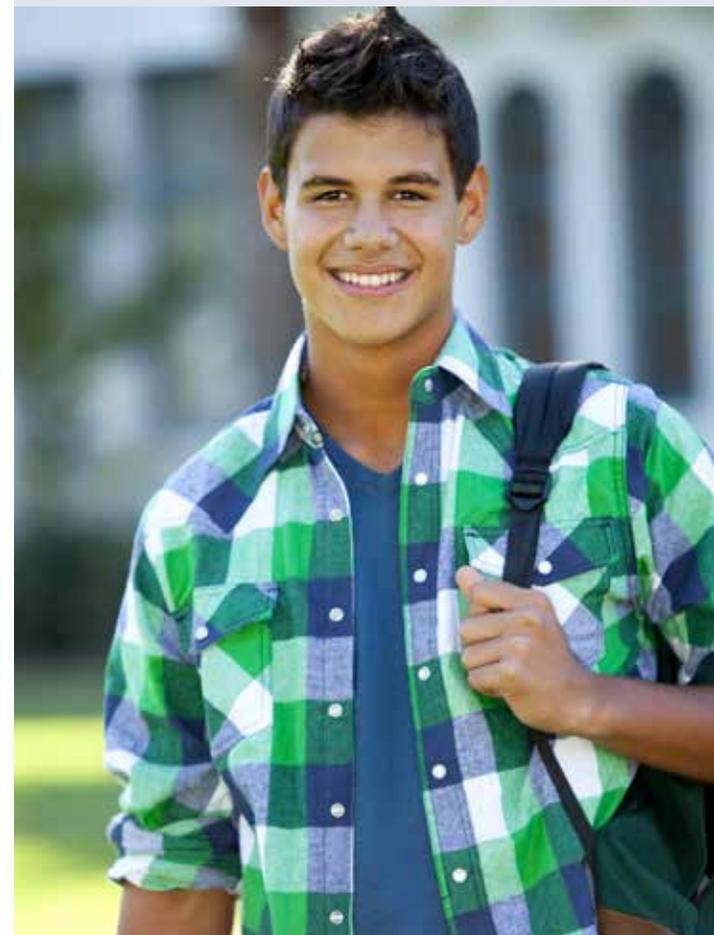
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FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN  
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

## TIPS: Transition Information for Parents and Students with IEPs

(Ages 14-22)



## Chapter 688 Referral

A series of brochures produced by  
The LINK Center - a project of the  
Federation for Children with Special Needs,  
and the Massachusetts Department of  
Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

## Chapter 688 Referral: What you need to know....

### TIP 1: Learn the steps in the Chapter 688 referral process:

- Start talking about the Chapter 688 referral with school staff at IEP Team meetings early in high school, to decide which adult agency will be the right one to send the referral to.
- The school must submit the referral electronically at least 2 years before the student is expected to graduate from high school or turn 22.
- The parent or guardian must sign the referral before it is submitted.
- If the IEP Team is not able to decide on one adult agency for a student, the Chapter 688 referral should be submitted to the Bureau of Transition Planning, which will select the agency they decide best fits the student's needs.

*The Chapter 688 process helps students with disabilities connect to the appropriate adult agency before they leave high school.*

### TIP 2: Learn about the adult agencies:

- The [Department of Developmental Services \(DDS\)](#) provides supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- The [Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission \(MRC\)](#) helps individuals with disabilities to live and work independently through vocational rehabilitation and community living services.
- The [Department of Mental Health \(DMH\)](#) provides services and supports to meet the mental health needs of individuals of all ages to help them live, work, and participate in their communities.
- The [Massachusetts Commission for the Blind \(MCB\)](#) provides rehabilitation and social services to individuals who are blind, to help them become more independent and engage in their communities.
- The [Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(MCDHH\)](#) provides accessible communication, education, and advocacy to consumers to make programs, services, and

opportunities fully accessible to persons who are deaf and hard of hearing.

- The [Department of Children and Families \(DCF\)](#) supports young adults, age 18-22, who are transitioning from DCF custody to independent living.

### TIP 3: Learn what the family is responsible for after the school makes the Chapter 688 referral:

- To make sure the referral was received, contact the adult service agency and/or check in with your school's special education liaison.
- Because a 688 referral is **not** an application for agency eligibility and will not result in any adult services, families should submit an eligibility application to the desired adult agency. The agency will then determine if the person with disabilities will be eligible for adult services from that agency. It's a good idea for families to make multiple copies of forms, just in case they get lost in the process.
- Once the family has submitted the eligibility application, the family should check in with the adult service agency within a few weeks to make sure they received the forms.

### TIP 4: Learn how to connect to other community resources.

- Get access to independent living and employment services through [Independent Living Centers](#), [MassHire](#), [peer mentoring](#), or youth/young adult groups.
- Individuals can also apply directly for services through MRC, DMH, or DDS if the IEP Team does not feel a Chapter 688 referral is necessary.



## Examples of Chapter 688 referral

**Tavon** (age 16) has Autism without an intellectual disability. He has an IEP and is expected to graduate with a regular high school diploma when he is 18. Tavon does well with academics but struggles with social cues and executive functioning and will need supports to work 20 or more hours per week. The IEP Team agrees that the Chapter 688 referral should be submitted to DDS.

**Cameron** (age 17) has an IEP and is enrolled in his district's alternative high school. Due to significant mental health challenges, he has missed many days of school and will need an extra year to catch up in order to graduate with a regular high school diploma at age 19. Cameron currently receives services through DMH, and the IEP Team agrees that he will need DMH services after he leaves high school. The Chapter 688 referral will be submitted to DMH.

**Aliyah** (age 19) is in her second year of the 18-22 program at her school. She has an intellectual disability and will exit high school when she turns 22. Aliyah's vision is to get a job and live independently, but she will need significant supports to achieve both of these goals. The IEP Team agrees that the Chapter 688 referral should be submitted to DDS.

**Julian** (age 19) has many functional limitations. He will receive school services until he turns 22 and will need significant supports after he leaves high school. The IEP Team is unsure which adult agency would be the best to support Julian so the Chapter 688 referral will be submitted to the Bureau of Transition Planning (BTP).

**Sadie** (age 16) has a learning disability. She participated in MRC Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) through her high school. Her IEP Team agrees that Sadie will need supports to work 20 or more hours per week, so the school submits a Chapter 688 referral to MRC.

The Chapter 688 referral is not an application for adult agency eligibility.