

# MRC Opportunities for Students and Youth to Achieve Brighter Futures

Visions of Community

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Creating Opportunities for Independent Living and Work



# Agenda

- Overview of MRC services and divisions
- How Students Connect to MRC
  - MRC and School Collaboration
  - Video
- Vocational Rehabilitation- Career Preparation and Work
  - Pre-Employment Transition Services
  - Video
- Independent Living/Assistive Technology, Benefits Counseling, Transition Pathway Services Grant
- Comments/Questions/Resources

# What do you know about MRC?

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MRC is a state agency that provides services to persons with disabilities.

There are three Divisions of MRC:

- **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)**
  - Employment Supports for persons with Disabilities, ages 16 and up
- **Community Living (CL)**
  - Community Based Services (Statewide Head Injury Program & Waiver Services)
  - Protective Services
  - Independent Living Programs (Independent living Centers, Supported Living Programs, Transition to Adulthood, Youth Leadership)
  - Assistive Technology (ILAT, MassMATCH, Vehicle Modifications, Home Modifications)
  - Home Care Assistance Program
- **Disability Determination Services (DDS)**
  - Determines eligibility for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits (funded by SSA)

MRC works with students and adults that have many different types of disabilities.

Our consumers may have:

- **Physical Limitations**
- **Emotional Difficulties**
- **Learning Difficulties**
- **Substance Abuse Difficulties**
- ... Or a combination of the above.
- **Our job is to help students:**
  - Understand their disability and some of the difficulties they may face
  - Identify their strengths and things they are good at doing, or would like to become good at
  - Identify supports that they might need to reach their goals

# How do Students get connected?

Referrals can be made for Students:

- Direct from school to the local MRC office
- Via a Chapter 688 Referral
- If the student is at least 18 years old, he/she can also refer himself directly, or a parent/guardian can refer them.

When:

- Ideally: Two years prior to Graduation or Turning 22
- Remember: MRC works with individuals with disabilities who range from 16 and up, with a vocational focus

While on the processing list, Students should:

- Begin to think about jobs that are of interest to them
- Start to think about, and talk to the people who know them well about, services and supports they might need to reach their goals
- Contact MRC if their address, telephone number, or any other contact information changes.
- Think about other people – teachers, doctors, family members- that are involved with them and who they would like to include as they plan for reaching their vocational goals

# MRC and High School

While in high school, MRC counselors work with the young adults to help them plan for the transition beyond high school.

- With students, VR counselors can:
  - Coordinate with other adult service agencies and families
  - Provide Vocational Counseling and Guidance
  - Conduct Assessments/Vocational Exploration
  - Refer students for other Services
  - Coordinate Pre-Employment Transition Services (**Pre-ETS**) Opportunities
  - Coordinate and refer students and families to Student Benefits Counselors for Work Incentives Planning and to the WIOA Family Support Planning for transition planning
- Within the school/community, VR Counselors can:
  - Coordinate with other adult service agencies and families
  - Participate in Parent Nights, Open House events or other school & community presentations
  - Attend IEP/other in-school meetings, as appropriate, to provide vocational transition consultation
  - Provide schools with MRC transition marketing materials



# Video

- LINK



# The VR Process

- Referral
- Processing List
- Intake & Application
- Eligibility Determination
- Plan Development (and ITP, if needed)
- Service Provision
- Case Closure
- Post-Employment Services

# Services and Supports in the IPE may include:

- Vocational Guidance and Counseling
- Vocational Evaluations
- Interest and Aptitude Evaluations
- College or Job-Specific Training
- Accommodations at College (disability services, tutoring)
- Assistive and/or Rehabilitation Technology
- Assistance with building a Resume, Networking, and Interviewing Skills
- Assistance with applying for jobs and talking to employers about support needs
- Job Placement Assistance
- Job Coaching/ Accommodations On the Job
- Follow-up and Referrals

# Pre-ETS Services

- To be eligible to receive **Pre-ETS** services, a student must be:
  - A current consumer of the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program, being referred from an MRC VR Area Office
  - An enrolled high school student or a student enrolled in Post-secondary education or training with a disability; and
  - Within the Ages of 16 to 22

## **Pre-ETS** Services include:

- Work-Based Learning Experience
- Self-Advocacy/Mentoring Instruction
- Workplace Readiness Training
- Counseling on Enrollment in Comprehensive Transition or Post-Secondary Educational Programs
- Job Exploration Counseling

# MRC and Student Success

- Video: [LINK](#)

# Transition To Adulthood Program (TAP)



## WHAT IS TAP?

Through **I**ndependent **L**iving **C**enters, the **TAP** provides:

- skills training
- peer mentoring
- advocacy (individual & systems)

to support students to develop the skills to live independently in the community of their choice.

The year-around program builds self-confidence & resources to prepare students for life after high school.

- Ages 14-22

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# Young Adult Supported Living (T22)

## WHAT IS SUPPORTED LIVING?

The Supported Living Program provides **ongoing** services for young adults graduating from high school or turning 22 years of age to live independently in the community.

The program is built on the independent living philosophy which empowers consumers to make their own decisions about their lives, based on informed choice.



## SERVICES INCLUDE:

- finding accessible housing
- managing:
  - PCA program
  - medication
  - personal health
  - finances
  - household
  - transportation
- requesting adaptive equipment
- accessing educational, vocational, social & recreational opportunities
- self-advocacy



## Youth Leadership Network (YLN)

- State-wide monthly meetings facilitated by **Easter Seals** to promote self-advocacy, self-awareness and life/employment skills for young adults ages 14-26.
- Hands-on groups/activities/discussions about communication, teamwork, community service, disability rights, career interests and employment skills.
- Meetings are held in Boston (BCIL), Springfield (Stavros), Worcester (CLW) & East Bridgewater (IA).



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# Assistive Technology

## ■ MassMATCH

- MA's initiative to enhance the independence of people living with disabilities.
- [www.MassMATCH.org](http://www.MassMATCH.org)
  - Device demonstrations
  - Short-term/long-term device loans
  - AT Loan Program [www.massATLoan.org](http://www.massATLoan.org)
  - Device exchange <http://getATStuff.com>
  - Reutilization program: *RE*quipment [www.dmerequipment.org](http://www.dmerequipment.org)

## ■ Assistive Technology IL

- Provides low and high tech solutions to increase independence in life through low and high tech solutions. Provides devices, training, and other supports.
- Financial eligibility requirements.

# Benefits Planning Services

- For students receiving SSI/SSDI benefits, who need help understanding eligibility and the impact work may have on their benefits: MRC has 3 Transition- focused Student Benefits Counselors across the state.
- Student Benefits Counselors are available to educate students and families regarding benefits and work incentives planning
- Goal is to ensure family support of student employment goals
- Student Benefits Counselors can arrange a school visit and individual meetings
- After High School graduation, Benefits Planning services are still available through adult Benefits Planning Counselors

## Benefits Planning Counselors Contact:

Kathleen Kelly  
North Region/Somerville  
(617) 776-2662  
Cell: (857)-319-1021

[Kathleen.Kelly2@MassMail.State.MA.US](mailto:Kathleen.Kelly2@MassMail.State.MA.US)

Elsa Jimenez  
South District/Braintree  
(781) 356-8840  
Cell: (857) 319-0983

[Elsa.Jimenez@MassMail.State.MA.US](mailto:Elsa.Jimenez@MassMail.State.MA.US)

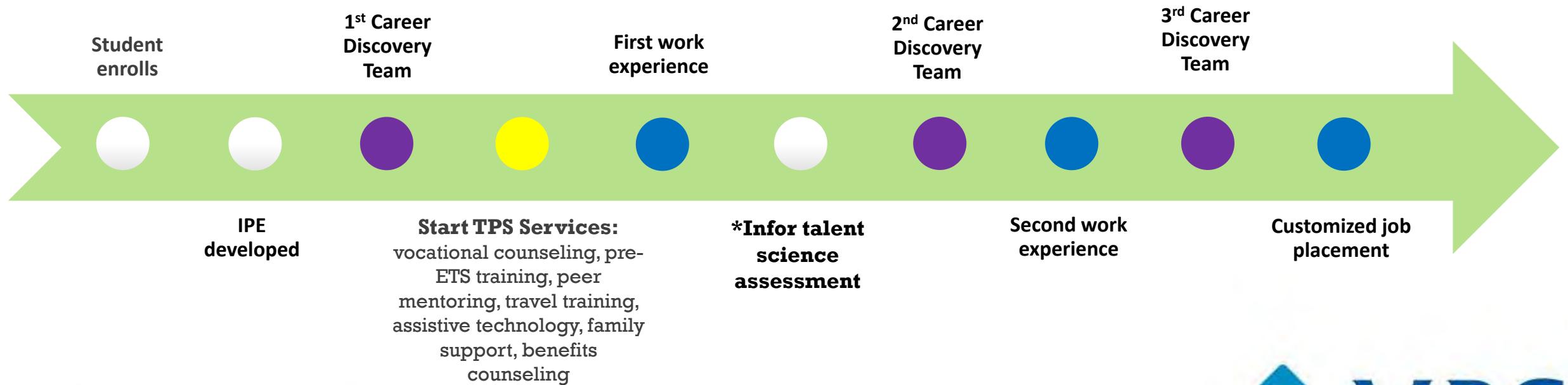
Xeimirillys Burgos  
West Region/Springfield  
(413) 736-7296

[Xeimirillys.Burgos@MassMail.State.MA.US](mailto:Xeimirillys.Burgos@MassMail.State.MA.US)

# Transition Pathway Services

- Transition Pathway Services Demonstration Project Grant
  - Opportunity to explore, innovate, create
  - RSA – Maine, Massachusetts, California, Vermont, & Maryland
  - MRC – Springfield, Lawrence and Roxbury Area Offices
  - 5 Years : 651 Students

# Program Model & Sequence



# MRC After High School

Once an individual has completed high school, MRC counselors will continue to work with the young adult in reaching his/her career goal. Upon graduating the following services can be offered to assist with obtaining and maintaining employment :

- Counseling and Guidance
- Interest and Aptitude Testing
- College or Vocational Training
- Tutors
- Assistive and/or Rehabilitation Technology
- Consultation to Employers
- Job Placement Assistance
- Job Coaching
- Follow-up and Referrals

# Contact Information

## **Contact your local VR Area Office:**

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/vocational-rehab/vr-area-offices/>

## **VR High School Coverage report:**

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/disability-services/vocational-rehab/vr-services-to-youth-in-transition.html>



# Resources

- **MRC** | [www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-rehabilitation-commission](http://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-rehabilitation-commission)
- **MassMATCH** | [www.massmatch.org](http://www.massmatch.org)
- **Assistive Technology Regional Centers** | [www.massmatch.org/inventory](http://www.massmatch.org/inventory)
- **Assistive Technology Loan Program** | [www.massatloan.org](http://www.massatloan.org)
- **REquipment** | [www.dmerequipment.org](http://www.dmerequipment.org)
- **Assistive Technology Exchange** | [www.getATstuff.com](http://www.getATstuff.com)
- **Independent Living Centers** | [www.masilc.org](http://www.masilc.org)
- **TAP Programs** | [www.ma-tap.net](http://www.ma-tap.net)



What services do you believe to be most helpful?

Questions??  
Thank you!

## Contact with Questions:

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Statewide Transition Director  
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