



Welcome to MRC Services

Options Counseling Training
February 8, 2024

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

The background features several overlapping circular shapes in various shades of pink and teal. A large teal circle is on the left, overlapping a larger pink circle. Another pink circle is at the bottom right, overlapping the first pink circle. The text 'Who We Are' is centered in the white space between the teal and pink circles.

Who We Are

EOHHS Agencies

- Department of Children and Families (DCF)
- Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDS)
- Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA)
- Department of Mental Health (DMH)
- Department of Public Health (DPH)
- Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)
- Department of Youth Services (DYS)
- Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB)
- **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)**
- Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH)
- MassHealth (MH)
- Office of Refugees and Immigrants (ORI)

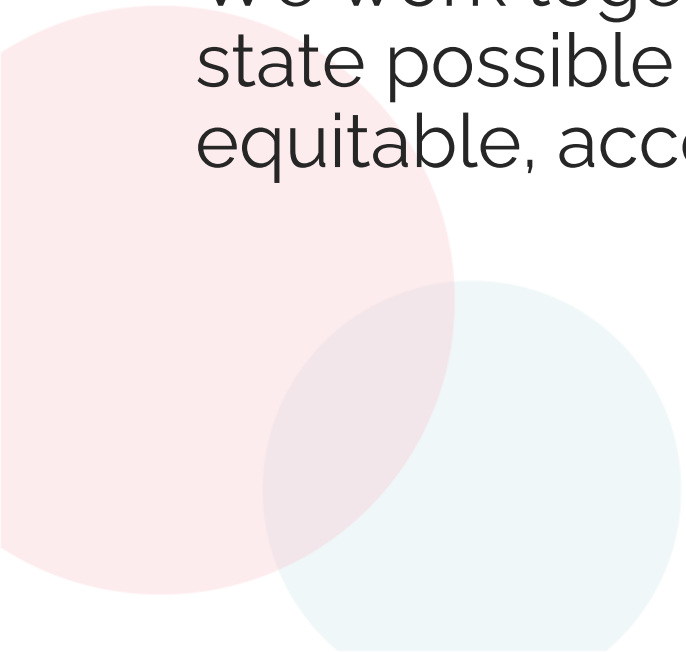
EOHHS Priorities

- Health
 - Reduce opioid related overdose deaths
 - Improve access to healthcare
 - Decrease health disparities
- Independence
 - **Increase job skills and life skills training**
 - **Increase utilization of participant directed services**
 - **Increase educational attainment**
- Resilience
 - **Increase the number of individuals who live safely in the community**
 - Reduce individual and family homelessness
 - Increase permanence for children in state care or custody

Our Vision & Mission

We envision a Commonwealth that is open to all, where everyone can seize their true potential and contribute fully to our communities and the world.

We work together to break down barriers and make a better state possible for people with disabilities— one that is truly equitable, accessible, and inclusive.



James McKenzie

“MRC opened the doors that would normally be closed.”

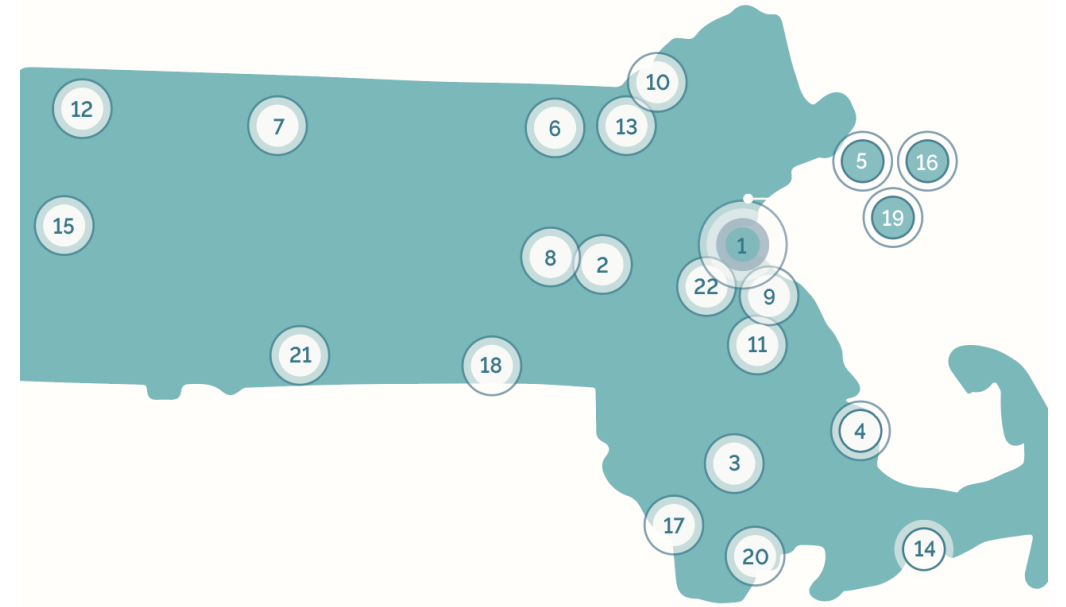
When you lose your leg above the knee, it's like you're an infant again. The Waiver Program helped me find and furnish an apartment with the things I needed. I have big trust issues and I never thought I'd have such a trusting relationship with my counselor, Jen. There is a reciprocity, and she has my best interest at heart.

MRC has helped me to overcome the fear of not being able to be out in the community as a disabled person; they've given me a new life.



MRC Office Locations

- 1. Boston** (HQ) (VR, Home Care, SHIP, SL, Waiver)
- 2. Framingham** (VR)
- 3. Taunton** (VR, PS)*
- 4. Plymouth** (VR, Waiver)*
- 5. Everett** (DDS)
- 6. Fitchburg** (VR)*
- 7. Greenfield** (VR)
- 8. Worcester** (VR/ PS & DDS – separate offices)*
- 9. Braintree** (VR)*
- 10. Lawrence** (VR)*
- 11. Brockton** (VR)
- 12. Lowell** (VR, Waiver, PS)*
- 13. Hyannis** (VR)*
- 14. Pittsfield** (VR)*
- 15. Malden** (VR)*
- 16. Fall River** (VR, Waiver)*
- 17. Southbridge** (VR)*
- 18. Salem** (VR)*
- 19. New Bedford** (VR)*
- 20. Springfield** (VR, Waiver, PS)*
- 21. Roxbury** (VR)



VR: Vocational Rehabilitation
SHIP: Statewide Head Injury Program
DDS: Disability Determination Services
SL: Supported Living
PS: Protective Services
OFMB: Office of Finance Management and Budget
Commissioner's Pod: Legal, Analytics & Quality Assurance, Communications, Learning & Community Engagement
***EHS Co-location Site:** i.e., DTA, DMH, DDS

The background features several overlapping circular shapes in various shades of pink and teal. A large teal circle is on the left, overlapping a larger pink circle. Another teal circle overlaps the bottom of the pink circle. The text 'The Front Door' is centered in white.

The Front Door

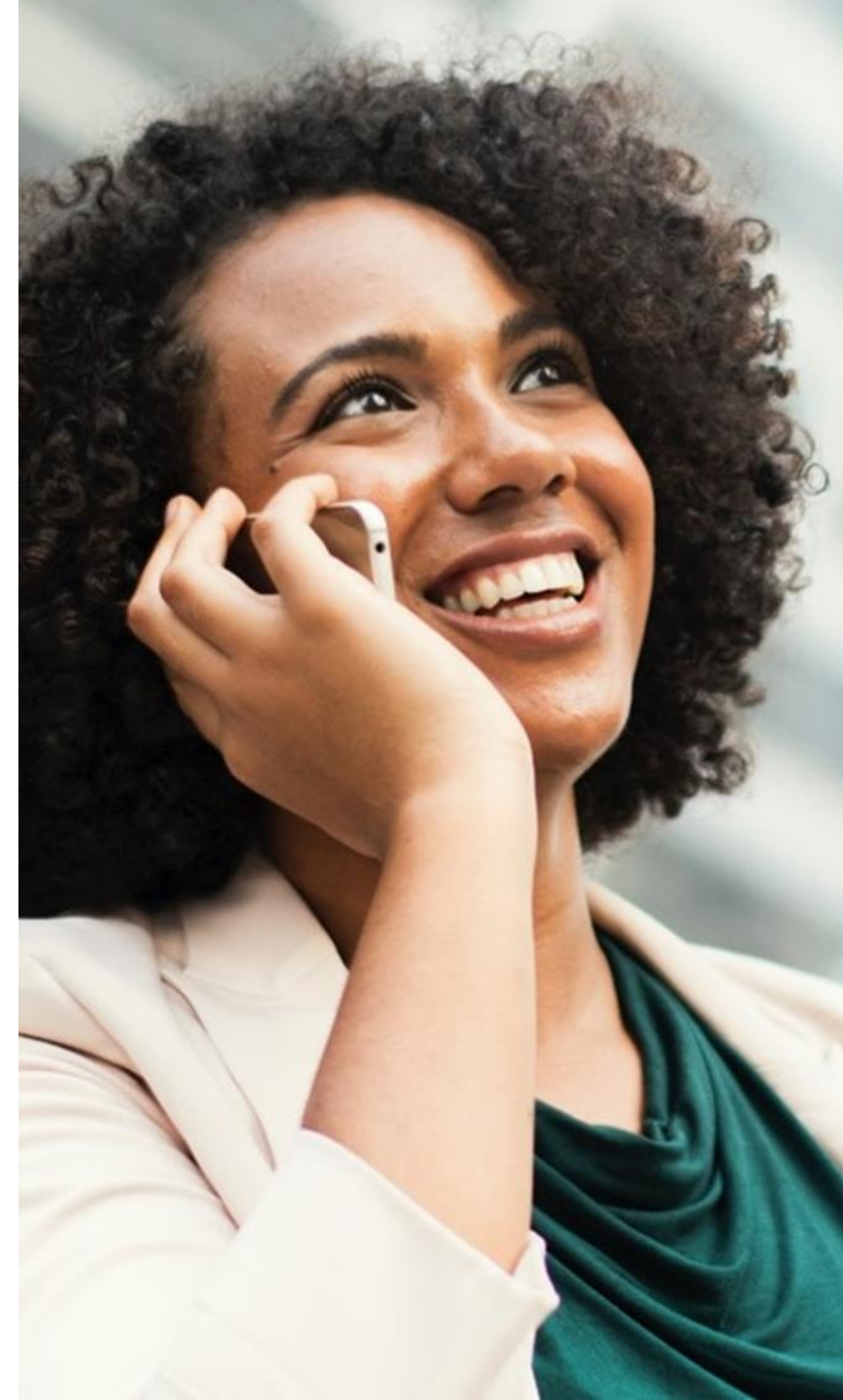
MRC Connect

- A single point of entry by completing an online application connects participants to a broad range of services for Career Services and Home & Community Life.
- MRC Connect Staff will be there with you through every step of the application process to connect you with the program that are the right fit for you.

Apply for these programs through MRC Connect:

- Career Services
- Home and Community Life
 - Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP)
 - Home Care
 - Supported Living (SL)
- Chapter 688
- www.mass.gov/mrc-connect

Waiver and Disability Determination Services eligibility are determined elsewhere



MRC Connect Application Demo

An official website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts [Here's how you know](#)

Menu Select Language Contrast Settings State Organizations Log In to...

Mass.gov Search Mass.gov SEARCH

Home > Finding a Job > Career Services > Vocational Rehabilitation

OFFERED BY Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Executive Office of Health and Human Services

MRC Connect

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) has gone digital! Now, in addition to in-person and over the phone, you have the opportunity to apply for services online through MRC Connect.

If you have a disability, MRC Connect offers an online referral application that gathers necessary information for various MRC programs. This application facilitates matching your needs with the available programs for which you may be eligible.

What would you like to do?

Top tasks

- Apply for Services →
- Learn How to Apply →
- MRC Connect FAQs →

The screenshot shows a web browser interface for the MRC Connect application. At the top, there is a green header with the state logo and navigation links. Below that is a blue navigation bar with a menu icon and links for language, contrast, and state organizations. The main content area features the Mass.gov logo, a search bar, and a breadcrumb trail. A large blue banner with a keyboard image and an 'Apply now' button is prominent. Below the banner, there is a paragraph of text and a section titled 'What would you like to do?' with three buttons for 'Apply for Services', 'Learn How to Apply', and 'MRC Connect FAQs'.

MRC Connect Process

- Apply anywhere at any time online
- Application submission
 - Upload a release of information (optional)
- Review of Application
- Document collection if applicable
- Phone Screening with Eligibility Screener
- Eligibility determined
- Warm hand off to Program

*****Timeline expectations vary*****



MRC Connect Contact

Information and Referral Line

- Any questions about services
- Application status updates require a signed release of information, or the applicant must be on the call.
- Phone: 617-204-3665
- Fax: (617) 727-1354
- Email: mrc.connect@mass.gov



Our Services

Career Services (formally VR)

Our Career Services prepares jobseekers of all ages to take on the modern workplace.

- Together with public colleges and universities, professional training programs, and employers statewide, we partner with people with disabilities to expand what's possible in their career and work life.
- Our programs give you the opportunity to explore many industries and sectors so you can find what's best for you and your circumstances.
- And we guide and support employers to create the accessible and inclusive environment that is your legal right.

Career Services

Participant Focused Services

- Job Placement
- Job Driven Training
- Counseling and Guidance
- Benefits Counseling
- Internships/Externships
- Career Assessments
- Vocational Training
- Communication Access
- Post-Secondary Education support

Employer Focused Services

- On-the-Job Evaluations (OJE)
- On-the-Job Training (OJT)
- Financial support for paid internships/practicums
- Tax incentives
- Disability inclusion support
- Consultation

NextGen Careers

- NextGen Careers is an innovative program designed to help young adults to explore the world of work. NextGeners learn to advocate for themselves, gain confidence, and fast track their job journey.
- **Target Population:**
 - VR-eligible young adults with a disability
 - Age 18 – 30
- **Targeted efforts:**
 - Intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (ID/DD),
 - Autism spectrum disorders
 - Sensory (Blind, Low Vision, Deaf, Hard of Hearing)
 - From underserved racial and ethnic groups (Black, Asian and Latinx)
- <https://www.mass.gov/vocational-rehabilitation/locations>



Where We Work

SOUTH DISTRICT

1. Boston 2. Roxbury 3. Braintree

NORTH DISTRICT

4. Lawrence 5. Lowell

WEST DISTRICT

6. Springfield 7. Worcester

The NextGen Career program meets you where you live. As an agency, MRC is focused on breaking down traditional barriers to employment. Our team will be your guide to building confidence, experience, and knowledge for your career journey.

Home & Community Life

Our Home & Community Life services empowers individuals to participate in their community and build a better life on your own terms.

- We partner with participants to expand what's possible for adults and youth with disabilities, providing you with the support, technology, and training you need to become self-sufficient.
- Together, we're breaking down barriers to create a Massachusetts that's truly equitable, accessible, and inclusive.

Home & Community Life Services

- Community-based residential, day, and support services for persons with brain injuries
- Transition from nursing home to community support
- Turning 22 Youth Transition to Adult Human Services
- Supported living
- Accessible Housing Registry
- Assistive technology training, devices, and resources
- Homemaking services
- Independent Living Centers

Moving Forward Plan



Waivers are designed to transition and support individuals into the community from a skilled nursing facilities or other long-stay hospital setting.

MRC manages two types of waivers: ABI Non-Residential Habilitation (ABI-N) Waiver & MFP Community Living (MFP-CL) Waiver. Contact UMass Medical 1-855-499-5109 to apply.

You May Qualify If:

- A Massachusetts resident
- Brain Injury
- Nursing Facility stay
- Participant can live independently with support, or else with family that can provide informal supports for at least 6 hours per day.

Examples of Services

- Includes a limit of 84 hours per week of in-home supports,
- Personal care services, homemaking, day services, supported employment services, skills training services,
- Home & vehicle modifications, assistive technology & specialized medical equipment, transitional assistance services, etc.
- MRC Case Managers coordinate services

Statewide Head Injury Program



This program provides a range of services for people with a traumatic brain injury. This includes individual supports for community living, regional service centers, residential supports, case management, recreation programs, substance use disorder services, technical assistance and consultation. To learn more, visit mass.gov/mrc.

You May Qualify If:

- You're a Massachusetts resident
- Have a documented externally caused traumatic brain injury with significant impairment
- Can demonstrate an ability to participate in community-based services

Examples of Services

- Skills Training: Helping consumers learn the skills they need to live in the community.
- Adult Companion: Provides companionship and social activities. This aide can also be used so a caregiving family can take a break.
- Residential Services: Provided in a 24-hour, provider operated group home setting.

Home Care Program



This program provides needed homemaking and coordination of services to individuals. To learn more, visit [mass.gov/mrc](https://www.mass.gov/mrc).

You May Qualify If:

- A Massachusetts resident
- Age 18 through 59 with disabilities other than legal blindness
- Have a disability which keeps an applicant from doing one or more homemaking tasks
- Meet financial guidelines
- Live alone or with live with another adult relative or significant other who also has a disabling condition

Examples of Services

- HCAP services may be provided on an average of 4 hours per week, with a maximum of 12 hours in exceptional circumstances;
- Meal preparation
- Grocery shopping at the supermarket or grocery store closest to the consumer's residence, medication pick-up and taking out trash
- Laundry of the eligible consumer's items only

Supportive Living Programs

Program	Supported Living (SL)	Supported Living Expansion (SLX) <small>Project duration: 07/2023-04/2025</small>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA residents age 17 - end of life Who are their own guardians and can direct their care living with a primary severe physical disability and any additional impairment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA residents age 18+ end of life Who are their own guardians and can direct their care Living with co-occurring conditions/behavioral health People screening negative on Level II PASRR, in an acute care or partial setting.
Application	MRC Connect referral	SLX Screening Tool
Service Entry Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPED system (Ch.688, IEP, 504 Plan) VR area office, PCM, ADRC OC (ILC/ASAP), providers, hospitals, SNFs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNFs ADRC OC (ILC/ASAP), providers CTLP coordinators, waiver case coordinators, LTSS and peer mentors/support workers, etc.

SL vs SL Expansion continued

Program	Supported Living (SL)	Supported Living Expansion (SLX) Project duration: 07/2023-04/2025
<p>Scope of Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing vendored out case coordination assisting with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> PCA Surrogacy, Personal Health Care, Financial Management, Household Management, Finding/Maintaining Accessible/Affordable Housing, Access to social, educational, vocational, and recreational opportunities, Assist Tech, Vehicle Mod, Home Mod Advocacy, Access to transportation, Remote Supports (if applicable) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing vendored out case coordination assisting with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> While in SNF: Discharge & safety planning including lining up all needed supports for transition and service coordination, housing stabilization. Upon transition back into the community: 1. Behavioral Health Services, 2. Personal Health Care, 3. Financial Management, 4. Household Management, 5. Finding/Maintaining Accessible/Affordable Housing, 6. Access to social, educational, vocational, and recreational opportunities, 7. AT, VM, HM 8. Advocacy, 9. Access to transportation, 10. Remote Supports (if applicable), 11. Peer supports
<p>Providers</p>	<p>SL Providers + Independent Case Managers (*new as of 11/2022)</p>	<p>Options Counselors + SL Providers + Independent Case Managers + ILC/RLC peer mentors</p>

Supported Living Expansion Pilot

- **Target area:**

- Suffolk County
- Norfolk County
- Middlesex County
- Bristol County

- **Target SL Providers (lead):**

- Bay Cove
- Empower
- UCP Boston

- **Pilot ILC/RLC Partners:**

- NERLC/NILP
- BCIL/MWCIL
- SCIL

- **Team Comp. (Pre-engagement):**

- CTLP/OC Representative
- MRC Program Coordinator/Clinician (as needed)
- SL Provider in Catchment area & Peer Support via ILC/RLC



Chapter 688 Program



Students receiving special education, who because of the severity of their impairment may require continued disability related services upon exiting school (by graduating or turning twenty-two years of age, whichever occurs first), shall be offered specific, coordinated transition planning.

You May Qualify If:

- Receiving special education paid for by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (on an IEP per Ch. 718 of Mass. Special Ed)
- Need continuing habilitative services at the time of turning 22 or graduating from special education
- Unable to work competitively (without specialized supports) for more than 20 hours per week at the time of leaving school

Key Information for Chapter 688

- Only the local school district, also known as the Local Education Authority or LEA, can make a 688 referral.
- The referral must be made while the student is still in school. The student's IEP team selects the human services agency that provides the services and expertise that most closely resemble the student's areas of need and sends the 688 referral to that agency. The receiving agency then becomes the "Transitional" Agency for the purposes of 688.

Disability Determination Services

- Disability Determination Services (DDS) is a federal program funded by the Social Security Administration.
- DDS determines eligibility of Massachusetts' applications for the following two disability programs:
 - **Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI):** Is available to people ages 18-65 with physical and mental impairments severe enough to prevent them from engaging in their normal occupations or any other substantial work. SSDI is an earned benefit tied to your work history.
 - **Supplemental Security Income (SSI):** Is a safety net program that pays benefits to people ages birth to 65 with limited income and assets who are disabled, blind; or 65 and older. SSI is not tied to your work history.
 - For more information or application go to [MRC Disability Determination Services \(DDS\) at Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mrc-disability-determination-services-dds)



Other Services

Independent Living Centers

The Mass Rehab Commission contracts with ten **Independent Living Centers (ILCs)** across the state, serving people of all ages regardless of the type of their disability.

At least 51% of the board and staff of ILCs are persons with disabilities.

ILCs provide:

- Peer Counseling
 - Skills Training
 - Information & Referral
 - Advocacy (Individual & Systems)
 - Transition services
-
- Contracted programs include: State IL services and Transition to Adulthood Program (TAP)

Assistive Technology for Independent Living

- Provides Assistive Technology low- and high-tech devices and services to individuals with disabilities so that they may maximize control over their environment and achieve self-determined independent living goals.
- MRC contracts with two regional providers, Easter Seals MA and United Cerebral Palsy of Western MA, for AT assessments, buy and set-up equipment, train and follow up.
- To qualify, individuals must not have access to similar AT services through another program or agency. The program has financial eligibility requirements.

MassMATCH

The state initiative called Maximize Assistive Technology (AT) in Consumers' Hands (MassMatch), is a federally-funded program to promote the use of AT devices and services to enhance the independence of people with disabilities. This is done through Assistive Technology Regional Centers and other partners. Consumers and families can visit an AT center to learn about, try out or borrow AT devices free of charge for up to four weeks. Go to www.MassMATCH.org for more information.

The program offers the following programs:

- Device Demonstrations at [AT Regional Centers](#)
- [Short-Term and Long-Term device loans](#)
- [AT Loan Program](#) for financial loans) see
- [GetATStuff](#) Device Exchange
- [REquipment](#) Reutilization programs



Question & Answers



Thank You