



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
600 Washington Street | Boston, MA | 02114
mass.gov/mrc | (617) 204-3600



A LETTER FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Dear MRC Community:

Throughout this year we have experienced the most devastating public health pandemic of our lifetime. COVID-19 has brought unprecedented challenges individually and collectively. Day after day, we at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) have remained resilient in our dedicated work to support individuals living with disabilities in the Commonwealth.

Looking back, none of us could have imagined what we have been through in 2020. MRC remains committed to improving consumer experience and outcomes, and our efforts have focused on breaking down the digital divide in this remote arena. We have pivoted to utilize and deploy much-needed technology to our staff and consumers. After months of strategic planning, we launched MRC Connect, a single, integrated access point that connects consumers with the full array of MRC services regardless of program. And, for the first time in agency history, consumers can apply for MRC services online.

MRC is deeply committed to advancing its work in racial equity, diversity, and inclusion. Given the strain and emotion of the current climate in the US due to the pandemic, the continuing episodes of racial violence, and the groundswell of protests against this violence, MRC held Listening & Healing Circles for staff of color. This served as an opportunity for employees to gather in community, share experiences, be heard, offer support to each other and begin to understand the implications for relationships at work and ultimately the success of the MRC's mission. They also empowered MRC leadership to gain insight on how the agency can systematically improve on racial equity, diversity, and inclusion. Together, we will transform and educate ourselves on anti-racism, and build a diverse, equitable, and inclusive agency.

Across the Commonwealth, more than 800,000 people live with disabilities. In the pages of this report, you will learn about the unique and specialized role our agency plays in their lives. We believe a workforce is richer when it's diverse and that must include people with disabilities.

We are grateful to Governor Charlie Baker, Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders, and members of the Massachusetts Legislature for their unwavering support of MRC. We are committed to a person-centered approach that both understands challenges and embraces opportunities. New policies, rethinking structures, and shifting agency culture remain as evolving factors as we continue to prepare MRC for a new decade. I am grateful to our forward-thinking workforce, our sister agencies, our providers, and our employer partners as we continue to support consumers during this public health emergency.

I am also indebted to each and every consumer who reminds us that solution thinking drives change and enables transformation. It is an honor to sit alongside each of you to conduct this important work while celebrating our victories in this unprecedented year.

Toni A. Wolf



Commissioner
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission





MRC AT A GLANCE

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

The **Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (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.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Age 14+)

State Fiscal Year	2019	2020
Consumers Actively Receiving Services	24,991	22,540
Total Funds Expended	\$60,155,449	\$64,061,576
Cost per consumer served	\$2,407	\$2,842

Community Living Division

State Fiscal Year	2019	2020
Consumers Actively Receiving Services	15,148	17,230
Total Funds Expended	\$53,541,561	\$60,997,300
Cost per consumer served	\$3,535	\$3,540

Disability Determination Services *

Federal Fiscal Year	2019	2020
Total Budget	\$46,971,951	\$46,971,951
Cost per Case	\$613.05	\$613.05
Accuracy of Initial Decisions	96.9%	95.2%
Federal Accuracy of Decision Standard	90.6%	90.6%

Retention

- **92.8%** of MRC consumers successfully placed remain employed for 90 days or more
- **88%** of consumers participating in the Adult Community Clinical Services (ACCS) a partnership program between MRC and Department of Mental Health (DMH) remained engaged with the program. This new model focuses on smaller caseloads and an integrated service model resulting in enhanced quality services and overall consumer engagement

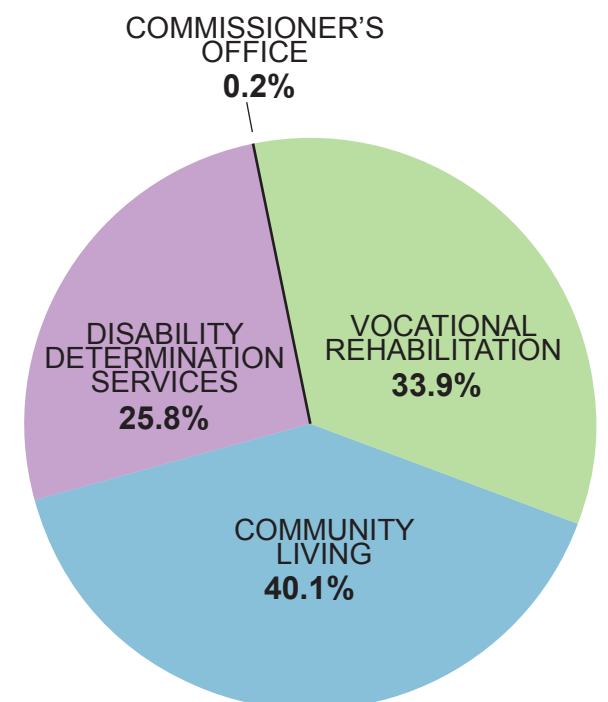
Overall MRC SFY20 Funding

SFY2020		Funding Source				
		State	Federal	Trust	Capital	Total
Net Agency Funding	Vocational Rehabilitation	\$20,646,215.78	\$35,900,741.25	\$7,514,619.45	-	\$64,061,576
	Community Living+	\$64,818,448	-	-	\$3,801,159	\$75,551,472
	Disability Determination Services	-	\$48,746,859	-	-	\$48,746,859
	Commissioner's Office	\$396,974	-	-	-	\$396,974
	Agency Funding Total	\$85,861,637	\$87,617,180	\$11,476,905	\$3,801,159	\$188,756,881
	Percentage of Overall Budget	45%	46%	6%	3%	-

+ This budget item includes a one-time, state funded, supplement of \$1.4 million.

Overall MRC SFY20 Funding

Program	Percentage of Budget
Commissioner's Office	0.2%
Community Living	40.1%
Disability Determination Services	25.8%
Vocational Rehabilitation	33.9%





VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

The **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** division of MRC assists individuals with disabilities in preparing for and obtaining jobs across the state. Vocational rehabilitation assists people with physical, cognitive, intellectual, and/or mental health conditions to manage the modern workplace.

Through partnerships with public colleges, universities, and training programs, and strategic partnerships with statewide and local employers, VR consumers have opportunities to explore and train for careers in various sectors. Our dual customer approach – that is supporting both the VR consumer and the employer – through events such as job driven trainings, hiring events, internships, and on the job trainings have proven effective strategies for achieving employment outcomes.

Vocational Rehabilitation services include:

- Vocational counseling, guidance, and assistance in job placement

- Training programs including job-driven partnerships with employers, and college and vocational certificate programs
- Assistive technology and rehabilitation technology services
- Job Coach services
- Community-based employment services
- Interview preparation and direct job placement services
- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities

Through MRC this year, citizens with disabilities have been successfully placed into competitive employment based on their choices, interests, needs and skills. Salaries for successfully employed consumers range from minimum wage to over \$120,000 annually, and the earnings of these successfully placed employees in MA in the first year were **\$67.0 million**.

WHO WE SERVE

Psychiatric Disabilities 44.3%

Learning Disabilities 24.8%

Orthopedic Disabilities 8.4%

Substance Abuse 6.6%

Deaf and Hard of Hearing 5.5%

Other Disabilities 4.6%

Developmental/Intellectual Disabilities 2.3%

Neurological Disabilities 2.2%

Traumatic Brain Injury 1.4%

Average Age 31

Male 55.1%

Female 44.9%

White 77.1%

Black/African American 17.8%

Hispanic/Latinx 13.9%

Asian/Pacific Islander 3.7%

Native American 1.2%

FAST FACTS

The goal of our services is to promote dignity through employment and community living, one person at a time.

All citizens with disabilities in Massachusetts should have the opportunity to contribute as a productive member of their community and family as a result of services provided by the MRC. For State Fiscal Year 20, MRC had:

- **6,964** individuals apply for Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- **3,042** consumers with disabilities become employed in competitive, integrated employment
- **22,540** individuals receive counseling and guidance
- **13,174** consumers enroll in vocational training/education program
- **99.4%** consumers become employed with medical insurance

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Estimated public benefits savings from people rehabilitated in MA were \$22.8 million. The average hourly wage was \$15.45, and the average work hours weekly was 27.4.

*The returns to society based on increases in lifetime earnings range from \$14 to \$18 for each \$1 invested in the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation program. *\$5 is returned to the government in the form of increased taxes and reduced public assistance payments for every \$1 invested in the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation program.¹

¹ *Based on Commonwealth Corporation Study



A Career Helping Others: *Rachel Chapman*

Growing up in Minnesota, Rachel Chapman knew from an early age that she wanted to be a vocational rehabilitation counselor. Her journey to this choice and career path did not exactly come easy. She vividly remembers a conversation with her vocational rehabilitation counselor when it came time for her to start the college application process.

“He met me and told me that I was too stupid to go to college,” Chapman recalled. “I am a person with a disability. After he said that I left his office and never went back.”

Chapman certainly proved him wrong. Upon graduation from high school, she attended Bethel University and received her undergraduate degree, and immediately following, earned a Master’s in Social Work from Boston University. “I knew from that conversation that a career in vocational rehabilitation is what I wanted to do,” she said. “I would never treat a person with a disability that way.”

October marked Chapman’s 20th anniversary as a senior vocational rehabilitation counselor for the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the Commonwealth’s premiere agency dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities to



live and work independently. In her two decades with the agency, Chapman has helped thousands of individuals, and always sees the positive, no matter the situation.

An incredible example of Chapman’s dedication to helping others happened 10 years ago. “A silversmith came to me because she had a stroke. Prior to that, she had been making beautiful handmade jewelry,” said Chapman. “She lost the use of one of her hands due to the stroke and was devastated. She said to me, ‘this is my passion and I can’t do it anymore.’”

Chapman reached out to MRC’s engineering department and had them look at her client’s equipment that she used to make jewelry. Together they were able to create tools and devices that adapted the process to allow her client to use one hand instead of two.

“We were able to accomplish this goal and she is back in business,” Chapman said. “In any case, you have to see the limitations. You have to see the barriers because until you understand them you can’t come up with the appropriate solutions. But you always need to be able to see the positive.”

Along with the duties she performs each day as a senior vocational rehabilitation counselor, Chapman is involved with several extra duties and initiatives both within the Lowell Office and statewide. These include serving as back-up supervisor, mentoring new counselors and colleagues, and serving as conduits for the office neuro-psychological consultant and the MRC/DDS partnership. She also is a member of the Statewide MRCIS User Group and provides technical support and updates to her colleagues related to MRCIS. Chapman also serves as liaison for four high schools within the Lowell Office catchment area.

“Rachel is a kind, compassionate and empathetic person who approaches her job each day with integrity,” said Lowell Office Manager Tim Rodden.

“Her highest priority is to serve, support, and advocate for her clients by doing what’s needed for their benefit and well-being by providing timely and quality services to them. She’s dependable and reliable to both her clients, colleagues, and other third-party providers. She’s resourceful and makes herself available as needed to support her clients and colleagues. She is one of the best counselors within MRC.”

In recognition of her outstanding commitment to the issues concerning people with disabilities, Chapman was awarded the prestigious Yvonne Johnson National Leadership Award from the National Rehabilitation Association this month. She accepted the award on behalf of all the individuals with disabilities she has worked with.

“It has also been a privilege to work alongside many individuals with disabilities in order to help them reach their goals and assist many to obtain competitive employment,” Chapman said. “Each individual is unique, and they make my days interesting to say the least. The barriers and challenges that they face and overcome with my support and encouragement make them the true leaders and I would like to acknowledge their hard work and accept this award on behalf of them.”

She added, “I greatly enjoy my job and I’m committed to continuing to make a difference on a daily basis. My job however, cannot be accomplished working in a vacuum and I have been blessed to work as part of a great team of professionals. It truly does take a village.”





COMMUNITY LIVING

The **MRC Community Living 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 include:

- Independent Living Center Services
- Community Supported Living Services
- Accessible Housing Registry
- Home Care Assistance Program for Eligible Adults with Disabilities
- Turning 22 Youth Transition to Adult Human Services
- Assistive Technology Training and Devices
- Community-Based Residential, Day and Support Services for Persons with Brain Injuries
- Home and Community Based Waiver Programs

Independent Living Centers

MRC provides funding and oversight (as the Designated State Entity) to the Commonwealth's 10 Independent Living Centers (ILCs). This year, we served 6,135 individuals through ILCs. As consumer-directed organizations, each ILC provides peer counseling, skills training, advocacy, and information

and referral, and assists individuals with disabilities in transitioning to independence.

In addition, ILCs offer targeted services to Vocational Rehabilitation consumers, including youth and young adults, to support achievement of employment goals. Other services offered by ILCs include Personal Care Management and Long-Term Services and Support coordination under recent state Medicaid reform initiatives. The ILCs serve as a strong consumer voice on a wide range of local, state, and national issues.

Transition to Adulthood

Each of the ILCs provide Transition to Adulthood programs (TAP) to young people with disabilities ages 14 to 22 who are enrolled in special education. TAP offers individual and group activities to help students with disabilities learn skills and self-confidence to prepare for independence in adulthood. TAP-enrolled students work with adult peer mentors who help the student learn how to take on the responsibilities of living independently in the community. Examples of training include money management, learning to use public transportation, self-advocacy, and classes to obtain a learner's permit. ILCs collectively served over 812 youth through TAP in FY20.

Young Adult and Adult Supported Living

The Supported Living Program assists youth and adults age 16 and up with severe physical disabilities to live independently in the community. The program supports individuals in managing their daily affairs such as overseeing personal care attendants, paying bills and money management, finding or maintaining housing, coordinating health services, and/or obtaining and maintaining durable medical equipment. Participants make their own decisions and direct their supports, and program staff help the individual carry out their wishes.

Home Care Assistance Program

The Home Care Assistance Program provides assistance to people with disabilities needing in-home supports that include housecleaning, laundry, meal preparation, grocery shopping, and medication pick-up. These essential services enable those with disabilities, with no other means of completing these tasks, to continue to live independently, and maintain hygiene and nutrition, which supports overall health, and the ability to be active participants in their communities.

Assistive Technology Training and Devices

This program provides assistive technology (AT) devices and services to assist people with significant disabilities to live independently. You can see the impact of AT through CR's story. CR was diagnosed at a young age with Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a progressive disability which affects the muscles responsible for movement. When he reached out for AT services he relied on a power wheelchair for mobility, and had little to no use of his hands. CR was hoping to acquire an adaptive bed control, to be able to control his adjustable bed by cell phone or Amazon Echo/Google Home. During installation of the bed control, CR told his AT therapist that he had been an artist, and that he missed being able to paint. The AT therapist was able to engineer a custom painting system using assistive technology, and CS is now able to paint again. He is now a professional artist using assistive technology to paint and supports himself through his work.

MassMATCH

MRC is the designated state host for the federal AT Act program - MassMATCH (Massachusetts' initiative to Maximize Assistive Technology in Consumer's Hands) - which offers a range of activities to help people learn about and acquire AT. MassMATCH program staff provide training and technical assistance to help organizations evaluate their equipment

needs, develop policies or programs related to assistive technology, and train staff on the use or applications of assistive technology.

Community Based Services

Community Based Services works with individuals living in their own homes or in small residential programs. Many of the individuals we support have brain injuries; most have more than one significant disability. Our two programs are the Statewide Head Injury Program and the Acquired Brain Injury/Moving Forward Program.

Supports include:

- Providing individuals a range of services and resources to move into and live in the community
- Assistance for families and caregivers
- Home modifications to assist individuals to live safely in their homes
- Person-centered planning to ensure that every individual has the services that best support their needs
- Training for other state agencies, private non-profit agencies, families and consumers
- Developing resources and trainings specific to the brain injury and substance use disorder communities to support professionals in their work with individuals living with both brain injury and substance use



COMMUNITY LIVING AT A GLANCE

FAST FACTS

The goal of our services is to promote dignity through employment and community living, one person at a time.

All citizens with disabilities in Massachusetts should have the opportunity to contribute as a productive member of their community and family as a result of services provided by the MRC. For State Fiscal Year 20:

- Total consumers actively receiving services: 17,230
- Total funds expended: \$60,997,300
- Cost per consumer served: \$3,540



IMPACT STATE FISCAL YEAR 20

Program	Individuals Assisted	Services Purchased
Independent Living Centers	6,135	\$9,023,840
Turning 22 Services	812	\$1,973,505
Assistive Technology	3,623	\$2,559,369
Housing Registry	1,272	\$80,000
Supported Living Service	170	\$2,927,124
Brain Injury Services	1,238	\$26,313,85
Home Care Services	1,310	\$4,345,720
Protective Services	1,601	\$61,057
ABI-N/MFP-CL Waivers	1,069	\$13,712,829



MRC TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE

Breaking down the digital divide during COVID-19

MRC quickly realized how critical access to technology was and was committed to breaking down the digital divide during the pandemic. After researching and assessing current consumer needs, the agency developed the MRC Technology Initiative, and has been able to identify and deploy more than \$5.4 million of federal funding for technology equipment to our consumers who are eager to return to work.

“Although COVID-19 has impacted all of us, MRC has pivoted in a robust manner,” said Commissioner Toni A. Wolf. “We’ve been able to utilize and deploy technology to our staff and consumers. “All of our efforts have focused on breaking down barriers to the digital divide in this remote arena.”

Consumers currently enrolled in services and deemed eligible received equipment customized to their needs. Vocational Rehabilitation has secured to date (work is ongoing) for more than 3,800 individuals.

In addition to equipment, MRC has provided funding for a “software essentials” training class. “At MRC, we are always focused on providing the services and supports people with disabilities need to thrive in the community. We believe a workforce is richer when it’s diverse and that must include people with disabilities,” said Wolf.

MRC programs outside of Vocational Rehabilitation have undertaken a similar assessment of consumer’s access to technology. To date, 249 devices have been secured for individuals in the Moving Forward Program.

EQUIPMENT DELIVERED

-  **3,207** Laptops (including basic Microsoft Office software)
-  **595** iPads
-  **2,000** Printers + 1 extra ink cartridge per printer
-  **500** Monitors (including 200 large screen monitors)
-  **1,300** Keyboards and Mouse
-  **1,100** Headsets





DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

The **MRC Disability Determination Services (DDS)** is funded by the federal Social Security Administration (SSA) and determines the initial and continued eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits.

Providing benefits to Massachusetts residents who are disabled and unable to work improves individuals' income stability, which allows greater independence and quality of life for those served. Favorable decisions also provide access to Medicaid and Medicare coverage, which opens the opportunity to health care for those who are disabled. All of this was able to be accomplished in Federal Fiscal Year 20 while maintaining a quality rating of 95.2%.

FAST FACTS Federal Fiscal Year 20

- **Total Budget:** \$46,971,951
- **Cost Per Case:** \$613.05
- **Total Disposition of SSI/DI Cases:** 65,163
- **Accuracy of Initial Decisions:** 95.2%
- **Federal Accuracy of Decision Standard:** 90.6%

Massachusetts SSI/SSDI Summary

Total MA Population: 6.9 million
MA SSI Recipients: 182,565
MA SSDI Recipients: 220,552
Annual SSDI Benefits Paid: \$3.33B
Annual SSI Benefits Paid: \$1.21B

Purchased Services

Consultative Examinations Purchased: 10,233
Consultative Examination Rate: 15.7%
Medical Evidence of Record Purchased: 55,338
Medical Evidence of Record Rate: 84.9%
Total Medical Costs: \$6,873,768

MRC CONNECT

You can now apply for MRC Services online! MRC connect provides an integrated experience that connects you with a full array of MRC services, regardless of program. Programs include Vocational Rehabilitation, Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP), Home Care Assistance Program (HCAP), Supported Living (SL) and 688 Program. Visit mass.gov/mrcconnect for more details.



mass.gov/mrcconnect



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