The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission operates a Public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program for individuals with disabilities. MRC’s VR program can help an eligible person with a disability:

- Work with their special education counselor to develop their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and receive VR counseling
- Plan for a career
- Identify college and vocational training choices and help with financial aid applications
- Participate in paid work experiences and on-the-job training
- Get training to achieve work goals
- Work with employers or colleges to ensure needed reasonable accommodations, assistive technology and other supports are received
- Find a job that matches their abilities, interests and needs

To be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, a person must have a physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability that interferes with their ability to work. They must also need and be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in order to get and keep a job.

Time spent receiving special education services should support a student’s future work goals. Students also need to make the right choices to assist with a smooth transition to adult services. After students with disabilities leave school, no single agency is required to coordinate all needed services. Each agency has its own eligibility criteria, application process and manner of providing services.

If your son or daughter is found eligible for MRC-VR services, a vocational rehabilitation counselor will work with your child to define a vocational goal and develop an employment plan. This plan is called an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and includes the vocational goal and the services needed for promoting employment.

Q&A for Parents

FACT: When students plan ahead for adult life, they are more successful in:
- Completing school
- Going to college
- Pursuing a career

By age 16, your child should be thinking about:
- What kind of job he or she wants
- How to get that job
- Where he or she can learn the skills to qualify for that job

Who is eligible for MRC’s vocational rehabilitation (VR) services?

Why should we begin career planning and think about our child’s employment during high school?

What vocational rehabilitation services are available through MRC?

To find out more about MRC, call: 1-800-245-6543 (voice or TTY).

Or go to the website: http://www.mass.gov/mrc
to achieve that goal. Depending on what your child requires, services may include counseling, vocational guidance, work evaluation, planning, skills training at a college or community rehabilitation program, adaptive equipment, benefits counseling and support services while completing training or placement services. Placement services may include job-seeking skills training, work tryouts and on-the-job services, such as job coaching and arranging for reasonable accommodations, employer referrals, occupational tools for reasonable accommodations, such as job coaching and arranging work tryouts and on-the-job services, include job-seeking skills training, services. Placement services may include counseling, guidance, work evaluation, planning, development or job placement. Your child's VR counselor will discuss how work activities relate to eligibility, service planning and selection of career goals.

5. **What is the process for applying for VR services?**

You may contact an MRC-VR office directly or someone from your school may talk with you about MRC during your child's junior year. With your child’s permission, or yours if you are their legal guardian, the school will send MRC information already in the records about the nature of their disability, as well as your child’s vocational interests, abilities and needs. If more information is needed to determine eligibility or develop a service plan, the counselor will discuss what additional medical or vocational assessments are needed and how to get these at MRC expense, if appropriate.

6. **Is this information confidential?**

Yes. MRC will not gather or release any information without signed consent. If the student is under 18, the signed consent of a parent or guardian is required. If your son or daughter is unable to understand the consent process, a parent or guardian's consent is required at any age.

7. **What can I do as a parent?**

Participation by parents is very important, especially when your child is less than 18 years of age. You know your child best; go with them to their first meeting with the VR counselor. Stay in touch with your child’s VR counselor to make sure planning for post-high school activities is consistent with the plans you and your child have been making with the school.

8. **My child works part-time. Does this mean he or she is not eligible for VR services?**

No. In fact, work experience is often an important part of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). However, your child’s capacity to work regardless of a disability is an important consideration in determining eligibility. Your child’s VR counselor will discuss how work activities relate to eligibility, service planning and selection of career goals.

9. **Will I have to pay for services for my child?**

There is no cost for planning and assistance provided by the VR counselor or for determining if and how MRC can assist you. Once it is decided that your son or daughter is eligible, except for those receiving SSI or SSDI benefits, family resources and level of need are considered when providing some paid services that may be needed to accomplish their work goal. Commensurate with your means, a family may be expected to share in the costs of services such as attending college, purchasing equipment, or making necessary modifications to your home. Financial need is NOT considered for counseling, guidance, plan development or job placement. Your counselor will discuss financial planning as part of developing the plan.

10. **How will VR services affect SSI or SSDI benefits?**

VR services will not have a direct impact on benefits. The VR counselor can advise you generally about how benefits may be affected when your son or daughter begins earning wages. In addition, your counselor can arrange for a confidential, detailed benefit plan to be conducted that will be specific to their public benefits, resources, working arrangements and estimated earnings. You may also directly contact the Social Security Administration District Office to obtain specific information about the impact of your child's employment on benefits and about available work incentive allowances.

11. **We receive other state agency services. How will that affect MRC services?**

Inform your VR counselor so that all services can be coordinated to best meet your child’s employment needs.

12. **Can MRC find residential placements or help with services not related to my child’s job preparation?**

The MRC-VR program does not provide these services directly, but can refer you to other agencies that can help, including the MRC Community Services program. Your local Independent Living Center may also be able to assist you.