Q&A for Students

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Vocational Rehabilitation Services for High School Students with Disabilities

Do you know...

- What kind of career you want?
- How to get a job that will lead you down that career path?
- What skills you need before you can get that job?
- Where you can get the training you need and how long this will take?

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and it has a Public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program for individuals with disabilities who want to go to work. MRC’s program can help an eligible person with a disability to:
- 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 the person’s abilities, interests and needs

FACT: Students who have work experience during high school are twice as likely to have a job and will earn more money after they graduate.

1 Why should I be thinking about my career while I am still in high school?
- The beginning of high school is when you should start planning what you will do after you finish high school. You will have time to learn about and try different jobs. Decisions you make at the beginning of high school affect how well prepared you will be when you leave school.

2 How can a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor help me?
- A VR counselor can:  
  - Help you choose a career goal that fits your choices, needs and abilities.
  - Suggest ways to find out more about your abilities, interests and need for assistance.
  - Give you information about work and job opportunities to help you decide on a career goal.
  - Make recommendations regarding how your school program can help you develop job skills.
  - Help you find and choose the right training to prepare for your career goal, whether it is college, trade school or on-the-job education.
  - Help you find a job and follow up to make sure it’s a good job for you.

To find out more about MRC, call: 1-800-245-6543 (voice or TTY)
Or go to the website at: www.mass.gov/mrc

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Boston, MA 02111
1-800-245-6543
Who is eligible for these services?

You may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services if you receive special education services or other help because you are a person with a disability. A disability may be a medical condition such as diabetes or epilepsy, or a physical, mental, emotional or learning disability. MRC will work with you to find out if you are eligible and what types of services you need to prepare for work. If you are eligible, you and your vocational rehabilitation counselor will plan a program to help you pursue a career.

Are vocational rehabilitation services only for students who are in special education?

No. Vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors may work with all students in high school who have a disability. If you are not in special education, ask your school guidance counselor about the MRC and its services.

But I don’t want people to know I have a disability!

Information about you, including the fact that MRC is helping you, is kept strictly CONFIDENTIAL. Information is only shared when you give permission to your VR counselor to do so.

Where would I have to go for the training I need to get a job?

Job training may be available on college campuses, at business and trade schools, at community rehabilitation programs, or even on the job.

Who will make the decisions about my VR program - me, my parents, my counselor or the school? This is my life.

You will make the final decisions that fit your own career interests, choices and goals. The best situation is one in which everyone works together so when your IEP is complete, your IPE begins. An Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) is a plan for VR services needed to enable you to reach your career goals.

How do I get MRC’s vocational rehabilitation services?

You may apply directly or ask your school to help you apply. Your guidance counselor, teacher, special education services staff or school nurse can help you contact an MRC-VR counselor. An appointment can be arranged in a convenient location, including at your school. If someone from your school does not talk with you about MRC by your junior year, you or your parents can call and make an appointment with a MRC-VR counselor at the nearest VR office (see locations on the back of this brochure).

When should I get MRC’s Vocational Rehabilitation services?

We strongly recommend that students be referred to the MRC Vocational Rehabilitation program while in their last two years of high school, preferably at the beginning of their junior year.

Can I find information about career opportunities and jobs on my own?

Yes. Your school librarian can help. Ask to see the Occupational Outlook Handbook and the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, or visit these websites for the latest information:

- stats.bls.gov/oco
- www.dol.gov

Check it out...

More information about getting ready for work and adult life can be found at the MRC web site:

www.mass.gov/mrc

This web site provides information about planning careers, college, assistive technology, living on your own and other issues of concern to young adults. It explains the many different services available and where to find assistance.

Take the first step...

For more information about MRC, call:

1-800-245-6543

When you find out your MRC counselor’s name and phone number, write the information here.