



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2001-2
January 29, 2001

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From: Joyce Sampson, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

Re: Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Working with TAFDC Recipients

Overview

DTA and MRC are working together to help TAFDC recipients with a mental and/or physical disability transition to economic self-sufficiency. The services provided by MRC will help TAFDC recipients wanting to prepare for work find and maintain employment of at least 20 hours per week. The interagency agreement is focused on job placement, short-term skills training and employment support programs. MRC will also provide job support services for a minimum of 90 days after job placement.

Candidates for the program are TAFDC recipients determined disabled by Disability Evaluation Services (DES) and TAFDC recipients who do not meet the Department's disability standards but may have some impairment hindering their ability to work. Participation is voluntary and there is no sanction for recipients who decide not to complete the program.

DTA will make every effort to refer a minimum of 200 recipients statewide and MRC will make every effort to place at least 50 TAFDC recipients referred by DTA into employment.

MRC Services

MRC services may include any of the following services which will lead to employment:

- Assessment, including diagnostic and related tests, as necessary to determine eligibility for MRC services and the nature and scope of services to be provided;
- Counseling and guidance;
- Work-related placement services;
- Vocational and other training services;
- Supported Employment services;
- Rehabilitation Technology;
- Transportation necessary to participate in any vocational rehabilitation services;
- Independent Living services; and
- Other services which can reasonably be expected to benefit individuals with disabilities in finding employment.

Who Will Be Referred to MRC

AU Managers will refer voluntary TAFDC recipients to MRC who:

- are exempt because they meet DTA's disability standards for TAFDC and have been identified by DES or the AU Manager as likely to benefit from MRC services; or
- do not meet DTA's Disability Standards for TAFDC but whom DES or the AU Manager has identified as likely to benefit from MRC services.

Note: DES will use the DES Tracking form to identify candidates who would benefit from MRC.

Before any referral is made to MRC, the AU Manager must contact the recipient to determine if he or she is interested in participating. The AU Manager should direct the recipient to bring any available documentation of the disability to the MRC appointment.

Notice Mailing

To help identify potential MRC candidates a staggered mailing will be sent in mid-February to all recipients who are currently exempt due to a disability (AR 09 and AR 10). The notice, titled *Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Working with TAFDC Recipients*, will explain the services being offered through MRC and who is potentially eligible for these services.

AU Manager Responsibilities

For an exempt recipient who has been determined disabled and whom DES or the AU Manager has identified as likely to benefit from MRC services, the AU Manager should at each eligibility review inform the exempt recipient:

- of the date that the DES disability determination period expires;
- that services to get employment are available through MRC;
- that DES has indicated that he or she may be able to work with certain accommodations, if applicable; and
- that he or she will not be sanctioned for starting but not completing an MRC activity.

Note: BEACON Release 1.0 will automatically sanction a recipient for not meeting the MRC activity. The AU Manager must enter a "good cause" reason to prevent the sanction. See page 5 of this memo for further instructions.

For a nonexempt recipient who has been denied by DES or has not applied for a disability exemption but has been identified by either DES or the AU Manager as having an impairment that hinders the ability to work, the AU Manager should inform the nonexempt recipient that:

- services to obtain employment are available through MRC;
- if work-program-required, the work program requirement must be met in addition to participation in MRC, except for those nonexempt recipients participating in MRC's Supported Employment program at least 20 hours per week; and

Note: The MRC activity will be entered on BEACON Release 1.0 as a secondary component for those recipients participating in another ESP activity.

**AU Manager
Responsibilities
(continued)**

- he or she will not be sanctioned for starting but not completing an MRC activity; sanctions, however, for not meeting the requirements of all other ESP components apply.

Note: BEACON Release 1.0 will automatically sanction a recipient for not meeting the MRC activity. The AU Manager must enter a "good cause" reason to prevent the sanction. See page 5 of this memo for further instructions.

MRC Referrals

For both exempt and nonexempt recipients participating in the MRC component, the AU Manager must access BEACON Release 1.0 to:

- complete/modify an EDP;
- complete an ESP Assessment;
- generate a Referral and Response form for MRC services by selecting "Skills Training Services" as the activity and "MRC" as the resource, and link the referral to the resource "Mass.Rehab. (ESP Funded)." The resource will have been added by Central Office;

Note: On the Referral and Response form include the recipient's exempt/nonexempt status, work program status, disability duration (if applicable) and the months remaining on the clock.

- give the original Referral and Response form to the recipient;
- direct the recipient to contact the local MRC office to set up an appointment; and
- give a copy of the Referral and Response form along with the DES Tracking form, if applicable, to the DES Liaison, who will fax them to the local MRC office.

Note: Upon receipt of the forms, MRC will attempt to contact the recipient if an appointment has not already been made by the recipient.

MRC will fax the outcome of the appointment to the DES Liaison using the Referral and Response form. The DES Liaison will track the outcome and forward a copy of the Referral and Response form to the AU Manager who must:

- enter the ESP Activity Disposition of the referral on BEACON Release 1.0; and
- authorize child care and/or transportation services, if applicable.

**Participation
Requirements**

BEACON Release 1.0 will issue a monthly participation report for all recipients participating in this MRC component. When participation reports are returned, the AU Manager will enter the actual participation hours on BEACON Release 1.0.

Note: Nonexempt recipients must continue to meet the TAFDC work program requirement in addition to participating in MRC programs, except for those participating in MRC Supported Employment at least 20 hours per week. Nonexempt recipients can be sanctioned for failure to meet the TAFDC work requirement, but not for failure to participate in the MRC component.

TAFDC recipients (exempt or nonexempt) participating in MRC must not be sanctioned if they do not meet the MRC requirement or change their minds about wanting to participate in the MRC component. AU Managers must check the following BEACON Release 1.0 views to monitor sanction information:

- "*Clients with Pending Sanctions*" View; and
- "*Clients with Sanctions*" View.

If the participant does not meet the MRC requirement or the participation report is not returned, the AU Manager will:

- enter the "good cause" reason for not meeting the MRC requirement to prevent the recipient from being sanctioned; and
- contact the recipient to schedule an appointment to discuss the reason(s) for not participating.

If the recipient no longer wants to participate in MRC, the AU Manager must:

- modify the EDP by accessing the ESP Activity Disposition window and terminating the MRC activity; and
 - notify the DES Liaison of the termination.
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**MRC
Responsibilities**

MRC is responsible for:

- scheduling an appointment with the recipient within 10 days of the DTA referral, whenever possible;
- completing and returning a completed DTA Referral and Response form to the DES Liaison within five working days after the recipient's appointment; and
- informing the DES Liaison of eligibility or ineligibility determinations as they occur.

Note: MRC will determine those recipients with the most significant disability eligible for MRC. Eligibility determinations will generally be completed by MRC in 30 days or less. MRC may determine the disability of some individuals not severe enough to be eligible for MRC services.

If the recipient is determined eligible, MRC will provide the DES Liaison with the following information:

- the services being implemented for each individual with an approved Individual Plan for Employment (IPE);
- job placement details within 10 days of the start date of a job;
- the reason for termination of the IPE, whether successful or unsuccessful, including the reason a participant did not complete the training, if applicable; and
- monthly updates on the progress of recipients receiving services from MRC.

**DES Liaison
Responsibilities**

Each TAO's DES Liaison will be the contact person between DTA and the local MRC office. The DES Liaison is responsible for:

- contacting the local MRC office to inform them of referred recipients by faxing a copy of the Referral and Response form (Attachment A contains a list of MRC Area Directors) and the DES Tracking form to provide additional information such as a DES recommendation to participate and any details on the disability, if applicable;

Note: The first contact with an MRC office regarding this program will be with the MRC Area Director, who will at that time identify the MRC Liaison for all future contacts.

**DES Liaison
Responsibilities
(continued)**

- receiving returned Referral and Response forms from MRC and providing a copy to the AU Manager;
- receiving monthly updates from MRC on the sixth of each month regarding the status of each recipient referred to MRC;
- scheduling quarterly meetings with the MRC Liaison to discuss operational issues and any recommendations for operational modifications;
- being the contact person for MRC to report changes in a recipient's circumstances, such as entering into employment or termination of an activity, etc.;

Note: Eligibility circumstances may change because a recipient is enrolled in a short-term MRC component (reimbursed by DTA) and becomes engaged in a long-term MRC training program such as community college (MRC is not reimbursed by DTA). Referred recipients have the option of choosing among all MRC services. In this instance the DES Liaison would direct the AU Manager to enter the activity under regular MRC services not under "Skills Training Services."

- informing local MRC offices of changes in referred recipients' exemption status, work program requirements and AU closings;
- maintaining an MRC Participation log (see Attachment B) that includes the referred recipient's name and SSN, the participation activity, job placement status, termination status and reason, if applicable; and
- sending the MRC Participation log to the Regional Director on the 10th of each month. The first log should be sent on March 10, 2001. The log is an ongoing list that follows the status of referred recipients.

Questions

Policy-related questions should be directed by the Hotline designee to the Policy Hotline at (617) 348-8478. Systems-related questions should be directed to Customer Service at (617) 348-5290.



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