

FSP FY2004 MRC

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Annual Family Support Plan State Fiscal Year 2004

Introduction

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) is organized pursuant to M.G.L. c. 6 S&74-84 and operates programs authorized by State law, the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Social Security Act. The MRC provides comprehensive services to individuals with significant disabilities, intended to promote equality, empowerment, and productive independence.

The MRC serves no discrete constituency. While each of the MRC's programs has its own focus and eligibility, the commission's mandate and purpose are, through its various programs and services, to assist all eligible individuals with disabilities, regardless of age, the nature of the disability or functional ability, to maximize quality of life and economic self-sufficiency in the community. Consistent among all services across programs is a consumer focused and consumer directed planning and service delivery process that respects and is driven by the informed decisions of empowered consumers. In most instances, consumers are competent, independent adults who choose to control their involvement with the MRC personally. However, in a number of the MRC's programs, parents and families play important roles in supporting the consumer and through participation in the planning process.

The Families Support Act requires the MRC and other human service agencies to submit to the governor, the secretary of health and human services, the joint committee on human services and elderly affairs, and the house and senate committees on ways and means, an assessment of the current service delivery system for individuals and family supports for persons with disabilities or chronic illnesses and their families. The MRC, through its programs of vocational rehabilitation services, employment services, community services that include: independent living center services, assistive technology services, home modification loan program, turning-22 services, supported living services, traumatic brain injury services, protective services and abuse investigation, home care services, consumer involvement, and its disability determination services, has been and continues to be committed to working with individuals with disabilities and their families to meet their community-based needs.

In fiscal year 2004, the MRC is focusing its family support efforts primarily on the programs of the Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP), which has actively engaged consumers and their families in many

aspects of its operations since its establishment. The MRC will continue its efforts to involve families whenever appropriate in all its other programs and service and will expand its surveying of families' opinions regarding services and service delivery throughout the year.

At the MRC, Family Supports are any of the panoply of services available through its various programs that support individuals and their choices: to involve family members in planning, to remain with their families or to live in their own homes with familial support, to enhance the ability of family members to support the choices made by consumers. The MRC recognizes that an informed, engaged and supported family can be the most important factor in an individual's efforts to achieve greater autonomy and independence.

Family Support Initiatives

I. Family Empowerment

Families hold over 40% of the seats on the Massachusetts Acquired Brain Injury Advisory Board, which recommends policy, practices and funding for SHIP and other human service agencies addressing the needs of people with brain injury.

Families sit on review committees for RFR responses under SHIP program development.

Families are on the Advisory Board Steering Committees for federal grants that we have written, received and implemented as a monitoring and advisory committee. Representatives also sit on the Olmstead Advisory Group, Real Choice Systems Change Grant Consumer Advisory Board, and the MRC Rehabilitation Council.

Families are integral to our service delivery model since over 75% of the TBI population, even though they are over the age of 22, lives at home with their families. We continue to involve families as we balance their roles with that of the individual.

II. Family Leadership

SHIP offers training to families and, over the years, has addressed topics of interest and concern to them such as subsidized housing, pharmacology with brain injury, substance abuse, and how to be a better case manager.

SHIP provides support for the Mass Brain Injury Association's I&R, support group network and prevention programs.

SHIP has funded family members to participate at national conferences and meetings where they meet other family members and can advance their advocacy skill level.

III. Family Support Resources

SHIP has a Family Assistance Program (FAR) that has been operating for almost ten years. We fund clinical assessment and support services for families who have someone at home with a TBI and other co-morbid problems such as behaviors.

SHIP requires state-funded Head Injury Centers around the state to offer educational opportunities and services to families.

SHIP pays for respite, whether in-home or out-of-home, when requested. This can either be driven by an emergency or planned in advance for a break.

SHIP funds home modifications that allow families to keep loved ones at home if they choose.

SHIP funds "companions" that allow survivors living with families to get out of the house for periods of time thereby giving families a break during the week on a regular basis.

SHIP pays for short-term private case management to assist families who often carry this burden.

IV. Accessing Services

SHIP provides funding to the Mass. Brain Injury Association with the expectation that they educate families about accessing the human service system and refer people to SHIP for more detailed information.

A portion of this funding is to manage their I&R program serving the entire state with an 800 telephone number.

SHIP sends out an MBIA brochure to new applicants encouraging their involvement in this organization.

V. Culturally Competent Outreach

SHIP has been involved in multicultural issues and outreach since the early 90's. SHIP has been part of an Advisory Board at the Institute for Community Inclusion that works to expand the capacity of minority organizations to serve people with disabilities and their families.

SHIP provides written materials in other languages and interpreters when necessary/requested. SHIP also provides funding to MBIA to translate and print their brochures in several languages.

SHIP actively seeks out professionals who are bi-lingual and bi-cultural.

SHIP staff recruitment has targeted diverse communities to expand this department's capacity to address the needs of a broad range of individuals on a day-to-day basis.

SHIP has two federal grants focusing on multicultural outreach – one has a goal of the development of "support groups" within minority communities that are culturally competent for those who choose to participate. At this time there are support groups that includes families within the Chinese, Vietnamese and Latino communities. The other grant has used therapeutic recreation as a way to serve families and survivors with a focus on skill development and enhanced independence.

SHIP is actively working with the Hispanic, Khmer, and Haitian communities as well. We will be expanding our outreach to the African American and Native American communities this year.

VI. Interagency Collaboration

SHIP co-chaired, with EOHHS, an interagency/intersecretariat steering committee for the last several years specific to better serving people with acquired brain injuries in our present system. The group has been put on hold due to the reorganization of Health and Human Services.

SHIP sits on the Employment Services Action Council, the Interagency Leadership Team at EOHHS specific to Olmstead and the Real Choice Grant and a number of project teams associated with demonstration projects; the Nursing Home Initiative Steering Committee run by DMR; Special Populations at EOHHS; and the Medical Review Team at DPH. SHIP is also represented on several Project Management Teams at EOHHS – Complex Case Management, Grants Coordination, Substance Abuse, Aligning Facility Operations, Closing Fernald, Consolidation of Campuses, and Transition.

SHIP sits on the Governor's Task Force on the Homeless.

SHIP is working with DPH Injury Surveillance to design a Registry system for Brain Injury in this state.

SHIP has a project with DYS to identify, assess and intervene early on with kids who have TBI in an effort to reduce future involvement in the correctional system.

SHIP has sat on teams under OSD regarding special education rates for children in residential schools and other procurements.

Other MRC Family Support Initiatives

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

In partnership with the Rehabilitation Council's State Plan Sub-Committee, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Services Programs annually holds two formal public hearings in April or May to provide individuals with disabilities, their families, other representatives, and other interested parties an opportunity to comment on current Commission policies and to offer suggestions on future ones. In FY '04 the MRC will seek specific input from families regarding their needs in order to better support the efforts of consumers to enhance independence and economic self-sufficiency.

Each year the MRC Rehabilitation Council conducts a survey of consumer satisfaction survey. The MRC will work with the Council to incorporate survey questions that address issues of family involvement and family support as part of the rehabilitation process.

Community Services Family Support Initiatives

The Community Services Division currently delivers to persons with disabilities or their families Independent Living Services, Home Care Assistance Services, Statewide Employment Services, Consumer Involvement, Traumatic Brain Injury Services, and Protective Services.

Independent Living Services include the following:

- 1) Core services of advocacy, peer counseling, information and referral, and skills training;
- 2) Turning 22 Services of supported living, early intervention in the school system, and plan development;
- 3) Assistive Technology;
- 4) Rehabilitation Technology;
- 5) Supported Living for adults with disabilities;
- 6) Community reintegration via the Roland Court decision;
- 7) Home Modification Loan Program

The Community Services Division solicits comment from persons with disabilities and or their families regarding service delivery in a number of different forums.

Home Care Services holds bimonthly meetings of its advisory council meeting. These meetings review and advise the Agency on regulations and policy regarding the delivery of services. In 2004, the Homecare

Services department will include family services as a regular agenda item of its advisory council meetings.

Independent Living Centers and Services solicit input from the Statewide Independent Living Council, which meets quarterly. The topic of family services will be raised by the MRC as an important topic for review and discussion for at least one of the SILC meetings in 2004.

Supported Living Services has a Supported Living Coalition that meets with the Agency on a regular basis to advise on policy and other services delivery issues. As has been its custom, the issue of family supports will continue to be an important topic at these meetings.

Home Modification Loan Program seeks input and advice from an advisory board made up of individuals with disabilities, community housing advocates, representatives of EOHHS agencies and families. Families have been primary beneficiaries of this important new program and their continued input into its review and development will continue in 2004.

The Supported Employment Services program has an advisory committee that regularly advises the MRC on policy and service delivery issues. The Statewide Employment Services department intends to develop a survey for families and consumers that will enable the department to better understand how it can enhance family supports for the people it currently serves.

The MRC also looks forward to participating with its sister agencies in the Disability and Community Services Cluster in collaborative hearings planned for later this year that will provide a forum for individuals with disabilities and their families to question and inform all the state providers of family support services regarding their family support needs and those of their family members.