



TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT



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FACT

A Chapter 688 Referral From Your School Is a First Step in Connecting With Adult Services

A Chapter 688 referral is a way to help adult service agencies, schools and families to identify and plan ahead for needed adult services for students with severe disabilities. Schools send a Chapter 688 referral electronically to the adult agency that the IEP Team thinks might be able to meet a student's need when the student graduates from high school or turns 22. The referral must be done at least TWO years before the student exits school (graduates from high school or turns 22 years of age).

It is important to know a 688 referral is not an application for adult service agency eligibility. Schools submit the 688 referral, but families are responsible for completing and submitting an application to the agency. Agencies must receive a complete application so they can decide whether the student will be eligible to receive adult services.

The Chapter 688 referral process also helps state agencies to estimate how many individuals will need adult services in a given year and therefore how much state funding will be needed to serve them. The referral also prompts the adult agency to work with the student, family, and school to develop an Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) that lists the supports and services the student may need to pursue their goals for life beyond high school.

Here are some of the more important facts to know about 688 referrals:

- A 688 referral is NOT an application for agency eligibility and will not result in any adult services. Families should submit an eligibility application to the adult agency that seems most appropriate to meet their child's needs. The agency will then determine if the person with a disability will be eligible for adult services from that agency. It's a good idea for families to make multiple copies of forms, just in case they get lost in the process.
- To have a Chapter 688 referral, a student must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP), need continuing services because of the severity of their disability, and be unable to work 20 or more hours per week in competitive employment.
- Individuals can also apply directly for adult services if the IEP Team does not feel a Chapter 688 referral is necessary.
- The school district is required to submit the referral (electronically through the Virtual Gateway) at least TWO years before the student is expected to graduate from high school or turn 22. Parents can request that their IEP Team address the need for a 688 referral two years before their child will exit school either by graduation or upon turning 22 years of age.

Parents/guardians should start talking about the Chapter 688 referral with school staff at IEP Team meetings early in high school, to decide which adult agency would be most appropriate to meet the individual's needs when they exit school. The parent/guardian must sign the referral before it is submitted by the school. (Due to the current pandemic, a verbal consent is acceptable). After submitting the eligibility application and any other documentation requested by the adult agency, the family should check in with the adult agency or with their school within a few weeks to make sure they received the forms.

Resources for more information

The LINK Center, a transition project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs

<https://fcsn.org/linkcenter/transition-resources/brochures/>

MA DESE Special Education Secondary Transition Website

www.doe.mass.edu/sped/secondary-transition/

MA DESE Guidance on Chapter 688

www.doe.mass.edu/sped/iep/688/

Bureau of Transitional Planning

www.mass.gov/service-details/bureau-of-transitional-planning

A 688 referral can be sent to any of the following adult agencies. If the IEP team is not able to decide on one adult agency for a student, the Chapter 688 referral should be submitted to the Bureau of Transitional Planning (BTP) rather than directly to a state agency. The Bureau will select the agency based on the student's needs after reviewing the student's IEP and most recent three-year school evaluations.

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) www.mass.gov/orgs/departments-of-developmental-services

provides supports for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)

www.mass.gov/service-details/am-i-eligible-for-vocational-rehabilitation helps individuals with disabilities to live and work independently through vocational rehabilitation and community living services.

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-mental-health

provides services and supports to meet the mental health needs of individuals of all ages to help them live, work, and participate in their communities.

The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB)

www.mass.gov/eligibility-for-mcb-services provides rehabilitation and social services to individuals who are blind, to help them become more independent and engage in their communities.

The Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-commission-for-the-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing

provides accessible communication, education, and advocacy to consumers to make programs, services, and opportunities fully accessible to persons who are deaf and hard of hearing.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-children-families

supports young adults, age 18-22, who are transitioning from DCF custody to independent living.



Sponsored by the Massachusetts Partnership for Transition to Employment (MPTE), a federal system change grant designed to improve transition outcomes that lead directly to paid employment and/or post-secondary options for individuals with ID/DD. The MPTE is led by the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services with partners that include the: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, Executive office of Labor and Workforce Development, the MA Developmental Disability Council, Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong, The Arc of Massachusetts, and the Institute for Community Inclusion/UMass Boston.