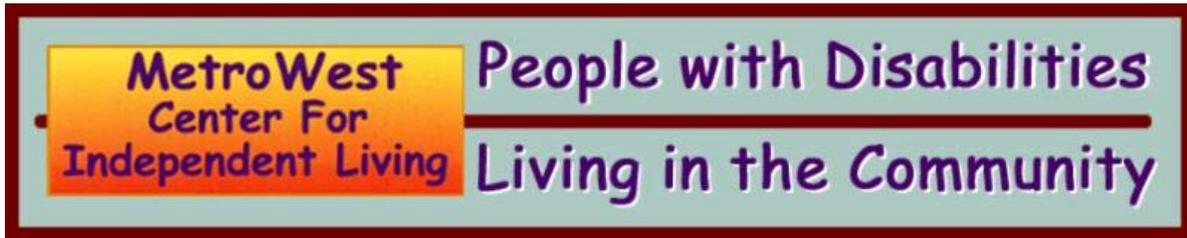


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News from MWCIL - January 2019



A major storm is predicted for Saturday night and Sunday. Make sure you are prepared!

With the new Massachusetts legislature in place, we are gearing up for IL Education Day at the State House. A top priority continues to be the AAB Bill.

And we have serious concerns about the MRC / VR Order of Selection proposal, which were well stated by Colin Killick at the Disability Policy Consortium.

Have you visited our new website yet? www.mwcil.org

Stay warm!

Paul Spooner,
Executive Director



Frosty Window

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DPC Calls on MRC to Drop Plans for Order of Selection (OOS)

John Winske at the Disability Policy Consortium published the article below in the January 14, 2019 DPC Weekly Update. *At MWCIL, we agree completely!* You can send your comments to Commissioner Wolf at the address below, or call her at (617) 573-1600.

DPC Calls on MRC to Drop Plans for Order of Selection (OOS)

In September, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) announced a plan to institute an Order of Selection creating a waiting list for services. We are extremely concerned that this proposed change, combined with others such as a \$1,000 limit on paid services per year, will have a very negative impact on the ability of people with disabilities to achieve competitive employment. As a result this week we (DPC) sent the following letter.

Commissioner Toni Wolf
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
600 Washington Street, 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02111

Dear Commissioner Wolf,

The Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) is writing to submit formal testimony on MRC's move to an Order of Selection (OOS) in its Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. Published in September 2018, 107 CMR 4.00 Section 4.08 allows for and defines Order of Selection in its program regulations.

After reviewing the regulations and discussing them with actual VR clients and

disability rights activists in the community, the DPC believes that they are inappropriate, ineffective and don't address the very real problem of a structural budget deficit with MRC in the VR division. OOS will not generate meaningful savings in program expenditures for clients or slow down the number of disabled people applying for services.

Federal RSA allows for OOS when VR agencies "resources are inadequate to provide services to all eligible individuals." In theory, it seems like a logical approach to rationing paid services. In reality, determining what Priority Category a potential client falls into is a very subjective process and, in some cases, works against people with the most significant disabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation counselors are not trained in determining whether a client requesting services has the "most significant" or "significant" disabilities, arbitrary categories that are likely to shift with time as individuals discover new areas of difficulty or new adaptive strategies.

Rationing services through a priority system such as OOS will only serve to delay the achievement of gainful employment, as clients languish on waiting lists. This will only be worsened by the agency's separate proposal to impose per person, per program caps on paid services per year. The result will be fewer people with disabilities achieving gainful employment, and the state will be paying out more in benefits to low-income people with disabilities and collecting less tax revenue.

MRC has a proud history in its VR program. Last year alone counselors found jobs for 3000 clients with disabilities, a record high. However, substantially more work remains to be done. With the economy booming, Massachusetts is nearing full employment in the general population, with just a 3.5% unemployment rate. Among people with disabilities, MRC's own data show that people with disabilities are less than half as likely to be employed as people without disabilities. On a national level, disability employment is increasing, as employers in need of workers grow increasingly willing to employ people with disabilities. If MRC picks this moment to restrict services and shunt clients onto waiting lists, vulnerable people will not gain the skills and supports they need to take advantage of this opportunity, and risk missing a rare opportunity to transform their lives.

Order of Selection is flawed, ineffective and hurts people with disabilities who need VR services to become employed or maintain employment. It will only perpetuate the cycle of poverty. In a quick review of the literature on OOS, we noted that many states, that entered into OOS, found out within a few years that it was very difficult managing the waiting list for services and developed strategic plans to get out of OOS.

The DPC recommends that MRC contact these states to discuss "lessons learned" to eliminate the perceived need for OOS for the foreseeable future. That MRC needs to develop a solid plan to immediately solve its structural

budget by including and using better internal controls that will signal management if there is overspending. By doing this, the agency will be better positioned for a legislative appropriation to close the gap and eliminate OOS as quickly as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Colin Killick
Deputy Director
Disability Policy Consortium

Architectural Access Board Bill

Stay tuned as we gear up for another year of support for this bill. The AAB bill should lead to increased accessible housing and increased accessible jobs! And it costs the state nothing.

Newsline for MetroWest

Joe Weisse from Natick is working on adding the MetroWest Daily News to Newsline. He is fundraising \$10,000 for this project by getting pledges from local organizations. Please let us know if you know of an organization who might contribute.

The \$10,000 is a one-time startup cost to Gateway news. Ongoing, the Perkins Library will fund annual costs of \$5000.

We have about 227 Newsline readers in our 26 town service area and approximately 1000 subscribers to the Braille and Talking Book Library. We are hoping that adding local news will increase Newsline subscriptions.

Who is eligible for the Talking Book Library at Perkins?

A person who is blind or visually impaired, who is unable to read regular print or unable to turn pages as a result of temporary or permanent visual or physical disabilities. They receive talking books and newsline among other library services. *This service is free.*

What is Newsline?

Newsline is a free national service provided by the National

Federation of the Blind in conjunction with the Braille & Talking Book Library at Perkins school for the Blind in Watertown. The service enables the user to listen to more than 300 newspapers, numerous magazines, access state-specific information, tv listings, job postings along with grocery and shopping advertisements. This can be accessed in English and Spanish over the phone, online, downloaded to a portable device, an app on your phone and by email. You can take a favorites list based on the newspapers and magazines you want to receive to be read or downloaded.

Disability Integration Act

The Disability Integration Act is reintroduced for 2019. This bill is "to address the fundamental issue that people who need Long Term Services and Supports (LTSS) are forced into institutions and losing their basic civil rights. The legislation (S.910, H.R.2472) builds on the 25 years of work that ADAPT has done to end the institutional bias and provide seniors and people with disabilities home and community-based services (HCBS) as an alternative to institutionalization. It is the next step in our national advocacy after securing the Community First Choice (CFC) option."

Download the [PDF Fact Sheet](#) from www.disabilityintegrationact.org for more information.

Happy Holidays

Our annual Holiday Open House was well attended and fun! We visited with legislators, service providers, consumers and friends.



Adriane and Rep. Lewis



Denise



Party!



Paul and Eva from MWRTA



Michael Weekes of the Providers Council and Paul

Save the Date for IL Education Day at the State House

Please join us in the Great Hall at the State House on Thursday, March 14 from 10:30-3. Download the pdf [Flyer](#) for more details. Invite your legislators.

Schedule:

- 10:30 a.m. - Registration
- 11:00 a.m. - Speakers
- 12:00 p.m. - Lunch
- 1-3 p.m. - Legislative Visits

Priorities:

- Align MA AAB regulations with the ADA
- Support Independent Living Centers
- Services and supports for Youth
- Access to Housing for People with Disabilities
- Access to Assistive Technology and Durable Medical Equipment
- Access to Health Care

For more information, contact Sadie at info@masilc.org.



IL Ed Day 2016

Activist Resources and Directories

National Contact Information

[Directory of House of Representatives](#)

[Directory of Senators](#)

Senator Edward J. Markey

Address:

255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Phone:

(202) 224-2742

Contact:

www.markey.senate.gov/contact

Website:

<http://www.markey.senate.gov/>

Senator Elizabeth Warren

Address:

317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Phone:

(202) 224-4543

Contact:

<https://www.warren.senate.gov/contact/shareyouropinion>

Website:

<http://www.warren.senate.gov/>

State Government Contact Information

[Directories of State Senators and Representatives](#)

[Contact Governor Baker](#)

[WhereDoIVoteMa.com](#) - Enter your address, and get a list of all of your elected officials.

National Resources

Indivisible - A practical guide for resisting the Trump agenda - Former congressional staffers reveal best practices for making Congress listen. [Download the pdf](#) or [Visit the website](#).

Save My Care - a movement to bring together families, advocates and health care providers to protect the health and financial security of all Americans. [Visit the website](#).

National Council on Independent Living has Action Alerts for issues on the table in Washington. [Visit the Advocacy Monitor webpage](#).

Join REV UP - Make the disability vote count!

For more information, visit www.revupma.org.



Disability Pride Toolkit

[NCIL](#) (National Council on Independent Living) has compiled a [Disability Pride Toolkit and Resource Guide](#).

This guide delves into what Disability Pride is, and why it is so important. The difference between the Medical Model and the Independent Living paradigm offer a framework of the disparities between how society works and how it should work.

The guide also offers many resources and ideas on how to advance the discussion and how to educate others. *We highly recommend this toolkit and resource guide for anyone who wants to be active in the fight for disability rights!*





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Email: info@mwcil.org

Phone: (508)875-7853

Address: 280 Irving Street, Framingham, MA 01702

Facebook: 

Sign up for our Newsletters and Action Alerts.

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