

Department of Mental Retardation Voluntary Services Program Fact Sheet

Vision for Children

All children with mental retardation grow up with the love and nurturing of their families. Families identify and receive the individually designed supports they need to raise their children in their local communities. Communities embrace children with mental retardation and their families and include them in all aspects of community life.

What is the Voluntary Services Program within the Department of Mental Retardation?

The Voluntary Services Program (VSP) supports families who have children with an emotional, behavioral or mental health need. VSP has traditionally operated solely by DCF. In July, 2005, DCF and DMR signed an Interagency Agreement to (a) transition existing Voluntary Services cases, involving children with mental retardation, to DMR administration, and (b) refer prospective Voluntary Services cases, involving children with mental retardation, for eligibility determination, resource allocation and administration. Families of children who are eligible for this program must demonstrate that an emotional, behavioral or mental health issue results in the functional impairment of the child and substantially interferes with or limits the child's functioning in the family or community activities. Family's must apply for service and be accepted into the program prior to the child's 18th birthday. Other children may be found eligible for this program with the Commissioner's approval.

Eligibility Restrictions

Children under the age of 8 will not be considered for the DMR VSP. These children will be considered under the DCF VSP. Cases will not be accepted if there is a pending investigation by DCF or if the parent/guardian is the subject of a pending petition alleging neglect, abused or uncared for or the child requires protective services. Cases that are pending juvenile/criminal justice proceedings will be discussed with DCF before eligibility is determined. VSP services and supports will be discontinued if at any time the child requires on going protective services through the Department of Children and Families or based upon the disposition of juvenile/criminal justice proceedings involving the child.

How do I apply for the voluntary services program?

To apply for VSP call the Department of Children and Families (DCF) hotline at 1-800-842-2288. Inform the hotline that you are requesting voluntary services and your child is a client of DMR and give them your child's name and DMR number and the case manager's name and phone number. You will be sent paperwork to be completed and returned to DMR. Your case manager will be informed that you have requested to apply for Voluntary Services and will available to help you to complete the application and compiling the other supporting documentation needed.

What supports and services can I expect from VSP?

VSP is primarily designed as an in-home support program. Families should receive the support they need to raise their children at home. An example of some supports include but are not limited to: personal support, including supervision and assistance with activities of daily living and gaining access to community activities. Individual support and habilitation including skill development instruction, implementation and training of behavior strategies or other, behavioral support, respite, community supports, after school programs and counseling. The supports and services that are put in place should have specific goals and outcomes attached to them. Services are individually designed for each child and intended to help you raise your child within the family and community.

If intense in home supports and services are found to be of appropriate quality but are not effective for your child, temporary out of home supports will be considered, such as a respite home. Temporary out of

home supports are available with the expectation of the child returning to the home, with appropriate supports and services put into place.

Long term out of home treatment will rarely be considered and are made by exception by the Commissioner. DMR will consider these requests once all other options have been exhausted. Again the least restrictive environment will be considered first. Requests for out of home placement/treatment are first reviewed by the department's Children's Services Committee which makes recommendations to the Commissioner. Families of children in long term out of home treatment facilities will be supported to maintain ongoing involvement with their child and to consider plans for reunification on a periodic basis.

How are services and supports determined?

VSP supports and services are offered based on the Level of Need (LON) tool. This program is not an entitlement program and supports and services are delivered at an appropriate level within the appropriations of the Department.

The Department will offer appropriate services to eligible applicants that are reasonably expected to increase positive behaviors and support the family in maintaining the family home. These services are offered through a team approach with input from the family, private provider(s), and case manager. Families will be expected to participate in trainings that will assist them to follow through in behavioral plans and techniques that are developed and put into place by provider agencies.

What if I disagree with the supports and services offered?

Sometimes DMR makes decisions with which families do not agree. If that should happen to your family, your first recourse is to discuss the matter with your case manager and designated regional managers in the DMR region in which your family member lives. If you are unable to resolve the matter informally, you have the right to ask for a Programmatic Administrative Review (PAR). If you need more information about the PAR process please contact your case manager.

If you are in disagreement with a decision made by the Children's Services Committee regarding placing your child out of the home you have the right to have your request reviewed by the Commissioner. After review, the Commissioner may require reconsideration by the Children's Services Committee for any denial of services in an out-of-home placement/treatment.

Other important information

The DMR VSP is separate from, and does not supplant, the DMR Waiting List Initiative, dedicated funding and programs for school graduates, and other programs and services of DMR.

The Connecticut General Statutes Section 4-66d requires the Department of Mental Retardation to notify individuals who receive care or support that they or their legally liable relative may be liable for reimbursement of any amount paid by the state for the person's care and support. A legally liable relative is the parent of a person under the age of 18, or a spouse of an adult served by DMR. Parents may be liable for a portion of the cost of care for their children under age 18 receiving services from DMR. Connecticut General Statute 4a-12 sets out the method to determine this reimbursement. Liability is determined by subtracting the state median income adjusted for family size from the federal taxable income. The liability can be no more than 12% of the remainder. If a child is enrolled in the waiver, room and board costs are the family's only liability. Families do bear a potential financial responsibility when an individual is not or can not be enrolled in waiver and is receiving services and supports which are paid for through state funds. Generally, DMR will not impose any liability for cost of care for in-home supports under the VSP program.