

INFORMED CHOICE

I. LEGAL AUTHORITY:

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; Section 12(e)(1), (2)(C) and (F); 101(a)(29); 29 U.S.C. 711(e) and 721(a)(29); 34 CFR 361.52.

II. POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE:

The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) assures that all recipients of vocational rehabilitation services will be provided with information necessary to make informed choices regarding the selection of their long-term vocational goals, intermediate rehabilitation objectives, vocational rehabilitation services (including assessment services), and service providers.

The Agency ensures that each individual receives, through appropriate means of communication, information concerning the availability and scope of informed choice, the manner in which informed choice may be exercised, and the availability of support services for individuals with cognitive or other disabilities who require assistance in exercising informed choice.

A. Definition

"Informed Choice" is a decision-making process whereby the individual with a disability analyzes relevant information and selects, with the assistance of the rehabilitation counselor or coordinator, a vocational goal, intermediate rehabilitation objectives, VR services, and VR service providers.

B. Conditions and Criteria

1. The Agency is required to inform individuals of their right to make informed choices and that this right may be exercised in a collaborative manner with the rehabilitation counselor.
2. It is the responsibility of all ORS staff to assure that each participant in the VR program acquires information needed for his/her decision making, is assisted in understanding the information, and if necessary, taught how to use the information.
3. Individuals may acquire, independently or with assistance, including, but not limited to that of ORS counselor, information about:
 - a. The advantages and costs associated with: preparation for and pursuit of alternative career or job goals;

- b. The cost, accessibility, and duration of potential service providers;
 - c. Consumer satisfaction with services or service providers;
 - d. The qualifications of service providers, and
 - e. The degree of integration available with each service option or site.
4. Participant decisions about their vocational rehabilitation will be based upon:
- a. Information that is relevant to the decision to be made including related laws, rules, policies, or other factors that may affect the decision;
 - b. An understanding of the potential positive and negative consequences that may result from a decision; and
 - c. Individualized support from ORS staff and/or others that will enable the individual to make decisions leading to successful employment.

III. PROCEDURES:

- A. The counselor will provide, or assist the individual in acquiring, information necessary to make an informed decision about specific services, including the providers of those services, that are needed for the individual to achieve his/her vocational goal. Such information may include, but is not limited to:
- 1. The purpose of vocational rehabilitation;
 - 2. The rights, roles, and responsibilities of the applicant or recipient, rehabilitation counselor, and the ORS agency itself;
 - 3. Results and implications of assessments related to strengths, interests, abilities, aptitudes, etc., for the purpose of career decision making and plan development;
 - 4. Benefit incentives and disincentives;
 - 5. National and state sources of labor market information and career decision-making tools;
 - 6. State or regional lists of services and providers, including the cost, accessibility, and expected duration of said services;
 - 7. Consumer satisfaction surveys and reports;

8. Referrals to other consumers or consumer groups or councils qualified to discuss services or providers; and
 9. Accreditation, certification, or other information related to the qualifications of services providers.
- B. ORS will provide, or arrange to provide, support services so that individuals who need such services may exercise informed choice.
1. In providing assistance to those individuals so that they may acquire or use the information to make informed choices, the vocational rehabilitation counselor may:
 - a. Provide the information using the appropriate mode(s) of communication identified/preferred by the individual; and/or
 - b. Relay the information to a representative of the individual who agrees to assist in the decision-making process.