



Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program Manual Revisions 2023

INFORMED CHOICE

Revision Summary – Added VR Policy regarding exercising informed choice in making decisions about services and employment provided by Rehabilitation Services Administration guidance.

Federal Regulation

34 CFR 361.52 Informed Choice

1. Applicants and recipients of services or, as appropriate, their representatives must be provided information and support services to assist in exercising informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process through:
 - a. Informing each applicant and recipient of services (including students with disabilities who are making the transition from programs under the responsibility of an educational agency to programs under the responsibility of VR and including youth with disabilities), through appropriate modes of communication, about the availability of and opportunities to exercise informed choice, including the availability of support services for individuals with cognitive or other disabilities who require assistance in exercising informed choice throughout the vocational rehabilitation process;
 - b. Assisting applicants and recipients of services in exercising informed choice in decisions related to the provision of assessment services;
 - c. Developing and implementing flexible procurement policies and methods that facilitate the provision of vocational rehabilitation services and that afford recipients of services meaningful choices among the methods used to procure vocational rehabilitation services; and
 - d. Assisting eligible individuals or, as appropriate, the individuals' representatives, in acquiring information that enables them to exercise informed choice in the development of their individualized plans for employment with respect to the selection of the:
 - 1) Employment outcome;
 - 2) Specific vocational rehabilitation services needed to achieve the employment outcome;
 - 3) Entity that will provide the services;
 - 4) Employment setting and the settings in which the services will be provided; and



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- 5) Methods available for procuring the services.
2. In assisting applicants and eligible individuals or, as appropriate, their representatives in exercising informed choice during the assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs and during development of the individualized plan for employment, applicants and eligible individuals or, as appropriate, their representatives must be provided or assisted in acquiring information necessary to make an informed choice about the specific vocational rehabilitation services, including the providers of those services, that are needed to achieve the individual's employment outcome. This information must include, at a minimum, information relating to the:
 - a. Cost, accessibility, and duration of potential services;
 - b. Consumer satisfaction with those services to the extent that information relating to consumer satisfaction is available;
 - c. Qualifications of potential service providers;
 - d. Types of services offered by the potential providers;
 - e. Degree to which services are provided in integrated settings; and
 - f. Outcomes achieved by individuals working with service providers, to the extent that such information is available.
 3. In providing or assisting the individual or the individual's representative in acquiring information for informed choice, the following methods or sources of information may be used:
 - a. Lists of services and service providers.
 - b. Periodic consumer satisfaction surveys and reports.
 - c. Referrals to other consumers, consumer groups, or disability advisory councils qualified to discuss the services or service providers.
 - d. Relevant accreditation, certification, or other information relating to the qualifications of service providers.
 - e. Opportunities for individuals to visit or experience various work and service provider settings.
 - f. Other sources as may be appropriate.

VR Policy



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1. Inform all individuals applying for services, including their representatives when appropriate, about providing informed choice by information in the Application and Eligibility Information document.
2. Informed Choice is an ongoing counseling and guidance and person-centered practice that ensures that an individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative is provided all of the information necessary to understand options, methods to overcome barriers, and the potential risks and benefits of decisions in a manner that is understandable to them in order to make informed and meaningful decisions about the individual's rehabilitation program.
3. **In addition to the requirements in 34 CFR 361.52, informed choice may also include:**
 - a. **Helping the individual to have a range of options from which to make decisions or, to the extent possible, the opportunity to create new options that will meet the individual's specific rehabilitation needs.**
 - b. **Ensuring that the individual has the skills or, to the extent possible, the opportunity to develop such skills or support for evaluating options and for making decisions that reflect the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests.**
 - c. **Helping the individual obtain specific information that can assist in the selection of vocational goals and realization of the employment outcome.**
 - d. **Explaining VR policies and procedures and decisions that affect the individual's eligibility, program of services, and case closure, including the consequences of choosing various options.**
 - e. **Informing the individual of appeal rights and how to contact a Client Assistance Program (CAP) representative.**

VR Procedures

1. Document discussions and active involvement with the individual or, as appropriate, the individual's representative regarding the provision of knowledge and information necessary to exercise informed choice in a case note or, as appropriate, in the IPE, including information on supports that may be available for exercising informed choice.
2. The ability for a customer to make informed choices should not be taken for granted. Customers should be able to make choices for what works best for them. Informed choices are



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best made through, as appropriate, education about the choice to be made, experience in the choice to be made, and exposure to similar circumstances. This can be provided by:

- a. Materials, videos, or references to online information related to the decision to be made.
- b. Helping arrange a hands-on work-related experience.
- c. Discussing ways that an individual can have exposure to work-related requirements or activities.
- d. More information and an example can be found at [Education-Experience-Exposure](#).

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