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## INFORMED CHOICE IN THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROCESS

Informed Choice refers to an ongoing process in which the individual with a disability and the vocational rehabilitation counselor collaborate to gather and evaluate information that will be used by the individual to make informed choices about goals and services that will lead to an employment outcome. It is the vocational rehabilitation counselor's responsibility to serve as a facilitator, using their skills and knowledge of the vocational rehabilitation process to contribute to the partnership. The individual requesting services brings their experiences with the implications of the disability and the knowledge of their strengths, abilities, and interests.

As an active participant in the vocational rehabilitation process, you have the following rights:

You must be informed, through appropriate modes of communication, about your opportunities to exercise informed choice throughout the vocational rehabilitation process, including the availability of support services for individuals with cognitive impairments or others who require assistance in exercising informed choice

You must be provided with assistance, by the vocational rehabilitation counselor, when exercising informed choice or when making decisions concerning evaluations

You must be provided with assistance, by the vocational rehabilitation counselor, when gathering information that enables you to exercise informed choice when developing your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) with respect to choosing the employment outcome, vocational rehabilitation services, service providers, the employment setting, the settings in which services will be provided, and methods for procuring services

Your vocational rehabilitation counselor must work with you to assess the factors related to your strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, and capabilities. This assessment must evaluate your ability to achieve meaningful employment with transferable skills, training, retraining, or advanced training.

Exercising informed choice and taking more responsibility in the vocational rehabilitation process makes demands on you and may also make demands on other people in your life.

The vocational rehabilitation counselor facilitates the process with knowledge of rehabilitation and the vocational rehabilitation process, an understanding of informed choice, information regarding rehabilitation resources and current labor market trends, and the experience of assisting other individuals through the vocational rehabilitation process.

To be fully engaged in the vocational rehabilitation process, you as the client must gather and use information to the extent possible, participate in planning and problem solving, make and implement decisions and seek or identify needed sources. The vocational rehabilitation counselor works with you to build relationships and to access resources that will enable you to exercise informed choice and work toward your employment outcome. Such activity includes:

Getting a listing of available vendors or providers for particular services

Working with new service providers to become familiar with all available options

selecting appropriate vocational rehabilitation goods and services that are available in your community

Utilizing the most flexible and least restrictive methods available when choosing vendors or providers and identifying when another vendor or provider may be more appropriate

Setting timeframes for procuring vocational rehabilitation goods and services in your community

Exhausting all comparable benefits and services available in your specific community or geographic area