

Chapter I – General Provisions of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Section 1 – Purpose

Guidance

In carrying out the day-to-day operations of the agency, staff at all levels need to continually question whether the decision that is about to be made or the action that is about to be taken is consistent with the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program:

- Is the decision/action for the purpose of assisting a person with a disability to enter or maintain gainful employment?
- Are our consumers full partners in the rehabilitation process, and have we ensured that our consumers are given opportunities to make *informed choices**? This means the person has meaningful options from which to choose and has the information necessary to make a choice that is fully informed.
- As a whole, do we see our consumers as capable individuals, able to be successfully employed?
- Are we primarily looking at the person's capabilities and strengths, trying to develop a plan consistent with those abilities, or are we too focused on the deficits?
- Have we recognized and utilized families and natural supports as playing an important role in the individual's rehabilitation, if the individual so requests and needs these supports?
- Is our program comprehensive, coordinated, effective, efficient and accountable?
- Have we made maximum efforts to coordinate and collaborate with other agencies and organizations?
- Are our accountability measures facilitating accomplishment of the above?

Legal Requirements

A. Congress' purpose in authorizing the vocational rehabilitation program was to develop a comprehensive, coordinated, effective, efficient and accountable program of vocational rehabilitation which is:

1. An integral part of the workforce investment system;
2. Designed to assess, plan, develop and provide vocational rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities, consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and *informed choice** so that they may prepare for and engage in gainful employment.

B. The vocational rehabilitation program must be consistent with these principles:

1. Individuals with disabilities are presumed capable of engaging in gainful employment and vocational rehabilitation services can improve their ability to become gainfully employed;
2. Consumers must be provided opportunities to obtain gainful employment in *integrated settings**;
3. Consumers must be active and full partners in the vocational rehabilitation process, making meaningful and *informed choices** during assessments, in choosing an *employment outcome**, services needed to achieve the outcome, providers of service and methods used to secure services;
4. Families and natural supports can play important roles in the success of the individual, if s/he requests or needs these supports;
5. Trained vocational rehabilitation counselors and other qualified personnel facilitate the accomplishment of the *employment outcomes** and objectives of the consumer;
6. Consumers and their *representatives** are full partners in a vocational rehabilitation program and must be involved on a regular basis in policy development and implementation;

The Bureau has addressed this requirement through consumer involvement on the Council.

7. Accountability measures must facilitate the accomplishment of the goals and objectives of the program.