

## Section 4 – Informed Choice

### Guidance

Consumers must be given opportunities to make *informed choices*\* throughout the rehabilitation process. This means that the role of staff must be to educate or otherwise ensure that consumers get the information needed to identify options and make *informed choices*\*, rather than to make decisions for the consumer. Choices that consumers make need to be honored if they are consistent with the purpose, goals and parameters of the vocational rehabilitation program. However, if choices made by consumers are inconsistent with the goals of the vocational rehabilitation program or rules governing the program, BRS cannot provide support for that choice. As discussed in Section 3 of this chapter, standards of reasonableness must be applied in determining whether the Bureau will agree to choices made by a consumer.

### Legal Requirements

- A. “*Informed choice*” means that the consumer:
1. has meaningful options from which to choose;
  2. understands his or her abilities, capabilities and interests related to the *employment outcome*\*; and
  3. participates in a planning process with bureau staff which considers such issues as:
    - a. relevant factors regarding choices made in the rehabilitation process. This includes, but is not limited to, service provider effectiveness and consumer satisfaction, relative cost of service options and labor market trends; and
    - b. applicable laws, regulations, state plan provisions and policy which establish parameters within which choices must be made;

In addition to these factors, implementing *informed choice*\* should also insure that the consumer has skills for evaluating the information and making decisions, has access to information about the consequences of various options, and understands his/her responsibilities for choices that are implemented and consequences that result.

- B. Consumers must be informed through *appropriate modes of communication\** about the availability of 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.
- C. Consumers must be given the opportunity to make meaningful choices:
1. during assessments for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs;
  2. in the selection of *employment outcomes\**;
  3. in the selection of services needed to achieve the *employment outcome\**;
  4. in selecting service providers;
  5. in selecting an employment setting and the setting in which the services will be provided;  
and
  6. in selecting the methods used to procure services.
- D. BRS must provide consumers (or if appropriate their *representatives\**) or must assist them in acquiring information necessary to make an *informed choice\** about the specific *vocational rehabilitation services\** needed to achieve the *employment outcome\** and the providers of those services. This information must include, at a minimum, information about:
1. cost, accessibility, and duration of potential services;
  2. consumer satisfaction with those services, to the extent that this information is available;
  3. qualifications of potential service providers;
  4. types of services offered by the potential providers;
  5. degree to which services are provided in *integrated settings\**; and
  6. outcomes achieved by individuals working with service providers, to the extent that this information is available.
- E. Sources of information concerning services and service providers that BRS may use include, but are not limited to:
1. lists of services and service providers;
  2. periodic consumer satisfaction surveys and reports;
  3. referrals to other consumers, consumer groups, or disability advisory councils qualified to discuss the services or service providers;
  4. relevant accreditation, certification or other information related to the qualifications of service providers;
  5. opportunities for the individual to visit or experience various work and service provider settings.