

Chapter 26

Informed Choice

26.1 Authority: 34 CFR 361.52

26.2 Policy

USOR policy requires VR Counselor to provide applicants, eligible individuals, or as appropriate their representative informed and meaningful choice throughout the VR process. Informed choice means the VR Counselor provides information regarding USOR programs, discusses options for the development of an IPE, explores options to enable the individual to have meaningful and informed choice in choosing a vocational goal, specific rehabilitation services, possible service providers, and methods of procuring needed services. Informed choice includes understanding of program restrictions, policy, and due process rights. Informed choice is the cornerstone of ethical VR Counseling and the development of a VR Counselor-Client relationship that will enable the individual to be successful. Information relevant to making a choice shall in all circumstances be provided in a mode of communication that is determined appropriate to the individual.

26.3 Informed Choice During the Application Process.

- A. Prior to the determination of eligibility, all applicants will be provided a program Welcome & Orientation to the VR program. This Welcome & Orientation includes information concerning the purpose, process, and available services of the VR program. The orientation also stresses informed choice during eligibility determination, IPE development, and service provision. The Welcome & Orientation is designed to provide the individual with the necessary information to determine if submitting an application for VR is appropriate. Individuals with cognitive or other disabilities which may require assistance in exercising informed choice shall be offered Welcome & Orientation in a format that meets their individual needs including offering Welcome & Orientation to their designated representative.
- B. Individuals who choose to apply for VR services are offered informed choice throughout the process of eligibility determination including those participating in trial work exploration. If diagnostic services are required for eligibility determination, the VR Counselor will provide the individual with information concerning the necessity of the service, available providers, costs of service, accessibility of services, and when available consumer satisfaction of those services. The individual is then encouraged to select the provider of their choice. If a trial work exploration or an extended evaluation is necessary to determine eligibility, the VR Counselor will provide the individual with information as to the necessity and purpose of the trial work exploration or an extended evaluation, cost, accessibility, and duration of potential services. This information includes, at a minimum, information relating to the:
 - 1. Cost, accessibility, and duration of potential diagnostic services;
 - 2. Level of consumer satisfaction with those services to the extent that such information is available;
 - 3. Qualifications of potential diagnostic service providers;
 - 4. Types of diagnostic services offered by those providers; and
 - 5. Degree to which diagnostic services are provided in integrated settings.

26.4 Informed Choice in Development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

- A. Prior to developing the IPE, the eligible individual must be given information regarding the options available in plan development (see Chapter 10).
- B. Eligible individuals will be provided with a Comprehensive Assessment of Rehabilitation Needs that discovers their vocational interest, primary employment factors, strengths, potential and abilities to the extent necessary for them to determine their vocational goal, objectives and the services available to achieve that goal.
- C. As a beginning step in the development of the IPE and if appropriate, prior to amending the IPE, the VR Counselor will provide all eligible individuals a thorough description of the scope of available services as described in 34 CFR 361.48 and how those services may relate to their identified needs. (See Chapter 13)
- D. Pertinent factors related to VR goals and objectives will be described and provided in accessible formats to all eligible individuals including, but not limited to, the following:
 - 1. Vocational appraisal techniques.
 - 2. Assessment of physical capacities.
 - 3. Assessment of learning capacities.
 - 4. Job market information.
 - 5. Relevant job seeking factors.
 - 6. Job retention factors.
 - 7. Environmental factors.
 - 8. Relative pay.
 - 9. Benefits.
 - 10. Integration.
 - 11. Upward mobility.
 - 12. Relative costs.
 - 13. Specific vocational preparation time.
 - 14. Interests of individual.
- E. Informed choices to be made will be identified by both the eligible individual and the VR Counselor. The VR Counselor will provide the level of assistance needed for the client to identify these choices.
- F. Information needed to make each choice identified will be obtained and discussed. The VR Counselor will assist the client in gathering needed information or, when necessary, gather it for the client.
- G. Any disagreement regarding choices will be thoroughly discussed and resolved as quickly as possible so as to not impede the individual's VR program. Client choices will be given preference where services are comparable following a discussion with the VR Counselor and client regarding the cost and appropriateness of the client's choice. Continuing disagreements will be submitted to supervisory and/or agency appeals processes for resolution in a timely manner. Clients will be advised of assistance available through the Client Assistance Program.

- H. The continuing effectiveness and satisfaction of the informed choices will be reviewed periodically especially during scheduled and unscheduled reviews of VR goals and objectives.

26.5 Informed Choice in Determining Services, Providers of Services, and Methods to Provide and/or Secure the Services

- A. VR Counselors will provide all eligible individuals with a thorough description of the scope of available services as described in 34 CFR 361.49.
- B. When there are comparable providers of services available those providers will be identified. After thorough examination and discussion of factors related to the use of each provider, including at a minimum:
 1. Cost, accessibility, and duration of potential services;
 2. Level of consumer satisfaction with those services to the extent that such information is available;
 3. Qualifications of potential service providers;
 4. Types of services offered by those providers; and
 5. Degree to which services are provided in integrated settings.
 6. Outcomes achieved.
- C. Except where otherwise prohibited by state or federal law, regulation, or policy; alternative methods to provide and/or secure services will be identified for clients and they will choose the method(s).
- D. The continuing effectiveness and satisfaction of the informed choices will be reviewed periodically especially during scheduled and unscheduled reviews of the IPE or the client's VR progress.

26.6 Informed Choice in Amendments to the IPE

All policy and procedures relevant to informed choice in the development of the IPE and selection of available services are applicable to amendments of the IPE.

26.7 Documentation of Informed Choice

Federal monitoring guidelines require the client record to have documentation that the client was given informed choice in selection of the rehabilitation goals, objectives, services, and service providers.

26.8 State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

All policies regarding informed choice in the VR process are developed in consultation with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).