# Vocational Rehabilitation Services Manual B-100: Vocational Rehabilitation Process, Roles, and Responsibilities

Revised on Oct. 1, 2019

## B-102: Informed Choice

Informed choice (also referred to as informed customer choice) begins with the first customer contact and continues throughout the VR process. Informed choice means that the customer chooses from options based on accurate information and knowledge. The options are developed in partnership between the customer and the VR counselor, and when applied correctly, result in a competitive integrated employment outcome.

It is important for all individuals involved in the rehabilitation process to consistently apply the principles of "informed customer choice."

### B-102-1: Legal Authorization for Informed Choice

#### CFR § 361.52 Informed choice.

(a) General provision. The vocational rehabilitation services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must assure that applicants and recipients of

services or, as appropriate, their representatives are provided information and support services to assist applicants and recipients of services in exercising informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process consistent with the provisions of section 102(d) of the Act and the requirements of this section.

(b) Written policies and procedures.

The designated State unit, in consultation with its State Rehabilitation Council, if it has a Council, must develop and implement written policies and procedures that

enable an applicant or recipient of services to exercise informed choice throughout the vocational rehabilitation process. These policies and procedures

must provide for—

(1) 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 the designated State unit 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;

(2) Assisting applicants and recipients of services in exercising informed choice in decisions related to the provision of assessment services;

(3) 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;

(4) 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—

(i) Employment outcome;

(ii) Specific vocational rehabilitation services needed to achieve the employment outcome;

(iii) Entity that will provide the services;

(iv) Employment setting and the settings in which the services will be provided; and

(v) Methods available for procuring the services; and

(5) Ensuring that the availability and scope of informed choice is consistent with the obligations of the designated State agency under this part.

(c) Information and assistance in the selection of vocational rehabilitation services and service providers.

In assisting an applicant and eligible individual in exercising informed choice during the assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs and during development of the individualized plan for employment, the designated State unit must provide the individual or the individual’s representative, or assist the

individual or the individual’s representative 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—

(1) Cost, accessibility, and duration of potential services;

(2) Consumer satisfaction with those services to the extent that information relating to consumer satisfaction 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 such information is available.

(d) Methods or sources of information.

In providing or assisting the individual or the individual’s representative in acquiring the information required under paragraph (c) of this section, the State unit may use, but is not limited to, the following methods or sources of information:

(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 relating to the qualifications of service providers.

(5) Opportunities for individuals to visit or experience various work and service provider settings.

### B-102-2: Applying Principles of Informed Choice to the VR Process

The principles of informed customer choice are set forth in regulations that implement the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and require that the customer must be informed about and involved in choosing among alternative:

* goals;
* objectives;
* services;
* entities providing such services; and
* methods used to provide or procure the services.

To achieve positive employment outcomes, the customer must be involved in decision making to the greatest extent to which the customer is capable of participating.

During the first meeting with the customer, the VR counselor explains the concepts of:

* informed choice;
* effective partnerships between the VR counselor and the customer; and
* the VR process, including the specific purposes of the VR program.

The customer and the VR counselor jointly choose providers for assessments and other information necessary to determine eligibility. During IPE development, the VR counselor and the customer jointly:

* consider a variety of competitive integrated employment goals that will help the customer overcome impediments to employment; and
* assess which choice is most consistent with the customer's knowledge, skills, abilities, and other key attributes.

After the customer's specific rehabilitation needs have been identified, the VR counselor provides information on available services that meet the customer's needs within the scope of state and federal laws, agency policies and procedures, and the highest ethical standards. In some cases, there may be only one appropriate alternative that meets the customer's needs and can be supported by VR. If alternatives developed by VR are not acceptable to the customer, or if preferences expressed by the customer are not among the alternatives presented, the VR counselor discusses options until the VR counselor and the customer reach a mutually acceptable decision. If the VR counselor and the customer cannot reach an agreement, the VR counselor informs the customer of his or her right to appeal. For more information, refer to [A-200: Customer Rights and Legal Issues](https://twc.texas.gov/vr-services-manual/vrsm-a-200).