

NC DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Section:	I
Title:	Informed Choice
Current Effective Date:	02/08
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The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program provides necessary information to make informed choices to each applicant and eligible individual throughout the VR process. These individuals may choose to involve family members, advocates, and other authorized applicant representatives or individual representative in their VR program. This informed choice includes the selection of a specific employment outcome; VR services to be provided to achieve the chosen employment outcome, including Assessment services, assessment for determining eligibility and VR needs, service providers; and methods to procure the services. All information is provided in the individual's appropriate mode of communication.

Toward this VR program intent, the State Agency provides these individuals with tools necessary to make informed choices and decisions. Full responsibility for this availability and scope of informed choice has been delegated to the State Agency's qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

In providing rehabilitation services to applicants or eligible individuals, it will be the responsibility of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to inform the person that:

AVAILABILITY AND OPPORTUNITIES - Through his/her appropriate mode of communication, he/she will be informed about the availability of and opportunities to exercise informed choice.

INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES - He/she will be provided information and support services to assist him/her in exercising informed choice throughout the rehabilitation process.

RIGHT TO MAKE CHOICES - Visual disability does not diminish in any way one's right to make choices.

EMPOWERMENT - The VR program intent is to empower him/her to use informed choice in making decisions about his/her employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion and integration into society.

ACT/PURPOSE - The purpose of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, is to assist individual(s) with disabilities to prepare for and engage in gainful employment. This must be done with informed choice, as well as his/her strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests.

PARTNER - He/she will be an active and full partner in the VR process.

INDIVIDUAL WITH A SIGNIFICANT DISABILITY/PRESUMPTION OF ELIGIBILITY - An individual determined disabled or blind by the Social Security Act is:

- An individual with a significant disability and
- Such an individual with a significant disability, under certain conditions is presumed eligible for VR services (presumption of eligibility).

ASSESSMENTS SERVICES/ELIGIBILITY AND VR NEEDS - He/she will be provided assistance in exercising informed choice in decisions related to the provision of assessment services for determining:

- Eligibility for services and
- VR needs.

PROCUREMENT POLICIES AND METHODS (SERVICES AND METHODS) - He/she will be provided flexible procurement policies and methods which facilitate the provision of services as well as meaningful choices among the methods used to procure the services: Assistive Devices/Equipment and Fees for Services and Vendors.

INDIVIDUAL PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT (IPE) He/she will be provided with and assisted in acquiring information which will enable him/her to exercise informed choice in the selection of the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) (On-Line DSB-4005b-VR Individual Plan for Employment with instructions):

- Employment outcome,
- Specific VR services needed to achieve the employment outcome,
- Service providers,
- Employment setting and the settings in which services are provided, and
- Methods available for procuring the services.

IPE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION - His/her IPE will be developed and implemented in such a manner it will afford the opportunity to exercise informed choice.

IPE EMPLOYMENT OUTCOME AND INTEGRATED SETTING - The IPE will have a mandated:

- Description of the specific employment outcome chosen, consistent with his/her unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice and
- To the maximum extent appropriate, results in employment in an integrated work setting.

SERVICES AND INTEGRATED SETTING - The IPE will have a description of the specific VR services to be provided in the most integrated setting, as appropriate for the service.

DEFINITION OF VR SERVICES - The IPE services described will meet the statutory definition of Vocational Rehabilitation Services; that is, any services necessary to assist an individual with a disability in preparing for, securing, retaining, or regaining an employment outcome, consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual.

COUNSELING AND GUIDANCE - The rehabilitation service of Counseling and Guidance (counseling and guidance) will also include information and support services to assist him/her in exercising informed choice.

STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS - The availability and scope of informed choice provided to him/her must meet statutory obligations of the Agency in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in August 1998 (Title I).