



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES

1. POLICY	
Department on Disability Services	Subject: Informed Choice
Responsible Program or Office: Rehabilitation Services Administration	Policy Number: Year-admin-abbreviated subject-POL consecutive three-digit-number
Date of Approval by the Director:	Number of Pages:
Effective Date: <i>Must be equal to or later than the Date of Approval by the Director</i>	Expiration Date, if Any:
Supersedes Policy Dated:	
Cross References, Related Policies and Procedures, and Related Documents: DCRSA Policy Section IV IPE Services	

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Department on Disability Services, Rehabilitation Services Administration (“DCRSA” or “Agency”) provides eligible persons with information and support services necessary to exercise informed choice consistent with 34 CFR § 361.52.

3. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Specialists, supervisors, managers, and people served by DCRSA.

4. AUTHORITY

The authority for this policy is established in DDS as set forth in D.C. Law 16-264, the “Department on Disability Services Establishment Act of 2006,” effective March 14, 2007 (D.C. Code 7-761.01 *et seq.*), and Establishment of the Rehabilitation Services Program (D.C. Code § 32-331 *et seq.*), and Informed Choice (34 CFR § 361.52).

5. POLICY

It is the policy of DCRSA to treat people as full and active partners throughout the VR





process, and to provide information and services to support decision making.

DCRSA VR Specialists shall inform each applicant and eligible person (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), through appropriate modes of communication, about the availability of and opportunities to exercise informed choice, including the availability of support services for persons with cognitive or other disabilities who require assistance in exercising informed choice in decisions related to service options.

Appropriate modes of communication are defined in 34 CFR § 361.5 as specialized aids and supports that enable a person with a disability to comprehend and respond to information that is being communicated.

Appropriate modes of communication include, but are not limited to, the use of interpreters, open and closed captioned videos, specialized telecommunications services and audio recordings, Brailled and large print materials, materials in electronic formats, augmentative communication devices, graphic presentations, and simple language materials.

- A. VR Specialists shall assist persons in exercising informed choice in decisions related to the provision of assessment services.
- B. The VR Specialists shall provide information, or assistance in acquiring the information, necessary to make an informed choice with respect to selection of the following:
 - 1) The employment outcome;
 - 2) Specific vocational rehabilitation services needed to achieve the employment outcome;
 - 3) Entity that will provide the services;
 - 4) Employment setting and the settings in which the services will be provided; and
 - 5) The methods available for procuring the services.

In providing information, the VR Specialist shall consider the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests of the person.

6. RESPONSIBILITY

The responsibility for this policy is vested in the Deputy Director of the Rehabilitation Services Administration. Implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Rehabilitation Services Administration.





7. STANDARDS

A. Decision Making

The VR Specialist shall support the development of the person's ability to gather information and use information to make decisions to the best of the person's ability. If the person has completed a Supported Decision Making document the VR specialist shall verify the preferences and use the document as a tool to support the person in exercising informed choice.

B. Discovery

The VR Specialist shall assist the person in discovering his or her unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests, and shall facilitate the selection of an employment outcome that is consistent with these.

C. Planning

The VR Specialist shall provide information regarding options for developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) described in 34 CFR § 361.45 including:

- 1) Developing all or part of the IPE without assistance from DCRSA; or,
- 2) Developing all or part of the IPE with assistance from-
 - a. A qualified VR Specialist employed by DCRSA,
 - b. A qualified VR Specialist who is not employed by DCRSA,
 - c. Other resources.

D. Information

The VR specialist shall advise the person that informed choice includes making choices from a range of options and within the parameters of regulations and policies that affect the exercise of informed choice.

The VR Specialist shall provide or assist the person to acquire information relating to the following to the extent available:

- 1) Cost, accessibility, and duration of potential services;
- 2) Consumer satisfaction with services;
- 3) Qualifications of potential service providers;
- 4) Types of services offered by the potential providers;
- 5) The degree to which services are provided in integrated settings;
- 6) Outcomes achieved by persons working with service providers.

VR Counselors shall inform persons that in addition to competitive, integrated public or private employer work places, employment setting can include self-employment or business ownership.





E. Disagreement

If the VR Specialist cannot support a decision of the person, the VR Specialist shall:

- 1) Assist the person in reviewing and reevaluating the information needed to make an informed decision;
- 2) Discuss with the person the need for further information and support the person, to the extent needed, to gather it;
- 3) Provide additional supports or alternative modes of communication to ensure understanding by the person;
- 4) Bring in additional people (support people, supervisor, professionals, consultants, and other relevant personnel) to discuss the issues; and
- 5) Discuss alternatives and possible compromises with the person.

If the VR Specialist and the person are still in disagreement, the VR specialist will provide a written denial of service along with appeal rights and a written description of services available from Client Assistance Program and information on how to contact that program for assistance

Andrew Reese, Acting Director

Approval Date

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