

IDVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Training Series Informed Choice – Part 2

Welcome

Welcome to IDVR's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Training. This program is provided by the Idaho Division of Rehabilitation Counseling and Interwork Institute of San Diego State University. It is part of the Agency's effort to provide readily available training support to vocational rehabilitation counselors. For further information contact: shannon.wilcox@vr.idaho.gov

Applying Principles of Informed Choice

Informed choice is implemented in every stage of the VR process. It is important that customers are aware of possible options throughout the entire process, including the option of contacting the Client Assistance Program (CAP) or requesting a fair hearing if the customer disagrees with a counselor's decision.

Application and Eligibility Process

Informed choice can be implemented during the application and eligibility process by assisting the applicant to understand options related to the process to determine eligibility and requirements for customer participation in the eligibility determination process. providers.

Vocational Needs

Use informed choice in helping individuals assess their vocational needs. Informed choice should be used to assist eligible individuals to:

- Understand options for eliminating, accommodating, or diminishing their barriers to employment,
- Research and determine the goods and services as well as costs, service providers and methods for procuring goods and services they will need to reach their vocational objectives, and
- Explore and apply for comparable benefits or other resources available to meet their needs.
- For those who receive social security benefits due to their disability, provide individuals with resources to help them understand how working may affect their benefits and to make choices based on their financial priorities.

Individualized Plan for Employment

Use informed choice to help customers develop their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Informed choice should be used to explain the customer's options for developing the IPE.

Based on research completed during the assessment of vocational needs (also known as a comprehensive assessment), assist the customer to choose an appropriate vocational goal, IPE objectives, and services that will help them become successfully employed.

Assist individuals to choose service providers and methods for procuring services among available options, including exploring comparable benefits.

Help customers understand that if VR cannot support a certain choice, the customer still has alternatives, such as pursuing their employment goal with assistance from other resources, choosing another vocational option, or determining if VR can partially support the choice.

Job Search

Use informed choice to help individuals during the job search. Informed choice should be used to:

- Assist the customer to understand choices and make decisions regarding job search methods,
- Clarify when a paid Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) can be used and, if applicable, assist the customer to explore available options for CRPs, including the option of interviewing CRPs before deciding,
- Assist customers to understand their responsibilities and potential consequences of their choices while searching for employment, such as helping them take responsibility to do all they can to find jobs on their own, and
- Assist individuals to understand implications of not actively participating in their job search, including a pause in service provision or case closure.

Employment

Use informed choice to help individuals with employment. Informed choice should be used to assist customers to make choices regarding job offers. This can include evaluating with the customer if job offers are appropriate given the customers' skills, capabilities, abilities, and functional limitations or medical restrictions.

Use informed choice to assist customers to understand their choices and responsibilities to accept appropriate jobs to reach the employment outcome outlined

on their IPE and potential implications if they do not follow through with entering into appropriate employment.

Assist customers to understand their choices for turning down job offers that are not appropriate due to their disability, medical restrictions, or other valid reasons.

Assist customers to make choices and take responsibility for the kind of employee they want to become and to be active in determining ways to remove barriers in their jobs.

Case Closure

Assist customers to make informed choices at closure by informing them that a case is typically closed 90 days after employment stability.

Explain other possible reasons for case closure. For example, a pattern of missing appointments, inability to continue with VR services due to health or medical reasons, or continued inability to meet agreed on customer responsibilities in their plan services.

Assist customers to understand their options, which include agreeing with closure if satisfied with this decision; reapplying for VR services if needed in the future or if their situation changes; discussing their concerns about closure with their counselor or supervisor; and contacting CAP or requesting an impartial fair hearing if they disagree with case closure.

Limits of Informed Choice

Informed choice is **NOT**...

- Unlimited choices,
- A blank check for whatever the customer wants,
- A binding obligation for VR to agree with whatever vocational goal or choices the customer makes,
- A customer-driven choice where the customer insists on a vocational goal, a service, service providers or methods for procurement of services without the benefit of counseling and guidance to help the customer discover strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and available options.
- A pre-selected goal or service based solely on the counselor's opinion as to the most suitable service or employment objective.

Importance of Documenting Informed Choice

It is important that counselors document the provision of informed choice. It is critical that case notes include information regarding the exploration of available options indicating the choices the customer made.

For example, if the counselor reports, “customer **agreed to**,” the reader cannot tell if the customer merely agreed to a decision that the counselor made or if the customer made a choice regarding the decision.

If the counselor reports, “after exploring options, **the customer chose to ...because....**,” it is clear that the **customer made the choice from available options** and explains the rationale for the decision.

Documenting the Informed Choice Process

Here are some examples of case documentation that demonstrate ways in which customers actively made decisions regarding their employment plans. Please review each case carefully and note how the counselor demonstrates each customer’s contribution to the employment plan.

Case Notes for George

Reviewed vocational test results and explored various vocational options. George indicated that due to the difficulties he had in school he does not want to pursue a job that requires additional schooling or extensive training. His test results indicate he has interest and aptitude in the service field. Provided C & G on various types of jobs and discussed possible pros and cons of choices he might make. He previously participated in school sponsored work experiences and indicated he liked stocking and dishwashing where he could be active but did not like “boring” jobs like shredding.

He indicated he did not want to explore additional options and preferred to stick with what he has done and knows. He chose an IPE goal of stocking but decided to also pursue dishwashing jobs. Because he will require the same basic services for both jobs, we agreed that an IPE amendment could be completed if a suitable dishwashing position were found.

We jointly explored services he will need to reach his goal and how these services can be obtained. He believed his primary need is assistance with completing applications and any paperwork required for employment.

Discussed use of a CRP and reviewed the vendor list with him. He decided he wanted to try CRP XYZ based on their experience working with young people. They will also provide assistance with completing new hire paperwork as needed.

Secondary services identified include a bus pass for job search and any uniforms or work clothes required by the employer.

Case Notes for Chrissy

Chrissy's disabilities include diabetes (controlled w/medications) and some arthritis in her knees. She has been released to light-duty work. Her physician recommends she avoid high stress environments as this may affect her ability to control her blood sugar.

She has previous front desk experience but has not worked in several years due to helping out with her grandchildren.

Reviewed her vocational test results and provided C & G on various vocational options both in and out of the clerical field. She decided to remain in the clerical field but wanted to participate in a clerical work assessment to determine her stamina levels and if she needed to update her skills. She chose Manpower in order to be in a "real office in the community."

She enjoyed and did well in the clerical aspects of the work assessment but decided high customer service demands were too stressful, therefore decided to pursue a selective office assistant position in an office with low phone and customer traffic.

C & G provided to help her determine services needed to go to work. As she will require updated computer skills she agreed to explore schools on the approved vendor list to determine which best fits her needs.

We explored various placement options. Chrissy believes she is capable of conducting her own job search. I agree with her assessment. We will not pursue CRP services if she attends a clerical training program and a workshop at IDOL to brush up on her interview and job seeking skills help her prepare a resume, and to obtain job leads.

She will need interview and work clothes and decided to use Goodwill for this because she'll be able to get more "bang for the buck."

Drafted IPE for her chosen goal. Scheduled an appointment time next week for her to bring in school information. Will plan to finalize and signing IPE at that time.

Case Notes for Jim

Reviewed the following with Jim: work history, strengths, needs, and priorities. Explored his options and provided counseling on pros and cons of each choice, including returning to the janitorial field, completing vocational evaluation, and exploring other options. Jim indicated he wants to return to the janitorial field as his priority is to get employed quickly.

Provided C & G to assist him in determining services he will need to be successful in this field. Jim decided he will need job search assistance, a job coach, work clothes and assistance with transportation, etc.

Discussed various job search assistance possibilities. He decided to participate in workshops at IDOL and also requested a job developer/CRP as he will need one-on-one assistance completing applications.

Discussed various vendors. He decided to use CRP XYZ for job development as they already have contacts in the janitorial field. After exploring options and comparable benefits, he would like to get his interview clothing from Fred Meyer as it is close to his home. IDVR will provide a bus pass for his job search, so he is not dependent on others for rides.

Jointly completed and signed his IPE & scheduled appointment for us to meet with the job developer/CRP.

In addition to case notes, documenting informed choice may also include placing research completed by the customer in the case file, and indicating on the IPE how a choice was made.

Conclusion

Implementing informed choice in the VR process can be instrumental for empowering people with disabilities toward inclusion and independence. By understanding ways to implement informed choice, counselors are able to guide customers in making thoughtful decisions that allow them to take responsibility for VR services and their own employment process. In turn, taking responsibility for life choices leads to empowerment, inclusion, and independence, enabling customers to achieve high quality and fulfilling employment.

Lesson Completed

You have now completed the second part of the lesson for this module. Click this [link](#) to complete the Module Quiz. You must successfully complete the quiz before moving to the next module.