

**Chapter 102**

**INFORMED CHOICE**

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## Section I. Definitions

**“Informed choice”** means making a decision based on adequate information. As appropriate, such information may include methods, costs, durations, accessibility, customer satisfaction, probabilities, sources, and consequences.

## Section II. General Policy

- A. The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) will provide each applicant, including persons who are receiving services during an extended evaluation, and each eligible person, the opportunity to make informed choices throughout the vocational rehabilitation process. DVR, in consultation with its State Rehabilitation Council, shall design policies and procedures and guidance material that enables each person to make an informed choice with regard to the selection of a long-term vocational goal, vocational rehabilitation services, and service providers.
- B. Policies, procedures, and guidance materials will be delivered through appropriate modes of communication. They will include, as applicable, information concerning the availability and scope of informed choice, the manner in which informed choice may be exercised, and the availability of support services for persons with cognitive or other disabilities who require assistance in exercising informed choice.
- C. In developing a person's Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), DVR shall provide or assist the person in acquiring information necessary to make an informed choice about specific services that are needed to achieve the person's vocational goal. This information shall include cost, accessibility, and duration of potential services, customer satisfaction with those services to the extent that information relating to customer satisfaction is available,

the qualifications of potential service providers, the types of services offered by those providers, and the degree to which services are provided in integrated settings. The IPE shall include documentation regarding the choices made. (See Chapter 203, Individualized Plan for Employment).

- D. In providing or assisting the person in acquiring the information above, DVR may use, but shall not be limited to, the following methods or sources of information:
1. Lists of services and service providers;
  2. Periodic customer satisfaction surveys and reports to the extent they are available;
  3. Referrals to other customers, customer groups, or disability advisory councils qualified to discuss services or service providers;
  4. Relevant accreditation, certification, or other information relating to the qualifications of service providers;
  5. Cost, accessibility, and duration; and
  6. Degree to which services are provided in integrated settings.

### **Section III: Disagreements**

If the Counselor cannot support the decision of the person, the Counselor shall:

- A. Assist the person in reviewing and re-evaluating information needed to make an informed decision;
- B. Discuss with the person the need for further information and how to gather it;
- C. Provide additional supports or alternative modes of communication to ensure understanding by the person;

- D. Bring in additional people (peers, professionals, consultants, and other relevant personnel) to discuss the issues;
- E. Discuss alternatives and possible compromises with the person; and

*GUIDANCE:* To make an informed choice, one must have and be able to understand pertinent information; acquiring and understanding information takes time. In an attempt to deliver services quickly and expediently (e.g., in the Division’s “fast track” model), pertinent information and enough time to interpret/understand it, may inadvertently be overlooked. Consequently, reviewing and re-evaluating information and following the activities listed above are important. Counselor judgement becomes key in determining the extent to which a person has researched and understands factors in making an informed decision.

Examples of disagreements:

1. The person needs a word processing capability to participate in a writing course at the Community College of Vermont; since it’s not possible to use the facility’s computer laboratory, the Counselor suggests that the person survey three local vendors for a word processor which will meet his/her needs (learn price, warranty, service information, etc.). At the next meeting the person dutifully brings quotes ranging from \$2,500 to \$3,000 for a personal computer with a modem, CD ROM, software for word processing, spreadsheets, three months of free Internet, and a color printer.

The Counselor reviews the information, clarifies that the need is only for a word processing capability, apologizes for the miscommunication, and suggests that the person research the cost, etc. of a word processor suitable to meet his needs. The Counselor also offers to furnish an amount equal to the cost of a word processor toward the cost of a computer. The person may then choose between a word processor furnished by the Division or a computer contingent upon other resources.

2. The person needs transportation to get to and from work and asks that the Division help purchase an automobile; he has already looked at the Transportation policy and also knows a guy for whom the Division purchased a vehicle, so he wants one, too.

The Counselor reviews the Transportation policy with the person and clarifies that the “most cost-effective alternative, including relocation” will normally be provided. The Counselor also asks that the person investigate costs of operating a vehicle and offers to help the person relocate closer to his job or to a location which is on a compatible bus line.

The person refuses to consider anything else. The Counselor provides information on CAP and reviews DVR’s appeals process.

F. If the Counselor and the person are still in disagreement, the Counselor will provide information concerning CAP and will review DVR’s appeals process.