

# Informed Choice

In the 1998 Amendments to the federal Rehabilitation Act, Congress found that:

"Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the rights of individuals to live independently; enjoy self-determination; make choices; contribute to society; pursue meaningful careers; and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the mainstream of American Society.

## What is Informed Choice?

You have come to the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) for assistance in finding a job. Many decisions affecting you and your life will be made as you work with DORS staff, such as:

- What kind of work fits your interests and abilities
- What you need to get that type of job
- What help you need to keep the job

DORS staff will help you find out 1) what your options are and 2) the pros and cons of each option. Then you will be able to make good decisions leading to employment. This is "informed choice."

There may be times when, because of policy or funding issues, DORS may not be able to pay for a specific choice you would like to make. However, your preferences should always be an important part of planning your rehabilitation program.

From the 1998 Amendments to the federal Rehabilitation Act:  
"Employment goals chosen by eligible individuals need to be consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns,

abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual."

### **What You Need To Fully Consider:**

- You - your strengths, needs, preferences, priorities, concerns, and hopes as they relate to employment
- The Job Market - accurate information about employment trends and opportunities, employer needs and expectations, and job duties and requirements
- Resources - information regarding community resources and programs which can assist you in reaching your employment goal
- DORS - information about DORS policies and procedures as they relate to your preferences, needs, and employment goal

Your DORS counselor is there to guide and assist you in identifying and considering all of these factors. You are welcome to invite a support person(s) to meetings with DORS staff.

### **Important Opportunities to Make Informed Choice**

The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 emphasize your right to fully participate from the beginning to the end of your vocational rehabilitation process, including when you:

- Plan for types of assessments and evaluations
- Develop employment options and select an employment goal
- Decide what steps are needed in order to reach your employment goal

- Choose who will provide rehabilitation services, goods, and assessments
- Develop your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)
- Plan how your financial contribution, if any, will be applied to your services
- Identify types of jobs to consider and select from available job offers

It is the policy of the United States that the public vocational rehabilitation program be carried out in a manner consistent with the principles of respect for individuals dignity, personal responsibility, self-determination, and pursuit of meaningful careers, and based on informed choice of individuals with disabilities.

## **Advocacy and the Appeals Process**

Throughout the rehabilitation process, you will have opportunities to discuss your options and choices with DORS staff. If you are not able to come to agreement, you may contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) to assist you in communicating your point of view and negotiating with DORS. You can reach a CAP specialist by calling 1-800-638-6243.

If you have a concern about any decision made by DORS, you may talk with your counselor the office supervisor, other DORS management staff, and/or request assistance through CAP.

You have the right to request a formal appeal by submitting your concerns in writing, within 60 days of the decision, to:  
Assistant State Superintendent in Rehabilitation Services  
2301 Argonne Drive, Baltimore MD 21218.

Formal appeals are heard through the Office of Administrative Hearings. If both parties involved agree, there is an option to

pursue a formal mediation process to assist in settling any dispute. Additional information regarding the appeal process can be requested through your counselor or CAP.

Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Rehabilitation Services  
Toll free: 1-888-554-0334  
TTY: 410-554-9411  
Website: [www.dors.maryland.gov](http://www.dors.maryland.gov)

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