

Individualized Employment Plan (IPE): Counselor-Consumer Alliance for Developing an Effective IPE

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June 18, 2009

Counselor-Consumer Alliance

- What is Counselor-Consumer Alliance?
Partnership of Counselor and Consumer characterized by:
 - Sharing of responsibilities
 - Sharing of information
 - Mutual respect
 - Mutual Input
 - Mutual decisions
 - Goal Oriented
 - Flexibility
 - Communication
 - Trust

When does the Counselor-Consumer Alliance start?

At Application:

- Counselor must immediately encourage/foster an atmosphere that is conducive to: Communication, mutual respect, sharing of information and goal orientation.
- Elements that must be present:
 - Exchange of expectations
 - Explanation of the VR Process
 - INFORMED CHOICE
 - Clear establishment that “employment” is the purpose and goal of the Alliance.

Exchange of Expectations

- The consumer shares and identifies reasons for contact, goals, needs, services, and desired outcomes.
- The counselor shares and clarifies roles, explains rights and responsibilities, initiates guidance and counseling, and emphasizes “employment” as the desired outcome.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Process and Informed Choice

Counselor thoroughly explains the VR process.

A. ORDER OF SELECTION

B. FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION

C. UTILIZATION OF SIMILAR BENEFITS

- **Program Eligibility** is thoroughly explained. Including the **preliminary assessment**; possibility of need for provision of Diagnostic services; information on the **60-day** period for determination of eligibility.
- **IPE information** is introduced, importance of consumer active participation in the development of the plan, selection of services, vocational goal identification, selection of vendor/services providers venues and formats are strongly emphasized.

VR Process and Informed Choice

Emphasis is placed on explanation of the **Comprehensive Assessment** –what it entails and its purpose.

- Consumer identifies his/her needs, strengths and challenges in meeting requirements towards completion of Comprehensive Assessment.
- Counselor and Consumer discuss and plan for taking advantages of the strengths presented and for overcoming challenges.

Informed Choice

- Shared responsibility
- Identifying options and considering the advantages and disadvantages of each
- Partnership
- Begins with the first meeting
- Continues throughout the rehabilitation process
- Accommodations identified/provided as needed

Key Elements of Informed Choice

- An Ongoing Process
- A Joint Effort
- Consumer Driven
- Counselor Supported
- Individualized
- Involvement is Documented

Counselor-Consumer Alliance

AT ELIGIBILITY:

The Counselor must directly communicate with the Consumer:

- To answer any questions the Consumer may have in reference to the process involved in the eligibility determination.
- To clearly specify, what it means to be eligible?
- “I will get everything from VR” or “I am entitled to everything from VR”.

In some instances, what the consumers want have absolutely no relationship with what is needed to accomplish their employment goal.

Preliminary Assessment

- Prior to making a final decision of Eligibility, a counselor may question an applicant's ability to benefit from VR services. A Trial Work or Extended Evaluation period might be useful before a determination of eligibility or ineligibility is made.
- The Counselor and Consumer must meet to discuss and agree to the provision of the Trial Work Experience and/or Extended Evaluation; and must develop a Trial Work Plan or Extended Evaluation IPE together.

Comprehensive Assessment

Counselor and Consumer will review the VR process and prepare for the Comprehensive Assessment.

Counselor and Consumer will share information on **tools and options** that will be used during the Comprehensive Assessment.

Tools/options may include:

1. **Vocational Assessment/Evaluation** (including questions to be asked and addressed by the Vocational Evaluator; extent of the vocational evaluation; outcomes desired)
2. **Community Based Assessment**
3. **Supported Employment**
4. **Situational Assessment**

Comprehensive Assessment

A Comprehensive Assessment Staffing - Consumer, Counselor and other individuals involved in the generation of reports/information during the CA period – strongly recommended.

Purpose:

1. Share and clarify information on data gathered, testing performance and recommendations made.
2. Provide consumer with evidence-based information in selecting a realistic vocational goal and start identifying goals and services that will not only assist with reaching the vocational goal but that are directly related with the achievement of the goal.

Individual Plan for Employment

- The IPE represents the culmination of the Comprehensive Assessment by documenting the job choice, and the nature and scope of services and benchmarks.
- The Counselor provides the Consumer information necessary to make decisions regarding alternative goals, objectives, services, service providers and methods to procure services and/or assist in the acquisition of information necessary to make these informed decisions.
- Information may also include: cost, accessibility, duration of potential services, qualification of service providers, and degree to which services are provided in an integrated setting.

Individual Plan for Employment

- Services will be provided consistent with the full input of the consumer.
- The employment outcome will be consistent with the consumer's informed choice.
- All services identified must be directly related to the achievement of the vocational goal.
- The IPE must be agreed to and signed by the consumer and must be approved and signed by the counselor.

Essential Components of the IPE

- Identify the Employment Outcome
- Select VR Services
- Choose Service Providers
- Establish Timelines
- Identify Responsibilities
- Identify Similar Benefits

Measuring Consumer Progress & Flexibility of the IPE

- Counselor and Consumer must communicate/meet periodically to share information on the consumer's progress towards completion of the vocational goal and other alternative goals identified in the IPE.
- There should be at least an Annual Review of the IPE with the consumer (providing the case is “active” for one year.)
- Amendments to the IPE are required at any time when there are substantive changes in the vocational goal, services to be provided or service providers (unless a similar certified provider is substituted for a similar/identical service) .

Empowerment of VR Consumers

- Establish Expectation of Consumer Engagement in the Process at First Meeting
- Focus on Relationship of Customer and VR as Allies not as Adversaries
- Good Naturedly Challenge Customers to Deploy Self-Determination through Research and Informed Choice

Customer Empowerment and Informed Choice

in Successful Rehabilitations

- Research suggests that the development of an effective counselor-consumer working alliance is a paramount prerequisite for facilitating consumer informed choice and self-determination
- The Central Factor in ALL Successful VR IPEs is an Effective Working Alliance between the Consumer and Their VR Representative

Essential Ingredients of an Effective Working Alliance

Between VR Staff and Consumers

- Treat all Consumers as adults, regardless of the severity of their disability.
- Use Age-Appropriate Language & Techniques
- Place emphasis on Consumer strengths
- Respect Consumer Values and Strengths

Questions...

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*This presentation was developed by the **TACE Center: Region IV ©2009** with funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) under the priority of Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Projects (TACE) – Grant #H264A080021. However, the contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policy of the RSA and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government [34 CFR 75.620 (b)].*

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