

Holding Engaging Conversations about Work

Employment First – Person Centered – Informed Choice

Minnesota Department of Human Services
2016 Informed Choice for Employment

As someone who helps people with disabilities explore employment, it is important to understand what Employment First, Person Centered Planning, and Informed Choice are and how they work together.

Employment First is a set of core values as well as policy adopted across the nation that supports competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities. It means that employment is the first and preferred outcome for all working-age people with disabilities, including people with complex and significant disabilities. Minnesota has an Employment First policy agreed upon by a number of state agencies.

Person Centered include planning and practices that help people set goals and develop action steps that enhance quality of life. These practices help the person connect to opportunities in the community and build relationships with others. Control over decisions rests with the person and you serve as a facilitator. Person centered planning can occur within different settings (schools, vocational rehabilitation, counties, etc.) and may use different tools for exploration (IEP, MNCHOICES, etc.).

Informed Choice can be the *result* of a person centered planning approach. Ensuring informed choice means that a person understands all of their options, understands methods to overcome barriers and understands the potential risks and benefits of decisions. Options are not limited to only disability specific programs. Community resources and supports are valued and explored.

How do I know informed choice occurred?

Informed choice means that the person you are supporting was able to make decisions based on the complete information that connects to their own situation. It means that myths about employment and barriers to achieving goals are effectively addressed.

Consider integrating the following steps within your processes to ensure informed choice:

1. Discover → helping the person explore
 - ✓ A strengths based conversation used to help a person explore dreams, goals, and assets.
 - ✓ Tools or assessments used to facilitate a conversation and document results.
2. Plan → helping the person develop an action plan to achieve goals
 - ✓ If pitfalls and barriers were identified, they were promptly addressed.
 - ✓ If a person says “no” to work, the reason for “no” is thoroughly explored and myths are debunked.
 - ✓ A person is supported to explore work experience and natural supports that can facilitate work.
3. Implement → supporting the person as they work to achieve their employment goals
 - ✓ You are available to help the person overcome unseen barriers and modify goals as needed.
4. Follow Up → ensuring that people feel supported by regularly checking in with them
 - ✓ You check in as agreed upon by you and the person and at least twice a year.
5. Document → providing documentation of the process and results of conversations
 - ✓ Documentation is clear and understandable by the person and others that support them.
 - ✓ Control over sharing documentation lies with the person.