

Providing Informed Choice

The following steps can help you support someone with a disability to make an informed choice about employment.

1. Talk about the benefits of working in a community setting, such as:
 - a. Opportunities to do work matching the individual's interests or hobbies;
 - b. The development of new relationships and skills;
 - c. Working with coworkers and customers with and without disabilities;
 - d. Pay expectations, potential uses of discretionary income, and economic self-sufficiency;
 - e. Potential changes to government benefits the individual receives, as well as how lost benefits might be minimized (e.g., employer-sponsored insurance might minimize Medicaid ineligibility; a higher income may exceed monthly Supplemental Security Income benefits); and
 - f. How the individual will develop greater independence and confidence.
2. Set up experiences for the individual in a variety of workplaces. If unsure where to begin, consider taking the individual to work sites they may already have an interest in, such as a favorite restaurant or store. Helpful experiences include:
 - a. Work site tours or visits;
 - b. Informational interviews;
 - c. Job shadowing; and
 - d. Trial work experiences.
3. Schedule peer-to-peer discussions where individuals can talk to others with disabilities who are working in competitive integrated employment (CIE). Peer-to-peer discussions can also involve family members meeting with other families. These discussions promote the sharing of information about:
 - a. First-hand experience with integrated CIE;
 - b. Obtaining needed supports and services;
 - c. Concerns and challenges with:
 - i. Skill-building and reasonable accommodations;
 - ii. Government benefits;
 - iii. Transportation; and
 - d. The confidence and autonomy that comes from CIE.

Equity Through Advocacy

The Protection and Advocacy System for the State of Indiana



4. Ask about, and then address, any questions or concerns the individual may have about informed choice. Understand that questions and concerns are important to the informed choice process, demonstrate the individual's engagement, and should not serve as barriers to the obtainment of CIE.
5. Revisit a decision to not work in the community on a regular basis. Informed choice is a process that should occur regularly and no decision need be final. Revisiting decisions will allow the individual to:
 - a. Take low-risk steps;
 - b. Be gradually introduced to CIE options;
 - c. Address questions and concerns over the time period with which they are comfortable;
 - d. Build decision-making skills and independence; and
 - e. Change what they want after learning new information or undergoing new experiences.

Informed Choice Is a Skill Built Over Time

If an individual has had limited chances to make decisions (because others did so for them), they may struggle to express their preferences. It takes time to “unlearn” deference to authority. Moreover, limited information and experiences often lead people with disabilities to see a limited range of options. Misinformation, stereotypes, and low expectations each diminish available options. Facilitating informed choice involves addressing these misperceptions and expanding the range of possibilities.

Fortunately, informed choice is a skill one can improve through practice. But making an informed choice does not happen automatically. Self-perception, decision-making skills, and individual abilities all contribute to the informed choice process. Thus, it is critical to provide needed supports so individuals can fully express their desires, concerns, and choices. Every person is unique, regardless of the similarity of their disabilities or diagnoses, and may need unique supports.

Questions?

If you have a question about the information in this fact sheet, feel free to contact Indiana Disability Rights using one of the methods below.

Phone: (317) 722-5555

Toll Free Phone: (800) 622-4845

Website: <https://www.in.gov/idr/for-help-fill-this-out/>

Email: info@IndianaDisabilityRights.org
