



Informed Choice

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- **What is informed choice**

Informed choice is the process of choosing from options based on accurate information, knowledge, and experiences

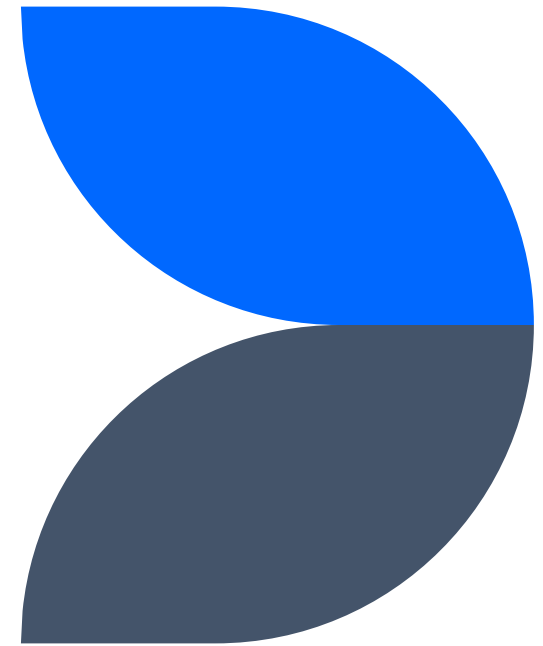


Core principles of choice

- Everyone is capable of making choices
- Choices are not unlimited
- Choices have consequences
- All choices aren't equal

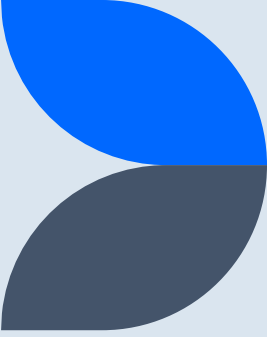
Ensuring a choice that is truly informed

- Individuals with disabilities have the right to make choices over where they work and how they spend their days



Informed choice is not:

**“Do you want to
work? Yes or No?”**

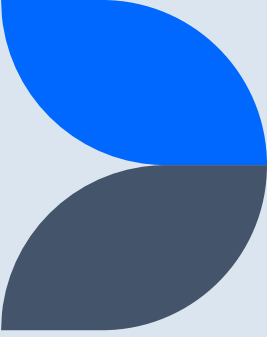


Informed choice requires more than simply asking an individual whether or not they want to work, and it is not a simple yes or no conversation.

Making a well-informed choice is not something that will happen automatically.

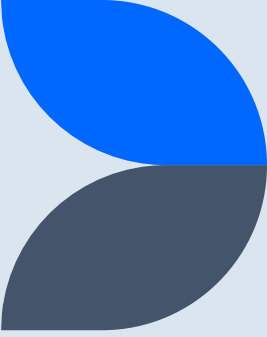
It's impacted by self-perception and by the skills and abilities a person has developed in choice making

What does this mean in terms of employment?



Individuals with disabilities who are considering their employment and service options should have the opportunity to make a fully informed decision about:

- Whether they want to work in integrated community employment
- What type of job they want



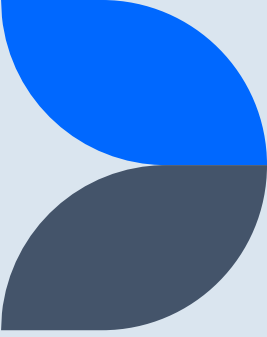
The challenges of informed choice

- Lack of self-determination and self-advocacy abilities can become a barrier to building this skill
- Limited information and experiences
- Misinformation, labels, and stereotypes
- A long-term history of low societal expectations
- Individuals often perceive their capabilities and opportunities as narrow and limited

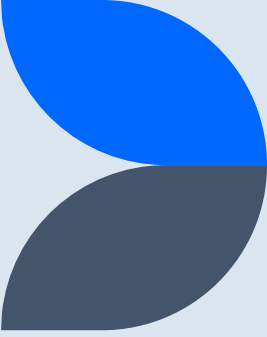
Informed choice should not be used just to decide if an individual wants to work in the general workforce. It can and should be used consistently.

Why informed choice matters

- It's the right thing
- Everyone has the right to self-determination and maximum decision making in how they live
- Informed choice ensures that individuals with disabilities get to exercise those rights

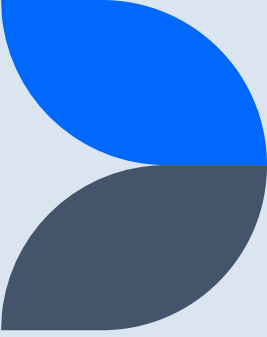


Process for ensuring informed choice regarding employment

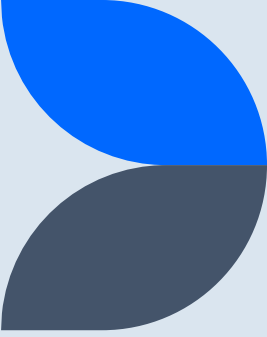


- Provide information about the benefits of working in integrated settings
- Facilitate visits or other experiences in employment settings
- Peer-to-peer discussions
- Identify and address any concerns or objections raised by the individual or relevant decision maker
- Regularly revisit a decision not to work in the community

Everyone has a role in informed choice



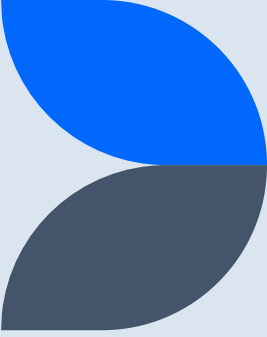
Support professionals should never make a decision on behalf of an individual. It is reasonable for staff to help the person understand their choices and options , advocate that they fully consider employment in the community , and ensure that all necessary steps be taken to maximize employment success.



Professionals should:

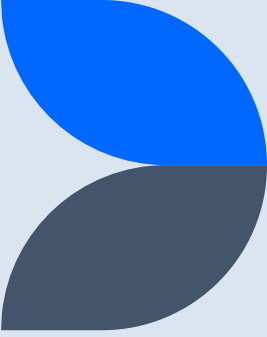
- present the informed choice process as an opportunity to explore options in a low-risk and thoughtful way
- Engage and inform the family
- Acknowledge that choices the individual makes about work may have an impact on family members
- Should an individual choose to pursue employment, working and family members as part of the career planning and discovery process will be important

Statements that can help informed choice



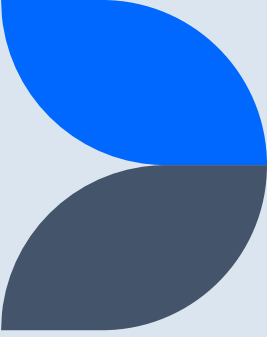
- “What type of things are you interested in?”
- “Tell me about why you're interested in that.”
- “Why is that important to you?”
- “How would you go about learning more about that?”
- “What interests you about working in the community?”
- “What do you know about working in the community?”
- “What concerns you about working in the community?”
- “What did you like about the experience ?”
- “What didn’t you like?”
- “Let’s go visit some workplaces and see what you find interesting?”

Statements that should be avoided



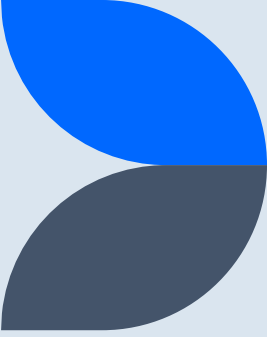
- “I really think you should do X.”
- “I think the best type of job for you is X.”
- “You don’t really want to do that, do you?”
- “I don’t think you would be good at that.”
- “What do you want to do that for?”
- “You’re happy at the sheltered workshop, aren’t you?”
- “Remember, you weren’t good at that.”
- “You’re not ready for work.”

Some common objections to employment



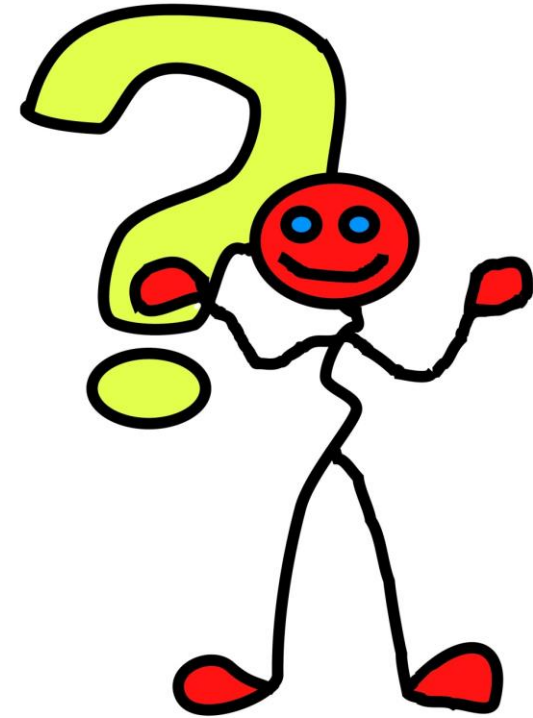
- I'll mess up my benefits and lose my medical coverage
- I'm worried about my safety working in the community
- I'll miss my friends in the workshop or day program
- It sounds scary. The workshop/day program is all I know
- How do I know the job will last? What if I lose it, or don't like it?
- I'm scared of feeling alone
- I don't even know what jobs are out there
- My family and friends don't think I should work
- I worked in the community before, and it was terrible
- It's my choice to stay in the sheltered workshop or day program

Responding to common objections regarding community employment



- Acknowledge all valid concerns
- Acknowledge we do not have all the answers
- Commit to work on an issue or potential barrier to employment with the individual, and when appropriate their family
- Encourage all stakeholders to participate in problem – solving

Questions





References:

David Hoff and Nicholas Holz of the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston (ICI). Editorial assistance provided by Cindy Thomas, Jessica Keenoy, and Anya Weber of ICI, and Jeanine Zlockie of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS).

Thank you