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Promoting Informed Choice

Overview/Summary:

Understanding and advocating for an individual's right to choose has extensive impact on the paths they pursue and the successes they achieve in their lives. Informed choice is based on the principle of presumed competence, that every person has the ability and the right to make choices and act on those decisions (Moore & Friedman, 2017).

What is Informed Choice?

Informed choice is the process of providing individuals with options to choose, providing relevant and unbiased information, and then being able to experience the options and information provided to make their own decisions. Individuals then work through and learn from the consequences of their choices.

What it is Not:

- Asking a yes or no question such as “Do you want to work?”
- Only providing options that align with preexisting programs, supports, or opportunities.
- Focusing discussions on convenience for the family, service provider, and funding agency.

The Importance of Informed Choice:

As individuals make more informed choices, they develop a self-determined mindset. As individuals act in self-determined ways they increase in their confidence, life satisfaction, overall self-efficacy, and well-being (Hartung & Taber, 2008; Kenny et al., 2018). Additionally, the individual will self-regulate their own behavior, become more empowered, and initiate events in their own life (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007).

Engaging Individuals in Informed Decision Making

Many individuals have been told by parents, teachers, and other authority figures what they need to do and how to do it which removes true engagement. The transition from being told what to do to making decisions about one's life can be very daunting and requires deliberate and patient attempts at teaching how to communicate effectively. One significant barrier to making decisions is the use of language. Coaching individuals to express their feelings through voice, signs, activities, and other means will unlock their ability to show what they feel.

Core Principles

The following core principles (Hoff & Holz, 2020) must be adhered to for individuals to achieve the greatest success in life.

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

Parents, support staff, and other community partners will not be adequately prepared to help individuals be informed decision makers if the following principles are not engrained in the support they provide.

Additional Considerations:

Informed choice does not mean that all individuals have unlimited opportunities or choices. The individual and support team must be willing to have in-depth discussions about the interests, skills, and abilities of the individual and then match them with the opportunities that are available. To practice this sufficiently, all individuals must be committed to educating themselves on all community opportunities and refrain from relying on assumptions or past experiences to determine fit. Everyone must be supported in learning through their own experience how their goals fit into their community and be allowed the opportunity to succeed and fail.

Cite Us!

Remund, C. (2021). Discovery: exploring neighborhood and community mapping [Fact sheet].
<https://ceiutah.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Informed-Choice-Factsheet.pdf>

References

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Hoff, D., & Holz, N. (2020). *Employment and Employment Supports: A Guide to Ensuring Informed Choice for Individuals with Disabilities*. Retrieved August 14, 2020, from https://www.communityinclusion.org/pdf/TO31_F.pdf

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