

FAMILY TIP SHEET SERIES:

What Should I Know About ECF CHOICES?

The Basics

Many people with disabilities get their health care through TennCare, Tennessee's Medicaid agency. Medicaid provides both medical and non-medical services. Non-medical services are called "long term services and supports." People with intellectual or developmental disabilities can get long term services and supports. These supports are provided through waiver programs. Employment and Community First CHOICES (ECF CHOICES) is a waiver program that helps people with disabilities find jobs and live on their own. You need to be on Medicaid to qualify for ECF CHOICES. There are waiting lists for this program, and people with urgent need will get into the program sooner. Here are the first four priority categories.

- A:** You have a job. You need help to keep your job.
- B:** You're about to finish school and you have a job offer. You can only get the job if you have help on the job.
- C:** You lost your job and need help finding a new one.
- D:** You're about to finish school. You don't have a job offer, but you want to work. You need help to get a job.

Someone in Category A would get into the program sooner than someone in Category D.

Myths

Myth #1: My child needs to be employed to get into ECF CHOICES.

Your child does not need to be employed to get into ECF CHOICES. If your child is interested in working or willing to explore working, they are qualified to enroll in the program. However, they might not get first priority acceptance into the program.

Myth #2: My child's disability is too significant for ECF CHOICES

The ECF CHOICES program provides supports and services for people with significant needs. As long as your child has an intellectual or developmental disability, they can qualify for ECF CHOICES.

Myth #3: My child can't work. They will not be able to get into ECF CHOICES.

Every person can work, no matter what their disability is. Sometimes, people need additional support. No one will be considered ineligible for ECF CHOICES because they can't work. They have to be willing to explore work and learn about supports, but they can choose not to work and still remain in the program.

Who Can Help Me?

If your child **does not** have Medicaid, contact the Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in your region and ask for help in applying: www.tn.gov/didd/about/contact-information.html.

If your child **does** have Medicaid, then contact the number on the back of your child's insurance card. They can help you apply for ECF CHOICES.

Your local chapter of The Arc can help answer questions about ECF CHOICES and support you in applying. Find your local chapter at <https://www.thearctn.org/Chapters.php>.

What Questions Should I Ask?

- When should my child apply for ECF CHOICES?
- How long is the waiting list?
- What category will my child be placed in?
- What kind of services and supports can ECF CHOICES provide?
- Who will be delivering the services?
- Who can I contact to find out the status of my application?