A Tip of the Hat from CAP

(March 6, 2019)

In January of 2019 we talked with you about productive things you could do while you are on the DRS waiting list. The agency has had a waiting list for over two years, and even though they have been taking some names off the list to begin services which cost money, there are still many people waiting. We made some suggestions on researching demand occupations at your local Workforce office as well as considering preparation for jobs at your nearest Vocational/Technical school in that January article.

It is still difficult to imagine that I have been working in the Client Assistance Program for over six and a half years now. When I first came to CAP I had to learn how the program at the Department of Rehabilitation Services works much like you are learning now. I was looking for a venue to share what I learned about the program, and my supervisor suggested *A Tip of the Hat from CAP*. He has followed that up with posting these tips on our agency website ([www.ok.gov/odc](http://www.ok.gov/odc)), and recently he has posted a link on the CAP Brochure which every DRS client is supposed to receive at key points in the progression of their case. It is my hope that as you become more familiar with the workings of the agency, you may be able to make that program work better for you.

Everyone wants to be in control of their lives, and this is true as well when people begin services with the Department of Rehabilitation Services. Part of what is to be learned about “control” is that for it to be really effective, it must be shared by all parties. If the DRS client tries to control everything, the DRS case will not run as smoothly as it would otherwise. If the DRS counselor tries to control everything, they will not serve the client even though serving the client is part of the mission of the agency.
In my job in CAP I am called upon to address new DRS employees twice a year. I tell new counselors and techs who work for the counselors about how the CAP program started and what it is empowered to do. At the end of my presentation, I venture to comment on what I think makes a good DRS counselor.

I walk over to the wall on one side of the room, and I suggest the new employees imagine it representing “client need.” I then walk over to the other side of the room and suggest that wall represents “agency policy.” If the counselor says yes to everything the client asks regardless of policy, there are no limits or guidelines. The agency would disintegrate without policy.

On the other hand, if the new counselor considers only agency policy and not client need, they cannot serve the very client which the agency is commissioned to serve. I tell the new employees that in my opinion, the best DRS counselor works right in the middle in the tension between agency policy and client need. They may be willing to interpret agency policy in a broader sense to accommodate the client need, or they may share agency policy with the client if that client asks them to do something absolutely not in the scope of their program.

No one knows the client as well as the client themselves, and that client has the responsibility and the power to share that self-knowledge. I tell clients over and over to “ask for what you need.” When you do this you bring an important and necessary component to the mix. Telling your counselor what you want and what you need to achieve your employment outcome is the control you exercise on your DRS case. No one else can do that but you.
On the other hand, your DRS counselor has a right and responsibility to explain to you how they can access the federal/state funds to pay for the services which you need. Some things they cannot pay for according to DRS policy in Oklahoma such as a vehicle to meet your transportation needs. They may be able to tell you how you could get a low-interest loan to buy that vehicle, and DRS could then equip it with a lift and hand controls.

Control is never a one-way street. It is two way, and it is shared. That makes for the best services, and in the process everyone gets what they need. I like to tell counselors and clients alike that we (including CAP) are all working for one primary end. We all want to see you get the job which fits your needs and abilities and brings the money you need to live in comfort and satisfaction.

The End