

Funds for School Counseling Programs

> No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Funding Program Overview

Detailed information: http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg68.html

Purpose and Background

In general, the Secretary of Education is authorized to award grants to local educational agencies to enable them to establish or expand elementary school and secondary school counseling programs that comply with specific requirements. For example, each program funded under this section shall:

- a) be comprehensive in addressing the counseling and educational needs of all students;
- b) increase the range, availability, quantity and quality of counseling services in elementary and secondary schools;
- c) use innovative approaches to increase children's understanding of peer and family relationships, work and self, decision-making or academic and career planning, or to improve peer interaction;
- d) provide counseling in settings that meet the range of student needs; and
- e) involve parents of participating students in the design, implementation and evaluation of the counseling program.

Funding and Eligibility

(Federal Appropriation Fiscal Year 2004: \$33.8 million)

Funds are awarded by the Secretary to local educational agencies to enable them to establish or expand elementary school and secondary school counseling programs that comply with specific requirements as noted above.

Each local educational agency desiring a grant must submit an application to the Secretary that describes the school population targeted; the program's proposed activities, services and training; evaluation procedures; how community groups will be involved; etc. A grant under this section is awarded for a period not to exceed three years and in an amount not to exceed \$400,000 for any fiscal year.



Alignment of Choices CD Edition to Requirements of Title V-D-2

Overview: Comprehensive and High-Quality Information

Choices is an interactive program that supports a range of student computer literacy skills, such as: searching large databases, accessing and printing information, using a word processor, creating a personal file and saving data to it, following links to selected websites and exploring those websites.

Choices also helps high school students focus on their academic career today and make plans for a smooth transition to a variety of post-secondary education and career options in the future. Choices helps students see clear linkages between their school work and career skills by providing information that is comprehensive, accurate and up to date. The program motivates and engages students through interactive activities for:

- Self-assessment of interests (English and Spanish), work values and basic skills;
- Career exploration with information that highlights necessary academic and career skills for hundreds of occupations;
- Post-secondary education exploration;
- Four-year high school course planning;
- Career and education portfolio building; and
- Financial aid and scholarship research and application.

Choices provides a seamless connection to thousands of college websites, America's Job Bank, state job banks, scholarship databases and other high-quality career sites. Students can apply to colleges online. Parents can complete college financial need forms and use tools to better understand the process of financing college costs.

Choices connects to more than 200 online career videos. They bring job information to life through real-world interviews with workers in the field. The videos show workers in action, giving a first-hand sense of what a career is really like. Students learn about required education/training and career skills, work activities, job outlook and earnings.

Academic Integration

Choices includes creative, outcome-based solutions for teaching established curricula and supporting remediation efforts with technology. Lessons are designed to integrate career development concepts into the core academics through the use of technology. They support teacher efforts to use technology to enhance academic instruction. The lessons are an excellent way to enrich academic learning and motivate students.

Accountability

The *OnTrack* accountability system provides counselors and administrators with data about *Choices* assessment results and progress with education and career planning for individual students or groups of students. *OnTrack* accountability data can be imported into applications such as Excel for further analysis and consolidation. Schools can also send *OnTrack* student information to parents and guardians quickly and easily, thus promoting parental involvement.



Authorized Activities

SEC. 5421. Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs (c) Use of Funds

- (2) Requirements
 - (A) be comprehensive in addressing the counseling and educational needs of all students
 - (C) increase the range, availability, quantity and quality of counseling services in elementary and secondary schools
 - (F) provide counseling in settings that meet the range of student needs

Choices CD Edition Alignment:

Choices supports a comprehensive school counseling program by addressing student needs in the areas of self-knowledge, academic planning and career planning, and transition to post-secondary options. It provides online resources for self-assessment of interests, work values and basic skills.

Choices helps students explore and learn about occupations, see connections to academics and make decisions about post-secondary opportunities. *Choices* complements the quality of counseling services with educational and career information that is current, accurate and unbiased.

Since *Choices* can be installed on every computer in a school, it greatly expands the availability of the counseling program's resources. For example, students might access *Choices* in labs, the media center, classrooms, and the counseling center.

Students can use *Choices* on their own and as often as they like. With a flexible and user-centered approach, *Choices* lets students start where they want and get immediate results. Students can get a great deal of educational and career information from *Choices* that better prepares them to work with counselors individually or in groups. Therefore, counselors can spend more time helping students interpret the information in light of their academic and career decision-making and less time on simply imparting information.



SEC. 5421. Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs (c) Use of Funds

(2) Requirements

(E) use innovative approaches to increase children's understanding of peer and family relationships, work and self, decision-making, or academic and career planning, or to improve peer interaction.

Choices CD Edition Alignment:

The *Choices* technology provides innovative approaches to increasing children's understanding of work and self, decision-making, and academic and career planning. A variety of online self-assessments expand student awareness of interests, work values and basic skills. Students can compare their assessment results with the factors typically required for success in occupations they select. In this way, they not only learn more about themselves, but also about the realities of work requirements.

Students can quickly search a large database of occupations by key topics (such as education requirements, skills, interests and earnings) according to their own priorities. Students can access detailed information about each occupation on the resulting list. The occupation profile includes information about suggested high school courses by career pathway, required post-secondary education/training, and related basic skills and abilities.

Choices also provides a seamless link from occupations to college majors, with one of the largest (more than 7,000 colleges, technical schools and graduate schools) and most accurate college databases available. Parents and students can explore and compare options quickly and easily. Links directly to college websites further enhance the process. Online college applications can also be accessed. Choices includes the Parent Loan Advisor and thousands of financial aid awards as well.

Choices further facilitates academic and career planning through the electronic Planner and portfolio where students can write descriptions of their skills through a guided process, create written Individual Education and Career Plans and practice resume writing and other job seeking skills.

The very nature of using *Choices* leads students to tap into many critical thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Students must make decisions and set priorities when they search for occupations, colleges or scholarships. They have opportunities to compare and contrast options and to use the insights gained for effective academic and career planning.

Including *Choices* in comprehensive school counseling programs offers a unique and innovative opportunity for counselors and teachers to work as partners in promoting student academic achievement. *Choices* has creative, outcome-based solutions for teaching established curricula and supporting remediation efforts with technology. Easy-to-use lessons are designed to integrate career development concepts into the core academics through the use of technology. They are an excellent way to enrich academic learning and motivate students.



SEC. 5421. Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs (c) Use of Funds

- (2) Requirements
 - (G) include in-service training appropriate to the activities funded under this Act to teachers, instructional staff and appropriate school personnel...

Choices CD Edition Alignment:

Bridges Transitions, developer of *Choices*, provides extensive services to assist educators in implementing and integrating *Choices* into the academic and technology curricula, as well as school counseling programs.

Customized training focuses on enhancing teacher and counselor technology skills and building an action plan for maximizing the use of *Choices* to support student academic achievement, technology literacy, educational planning and career planning.

The Choices software and a variety of excellent websites are used in the hands-on training.

SEC. 5421. Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs (c) Use of Funds

- (2) Requirements
 - (H) involve parents of participating students in the design, implementation and evaluation of the counseling program.

Choices CD Edition Alignment:

Schools can use *Choices* in a variety of ways to promote meaningful parental involvement with the counseling program. Parental influence is a key factor in student course selection and career choice. *Choices* provides parents with the results of student assessments in the areas of interests, work values and basic skills. The combination of assessment results and occupational information offers students and parents a powerful base from which to explore career plans and make decisions.

Choosing and applying to colleges is another key area for parents. *Choices* facilitates the college search with one of the largest (more than 7,000 colleges, technical schools and graduate schools) and most accurate college databases available. Parents and students can explore and compare options quickly and easily. Links directly to college websites further enhance the process. Students and parents can also access online college applications. *Choices* includes the Parent Loan Advisor and thousands of financial aid awards.

The interactive *Choices* Planner and portfolio helps students develop and document Individual Education and Career Plans. Through templates and form letters, schools can easily advise parents of student progress on their plans and changes that might need attention. This is yet another way to use *Choices* to support parental involvement in student education.



SEC. 5421. Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs (c) Use of Funds

- (2) Requirements
 - (J) evaluate annually the effectiveness and outcomes of the counseling services and activities assisted under this section.

Choices CD Edition Alignment:

The *OnTrack* accountability system provides counselors and administrators with data about *Choices* assessment results and progress with education and career planning for individual students or groups of students.

OnTrack accountability data can be imported into applications such as Excel for further analysis and consolidation. Schools can also send *OnTrack* student information to parents and guardians quickly and easily, thus promoting parental involvement.