



Workfront-Homefront

A SERIES FOR PEOPLE MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM WELFARE TO WORK

Decision Making: It's a Skill

Sometimes there are so many decisions to make that it is easy to feel overwhelmed. These decisions might be about things like child care, what kind of job to look for, where to live, or even how to spend your money.

If you just think about one problem at a time, and go through the following step-by-step process, even the biggest decisions can be managed.

#1 Identify the problem.

What exactly is the problem? Write it down in one sentence. If you need to make more than one decision to solve your problem, write down each decision and think about which decision needs to be made first.

#2 Gather information about the problem and your options.

Think about who you can ask where you can find information to help you make your decision.

For example:

- You could talk to people like neighbors, friends, relatives, teachers at your child's school, counselors, co-workers, and employers.
- You could look in places like the newspaper, magazines, books at the library, or the yellow pages in the telephone book.
- You could go to the Department of Social Services, your church, Co-

operative Extension, or any other local agencies that might have information you need.

#3 List your options.

After getting all the information you need about your problem, think about all the different things you could decide. Make a list of your options.

#4 Write down the things that are most important to you in making your decision.

For example, if you are deciding on what job to take, what matters most to you about the kind of job you will have? One person might say: "Good pay, medical benefits, and full-time hours."

#5 List the "pros" (good things) and "cons" (bad things) about each option.

Then put pluses (+) next to each thing in the "pro" list that you said were most important to you. Put minuses (-) next to each thing in the "con" list that you said were most important.

One example (based on the important things listed in #4), is given on the next page.

#6 Compare your list of pros and cons for each option with the things most important to you. Decide on the best overall solution.

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Pros

+ *job is close to home*
 + *pay is good*
 + *room for advancement*

Cons

- *no medical benefits*
 - *part-time hours*
 - *I'm not trained to do it*

If you are still having trouble deciding, ask someone else's opinion. Show them your lists of pros and cons. They might think of something to add that you had not thought of before!

#7 Make your decision and carry it out.

After a while, stop and think about your decision. What have you learned that will help you make decisions in the future?

A Decision-Making Example**#1 Identify the problem.**

Cheryl needs to find a new apartment.

#2 Gather information.

She asks her friends, family, neighbors, and people at her church if they know about any apartments in the area. She asks her caseworker about finding more information and about what kind of apartment would fit her family's needs. Then, she looks in the newspaper listings and on bulletin boards in local stores to find any apartments advertised that might work for her.

#3 List options.

Cheryl visits three apartments that seem like possible choices: apartment #1, apartment #2, and apartment #3.

#4 List the things most important to your decision.

Options	Pros	Cons
apartment 1	<i>low rent + near a park low utility bills</i>	<i>landlord not nice unsafe neighborhood- not in good repair-</i>
apartment 2	<i>low rent + safe neighborhood + in good repair +</i>	<i>far from work not much space inside noisy street</i>
apartment 3	<i>lots of space</i>	<i>high rent-</i>

After thinking about her situation and her needs, Cheryl lists three things about a new apartment that are **most** important to her:

- low rent
- safe neighborhood
- apartment in good repair

#5 List the pros and cons and then put pluses or minuses by the most important things.**#6 Compare each option and decide which is best.**

All the choices have some pros and some cons. *But*, apartment #2 has more pluses and the fewest minuses. (Apartments #1 and #3 both have at least one minus in the cons list.) Apartment #2 looks like the best option.

#7 Make your decision and carry it out.

Cheryl decides that apartment #2 is the best choice for her, and begins planning how to work out the details. After a few months, she will stop and think about what she has learned about choosing a new place to live.

References

Lloyd, J. H. (1991). *Decision Making: Personal, Family, and Business Considerations*, HE-337. North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service.

Note: Cooperative Extension has additional fact sheets on budgeting and many other topics.

The titles for the series *Workfront-Homefront* were selected based on telephone interviews with Work First participants. Titles include:

Easing Transitions: Balancing Work and Family, FCS-479-1

Parenting for the Busy Parent of a Preschooler, FCS-479-2

Adjusting to Work: Getting Along with Others, FCS-479-3

Decision Making: It's a Skill, FCS-479-4

Locating and Selecting Child Care, FCS-479-5

Personal Wellness for Top Performance, FCS-479-6

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