



University of Connecticut Health Center

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Connecticut Bureau of
Rehabilitation Services:

Benefits Counseling
Consumer Satisfaction
Survey Results

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I. Introduction

The Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) offers benefits planning and counseling that enables individuals with significant physical and mental disabilities to make informed choices about preparing for, obtaining, and maintaining competitive employment (<http://www.brs.state.ct.us/aboutus.htm>). This counseling is available through the Connect to Work Center (<http://www.brs.state.ct.us/ConnectToWork.htm>) where Benefits Specialists, also known as Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs), assist individuals in assessing the impact returning to work will have on their disability benefits and help them create a benefits package that meets their needs.

Benefits Specialists help eligible individuals gain an understanding of the programs and safety nets that are available to individuals with disabilities who are interested in starting to work, are currently working, or want to work more hours and earn more. Benefits Specialists are trained to:

- provide work incentives planning and assistance including resources, referral, and problem solving for individuals with benefit concerns
- conduct an individualized analysis of benefits and help clients and their families determine eligibility for Federal and State work incentive programs
- write a plan demonstrating how work affects all benefits including work incentives, health care options, overall financial situation, and information about wage reporting to maximize independence
- refer clients with disabilities to the appropriate Employment Networks or State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies
- provide general information about potential employer-based or federally subsidized health benefits that are available after an individual enters the workforce
- inform clients with disabilities about other protection and advocacy services that might be useful to them

Benefits Specialists are an important resource in understanding complex Social Security Administration (SSA) rules for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI). SSDI provides cash benefits to individuals who are blind or have a disability and is available to people who have worked and paid Social Security taxes for a long enough time period. SSI provides a monthly cash benefit to individuals who are blind, older, or have a disability, and have limited work experience and income. Other programs such as Medicaid for the Employed Disabled (MED-Connect), effective in 2000, enable individuals to work and receive health care and other support programs (e.g., personal assistance services, food share, subsidized housing).

SSA's State Partnership Initiatives (e.g., Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act) as well as other federal-state vocational rehabilitation programs

have promoted benefits counseling and Benefits Specialists as an important resource for people with disabilities who want to work.

This study assessed the experiences and satisfaction of individuals who received benefits counseling from a CWIC through the Connecticut BRS between November, 2008 and October, 2009. Data related to program needs and satisfaction with benefits counseling were collected directly from consumers.

II. Methodology and Analysis

Survey instrument

A three page confidential survey (See Appendix A) was mailed to individuals who applied for Benefits Analysis services from November 1, 2008 to October 31, 2009. The survey, developed by BRS and the University of Connecticut Health Center evaluation team, assessed consumer satisfaction with benefits counseling services including how helpful the services were and whether individuals would recommend it to others. Respondents were asked about work experiences and how helpful benefits counseling was in either starting to work or increasing hours/earnings. Respondents were asked how likely it is they will start working or increase their hours or earnings in the next 12 months and if they have ever turned down a raise, increase in hours, or a job offer because it might affect Social Security or other benefits.

Two open-ended questions asked respondents to report any questions or concerns not addressed by the Benefits Specialist and to list suggestions to improve the BRS Benefits Counseling Program. One general question asked respondents to indicate the highest grade or year completed in school. A final question asked respondents if there was anything else they wanted BRS to know about their work situation (e.g., concerns or changes related to number of hours worked or wages earned).

Surveys were printed on white paper, stapled, and individually numbered to prevent survey duplication. A Spanish translation of the survey was printed and mailed to respondents who were identified in the BRS database as Latino for the purpose of increasing access to this population.

Research sample

The BRS database contains information on all current and former clients who have received Benefits Analysis (benefits planning and counseling) services. The survey explored the experiences of those clients who had full Benefits Analysis services and not those who received telephone inquiry information only. The sample was drawn from a list of consumers who received Benefits Analysis services through the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) program since its inception in 2006 and included a total of 1,986 individuals. Of those, 576 individuals applied for

the program between November 1, 2008 and October 31, 2009. Benefits Analysis is the indicator that shows full benefits counseling was done. The sample included all persons receiving the service; there was no exclusionary screening for race, ethnicity, or gender. Some cases were closed due to completion of Benefits Analysis services and others were in the initial phases of receiving information. After removing duplicates, the final sample consisted of 571 clients.

Recruitment

Each client in the sample received a personalized letter requesting their participation, a numbered survey, and a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope. The letter included the name of the CWIC who provided the consumer with benefits planning and counseling as well as an incentive stating that upon receipt of the survey, the respondent would be entered into a drawing to win one of five \$50.00 gift cards. Four weeks after the first mailing, a follow-up letter, survey, and self-addressed stamped envelope were mailed to non-responders. Follow-up phone calls were made to a random sample of individuals who did not respond to the second mailing of the survey.

Envelopes that were returned due to a wrong address were checked with addresses in the BRS database and public telephone directory and resent if a different or updated address was available.

The letter and the survey were translated into Spanish. The English letter included a sentence in Spanish at the bottom with a name and telephone number to call if someone wanted to request a survey in Spanish. Clients identified in the database as Latino received an envelope with both an English and Spanish letter and a survey in English and Spanish.

Response rate

The initial mailing on November 23, 2009 comprised a total of 571 surveys. Clients who returned completed surveys and those with wrong addresses were excluded from the second mailing. A total of 423 surveys were mailed in the second mailing on December 28, 2009. Beginning on February 17, 2010, phone follow-up calls were made to a random sample of 98 individuals. Seventy of these were unable to be reached, 5 refused, and 2 were unable to complete the surveys. A total of 21 people contacted by phone completed surveys. Including the phone surveys, a total of 219 surveys were completed; of these, six were completed in Spanish. In several cases, surveys were completed by a proxy. After receiving returned surveys, accounting for ineligible surveys (e.g., wrong addresses), and following completion of the phone follow-up, the overall response rate was 40 percent.

Table 1. Response rate

	Surveys sent	Phone calls made	Surveys received	Phone surveys completed	Surveys ineligible	Final response rate
Surveys in first mailing	571		137		11	
Surveys in second mailing	423		61		13	
Telephone surveys		98		21		
Total number of surveys			198	21	24	40%

Analysis

All survey data was entered into an online Access database. Analysis of the data was done using PASW 17 statistical software. Descriptive statistics were performed for each question.

III. Results

The following section describes the most important results. For total sample percentages for each question, see Appendix A.

Demographics

BRS supplied some demographic data that was not included in the survey. This included date of birth, gender, and race and ethnicity.

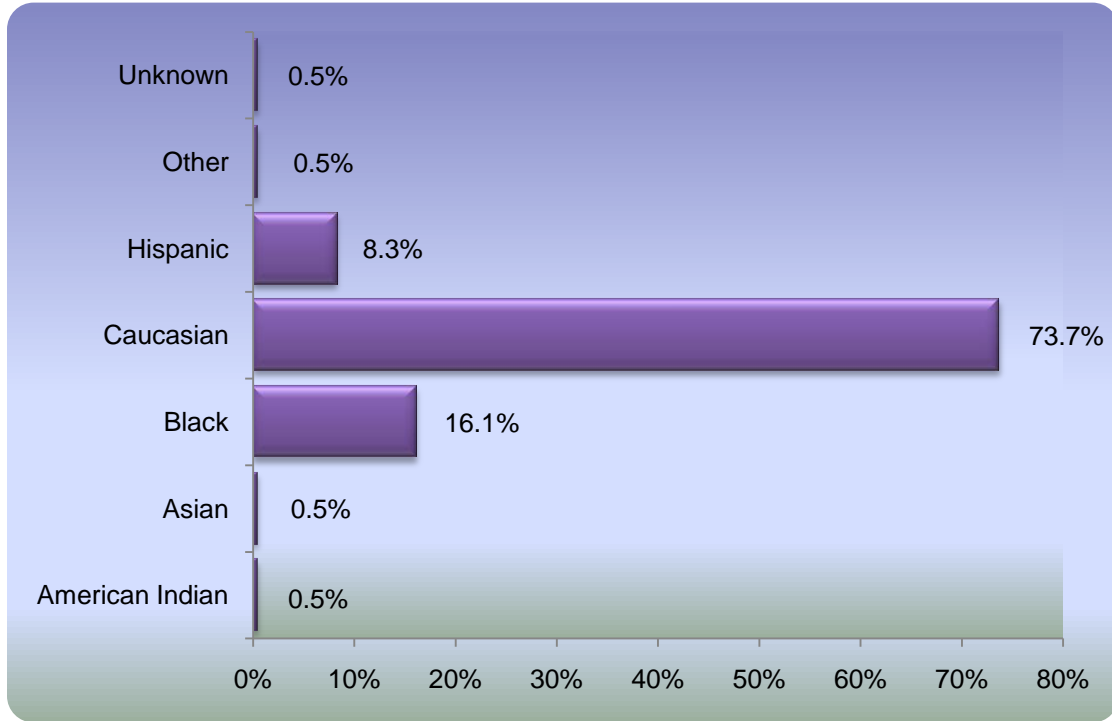
Age and gender

The age of the respondents ranged from 17 to 76 with a mean of 46.5. Forty-six percent of respondents were male and 54 percent were female.

Race and ethnicity

The majority of respondents (74%) were Caucasian (n=160); 16 percent were Black or African American, and 8 percent were Hispanic. Asian, American Indian, other and unknown ethnic backgrounds represent less than one percent each.

Figure 1. Ethnicity



Most respondents had either some college or a high school diploma (63%); 19 percent had a four-year college degree; 10 percent had post graduate degrees; five percent (n=11) had some high school; and three percent (n=6) had an 8th grade education or less.

Table 2. Highest education

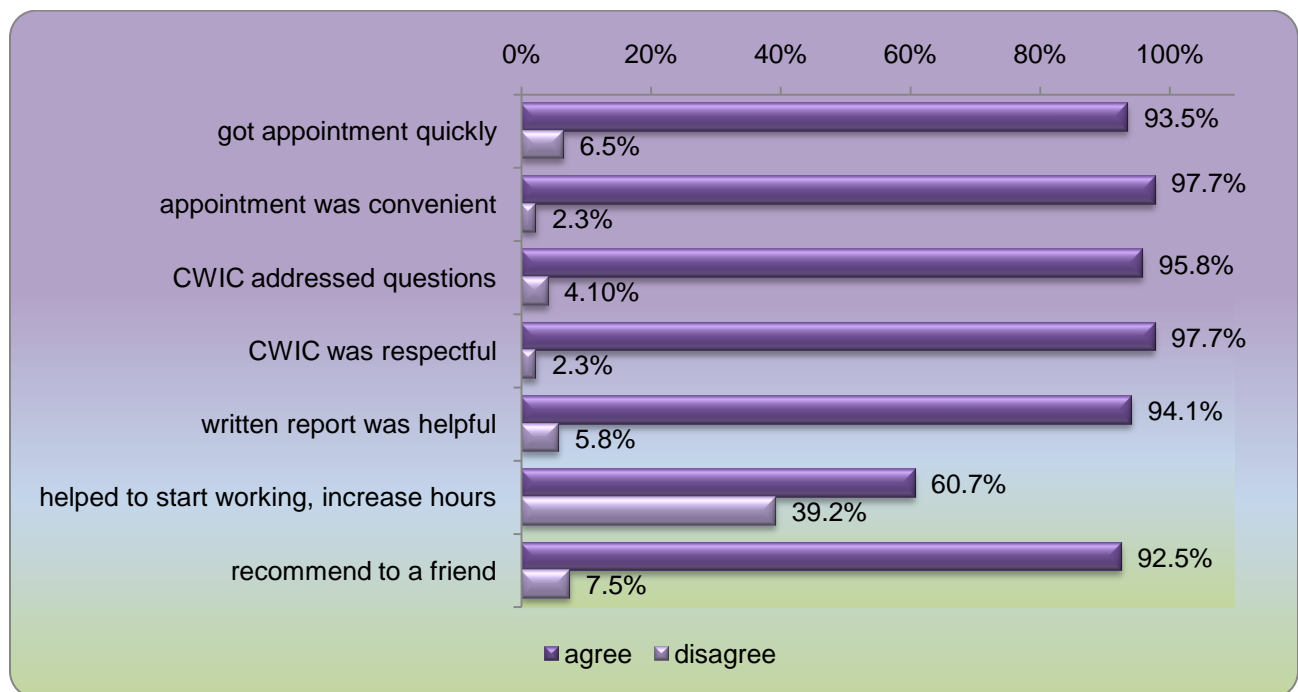
	Number	Percent
8 th grade or less	6	3%
Some high school	11	5%
High school diploma	71	33%
Some college	65	30%
Four year college	41	19%
Post graduate degree	22	10%

Satisfaction with services

The mail survey was intended to determine each participant's satisfaction with the services they received from their CWIC. Formerly referred to as a Benefits Counselor or Benefits Specialist, CWICs help individuals assess the impact returning to work will have on their disability benefits. Using the following scale, strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree, respondents rated their satisfaction with various components of their experience with the CWIC. These components include the timing of the appointment, the ability of the CWIC to answer all questions, the respectfulness of the CWIC, an evaluation of the written report, the impact on working, and whether the individual would recommend such services to a friend.

In most areas, the overwhelming majority of respondents felt very positive about their experience with the CWIC. Ninety-four percent of individuals either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that they were able to get their appointment quickly; 98 percent of individuals either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that their appointment was convenient; 96 percent strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the CWIC addressed all of their questions or concerns; 98 percent of the respondents strongly or somewhat agreed that the CWIC was respectful; 94 percent either strongly or somewhat agreed that the written report from the CWIC was helpful; and, 93 percent strongly or somewhat agreed that that if a friend had questions or concerns similar to theirs, they would recommend the BRS Benefits Counseling Program. Though still a majority (61%), fewer respondents somewhat or strongly agreed with the statement "the benefits counseling helped me to start working, increase my hours, or increase my earnings."

Figure 2. Satisfaction with the Benefits Counseling Program



Respondents were asked several open-ended questions. These focused on questions or concerns that were not addressed by the CWIC during meetings, any suggestions consumers had about improving the BRS Benefits Counseling Program, and aspects of work experience (e.g., current job, changes in job). Not all participants chose to answer these questions. The results of the qualitative questions are based on the number of people who responded to each question.

Questions or concerns

Thirty-nine percent (n=85) of participants responded to the question regarding any questions or concerns that were not addressed by the CWIC. Most responses (44%) were positive and indicated that the Benefits Specialist provided a thorough explanation of benefits. In addition, many of these respondents reported that the relationship with their CWIC was helpful and encouraging.

They answer everything and always return my calls quickly. They're a refreshing and hopeful change from other DSS workers.

All questions and concerns I brought up were discussed and addressed.

She answered all my questions and was extremely helpful and accommodating. On several occasions, I called her with questions or concerns about which I was confused and she was always very helpful and was able to de-mystify some of the areas of confusion.

Only six percent of respondents (n=5) were negative about their experience with the CWIC.

Empathy was lacking, the true core of the hardships, emotions and struggles were not addressed. Very few people can relate to the path a homeless disabled woman walks.

Thirteen percent of those who responded still had questions regarding their benefits and how these would be affected by working or being on a Trial Work Period. Twelve percent of respondents thought that the purpose of the benefits planning and counseling meeting was specifically for information about obtaining a job or information about job status.

I need to learn more about getting a new job.

What are my rights as a worker with a disability? Can I be demoted at my job (which I was) because of my disability?

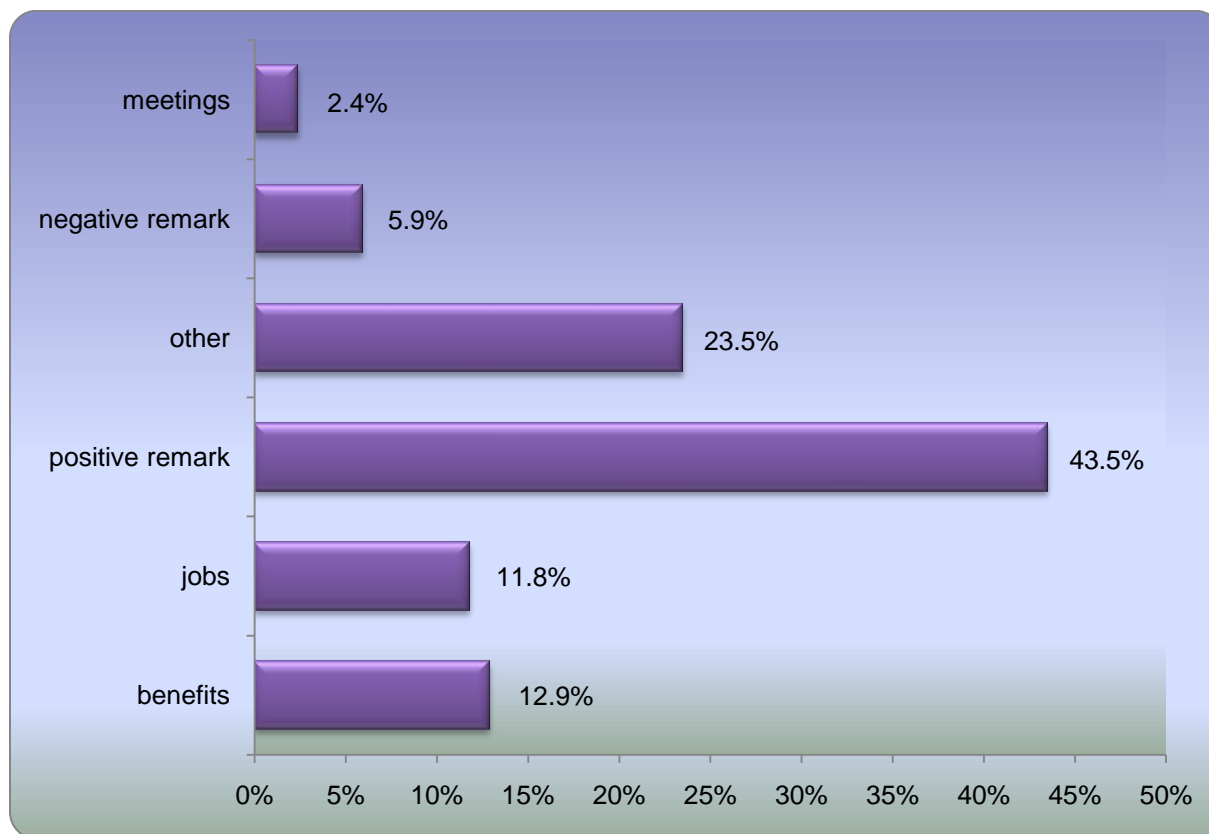
Two respondents had comments regarding the meeting itself. For example, one client thought it was not enough time to devote to his particular case.

Other concerns (24%) covered a broad range of topics that would be best met by a referral to other specialists (e.g., Vocational Rehabilitation).

How to get schooling if desiring to learn a new skill.

I am disabled and housing is a problem. Where I live, I have to climb 10 stairs, walk through a courtyard and descend 10 steep stairs. No housing for disabled has been made available and I'm on a 2-year waiting list.

Figure 3. Questions or concerns



Suggestions for improving the Benefits Counseling Program

Thirty-two percent (n=71) of respondents offered suggestions for improving the quality of services provided by the Benefits Counseling Program. These suggestions are organized around several themes.

Meetings with CWICs

Seven percent of respondents indicated that they wanted to have additional follow-up meetings with their CWIC, and 13 percent suggested that communication with CWICs during meetings should be more informative. Another 13 percent of respondents made

suggestions about meeting times. Some clients wanted meetings earlier in the day. Others reported that their meeting was too long or went by too fast, and some clients wanted a broader range of experiences during the meetings, such as mock interviews. This strengthens the notion that there is a general misconception of the purpose of the Benefits Counseling Program.

Thirteen percent of respondents made suggestions pertaining to CWICs indicating that there should be a greater number of Benefits Specialists available, and that they shouldn't have to change counselors during counseling. This last suggestion may indicate some confusion about counselors and lack of differentiation between BRS counselors and CWICs, the latter of whom are assigned by region.

Some clients mentioned that they would like legal counsel present during meetings while others would like the availability of a bi-lingual specialist. Another notable concern included the Benefits Specialists' lack of sensitivity toward people with disabilities during benefits planning and counseling sessions.

Everything was going very fine – everyone was very polite and understanding until they switched counselors on me.

Working more with client – knowing more about someone's disability.

BRS in Bridgeport was useless for my son. I feel their interest, lack of concern and help has made my son's illness spiral downward.

Eligibility and benefits

Fourteen percent of respondents who made suggestions about improving the Benefits Counseling Program had issues regarding eligibility and benefits. For example, they wanted eligibility and benefits explained more completely or wanted to better understand what sort of employment situations might jeopardize their benefits.

More clarity on the issue of eligibility for state supplement. We understood my daughter was eligible, but DSS disagreed.

How to understand better my benefit and walk me through all the change of the benefits.

A handbook with diagrams showing the impact working may have on disability earnings, and reassurance that disability earnings will not be completely and suddenly stopped.

Issues and concerns about finding jobs

Almost 10 percent of respondents suggested the Benefits Specialists should be more involved in helping the individual find a job and providing resources for finding a job.

Provide suggestions and/or networking opportunities for low paying jobs.

Positive remarks

Seventeen percent of respondents shared positive remarks about the meetings with counselors indicating that there were no suggestions to be made to improve CWIC services.

I think it was fine as is and was profitable.

You guys are doing a great job. Keep up the good work.

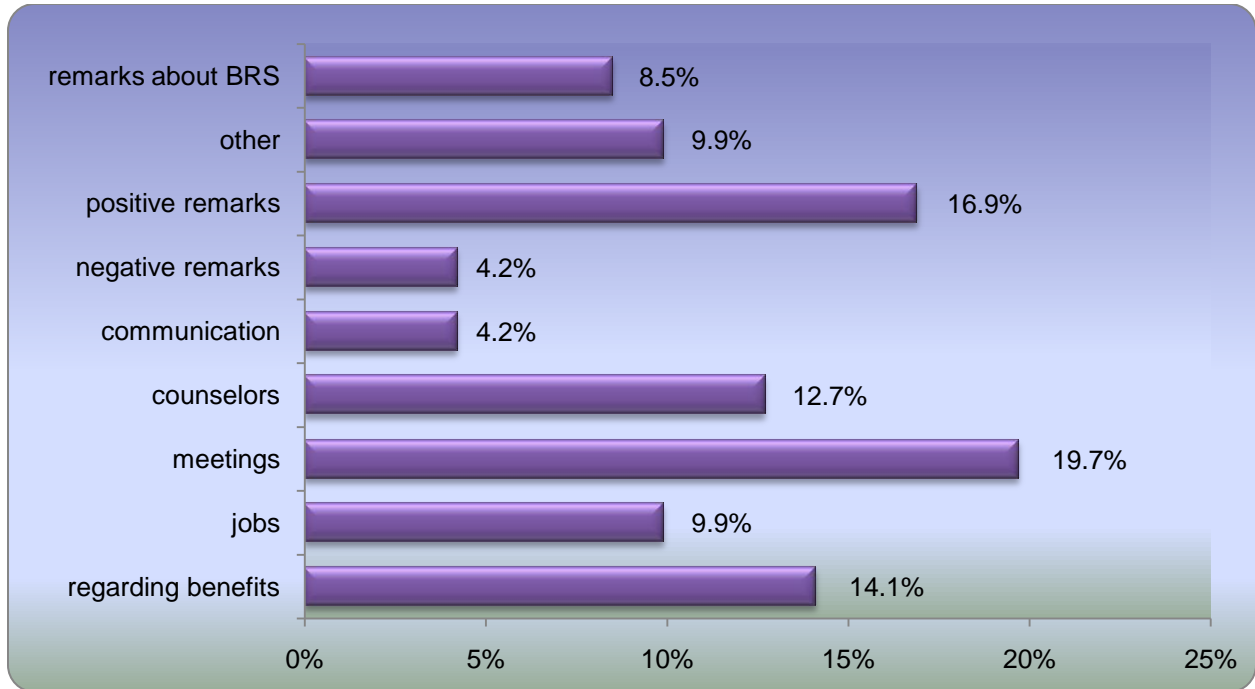
Negative remarks

Only four percent of respondents had something negative to say about the Benefits Counseling Program. However, an additional nine percent had negative comments about BRS in general.

There are too many different factions to starting to work, e.g., unemployment helps with resume, etc. It would be easier to stay organized and keep track of what I need to do if BRS was more holistic.

The core of BRS needs revamping. People such as myself should be on the board to give and share our knowledge. I could be such an asset to BRS if you can hire me as a consultant. I bring a lot of life experience and education to the table.

Figure 4. Suggestions to improve the Benefits Counseling Program

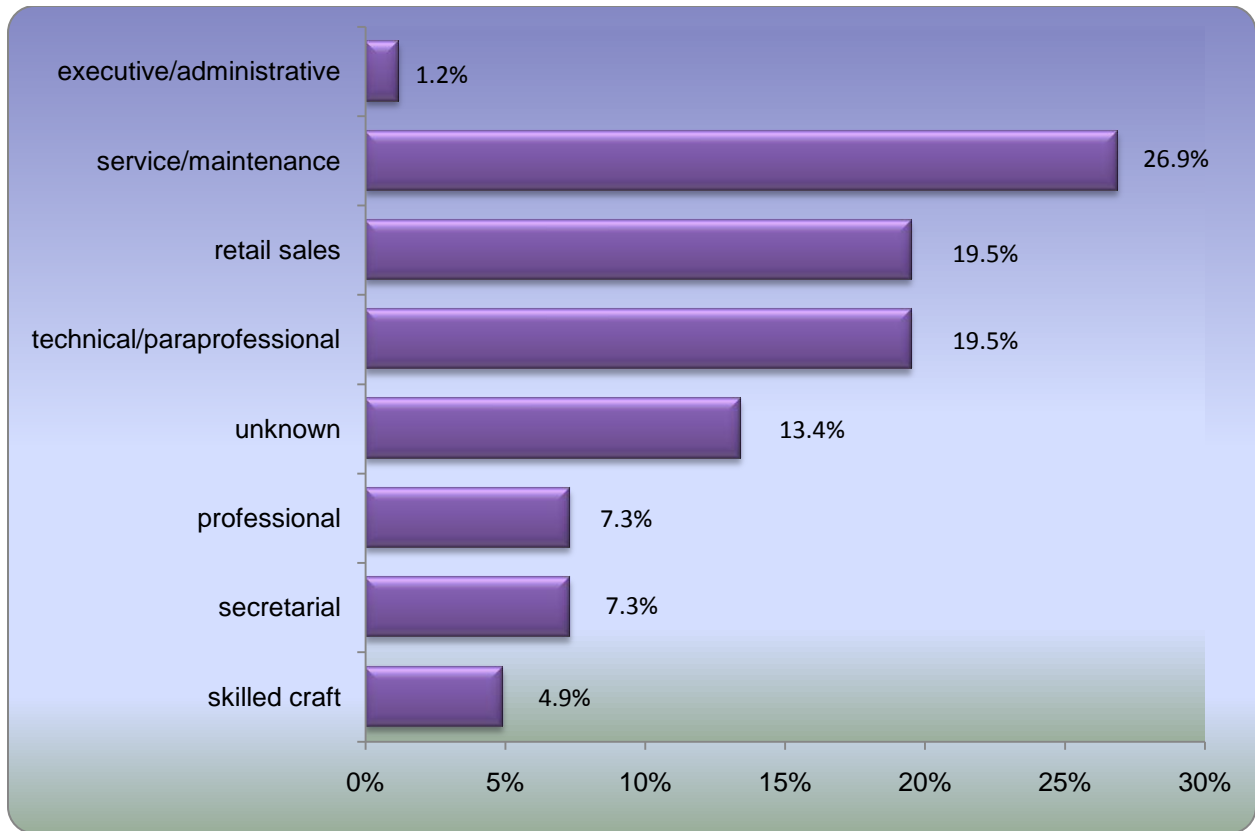


Current job

In this assessment, people are considered to be working if they are earning any amount of money for any amount of work performed. Participants were asked to report on their current work status. Thirty-seven percent (n=82) of respondents indicated that they are currently working at a job. Responses were categorized in job categories delineated according to the definitions formulated by the US Government. These categories include: a) executive, administrative, managerial (e.g., executives, small business owners); b) professional (e.g., teachers, nurses, programmers, doctors, engineers); c) secretarial, clerical (e.g., administrative assistants, bookkeepers, tellers); d) technical, paraprofessional (e.g., drafters, teachers aides, nurses' aides); e) skilled craft (e.g., mechanics, assemblers, carpenters, electricians); f) service, maintenance (e.g., child care, cafeteria or restaurant workers, janitors, truck or bus drivers); g) sales and related work (e.g., cashiers, telemarketers, real estate sales, clerks).

More respondents (27%) had jobs in the service or maintenance fields than in other areas. This was followed by 20 percent in the technical or paraprofessional category and another 20 percent in sales and related work. Less than 10 percent each were in the administrative, professional, secretarial, or skilled craft positions. Fourteen percent responded in such a way that it was unable to determine what their actual position was (e.g., "part time temporary work," "various jobs").

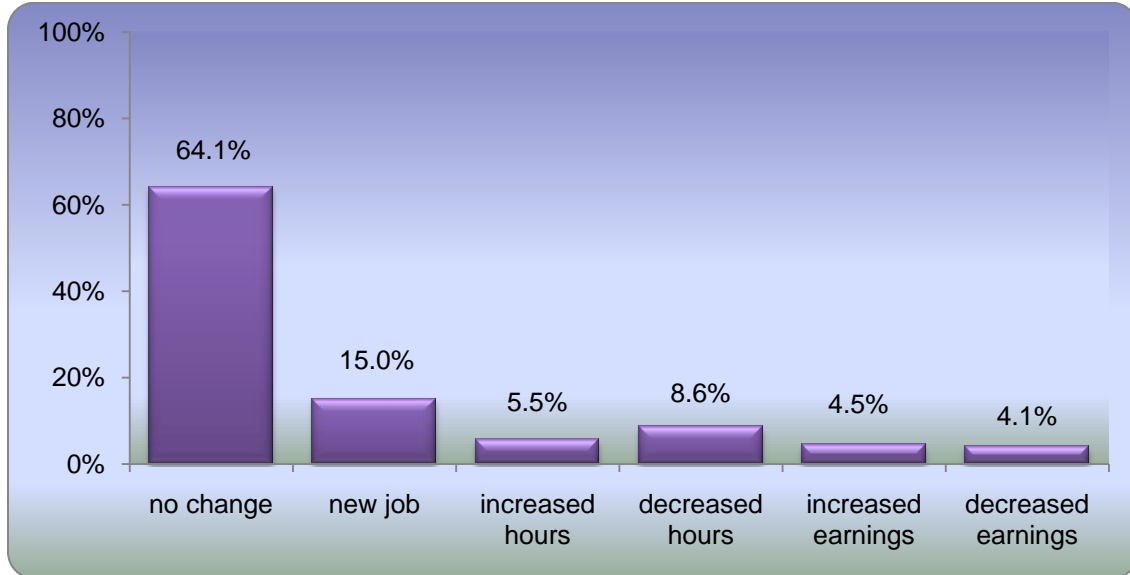
Figure 5. Current job



Changes in job

Participants were asked if they had started a new job or changed their hours or earnings since meeting with the CWIC and to check all that apply for the question including: no change, started a new job, increased hours, decreased hours, increased earnings, or decreased earnings. Sixty-four percent of respondents reported no change; 15 percent started a new job, four percent increased their hours; and five percent increased their earnings. Nine percent of respondents reported that their hours decreased, and four percent reported decreased earnings.

Figure 6. Changes in job, hours, and/or earnings



Respondents who indicated that they started a new job or had any changes in their hours or earnings were asked to explain why the changes occurred. Of the 30 percent who reported job-related changes, 26 percent reported they started a new job since they met with their CWIC. Nine percent indicated they increased their hours or their pay since they met with their CWIC.

I graduated from the DNA training at the American Red Cross of Waterbury and just got hired as a Home Health Aide.

I had two part-time jobs then went to full time. I then had a full time and seasonal work for a brief time. Now I am straight full time – 40 hours.

[Name of community service agency] gives you the opportunity to work more hours.

Twenty percent of respondents were either laid off, left their job or were working fewer hours, and nine percent of respondents said that they did not want to increase their hours because they were fearful of losing their benefits.

Less hours because I went over the limit.

I decreased my hours because I was earning too much to qualify for benefits, but too low to live on this income alone.

I kept the same place of employment, but decreased my hours to keep my benefits.

Fourteen percent of respondents reported that they were unable to continue working or had to cut down their work because of health reasons.

I started a job but had to stop working because of health reasons.

I am still healing from a hip operation. I need six weeks or more.

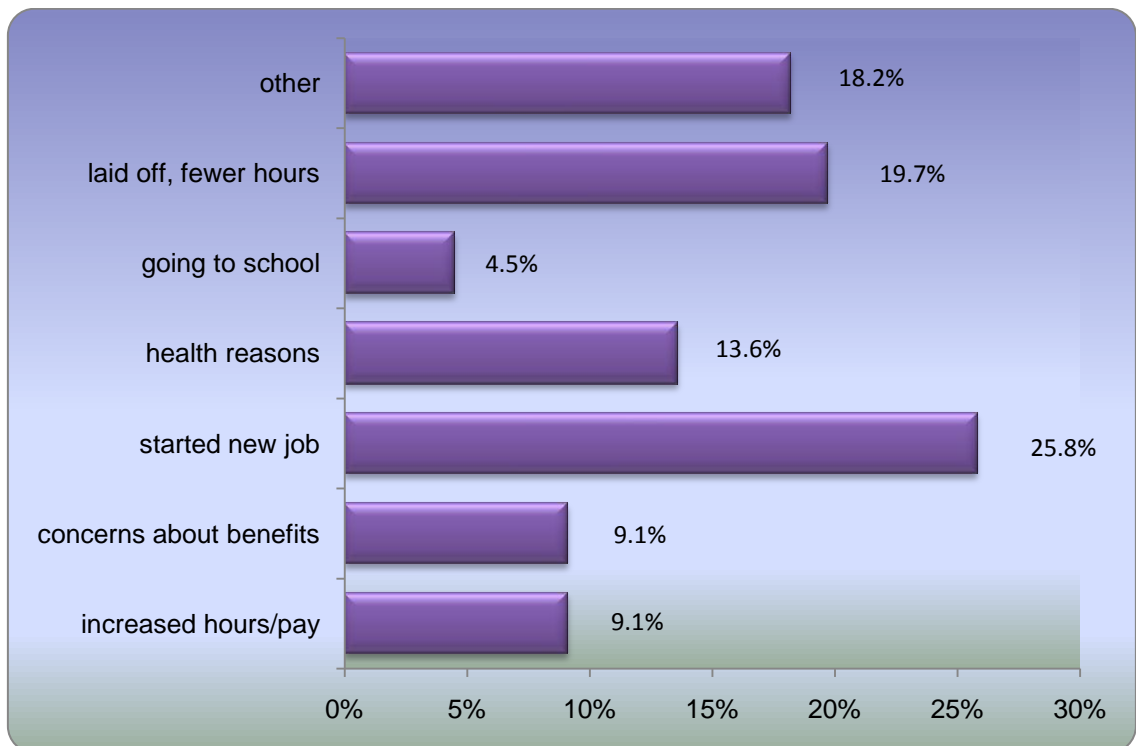
My doctor recommended me to take at least a month off due to an ulcer on my tail bone which has gotten worse since I started working.

Five percent of respondents had given up their jobs to continue with schooling and 18 percent gave answers that did not fit in a particular category.

With the assistance of my counselor, I have gained confidence and have started believing I can work.

My son was told he was “not employable.” My son has lost all desire and confidence.

Figure 7. Reasons for changes in job, hours, and/or earnings



Likelihood of starting or stopping work in the next 12 months

Participants were asked about work experiences in the next 12 months and the likelihood of starting work or increasing hours or earnings during that time period. Thirty percent of respondents reported it was very likely they would start working or increase their hours in the next 12 months; 45 percent indicated it might be somewhat likely; and 25 percent reported it was not at all likely that they would start working within the next 12 months. In contrast, participants were asked the likelihood of stopping work or decreasing hours or earnings in the next 12 months. Twenty-three percent reported it was somewhat likely and 72 percent reported it was not at all likely that they would stop working or decrease their hours or earnings in the next 12 months.

Figure 8. Likelihood of starting new job or increasing hours in next 12 months

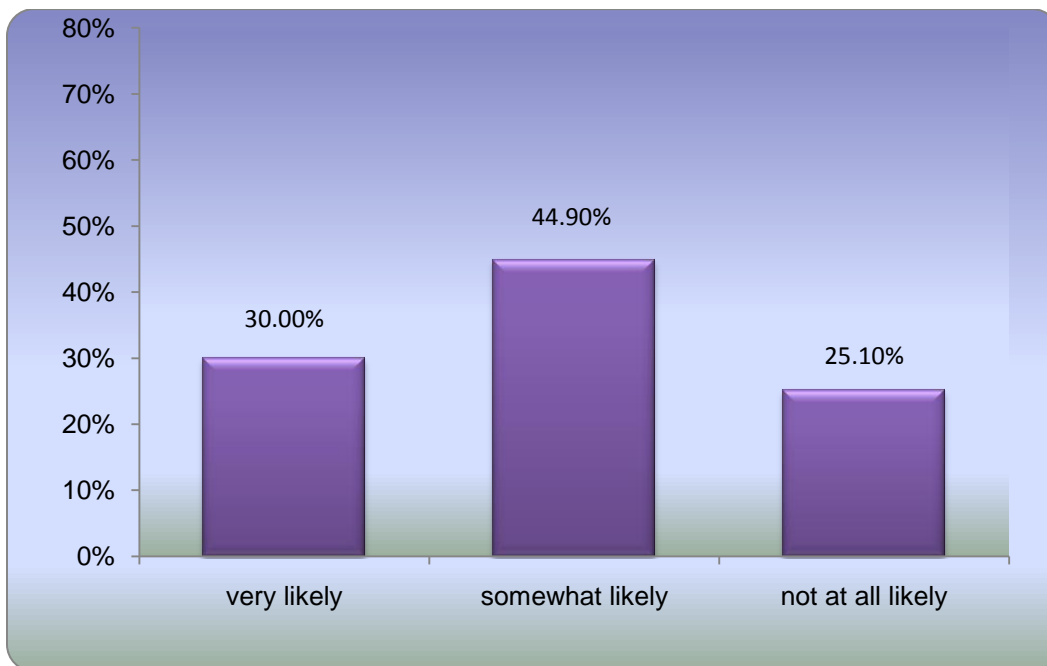
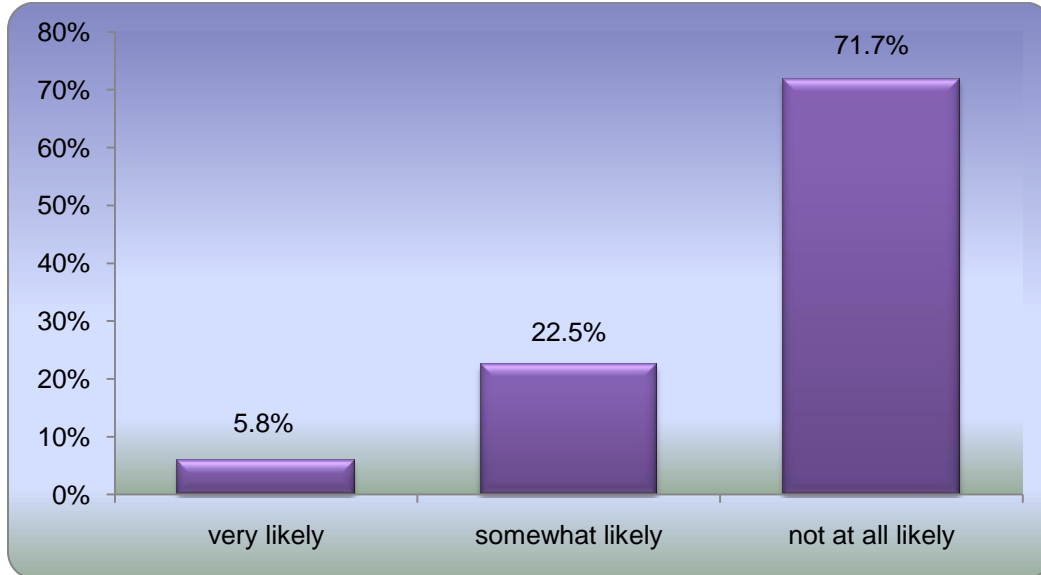


Figure 9. Likelihood of stopping work or decreasing hours in the next 12 months



Turning down a raise, increase in hours, or a job

Respondents were asked to report whether or not they had ever turned down a raise or increase in hours because it might affect their Social Security or other benefits. The majority of respondents (84%) said they had never turned down a raise or an increase in pay because it might affect their benefits.

Participants were also asked if they had ever turned down a job because it might affect their Social Security or other benefits. Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated they had never turned down a job offer because it might affect their benefits.

Additional comments

Additional comments covered a broad range of themes. A few responses were positive.

Although my funding is limited, I keep on gaining experience and take on more responsibility, a situation that may eventually generate many job opportunities.

More comments reflected respondents' frustration with trying to find employment while contending with disability-related issues.

Sometimes still a little paranoid, however have still been able to "keep it together" and stay employed. Would like to try full-time work and get off of disability at this time. After graduating in May 2008, [I] have not been able to find job that is either full time or matches my skills.

Low-income sucks and having a disability is no fun!

I don't think that I can work productively as a registered nurse anymore. The responsibility is too great. If I go back to work it would have to be a job that doesn't require as much responsibility, but hopefully something I enjoy.

My husband is only focused on going back to work. He's willing to try any therapy that will facilitate this. John was a man that worked 12 hours a day, 6 days a week and enjoyed it. The injury has been devastating to him as he's always been an active man. Now he's sitting until his next therapy session.

Many comments focused on respondents' feelings regarding being on benefits and the ability to earn money. Several individuals described it as "Catch-22" situation.

My concern is: how I am going to get a "real", full-time job that will make up for all the 'aid' I am currently receiving (which I am looking to eventually stop) in one fell swoop. It's been (since 1986) 23 years since I had a job having to do with my education. Background (payroll - I have a B.S. Bus. Mgt.); and I don't see anyone hiring me before my 36 months is up (before my disability stops). I have to get a job that pays for my rent, my oil (I pay heat/hot water in my apt.), expenses, food, and a good used car because what I currently have won't last forever. How do I go from part-time cashier to full-time career-oriented employment in one step? If I earn over a certain amount per month, I lose food stamps, TVCCA and disability, yet don't have enough to pay for all I lose if I don't get a really good job to make up for all of it. (I'm nervous already over this.) I feel as though I'm stuck and I don't even care for the job I currently have at all.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

CWICs and the benefits planning and counseling they provide help SSA beneficiaries reduce their dependence on benefits and start working or, if they are already employed, remain in the labor market. People with disabilities have the ability to work and earn money even if they are also receiving benefits from SSI or SSDI. Benefits counseling is intended to help these individuals navigate through technicalities regarding the limits to income that would still allow the person to collect their benefits while being able to gain some meaningful employment. This study evaluated satisfaction with CWICs and their ability to effectively counsel clients on how to use work incentives to pursue employment or increase earnings, work experience, and other aspects related to employment.

Overall, individuals who answered the survey were complimentary about the services they received from their CWIC. A majority of individuals strongly agreed with the statements regarding the scheduling of appointments and the respectfulness of the CWIC and his/her ability to respond to questions or concerns. This demonstrates that the basic services and manner of service delivery are adequate for most clients.

Nearly half (43%) of individuals responded to the open-ended questions and had positive feedback about how helpful their CWIC or the Benefits Counseling Program in general was. Qualitative data demonstrates that overall, CWICs in Connecticut are effectively providing people they counsel with specific information on the impact that working has on the benefits people receive, resources including referrals, and the skills needed to problem solve so they can maximize their independence. The assistance of CWICs and work incentive planning is supporting rather than limiting employment and helping many clients gain the confidence they need to seek employment or, if employed, remain in their job.

Yet, a sizable minority of respondents disagreed that benefits counseling helps an individual to start working or increase their hours or earnings and wrote that they still did not have a job, or that they could not find a job. Although a CWIC's role does not include finding jobs for the people they counsel, respondents' comments indicate that some think helping an individual find employment is part of the CWIC's responsibility. This is an area of confusion that still needs to be clarified and underscored when conducting counseling.

A number of respondents had questions about benefits, in particular how benefits are affected by working or being on a Trial Work Period. Some clients indicate that having more in-depth conversations during additional meetings about employment goals and work incentive programs would be profitable. Given that the information about benefits and work incentives is complex and difficult to understand, especially for those with cognitive impairments, it would be useful to have better coordination between clients and CWICs.

Although the majority of respondents (59%) report having more than a high school education, only 37 percent (n=82) are currently working at a job and many of the jobs held by these individuals are in service/maintenance (27%), retail sales (20%), or technical /paraprofessional (20%) fields. In some cases, clients' lack of job experience and specific training qualifies them for lower paying jobs that are insufficient for survival without government aid. Clearly, clients need ongoing support from professionals who understand how different work incentives can be combined to benefit people as their life and work situation changes.

The majority of respondents reported they had never turned down a raise, increase in hours or a job offer because it might affect their Social Security or other benefits, however qualitative responses indicate that some individuals try to keep their hours or income low enough in order to continue qualifying for benefits. In addition, a number of individuals expressed anxiety about how they can survive on a fixed income and fear that they will be cut off from benefits if they earn too much. This fear again indicates the need for greater support from CWICs over a longer period of time. It also suggests that clients might benefit from starting to work at part time employment not only as a first step to economic self-sufficiency, but to gain the confidence needed to eventually seek full time employment.

Recommendations

Given the conclusions, we recommend the following suggestions.

- Provide ongoing training for CWICs to help them manage service demand and be able to more effectively communicate complex information on work incentives to clients.
- Use handbooks, videos, client-oriented tutorials, and web-based resources to help clients better understand work incentives information.
- Distinguish the CWIC's role from others (e.g., BRS counselors, VR specialists) more clearly and strengthen connections between CWICs and other service providers for client referrals.
- Make additional meetings available, if requested by a client, to answer any questions that arise over time. If clients are working, follow-up meetings should be scheduled to determine earnings and utilization of work incentives.
- Emphasize that client meetings are not primarily intended to help them find a job, but are a way for them to understand the parameters within which they can work and also be eligible for benefits from Social Security.
- Recognize and validate the frustration clients feel about being in a "Catch-22" situation with their benefits and make sure they understand how employment will impact their benefits.
- Share knowledge among ENs about work incentives and distinctions between SSI and SSDI.
- Tap into additional resources and collaborate with transition specialists and trade associations to introduce strategies to expand basic knowledge about work.
- Lastly, conduct future surveys to determine whether or not any issues raised in this survey have been resolved and to continue improving existing services.

V. Appendix

Appendix A: Benefits Counseling Customer Satisfaction Survey

Appendix A

Benefits Counseling Customer Satisfaction Survey

The following copy of the Benefits Counseling Customer Satisfaction Survey was used for this needs assessment. For each question, responses are shown in percentages and represent the percentage of the total number of clients who responded to each question. More information is available from the authors upon request.

Please note that due to rounding, responses to individual questions may not add up to 100 percent.

University of Connecticut Health Center

Benefits Counseling Customer Satisfaction Survey

Benefits counseling is available through the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) to help individuals assess the impact returning to work will have on their disability benefits. Please take a few moments to complete this confidential survey to let us know how satisfied you were with your benefits counseling sessions and about your current work situation. Your responses will help the BRS Benefits Counseling Program know if people are working and earning more money. Your participation is voluntary.

Benefits Counseling

For the following statements, please place an X in the box that best represents your opinion about each one.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I was able to get an appointment quickly.	71%	23%	4%	2%
2. My appointment time was convenient.	83%	14%	1%	2%
3. The Community Work Incentive Coordinator (Benefits Counselor) addressed all my questions or concerns.	76%	20%	2%	1%
4. My Community Work Incentive Coordinator was respectful.	89%	8%	2%	1%
5. The written report I received from my Community Work Incentive Coordinator was helpful.	72%	22%	3%	2%
6. The benefits counseling helped me to start working, increase my hours, or increase my earnings.	34%	27%	20%	2%
7. If a friend had questions or concerns similar to mine, I would recommend the BRS Benefits Counseling Program.	77%	16%	4%	3%

8. What questions or concerns were not addressed by the Community Work Incentive Coordinator?

A total of 85 individuals responded to this question.

9. Please list below any suggestions you have about improving the BRS Benefits Counseling Program.

A total of 71 individuals had suggestions or comments for this question.

Work Experience

10. People are considered to be working if they are earning any amount of money for any amount of work performed. Are you currently working according to this definition?

Yes **41% (n=86)**

→ What is your current job, including any self-employment? **82 people responded**

No **59% (n=123)**

11. Have you started a new job or changed your hours or earnings since you met with the Community Work Incentive Coordinator? (Please check all that apply)

No change **64%**

Started a new job **15%**

Increased hours **6%**

Decreased hours **9%**

Increased earnings **5%**

Decreased earnings **4%**

12. If you started a new job or made any change to your hours or earnings, please tell us why.

A total of 66 individuals responded to this question.

For the following statements, please place an X in the box that best represents your opinion about each one.

	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not at all likely
13. How likely is it that you will <u>start working</u> or <u>increase</u> your hours or earnings in the <u>next 12 months</u> ? Is it	30%	45%	25%
14. How likely is it that you will <u>stop working</u> or <u>decrease</u> your hours or earnings in the <u>next 12 months</u> ? Is it	6%	23%	72%

15. Have you ever turned down a raise or an increase in hours because it might affect your Social Security or other benefits?

- Yes **16%**
- No **84%**

16. Have you ever turned down a job because it might affect your Social Security or other benefits?

- Yes **17%**
- No **83%**

General Information

17. What is the highest grade or year you finished in school?

- 8th grade or less **3%**
- Some high school **5%**
- High school diploma or GED **33%**
- Some college **30%**
- Four year college degree **19%**
- Post graduate degree **10%**

18. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your work situation (i.e., concerns or changes related to number of hours you work or the wages you earn)?

A total of 69 individuals responded to this question.

Thank you for completing this survey.