



University of Connecticut Health Center

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Connecticut Bureau of Rehabilitation
Services Needs Assessment:

Vocational Rehabilitation
Services

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I. Introduction

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) offers vocation rehabilitation services to assist individuals with significant physical and mental disabilities find and maintain employment (<http://www.brs.state.ct.us/aboutus.htm>). Such services may include:

- Vocational counseling
- Job search assistance
- Skill training and career education in vocational and other schools
- On-the-job training in business and industry
- Assistive technology services such as adaptive equipment for mobility, communication and specific work activities
- Vehicle and home modifications
- Supported employment services
- Services to assist in restoring or improving a physical or mental condition
- Services to help the individual access other needed services, such as transportation assistance, in order to meet the individual's Employment Plan goals (www.brs.state.ct.us/programs.htm)

These services are offered at no cost to eligible Connecticut residents. In addition to having significant physical or mental disabilities, a consumer's disabilities must also cause substantial barriers to employment, and they must require vocational rehabilitation (VR) services to become employed. The Board of Education and Services for the Blind assists consumers who are legally blind.

VR services support consumers through preparation for employment, job search, application/interview process, getting hired, and maintaining employment. Through individualized services, consumers can identify their employment goals and proactively work towards achieving their goals.

This study represents a needs assessment of current and past VR participants. Data were collected directly from VR participants regarding their program needs and satisfaction with VR services.

II. Methodology and Analysis

Survey instrument

The needs assessment utilized a confidential mail survey. A four page survey was developed by BRS to assess the following domains:

- Overall satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services
- Current employment satisfaction
- Barriers to employment
- Satisfaction with BRS services

A final question asked, "Do you want to speak with someone about your experience at BRS?" If yes, respondents were asked to write in their name and number for BRS follow up. See Appendix A for the survey.

The survey was printed as a booklet on blue paper, and the surveys were numbered in order to prevent use of duplicate surveys. The survey was also translated into Spanish to increase its accessibility for Latino respondents.

Research sample

BRS maintains a database of all current and former VR clients. The needs assessment examined two different populations: VR cases that were closed in fiscal year 2009, and VR cases considered open by BRS (i.e., the person is still working with a VR counselor). Random sampling was used to identify potential respondents, with oversampling of racial and ethnic minority clients. Using the ethnicity variable in the database, both Black and Latino populations were oversampled to increase the number of responses from these groups. Because a sample of Benefits Counseling clients, some of whom also used VR services, had recently received a satisfaction survey, those who had received the Benefits Counseling survey were removed from all closed cases, leaving an initial sample size of 3,297 clients with closed cases. A random 10 percent sample of the remaining non-minority and a 20 percent sampling of the minority clients were chosen, yielding a total sample of 414 clients with closed cases to survey (239 non-minority and 175 minority, of which 72 clients identified as Latino).

A similar sampling methodology was used for the open (active) cases, eliminating those who received the Benefits Counseling satisfaction survey, and including an oversampling of both Black and Latino clients. From the initial population of 2,932 open cases who did not receive the recent Benefits Counseling survey, a final research sample of 347 was randomly chosen to receive surveys. This sample comprised 231 non-minority and 116 minority clients, of which 40 were Latino.

Recruitment

Each client received a personalized letter inviting them to participate, a numbered survey, and a self-addressed, postage-paid reply envelope. Following standard survey methodology, a follow-up letter, survey, and reply envelope were sent to both the open and closed cases. The initial and follow-up surveys were sent one week apart.

Both the survey and the letter were translated into Spanish. On the bottom of the English letter, a sentence in Spanish gave a number for clients to call if they wanted the survey in Spanish. Clients identified as Latino in the database received both the Spanish and the English letters and surveys in one packet.

Response rate

A total of 761 surveys were mailed in the initial mailing: 414 closed cases and 347 open cases. The second mailing excluded any returned surveys or wrong addresses, for a total of 704 surveys: 367 closed cases and 337 open.

Closed cases:

1st mailing: 3/05/2010 (342 English; 72 Spanish; total=414)

2nd mailing: 3/15/2010 (297 English, 70 Spanish; total=367)

Open cases:

1st mailing: 3/12/2010 (307 English; 40 Spanish; total=347)

2nd mailing: 3/18/2010 (298 English; 39 Spanish; total=337)

Overall response rate for both closed and opened cases was 30.6 percent (33.2% closed and 26.0% open cases).

Cases	Surveys sent in first mailing	Surveys received	Surveys ineligible	Final response rate
Closed	414	116	65	33.2%
Open	367	89	25	26.0%
Overall	761	205	90	30.6%

A greater percentage of clients with closed cases responded. This could in part be attributed to their lower levels of satisfaction overall, as well as the timing of the surveys, as these surveys were mailed first and so former clients had more time to respond. Providing a longer time frame for data collection and more time between the first and second mailings would have likely lead to a higher response rate. Inclusion of an inducement such as offering money or gift certificates for responses might also have increased the response rate.

Analysis

All data were entered into an online Access database, and then transferred into statistical software PASW 17 for analysis. Question by question descriptive statistics were performed, and chi square tests of statistical significance were used to compare the data for open and closed cases. A p-value of less than 0.05 indicates a statistically significant difference.

III. Results

The following details the most salient results; see Appendix A where total sample percentages are given for each question.

Demographics

Some demographics were supplied by BRS with the contact information, including date of birth, gender, and race and ethnicity. Using these data, the average respondent can be characterized as a white, non-Latino male in his mid thirties.

Age and gender

Respondents ranged in age from 14 to 81, with a mean of 36.7. Former clients were, on average, older than current participants (mean 39.5 vs. 33.5, $p < .001$). Substantially more men than women responded to the survey: 59 percent of all respondents were male, compared with only 41percent female.

Race and ethnicity

Clients had the choice of identifying as one or more race. Although multiple races and ethnicities were represented, most respondents were white (Caucasian), non-Latino. A full quarter of all respondents identified as Black/African American. Three quarters of former clients (75%) and two thirds of current clients (67%) identified as white ($p < .05$). Other categories with

significant differences included Latino ($p < .05$) and white-Latino ($p < .001$). For both of these, more former clients were of Latino ethnicity compared with current clients. A greater percentage of current clients were Black, non-Latino, but this difference was not significant (see Table 1).

Table 1. Race and ethnicity: Number and percentage of total respondents

	Current clients	Former clients	Total respondents
White, non-Latino*	231 (67%)	309 (75%)	540 (71%)
Black, non-Latino	101 (29%)	97 (23%)	198 (26%)
Latino*	40 (12%)	72 (17%)	112 (15%)
White-Latino**	18 (5%)	61 (15%)	79 (10%)
Black-Latino	14 (4%)	11 (3%)	25 (3%)
Asian	9 (3%)	9 (2%)	18 (2%)
Pacific Islander	2 (1%)	1 (<1%)	3 (<1%)
Native American	5 (1%)	12 (3%)	17 (2%)
Multi-racial	9 (3%)	12 (3%)	21 (3%)

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

Vocational rehabilitation services

The first part of the survey had a set of eleven evaluation questions specific to the client's VR services experience. The questions covered the client's satisfaction with their own involvement, counselor understanding and respect, overall services, and office accessibility.

Client involvement:

Three questions assessed satisfaction with the client's own involvement in their VR services, specifically satisfaction with setting their job goals, choosing their services, and choosing their providers. The majority of all clients with either open or closed cases expressed satisfaction with all three client involvement measures.

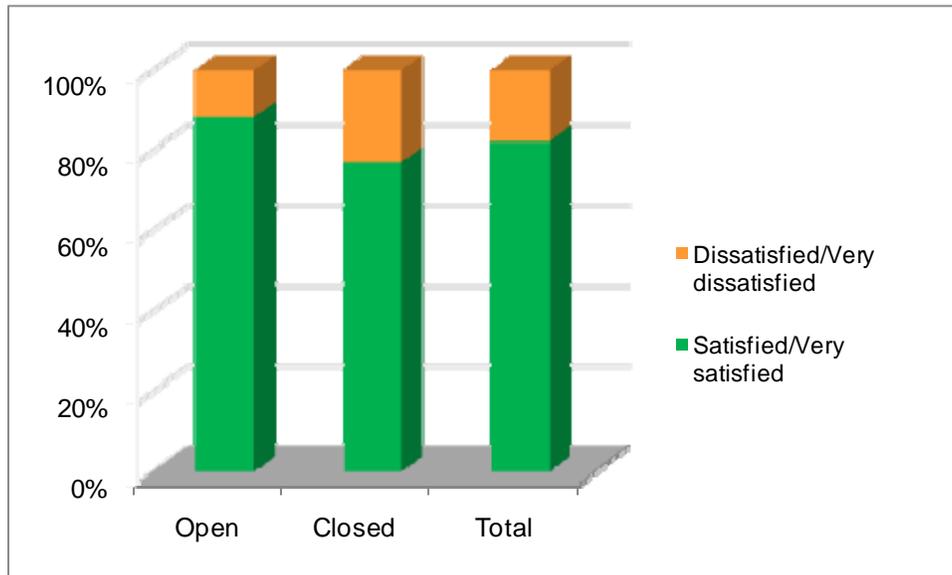
Client satisfaction for all consumers for all three measures ranged from 71 percent to 82 percent (Table 2). As a whole, clients were not quite as happy with their involvement with choosing their services. A significant difference was noted between open and closed cases, with closed cases expressing greater dissatisfaction with involvement with setting job goals ($p < .05$, Figure 1).

Table 2. Satisfaction with client involvement

	Very Dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied or very satisfied (%)
Your involvement in setting your job goals*					
Open cases	8.1	3.5	55.8	32.6	88.4
Closed cases	11.4	11.4	41.0	36.2	77.1
Total cases	9.9	7.9	47.6	34.6	82.2
Your involvement in choosing the services you received					
Open cases	7.2	19.3	39.8	33.7	73.5
Closed cases	13.3	18.4	39.8	28.6	68.4
Total cases	10.5	18.8	39.8	30.9	70.7
Your involvement in choosing your service providers					
Open cases	11.7	14.3	44.2	29.9	74.0
Closed cases	10.4	14.6	38.5	36.5	75.0
Total cases	11.0	14.5	41.0	33.5	74.6

*p<.05

Figure 1. Satisfaction with involvement in setting job goals*



*p<.05

Counselor understanding and respect:

Three questions examined satisfaction with specific qualities of the counselor: the counselor's understanding, respect and concern for the client, and responsiveness to telephone calls. The majority of all clients indicated high levels of satisfaction with the understanding, respect, and responsiveness they received from their VR counselors (see Table 4). This was equally true across all three domains and for both current and former clients.

Given the importance of the counselor-client relationship, it is notable that a full half of clients with either open or closed cases were very satisfied with their counselor's respect and concern for them. Moreover, 56 percent of former clients were very satisfied with their counselor's understanding of their needs and interests.

Table 4. Satisfaction with counselor

	Very Dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied or very satisfied (%)
Your counselor's understanding of your needs and interests					
Open cases	10.8	7.2	34.9	47.0	81.9
Closed cases	9.6	12.3	21.9	56.1	78.1
Total cases	10.2	10.2	27.4	52.3	79.7
Your counselor's respect for you and concern in helping you get a job					
Open cases	8.4	8.4	33.7	49.4	83.1
Closed cases	8.0	11.0	31.0	50.0	81.0
Total cases	8.2	9.8	32.2	49.7	82.0
How long it took your counselor to return your telephone calls					
Open cases	9.2	8.0	35.6	47.1	82.8
Closed cases	7.1	9.7	40.7	42.5	83.2
Total cases	8.0	9.0	38.5	44.5	83.0

Overall services and experience:

Overall services and experience were covered by three questions assessing satisfaction with the length of time for services, the services themselves, and the client's overall experience. Although once again the majority of clients expressed satisfaction with these items, they were somewhat less satisfied with their overall services and overall experience with BRS than their involvement in their services and relationship with their VR counselor. Between 69 to 74 percent of all respondents indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their services, length of time to receive them, and their overall experience with BRS (see Table 5).

Table 5. Satisfaction with overall services and experience

	Very Dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied or very satisfied (%)
How long it took to receive services					
Open cases	12.9	16.5	44.7	25.9	70.6
Closed cases	11.9	14.7	41.3	32.1	73.4
Total cases	12.4	15.5	42.8	29.4	72.2
The services you received					
Open cases	13.4	18.3	40.2	28.0	68.3
Closed cases	14.4	15.4	29.8	40.4	70.2
Total cases	14.0	16.7	34.4	34.9	69.4
Your overall experience with BRS					
Open cases	14.5	12.0	36.1	37.3	73.5
Closed cases	11.7	18.9	22.5	46.8	69.4
Total cases	12.9	16.0	28.4	42.8	71.1

Office location/accessibility:

The final two questions concerned the location and accessibility of the office. Approximately 90 percent of current and former VR clients were satisfied with both (see Table 6). Accessibility issues included parking, entrance to the office, and mobility in the office.

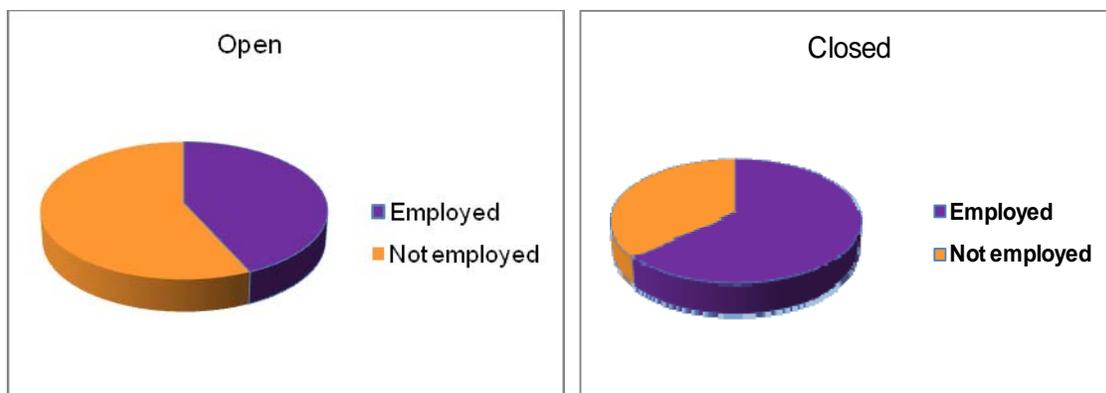
Table 6. Satisfaction with office location and accessibility

	Very Dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Very Satisfied (%)	Satisfied or very satisfied (%)
The location of the office					
Open cases	3.5	4.7	50.6	41.2	91.8
Closed cases	3.5	6.2	49.6	40.7	90.3
Total cases	3.5	5.6	50.0	40.9	90.9
The accessibility of the office					
Open cases	2.4	9.5	38.1	50.0	88.1
Closed cases	4.5	5.4	49.5	40.5	90.1
Total cases	3.6	7.2	44.6	44.6	89.2

Current employment

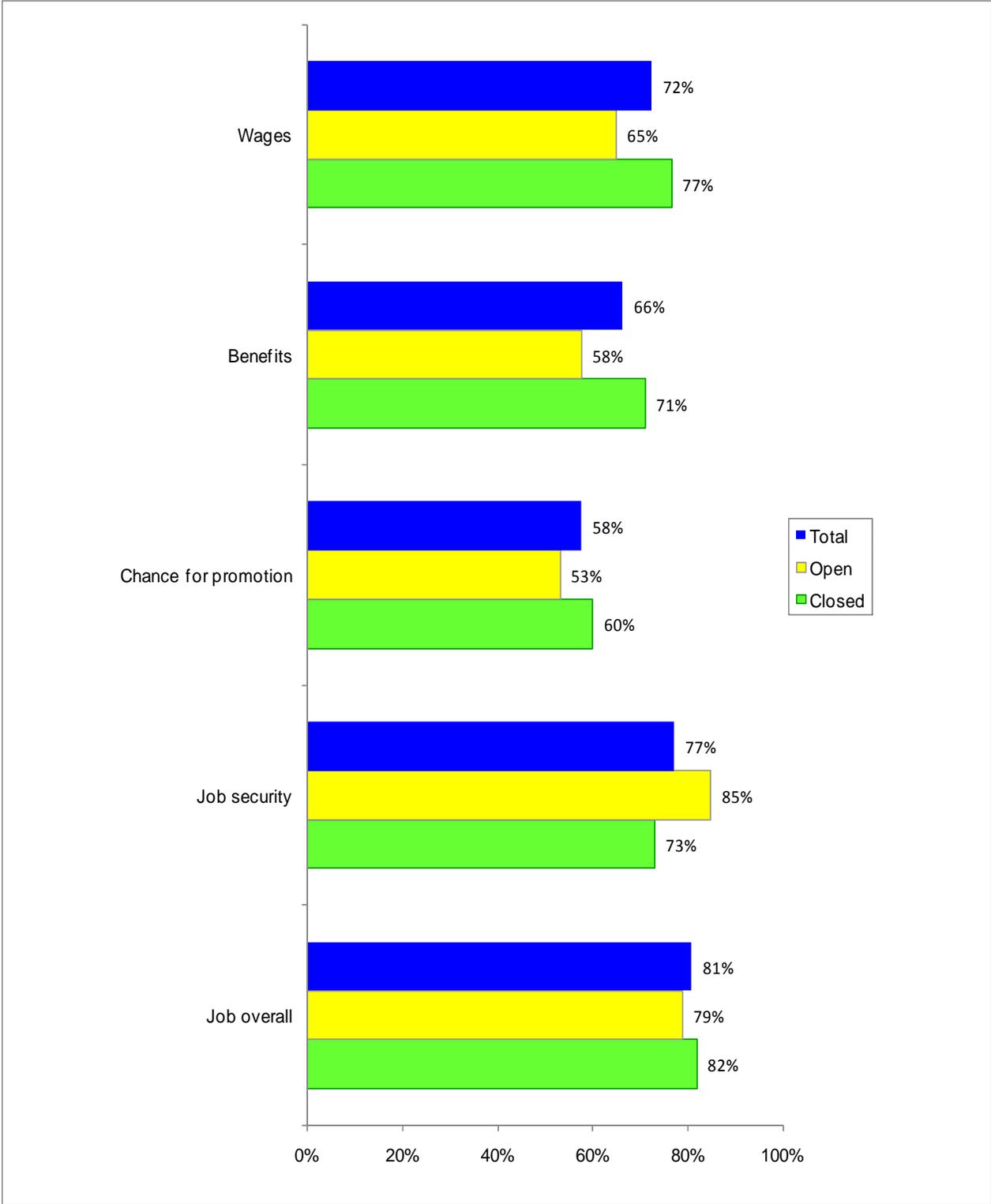
Of the 205 total respondents to the survey, just over half (55%) were currently employed (n=112). This question did show significant differences between current and former clients. Almost two thirds (64%) of former clients were working, compared with 43 percent of current clients ($p < .05$).

Figure 2. Current employment



Current job satisfaction was examined using wages, benefits, chance for promotion, job security, and job overall (see Figure 3). The following trends were apparent, although these differences did not reach statistical significance. A greater percentage of former clients reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their current wages compared with current clients (77% vs. 65%, respectively). Former clients were also more satisfied with their benefits, such as health insurance, vacation, and sick leave (71% vs. 58%, respectively). On the other hand, more current clients felt satisfied with their job security (85% vs. 73%, respectively). Neither group was especially happy with their chance for a promotion in their current jobs (58% satisfaction overall). Interestingly, even with some lower levels of satisfaction with individual job aspects, the majority of both groups reported they were either satisfied or very satisfied with their job (79% of current clients; 82% of former clients).

Figure 3. Satisfaction with current job

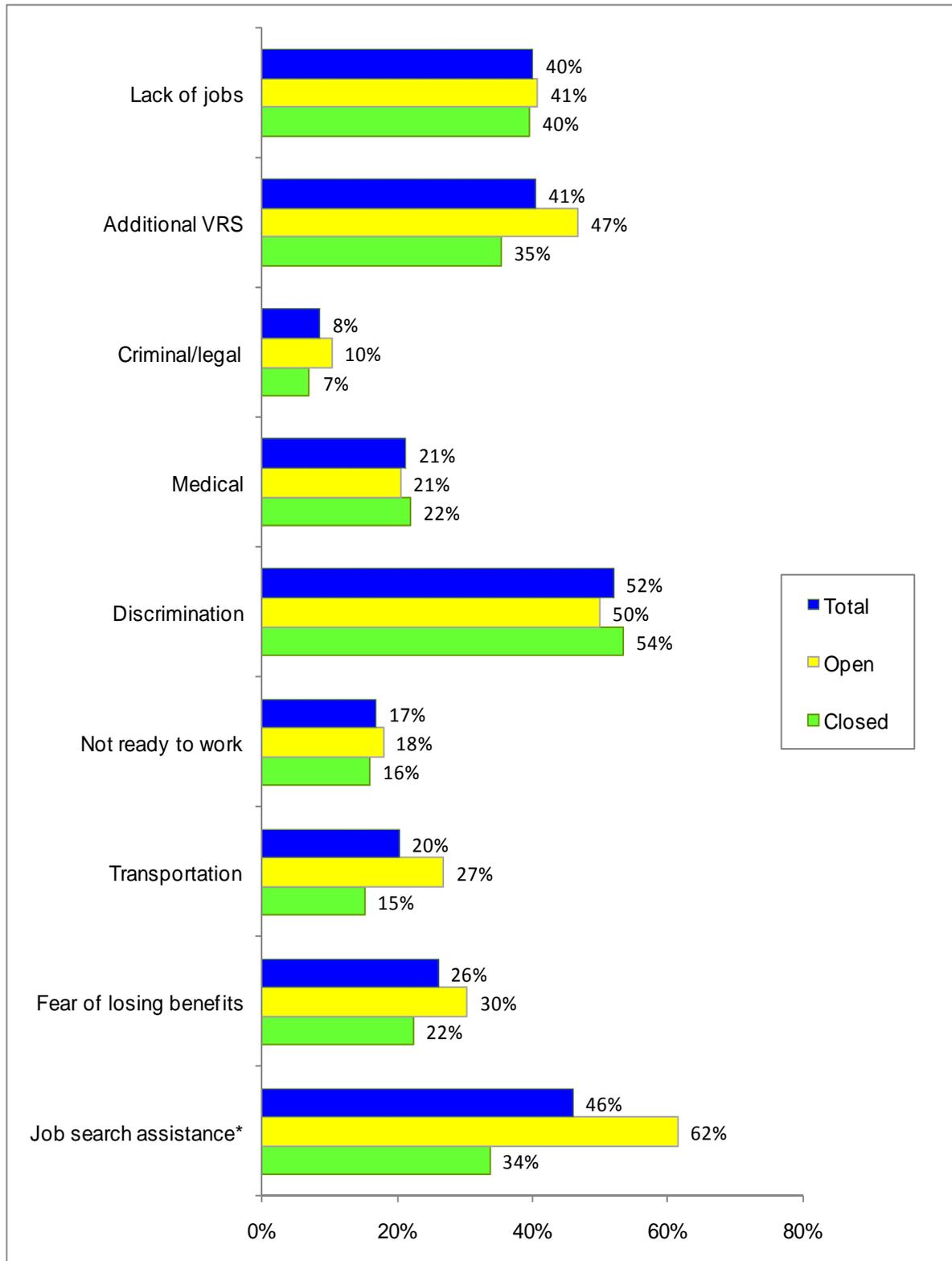


Employment barriers

Respondents reported various barriers to obtaining employment (see Figure 4). Overall, respondents reported discrimination against people with disabilities as the number one barrier to employment: half of all respondents (52%) indicated this to be a barrier. Other top barriers were need for job search assistance (46% overall), need for additional VR services (41% overall), and lack of available and desirable jobs (40%).

The two groups of clients were similar with respect to most employment barriers. Only one barrier was significantly different between the two groups, and one other approached significance. Many more clients with open cases reported needing help with their job search as a barrier: 62% open cases vs. 34% closed ($p < .001$). Lack of transportation was also more often reported by current clients when compared to former clients (27% vs. 15%), but this difference did not reach statistical significance.

Figure 4. Barriers to employment: Percentage of each group reporting each barrier



*p<.001

Experiences with BRS services

This section covered satisfaction with BRS services overall: appointment scheduling, maintaining contact, explanation of services, the goal of BRS, and resolution of any concerns. As shown in Table 7 below, respondents knew when and why their appointments were scheduled (84% all respondents), but were less sure of the other items overall. For example, approximately 70 percent of all respondents indicated that they always maintained contact with their counselor as often as agreed upon, and a similar percentage agreed that they were satisfied with the explanation of services. Clients especially had difficulties with resolution of any concerns expressed to their BRS counselor; less than 60 percent overall indicated these concerns were consistently resolved to their satisfaction.

Notable differences between current and former clients were reported concerning both the goal of BRS and resolution of concerns. Almost all current clients knew that the goal of BRS was to help them find a job, compared to just three-quarters of former clients. Moreover, over one third of former clients were dissatisfied with the resolution of any concerns, compared to less than 20 percent of current clients. A closer look also revealed that former clients were especially dissatisfied with the explanation of services, as expressed by 20 percent of this group. While these difference show an important trend, none of them reached statistical significance.

Table 7. BRS services

	No (%)	Sometimes (%)	Yes (%)
Did BRS staff explain when and why appointments were scheduled with them?			
Current clients	7.6	8.9	83.5
Former clients	5.9	9.9	84.2
Total clients	6.7	9.4	83.9
Did you and your counselor maintain contact as often as agreed upon while receiving services?			
Current	11.8	18.8	69.4
Former	11.0	15.6	73.4
Total	11.3	17.0	71.6
Were you satisfied with the explanation of services to help you reach your goal?			
Current	14.8	14.8	70.4
Former	20.0	12.4	67.6
Total	17.7	13.4	68.8
Did you know the goal for BRS was to help you find a job?			
Current	3.7	3.7	92.7
Former	21.2	3.0	75.8
Total	13.3	3.3	83.4
If you expressed concerns about your BRS counselor, were your concerns resolved to your satisfaction?			
Current	19.3	12.3	68.4
Former	36.1	14.8	49.2
Total	28.0	13.6	58.5

Additional comments

Respondents used this open-ended question to add more about their experience with VR services and BRS overall. Approximately half of the respondents answering this question expressed a positive experience, and roughly one quarter of the positive experiences regarded receiving assistive devices, most often hearing devices. Some of the negative comments concerned the limitations beyond VR services and BRS in general, such as the poor job environment or employers' unwillingness to hire a person with disabilities. Areas for improvement indicated by respondents include feeling persuaded to take a job that did not fit their skills or needs, receiving no assistance in finding a job, taking too long to be assigned to a new counselor after their original one was no longer available or did not work out, experiencing bureaucratic issues with BRS, experiencing a negative relationship with referred agencies, and not receiving needed training or education.

Suggestions from respondents included earlier reassignment to a new counselor, better explanation of how working would affect their benefits, providing assistance in receiving a driver's license, providing assistance with starting one's own business, use of video phone, and offering better education and training. The following are selected representative comments; see Appendix B for a comprehensive list.

Sometimes I felt we were going in circles when we talked about what type of a new job I wanted to do. Instead of what I really do for a job since I had a part-time job. I really wanted to go back to school to help myself get into a better job but it never happened. So eventually I stopped going to BRS, and now I'm stuck in just settling.

I thank BRS for finding me a job taking care of two ladies as a companion for an hour and cleaning for an hour. We got along great.... It was a wonderful experience.

Services were not to get a job. I had one. I had a disability that was interfering with my work - a severe hearing loss. BRS helped me to get evaluated and get the hearing aids that made a world of difference in my ability to work effectively and productively. Staff was professional, knowledgeable, compassionate and very effective in meeting my needs. My thanks to them! I am very satisfied. Great program!

My counselor has left to seek other employment. It is taking too long to be reassigned to a new worker. I think the clients should be reassigned before the worker leaves, so there would be no gap in services or loss of opportunities.

I was not helped to find a job, especially one that used my training and skills.... It did not matter to them what I wanted to do, only to push me into any job. I am intelligent and need fulfillment and to use my skills.

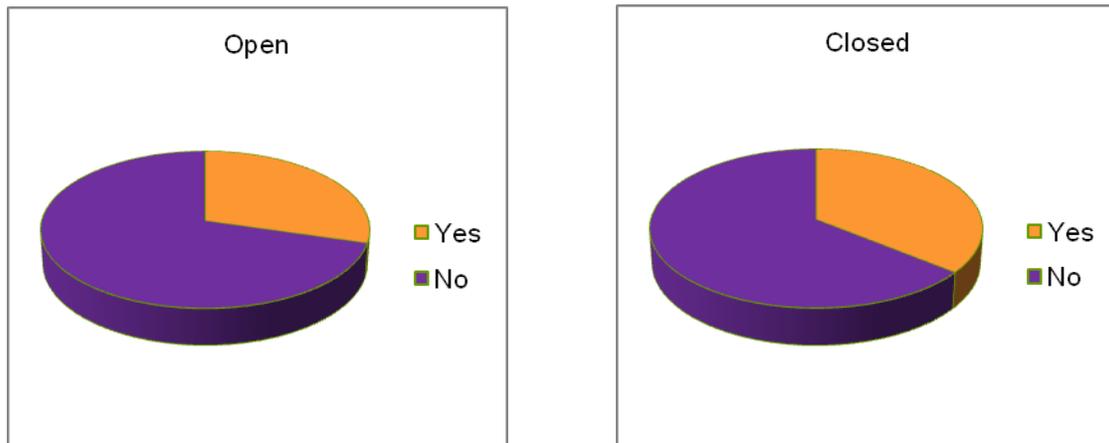
My BRS counselor was very good. However, the agencies s/he hired would not follow through. I found job on my own, but the agency really screwed things up.

I believe my counselor did everything under her power to help me in my search for employment.

Telephone follow-up

Respondents were given the option of asking to speak with someone about their experience at BRS. One third of all respondents indicated that they would like to do so (n=62, 33%). More former than current clients expressed this interest (36% closed vs. 30% open cases).

Figure 5. Would like to speak with someone about their BRS experience



IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Overall, the majority of both current and former clients expressed satisfaction with measures such as client involvement in goals and services, counselor understanding and responsiveness, and office logistics. These are all essential pieces of a client's VR experiences and reflect areas which are working well for most clients.

Fewer respondents were as satisfied with how long it took to receive services, the services themselves, and overall experience with BRS. Although still satisfying a majority of clients, these indicate areas which could use improvement. An internal evaluation of these services might be useful. This also represents an area which could be enlarged upon in a future needs assessment.

Of the nine potential barriers to employment, four were experienced as barriers by at least four out of ten respondents overall: discrimination against people with disabilities, need for more job search assistance, need for additional VR services, and lack of available and desirable jobs. Although the great majority of those indicating a need for more job search assistance were current clients, still, one third of former clients cited this as a barrier to employment. In addition, one third of former clients indicated the need for additional VR services. These numbers are notable and indicate room for improvement in both these areas.

Overall, respondents expressed greater levels of satisfaction with their counselor than with either their experience with the services received, how long it took to receive services, or BRS overall. This was also apparent with the number of current and former clients who would like

additional VR services and additional help with their job search. One notable exception to this was the resolution of any concerns expressed to their BRS counselor: less than 60 percent overall indicated these concerns were consistently resolved in a satisfactory manner.

As a whole, the former clients were less satisfied with their VR or BRS services and expressed a greater need for additional VR services. Although the majority of respondents were satisfied with their involvement in setting their job goals and their involvement in choosing their services, former clients were not as satisfied as current clients with either of these measures. Former clients were also less clear that the goal of BRS was to help them find a job and were more dissatisfied with the explanation of services. It might be useful to pay special attention to these areas, especially for clients who may be ending services.

Almost two thirds of former clients were working, compared with 43 percent of current clients. This is encouraging, as receiving VR services may have had a positive effect on former clients obtaining employment. A greater percentage of former clients were also satisfied with their wages, which is another sign of possible positive influence of VR services.

Recommendations

It must be noted that the details of the closed cases, including when they were closed, the reasons why, and if the client initiated the ending of services are not known. Still some overall recommendations can be offered.

- Examine the closed cases of former clients who expressed dissatisfaction. Clients with closed cases expressed greater dissatisfaction overall than current clients. A closer look at their case files might reveal some commonalities between these cases. Outreach could possibly be done to former clients to offer additional VR services. Sending confidential satisfaction surveys to all clients after their case is considered closed might better determine any negative experiences.
- Follow up personally with all clients who indicated they wanted to be contacted. This conversation will most likely provide some insight into what is working or not working for both current and former VR clients.
- Create a formal procedure in the event that a case must be transferred to another counselor, including a briefing from the current counselor to the new one.
- Uniformly offer comprehensive benefits counseling to all clients, being sure that each client has a clear understanding how employment may affect their benefits.
- Provide more comprehensive training, including training on advanced computer skills.
- The majority of negative experiences related by clients concerned expectations from the services which were not met. One way to lessen this would be to *specifically discuss the client's expectations of services*, in addition to the client's needs and wants, and to communicate clearly how VR services can and cannot support the client in their search for employment.

- Finally, conducting periodic needs assessments would be another way to further evaluate and improve the program. Details from closed cases could then be elicited, especially if the needs assessment included telephone interviews and focus groups with former and current clients. It would be useful to include a detailed assessment of the clients' opinions regarding what additional VR services they feel would be helpful in obtaining a job which uses their skills and abilities.

V. Appendices

[Appendix A:](#) Vocational Rehabilitation Customer Satisfaction Survey: Percentage Results

[Appendix B:](#) Additional Comments

Appendix A

Vocational Rehabilitation Customer Satisfaction Survey: Percentage Results

The following is a copy of the VR satisfaction survey used for this needs assessment. Responses are given in percentages for each question. These represent the percentage of all clients who answered that question. More detailed results are available from the authors upon request.

Responses to any individual question may not equal 100percent due to rounding.

University of Connecticut Health Center

Vocational Rehabilitation Customer Satisfaction Survey

Vocational Rehabilitation is available through the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) to help individuals obtain employment. Please take a few moments to complete this confidential survey to let us know how satisfied you were with your vocational rehabilitation services and about your current work situation. Your responses will help the BRS Vocational Rehabilitation Program improve their services. This survey is confidential, and your participation is voluntary.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Please tell us how satisfied you were with the services you received. For each statement, place an X in the box that best represents how satisfied you were.

How satisfied were you with:	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
1. Your involvement in setting your job goals	10%	8%	48%	35%
2. Your involvement in choosing the services you received (such as training)	11%	19%	40%	31%
3. Your involvement in choosing the service providers (such as doctors or schools)	11%	15%	41%	34%
4. Your counselor's understanding of your needs and interests	10%	10%	27%	52%
5. Your counselor's respect for you and concern in helping you get a job	8%	10%	32%	50%
6. How long it took to receive services	12%	16%	43%	29%
7. How long it took your counselor to return your telephone calls	8%	9%	39%	45%
8. The services you received (such as job training or medical evaluation)	14%	17%	43%	35%
9. Your overall experience with BRS	13%	16%	28%	43%
10. The location of the office	4%	6%	50%	41%
11. The accessibility of the office (parking, entrance to office, mobility within the office)	4%	7%	45%	45%

Your current job

12. Are you working now? (circle one):

55% YES

45% NO → **If you answered No**, skip to question 18.

If you are working now, place an X in the box that best represents how satisfied you are for each one.

If you are working now, how satisfied are you with:	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
13. Your wages	7%	21%	49%	24%
14. Your benefits (such as health insurance, vacation, sick leave)	13%	21%	40%	26%
15. Your chance to move up or get a promotion	14%	28%	40%	17%
16. Your job security	3%	20%	55%	22%
17. Your job overall	2%	17%	53%	28%

Barriers to working

Have you experienced any of the following barriers in obtaining employment? Place an X under Yes if you have experienced that barrier, under No if you have not.

	YES	NO
18. No jobs are available that I want.	40%	60%
19. I need additional vocational rehabilitation services.	41%	60%
20. I have past criminal or legal issues.	8%	92%
21. Medical problems prevent me from working now.	21%	79%
22. I find that people discriminate against persons with disabilities.	52%	48%
23. I am not ready to start working.	17%	83%
24. I do not have access to transportation to get to work.	20%	80%

Have you experienced any of the following barriers in obtaining employment?

	YES	NO
25. I am afraid of losing disability and/or health care benefits (such as SSDI, SSI, or Medicaid).	26%	74%
26. I need help with my job search.	46%	54%
27. Other (please describe):	9%	91%

BRS Services

For each question, place an X in the box that best represents your experience.

	Does not apply to me	No	Sometimes	Yes
28. Did BRS staff explain when and why appointments were scheduled with them?	8%	6%	9%	77%
29. Did you and your counselor maintain contact as often as agreed upon while receiving services?	2%	11%	17%	71%
30. Were you satisfied with the explanation of services to help you reach your goal?	3%	17%	13%	67%
31. Did you know the goal for BRS was to help you find a job?	8%	12%	3%	77%
32. If you expressed concerns about your BRS counselor, were your concerns resolved to your satisfaction?	36%	18%	9%	38%

33. Do you have any additional comments?

64% of respondents wrote in comments. See Appendix B for a comprehensive list.

34. Do you want to speak with someone about your experience at BRS? (circle one)

33% YES

67% NO

If you circled "yes", please print your name and add your telephone number below. This way we can call and speak to you. If you do not wish to be called, do not print your name or phone number.

If you give your name, your answers to this survey will not be anonymous, but your name will not be published in any report.

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Thank you for sharing your thoughts to help us improve services for all consumers.

Please mail your completed survey in the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope provided.

Appendix B Additional Comments

The following are all comments written in by respondents in response to Question 33' "Do you have any additional comments?" They have been edited for spelling with some words added in brackets to improve comprehension. Spaces indicate unreadable words.

I believe my counselor did everything under her power to help me in my search for employment
I am very grateful that BRS found a company to help me find a job ASAP and that gave me a job coach when I did get a job. Thank you.
BRS did not help in any way to help me get a job. I received much better vocational services from United Services in which they helped me get my current job. BRS was a complete waste of time.
I am on SSD, this is the first time I ever heard of BRS. No one ever contacted regarding this service. I don't even know how you got my name.
Wasn't looking for a job, just with hearing so I could maintain present job.
I found a job on my own. BRS didn't help me or help keep it. Then I joined the military. BRS did not help me prepare for a job I was interested in.
I would like to be contacted so I can get training and a job. Please call me at 203-745-8537
I was so impressed with the professionalism! [Name] was great! Having hearing aids has given me my life back. Thank you.
Sincere thanks to [name] and her staff. Her time and effort are greatly appreciated.
Sometimes I felt we were going in circles when we talked about what type of a new job I wanted to do, instead of what I really do for a job since I had a part-time job. I really wanted to go back to school to help myself get into a better job but it never happened. So, eventually I stopped going to BRS and now I'm stuck in just settling.
Due to medical reasons, I had to discontinue with BRS. I was interested in specific training, but because I have my Masters degree I was discouraged from further training through BRS. I thought my counselor was very thoughtful about my situations and made many efforts to help me with rescheduling. I found this issue about my education very disappointing.
I was and am employed by the same employer for 32 years. It seemed odd that I needed to take to several multitude hour mornings off [to talk to someone] so that I could get monies for vehicle modifications to maintain employment.
My case was handled by [name] in Bridgeport. She was very professional, helpful and courteous. [My counselor's] attitude and concern left me with a most positive impression of BRS and its services. Well done indeed.
My BRS counselor really didn't help me at all, I felt as if all we ever did was have appointment on top of more appointments. It was a complete let down.
I thank BRS for finding me a job taking care of two ladies as a companion for an hour and cleaning for an hour. We got along great. I had to quit because I got sick. It was a wonderful experience.
She did nothing for me. She said there were no jobs. Not for 6 months. It's frustrating. So I went and found myself a job at Salvation Army. They [BRS] didn't help me get a job. Now I'm trying to find a job for 20 hours. It's hard.
My counselor retired just after my recent case. Who will replace her?

<p>Due to my disability, I contacted BRS myself hoping that they can help me find a job. Unfortunately, they acted with me like any other job search agency.</p>
<p>Neither my counselor nor I fully understood what jobs I was capable of doing. I was not evaluated on what I could or could not do, only on what training was available to me and then I had to pick something. I picked nurses aid but I am not able to physically do the job so I am not working.</p>
<p>The closest I came to working with my degree in human service is with the warm line at Valley Mental Health which I feel is a starting place for me. I would like to work at least 15 hours a week. With Warm Line I am only working about 15 hours every two weeks. That makes it 7.5 hours a week. I do not want to do any home health care and be a CNA or HHA. I had enough of that. It is too much on me.</p>
<p>My counselor stated she had too many clients to keep in touch with. It would be months between calls from her. She did not respond to my call.</p>
<p>My BRS counselor has since retired and she briefed the new counselor about me. I was able to get my prosthesis paid for as a result of her help. Very pleased with BRS. I had to find their services on my own - too bad I wasn't told about them after my surgery.</p>
<p>My counselor was [name]. She was excellent in all respects. Unfortunately she retired. It is everyone's loss.</p>
<p>I am re-applying for services and/or post employment services. I want to do something with my life. It is already half over and I have nothing to show for it. I'm sorry I got sick but it wasn't my fault. All I want is a reasonable job with reasonable hours and a chance to part of society. A productive part of society.</p>
<p>BRS staff are very friendly, but receiving services takes too long to the point that you lose motivation waiting [for] them. On occasion, after an employment evaluation (job interview) when I didn't get the job, I was even more depressed.</p>
<p>While in CT I was not given any job training although I had numerous meetings with counselors. They were helpful in obtaining some medical care and transportation vouchers but did not offer any job training.</p>
<p>My job at Walgreens... is physically demanding and requires speed, to make rate, which aren't my strengths. If I don't make rate at this job, I won't be able to transfer to a job that's a better fit for me. While I'm grateful to have a job in this economy, it's not a good fit for me.</p>
<p>My worker [name] downgraded me a lot because of my disabilities and making me think that I can't do my goals that I wanted to do like I wanted to go back to school for certified nurse's aide but because I failed once she thought I couldn't do it. So CT Works paid for school and now I'm a certified nurse's aide.</p>
<p>I was recommended to obtain services through Ability Beyond Disability.</p>
<p>Services were not to get a job. I had one. I had a disability that was interfering with my work - a severe hearing loss. BRS helped me to get evaluated and get the hearing aids that made a world of difference in my ability to work effectively and productively. Staff was professional, knowledgeable, compassionate and very effective in meeting my needs. My thanks to them! I am very satisfied, great program!!!</p>
<p>I found work fairly quickly after completing training which was partially funded by BRS. However, I didn't mention my disability until I was accepted for the job. My disability is visual and not immediately obvious. Most handicapped people don't have the option of "hiding" (or just not mentioning) their disabilities.</p>
<p>Got lip service but no action. It's a waste of time to go there.</p>
<p>I was placed in a job that had a lot of dust. It was making me sick all the time. I have decided to reapply for SS because my asthma causes me to spend a lot of time at home during the winter/summer months. I did not like the job that I received my training in.</p>

I had a job at St Mary's. I went to BRS. I needed hearing aids to keep job. I did not have any problem. I received my hearing aid in a timely manner. Thank you.
I felt that BRS just went through the motions in helping me. I felt that because I have a job now, they didn't think I needed help. Even though my medical evaluation said I did have significant hearing loss that would very easily make me misunderstand what people were saying.
My positive experience with BRS was mostly due to [name], a counselor now retired. She was wonderful.
You should try to clone [name] at your Waterbury office. My wife and I were very satisfied with his service. More people should be like him. Thank you.
They do not understand my personal interest or needs, nor do they understand my limitations in reference to my job search.
Everyone was so polite and treated me well. They were so nice.
I found BRS and counselor services were great!
The services I received were to help me perform better at my jobs. I work 2 part time jobs. Having difficulty obtaining a full time job.
My counselor was finally able to get my doctor's to decide to support court and medically approved disability. Prior to that I was left hanging by the doctors for years because they could not or would not decide my final Medicaid status. My counselor went above and beyond to help me in my very frustrating situation. She has made my life better, much better, and should be commended for her work on my part. Please continue to support BRS. They provide help and direction and support when they [are] maybe the only ones who do and care. Thank God for BRS.
Although BRS did not help me to obtain a job, they did get involved with my hearing impairment and got me hearing aids. I now have no problems at my job. Thank you. [Name] helped me and she is a credit to the department and the citizens should be happy that we have [name] working for the state of CT BRS. Please let her know how much she has helped me.
racial discrimination
I would like to improve my skill by going to school or get training for a different job position.
I have a sister that [is] in rehab and I know what you can and cannot do, I asked them to help him [the client] to get a job in government. This is who my sister works for and rehab got her the job.
I felt my counselor did not help me one bit. It was all fake promises and misleading. In the end I was disappointed. And still stuck with no improvement in my life what so ever.
My outstanding counselor was [name] of the Danbury office. This person was highly professional and went beyond "helpful" in handling my case. Salute to [this counselor].
My involvement with BRS was related to hearing loss and access to hearing aids to improve my capacity to function in my job. Overall, I was very pleased with the services provided by BRS.
BRS didn't help at all. They put barriers in the way of receiving services and did not respond. I worked with them for 3 years and finally found a job on my own.
I was never able to find summer employment in my college tenure. Getting a driver's license was a nightmare. However, getting help with pedal extensions was made possible from BRS. I have been looking for a job since May of 2009.
There should be a maximum amount you can earn before you are disqualified. There are too many professional people (doctors, dentist, lawyer, etc) deciding these benefits. They should be excluded because of their salaries.

<p>Re: hearing aids: Someone has decided that the program be limited to certain styles - not price affected. These limited selections are very uncomfortable and _____. They still leave the "Stigma" of impairment even though the disability is greatly reduced.</p>
<p>This is a great program. I was able to receive top quality hearing aid to equip me to hear and respond to the needs of fellow employees and the students I teach at the daycare.</p>
<p>I was treated very professionally and politely. The BRS counselor was very nice to work with.</p>
<p>I was not happy with BRS. They [did not] do anything for me.</p>
<p>You (BRS) and sound community helped me. I was a lot happier with you. Sounds Community Services didn't really do anything for me.</p>
<p>I'm hearing impaired. This was a great opportunity for me to improve my communication success. Thank you!</p>
<p>I felt kind of let down with the services from BRS. But [name], a benefits specialist with Connect to Work Center, would call me back when I had a question. He was very informed and helped me a lot.</p>
<p>The BRS staff was exceptionally professional, helpful and encouraging. If the agency needs a "booster" please call me.</p>
<p>I really appreciate the help I received from BRS. It helped me with a situation at work during my time on the job. I was not able to obtain hearing aids on my own, BRS was a God send. Thank you.</p>
<p>I don't know if I can get assistance again when my hearing aids breakdown (about 5 years). This was not addressed or answered directly.</p>
<p>The process took far too long; my hearing impairment hadn't changed; in fact it has deteriorated and this was documented. [There are] too many steps over too long a period to get sign-off.</p>
<p>Shouldn't BRS's goal be to find me a job? They haven't done that yet. Not completely satisfied. If you ask me, BRS is nothing but a waste of time and effort.</p>
<p>I had to do a lot of networking on my own before getting a job. I was hoping that [there were] more jobs available for people with chronic disabilities but there is not that many jobs. _____ past working experience and education. I had to get out there and look for a job just like everyone else without disabilities.</p>
<p>Very good experience. Great people.</p>
<p>At one point, one of my counselors refused to help me look for jobs anywhere outside of the New Haven area, which I found very frustrating and somewhat myopic. At another time one of my counselors insisted that I call companies myself rather than they call them. Finally, one provider company, Transitional Employment Unlimited, accused me of not doing enough to help in the job search and in being "non-compliant", which was ridiculous. During a hard-work program with [name] from that company, he made disrespectful comments about my mother. However, the BRS has helped me to find a job, for which I am grateful, but I hope they can help me advance. Finally, I would like to suggest that the state increase the \$2400 tax credit for hiring individuals from BRS, which is great incentive. Again, thank you.</p>
<p>My counselor was fine, but limited in power. Had to speak to supervisor in Hartford who did not bother to understand my hearing loss is progressive which would qualify me for nursing aids. That was disappointing.</p>
<p>I have maintained a close and open relationship with my counselor. I do have problems but feel like they are from a higher level. There have been contradictions and many miscommunications that make working with BRS frustrating. As recent as this week my help to get job training completely fell apart.</p>
<p>I feel [name] has shown much concern and support in helping overcome my disabilities caused by a</p>

brain tumor. I know he will help in any way possible. Right now my success in the transcription training program is up to me.
I think that they did a nice job.
My counselor has left to seek other employment. It is taking too long to be reassigned to a new worker. I think the clients should be reassigned before the worker leaves, so there would be no gap in services or loss of opportunities.
I am in college, but will need a job for the summer.
I felt BRS was always at my disposal. I hope I can use their services for my more future prospects.
Excellent treatment
BRS and Goodwill have been very helpful to me in getting a job and saving money for income.
I was already employed when I applied for hearing aid assistance with BRS. My experience was very good. I was able to obtain the hearing aids needed to help me perform my current job much better.
I am not working at this time. I need BRS to help again.
Put it to you this way – they brought me into BRS in 2004 and I'm still unemployed, and have no life, and live in my room 24-7.
The waiting list and time between appointments is too long. BRS should receive additional funding to hire more staff and expand.
If the hospitals want tech's with at least 1 year of hospital experience, how am I to get this experience if they won't hire new grads from accredited programs?
I am currently at the academy. I am working with a BRS counselor through the academy. I am on a work program currently.
BRS was very helpful and concerned about any problems. It was a good experience. Keep up the good work.
We have always had a super relationship with [name] from Bridgeport. She's a very concerned and dedicated person.
Very satisfied with the BRS staff and services provided. However, no jobs available in this difficult job environment.
I need get fare money for travel to look for job for gas/parking a lot. Yes, I want them to have use video phone for our communication needs for any feedback or comments. Also Soreneson relay to assist me with your communication at BRS office. Yes, another states vocational rehabilitation office [has] used video phone. I expect CT state will allow and [give] approval to BRS that [they] need to communicate on video phone.
My experience with BRS in terms of dealing with the counselors, especially my last one, [name], has been a good one. The disconnect came with the employment placement staff. I suggest that one of their approaches could be that of a salesman. Get that product to the customer and let it demonstrate. Perhaps some Zig Zigar Seminar training - positive reinforcement. My success in acquiring past employment has been to keep the focus on my abilities. I have found that when that happens and I then demonstrate my work ethic, people skills, know-how, etc., it's a win-win situation.
Been involved with BRS for over a year. Nothing has been done for my daughter and you have switched counselors more times than I can count. So far for 2010, things are better: [counselor is] staying in contact and [we] have a second meeting set up.
I think more training – schools. Listen to problems having in job, life, find work to support self.
[Name] was the best.

[Name], [name], as well as [name] (retired) have gone above and beyond what their job entails to help me, without all their help and guidance, I would have not been able to retain my job for so long. I really do need help! My job is not an easy one. I am very misunderstood. My boss makes it very hard for me at times.

Everybody is doing all they can to help me find a job that I may be able to do with close _____.

I wanted BRS to find me a job in a different area, in which I had qualifications for also, but [the counselor] refused to because I was already working at this job for 2 years. He and I knew I could not go any further with this job because of my disability, and he still refused my request to search in a different field (which I had a lot of schooling for). It seems like he just wanted me to stay there and get evaluated from this so called job coach! I only met her once for 15 minutes then we went over to my place of employment. She observed me for a little less than 1 hour and then drew her conclusion I got the feeling it was just a "hurry up and get it over" with this job coach. I did not get any deed back that I already knew about or suggestions on how to improve my working situation. I want to work and stay in the job market. I know that there is a job out there for me. I just need help to find where my greatest potential is.

My BRS counselor was [name]. He was extremely helpful, very caring. His efforts helped me overcome my hearing problem and allowed me to get a terrific job.

I want job training and a guarantee of a high-paying part time job not 2 hours a week for a _____

BRS is a complete waste of valuable time and tax money and should be eliminated.

I could use additional help and after my counselor retired, other than follow-up, I received no return call after trying one time. My wife fell ill and I have been too distracted to try again.

I enjoy the services given but I have yet to find a job!

My BRS counselor was very good, however, the agencies he hired would not follow through. I found job on my own, but the agency really screwed things up. First they agreed with my employer that I was hired full-time, and only after we made them pull the application did they find out that I was hired part-time. The store wanted me for a department; BRS and the agency decided I should work in the lot. I have some college and can certainly pour coffee or stock shelves. I was put in a parking lot to be a cart boy. I had to work 9 straight days for a total of 72 hours. My legs couldn't take it and I left the job. Prior to this my job developer only came up with me picking up garbage at the parking lot at Blue Back Square. I do not have a developmental intelligence problem. I have a heart problem and Asperger's syndrome. My experience was much less than positive. I felt I had no one to help me advocate. My counselor made two remarks I found offensive: 1) "[You] can get a job in the middle of a cow field – you will probably feel right at home," and 2)" I'd much rather work with alcoholics or drug addicts than work with autism. No one knows what to do with people like you." As you can see my experience is less than positive.

These services didn't really help me find employment. I have to, very much wish to, find a job that has something to do with my education. These services have not found me a job that can match my education level.

I think there are several problems with the BRS and would like to offer and discuss ways of improving your services.

Back when she graduated from high school we had bad experience with BRS. This time around we asked for a new case worker and he was wonderful.

I received hearing aids through you. You don't know how wonderful it is to hear simple things like birds chirping and rain outside. Thank you.

My counselor went way above. Extremely nice and always returned calls. Took the time to explain

everything in detail.
If they cannot get me a job, [then] help me get SSD, or SSI, or Medicaid. Please help. I need something.
I am very satisfied with the assistance that [name] has provided to me. I am not happy with the state regulations that prevented me from continuing at St. Joseph's College because of funding to private colleges. [Name] has worked very hard on my behalf and [has] been very understanding.
Our initial contact with the Waterbury BRS counselor was next to non-existent. He didn't show for any of the scheduled PPT's and said that "it wasn't time yet" for my son to receive services. We transferred to New Haven office and had a good summer job experience but were advised this counselor was no longer at the agency. We later were contacted and the new counselor tried to convince us to return to the Waterbury office, which means no services. Being a transitional year with graduation from a special education school, BRS services are needed this school year. New Haven agreed to keep his case active, but we'll see what the experience brings.
My computer skills [need] updating. [This] needs addressing to keep up with job market in this area.
I still need help with job search and need BRS counselor to help me more with my job goals/search.
When I express concerns about [name] to her boss, he simply stated that she was available and there was no option to change to someone else. Completely blew me off. Why are you mailing these out? I filled out essentially this for in an extended format from an email attachment and mailed it back. Just curious?
The position I was hired for was new to company that hired me. I felt I was not prepared to do the job well. I would have liked to start as an intern to study to work position/worker.
Doctors aren't willing to cooperate with BRS's paperwork or services required. I did hours of paperwork, spent money to send [it] with no result. Employers not willing to train on jobs. No help from BRS finding actual hiring employers or full-time positions. No schools or free training offered. Wasted time. No full-time job. Lots of effort, no health insurance, no better off. But over worked and out of touch. Employers concerned and tried to do their job but everything would fall through before results or needed services not available, or supposed to be but not out there in the working community.
After I was employed I had my benefits cut and no one told me what would happen. My benefits were cut and after I stopped working my benefits were cut for up to 3 months. Now I am behind on rent payments of up to 3 months and may get put out. I need some help.
I was not helped to find a job, especially one that used my training and skills. I hated working with this agency and regret going to them. It did not matter to them what I wanted to do, only to push me into any job. I am intelligent and need fulfillment and to use my skills.
I still work at the company where I work there is discrimination and mental abuse and verbal and sexual aggravation.
I began being a client in 1987 and BRS has been unable to assist me in finding employment. Complaints were made to Protection and Advocacy. BRS closed my case in 1999 because they didn't know what else to do. Some reasons for closing my case were due to my disability. I enrolled in college to complete my degree and received a BS in Sociology. I had my case re-opened in 2006-2007 for financial aid assistance but they refused to help. My counselor doesn't respond in a timely manner, and I had to complain to his supervisor, and then next time to Protection and Advocacy.
I need help with transportation to my job. I need to speak with Barbara or Pat in Norwich office.
System sometimes was restrictive as to time and compliance requirements.
My counselor was great – [name]
I wanted some training program, but the program that I wanted to go to started and I wasn't notified;

and besides that, they didn't tell me of what had to be done in order to get into this program. All he says is, "See if you can find [it] somewhere else." But it seems that I am doing all the work, not the counselor. If he knew I wanted to enter that program, he sure didn't do anything to see what was the process. I had to do it (all the callings, but I couldn't get in). I believe that they need to keep in touch more often, especially for programs that people are interested in.

Thanks for your help.

You should send the clients to places of training and jobs where transportation is not difficult. Transportation is an issue. I know that in the past you used to help clients to obtain driver licenses and also their own businesses, but now that does not happen anymore.

Thank you for giving me another opportunity in life to try a different occupation that may help me better myself.

The job type I was interested in - I was discouraged from applying for. I only had a job coach for a couple of days, but I work with people who've had a coach for months, even though they seem to be doing very well.

BRS helped me in finding a job. I am very grateful. The counselor that took care of me was very courteous and friendly.

[Name] was professional, extremely pleasant and knowledgeable.

I want to work and would like a secure job, but I was on the _____ with problems but the counselor helped me, but there is nothing I can do about it.

I had a situation where I had an opportunity to work for a non-profit company that uses BRS for client leads. I was told by my BRS worker not to share with my employer that I was a client at BRS. This made me uncomfortable at the job, especially when certain questions were asked.

Everyone at BRS was very, very helpful.