

Benefits Counseling: Outcomes Conference Call

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This is the third MIG-RATS workgroup conference call on benefits counseling (BC) with a focus on outcomes research. Damon Terzaghi was introduced as co-facilitator of this workgroup. Today's meeting presented a forum for continuing the discussion of research questions, a draft logic model, and developing a state feedback form on existing datasets before the next call.

Key Research Questions: Voting Results

The following research questions were voted on and agreed to by state participants:

	Research Question
1	Does BC have any effect on earnings and employment?
2	Does BC plus supportive employment services have a greater impact on earnings than supportive employment services alone?
3	For whom does BC work? Does it depend on age, disability type, or motivation level? Who uses benefit planning (with specific interest in younger populations)?
4	Does BC have an effect on other long-term outcomes? (e.g., SSI/SSDI benefits, food stamps, family earnings, and self-employment)?

Additional Research Issues

- Where do beneficiaries access BC most?
- How do services differ between providers (e.g. Mission to Work, private providers, Vocational Provider, etc.)?
- Both questions will be proposed to the Fidelity Measures workgroup.

Purpose of Workgroup

States agreed that they would prefer the workgroup to provide information sufficient for independent state research projects, but to also be able to coordinate and compare research efforts between states, recognizing that comparing programs is problematic and difficult.

Data Sources

- *Individual earnings:* UI data, Medicaid eligibility data/SSA data, RIS data.
- *Family earnings:* UI data, Medicaid eligibility data/SSA data, RIS data, surveys. However, releases are necessary to retrieve and link all family earnings.
- *Employment:* UI data (though self-employment data is highly problematic), Medicaid eligibility data/SSA data, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, Employment Services/Labor State Agencies, self-report/surveys.

- *Benefits participation*: SSA data, Department of Social Services, Department of Human Services, state data, survey data
- *Readiness or Motivation to Work*: Survey data, perhaps from Michigan, CIL network, OPHI, and/or VR agencies who have developed tools.
- *Job Seeking Behavior*: TANF (and other projects) may have developed ways to capture this measure. Benefits counselors may use an instrument to find out what services have previously been accessed (Connecticut may have one).

Logic Model

Approved with potential addition to indicate how BP has impacted the ability of an individual to navigate the system independently.

Next Steps

- The next call will be on June 20th at 2:30pm ET
- Homework Assignments before next call

MIGRATS:

- Will send grid for states to fill with information on what data they can access.
- Research/gather scales of readiness-to-work or employment motivation
- Analyze strengths/weaknesses of data sources, including cross-state compatibility

STATES:

- Will fill-in grid from MIGRATS with available data sources.
- Damon will send mapping of where and when beneficiaries encounter benefits planning-type services throughout the return-to-work process in Oregon
- Compare Oregon's process with own state process prior to next call.