

Chapter 8: Benefits Counseling & Case Management

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Definition & Description

Benefits counseling

- A set of strategies, services and supports to promote work preparation, attachment, and advancement
- Focus on enhancement of self-sufficiency and independence

Adapted from Golden et al (2000)

Case management

- Complimentary approach to benefits counseling
- Addresses physical and social functioning
- Involves mobilization, integration, and coordination of care in low resource environments to maximize function

Ziguras and Stuart (2000)

History & Policy Setting

- Benefits Planning and Outreach Program (BPAO)
 - Established by Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement (Ticket) Act in 1999
 - Initial model of benefits counseling and case management
- Work Incentives Planning Assistance (WIPA)
 - Replaced BPAO in 2006
 - Services are provided by Community Work Incentives Coordinators (CWICs) and emphasize
 - Coordination of long-term employment supports
 - Education and monitoring of work incentives
 - Working with community agencies

Findings from SSA Demonstrations and other Research

Note: The following slides describe program components and findings as they relate to benefits counseling and case management ONLY



Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND)

- Tested replacing cash cliff with a ramp and impact of more extensive, proactive work incentives counseling
- No detectable effect of Enhanced Work Incentives Counseling (EWIC) vs. standard Work Incentives Counseling (WIC)
- Telephone counseling was a promising strategy

Derr et al. 2015; Geyer et al. 2018; Gubits et al. 2018

PROMISE

- Tests employment service coordination for transition aged youth
- Five components of PROMISE
 1. Strong intra-agency collaborations;
 2. **Case management**;
 3. **Benefits counseling** and financial education;
 4. Career and work-based experiences; and
 5. Parent training and information
- Overall, weak effect on employment status, no impact on earnings
- Unable to disentangle impact of case management services

Honeycutt et al. 2018; Levere et al, 2020

State Partnership Initiative (SPI)

- SSA funded programs included benefits counseling, employment services, Medicaid waivers etc.
- Outcomes measured at 3 months
- Benefits counseling most effective when paired with employment service vouchers
- Intervention may have a differential effect on sub-populations

Peikes et al. (2005)

Accelerated Benefits (AB)

- Tested effect of health insurance for uninsured SSDI beneficiaries, and difference between insurance alone (AB) vs. insurance plus employment, health, and benefits counseling (AB Plus)
- Compared to control group, AB plus had significant short-term impact on Ticket to Work enrollment, employment status, and earnings
- Impact dissipated by 3 years post-intervention

Michalopoulos et al. (2011)

Mental Health Treatment Study (MHTS)

- Targeted beneficiaries with Schizophrenia and affective disorders
- Used Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model; case management and benefits counseling are integral components of IPS
- Beneficiaries in treatment group had significant increase in employment status and earnings compared to control group
- Impact of case management and benefits counseling could not be isolated

Frey et al. (2011)

Project NetWork

- Tested the use of case management, counseling, and employment services among beneficiaries
- Case management increased return-to-work services including counseling, physical therapy, work assessments, and job search services
- Significant increase in earnings for the first two years but the effect did not sustain
- High cost to deliver case management services

Kornfeld and Rupp (2000)

Findings From Other Empirical Research

Benefits counseling

- Personalized attention, building rapport, and trust are important (Schelegelmich et al. 2019).
- Timing of benefits counseling services is important; early intervention is promising (Honeycutt and Stapleton 2013; Martin and Sevak 2020)

Case management (Fukui et al. 2012)

- Strong evidence within sub-populations
- Fidelity of implementation is important

Lessons Learned & Policy Implications



Lessons Learned

- Benefits counseling or case management are effective when paired with VR services
- Timing and nature of services matters
 - Early intervention programs are promising
 - Coaching based approaches seem to be successful (e.g., PROMISE, AB plus)
 - No clear consensus on structure and components of benefits counseling and case management programs

Future Research & Policy Agenda

1. Learn more about what works and for whom
 - Test specific sub-populations
2. Standardize models and define program components
 - Improves quality and enables measurement
3. Evaluate and design with self-sufficiency as the goal
 - Focus on developing a career, not just job placement
 - Financial literacy training may be useful
 - Need long-term follow-up to measure success
 - Explore motivational interventions

Future Research & Policy Agenda

4. Implement and expand proven strategies
 - Embed benefits counseling and case management in youth transition programs
 - Target case management services for beneficiaries who are less job ready or for sub-populations
5. Consider interactions between programs and rules
 - Work incentives and benefit rules may mediate outcomes
 - Explore opportunities to embed integrated health-care and social services (e.g., ACL's CIHN, ACT)

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Notes on Benefits Planning and Case Management

Discussant: John Kregel

WIPA National Training and Data Center

Virginia Commonwealth University



VCU Participation in Social Security Demonstrations

- State Partnership Initiative
- Youth Transition Demonstration
- Benefit Offset National Demonstration
- Promoting Opportunity Demonstration

VCU National Training and Data Center

Since 2000, VCU has provided training, certification, technical assistance and professional development activities to Community Work Incentive Coordinators and Community Partners.

The SSA WIPA program has changed significantly over the past 20 years and should be reflected in SSA demonstrations.

Current WIPA Service Practices

1. WIPA programs receive approximately 75% of their referrals from the Ticket to Work Help Line.
2. Over 70% of WIPA clients are beneficiaries who are working or have a job offer pending.
3. WIPA programs provide the large majority of their services remotely.
4. Community Work Incentive Counselors serve a dynamic, as opposed to static, case load.

How Effective is Benefits Counseling in the Absence of Employment Services and Supports?

Benefits Counseling addresses some but not all barriers to employment for Social Security disability beneficiaries

- Fear of Losing Benefits
- Fear of Losing Health Insurance
- Fear of Overpayments or Sudden Benefit Loss

Benefits Planning in SSA Demonstrations

Lack of standardization makes it difficult to aggregate data across programs or sites.

Participants should be tracked for a sufficient amount of time to determine long-term impact of services.

Evaluation designs generally make it difficult to isolate the effect of benefit planning activities.

Benefits Planning Treatment Fidelity

1. Standardized training and certification
2. Development of SSA approved service delivery protocols
3. Web-based training module
4. Bi-monthly national webinars
5. Two technical assistance videoconferences each month
6. Monthly individual counselor videoconferences
7. Bi-annual site visits



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Discussion: Benefits Counseling and Case Management

Discussant: Leslynn Angel, Michigan United Cerebral Palsy



Lessons Learned from SSA Demonstrations: A State of the Science Meeting



We are on a break.
Content will resume shortly.