



NC Benefits Counseling Expansion Project Year 3 (of 3)

7/1/2024 - 3/31/2024

System Gap Addressed

- Research on Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects demonstrates that individuals who receive benefits counseling services are more likely to pursue employment, maintain employment, and leverage available incentives that support their goal of greater financial security and independence.
- The North Carolina Benefits Counseling Services Demonstration Project initiative will attempt to demonstrate the impact of using a tiered model to address the lack of system capacity for providing benefits counseling services to individuals receiving federal and state public assistance.

Initiative Goals and Timeline

- Expand benefits counseling services throughout the state by increasing service capacity through the training of service provider staff as Benefits Liaisons to provide general benefits information and referrals.
- Increase employment participation through provision of initial benefits counseling advisement, benefits information and referral, benefits service plans, and on-going support including access to certified benefits counselors.
- Serve individuals or families through trained partner agencies (service providers, employers, training programs, and family support groups).
- Development of Referral Network (Years 1, 2, and 3).
- Development of Benefits Liaison training curriculum (Years 1, 2, and 3).
- Enhance training of Benefits Liaisons through including specific examples of the impact and benefits of Benefits Counseling examples.
- Tailor family seminars for partner agencies to include relevant benefits topics to parents, family members and other support professionals.

Description of Activities

Year Three included the following activities:

- Delivered additional, enhanced training to agencies.
- Increased and enhanced educational materials sent out to referrals networks.
- Improved in gathering and analyzing outcome data and success stories.
- Delivered family seminars across the state to support financial family decisions.
- Increased the number of individuals pursuing Competitive Integrated Employment activities through trained Benefits Liaisons and family seminars.

Achievements and Outcomes to Date

- Reached out to 303 organizations that serve individuals with I/DD across the state.
- Built 21 new partnerships with family and parent groups. Additionally, formalized 21 partnerships through MOUs with agencies providing services to I/DD individuals.
- Established Benefits Counseling Expansion advisory committee –11 members.
- Trained 141 Benefits Liaisons (partner staff) across the state.
- 145 individuals with I/DD received benefits counseling from a trained Benefits Liaison
- 470 family members have been trained in benefits.
- Provided benefits counseling services to 60 individuals with I/DD and their families.
- Trained 75+ Hispanic/Latino family members with Benefits information in Spanish.
- Distribute benefits information through monthly newsletters, monthly training, and participation in open houses, resource fairs, job fairs, symposiums, and similar events.