



## 2006 Fresno Cross Agency Health Coverage and Benefits Training on Work and Disability: Evaluation Report

### Introduction

The California Health Incentives Improvement Project (CHIIP) conducts statewide training and outreach on benefits, work and disability. Training and outreach activities are designed for in-dependent living center staff, cross-agency and county program staff, employment services, employer Human Resource departments and other service providers who work with individuals with disabilities. The main purpose of the trainings is to increase the capacity of program staff who work with individuals with disabilities to supply information which will enable and encourage persons with disabilities to seek gainful employment while pre-serving benefits. CHIIP presentations include how to use benefits information online at the web-site Disability Benefits 101 (DB101), Working with a Disability in California. In addition, participants learn about new laws and benefits planning services for work-ing Californians with a disability, Medi-Cal benefits for work-ing Califor-

nians with a disability, using In-Home Supportive Services in the workplace, how work incentives support employment, and how benefits programs interact with each other. Trainings also include how to use benefits information online at the website, **Disability Benefits 101 (DB101), Working with a Disability in California**. The 2006 cross agency trainings emphasize familiarizing participants with the new Benefits to Work Calculator that can be accessed on the DB101 website. The benefits to work calculator shows individuals with disabilities how their benefits might change should they go to work.

Thus, the 2006 training sessions emphasize teaching benefits planners how to access and use the Benefits to Work Calculator. In addition, participants in the training learn about:

- New laws and benefits planning services for the working disabled
- Medi-CAL benefits for the working disabled

- In-Home Supportive Services Providers in the workplace
- Social Security's new Ticket to Work program
- How work incentives support employment
- How programs interact with each other

- Social Security Administration

The training covers public and private health, benefit and employment programs and protections, and introduces trainees to Disability Benefits 101, [www.db101.org](http://www.db101.org) ("working with a disability in California.") Participants from different agencies are encouraged to get to know each other, share resources and create networks beyond the one-day training. The Fresno trainings took place at the California State University, Fresno, and at the Fresno Regional Center. Participants were provided snacks and lunch, along with a resource manual to which they can refer after the training. Trainings are conducted by Bryon MacDonald from the World Institute on Disability, Maria Iriarte, Protection and Advocacy, Inc., and Abygail Medina, California Department of Rehabilitation.

Partners include:

- Fresno County Public Authority
- Center for Independent Living, Fresno
- Tulare County Department of Education
- Fresno City College, Disabled Students Programs and Services
- California Institute on Human Services at Sonoma State University

## Evaluation Results

### Participants

One hundred and eleven people attended the Fresno trainings and ninety one of the participants filled out the exit questionnaire (82% response rate).

### Participants' Affiliation

Fresno cross agency training participants reported that they were mainly public agency staff (41%).

- Public agency staff (41%)
  - Social Security Administration
  - Arbor Education and Training
  - Department of Rehabilitation
  - Fresno County Mental Health
  - WIA
  - CVRC
  - Job Options
  - Fresno County DBH
- Community non-profit staff (31%)
  - Workforce Connection
  - A Ticket to Success
  - Job Developer Porterville Sheltered Workshop
- Center for Independent Living
- Fresno Center for New Americans
- SVS
- Exceptional Parents Unlimited
- CURC
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Service Center
- Workforce Development Officer
- Other (15%)
  - Consumer
  - Student from rehab program
  - Parent of someone using benefits
  - Rehab counselor
- Someone who uses public or private disability benefits (3%)
- Someone who uses Medicare or Medicaid (2%)
- Educator (2%)
- Advocate (2%)
  - Center for Independent Living
- Did not indicate their affiliation (4%)

Topic	Average Knowledge Before the Training	Average Knowledge After the Training	Statistical Test: Significance of Difference
Public disability income programs (e.g., SDI, SSI, SSDI, CAPI):	2.58 "An average amount"	3.36 "An average amount"	t(83) = -8.43, p < .05*
Health coverage options for people with disabilities:	2.25 "Some previous knowledge"	3.29 "An average amount"	t(82) = -9.69, p < .05*
General knowledge on health and employment services available:	2.56 "An average amount"	3.31 "An average amount"	t(82) = -7.53, p < .05*
How benefits programs interact to support entry, re-entry or advancement in the workplace:	2.24 "Some previous knowledge"	3.24 "An average amount"	t(83) = -9.06 p < .05*
Tools (such as the benefits to work calculator and the disability 101 website) available for people with disabilities:	1.80 "Some previous knowledge"	3.24 "An average amount"	t(83) = -11.13, p < .05*
250% Medi-Cal Working Disabled program:	1.45 "No previous knowledge"	3.02 "An average amount"	t(83) = -13.38, p < .05*
Youth Transitions and Section 301 Protections:	1.50 "Some previous knowledge"	2.93 "An average amount"	t(83) = -11.64, p < .05*

**Table 1:** A paired samples t-test for non-independent samples was conducted on each pair to determine if the differences in averages are statistically significant. A  $p < .05^*$  indicates that the two averages are statistically significant from each other, meaning that the observed differences in averages were unlikely to occur due to chance.

### How Participants Heard About the Training

These participants heard about the training session mainly from a colleague connected with their place of work (37%)

- Colleague connected with work (37%)
- Non-profit organization (22%)
  - CIL
  - DHHSC
  - Workforce Connection
  - Arbor Education and Training
- Community non-profit (16%)
- Other (16%)
  - Employer/supervisor
  - CURC
  - Teacher
  - Through their agency (who co-hosted)

- WIB
- Advertisement or flyer (4%)
  - At work
- Friend or relative (2%)
- Did not indicate (3%)

### Prior Knowledge Compared to Knowledge After the Training

Participants were asked several questions designed to assess their levels of knowledge before they participated in the health and benefits training on work and disability, and were also asked to assess their levels of knowledge after having participated in the training (see Table 1 on this page). They rated their levels of knowledge as 1) "No previous knowledge," 2) "Some previous knowledge," 3)

Activity	Average Preparation Before the Training	Average Preparation After the Training	Statistical Test: Significance of Difference
Work with individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain health care coverage when preparing to go to work	2.21 "A little prepared"	3.07 "Somewhat prepared"	$t(82) = -7.83,$ $p < .05^*$
Navigate public, private, state and federal income and health care coverage programs	2.17 "A little prepared"	3.14 "Somewhat prepared"	$t(82) = -8.28,$ $p < .05^*$
Identify a network of disability benefit program resources	2.43 "A little prepared"	3.30 "Somewhat prepared"	$t(82) = -8.23,$ $p < .05^*$
Utilize a network of disability benefit program resources	2.34 "A little prepared"	3.25 "Somewhat prepared"	$t(82) = -7.89,$ $p < .05^*$

**Table 2:** A paired samples t-test for non-independent samples was conducted on each pair to determine if the differences in averages are statistically significant. A  $p < .05^*$  indicates that the two averages are statistically significant from each other, meaning that the observed differences in averages were unlikely to occur due to chance.

"An average amount of knowledge," 4) "A lot of knowledge," and 5) "Extremely knowledgeable." As shown in table one, overall, participants rated their previous knowledge as below the average amount on five of the items, but also rated an increase in knowledge to "an average amount" on those items after the training. Further, each pair of averages show an increase in amount of knowledge after the training. A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine whether or not these differences in averages are statistically significant. For each topic, the differences in averages were statistically significant, meaning that the reported increase in amount of knowledge after the training is significantly higher than the amount of knowledge reported before the training.

**Participants' levels of preparation to carry out benefits training activities before compared to after the training**

Participants were asked questions designed to assess their levels of preparation to carry out specific benefits training activities both before and after the training

(see Table 2 on this page). They rated their levels of preparation as 1) "Not at all prepared," 2) "A little prepared," 3) "Somewhat prepared," 4) "A lot prepared," and 5) "Extremely prepared." As shown in table two, overall, participants rated their previous preparation as below the average amount on every item, but also rated an increase in preparation to at least "somewhat prepared" on those items after the training. Again, a paired samples t-test was conducted on each pair of averages to determine whether or not the differences in averages were statistically significant. For each activity, the differences in averages were statistically significant, meaning that the reported increases in levels of preparation after the training were significantly higher than reported amounts of preparation before the training.

**Do participants anticipate an increase in benefits counseling activities and referrals?**

Participants were asked whether they anticipated a change in the number of times

Activity	Average Amount Before the Training	Average Amount After the Training	Statistical Test: Significance of Difference
Attempt to access benefits planning information via the Internet, telephone or printed materials	2.07 "One time a month"	2.93 "More than once a month"	t(84) = -7.67, p < .05*
Engage in benefits planning activities with individuals with disabilities	1.94 "One time a month"	2.67 "More than once a month"	t(85) = -7.24, p < .05*
Refer individuals with disabilities to other organizations for assistance with benefits planning	2.49 "More than once a month"	3.08 "More than once a month"	t(84) = -4.63, p < .05*

**Table 3:** A paired samples t-test for non-independent samples was conducted on each pair to determine if the differences in averages are statistically significant. A  $p < .05^*$  indicates that the two averages are statistically significant from each other, meaning that the observed differences in averages were unlikely to occur due to chance.

they engage in the benefits counseling and referral activities described below in Table 3, and indicated their reasons for their yes or no answer. Fifty-eight percent of the participants indicated that they anticipated an increase in the number of times they engage in these activities after having participated in the training. Participants who indicated no anticipated change (31%; 11% did not answer) also stated that it is not currently in their job description to do so (they are a student), that case referrals are assigned to them, number of cases has decreased, that they anticipated no changes in job responsibilities, that their primary job requires more of their attention, and that their organization refers clients to other organizations, but does not engage in benefits counseling. Table 3 (above) shows the overall anticipated change in activities (they rated the number of times they engaged in the activities in the past, as well as the number of times they anticipate engaging in the same activities in the future). Answers ranged from 1) "Not at all," 2) "One

time a month," 3) "More than once a month," 4) "Once a week," and 5) "More than once a week."

Participants reported anticipating an increase in the number of times in the future that they will access benefits planning information on the internet as well as engage in benefits planning activities with individuals with disabilities (from "one time a month" to "more than once a month"). They reported a slight increase in the number of times in the future they anticipated referring individuals with disabilities to other agencies for assistance with benefits and planning. The reported increase in the amount in which they anticipated engaging in all three planning activities was statistically significant, indicating that overall, participants planned to engage in these activities more often in the future.

### Overall Ratings

Participants provided overall ratings of several components of the training ses-

<b>Training Activity</b>	<b>Average Rating (scale = 1-5)</b>	<b>Standard Deviation from the Average</b>
The presenters were effective:	4.48	.67
The presenters were knowledgeable:	4.78	.57
The presentation was well organized:	4.46	.65
The length and pace of the training was appropriate:	4.32	.78
The training manual was explained well during the training:	4.14	.90
I would recommend this training to my peers or colleagues:	4.55	.61
The real case scenarios and DB101 Life Situations were helpful to me:	4.45	.63
The overview on public and private income support programs was helpful to me:	4.37	.60
The review on Medi-Cal eligibility categories (which included SSI linked Medi-Cal, section 1619(b) of Social Security Act and Work, and the Medi-Cal Working Disabled Program) was helpful to me:	4.41	.61
Information about Youth Transitions and Section 301 Protections Overview was helpful to me	4.11	.75
The benefits-to-work calculator demonstration was helpful to me:	4.45	.64
Overall, the training increased my ability to communicate with job seekers with disabilities about health and work incentive laws:	4.38	.51
Overall, the training had a positive impact on my knowledge, abilities, and skills:	4.48	.55
Overall, the training will have a positive impact on the individuals served by my organization:	4.54	.53

sion. Ratings are on a one to five scale, one being the lowest possible rating for that item, and five being the highest possible rating. As shown in table 4 (page 6), very high ratings were given to each component of the training.

### **Comments and Suggestions**

Several open-ended questions at the end of the survey allowed participants to give

more in-depth information about their experiences at the Cross Agency Training, along with their opinions and suggestions for future training sessions. The following bulleted lists summarize the percentage of comments offered in particular categories, and provide a few representative examples of some of the comments made.

**Strengths of the training:** The majority

of participants' comments (29%) were in reference to the knowledge and expertise of the trainers, and the clarity and quality of the presentations.

- Knowledge and expertise of trainer (29%)
- All of the information (25%)
- Resources that were made available (17%)
- Calculator and the DB101 website (10%)
- Organization of the training session (9%)
- Real life scenarios/examples (8%)
- Everything (2%)

**Weaknesses of the training:** Many of these comments (30%) referred to how the manual was organized (there were no tabs, and it was difficult to navigate).

- Organization of the manual (30%)
- A lot of information and not enough time (28%)
- Organizational "glitches" (26%)
  - Internet connection
  - Facility/location
  - A little too fast paced
  - The room (very uncomfortable)
  - Seating arrangement
- Need handouts to go with the presentation (6%)
  - Plus a contact list of local service agencies
- Complicated topic (6%)
- Not applicable (all was good; 4%)

**Were participants' goals and objectives met?** Of the fifty-one people who offered comments, forty-five indicated that their goals and objectives were met. No one answered "no", but one individual (out of six) said that their goals and objectives were somewhat met. Other commented on the quality of the presentation, while others said that the training session was a great overview for them.

Other comments in this section (for those who answered yes mainly included:

- There was a lot of information available, they learned a lot, or that their understanding was much deeper after the training (78%)
- They are better informed and prepared to advise clients (13%)
- Their goal of getting acquainted with the calculator and DB101 website was met (9%)

**Did their knowledge increase as a result of the training?** Thirty eight out of forty-two people who commented in this section agreed that their knowledge increased due to the training. Two people said no; one person said they already know the community very well, and one other person said that it was too much information to absorb all at one time. Another person did not indicate whether their goals were met, but commented that there wasn't enough time for participants to network.

**Suggestions:** Most of the suggestions pertained to who participants thought should attend, or for what populations they thought these trainings could be designed (28%).

- Who should attend
  - More consumers should be informed to make benefits planning more efficient
  - Trainings specifically for youth
  - Mental health consumers
- Suggestions on content (24%)
  - Social Security's Ticket to Work Program
  - Keep updated as programs change
  - Offer more scenarios
- Organizational suggestions (24%)
  - Provide coffee and ice water
  - Include tabs on the manual

- More breaks and stretch out over time (so people will pay more attention)
- More breaks in order to network
- Spread out over two days, more time, or more of the same (24%)

**Miscellaneous:** Participants were given the opportunity to add anything else they thought was relevant to their experience at the cross agency training. Most of the participants who offered comments here

took the opportunity to thank facilitators, to indicate their appreciation for the opportunity, or to praise the success of the cross agency training. One participant noted that they would like a shorter evaluation as they thought it was kind of confusing, so perhaps shortening the evaluation should be considered. Another person noted:

*"It was a very good training and I learned more than I expected."*

## Summary

Evaluation results indicate that the Fresno cross agency full day trainings were successful. Comparing the average ratings of previous knowledge on disability and benefits topics to knowledge after receiving the training indicates that participants felt significantly more knowledgeable about these topics after the all day training. Participants indicated that they were significantly more prepared to carry out important benefits counseling activities with their clients. They also reported that they anticipated an increase in the number of times they would access benefits planning resources on the internet and engage in benefits planning activities with clients in the future. They also anticipated an increase in the number of times they would refer individuals with disabilities to other agencies.

Participants' comments on the open ended section of the survey also indicated success. Participants pointed out various strengths of the training, including the knowledge, expertise and presentation style of the trainers, all of the information and resources that were available for them, how the training was organized, the calculator, and the real life examples. The most frequently mentioned weakness was that the training manual didn't have tabs, was confusing and difficult to navigate (but useful nonetheless). Some people also mentioned having handouts to go along with the presentation, and a contact list of local service agencies. The organizational glitches mentioned were things that could have been out of facilitators' control, and within the scope of things that can happen during the course of such trainings. Participants also indicated that their goals and objectives were met during the course of the training, and that their levels of knowledge increased, which is also reflected in the ratings given on levels of knowledge before and after the training.

One thing that was not captured in this evaluation was the emphasis on and the usefulness of the benefits to work calculator and the DB101 website. However, this is more of a function of the evaluation tool (the survey questions) rather than the training itself. A suggestion for the future would be to include questions in the survey similar to those included in the New Tools for Success half day evaluation forms that specifically address whether or not the calculator will be useful to them in the future, and whether or not participants are more hopeful that individuals can work without losing their benefits. These questions really captured why having these tools available to benefits counselors and disabled individuals is so important. Another suggestion (because there was one complaint about the length of the evaluation) is to consider shortening the survey. It was noted during the data analysis phase of these evaluation surveys that some of the open-ended questions captured redundant information and were less useful than some of the other questions. Also, it stands to reason that if participants agree that after the training they are more prepared to engage in various benefits planning activities with clients, that these activities will inevitably increase in the future, and that the quality of the planning activities will be enhanced. In other words, is it necessary to ask whether training participants anticipate changes in the number of times they will engage in these activities in the future? These suggestions have to do with the logistics of the evaluation tool rather than the training itself. And despite any changes that may be made to the survey in the future, the existing survey certainly did capture the fact that the California Health Incentives Improvement Project and partners hosted yet another successful training session.

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Please direct any comments, questions or suggestions regarding this report to:

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