



North Dakota
**Workforce Safety
& Insurance**
Putting Safety to Work

Survey of Injured Workers: Effectiveness of Rehabilitation Programs

February 2010

Executive Summary

This is the first in a series of surveys of injured worker claimants to be conducted for North Dakota Workforce Safety & Insurance (WSI) over the next few years. The surveys are designed specifically to gather information in four general areas: general satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services, job search assistance, current status of employment for those having gone through vocational rehabilitation, and the retraining experience of those who were eligible for retraining services.

In this telephone survey, 75 injured workers who had vocational rehabilitation cases closed by WSI in the last quarter of 2009 were interviewed by DLN Consulting, Inc. during February 2010.

The survey results demonstrate that, generally, workers who have been injured in North Dakota and whose claims have resulted in referrals for vocational rehabilitation services are more satisfied than dissatisfied with the services provided. Only three of ten people, overall, indicated any levels of dissatisfaction with their experiences with vocational rehabilitation services. Six of ten people interviewed were either satisfied or had neutral satisfaction levels that the skills and knowledge they gained from vocational rehabilitation was helpful. This same number of people was either satisfied or had neutral feelings toward the job search assistance they received. Fully half those who received retraining and are currently employed said the retraining was helpful. The most dissatisfaction was also recorded in this area, with four of ten individuals stating they were most dissatisfied that the retraining they received was of any help with their current employment.

The majority of those enrolled in vocational rehabilitation were offered assistance in searching for a job and the majority of these people did, indeed, receive that assistance. The survey did find that the majority of those interviewed were not working and only three of ten who are not working had looked for a job.

Of those who are currently working, most have a full-time position with the same employer, making about the same income as they had prior to their injury. Two-thirds of the respondents were a candidate for retraining, but only one-in-four of those who were candidates actually graduated from a retraining program

February 2010 Survey Results

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Interviewers were able to complete 75 interviews of the 122 names provided in the closed case sample of those receiving rehabilitative services. The response rate of 61.5 percent means that more than half, but slightly less than two-thirds of the claimants on the master list eventually completed a survey with the interviewers. This sample size of 75 respondents is statistically very small, and as a result, the estimated maximum sampling error is plus or minus 11.32 percent (0.1132) at the 95 percent confidence interval where the probability is ≤ 0.05 .

The 15 questions asked of those who were interviewed could generally be categorized into four areas:

1. General satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services
2. Job search assistance
3. Current status of employment
4. Retraining experience

The mean and standard deviation for each of the 15 questions can be found in Appendix A.

GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Results for those questions that dealt with the respondents' satisfaction levels on various aspects of the processing of the vocational rehabilitation services are as follows:

Sixty-two of the 75 respondents said they had received vocational rehabilitation services as a result of their WSI claim. This converts to 82.7 percent. Thirteen of the respondents indicated they had not received any rehabilitation services and for these people, the survey ended. Chart 1 shows these results.

Discussion and Recommendations

In general, the results of this survey are fairly positive. More people were either satisfied or neutral in their responses than dissatisfied. The results would indicate that there is room for improvement, but this is stated with a caution to the reader. The database for this survey and the numbers of people who responded are both very small, meaning the results for this survey and those in the future are quite volatile with much room for huge swings in the results. As such, it will be important as future surveys are conducted, to not only calculate the individual survey comparisons requested by WSI, but also aggregate the results from several surveys to determine more stable results. For this survey, some observations about the substantive operations at WSI and some about the survey methods and protocols are offered.

SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS

There were those in the sample who claimed they did not receive vocational rehabilitation services, yet their names were in the database as having a rehabilitation services case closed during the previous quarter. It is unknown to the analysts if WSI made errors in entering these names into the rehab services database, or if the injured workers were not aware they had been referred to rehab services. Regardless of the situation, the interviewers had to be quick thinkers to gracefully end the survey after when respondents said they had not received any rehabilitation services.

The second recommendation involves how WSI responds to the individuals who are enrolled in rehabilitations services and the retraining programs. Fully two-thirds of the comments that were offered as suggestions for improvement asked WSI to give more attention to the individual needs of the worker. Recognizing that WSI is bound by laws, policies, and protocols, and these likely govern how the injured worker is approached, people still need to feel they have some importance to the process. WSI may want to review their approach to reduce the numbers of comments in this area and find ways to help the injured worker feel their outcome is more positive.

A final observation is in the area of retraining services. Sixty five percent, 40, of the respondents said they were candidates for the retraining program. Yet, only one-fourth (11) of those people actually graduated from a retraining program. Only four people felt the retraining they received was helpful. This means only 10% of those who were candidates for retraining actually had some sense of satisfaction with the retraining program. WSI should look at this program more carefully to find out