

BURST FOR PROSPERITY

Evaluation Report of Coaching for Prosperity implemented by
the King County Career Connections Education and
Employment Coordinators

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Prepared for Burst for Prosperity

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ConTEXT

**Evaluation of Coaching for Prosperity implemented by the King County Career
Connections Education and Employment Coordinators**

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Evaluation of Coaching for Prosperity implemented by the King County Career Connections Education and Employment Coordinators

Executive Summary

The Career Connections Education and Employment Coordinators are implementing a client-centered empowerment approach in their interactions with clients from multiple referral sources. The coordinators are using the approaches and techniques they learned in the Coaching for Prosperity© training including active listening and powerful questions to develop relationships with clients. The Coaching for Prosperity© training guided the coaches on how to engage individuals to improve their education, employment, and decision making skills toward achieving financial stability and shared prosperity. The coaching empowerment model approaches clients as whole, resourceful and capable individuals who can learn skills for career and life planning. The coaching approaches differ from traditional case management as the clients rather than the coach set their own agendas, reflect on their desires, aim to accomplish long term and short term goals, brainstorm possible solutions and select a path of action.

The coaches have initiated relationships with the clients that will be more fully assessed and analyzed in the next report period. The majority of the clients have just been engaged for two months or less so more time should pass before assessing the extent that client characteristics and experiences, environmental factors, and the coach relationship affects the clients' progress in life skills, education, and employment.

Factors facilitating and hindering coaching- The majority of the clients are being referred from several Rapid Rehousing partner agencies: Solid Ground, YWCA, the Multi-service Center, and WellSpring Family Services. Referrals have been streaming in monthly after a slightly slow start in January 2010. The coaches anticipated serving 100 rapid re-housing clients during the duration of the program through December 2011 and as of September 1, 2010 are serving 67 re-housing clients, 10 ex-offenders, and 6 Veterans.

The majority of clients experience multiple and inter-related challenges that tend to impede them from identifying education as a goal or immediate priority. Many clients have very low self-esteem, express that they have never been placed in a position to make decisions about their future, and lack social support that would influence them to set goals or take any steps toward change in their lives. The barriers include personal issues including past or present substance use. Approximately 20% of the clients were initially identified to be in need of mental health counseling based on their histories and interactions while approximately one third of the clients who were referred to the coaches had received or were receiving mental health counseling. Another obstacle faced by many clients has been overwhelming financial problems such as unpaid traffic fines, unpaid child support, or previous rent evictions that had led to high debt. Among the clients who were parents, 61% of these clients had to resolve their debt issues before they would be able to pay market-rate housing at the end of their housing subsidy period.

When the coaches met with clients in their initial sessions and in follow-up meetings, the clients opened up and explained their previous experiences and their present situations which they had not done in other interactions with case managers. When the coaches discussed a case with the housing case manager it became apparent that the coaches had learned more about the clients' interests, experiences, education, and job histories than the case managers. The coaching paradigm to see the client as a whole, capable and resourceful individual was successful in generating more information for the coach-client relationship. One coach said that clients don't feel their past and present actions are being judged in the coach relationship which was positive compared to more traditional case management interactions. The coaches agreed that clients found it flattering to be asked more questions and to be encouraged to talk about themselves which engaged the clients into more actively seeking solutions and changes to their living situations and employment status.

The Education and Employment Coordinators have identified a hierarchy among the participants' goal-oriented actions as they are far more focused on meeting their physiological and psychological needs for safety, food and housing security prior to committing their time to higher order educational programs. This corresponds to putting more attention in what is termed life skills such as having transportation, housing, organizing one's personal life, and addressing mental health issues of substance abuse or anger management.

Clients progress in life skills, education and employment- Two life skills that were assessed were the clients decision making skills and competencies in organizing their lives such as keeping appointments and being on time. There were very similar results as 61% and 60% of the clients were assessed to have adequate decision making and personal organization competencies that are needed to take positive steps toward finding and keeping a job.

The clients changes in education level and in employment were also assessed. Since clients have not had sufficient time to complete GED tests and vocational training these achievements will be assessed in a future report. There are changes in the clients employment status and the results reflect the efforts of the clients in applying for jobs as well as the time spent by the coaches in interacting with the clients to help them to prepare to enter the work force.

- 33 clients have obtained a job
- 10 clients have increased from part-time to full time work
- 4 clients completed a temporary job
- 25 clients are working part time

There are several success stories of clients identifying career objectives and taking steps to achieve them. These clients are making an hourly wage that should put them on a path to financial stability. One recent success occurred for a female client who had completed training to be an apprentice carpenter. The coach had accessed the Attainment fund to assist the client to obtain the work clothes and tools that she needed as well as to repair her aged truck so she could reach her job site. This client was successful in finding a job in her field so she started in July on a job paying \$25 an hour. She has the potential to have an increase in her hourly wage as she gains experience and she is working on building a housing project that should last for months.

One of the factors of interest is to assess the clients' job retention so in the next report period we should have data on the length of time that clients have remained employed. The results of the process evaluation and the outcome evaluation will be developed in the next data collection and report period.

Influence of coaching on clients' paths to self- sufficiency- The roles of the coaches and the influence of coaching in guiding clients toward the changes that they make in their lives are just developing now and will be assessed in the future. The majority of clients have been interacting with the coaches for less than two months and other clients have been working with a coach for 5-8 months.

While carrying out some of the tasks typically done by case managers, the coordinators have also been integrating dimensions of the coaching paradigm. They state and demonstrate their newfound commitment to actively listening and eliciting information from the client that will steer the course of action for the client. The coaches also see that the way they are carrying out their job sets them apart from other case managers. The coordinators identified that their attitude that the client can be resourceful in brainstorming options, identifying a possible solution, and taking action is a shift from what traditional case managers are doing in drafting an action plan for a client. The coordinators have adopted the use of terms such as balance and process to explain that they are more comfortable in taking time to hear each client's experiences to help the client to achieve personal fulfillment, educational achievement, or career advancement.

The coordinators integration of the coaching paradigm into their daily functioning is dynamic and evolving from month to month. Each coach is moving at a separate pace to embrace the coaching language and approaches as evident in the way one coach describes the behaviors that facilitated a coaching relationship such as trusting the client's capability, encouraging the client to lead the conversation, or asking powerful questions. The coordinators are not totally synchronized in assuming the coaching role but each one is enthusiastic in practicing selected coaching components and developing competencies as part of a professional array of client focused approaches. The interaction of the coaches and clients as well as the differences among coaches should be assessed and described in a future evaluation report.

Evaluation of Coaching for Prosperity implemented by the King County Career Connections Education and Employment Coordinators

Overview

Burst for Prosperity, in collaboration with CARES of Washington and a Master Certified Coach, initially developed and provided the Coaching for Prosperity© Training Program to frontline staff in three pilot sites starting in 2008.¹ The goal of the training program has been to inform staff in listening, trust building, and empowering approaches to build relationships with low-income clients so they develop skills and make decisions to move out of poverty. Coaching for Prosperity© is a client focused model that engages individuals to improve their education, employment, and decision making skills toward achieving economic self sufficiency. The coaching empowerment model approaches clients as whole, resourceful and capable individuals and guides clients as they learn skills for career and life planning.

This report describes the implementation of the Coaching for Prosperity Model by three King County Career Connections Education and Employment Coordinators who participated in the Coaching for Prosperity Training Program in November 2009. The report is in two parts (1) the process evaluation that describes the extent that the Coaching for Prosperity model was implemented with low income King County clients who were referred to Career Connections and (2) the outcome evaluation that identifies the emerging results for clients who have been engaged starting in early 2010 in coaching relationships. Since the length of time that clients have engaged with the coaches, at this time, is eight months or less many of the anticipated outcomes have not yet been met. The outcomes that can be reported are the clients' first steps toward their career advancement or their educational attainment.

In Section 1, the process evaluation focus is on the identification and the analysis of the factors that influenced and determined how the coaching was implemented and what affected the relationships between the coaches and the clients. The documentation of this process and implementation of the coaching model is essential as the coach-client relationship differs from short-term training programs that are tracked with discreet outputs of number of clients served. The process and implementation phase of the evaluation yields evidence of the coach-client interactions that produce the intended results and answers these questions - What are the characteristics of the clients that are best served by career coaching? What components of the coaching model and what attributes of the coaches are best suited to producing the intended results with the target population?

¹ Burst for Prosperity owns Coaching for Prosperity and offers it as a fee-for-service training to public and private agencies. The first coaches trained through Coaching for Prosperity were at the Refugee Federation Service Center, the YWCA, and the Welcome Back Center at Highline Community College.

The objectives for the process evaluation are:

1. To describe what has positively influenced or what has slowed the implementation of the Coaching for Prosperity model with the Career Connections Education and Employment coordinators
2. To assess the coaches' perceptions of the effectiveness of the approaches and communication tools on the clients' problem solving and decision making skills.
3. To collect and analyze information from the coaches of their observations of the clients' participation in coaching

In Section 2 the outcome evaluation describes if the clients gain life skills to more confidently access education and employment opportunities. One long-term goal is that previously unemployed or underemployed workers acquire skills and develop personal competencies to enter the work force and advance in occupations to stay employed and to gain personal assets. The long term results of coaching are likely to emerge 12-24 months after the coach-client relationships are initiated. The expected outcomes are that clients who have received coaching services for at least 6-12 months or longer duration will increase in their life skills, personal financial management skills, and obtain a job that has promising prospects for advancement. The outcome evaluation is dependent on the retention of the coached clients in services over time to have sufficient contact to collect data at 6 month intervals on employment and education status. Progress indicators are identified to measure client behavior change and skill acquisition that occurs over time. The client data are analyzed in relation to the duration and intensity of the coaching services and in relation to the client characteristics to evaluate the effectiveness of the coaching model to move clients toward self-sufficiency.

The objectives of the outcome evaluation are:

1. To describe the response pattern, engagement, and duration of coaching received by clients referred for coaching.
2. To assess the coached clients' development of life skills that influence their goals for employment, education or training
3. To analyze coached clients employment history (hours worked per week, succession of jobs), wage progression, or employment advancement
4. To compare the coached clients education and employment progress to the available data and to other studies.

I. Process Evaluation of Coaching for Prosperity with clients referred to the Career Connections Education and Employment Coordinators in King County

This section includes a description of the components influencing the implementation of the coaching model and the interactions among components. First there is brief description of Career Connections, followed by a brief overview of the clients being referred to Career Connections. There is information describing characteristics of the clients including their income, education, challenges, and their responses to coaching. The focus shifts to the coaches including their perceptions, their use of the coaching paradigm, and their coaching behaviors.

Description of Career Connections

The Coaching for Prosperity Training Program© is based on nationally recognized coaching standards set by the International Coach Federation. The training program for frontline staff covers the components of coaching and calls for a paradigm shift in that coaching differs from a traditional case management approach. The topics that were addressed during a six day training were: qualities of an effective coach, empowering language, life planning, values clarification, honoring values, and standards of ethical conduct.

The Education and Employment Coordinators who completed the training learned the essence of coaching is not setting goals or developing an action plan for the client but rather on empowering individuals to set their own goals and take action to take control of their lives. The coaches participated in the Coaching for Prosperity training and in addition they attended trainings on other topics including Asset Building, Explorer and Labor Tools, Career Planning and the Self-sufficiency Calculator so they acquired skills and knowledge to work with the clients referred to Career Connections.

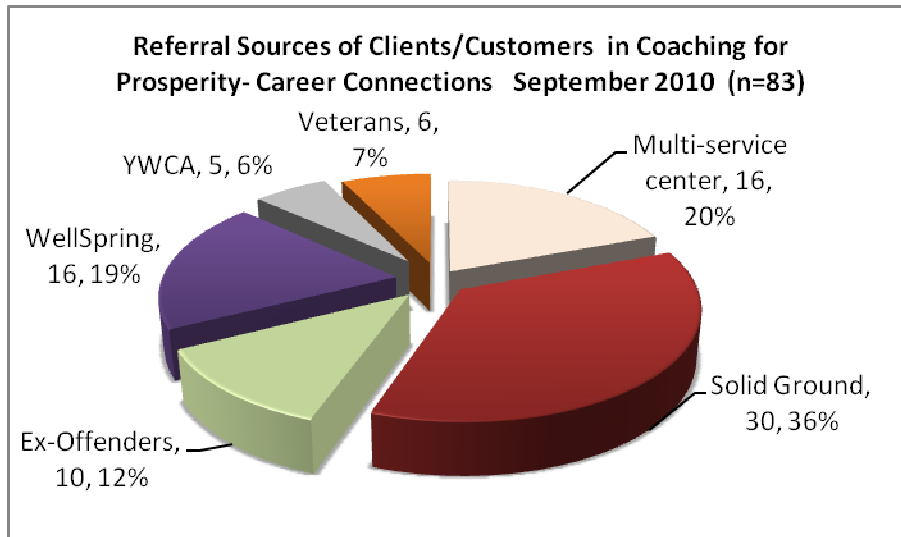
Career Connections has multiple partnerships to address the complex needs of the clients who are served including leveraging WorkSource partnerships. Other Career Connections partners include:

- Seattle King County Asset Building Collaborative and Seattle Asset Building Initiative
- YouthCare that has provided refurbished computers to Career Connections clients
- Pioneer Industries that has provided training/employment services to clients referred through the Department of Corrections
- Clearpoint that has provided credit counseling and asset building services to clients
- Goodwill that offers College 1010 training to clients
- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation/Skill Up/ Seattle Jobs Institute Pre-Attainment fund that is accessed to support clients plans toward self-sufficiency

Clients are referred to the coaches at Career Connections from the agencies that are rapid re-housing partners: Multiservice Center, Solid Ground, WellSpring Family Services, and the YWCA. These are individuals who have experienced homelessness and have been placed in rental housing by a partner agency case manager who maintains contact with the client. Clients

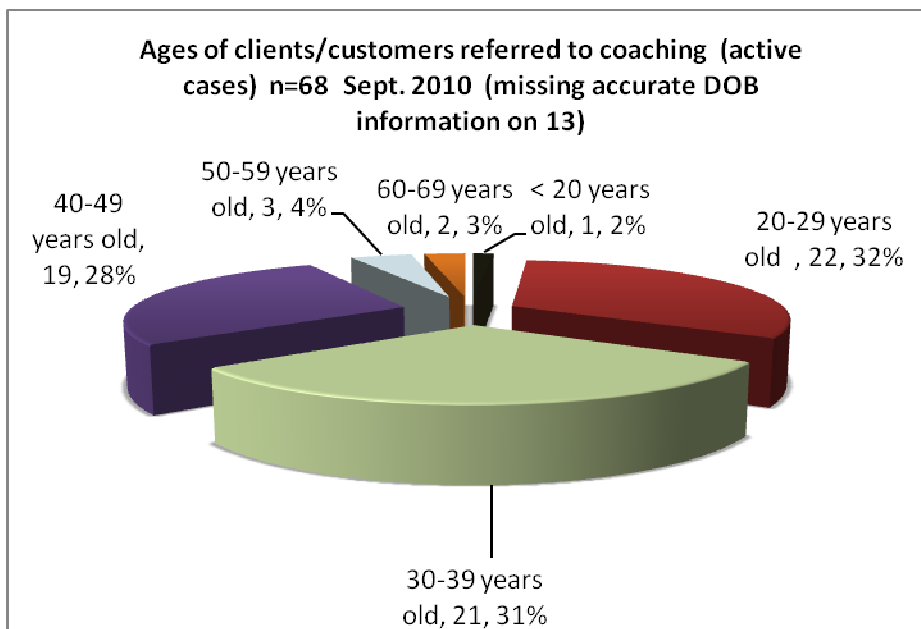
are also referred to the coaches at Career Connections from Veterans services and from the Department of Corrections (DOC).

The majority of the clients are being referred from Solid Ground, the Multi-service Center, and WellSpring. Referrals have been streaming in monthly after a slightly slow start in January 2010. In early February 2010 one coach had 11 clients and a second coach had 7 clients while the third coach started in the position in March after transferring from another work training position. The coaches anticipated serving 100 rapid re-housing clients during the duration of the program and as of September 1, 2010 are serving 67 re-housing clients, 10 ex-offenders, and 6 Veterans.



The coaches are presently carrying caseloads of 33, 31 and 19 clients. After referral to the Career Connections program, the coaches connect and initiate relationships with most clients but it has taken 1-2 months to establish contact with approximately 18% of the clients who have initially been lost to contact or who did not return messages. A small number of clients also becomes inactive for a period of time due to missed appointments or changes in schedules from temporary job or short term work.

The clients referred for coaching have ranged in age from 18 to 62 years old. The majority of the clients are 20-39 years old. There are nearly equal numbers of clients in their 20s and in their 30s.



Factors affecting the client-coach relationship

The clients are also culturally, racially and linguistically diverse as some of their countries of origin are Ethiopia, Eritrea, or Mexico. Not all of the clients are familiar with American customs, patterns of dress, formalities observed during interviews, or relationships between employers and employees. The cultural, linguistic, ethnic and racial differences among the clients will be considered as a potential variable that may affect the coach-client relationship. As many of the clients are still early in their relationships the influence of cultural variations are only emerging, but one consideration, for example is that Latino cultural values may highly influence how the Latino client conceives of career possibilities such as placing family needs above personal desires, or believing some occupations are the domain of women or explicitly male occupations.² Whether the client has endured discrimination or intolerance will also affect the client's response to developing career aspirations or educational goals and interacting with a coach. If the Latino clients have not had successful cultural role models in education and employment they are more likely to internalize negative messages about their potential.

In considering racial and ethnic differences among clients the coaches might identify that African American clients and ethnic minority clients may not differ in career goals from other clients but they anticipate more barriers than did White individuals.³ The coaches have seen that some clients have low self-confidence and research supports that minority clients might have lower confidence to cope with barriers. Barrier perceptions might also serve to motivate some clients and enhance their coping. The different responses of clients that may be influenced by

² Flores, L.Y., Ramos, K., Kangui, M. (2010) Applying the Cultural Formulation Approach to Career Counseling with Latinas/os. *Journal of Career Development* 37(1) 411-4424.

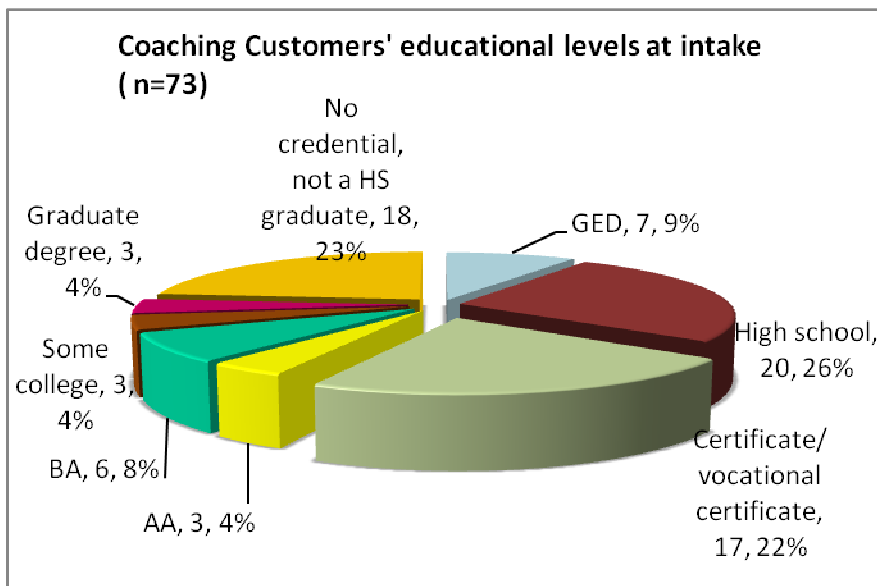
³ Byars-Winston, A. (2010) The Vocational Significance of Black Identity: Cultural Formulation Approach to Career Assessment and Career Counseling. *Journal of Career Development* 37(1):441-466.

their cultural values or their ethnic or racial identity will be considered in a future report that assesses the factors affecting the client-coach relationship.

Barriers impede client progress- The majority of clients experience multiple and inter-related barriers that tend to impede them from identifying education as a goal or immediate priority. Many clients have very low self-esteem, express that they have never been placed in a position to make decisions about their future, and lack social support that would influence them to set goals or take any steps toward change in their lives. The barriers include personal issues including past or present substance use. Approximately 20% of the clients were initially identified to be in need of mental health counseling based on their histories and interactions while approximately one third of the clients who were referred to the coaches had received or were receiving mental health counseling. Another obstacle faced by many clients has been overwhelming financial problems such as unpaid traffic fines, unpaid child support, or previous rent evictions that had led to high debt. Among the clients who were parents, 61% of these clients had to resolve their debt issues before they would be able to pay market-rate housing at the end of their housing subsidy period.

Many of the clients are very isolated with a limited support network so they have contact with few people. Approximately one of five clients is depressed or has a mental health condition. Beyond the stigma that is associated with being homeless, some of the clients convey a sense of helplessness in their encounters with the coaches.

Characteristics of clients- Less than half of the clients have completed a GED or have graduated from high school as their highest level of education. Nearly one of four clients has a vocational certificate. Approximately 20% percent of the clients have an Associate degree, some years of college, a Bachelor’s degree or a graduate level education. The proportion of clients who have not completed high school or obtained a vocational certificate is 23% almost equal to the proportion that have acquired a certificate.

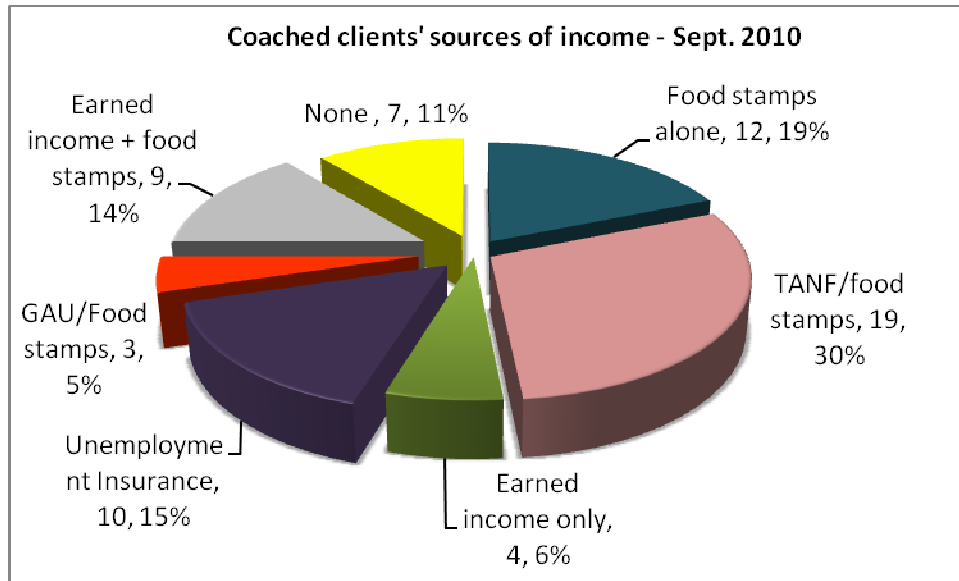


Nearly all clients are facing daily realities of struggling to maintain a sufficient supply of food and other necessities for themselves and their children if they have a family. While some clients have become established in apartments, many were placed in unfurnished apartments and they lacked furniture, kitchen utensils or dishes, and cleaning supplies. A small number of clients had stored personal belongings so with the subsidies they are receiving they are now living in relative comfort while trying to procure and retain employment.

There are some clients who have been victims of domestic violence and have experienced homelessness after leaving an abusive relationship. In the sub-group of the clients who are parents, 18% had been involved in an abusive relationship. The partner leaving an abusive relationship may be alone or have children to care for and may or may not have had previous employment experience or completed basic education.

At the time of initial assessment 56 of the clients were not employed and 22 had part-time, temporary or full-time work. Part-time work included very limited hours of less than 10 hours a week or a short term assignment that lasted for several weeks. Seven of the nine clients with a bachelor’s degree or graduate education were not employed at the time of initial assessment.

The highest proportion, 30%, of clients was receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and food stamps. The combined proportions of clients who received food stamps as their only benefit or who received food stamps in combination with TANF or with GAU or with earned income was 68%.



Sub-group of homeless families- In addition to the above look at the entire group of clients that have been engaging with the coaches, there is a sub-group of clients that are adults with children and they have been referred to as families in the data collected by the coaches. Among these families, 50% of the heads of household had only a GED or high school diploma

and 25% of the adults did not have a GED or high school diploma. One of five of these adults who headed a household was employed and one third of these adults were attending school or attending a training program. Many of these parents, 61%, were like the entire group of clients many of whom faced an obstacle before returning to school and that was the necessity to reduce or resolve debt.

Evidence of the coaches' paradigm shift in client interaction

The three Employment and Education Coordinators participated in the six day Coaching for Prosperity training in November 2009. Following training they scheduled six monthly peer sessions with the master coach, and the first four of these sessions were held in February, March, April, and May 2010. The fifth session was not held on planned dates in June or July and occurred on August 13, 2010. The sixth session was held on October 15, 2010. The peer sessions provided the opportunity to review skills with the master coach, refresh and refine approaches based on discussing chapter content from *Co-active Coaching*, and address any questions or challenges arising in client interactions. Chapter content refers to readings on intuition, curiosity, deepening the learning, self-management, nurturing, balance, and fulfillment. Client oriented tools including the Wheel of Life and the Personal Empowerment Game were also introduced by the master coach for coaches to use to guide clients to identify areas of their lives where they wanted to develop empowering habits and mark their progress.

In the first four sessions, the coaches identified their confidence in applying concepts such as authenticity, connection and aliveness. The coaches were sharing examples of how they were applying coaching approaches in their interactions such as a case of a young offender when the coach felt prepared to speak boldly to the client regarding his appearance that could be perceived negatively by a potential employer. Another coach felt she aptly responded to a client to assume responsibility for his decisions. Two coaches felt very committed to having clients identify steps in an action plan. One coach referred to using the action plan to show clients steps that the client and coach would take to support the client.

Signs of coaches' new communication approach and language

During master-coach peer sessions the coaches identified they embraced the topics that had been covered in the training and in their reading when they talked about doing the following:

- Asking powerful questions that elicited the client to speak up and explain their goals and actions
- Using intuition to listen to the client and develop questions to ask the client
- Labeling what they were already doing as being curious or intuitive or nurturing
- Seeing the world through the experiences that were expressed by the clients that gave the coaches very different perspectives from their own lives.

One coach described that coaching leads to building trust with the client and the coach explained the emerging success of a client who is a mother to a young school aged child. The mother was motivated to get a GED so she could read at a higher grade level than her child. The

coach supported the client to enroll in a GED program so she was on her way toward her goal that might not have been set in a traditional case management program. The coach had spent months to build trust with the client to help her make decisions in her time.

Challenges perceived by coaches to effective client interactions

The coaches described the challenges that are faced by the clients in three domains: pressure to find employment in a time of scarce employment, lack of tangible resources, and unmet needs.

Scarce employment opportunities - The clients who are referred through rapid re-housing perceive pressure from their housing case manager to secure employment so they have income to pay toward their rent when their housing subsidy is reduced. The clients are in rent-subsidized housing for a limited period and are expected to progressively pay a portion of rent starting at 6 months and becoming independent of subsidies at 12-18 months. The pressure to obtain a job is compounded by the lack of available jobs for skilled and semi-skilled workers as well as very competitive applicants for the small number of jobs that are available.

Lack of available resources for clients - When clients were initially referred the coaches experienced some frustration that they could not readily provide the tangible support such as bus tickets that would assist clients to get to appointments or interviews. The access to bus tickets was made easier but the coaches have continued to describe that the clients placed into rental units typically have very little or no furniture, no cleaning supplies and no personal hygiene products such as soap, shampoo, and towels. In the first quarter and throughout the past five months the coaches have spent time to locate these tangible resources for clients relying on their individual and combined knowledge to access community agencies and organizations as well as developing creative solutions to tap new sources of assistance.

The coaches have clarified and accessed the use of the Attainment fund through SkillUp Washington to allow for food, clothing and necessary transportation expenses including bus tickets. The coaches have identified that several categories of expenses are not allowed including mental health counseling, costs related to court, medical and dental expenses, and internet service. In approximately six months the coaches had accessed nearly \$9,000 in the attainment fund 46% of the expenditures for clothing and 27% for Metro passes so clients could use public transportation for job interviews, workshops and other appointments.

Overwhelming debt- The coaches have indicated on several occasions that the clients have very high needs and very limited resources referring to not having many personal belongings, clothes, adequate food, furniture, or reliable transportation. Many clients also had debt from unpaid parking tickets or moving violations or had incurred court costs. Clients also had debts from not paying their rent or from loans or student loans. For the sub-group of clients who were the head of a family, and were not single adults living alone, 46% of these clients were struggling with fines and penalties as a significant part of their debt.

Shifts in the clients' reactions when they are coached

The coaches tended to agree that clients found it flattering to be asked more questions and to be encouraged by the coaches to talk about themselves. When the coaches met with

clients several times the clients opened up and explained their previous experiences and their present situations which they had not done in other interactions with case managers. When the coaches discussed a case with the housing case manager or the case manager who referred the client the coaches had learned more about the clients' interests, experiences, education, and job histories than the case managers. The coaching paradigm to see the client as a whole, capable and resourceful individual was successful in generating more information for the coach-client relationship. One coach said that clients don't feel their past and present actions are being judged in the coach relationship which was positive compared to more traditional interactions.

Clients have a positive response- One coach described the unexpected and positive responses from clients when she stated to them that they were "in the driver's seat of their life," or they could "decide what would happen in their lives," or "it was up to them to decide what to do." The response from the clients was typically that no one including social workers or case workers had placed the responsibility in the clients' hands and the clients had instead been the recipients of decisions made for them. Hearing the words that he could make his own decisions brought one young male client to tears when he said that no one ever said that to him. The coaches describe that empowering clients to make decisions does not occur at a one-time meeting, but is instead a process that occurs over several meetings when the coach can reinforce the idea that the client is indeed an individual capable of making decisions.

Client moves ahead- A coach described how reiterating positive messages and suggesting possibilities to a client who had previous setbacks in returning to school had contributed to the client enrolling in a vocational training program. The coach found it helpful to engage the client in mapping out the different areas in her life and observed how the client moved from a victim role into feeling empowered to set action steps for herself.

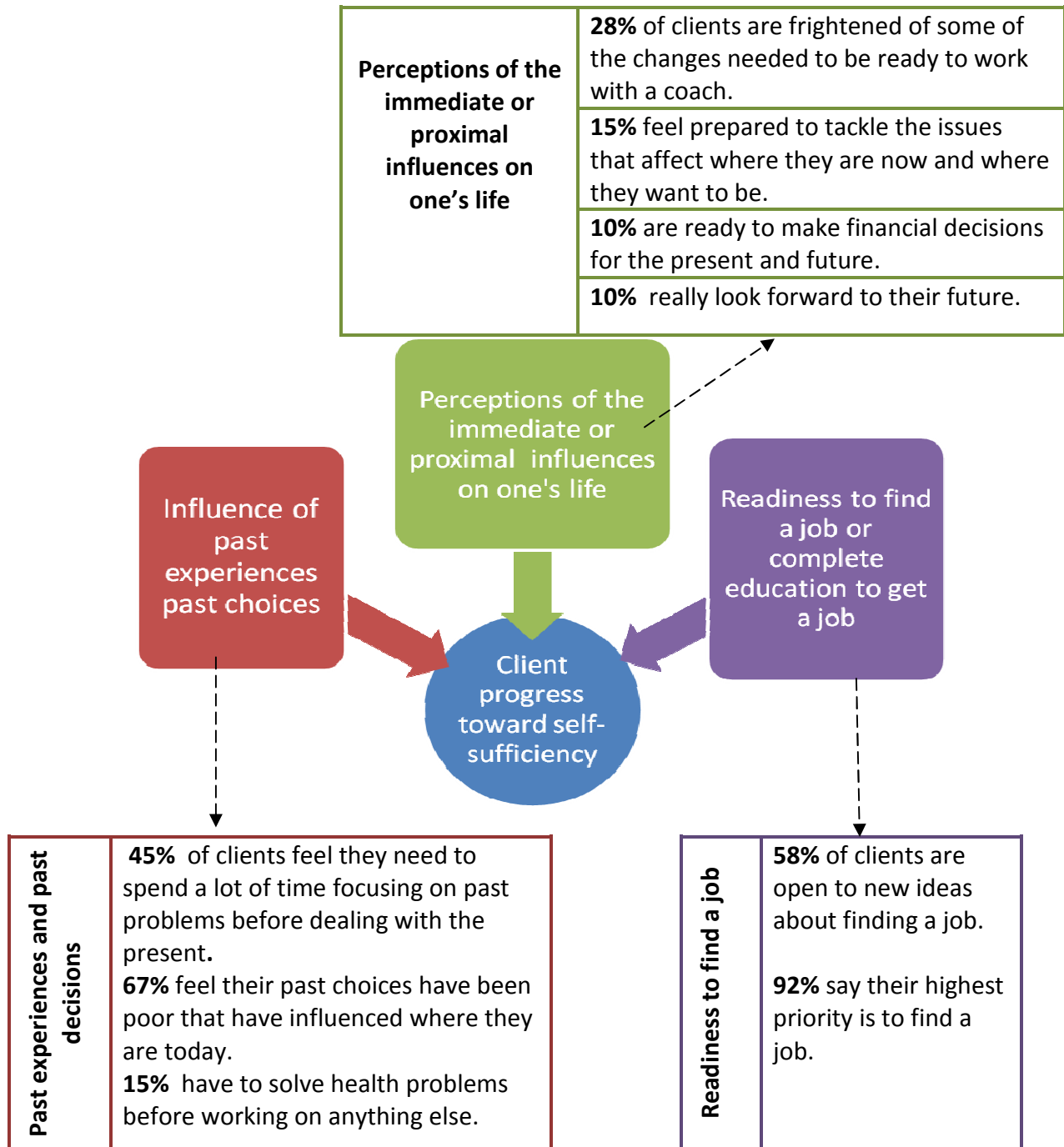
Several successes have occurred including a female client with a child who had been a domestic violence victim. She had medical bills and past due student loans so she was referred to financial counseling while she completed a short term certificate program that should enable her to seek employment in the health care field. A male client who had previously worked but had accumulated debt in unpaid child support has been hired in a well-paying monthly job specific to his skills so he should be in a position to pay off his debt.

Coaches perceptions of factors that influence the clients engagement with coaching

Categorically, the barriers that influence how the clients are engaging into coaching are shown in the diagram below. The three categories that capture the barriers faced by most clients are their perceptions of the immediate or proximal influences on their lives, the influence that past choices have made on their present situations, and their readiness to find a job or take steps to complete their education. The categories are based on concepts of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT).⁴ The coaches identified for what proportions of their assigned caseloads were the statements in the three categories applicable. The combined percent from the coaches is listed for each of the statements in the three categories: the clients' perceptions of immediate influences on their lives, their past experiences, and their job readiness.

⁴ Chronister, K.M., Linville, D., Kaag, K.P. (2008) Domestic Violence Survivors' Access of Career Counseling Services. *Journal of Career Development* 34(4):339-361.

Influences on the Clients' engagement in Coaching based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (Percents correspond to proportions of clients).



Clients' perceived readiness and challenges to coaching and to employment advancement

A high proportion of clients, 92%, state that their priority is to find a job but many do have some lingering negative influences from their past experiences and most clients did not feel ready to face the issues they needed to deal with. For many of the clients, the immediate influences and circumstances on their lives can be hard to overcome. Some of the clients are making the effort to apply for jobs but they are rejected and rejection can be in the form of receiving no response, not obtaining an interview, being told they are not suitable for a job, or not even knowing if their application was read or considered. Experiencing rejection and repeated rejection can reduce the clients' self confidence. The coaches have described low self-confidence in some of their clients but they have also described how some of the clients are resilient in their job search and employment process. The concept of resilience will be explored further in the clients' ongoing coaching relationships since it includes some of the environmental factors that influence the clients' behavior (such as rejection) along with some of their individual characteristics, strengths, and assets.⁵

The clients' perceptions of their present circumstances and their past experiences also seem to influence their willingness to plan for the future. A low percent of the clients working with coaches felt ready to work on financial decisions for the future and only 10% of the clients looked forward to the future. The coaches have focused their efforts in interacting with clients so clients do feel slightly more prepared to deal with the issues they face. The coaches have felt that some clients need time to increase their self-confidence and experience some success in small steps to get to a point that they can identify long term goals for employment and education.

The coordinators roles in the coach-client relationships

The coaches are encountering very challenging situations in what have been described as the high needs of the clients, very limited resources, and scarce employment opportunities. The Education and Employment Coordinators find that the clients have overwhelming complex physiological, safety, and security needs so the coaches have felt compelled to spend time to reduce these needs. In the early implementation of the coaching model, the Coordinators have described their roles as case managers. The partner agencies have rapid re-housing case managers who refer clients to the Career Connections Education and Employment Coordinators and yet the coordinators were fulfilling the tasks that might be done by a case manager. Several factors contributed to the coaches referring to themselves as case managers rather than to identify themselves as career coaches. One influence was the relative short term experience among most of the referring case managers as well as the turnover that has already occurred among several of the rapid re-housing case managers. Another factor that has contributed to the coaches spending time identifying resources for clients and completing other tasks typically performed by case managers is the very high level of competence and experience among the coaches who have knowledge of many community resources such as those for transportation, job interview clothing, emergency food, and furniture.

⁵ Fleig-Palmer, M.M., Luthans, K.W., and Manderlach, B.J. (2009) Successful Reemployment through Resiliency Development. *Journal of Career Development* 35:228-240.

While carrying out some of the tasks typically done by case managers, the coordinators have also been integrating dimensions of the coaching paradigm. They state and demonstrate their newfound commitment to actively listening and eliciting information from the client that will steer the course of action for the client. The coaches also see that the way they are carrying out their job sets them apart from other case managers. The coordinators identified that their attitude that the client can be resourceful in brainstorming options, identifying a possible solution, and taking action is a shift from what traditional case managers are doing in drafting an action plan for a client. The coordinators have adopted the use of terms such as balance and process to explain that they are more comfortable in taking time to hear each client's experiences to help the client to achieve personal fulfillment, educational achievement, or career advancement.

The coaches' did not consistently show a high level of prioritized attention to the coaching paradigm or to the available sources of support to gain competencies in coaching skills. The coordinators might have met monthly with the master coach but other tasks consumed their time. Two master coach-peer sessions were cancelled when a schedule conflict arose and the coaches were expected to attend a data base training one day and then had to compile client data on another day that was necessary due to the unreliable and incomplete database. The coaches did not think they had any time available to reschedule the cancelled sessions which may convey that the sessions were not regarded as contributing significantly to the coaches' ongoing learning or occurred due to perceptions of feeling overwhelmed and facing other priorities.

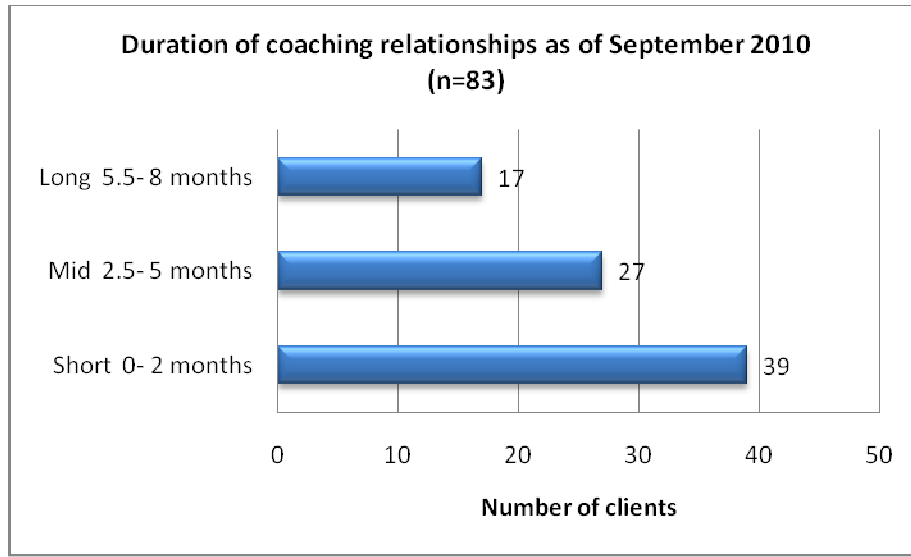
Another subtle sign that the coaches may have been assigning less importance to the coaching approach and putting more reliance onto their traditional case management tools was when the coaches described how much time they spend in resolving the crises presented by their clients. The coaches referred to contacting resources or identifying sources and it appears that they complete the contacts rather than brainstorming ways that clients might do their own leg work or make phone calls to get what they need. The coaches have identified the necessity of reducing or minimizing the presenting and often complex needs of the clients before they can identify and work on other items such as setting education or employment goals. The signs that the coaches may be overwhelmed with the high level of the clients' needs combined with very limited community resources are evident in their actions and words. One subtle sign was heard in a coach's reference to making a set agenda for meeting with a client that implied the coach, and not the client, set an agenda which differed from the same coach's earlier reference to stating the clients' goals were her goals. Another indication was when the coaches introduced and referred to themselves as case managers and social workers with no mention of being coaches.

The coordinators integration of the coaching paradigm into their daily functioning is dynamic and evolving from month to month. Each coach is moving at a separate pace to embrace the coaching language and approaches as evident in the way one coach describes the behaviors that facilitated a coaching relationship such as trusting the client's capability, encouraging the client to lead the conversation, or asking powerful questions. The coordinators are not totally synchronized in assuming the coaching role but each one is enthusiastic in practicing selected coaching components and developing competencies as part of a professional array of client focused approaches.

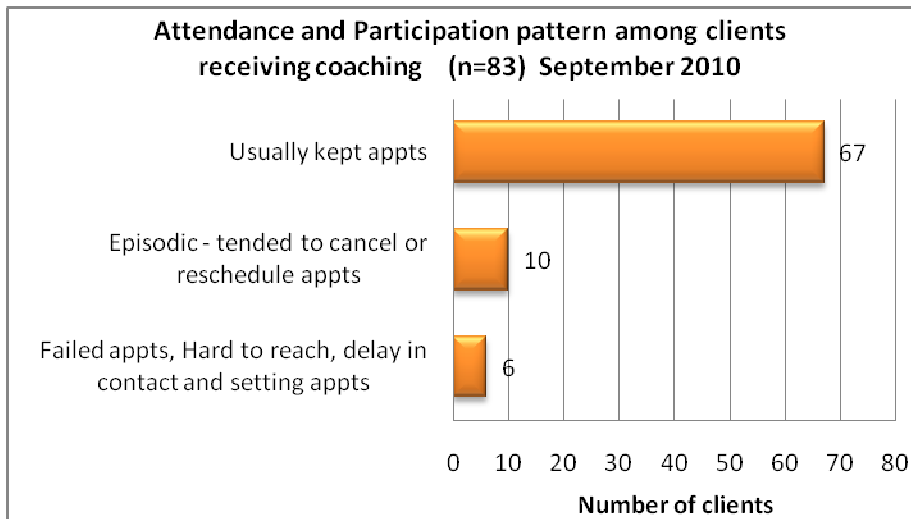
Data entry deficiencies- The coaches have been delayed and frustrated in efforts to try and document their efforts with clients in a database. The Safe Harbors database was to incorporate 74 milestones in life skills, employment status, education received, and income level to measure coached clients progress. The coaches report that they were delayed in initially receiving training in the database and did not receive timely responses to their requests for assistance to use the database. When they did enter data they encountered problems in that data were not retained and newer data entries displaced earlier entries rather than recording multiple dates with notes such as appointments, assessments, or completed test dates. What was perceived as the unreliability of the database has led the coaches to not enter data and to rely on case notes. The case notes document the actions of the coach and the clients' responses but compiling data across caseloads requires the time to hand sort data and tabulate cases individually. Efforts were underway in late August 2010 to remove the deficiencies in data entry, retrieval, and report generation which should improve how data can be obtained to track client progress toward self-sufficiency. The coaches would need to spend time to enter client data that are currently not being entered into a database but once the backlog of data are entered there should be a systematic way to enter data to track ongoing client progress.

II. Outcome Evaluation of emerging changes in clients as of September 2010

The first clients began relationships with the coaches in February and March 2010 so they have been engaged for up to eight months as of September 2010. Other clients have been referred in the past six months and new referrals continue to be received. Nearly half of the clients, 39 or 47% had been engaged for short durations of between one session to two months at the time of the data collection. There is a smaller proportion of 17 or 20% of the clients who have been working with a coach for more than five months.



The majority of the clients have been engaged in coaching as evident in their pattern of regularly meeting with the coaches. It is an encouraging finding that such a high proportion of clients are engaged in coach relationships.



Attendance might influence job seekers- The sub-group of clients who had part-time work also had a consistent pattern of attendance and participation in coaching sessions which suggests that having a set time to interact with the coach may help guide the client to take action

to find work. This preliminary finding needs to be assessed with a larger group of clients using attendance and participation data collected over a longer interval of six months. There are also other factors such as education and experience that could influence the clients' job seeking actions so their success in finding part-time employment could also be linked to these or other factors. The part-time workers had a range in their educational levels including a GED, high school, and some vocational training so any possible relationship between client's education level and part-time and full-time work will be assessed in a future report.

The Career Connections coaches, the initial Program Manager, the Safe Harbors database experts, and the Asset Based Coalition representatives had a number of meetings where the discussion focused on milestones to measure the progress of clients receiving coaching. The milestones were in alignment with the measurement of client participation in other King County programs to advance client education and employment. The milestones are indicators of client movement and change in behavior, life skills, employment and income status, educational attainment and financial stability. The coached clients' progress in meeting these milestones is discussed in this section.

Some clients develop or enhance their life skills

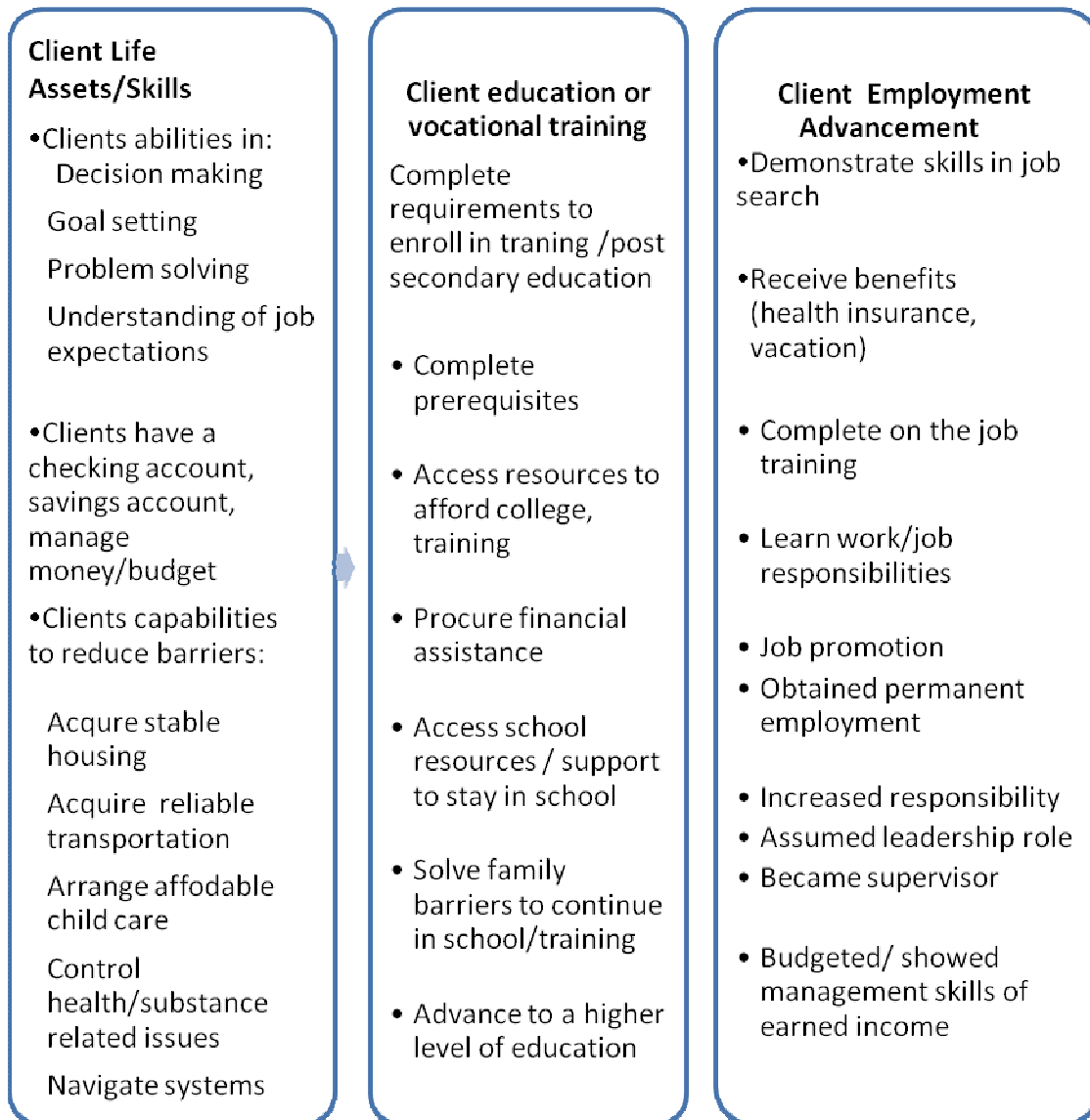
The Education and Employment Coordinators have identified a hierarchy among the participants' goal-oriented actions as they are far more focused on meeting their physiological and psychological needs for safety, food and housing security prior to committing their time to higher order educational programs. This corresponds to putting more attention in what is termed life skills such as having transportation, housing, organizing one's personal life, and addressing mental health issues of substance abuse or anger management.

Life Skills- Client milestones

1. Located/ maintained safe affordable housing
2. Procured/maintained reliable transportation
3. Demonstrated decision making skills to move toward goals
4. Showed competency in organizing personal/family life for 3 months to meet multiple demands
5. Engaged in mental health counseling
6. Completed anger management training

The milestones that were included for assessment at this time align closely with the indicators depicted below in three career pathway areas. The areas are Life assets and skills, Education and training, and Employment.

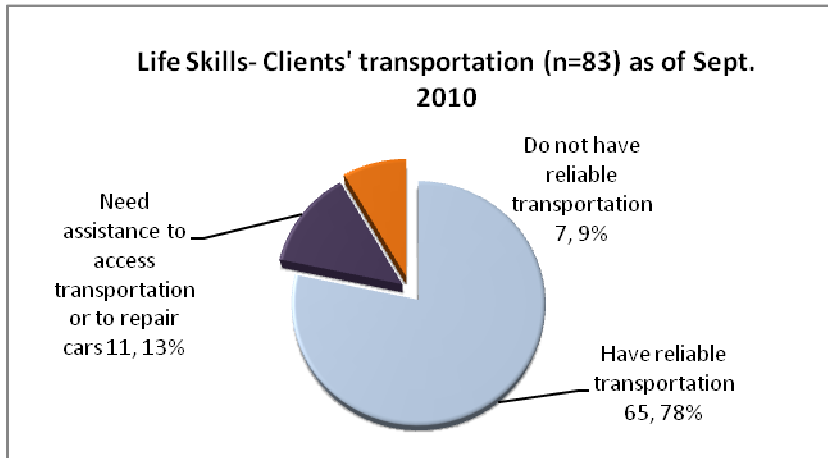
Domains for assessing client change and progress



Most clients are in safe housing- As discussed in the process evaluation section the coaches found that many clients were overwhelmed in trying to procure and maintain sufficient food, adequate clothing, apartment furnishings, and reliable transportation to support them so they could seek a job. The coaches have identified that the majority of the clients are in safe and adequate housing and just 10% are in need of assistance to obtain and maintain their housing. The ex-offenders or veterans that are referred to the Career Connections program have not had the services of a housing case manager as have the majority of clients that were referred from one of the Rapid Rehousing partner agencies so they may be struggling with housing. The challenge faced by the Rapid Rehousing clients is that they are to assume the cost of their monthly rents after 12 months of program entry. At the start of 2011 some of the earliest enrolled

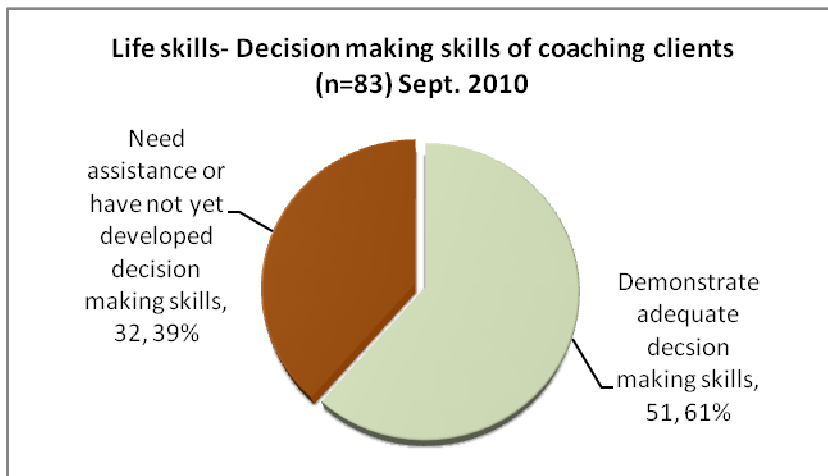
clients will be burdened with rent payments when they have not yet obtained full time employment with sufficient income.

Transportation is improving- The coaches assisted some clients and as of September, most clients, 78%, have acquired reliable transportation by accessing public transportation or having a car in running order if they need a car for necessary transportation. At entry, typical clients had a vehicle that did not run or required more than \$250 in repairs or the client did not have a license or lacked insurance.

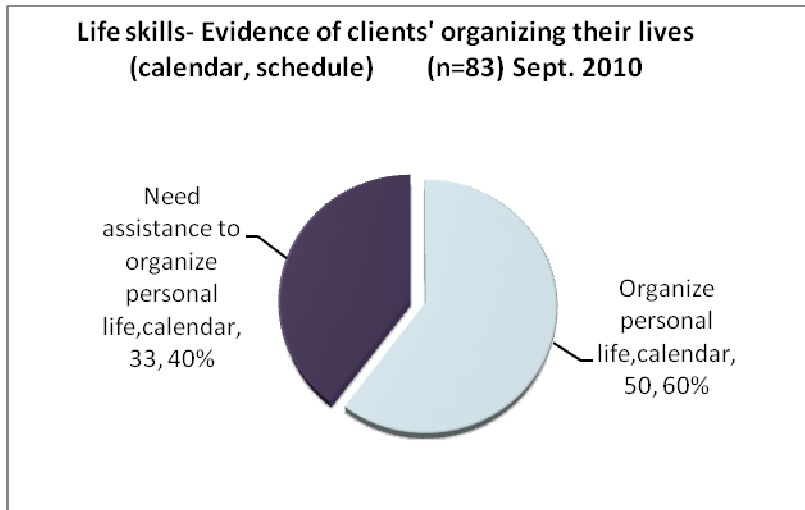


A female client completed training and with the assistance of the Education and Employment Coordinator procured a job as a carpenter. She had also been assisted through Career Connections to have her truck repaired as she needed to drive to job sites to start her job early in the morning.

Decision making and life organizing skills emerge-



Along with housing and transportation, two other life skills that were assessed were the clients decision making skills and competencies in organizing their lives such as keeping appointments and being on time. There were very similar results as 61% and 60% of the clients were assessed to have adequate decision making and personal organization competencies that are needed to take positive steps toward finding and keeping a job.



It is anticipated that as clients continue in coaching relationships the proportion of clients that demonstrate these two life skills will increase. Some clients have indicated that prior to the coaching relationship they have not been asked to set their own goals or decide what they wanted to do so they were experiencing a new feeling of taking control of their own decisions.

Personal health issues affect job hunting- Three other life skills that some clients need to master before successfully obtaining and retaining a job are to obtain mental health counseling if needed, and to address substance abuse issues and anger management problems. There are 18 clients or 22% of the clients interacting with the coaches are in need of further assessment to determine if they need mental health counseling. There are three other clients who appear in need of anger management classes or substance abuse counseling and there are two clients who appear to be in need of further assessment and referral for mental health, anger management, and substance abuse counseling.

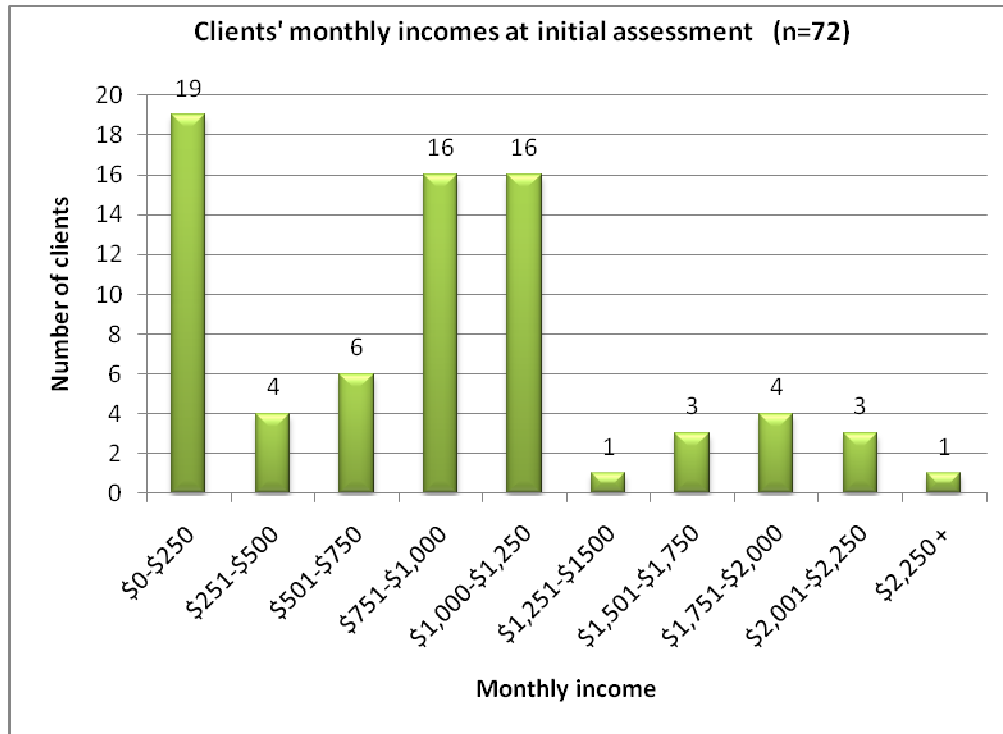
Financial skills challenge many clients- All but one of the clients has completed a self-sufficiency calculator that helps the clients to understand the amount of income required and the hourly wage needed in order to meet total expenses for basic needs. The majority of the clients are in need of assistance to set up personal checking accounts.

Just over one third of the clients have a checking account. One of the reasons that clients have not necessarily kept a checking account or started a savings account is their perception that they do not need to bank money when they have a limited monthly income and spend all of their income each month.

Financial Skills- Client milestones

1. Created checking account
2. Completed Self-sufficiency Calculator pre-assessment

The majority of the clients, 62%, had a monthly income of \$1,000 or less and 84% had a monthly income of \$1,250 or less. Three clients have an earned monthly income of approximately \$2,066. The clients were expected to be contributing a progressive proportion toward their monthly rent over time so as to assume the total rent cost after 12 months. Average rent costs could exceed more than 30% of the clients' monthly incomes that could challenge them to meet other necessary expenses.



Clients Education and Vocational training needs are diverse

Education goals are slowly increasing- Of six clients that did not have a GED and have identified that as a goal, three have taken at least one GED test and one of these clients has taken three of the GED tests. There are 39 clients who have explored vocational or training resources. At this time 15 clients are enrolled in vocational training programs that are a means of acquiring skills for future employment. There has not yet been a sufficient duration of time for coached clients to complete education or training programs or to complete the prerequisite courses to enroll in certificate or college courses. Many clients have been engaged in coaching for two months or less so they are working in identifying future educational objectives and paths of study. The results of clients' completion of vocational training, GED tests, and college courses could be discussed in a future report.

One client's progress- A single 28 year old mother who had dropped out of high school in the ninth grade decided to get her GED and plans to continue studies at a community college. She scored very high in the first of the five GED tests. This client, like many others, has other issues affecting her education completion. She has received support and referral from her coach to meet with a counseling service to discuss how to reduce the debt she has incurred in the past that affects her being able to retain her present apartment.

- Education Indicators –Client milestones
1. Earned GED
 2. Passed a single GED test
 3. Completed 3 GED tests
 4. Graduated high school
 5. Completed prerequisites to enroll in certificate/college course

Employment opportunities are slowly developing

Clients are challenged to find employment- Many clients have been searching for jobs and have not yet been successful. The clients vary in the level of job-specific skills that they possess and also in the length of employment and experience. Among the clients that have been engaged in the coaching services are three clients with graduate level degrees and two clients who have a bachelor's degree from a college outside of the United States. The clients have been searching for jobs as have other recently unemployed workers, previously employed workers, and never employed first-time job seekers. The coaches have identified that some of the clients are applying for jobs for which they meet the job qualifications qualified but the competition is high and the clients have not yet been successful in their job search.

In light of the slowly evolving results of the clients obtaining jobs, the indicators that convey how the clients are making progress are presented here. The majority (n=62) of the clients engaged in coaching have completed a career counseling session. There are 54 of the 83 clients who have completed at least one job application. There are 11 clients that have been very recently engaged into services in the past month and have not yet completed a job application. Other clients have issues interfering with their job readiness at this time so they have not yet applied for jobs. .

Nearly half of the participants (n=41) have attended a job fair or a job workshop. Some clients have obtained more than one workshop. There are 51 clients who have completed a short term career plan indicating the client has identified a job objective or a goal that could be met in a short time period. When the coaches meet with the clients they are able to use the Career Connections resources and internet access to search for job openings and announcements. Many clients know to search the internet for jobs but do not have a computer or can not afford internet access so their search time is limited to times when they use available computers.

Career Planning- Client milestones

1. Completed short term career plan
2. Completed career counseling sessions(s)
3. Completed job application

Employment

1. Obtained a job

Some clients succeed in finding a job- The coaches have met with some clients for five months or longer and have been meeting with the client to discuss long range goals and more immediate objectives to obtain employment. Many clients are feeling pressured to obtain employment for a sufficient income to pay rent and other essential expenses.

One recent success occurred for a female client who had completed training to be an apprentice carpenter. The coach had accessed the Attainment fund to assist the client to obtain the work clothes and tools that she needed as well as to repair her aged truck so she could reach her job site. This client was successful in finding a job in her field so she started in July on a job paying \$25 an hour. She has the potential to have an increase in her hourly wage as she gains experience and she is working on building a housing project that should last for months.

The numbers of clients that are finding jobs is a dynamic number as there are clients who finish short term project work or complete temporary work on a weekly basis. Some other clients

may be able to locate a part-time or full time job after filing several applications. As of September, there were 33 clients who have obtained a job and for four clients this has been a short-term or temporary job. There have been 25 clients who have worked part-time and 8 of these clients have advanced to full-time work. The results reflect the efforts of the clients in applying for jobs and are also an indicator of the time spent by the coaches in interacting with the clients helping many of them to prepare to enter the work force.

- 33 clients have obtained a job
- 10 clients have increased from part-time to full time work
- 4 clients completed a temporary job
- 25 clients are working part time

The coaches have described the results of using their coaching approaches in working with clients to help the client to express his or her career goal or for the client to state what he or she most prefers as a job. An example was a young mother who had left an abusive relationship and also had accrued debt from unpaid parking tickets and accumulated medical bills. She was assisted by the coach in enrolling in a three month training program in the health care field that should start her on a career path where she will obtain an adequate income to meet her expenses and improve her credit. The Career Connections coach had assisted her in identifying a career goal and in taking the steps to reach that goal along with providing tangible support in clothing, transportation, a computer and household furnishings.

Section 3. Discussion and next steps for a future evaluation

The Career Connections Education and Employment Coordinators are implementing a client-centered empowerment approach in interactions with clients from multiple referral sources. The coaches are using the approaches and techniques learned in the Coaching for Prosperity training including active listening and powerful questions in developing relationships with clients. The coaching approaches differ from traditional case management as they actively engage clients in decision making, goal setting, career planning that ultimately may guide the client to acquire financial stability and shared prosperity. Each coach is establishing her unique position by integrating selected coaching components and communication skills along with the more familiar and traditional case management approaches. The coaches have called upon their case management skills under crisis conditions and are gradually evolving in trusting the coaching paradigm for developing coach-client interactions. The dynamic roles of the coaches appear to be shifting gradually as they are trying out the coaching skills, practicing, and assessing the results. The interactions of the coaches with the clients will be described in the next evaluation report. The responses of the clients will also be elicited in interviews and the results will be included in the next report in order to better assess the contribution of coaching to low-income clients' paths to self-sufficiency.

The results of the process evaluation and the outcome evaluation will be developed in the next data collection and report period. Sufficient time should have elapsed to assess the factors influencing the client-coach relationship and to assess differences or variations in sub-groups of clients with potential comparisons of the clients referred from rapid re-housing partners and from other referral sources.

In the next data collection and report period there should be a longer duration of services so some clients who have started vocational training programs will have completed their course of study and the evaluation can discuss if these clients enter the work force. It should also be possible to assess if clients who are working on GED completion will have met that goal and continued their education or found employment. One of the factors of interest is to assess the clients' retention of a job so in the next report period we should have data on the length of time that clients have remained employed. The delays that have occurred in the consistent entry of client data in a Career Connections database to track the client's milestones and changes should be corrected so future data reports should reflect the client's progress.