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## **Final Report**

### **Barriers to Employment and to the Utilization of Employment Services for Individuals without Housing**

Prepared by Roger Durand, Ph.D.

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Date: April 22, 2010



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## Executive Summary

In this document the results of a study of barriers to employment and to the utilization of employment services among individuals without housing is presented. The study itself was conducted principally at the facilities of SEARCH Homeless Services in Houston, Texas, over the period from late 2008 until April 2010. Impetus for the investigation came in part from the obvious: long recognition that most homeless individuals in the U.S. continue to be so as a consequence of an inability to find suitable employment. Additional impetus came from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, an organization that has worked tirelessly to alleviate the plight of homeless military veterans. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provided a generous grant to SEARCH Homeless Services in support of the research reported here.

In this report, the methodology utilized to conduct the research reported here is described first. Then, the principal findings of the investigation are presented. Finally, the implications of the findings for the training of caseworkers and employment counselors as well as for employment services are discussed.

Methodology. The methods used to complete this report include a review of existing professional literature on the topic of the study; interviews with employment service (Workforce Solutions office located at SEARCH) staff; discussions with various staff members at SEARCH Homeless Services; the examination of customer satisfaction data collected by the Workforce Solutions employment service; the implementation of focus groups of military veterans and non-veterans who were utilizing the services of SEARCH; and a survey of 131 SEARCH clients selected by convenience sampling methods. Approval for the methods was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (known as the “Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects”) of the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL). UHCL’s IRB has Federal-wide assurance (FWA #00004068). (A copy of the focus group questions and the survey questionnaire will be found in the appendix to this report.)

Principal findings. The following are the major findings derived from an analysis of the responses obtained from a survey of SEARCH clients.

1. The findings suggest, first, a rather considerable interest in and motivation for obtaining employment on the part of SEARCH clients.
2. “Medical or health problems” were found to be a major barrier to obtaining or maintaining employment among these persons without homes. Moreover, “health problems” were apparently not a euphemism for substance abuse.
3. The barriers to getting and maintaining employment that were most commonly cited included (in order of frequency of mention) being homeless, a lack of proper clothing or equipment, lack

tion in one's past, and either health or medical problems.  
with other benefits and transportation difficulties were

mentioned by only a few.

4. As expected, those who reported 7 or 8 personal barriers to getting or maintaining employment were found to be without housing for a considerably longer period than those with fewer who reported fewer personal employment barriers.
5. Not surprisingly, substance abuse was the single employment barrier most strongly associated with a longer duration of homelessness.
6. Interestingly, "conflicts with Veteran's benefits" was a barrier to getting or obtaining employment that was found to be associated with above average (mean) days spent without housing.
7. Among the currently unemployed, employment counseling and referrals, commonly provided by employment services, were not perceived by many (only about 6%) as the choice most instrumental to obtaining a job.
8. Some 58% of survey respondents reported having tried the WFSS employment services, a larger percentage than mentioned any of the other services proximate to SEARCH.
9. "Health or medical problems" was the employment barrier most commonly reported by those not utilizing any employment service. An additional 19% of those not utilizing a service also reported that substance abuse was a barrier to employment for them. However, there was little overlap between reported health and substance abuse employment barriers.
10. Again, not surprisingly, those who reported being without housing for a longer duration were found to be more likely to have tried using an employment service to obtain a job.
11. Among those survey respondents who indicated that they had not tried to use WFSS to obtain employment, the reasons most commonly cited were the lack of proper identification, the need for help with computers, and health.
12. Few *multiple* obstacles to utilizing WFSS services were reported by survey respondents.
13. In considering the experiences of those who reported using WFSS, the four most common problems experienced by respondents in doing so were (in order), the need for more help with computers, having to wait for a long time, transportation problems in getting to a referral, and WFSS staff not being helpful.
14. The average (mean) number of problems reported at WFSSS by those that utilized its services was 2.24 with a rather high variability (standard deviation) of 1.71. Further, while 21% reported no problems, as many as 6 problems were reported by some respondents.

H clients regarding WFSS and its services were decidedly more negative than those reported by WFSS in its December 2008 “customer satisfaction survey.”

Particularly noteworthy, is that only 67% of SEARCH clients who utilized WFSS services indicated a willingness to recommend WorkForce to others compared to 99% of those who completed the WorkForce customer satisfaction survey (see responses to the last question on the WFSS survey reported beginning on p. 18). Similarly, only 75% of SEARCH clients who responded to the survey indicated that counselors at WFSS were helpful to them while fully 98% of those responding to the WFSS customer satisfaction survey did so.

16. Some 25% of SEARCH clients (who utilized WFSS) reported being treated badly at WFSS as a consequence of their being homeless and 31% of clients reported not receiving accurate, useful information at WFSS.
17. An in-depth analysis of responses to the question, “I will recommend WFSS to others,” revealed that a cluster of attitudes (established through factor analytical statistical procedures) identified as “personal treatment by WFSS staff” was the strongest predictor (as determined by discriminant analysis statistical procedures) of an inclination – or really disinclination -- among SEARCH clients to recommend WFSS.
18. Fully 54% of those respondents who reportedly would not recommend WFSS felt they were treated badly at WFSS “because I am homeless” compared to just 10% of those who reportedly would recommend WFSS.
19. Only 24% of the 75 survey respondents who used WFSS employment services reported that they were helped to get a job. Moreover, of those (24%) who reported being helped by WFSS to obtain employment, only 22% of them (the 24%) also reported being presently employed in a permanent position.

Discussion. Implications of the findings for the training of caseworkers and employment counselors as well as for employment services are discussed. First, the findings suggest that case managers need to be aware of the considerable motivation that exists among the homeless to find permanent employment. Further, case managers need to appreciate fully that the barriers limiting employment for persons without housing are especially trenchant ones: medical or health problems together with felony convictions were found here to be among the most important barriers limiting both employment and the utilization of employment services. Further, case managers need to recognize that employment services are not perceived by homeless individuals who desire a job as the best avenue to obtaining one. Implications discussed for employment services and for the training of employment counselors include, perhaps of greatest importance, the need for improved customer service training on the part of



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staff who provide services to homeless individuals. Another  
he need for further client assistance with computers utilized  
at employment services. Finally, the findings suggest the necessity of additional staffing at employment  
services sites that serve a large proportion of individuals without housing.



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## Final Report

# Barriers to Employment and to the Utilization of Employment Services for Individuals without Housing

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## I. Introduction

In this document the results of a study of barriers to employment and to the utilization of employment services among individuals without housing is presented. The study itself was conducted principally at the facilities of SEARCH Homeless Services in Houston, Texas, over the period from late 2008 until April 2010. Impetus for the investigation came in part from the obvious: long recognition that most homeless individuals in the U.S. continue to be so as a consequence of an inability to find suitable employment. Additional impetus came from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, an organization that has worked tirelessly to alleviate the plight of homeless military veterans. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provided a generous grant to SEARCH Homeless Services in support of the research reported here.

While research into the employment of individuals who lack housing has produced a considerable body of literature (see, for example, Munoz, 2005; Taylor, 2001; Cook, 2006), there remain a number of important gaps in existing knowledge. One such knowledge gap concerns the usefulness of employment services to individuals lacking housing. Another is that of whether persons without homes perceive discrimination by employment services providers and, consequently, refrain from using such services. The present investigation was designed to help close these knowledge gaps.

In the sections of this report that follow, the methodology utilized to conduct the research reported here will be described first. Then, the principal findings of the investigation will be presented. Finally, the implications of the findings for the training of caseworkers and employment counselors as well as for employment services will be discussed.

## II. The Methodology of the Study

### Overview:

Planning for this study of barriers to employment and to the utilization of employment services began in early October of 2008 with a meeting of the principals involved in the project, principals that included Ms. Cathy Crouch, Executive Vice President, SEARCH Homeless Services,

on the SEARCH staff, and Roger Durand of the University led to the development of a research plan that included a review of existing professional literature on the topic of the study; interviews with employment service (Workforce Solutions office located at SEARCH) staff; discussions with various staff members at SEARCH Homeless Services; the examination of customer satisfaction data collected by the Workforce Solutions employment service; the implementation of focus groups of military veterans and non-veterans who were utilizing the services of SEARCH; and a survey of SEARCH clients. The purposes of the literature review, interviews, discussions, data examination, and focus groups were to refine the principals’ hypothesis as well as to develop a questionnaire for surveying a sample of SEARCH clients.

In the table below, a timeline of the major activities of the project is displayed.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date or dates</b>
Initial meeting to develop study plan	October 2, 2008
Literature review begins	October 15, 2008
Development of informal discussion questions for SEARCH staff	October 28, 2008, to November 10, 2008
Conduct of SEARCH and WorkForce Solutions informal staff interviews	November 10 to November 21, 2008
Compilation of staff interview results	November 23, 2008
Analysis of interview results	November 23 through December 10, 2008
Development of questions for veterans and non-veterans focus groups.	December 3, 2008, through December 10, 2008
Conduct of focus groups of veterans and non-veterans	December 15, 2008
Compilation of focus group results completed	December 17, 2008
Analysis of focus group results	December 17, 2008, through January 8, 2009
Collection of WorkForce Solutions customer satisfaction data	January 17, 2009
Construction of survey questionnaire based on compilation of focus group and staff interview results as well as literature review	January 8, 2009, through June 23, 2009
Discussions with Star of Hope (SOH) to administer survey to SOH clients (Discussions were fruitless which led to further survey revisions.)	March through early April (April 4)
Pre-test of the survey instrument and final revisions to the instrument.	June 2009
Final IRB approval obtained for survey questionnaire and methodology	July 6, 2009
Training of survey interviewers	July 13, 2009
Survey data collection	July 20, 2009, through July 29, 2009
Survey data cleaning and entry into electronic medium	July 29, 2009 through August 20, 2009
Construction of data analysis files and statistics	August 20, 2009, through September 3, 2009



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	September 3, 2009, to September 10, 2009
Initial univariate and bivariate statistical results generation and analysis	September 10, 2009, through October 21, 2009
Additional bivariate analysis; multivariate analysis; interpretation of results	October 21, 2009, through January 11, 2010
Final interpretations and meetings to discuss results	October 15, 2009, through March 30, 2010
Subsequent statistical analysis in light of discussions; additional meetings about results	March 31, 2010, through April 17, 2010
Final report preparation	April 22, 2010 through May 13, 2010.

### Methodology of the Focus Groups

As briefly noted above, a focus group of military veterans as well as a focus group of non-veterans was conducted on December 15, 2008. Both focus group sessions were held in a second floor conference room at the offices of SEARCH Homeless Services. Each session lasted approximately 1 and ½ hours. The session for military veterans included a total of 10 individuals, including nine (9) males and one (1) female. The session for non-veterans included eight (8) males and one (1) female. Roger Durand, experienced in conducting focus groups, served as moderator for both sessions while Zina Robinson of SEARCH Homeless Services recorded all comments and responses to questions on newsprint. No other persons were present in the room during each session.

Prior to the conduct of these sessions, focus group questions were devised based on the results of informal interviews with SEARCH and WorkForce Solutions staff, on the results of a literature review, and on the findings of the WorkForce solutions customer satisfaction survey. Also prior to the sessions, military veteran and non-veteran clients of SEARCH Homeless Services were identified through intake and case management information. Eligible individuals were then approached randomly and asked to volunteer for a group session. Those who volunteered were given a modest gift card for their time and provided with drinks and a snack during the session.

### Methodology of the Survey

As briefly alluded to above, the principal means for gathering evidence about barriers to employment and to the utilization of employment services by individuals without housing was that of a sample survey. A standardized survey questionnaire was designed for administration by interviewers to a sample of clients of SEARCH Homeless Services. Approval for the survey questionnaire and the means of its administration were obtained from the Institutional Review Board (known as the “Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects”) of the University of

has Federal-wide assurance (FWA #00004068). (A copy will be found in the appendix to this report.)

Trained interviewers, who were volunteers of SEARCH Homeless Services and interns from the University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work, administered the survey instrument to a sample of SEARCH Homeless Services clients selected by “convenience sampling methods.” Interviewing took place over the period from July 20 through July 29, 2009. Out of a total of 150 targeted interviews, 131 completed surveys were obtained for a completion rate slightly in excess of 87%.

Immediately following the interviewing, completed questionnaires were examined for errors, then entered into an electronic medium (Excel spreadsheet) for analysis. Next, data files suitable for statistical analysis were constructed. Subsequently, appropriate univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistical analyses were conducted utilizing “SPSS,” the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (see below).

### III. Study Findings

In this section findings from the staff interviews, from the customer satisfaction data obtained from WorkForce Solutions, from the focus groups of military veterans and of non-veterans, and from the surveys of SEARCH clients will be presented.

#### Findings from the staff interviews

Results from the informal interviews of SEARCH Resource Center staff, SEARCH Outreach staff, and from staff members of WorkForce Solutions, respectively, are detailed immediately below. (Please note that each question posed is followed by the answers *compiled* from all of those interviewed.) Ms. Zina Robinson of SEARCH Homeless Services conducted all of the interviews and compiled the following results.

#### **Results of Informal Interviews with SEARCH Resource Center Staff (Conducted and compiled by Zina Robinson, 11/21/2008)**

##### **Question: What do you say to clients about employment services?**

- I give a referral to WorkForce Solutions each and every time an individual mentions anything about employment.
- I give a referral to WorkForce Solutions if they ask about uniforms, tools, boots, etc.
- Only when they ask will I inform them of the WorkForce Solutions
- I tell them about the WorkForce and reference the WorkdForce flyer that give them more information.
- I ask are they looking for employment
- If they say yes then I tell them about the WorkForce Solutions

**Question: What reasons have you heard clients say about not seeking employment?**

- Because of felonies unable to get employment
- Warrants so they can't get an ID to work
- I have not heard clients say anything
- Because of felonies
- Lack of identification
- They can't read

**Question: What have you heard clients say about WorkForce Solutions?**

- That they have to have a homeless letter before they can use the services
- They have employment resources on how to find a job
- That they go there to find jobs in Galveston or overseas
- That they will help get there ID and pay for them to work overseas
- That they need them to find a job
- That they don't like the staff

**Question: What reasons have you heard clients give for using WorkForce Solutions?**

- Looking for employment
- They want to get off the streets and find employment
- Assist them with finding a better way of life
- Less amount of people
- Locations closer to where they are
- Access to telephone and computers
- They feel that they will not get help
- They don't want to ask staff for help
- Long wait list
- They are really looking for employment
- They want to get off the streets and get on their feet
- Assist them with finding a better way of life

**Question: What reasons have you heard clients give for not using WorkForce Solutions at SEARCH?**

- Sometimes a 2 hour wait
- Clients don't want to wait so they leave
- Discouraged at the long process
- Being around homeless people; crowded
- Bad experience
- Too long of a wait to see counselor

nts about Ms. Gracie)  
staff will be able to help them

- They are treated less than human
- They are talked to disrespectfully because of their homelessness

**Question: What impressions have you developed as to why clients don't use employment services?**

- Process too long
- Felonies/warrants
- Felonies
- Literacy
- That some staff don't have an interest in helping them
- Clients are more focused on their extra curricular activities than finding employment
- Not able to deal with the clientele properly
- Treat homeless different from others

**Question: What impressions have you developed as to why clients don't use WorkForce Solutions at SEARCH?**

- Wait time
- Being around a lot of other homeless people
- Limited services/resources
- Too crowded
- The type of people that are using services (homeless)
- That some staff don't have an interest in helping them
- Clients are more focused on their extra curricular activities than finding employment
- Basic services more important
- They are not focused on finding a job
- They use limited resources (internet and phone) and don't wait to see a counselor
- Wait time
- Disrespectful to clients

**Question: Statistics tell us that < 10% of Resource Center clients access WorkForce Solutions at SEARCH. Why do you think that might be?**

- Find this hard to believe because of the amount of referrals given
- They must be leaving because of the wait time
- 4:9, 3:4, 4:4 I referred in just one week
- Limited services
- Poor customer service
- Job board announcements (no need to use services)
- They are not focused on finding a job
- They use limited resources (internet and phone) and don't wait to see a counselor

- Don't understand why they need a resume

**Question: Do you see any difference between veterans and non-veterans when it comes to interest in employment or use of employment services?**

- Not sure; if they mention they are a veteran I refer them to veteran services
- Yes, more veterans want to work than non-veterans
- Once I find out they are a veteran, I refer them to VA services
- At times it seems like the veterans are more focused on trying to find employment.
- No I don't see any difference

**Results of Informal Interviews with SEARCH Outreach Staff (conducted and compiled by Zina Robinson on 11/21/08)**

**Question: What do you say to clients about employment services?**

- WorkForce Solutions is the only program people who are not homeless can use.
- The WorkForce at SEARCH is specifically for the homeless and they have more funding
- Before your first check of verifiable employment, they can assist with bus fare, uniforms, tools, and food vouchers.
- Ask if they have an ID; if yes, explain the services available at the WorkForce Solutions. if no, ask if they are looking for work that WorkForce Solutions is a good place to start with getting ID and employment
- I give a referral to WorkForce Solutions each and every time an individual mentions anything about employment.
- I give a referral to WorkForce Solutions if they ask about uniforms, tools, boots, etc.
- If they ask about working I explain the services

**Question: What have you heard clients say about seeking permanent employment?**

- They don't want to give up their temporary labor assignment to go SEARCH for permanent employment
- Hard to get one without stable housing
- I need a job
- I want to go to work
- They ask for training
- They want help getting tools for day labor work
- They want to work, but have past issues
- They can't get employers to work with them because of past issues

### What reasons do you hear clients give for not seeking employment?

- They have a criminal background
- They need an ID
- Disabilities
- Can't get ID because of warrants
- If they live in the shelter they have to take everything with them when they leave which makes it hard to seek employment
- Can't pass drug screen
- No ID
- Disabled
- Criminal issues
- Because of their past history, its not worth the disappointment
- Can't get an ID because of warrants/past history

### Question: What have you heard clients say about WorkForce Solutions?

- You have to wait a long time to be seen
- Sometimes they just get a list of jobs
- Some of the staff are rude
- Don't like attitude of workers
- Lines too long; wait is too long
- Been there before and did not get the help desired
- They help find employment
- Help get tools and bus fare
- I have not heard anything

### Question: What reasons have you heard clients give for using WorkForce Solutions?

- To get bus fare
- Resume writing
- Some of the workers really help
- Use of the computers
- Having independence to SEARCH for employment
- Case manager relationship and assistance
- Have jobs that may not be in the paper or displayed
- Application and resume assistance

### Question: What reasons have you heard clients give for not using WorkForce Solutions?

- Travel time
- Other locations are closer
- Interfere with SSA benefits
- Wait time too long

work (clients complained about two staff members and the  
properly)...useless process

- Being around a crowd
- Don't want to be around so many other homeless people
- Not as diverse (people who come in are not dressed in suit & tie/well educated)
- Didn't help
- Locations too far
- People are always on the computer
- Not enough equipment
- Wait is too long

**Question: What impressions have you developed as to why clients don't use employment services?**

- Not ready for employment
- Substance abuse concerns
- The number of multiple steps it takes to get an ID
- Travel time
- Over burden or overworked staff
- Wait time is too long
- Space is inadequate; no privacy
- Too many distractions
- Confidentiality
- Fear (homeless for so long unable to make the change or transition)
- Street activity (drugs, etc)
- Wait time
- They don't have the initiative to SEARCH for employment
- They need motivation

**Question: What impressions have you developed as to why clients don't use WorkForce Solutions at SEARCH?**

- Registered elsewhere
- Prefer the temporary jobs
- Client/staff personality and issues at SEARCH
- WorkForce Solutions understaffed
- Waiting too long in the line
- Possibility of a revolving door
- Used as an outlet instead of employment services
- Wait time
- Too many people
- They have to wait too long
- Not enough staff

## of RC clients access WorkForce Solutions at SEARCH. Why

- Most of RC clients are frequent flyers
- They just come to eat
- Old timers; just want to eat, shower, laundry and mingle
- Find this hard to believe because of the amount of referrals given
- They must be leaving because of the wait time
- 4:9, 3:4, 4:4 I referred in just one week
- The economy
- Not enough entry level positions for clientele
- Clients don't have the skill set so they don't come to WorkForce

### **Question: Do you see any difference between veterans and non-veterans when it comes to interest in employment or use of employment services?**

- Most veterans are disabled
- Veterans use the vocational rehabilitation services offered by Veteran Affairs
- We see more non-veterans than veterans
- More veterans want to work and keep active than non-veterans
- Veterans that do not have any entitlements are less likely to seek employment (they don't have the patience to complete the process)
- More veterans just want basic services
- No difference really
- Veterans want housing more than employment since they get VA benefits

### **Question: What do you think SEARCH Resource Center staff tells clients about Workforce Solutions?**

- That if they need assistance with using the phone, faxing, copying they can go to the Workforce
- That the Workforce is here to help find employment
- They have equipment that they can use for employment
- I am unsure of what they tell them; no idea
- If client is seeking employment they will refer them to the Workforce (only if they ask about working)
- I believe that the Resource Center educates all their clients about the benefits of enrolling and participating in the Workforce Solutions programs.
- I think they give them general information about services provided
- I think they inform them that they can use the WF for employment resources
- They give the basic information and that it is located next door
- That the WF will assist them with finding work



- Help with resume

**Question: What have you heard clients say about seeking permanent employment?**

- They can't find an employer that will give them a chance
- When they are told it is "case by case" it really isn't
- Hard to find because they have not offended in 7 years
- It is hard to find employment due to so many barriers
- Hard to find because of transportation
- Tired of day labor jobs
- Times have changed; 5-10 years ago one could walk in to a business and ask if they were hiring and find a job like that. Now you have to go online fill out application, submit resume, and wait for them to call
- They express the desire to secure permanent employment
- They don't like being in their current situation
- That they are tired of temporary day labor jobs and want permanent employment
- The clients that have accessed the resource center are always positive when seeking permanent employment.
- That they are interested in permanent job leads
- They look forward to finding permanent employment instead of day labor work
- They want permanent work because they have always had a job
- They have not worked in a long time and tired of working temp jobs
- They want to work, but too many barriers
- That is why they come to the WF to find permanent fulltime work
- That it is hard to find with a felony
- Can't find it because of their history
- Hard to compete without qualified skills
- They would seek employment if they did not have to go through so much to register
- They want to work

**Question: What reasons have you heard clients say about not seeking employment?**

- I have not heard this
- If they are applying for benefits they are unsure about working
- The only reason I would hear this if they have serious physical issues or disabilities
- The only reason I have heard is if they are on disability and not sure if they can work or not
- The only clients that appear to be hesitant about permanent employment are the ones that are receiving some type of disability compensation.
- Transportation issues
- Clothing issues
- Physical injuries
- Family issues

- Not authorized to work in the US
- Live in half way house
- They don't seek it because of their medical and physical issues
- Mentally challenged
- Disabled
- Things are different from 5-10 years ago
- You can't just walk in and ask about work
- Too much to do just to find a job (internet applications, resumes)

**Question: What have you heard clients say about Workforce Solutions?**

- That they prefer SEARCH location over downtown location
- Place where they can hang out majority of the day
- No need to go because there aren't any jobs out there and they don't want minimum wage employment
- Very little one way or the other
- Clients are always grateful that Workforce Solutions is a viable option for them to utilize. Enjoy the experience
- Not enough job leads
- Not enough personnel
- They have gotten referrals to the Workforce
- They are very resourceful
- Everything one needs for employment search is here
- Good place to start for those relocating
- They like the SEARCH location better than others
- Staff really try to help them find employment
- More resources for the homeless at SEARCH location
- A place to get bus fare, gas cards
- Place to go to look for work
- Equipment doesn't work
- You can get bus fare, gas cards, wal-mart cards
- Access to look for jobs not in the paper
- It helps to speak to an employment counselor
- Need to be computer literate
- Hard to get assistance because so many candidates
- Employers don't want to train so they think it is a waste of time

**Question: What reasons have you heard clients give for using Workforce Solutions?**

- Their reasons for utilizing Workforce Solutions include compensation and training.
- It is a way to get in out of the cold

net services

- To secure employment
- Supportive services (bus fare, etc)
- Heard success rate with certain staff To get help with locating fulltime employment
- They get to use the phone, computer, fax
- They can get bus fare tickets
- Find employment
- There is access to computers for free
- Use of the internet and telephones
- Support of employment counselors
- Receive motivation and self-esteem boost
- To assist with finding employment
- Help with finding a job
- They have access to the computer; internet
- Can use the phone
- Research for job training
- Incentives/benefits
- To get help with looking for work
- Internet and telephone usage
- Assistance is available
- They could not job search on their own

**Question: What reasons have you heard clients give for not using Workforce Solutions?**

- Hearsay about a bad experience
- They think they can do it on their own
- Use self serve job searches (monster, career builder)
- I have not heard any reasons yet
- Not enough hands on assistance
- Too many rules
- Don't want to register on WorkinTexas just to see a counselor and look for a job
- None – I have not heard this
- They are not looking for employment
- They have their own computer access
- They have cell phones to make calls
- The wait time is too long
- Good job leads are scarce
- Policy and procedures don't allow for them to get the help they need
- None
- Too many rules
- The only negative responses are those that reflect the availability of appointments.

**Question: What impressions have you developed as to why clients don't use employment services?**

- Because they may have burnt some bridges and aren't given a second chance
  - Not comfortable within the environment of others
  - They are looked down upon
  - Staff not willing or able to deal with their issues (abuse/felony)
  - They have been enabled by staff
  - Lack of boundaries
  - They think they have a sense of entitlement for supportive services
  - Lack of motivation
  - Some think that they are not going to be successful at gaining employment so they don't search for it
  - Some don't have the needed employment skills
  - Unfortunately, I have not developed any impression on why a client would not utilize the employment services.
- 
- They are not interested in working
  - Fear of going back to work
  - New format how to apply for jobs
  - Unable to adjust to employment changes
  - Not serious about working
  - SSI/SSDI benefits
  - They didn't know about employment services they could use for free
  - Difficult to find locations
  - Not accessible to the area they live
  - Don't have the patience to complete resume
  - They want you to do everything for them
  - Don't want to complete application to create resume
  - Bad experience in the past
  - Take too long to hear back from employers after applying

**Question: What impressions have you developed as to why clients don't use Workforce Solutions?**

- They are degreed professionals
- The location of offices
- Clientele being served
- Wait time is too long
- Easier to go to other locations
- Client: staff relationships
- RC staff contaminate clients from being proactive
- Lack of professionalism
- Job search is not promoted, just basic services
- Don't want to wait to see a counselor
- Don't like following so many rules

... other Workforce Solutions  
... related to the availability of cubicles.

- Not interested in working
- Always an excuse as to why they can't work
- Computer issues
- Hearsay of bad experience
- Transportation issues
- Nothing to give them (benefits) they will not come
- Come for benefits and not to job search
- Just didn't know it existed
- Didn't know what they offered
- Not enough staff, equipment
- Inability to operate equipment on their own
- They think that other agencies are more relaxed
- Other agencies will do more for them

**Question: Statistics tell us that < 10% of RC clients access Workforce Solutions at SEARCH. Why do you think that might be?**

- I disagree – the majority are from SEARCH RC or Star of Hope
- Because the Workforce are helping those who are serious about working and not to get other services
- Everything is verified before assistance is given (example... tools they call and verify employment)
- Most are frequent flyers
- Too much caretaking instead of job search promotion
- Encouraging clients same behavior
- Façade that this is a glorified soup kitchen instead of place to start over
- Lack of independence to go to WF
- RC port of entry and the employment piece is missing
- Just not interested in working
- Just want the basic services at the Resource Center
- Trying to get free lunch thru WF Solutions
- I believe that the number would be much lower if the Workforce Solutions were not located within the SEARCH building.
- I don't agree with this statistic
- The majority of clients are from the RC
- They are not serious about looking for work
- Use WF as a place to socialize
- Use of internet only to check emails, etc
- I disagree; if this is true the % is smaller
- Most of the clients are RC clients
- They just don't want to work
- Prefer to use place as a hangout and socialize than job search
- Don't want to change their lives

employers that will hire ex-offenders

- RC has more chronic homelessness
- They are unemployable
- They have no intent of using WF just want basic needs (shower, food, etc)
- Unbelievable, most clients are from the RC
- Location of Job Fairs
- SEARCH WF don't have job training workshops
- Location; not enough space

**Question: Do you see any difference between veterans and non-veterans when it comes to interest in employment or use of employment services?**

- The veterans appear to be very grateful that SEARCH has a tailored program that fits their employment needs.
- No difference; they are all trying to get back on their feet
- Yes, since the VIP program enrollment is quicker veterans
- The turnaround time is quicker to see a counselor
- There are more non-veterans than veterans
- Veterans already have skills they learned in the military and therefore are more employable
- Veterans have less felonies
- Veterans seem to follow suit w/non-veterans; no difference
- More veterans come in to seek services
- They seem to get more services or extra as a veteran
- Veterans believe that they can find employment by working with veteran staff
- I have not noticed a difference
- I don't think there is a difference
- Both veterans and non-veterans are looking for work
- No difference
- Not really; everyone is looking for work
- Yes, the only difference is that veterans get more comprehensive case management than non-veterans
- Additional services may be available
- Some jobs prefer veterans
- Veterans are more disciplined
- Veterans don't have a lot of excuses

Some observations about the informal interview results

As is apparent from the above responses, the informal interviews produced both rich and varied results. *The comments presented above need to be read in the original to understand their full meaning and to capture their full flavor.* Moreover, placing all of the above

considerable undertaking fraught with problems in my. Consequently, I will restrict my comments to those matters most salient to me.

1. Staff members at SEARCH frequently cited reasons for persons without housing not seeking permanent employment (Q2) that differed somewhat from the reasons cited by WorkForce Solutions staff. “Past history,” felony convictions, lack of proper identification, and disabilities were cited rather frequently by SEARCH Resource Center and Outreach Staff. In contrast, while WorkForce Solutions staff also cited disabilities, they also mentioned transportation problems, and implied something about persistence and motivation in reporting, “they think there is too much to do just to find a job (internet applications, resumes).”
2. In response to the question, “What impressions have you developed as to why clients don’t use employment services?,” SEARCH staff members reported the impression that employment personnel treat homeless individuals differently, that employment service staff was not equipped to help homeless individuals, and that wait times were too long. In comparison WorkForce Solutions staff more often mentioned lack of motivation as the principal reason.
3. When asked about clients’ lack of inclination to use WorkForce Solutions at SEARCH, some SEARCH staff members offered disturbing answers, including the disrespectful treatment of homeless clients, that “some WF staff don’t have an interest in helping them,” the limited services and resources available at WF-SEARCH, and long wait times. Interestingly, WF-SEARCH staff also pointed to long wait times and to a lack of resources, including staff. But these latter staff members also pointed to matters involving insufficient client motivation and a disinclination on the part of homeless persons to follow rules.
4. What about the differences between veterans and non-veterans in the use of employment services and in an interest in employment? Responses to this informal interview question were quite varied. Some staff members of SEARCH and of WF saw few differences between veterans and non-veterans. Others reported that that they saw more veterans while others reported seeing more non-veterans. Interestingly, however, one WF staff member reported that, “the only difference is that veterans get more comprehensive case management than non-veterans,” while another reported that additional services may be available to veterans.

*It is important to remember that the above responses were gathered from staff members at SEARCH with varied direct experience in dealing with employment-related client issues and from WorkForce staff with differential experience with the full range of needs presented by individuals without housing. Further, the above data are certainly impressionistic. Moreover, they were gathered for this investigation not as definitive, but principally to inform focus group questions (see below) and survey construction.*

#### Results of the WorkForce Solutions Customer Satisfaction Survey



2008, WorkForce Solutions (WF) at SEARCH conducted a survey of 83 respondents, many of whom were also clients of SEARCH Homeless Services. Unfortunately, the number of WF customers that were also SEARCH clients is unknown. Also unknown to us is the exact manner in which the customer survey was conducted. The complete, summary results, nonetheless, are presented below --

## Workforce Solutions Satisfaction Survey

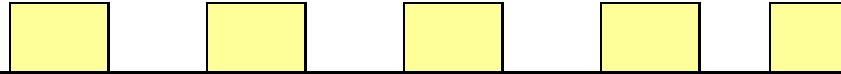
### - Dec. 2008 Results -

Workforce Solutions surveys are administered on a monthly basis to center participants. Our funder, the Houston-Galveston Area Council, mandates eight questions be asked.

Overall, of the 83 respondents surveyed the first week of December, 2008, 92% - 95% rated the Workforce Solutions highly.

QUESTIONS	Strongly Agree		Somewhat Agree		Somewhat Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Not applicable	
	Nov '08	Dec '08	Nov '08	Dec '08	Nov '08	Dec '08	Nov '08	Dec '08	Nov '08	Dec '08
I was greeted promptly and in a friendly manner.	92%	95%	8%	5%						
The staff was knowledgeable.	95%	94%	5%	5%						1%
I received the help I requested.	94%	93%	5%	5%			2%			2%
The counseling services were helpful.	90%	94%	6%	4%			2%		2%	2%
The office was clean and a comfortable environment.	86%	92%	11%	8%	2%				2%	
It was easy to find what I was looking for inside the office.	89%	93%	10%	5%		2%			2%	
I am satisfied with the overall service I received.	92%	95%	5%	4%	2%	1%			2%	
I would recommend the Workforce Solutions to	92%	94%	8%	5%						1%





Historically, “the office was clean and a comfortable environment” has rated the lowest scores. In December, client satisfaction with counseling services increased. This could be attributable to being fully staffed. A similar interpretation may also be attributed to increased scores related to the ability to find things “inside the office.”

Thirty-nine comments were received in the survey. The vast majority were extremely complimentary, singling out individual team members for their knowledge, helpfulness, and courtesy. All comments are similar to those received in November. Examples of December comments include:

- . . . has been an angel to me and has gone beyond the call of duty. You guys have helped me regain my life and I do thank you greatly.
- . . . is always prompt and efficient.
- The staff was excellent, very knowledgeable of the computers systems and the program at Workforce Solutions.
- My job counselor has been a great help to getting me set to job search and giving me job leads.
- The services provide here are REALLY, REALLY need by many. Especially the internet service. It helps in so many ways in addition to the case managers. (sic)
- Always treated with respect and friendly and very very helpful. (sic)
- The staff was exceptionally helpful and courteous. I could not have gone forward without their talent and skills. Thank you.

Three criticisms/suggestions (3.5%) were received in December.

- Shorter waiting time to speak with a counselor. (sic)
- I was referred to wrong part of office without full understanding of situation because I was a vet.
- I would recommend more social workers like . . . for people in need of work source assistance (sic)

The one negative comment in November was:

- . . . your computers suck!! I am stunned at the lack of speed.

My observations about the above customer satisfaction results

In my professional judgment, the above percentages are unusually positive compared to other customer satisfaction surveys with which I am familiar. *Because one does not know how (i.e., the exact process) the survey was administered, the response rate (i.e., how many refused to be interviewed or how many clients were not interviewed) or the total population of clients served, it is not possible to know how generally representative these numbers are of the assessments of customers served by WF during the first week of December 2008.* Particularly noteworthy in the above results is that more questions were focused on process matters (e.g., “It was easy to find what I was looking for inside the office) than on

above results of actually being placed into a job or even is especially striking.

*A caveat: The above survey questions and their associated results were considered as supplementary material to this investigation. They were used to help complete our picture of WorkForce Solutions as well as to inform our focus groups and our survey questionnaire construction.*

### Findings from the Focus Groups

Results obtained from the focus groups of military veterans and of non- veterans, respectively, are detailed below.

### **Results from the focus group of military veterans (10 total – 9 males + 1 female)**

#### **Question 1. How many of you here are interested in getting a job?**

8 of 10 responded affirmatively.

#### **Question 2. Of those not interested, could you please tell me about your not being interested in getting a job?**

- Afraid of losing VA benefits
- Unable to locate a part time job that will not interfere with my present benefits

#### **Question 3. There are many reasons why people are having problems in getting or maintaining jobs. What problems have you experienced in getting a job?**

- Felony conviction in my past
- Transportation (job not on the bus line; no funds for job search; funds given to those that are employed)
- Documented work experience is mandatory; in the past a person's word about their work experience was sufficient.
- Medical reasons – because of certain types of illness, they would not hire even though individual could work
- I am not bilingual
- Poor computer skills
- Lack of or too much education
- Gaps in work history
- Substance abuse issues
- Natural disasters (Hurricane Ike)

#### **Question 4. What is the biggest/main reason why you have not been able to get a job?**

- Education (lack of)
- Felony conviction in my past
- Poor work history
- My age

**Question 5. What do you think would help you the most to obtain a job?**

- A good reference
- A chance
- Clean background (individuals understand that will not happen, but it would help)
- Stability (shelter, etc)
- Transportation

**Question 6. How many of you have tried to use the Workforce Solutions employment services located here at SEARCH?** 7 of the 10 responded affirmatively

**Question 7. For those of you who have not tried, what has prevented you from using the Workforce Solutions at SEARCH?**

- Did not want to interfere with my benefits
- Residence (reside in personal care home)

**Question 8. For those of you that have tried, did you experience any problems in trying to get a job through the WFS at SEARCH?**

- Computers (they are slow, they freeze up, they will not attach documents)
- Case managers leave clients sitting at their desk to go and assist other clients on computers, etc
- Receptionist is very rude; her attitude is nasty; she is not knowledgeable about computers to try and assist clients
- Staff in general are not helpful
- Staff indifferent and rude
- Staff give job leads that require transportation (but no access to transportation funds)
- Staff sometimes take their time not to see other clients (they stall)
- Staff chit chat with certain clients (make staff laugh, brown noses)
- Takes too long to see counselor
- 1.5 years ago it was very good (Jessie was on the WF staff; they wore him out)

**Question 9. What was your experience like at the WFS at SEARCH?**

- Staff rude
- Average wait is 1-2 hours to see counselor
- Staff unprofessional
- Being attached to SEARCH make it bad for clients that are not homeless
- Staff consider homeless individuals as bottom of the barrel
- Staff demeanor changes
- Sometimes they are helpful
- Staff should be more client friendly

d well at WorkForce? NO was the general consensus

- Not at SEARCH WFS location
- Reliant location better
- Need more computers
- Goodwill is better than SEARCH WFS location
- Staff assume all clients are not serious about finding a job
- Look down on homeless
- Staff do as little as possible if you are homeless
- Security took on attitude of receptionist
- Clients are told inaccurate information (i.e. "you can't use the phone w/out a counselor)
- Use of Career Recovery more helpful than SEARCH WFS location
- Even if staff with client, they will stop helping to go to lunch and tell client to come back

### Results from the focus group of non-veterans (9 total – 8 males + 1 female)

#### Question 1. How many of you here are interested in getting a job?

All 9 responded affirmatively

#### Question 2. Of those not interested, could you please tell me about your not being interested in getting a job?

N/A

#### Question 3. There are many reasons why people are having problems in getting or maintaining jobs. What problems have you experienced in getting a job?

- No physical address
- Voicemail inoperable (at agencies)
- Transportation
- Lack of training for skilled jobs
- No identification
- Unable to pass drug screen
- Felony conviction
- Age
- Gender
- Not having the proper attire
- Not bilingual
- Low self-esteem
- Felonies over 10+ years ago continue to be an impediment to employment

#### Question 4. What is the biggest/main reason why you have not been able to get a job?

- Cultural differences (appearances – dreadlocks/braiding of the hair)

**Question 5. What do you think would help you the most to obtain a job?**

- A clean slate (clean background)
- A chance
- Education (GED or higher)
- Job training
- Computer training
- Shelter
- Transportation
- Job connection referrals
- Better staff

**Question 6. How many of you have tried to use the Workforce Solutions (WFS) employment services located here at SEARCH?**

7 of 9 responded affirmatively

**Question 7. For those of you who have not tried, what has prevented you from using the Workforce Solutions at SEARCH?**

- Need identification
- Need birth certificate
- Jobs not on the bus line
- Never got a job from WFS

**Question 8. For those of you that have tried, did you experience any problems in trying to get a job through the WFS at SEARCH?**

- Getting transportation to look for work/a job
- Limited bus cards
- Felony

**Question 9. What was your experience like at the WFS at SEARCH?**

- SEARCH/WFS staff do not work together (i.e. client had interview on a on the same day client was at SEARCH, but clothing closet closed and client was unable to get something to wear to interview).
- Too many rules within rules
- Same people on computers each day – stays full (average wait time 15-20 min)
- Takes a long time to get identification/birth certificate if our of state
- Attitudes of staff at WFS are unprofessional

on not to assist (i.e. forklift training – client had job lead  
client request forklift training; staff told client that he need to  
get the job first then they will see if they can get training)

- Not as helpful as Jefferson or downtown WFS location (SEARCH staff seem to not put forth effort; just there to collect paycheck)
- Staff not competent (providing resources for job skill testing, computers, or funding information)
- Helped with bus fare to get to work, but would not assist with getting work boots because WFS had already helped client. Client was told to go to another WFS location
- SEARCH location does not sponsor any job fairs, career fairs like the other WFS locations

**Follow-up question: Were you treated well?** NO, was the general consensus

- Staff think homeless are the lowest and treat like dirt
- Lowers self-esteem
- Seems the further client goes out to WFS the better
- Form of undercover discrimination against homeless
- Labeling (client heard being called alcoholics, drug addicts, bums, etc)
- Staff body language and how they communicate to clients very negative
- Client has heard staffs say “I don’t want them coming over here.”
- Everyone that comes into SEARCH WFS is not homeless (they need to find out what a person wants before they make assumptions)
- When there is a problem, clients are not allowed access to speak to the person in charge (clients request to have a meeting with Caroline; was not comfortable with speaking to with Edith or Heather )

### My observations about the focus group results

Placing focus group responses into categories for purposes of analysis is always extremely difficult. Typically, one loses the richness of responses and the general tenor of comments in attempting to do so, not to mention actually distorting a respondent’s meaning. Accordingly, I have refrained from developing categories in favor of describing what I consider the salient findings.

The responses of military veterans and of non-veterans were remarkably similar to all of the questions. The single apparent exception to this is the fear expressed by one veteran that losing VA benefits was a major reason for not seeking employment and for not using the services of WorkForce Solutions.

The most important barriers to employment expressed in both focus group sessions were nearly identical: felony convictions, lack of training, and transportation problems.

Military veterans and non- veterans alike reported, with only a few exceptions, they had tried to use the services of WorkForce Solutions at SEARCH.

of the WorkForce Solutions customer satisfaction survey was a generally unanimous feeling among military veterans and non-veterans of rude and discriminatory treatment at WFS because they were homeless.

*Two caveats: focus groups provide rich and in-depth evidence. Yet, they cannot be considered representative of a larger population of individuals. That is certainly the case here. The 10 veteran and 9 non-veterans that participated in the focus group sessions were seen from the start as not likely to be typical of all SEARCH Homeless Services clients. In addition, the reader is reminded that the focus group sessions here were conducted for the principal purpose of assisting the construction of a survey questionnaire to be administered to a larger, more diverse population of individuals without housing.*

### Findings from the SEARCH client survey

Responses to each of the survey questions on the SEARCH client survey of barriers to employment and to the utilization of employment services are shown below. (A copy of the complete questionnaire will be found in the appendix to this report.)

**1. Please tell me what is the most important problem that you are currently facing in your life?**

Homelessness; housing 42%  
Unemployment 33%

On the other hand, only about 2% mentioned a criminal background; only 2.3% mentioned substance abuse; and only about 3% mentioned transportation.

**2. Could you please tell me, are you presently employed in a permanent position, actively seeking permanent employment, presently interested in employment, or none of these? (Seeking)**

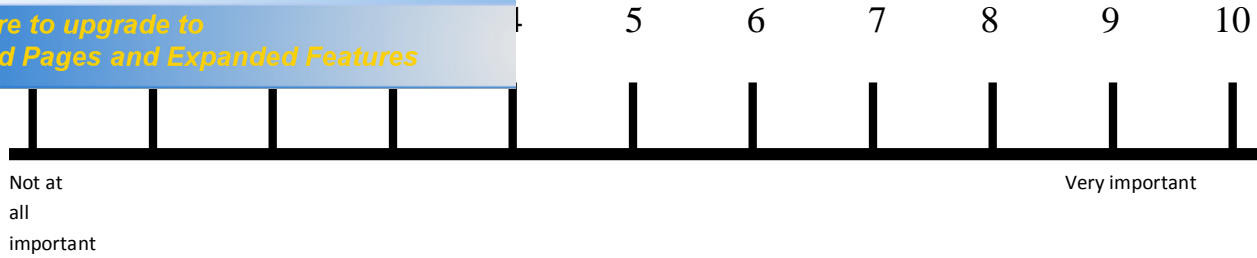
a. Presently employed in a permanent position	9%
b. Actively seeking employment	48
c. Interested in employment	24
d. None of the above	19
	100%

**{IF EMPLOYED SKIP TO QUESTION 5. IF NOT PRESENTLY EMPLOYED IN A PERMANENT POSITION, ASK:} I would like to have an idea about how important it is to you to obtain permanent employment. On this ruler, with this end {interviewer point to this} the “not important” end and the other end (interviewer point again) the “very important” end, what number would you give yours? {Record answer: \_\_\_\_\_}**



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Not presently employed\* (I verified that this was so....)

Mean = 8.54, Standard Deviation = 2.69

Score	% of total cases
7	3.4%
8	5.0%
9	6.5%
10	66.4%

**{IF ANSWER TO PREVIOUS QUESTION IS LESS THAN 7, ASK:} Could you please tell me more about it not being very important to you to obtain employment? Why is that? {check all that apply}**

	Number responding
a. Veteran's benefits reason	1
b. Conflicts with other, non-Veteran's benefits	1
c. Health reasons; disability	14
d. Just not interested	1
e. Other	10

**3. {ONLY ASK IF NOT PRESENTLY EMPLOYED} There are many reasons why people are having problems in getting or maintaining jobs. Could you please tell me which of the following reasons apply to you {READ LIST AND ASK FOR A YES OR NO RESPONSE TO EACH ITEM}**

	Number responding "yes"
a. Conflicts with your Veteran's benefits	3



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your past	52
ms	3
d. Baby sitter or child care problems	4
e. Medical OR health problems	49
f. Conflicts with your Medicaid or CHIP benefits	6
g. Substance abuse problems	20
h. Lack of computer skills	53
i. Lack of language skills (including not being bilingual)	17
j. Not having proper identification	20
k. Being homeless – no address or phone	76
l. Lack of the proper clothes or equipment	60
m. "Anything else?" _____	21

Multiple barriers of respondents (based on above responses)

Average number of barriers per unemployed person = 3.81

Standard deviation = 2.01

Number of employment barriers	Percent (and number)
1.00	16.9 (20)
2.00	12.7 (15)
3.00	17.8 (21)
4.00	13.6 (16)
5.00	17.8 (21)
6.00	11.0 (13)
7.00	5.9 (7)
8.00	4.2 (5)
Not answered	(13)
Totals	100% (131)

**4. {ONLY ASK IF NOT PERMANENTLY EMPLOYED AT PRESENT} Which of the following would help you most in getting a job – {READ ENTIRE LIST, BUT ASK FOR JUST ONE ANSWER....}**

- 1/A more stable living environment (home)
- 2/A means of transportation
- 3/Better employment counseling and referrals
- 4/Education or training
- 5/Other services {WHAT IS THAT?} \_\_\_\_\_

Codes (see above)	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20	15.3	15.3	15.3
1	41	31.3	31.3	46.6
1 & 2	2	1.5	1.5	48.1
1 & 4	1	.8	.8	48.9
1, 2, & 4	1	.8	.8	49.6
1,2,& 3	1	.8	.8	50.4
1&;2	1	.8	.8	51.1
2	26	19.8	19.8	71.0
3	7	5.3	5.3	76.3
4	16	12.2	12.2	88.5
5	14	10.7	10.7	99.2
NR	1	.8	.8	100.0

**5. {ASK OF ALL SURVEY RESPONDENTS} Have you ever tried to the use any of the following employment services? {CHECK ALL THAT APPLY}**

	Number of Responses
a. Compass ____	46
b. Career and Recovery Resources ____	35
c. Goodwill____	15
d. Workforce Solutions on Westheimer ____	20
e. Workforce Solutions – downtown Jefferson Street location ____	61

**6. Have you ever tried to use the Workforce Solutions employment services offered here at SEARCH?**

	%	N
a. Yes	58%	76
b. No	42	55
c. Don't know or recall	0	
	100%	

Attempts to use employment services at multiple locations

Mean number of locations = 1.93, Standard deviation = 1.47

**The Use of Multiple Locations**

# of locations	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid .00	26	19.8	19.8	19.8
1.00	30	22.9	22.9	42.7
2.00	30	22.9	22.9	65.6
3.00	25	19.1	19.1	84.7
4.00	14	10.7	10.7	95.4
5.00	4	3.1	3.1	98.5
6.00	2	1.5	1.5	100.0
Total	131	100.0	100.0	

**{IF NO TO QUESTION 6, ASK:} Please tell me what – if anything – has prevented you from trying to use the Workforce Solutions here at SEARCH?**

Number of responses

- c. Disability benefits 2
- d. I use the Veteran's employment services 13
- e. I do not have the proper identification 9
- f. I need help with computers 0
- g. I need help with completing job applications 14
- h. Other {ASK ABOUT THIS} \_\_\_\_\_ 14

Multiple reasons for not using Workforce Solutions at SEARCH

Mean number of reasons given = .58, Standard Deviation = .89

Number of reasons given for not using WFS at SEARCH

#	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid .00	80	61.1	61.1	61.1
1.00	34	26.0	26.0	87.0
2.00	11	8.4	8.4	95.4
3.00	4	3.1	3.1	98.5
4.00	2	1.5	1.5	100.0
Total	131	100.0	100.0	

**{IF YES TO QUESTION 6, ASK:} Did the Workforce Solutions here at SEARCH – just the one here at SEARCH – help you to get a job?**

	%	N
a. Yes	24%	18
b. No	76	57
c. Don't know or recall	0	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>75</b>

**7. {IF YES TO QUESTION 6 ABOVE ABOUT USING WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS HERE AT SEARCH, ASK:} In trying to get a job through the Workforce Solutions here at SEARCH, did you**

**Problems {READ ENTIRE LIST AND CHECK EACH ONE THAT**

	Number of responses
a. Need for more help with the computers	38
b. Computers did not work	1
c. Workforce staff was not helpful	26
d. I was discriminated against because I am homeless	8
e. I had to wait a very long time	34
f. Transportation problems in getting to a referral	33
g. Lack of proper identification	5
h. Need help with completing job applications	12
i. Any other problems? _____	15

Multiple problems at Workforce Solutions

**Mean = 2.24, Standard deviation = 1.71**

Number of Problems Experienced at WS

% and (number of cases)

0	21% (16)
1	12 (9)
2	30 (23)
3	13 (10)
4	9 (7)
5	12 (9)
6	3 (2)
TOTALS	100% (76)

**8. {IF YES TO QUESTION 6 ABOVE, ASK:} I am going to read a list of questions that have to do with how you were treated when you tried to get a job through the Workforce Solutions here at SEARCH. Thinking back to the last time you tried, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each one....**

	Agree	Disagree	Total*
a. I was treated rudely by the Workforce staff	27%	73	100%

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			(73)
b. It was easy to find what I wanted inside the office.	70%	30	100% (71)
c. There were enough computers so that I did not have to wait	55%	44	100% (73)
d. I was greeted promptly and in a friendly way.	84%	16	100% (73)
e. I was NOT provided useful, accurate information	31%	69	100% (72)
f. The counselors were helpful to me.	75%	25	100% (72)
g. The Workforce staff was NOT competent	21%	80	100% (72)
h. I will recommend the Workforce to others	67%	33	100% (73)
i. I was treated badly because I am homeless	25%	75	100% (72)

\*Notes: The total number who answered each question is shown in parentheses (out of 76 possible respondents.) Some rows may not sum to 100% as a result of rounding.

**Now, I have just a few questions about you that will help us improve the services offered to you and others like you here at SEARCH....**

**9. What language do you speak most often?**

English	Spanish	Chinese	Vietnamese	Other	
98%	2	0	0	0	100% (n=131)

living with you right now?

ow Totals

14% 86 0 100% (n=131)

{IF YES TO Q. 10, ASK:} Who is that? {CHECK ALL THAT APPLY}

Number responding

- A. Spouse or companion 7
- B. Child or children 7
- C. Other (specify) 7

11. About how long have you been homeless or without a permanent residence over the past two years? (in days) \_\_\_\_\_ days (or if "many" days, ask about weeks) \_\_\_\_\_ weeks

Mean number of days = 408.17 (n=128)

Standard deviation = 664.06

Range = 0 (n=9) to 4015 (n=2)

12. How old were you on your last birthday? \_\_\_\_\_ years

Mean = 45.37 (n=131)

Standard deviation = 9.71

13. When people ask you your racial or ethnic background, how do you respond?

- |                                      |            |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| a. African American or black         | 74%        |
| b. Hispanic                          | 3          |
| c. Caucasian, not of Hispanic origin | 19         |
| d. Asian/Pacific Islander            | 1          |
| e. Other                             | 3          |
| TOTAL                                | 100% n=131 |

14. {RECORD BY OBSERVATION:} Gender:

male	female	uncertain	Total
71%	29	0	100% (n=131)

My observations and additional analyses

largest, first, a rather considerable interest in and motivation for CH clients. Some 81% of those interviewed reported being employed, actively seeking employment or interested in employment. In contrast, about 19% responded “none of these.” (See Question 2.) Further, slightly more than 80% of respondents reported using at least one nearby employment service to look for employment (see responses to Questions 5 and 6). The average number of services utilized was nearly two for our respondents with the range being from zero (0) to six (6). Additionally, on the self-anchoring scale (Q2a.) concerning the personal importance of permanent employment, the average (mean) score was 8.54 on a 10 point scale. Further, some 78% of respondents rated this importance it as 8, 9, or 10 on the ten point scale. And of this, more than 66% rated it a 10. Finally, in response to Question 1, an open-ended question asking about the “most important problem in one’s life,” 33% reported that unemployment was the number one problem in their lives, second only to homelessness or housing, which was mentioned by 42% of respondents.

Who are those with no interest in employment or not presently employed? What do we know about them? (That is, who are the people that responded “none of these” to Q. 2?) Demographically, they are more likely to be Caucasian than those who responded otherwise (32% of those responding “none of these” to Q2 above were Caucasian compared to just 16% of those who did not so respond) and they were more likely to report not being accompanied by other family members (q10). While they were about the same age as others, they did report a lower average period of homelessness compared to other respondents (363 days compared to 419).

Perhaps these “no employment- no interest in employment” individuals might be transients, on their way somewhere else. But there is a clue that this might not be so. These individuals were only slightly less likely than others to report trying to obtain employment through the utilization of multiple local employment services – 1.68 local agencies compared to 1.99 agencies for others.

Those with no interest in employment or not presently employed were also likely to report fewer (in number) total personal barriers to employment (2.70 barriers compared to 4.09) than those who responded differently to Q.2 .

*Perhaps the most striking feature about these “not employed-not-seeking and not-interested-in-employment” people is that they reported more often than other survey respondents that “medical or health problems” were a barrier to them in obtaining or maintaining employment – 64% of them responded in this way compared to just 31% of their “employed-seeking-interested” counterparts. (Moreover, “health problems” were apparently not a euphemism for substance abuse since only 8% of this “no employment- no interest in employment” group indicated that substance abuse was an employment barrier for them compared to about 17% for others.)*

Next, I examined barriers to employment – both getting and maintaining a job – among the survey respondents. As shown by the responses to Question 3 above, the reasons our respondents reported for having trouble getting or maintaining employment (Q. 3) were many and varied. *The reasons most commonly cited were (in order of frequency of mention) being homeless, a lack of proper clothing or equipment, lack of computer skills, a felony conviction in one’s past, and either health or medical*



ts with other benefits and transportation difficulties were

Given the likelihood of multiple barriers to employment, I next calculated the total number of the above barriers mentioned by each individual. *The average number of barriers per unemployed survey respondent was found to be just under 4 (3.81) with a rather substantial variability (a standard deviation of 2.01).*

Given such a high average number of barriers among our unemployed survey respondents, I performed some additional calculations. First, I found that there was a rather modest relationship between the total number of barriers reported and the number of days reported being homeless ( Kendall’s Tau-c was .17 with a p = .01). *However, on closer examination, I found that those with 7 or 8 personal barriers reported being homeless for considerably longer than those with fewer personal barriers –*

**Number of Barriers to Employment by Average Number of Days Being without Housing**

Number of barriers	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
1.00	408.20	20	873.445
2.00	328.31	13	407.620
3.00	203.57	21	344.691
4.00	348.60	15	475.362
5.00	430.24	21	786.955
6.00	449.23	13	365.387
7.00	966.14	7	1368.786
8.00	546.00	5	565.314
Total	402.64	115	674.438

Note: the mean score is number of days reported being homeless.

However, perhaps specific barriers to employment, rather than the number of barriers, are related to *the length of time of being without housing*. The results of inquiring into this matter are shown immediately below --

<u>Employment barrier:</u>	<u>Mean homeless days...(n )</u>
a. Conflicts with your Veteran’s benefits	429.7 (3)*
b. A felony conviction in your past	486.8 (50)*

ms	457.8 (68)*
e problems	212.5 (2)
e. Medical OR health problems	380.4 (48)
f. Conflicts with your Medicaid or CHIP benefits	213.3 (6)
<b>g. Substance abuse problems</b>	<b>722.0 (19)</b>
h. Lack of computer skills	448.9 (53)*
i. Lack of language skills (including not being bilingual)	436.6 (17)*
j. Not having proper identification	281.5 (20)
k. Being homeless – no address or phone	457.5 (76)*
l. Lack of the proper clothes or equipment	493.7 (58)*
m. “Anything else?” _____	435.7 (21)*

The mean number of homeless days for the entire population (n=131) was 408.7. Note from the above results that not surprisingly *substance abuse stands out as the strongest barrier with regard to days homeless. Other personal barriers that were associated with homeless days above the population mean are shown with an asterisk. Interestingly, “conflicts with Veteran’s benefits” was an employment barrier associated with above average (mean) days spent without housing.*

Following consideration of barriers to getting and maintaining a job, my analysis turned next to the utilization of employment services by SEARCH clients. One of the initial questions asked of survey respondents who were not presently employed was about what would help them the most in getting a job (Question 4). In response to that question, about 32% mentioned housing while about 20% mentioned a means of transportation. On the other hand, only about 6% (5.3% in the table above plus the lone respondent who provided multiple answers) indicated that “better employment counseling and referrals” would be the most helpful means. Thus, *among the currently unemployed, employment counseling and referrals, commonly provided by employment services, were not perceived by many as the choice most instrumental to obtaining a job.*

Turning to the actual use of employment services by our respondents, all of the employment services— all proximate to SEARCH – were mentioned as being used. Interestingly, Workforce Solutions at SEARCH (hereafter denoted as WFSS) received more mentions than any of the others. (Please refer to the results for Questions 5 and 6 reported above.) Concerning the use of multiple locations by survey respondents, the results are reported above immediately below the responses to Question 6. As will be noted, the typical (average) SEARCH client responding to the survey indicated using just under two (2) different services (average = 1.93, standard deviation =1.47). Yet, the number of different services reportedly used ranged from 0 to six (6). Interestingly, when I examined these results in greater detail, I

Force Solutions at SEARCH (WFSS) also reported utilizing

wonders why those who used WFSS were also likely to use

another nearby service. Possible reasons for this are discussed more fully below. For now, it is important to note that the multiple use of employment services by those who used WFSS means that these clients were rather likely to have had a comparative frame of reference in judging the quality and outcomes of what they were provided at WFSS.

But who are the nearly 20% of total respondents that reported not using any one of the local employment services? About 38% of respondents who reported not using at least one employment service indicated (in response to Q2) that they were “not employed, not seeking employment, and not interested in employment.” Further, as would be expected in light of the analysis reported above, about 46% of them reported that “health or medical problems” were a barrier that prevented them from getting or maintaining a job. *This was the employment barrier most commonly reported by those not utilizing any employment service.* About 19% also reported that substance abuse was a barrier to employment for them. (Of the 26 total respondents who indicated that they had not tried to use an employment service, only 2 reported “health or medical problems” AND “substance abuse” problems as barriers to employment. Consequently, there was little overlap between reported health and substance abuse employment barriers.) Finally, all of those respondents who reported “not using an employment service” also reported at least one barrier to employment.

In all the personal barriers reported by the almost 20% of respondents (n=26) who indicated that they had not used a local employment service were as follows –

	Percentage citing
a. Conflicts with your Veteran’s benefits	4%
b. A felony conviction in your past	31%
c. Transportation problems	27%
d. Baby sitter or child care problems	4%
<b>e. Medical OR health problems</b>	<b>46%</b>
f. Conflicts with your Medicaid or CHIP benefits	0
g. Substance abuse problems	19%
h. Lack of computer skills	31%
i. Lack of language skills (including not being bilingual)	8%
j. Not having proper identification	23%
k. Being homeless – no address or phone	42%
l. Lack of the proper clothes or equipment	31%
m. “Anything else?” _____	12%

the utilization of local employment services? As indicated by an analysis of mean scores, those with no reported attempts to utilize local employment services reported fewer personal barriers to employment than those who had used one or more of such services (3.0 barriers compared to 3.8 barriers for all respondents and to 4.25 barriers for those who had utilized at least four (4) local services). Finally, all of these “not using an employment service” respondents reported at least one personal employment barrier.

The final analysis I conducted regarding the utilization of local employment services generally was to examine the length of homelessness (i.e., average days reported homeless) among the users and non-users of services. An analysis of mean scores revealed that those who had not tried to utilize a local service were homeless for far fewer days (about 266 days) compared to all others (about 483 days). Thus, being without housing longer appears to have resulted in a greater likelihood of trying to using a service to obtain employment.

My analysis of the survey data next turned to the utilization, experiences, and job success of clients at SEARCH’s WorkForce Solutions office (WFSS). As noted in the frequencies tables, WFSS was the single most commonly utilized local employment service by survey respondents. Still, only 58% of all respondents reported using this service. What reasons were given by the approximately 42% of respondents who did not use WFSS services? Here are the results –

{The following question was asked of those SEARCH clients who reported not trying to utilize WFSS.} Please tell me what – if anything – has prevented you from trying to use the Workforce Solutions here at SEARCH?

	<b>Number of responses</b>
a. It would interfere with my Veteran’s benefits.	2
b. Health reasons	13
c. Disability benefits	9
d. I use the Veteran’s employment services	0
e. I do not have the proper identification	14
f. I need help with computers	14
g. I need help with completing job applications	6
h. Other {ASK ABOUT THIS} _____	18

As noted in the table above, aside from “other” the most common reasons cited were the lack of proper identification, the need for help with computers, and health reasons.

ng WFSS? On calculating the mean number of reasons (barriers) cited by those who reported not trying to utilize WFSS, I found the typical respondent to report an average of just .58 reasons (standard deviation =.89) for their disinclination to do so. Given this rather small mean (average) number of total reasons cited, there appear to have been few multiple obstacles to using WFSS.

What was the experience like of those SEARCH clients who reported using WFSS services? Survey questions 7 and 8 (and their component parts) were designed to elicit information about such experiences.

Question 7. {IF YES TO QUESTION 6 ABOVE ABOUT USING WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS HERE AT SEARCH, ASK:} In trying to get a job through the Workforce Solutions here at SEARCH, did you experience any of the following problems {READ ENTIRE LIST AND CHECK EACH ONE THAT APPLIES}—

	Number of responses
j. Need for more help with the computers	38
k. Computers did not work	1
l. Workforce staff was not helpful	26
m. I was discriminated against because I am homeless	8
n. I had to wait a very long time	34
o. Transportation problems in getting to a referral	33
p. Lack of proper identification	5
q. Need help with completing job applications	12
r. Any other problems? _____	15

As seen above the four most common problems experienced at WFSS by respondents were (in order), the need for more help with computers, having to wait for a long time, transportation problems in getting to a referral, and WFSS staff not being helpful.

I next examined the number of problems experienced at WFSS S by respondents. The numbers are shown in the table immediately below.

Number of Problems at WS % and (number of cases)

0	21% (16)
1	12 (9)
2	30 (23)

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	13 (10)
	9 (7)
5	12 (9)
6	3 (2)
TOTALS	100% (76)

The average (mean) number of problems experienced at WFSSS by those that utilized its services was 2.24 with a rather high variability (standard deviation) of 1.71. Further, as shown in the above table, while 21% reported no problems, as many as 6 problems were reported by some respondents.

Question 8 on the survey was designed to assess further the experiences of persons without homes at WFSS with a special emphasis on treatment by WFSS staff. The results are shown below –

Question 8 {IF YES TO QUESTION 6 ABOVE, ASK:} I am going to read a list of questions that have to do with how you were treated when you tried to get a job through the Workforce Solutions here at SEARCH. Thinking back to the last time you tried, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each one....

	Agree	Disagree	Total*
a. I was treated rudely by the Workforce staff	27%	73%	100% (73)
b. It was easy to find what I wanted inside the office.	70%	30%	100% (71)
c. There were enough computers so that I did not have to wait	55%	44%	100% (73)
d. I was greeted promptly and in a friendly way.	84%	16%	100% (73)
e. I was NOT provided useful, accurate information	31%	69%	100% (72)
f. The counselors were helpful to me.	75%	25%	100% (72)

	21%	80%	100% (72)
h. I will recommend the Workforce to others	67%	33%	100% (73)
i. I was treated badly because I am homeless	25%	75%	100% (72)

\*Notes: The total number who answered each question is shown in parentheses (out of 76 possible respondents.) Some rows may not sum to 100% as a result of rounding.

Certainly, these results stand in sharp contrast to those derived from the WFSS “customer satisfaction survey” of December 2008 reported above beginning on p. 18. Indeed, these results are decidedly more negative in comparison. Particularly noteworthy, is that only 67% of SEARCH clients who utilized WFSS services indicated a willingness to recommend WorkForce to others compared to 99% of those who completed the WorkForce customer satisfaction survey (see responses to the last question on the WFSS survey). Similarly, only 75% of SEARCH clients who responded to the survey indicated that counselors at WFSS were helpful to them while fully 98% of those responding to the WFSS customer satisfaction survey did so. (The problems with the WFSS customer satisfaction survey have already been discussed above in this report. See page 20 above.)

Comparison aside, the 25% of SEARCH clients who reported being treated badly as a consequence of their being homeless and the 31% of these same clients who reported not receiving accurate, useful information at WFSS also stand out for me in the table immediately above.

Who are those respondents who indicated that they would not recommend WFSS to others (i.e., disagreed with the statement about recommending WS to others)? They were only slightly more likely to be men and nearly alike ethnically to those who reportedly would recommend WFSS to others. Also, they reported slightly fewer days of being homeless (344 compared to 385) and were slightly younger (46 years compared to 42) than their “recommending” counterparts. But none of these differences seems appreciable. As might be expected, they were likely to have reported more problems at WFSS (in response to Q7) than were those who indicated a willingness to recommend WFSS – 3.38 problems compared to 1.86 problems.



ed fully 54% of those who reportedly would not recommend “because I am homeless” compared to just 10% of those who reportedly would recommend WFSS.

A comparison of these “non-recommenders of WFSS ” to others also revealed that they were somewhat less likely actually to have been helped in obtaining employment by WFSS than were their “recommender” counterparts – 17% indicated help from WFSS in obtaining employment compared to 29% of the recommenders. So, the job outcome of clients’ experiences at WFSS was associated – at least weakly -- with whether or not a SEARCH client would recommend WFSS to others.

In an effort to study more fully the experiences reported about and the feelings towards the services of WFSS among SEARCH clients, I sought to identify any possible clusters in the data. I did so by performing a “rotated factor analysis” of selected items contained on the surveys. The items included in the factor analysis were the responses to Question 8a through 8g, 8i, 7a, 7f, 7g, and 7h. These items were all non-repeated questions about problems experienced by clients of WFSS. In total four clusters of attitudes about WFSS were derived from the analysis. The resulting clusters are shown immediately below:

Item	Cluster			
	1	2	3	4
Q8a	.776	.127	.079	.268
Q8b	-.779	.155	-.019	.102
Q8c	.006	.017	-.009	-.892
Q8d	-.726	.014	.129	.100
Q8e	.619	.136	-.380	.325
Q8f	-.806	.068	-.066	-.058
Q8g	.700	.171	-.037	.047
Q8i	.571	-.178	.053	.459
Q7a	.106	.875	-.081	-.089
Q7f	-.109	.354	.363	-.298
Q7g	.064	.000	.892	.032
Q7h	-.072	.618	.514	.141





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sis.  
zation.

The numbers in the above matrix may be thought of as the correlation between each individual survey item and the total cluster of which each is apart. (For example, survey item 8a may be thought of as having a correlation of .776 with cluster 1.) *Further, each of the above clusters is forced by the underlying mathematics of the factor procedure to be independent of each and all of the others.* That is, each cluster cannot predict any of the other clusters. Thus, for example, the items contained in cluster one cannot and will not predict – or be correlated with – the survey items as a whole in cluster 2.

For ease of understanding, I have highlighted the items that help to identify the “most important” (i.e., most highly correlated) components in each cluster. Thus, in cluster one, all of the items contained in Question 8 except 8c (and 8h – see below) were found closely related to (highly correlated with) the other items forming the cluster. All of these items appear to be principally about personal treatment by WFSS staff. Similarly, survey items 7a and 7h were found to form a second cluster (cluster 2), one which seems to be about needing assistance (with computers and job applications). Survey items 7g and 7h, items about lacking proper identification and needing assistance with completing applications, were found to form a third cluster. Finally, note that survey item 8c, which concerned the sufficiency of computer resources, was found to stand rather alone on cluster 4.

The above results show merely how the feelings and judgments of SEARCH clients who utilized the services of WFSS are organized. While interesting in and of themselves, the more important matter to know is the impact of these different clusters of feelings. Work on services utilization, such as the outstanding evaluation reports done by Press-Ganey regarding health services, has found that questions like, “I will recommend this to others” are the best predictor of the overall experience of an individual with a service. Further, such “I will recommend...” questions are also the best predictor of actual behavior, i.e. actually recommending a service to another person. Note in the above table, that responses to survey Question 8h (“I will recommend the WorkForce to others”) were not included in the factor analysis. This exclusion was intentional. This question is modeled after the Press-Ganey best predictor of overall experience with a service and of actually recommending a service.

The next step in my analysis was to determine which of the four clusters above was the most important one with regard to recommending WFSS to others. To accomplish this task I used a statistical procedure

this procedure predicts the responses to a survey question agree with the statement that I will recommend WFSS to

others) from a set of other predictor variables (such as the items contained in cluster 1). The ability of each of the four clusters of feelings identified above were studied for their ability to correctly identify SEARCH clients responses to Question 8h, the “I will recommend question.”

Utilizing the discriminant analysis statistical procedures, I found that cluster 1 correctly identified 88.4% of the responses to survey question 8h while clusters 2, 3, and 4, respectively, identified 72%, 64% and 55% of these same responses. Thus, the first cluster – one which consisted of survey questions asking about treatment by WFSS staff – was the most important set of feelings with regard to recommending WFSS to others.

The final analysis I conducted of the survey results was about whether WFSS actually helped someone to obtain employment ({Asked of individuals who reported try to use the WFSS services:} “Did the Workforce Solutions here at SEARCH – just the one here at SEARCH – help you to get a job?”) As already shown in a table above, only 24% of the 75 survey respondents who used WFSS employment services reported that they were helped to obtain employment. However, of those (24%) who reported being helped by WFSS to obtain employment, only 22% of them also reported being presently employed in a permanent position (in response to Question 2).

#### **IV. Summary of Major Findings**

The following are the major findings derived from an analysis of the survey results obtained from SEARCH clients.

20. The findings suggest, first, a rather considerable interest in and motivation for obtaining employment on the part of SEARCH clients.
21. “Medical or health problems” were found to be a major barrier to obtaining or maintaining employment among these persons without homes. Moreover, “health problems” were apparently not a euphemism for substance abuse.
22. The barriers to getting and maintaining employment that were most commonly cited included (in order of frequency of mention) being homeless, a lack of proper clothing or equipment, lack of computer skills, a felony conviction in one’s past, and either health or medical problems. Contrary to expectations, conflicts with other benefits and transportation difficulties were mentioned by only a few.

- 7 or 8 personal barriers to getting or maintaining employment were found to be without housing for a considerably longer period than those with fewer who reported fewer personal employment barriers.
24. Not surprisingly, substance abuse was the single employment barrier most strongly associated with a longer duration of homelessness.
  25. Interestingly, “conflicts with Veteran’s benefits” was a barrier to getting or obtaining employment that was found to be associated with above average (mean) days spent without housing.
  26. Among the currently unemployed, employment counseling and referrals, commonly provided by employment services, were not perceived by many (only about 6%) as the choice most instrumental to obtaining a job.
  27. Some 58% of survey respondents reported having tried the WFSS employment services, a larger percentage than mentioned any of the other services proximate to SEARCH.
  28. “Health or medical problems” was the employment barrier most commonly reported by those not utilizing any employment service. An additional 19% of those not utilizing a service also reported that substance abuse was a barrier to employment for them. However, there was little overlap between reported health and substance abuse employment barriers.
  29. Again, not surprisingly, those who reported being without housing for a longer duration were found to be more likely to have tried using an employment service to obtain a job.
  30. Among those survey respondents who indicated that they had not tried to use WFSS to obtain employment, the reasons most commonly cited were the lack of proper identification, the need for help with computers, and health.
  31. Few *multiple* obstacles to utilizing WFSS services were reported by survey respondents.
  32. In considering the experiences of those who reported using WFSS, the four most common problems experienced by respondents in doing so were (in order), the need for more help with

ing time, transportation problems in getting to a referral, and

33. The average (mean) number of problems reported at WFSSS by those that utilized its services was 2.24 with a rather high variability (standard deviation) of 1.71. Further, while 21% reported no problems, as many as 6 problems were reported by some respondents.
34. The results of the survey of SEARCH clients regarding WFSS and its services were decidedly more negative than those reported by WFSS in its December 2008 “customer satisfaction survey.” Particularly noteworthy, is that only 67% of SEARCH clients who utilized WFSS services indicated a willingness to recommend WorkForce to others compared to 99% of those who completed the WorkForce customer satisfaction survey (see responses to the last question on the WFSS survey reported beginning on p. 18). Similarly, only 75% of SEARCH clients who responded to the survey indicated that counselors at WFSS were helpful to them while fully 98% of those responding to the WFSS customer satisfaction survey did so.
35. Some 25% of SEARCH clients (who utilized WFSS) reported being treated badly at WFSS as a consequence of their being homeless and 31% of clients reported not receiving accurate, useful information at WFSS.
36. An in-depth analysis of responses to the question, “I will recommend WFSS to others,” revealed that a cluster of attitudes (established through factor analytical statistical procedures) identified as “personal treatment by WFSS staff” was the strongest predictor (as determined by discriminant analysis statistical procedures) of an inclination – or really disinclination -- among SEARCH clients to recommend WFSS.
37. Fully 54% of those respondents who reportedly would not recommend WFSS felt they were treated badly at WFSS “because I am homeless” compared to just 10% of those who reportedly would recommend WFSSS.
38. Only 24% of the 75 survey respondents who used WFSS employment services reported that they were helped to get a job. Moreover, of those (24%) who reported being helped by WFSS to



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them (the 24%) also reported being presently employed in a

## **V. Discussion: Implications of the findings for the training of caseworkers and employment counselors as well as for employment services**

The findings of this research have important implications for the training of case managers and employment counselors as well as for employment services that serve persons without housing. First, the findings suggest that case managers need to be aware of the considerable motivation that exists among the homeless to find permanent employment. Such motivation, documented in this investigation, conflicts with the “prefer-my-vagabond-lifestyle-cannot-accept-societal-norms” view of homeless individuals that seemingly pervades much public discussion. Further, case managers need to appreciate fully that the barriers limiting employment for persons without housing are especially trenchant ones. Medical or health problems together with felony convictions were found here to be among the most important barriers limiting both employment and the utilization of employment services. Finally, case managers need to recognize that employment services are not perceived by homeless individuals who desire a job as the best avenue to obtaining one. Rather, the homeless have multiple reasons for skepticism.

Case managers aside, the findings of this research also have important implications for employment services and for the training of employment counselors. Perhaps the most noteworthy of such implications is the need for improved customer service training on the part of employment counselors and employment staff. Rather substantial proportions of the SEARCH clients we interviewed reported rude treatment by employment services staff (including counselors), being treated badly because they were homeless, and of not being provided accurate, useful information. Friendlier, more-customer oriented counselors and staff would help to promote an environment more conducive to the utilization of employment services by the homeless. Besides customer service training, another implication of the findings of this study is the need for further assistance with computers utilized at employment services. A substantial proportion of the homeless individuals we interviewed cited the need for such assistance. All in all, it seems unreasonable to expect individuals without housing and employment to have developed the computer skills by themselves sufficient to locate and obtain jobs. Perhaps a basic computer “boot camp” offered regularly at employment services would prove quite fruitful. Finally, frequently cited long wait times at employment services together with commonly mentioned need for assistance with job applications and with the previously noted need for computer help suggest the necessity of additional staffing at employment services sites that serve a large proportion of individuals without housing.



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## Methodological Appendix

- Focus group questions for veterans and non-veterans
- Survey instrument



## Questions (for veterans and non-veterans)

Question 1: How many of you here are interested in getting a job?

Question 2: {Ask of those not interested.} Could you please tell me about your not being interested in getting a job?

Question 3: There are many reasons why people are having problems in getting or maintaining jobs. What problems have you experienced in getting a job?

Question 4: What is the biggest reason why you have not been able to get a job. {Note: this might evoke the same answers as Q. 1}.

Question 5: What do you think would help you the most to obtain a job?

Question 6: {Prelude: How many of you have tried to use the Workforce Solutions employment service located here at SEARCH?}

Question 7: {Ask of those who have NOT tried.} What – if anything – has prevented you from using the Workforce Solutions employment service here at SEARCH to find a job?

Question 8: {Ask of those who HAVE tried.} Did you experience any problems in trying to get a job through the Workforce Solutions employment service here at SEARCH?

Question 9: {Ask of those who HAVE tried.} What was your experience like at Workforce Solutions...were you treated well, was the staff helpful?

Please make sure that he/she has been to \_\_\_\_\_ s.

## Barriers to Employment Survey

Hello, I am \_\_\_\_\_. I work here at SEARCH. We need your help. SEARCH and the University of Houston-Clear Lake are trying to get at the needs that people have for services, especially employment services, as well as at the quality of the services that SEARCH clients are currently receiving. The information we are gathering will be used to improve the kinds of services – again, especially employment services – that you and others are currently getting. I have just a few questions that will take less than ten (10) minutes of your time. Your talking to me is purely voluntary and if you refuse, the services you personally receive here at SEARCH will not be affected in anyway. Also, I will not ask your name and you will not be identified in any way; your answers will be help strictly confidential.

12. Please tell me what is the most important problem that you are currently facing in your life?

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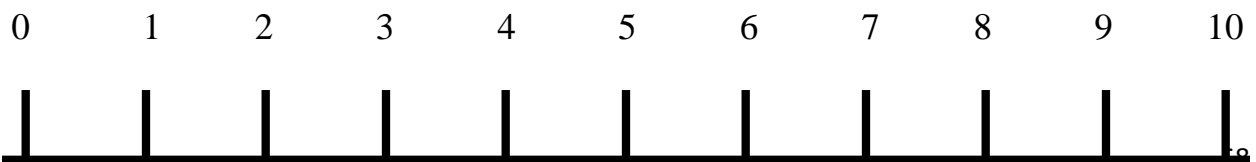
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13. Could you please tell me, are you presently employed in a permanent position, actively seeking permanent employment, presently interested in employment, or none of these? (Seeking)

- e. Presently employed in a permanent position
- f. Actively seeking employment
- g. Interested in employment
- h. None of the above

{IF EMPLOYED SKIP TO QUESTION 5. IF NOT PRESENTLY EMPLOYED IN A PERMANENT POSITION, ASK:} I would like to have an idea about how important it is to you to obtain permanent employment. On this ruler, with this end {interviewer point to this} the “not important” end and the other end (interviewer point again) the “very important” end, what number would you give yours? {Record answer: \_\_\_\_\_}



{IF ANSWER TO PREVIOUS QUESTION IS LESS THAN 7, ASK:} Could you please tell me more about it not being very important to you to obtain employment? Why is that? {check all that apply}

- f. Veteran's benefits reason
- g. Conflicts with other, non-Veteran's benefits
- h. Health reasons; disability
- i. Just not interested
- j. Other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. {ONLY ASK IF NOT PRESENTLY EMPLOYED} There are many reasons why people are having problems in getting or maintaining jobs. Could you please me which of the following reasons apply to you {READ LIST AND ASK FOR RESPONSES TO EACH ITEM}

- n. Conflicts with your Veteran's benefits
- o. A felony conviction in your past
- p. Transportation problems
- q. Baby sitter or child care problems
- r. Medical OR health problems
- s. Conflicts with your Medicaid or CHIP benefits
- t. Substance abuse problems
- u. Lack of computer skills
- v. Lack of language skills (including not being bilingual)
- w. Not having proper identification
- x. Being homeless – no address or phone
- y. Lack of the proper clothes or equipment
- z. "Anything else?" \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

15. {ONLY ASK IF NOT PERMANENTLY EMPLOYED AT PRESENT} Which of the following would help you most in getting a job – {READ ENTIRE LIST, BUT ASK FOR JUST ONE ANSWER....}

- c. Better employment counseling and referrals
- d. Education or training
- e. Other services {WHAT IS THAT?} \_\_\_\_\_

16. {ASK OF ALL SURVEY RESPONDENTS} Have you ever tried to the use any of the following employment services? {CHECK ALL THAT APPLY}

- f. Compass \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Career and Recovery Resources \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Goodwill \_\_\_\_\_
- i. WorkSource Solutions on Westheimer \_\_\_\_\_
- j. WorkSource Solutions – downtown Jefferson Street location \_\_\_\_\_

17. Have you ever tried to use the WorkSource Solutions employment services offered *here at SEARCH?*

- d. Yes
- e. No
- f. Don't know or recall

{IF NO TO QUESTION 6, ASK:} Please tell me what – if anything – has prevented you from trying to use the WorkSource Services here at SEARCH?

- i. It would interfere with my Veteran's benefits.
- j. Health reasons
- k. Disability benefits
- l. I use the Veteran's employment services
- m. I do not have the proper identification
- n. I need help with computers
- o. I need help with completing job applications
- p. Other {ASK ABOUT THIS} \_\_\_\_\_

{IF YES TO QUESTION 6, ASK:} Did the WorkSource Services here at SEARCH – just the one here at SEARCH – help you to get a job?

- d. Yes
- e. No
- f. Don't know or recall

18. {IF YES TO QUESTION 5 ABOVE, ASK:} Did try WorkSource Solutions here at SEARCH, ASK:} In trying to get a job through the WorkSource here at SEARCH, did you experience any of the following problems {READ ENTIRE LIST AND CHECK EACH ONE THAT APPLIES}—

- s. Need for more help with the computers
- t. Computers did not work
- u. WorkSource staff was not helpful
- v. I was discriminated against because I am homeless
- w. I had to wait a very long time
- x. Transportation problems in getting to a referral
- y. Lack of proper identification
- z. Need help with completing job applications
- aa. Any other problems? \_\_\_\_\_

19. {IF YES TO QUESTION 5 ABOVE, ASK:} I am going to read a list of questions that have to do with how you were treated when you tried to get a job through the WorkSource here at SEARCH. Thinking back to the last time you tried, please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each one....

a. I was treated rudely by the WorkSource staff	Agree	Disagree
b. It was easy to find what I wanted inside the office.	Agree	Disagree
c. There were enough computers so that I did not have to wait	Agree	Disagree
d. I was greeted promptly and in a friendly way.	Agree	Disagree
e. I was NOT provided useful, accurate information	Agree	Disagree
f. The counselors were helpful to me.	Agree	Disagree
g. The WorkSource staff was	Agree	Disagree

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h. I will recommend the WorkSource to others	Agree	Disagree
i. I was treated badly because I am homeless	Agree	Disagree

Now, I have just a few questions about you that will help us improve the services offered to you and others like you here at SEARCH....

20. What language do you speak most often?

English    Spanish    Chinese    Vietnamese    Other

21. Do you have any family members living with you right now?

Yes    No    Don't know

{IF YES TO Q. 10, ASK:} Who is that? {CHECK ALL THAT APPLY}

- D. Spouse or companion
- E. Child or children
- F. Other (specify)

22. About how long have you been homeless or without a permanent residence over the past two years? (in days) \_\_\_\_\_ days (*or if "many" days, ask about weeks*) \_\_\_\_\_ weeks

12. How old were you on your last birthday? \_\_\_\_\_ years

13. When people ask you your racial or ethnic background, how do you respond?



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- h. Caucasian, not of Hispanic origin
- i. Asian/Pacific Islander
- j. Other

14. {RECORD BY OBSERVATION:} Gender: male    female    uncertain

Thank you for helping SEARCH!!