

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STANDARDIZED
EMPLOYABILITY ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR USE
WITHIN THE EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT CENTRE,
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

BY

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62

A Practicum Report
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

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ABSTRACT

This practicum focuses on the development of a standardized employability assessment package for use within the Employment Development Centre, Department of Education and Training, Manitoba.

An external evaluation of the Centre determined the existing assessment package was insufficient and feedback provided by the staff of the Centres across the province indicated agreement that the assessment package required redevelopment. A new standardized employability assessment package was developed and field tested by the Employment Development Centre counsellors, and their impressions of the new package evaluated.

The approach was effective in pinpointing specific aspects of the package requiring corrective action, in order to enhance overall service delivery.

Generally, the new assessment package was rated as an improvement. The results demonstrated the desire for the new standardized employability assessment package in order to improve quality of service provided.

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INTRODUCTION

Increasing numbers of people are participating in vocational counselling and training programs due in large part to a structural change within the Canadian labour market. Although there is government support at all levels for these employment initiatives, little is known in Canada about the effectiveness of vocational counselling services (Mason, 1985).

What is known, however, is that one of the major difficulties in employment programs and vocational counselling services is actually the assessment of employability. The employability assessment is central to the development of a realistic, individualized vocational plan (Prairie Research Associates, 1992). The assessment phase provides the vocational counsellor and the client the opportunity to collect data, set initial goals, define tasks to achieve those goals, and identify strengths and barriers. As additional information is gathered and tasks are completed, there may be some reworking of goals. However, if a thorough assessment is conducted, there is generally no major deviation in the plan that has been established, that is, there should be "no surprises" (Prairie Research Associates, 1992). In addition, it increases the likelihood of successful completion of the training program.

Careful assessment and planning combined with high quality service delivery greatly enhances the likelihood of success. Complete assessments and comprehensive plans enhance the rehabilitation process, and thus clients benefit from the service provided. The assessment allows for the determination of an individual's employment related strengths and weaknesses, and behaviours or characteristics which could be possible barriers to employment.

Employability assessments are likely to be as diverse as the staff who conduct them and the individuals requesting services, but that diversity does not preclude consistency in process to ensure the quality and appropriateness of service to individuals (Prairie Research Associates, 1992). Without an adequate base from which to work, needs cannot be identified and rehabilitation is hampered.

The Employment Development Centre (formerly the Human Resources Opportunity Program), a branch within the Provincial Department of Education and Training, assisted persons on social assistance or likely to be in need of social assistance, to enter or return to employment. The objectives of the Employment Development Centre included:

- a) assisting persons who experience difficulty in obtaining or sustaining employment to acquire skills/training necessary to prevent financial dependency on assistance.
- b) to develop employment opportunities for persons unable to function independently in the labour market.
- c) to develop service delivery systems which will ensure that comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services are available equally throughout the province.

A fundamental premise of the Employment Development Centre was the acknowledgement that a variety of characteristics (such as social, personal, education and employment history) of the client group all act as barriers to an

individual's employability. The program offered employment counselling and training which was client focused and concentrated on overcoming multiple employment barriers. Life skills, work skills and job finding skills were areas which were developed so participants could find and maintain employment.

The vocational counsellors employed by the Employment Development Centre utilized an assessment package on intake, to gather information, assess a client's current situation, identify a client's strengths and potential barriers to employment, and to develop a realistic vocational plan. An evaluation of the Employment Development Centre was conducted in the early 1990's by the department's Policy and Planning Branch and the Prairie Research Associates Inc. One of the findings indicated the assessment package used by the vocational counsellors had several limitations, and the recommendation was that a new index be developed.

Statement of Problem

In a report discussing the employability assessment process (Prairie Research Associates, 1992), the assessment package was found to be weak in several areas, including:

- 1) The form was not standardized in nature.
- 2) No rating scale was provided.
- 3) There was a lack of compatibility between the policy statement and the suggested outline for written assessment/recommendations.
- 4) No clear directions were provided about expectations for report preparation.

- 5) The degree of specificity of information varied.
- 6) The quality of the information collected was dependent on the ability of staff to write consistent reports over time and among individuals.
- 7) The process of compiling these reports longhand was time-consuming.
- 8) The information collected was not quantifiable nor available for further analysis, such as for the information that an annual report might require.
- 9) Program improvement was hampered by the inability to create a data bank to assess general trends.
- 10) The form did not provide information in many areas including emotional health, mental health, work ethic, work references, age, etc. (Prairie Research Associates, 1992).

The conclusion reached was that it was difficult to complete the form in a consistent and time-efficient manner. The topics encompassed both very general and very specific areas but not each to the same degree. More information was requested in some areas than may have been needed to assess a client's employability level.

In addition, as a whole the vocational counsellors and the managers of the Employment Development Centre seemed to feel the assessment index needed improvement for these very same reasons. Essentially the recommendation was that a new assessment tool be developed, one that could be standardized and eventually codified. The assessment index used was not considered effective, and further, a new assessment instrument was hoped to form the basis for a management information system, desperately needed

within the Employment Development Centre.

Program managers stated that there was a dire need for a management information system as no client information system existed. As a result, the program was only sure of its performance through informal feedback from clients and referral-in agencies. If standardized information was collected, a management information system could be developed and used to balance counsellor workloads and to prioritize and allocate services to clients.

It was clear more in-depth information was required, however there were no formal facilities for a computerized model. Therefore, a package which would be more objective than descriptive, provide standardized response categories, provide non-computerized scoring, be completed in a time efficient manner, and be relatively simple to both use and interpret needed to be developed.

Statement of Purpose or Intent

Taking into account the needs and recommendations of the Employment Development Centre, I developed a new "employability index" or assessment package to assess client employability. This involved a review of the strengths and limitations of the assessment tool, and a comparison with other such instruments used throughout Canada. Management and field staff of the Employment Development Centre were key informants.

I aimed for a package which could be transposed to a computerized

version in the hopes that the Employment Development Centre will acquire automation capabilities, so that eventually data can be entered, stored and retrieved for analysis.

I believe this was a valuable exercise which has been of benefit to the Employment Development Centre by improving service delivery and statistical record keeping, as well as a valuable learning experience for myself. Essentially there were two sets of objectives for this Practicum.

Objectives for Program Development:

- 1) To develop an assessment instrument which is a more effective indicator of a client's circumstance/situation.
- 2) To develop an assessment instrument to collect data and information in order to assess various aspects of the actual service.
- 3) To evaluate the new index via the Employment Development Centre vocational counsellors.
- 4) To ultimately provide a way of interpreting and analyzing the data and results (MIS).
- 5) To introduce and maintain procedures so that program evaluation can occur on a regular basis as part of program operations.

- 6) Using the results, to put forth recommendations that would strengthen policy and improve service.

Learning Objectives:

- 1) To develop a degree of competence in program development and development of assessment packages through design, implementation and analysis.
- 2) To further develop an ability to work effectively with many levels within government.
- 3) To gain an opportunity to integrate theory and practice by obtaining relevant literature on and researching the requirements for a comprehensive employ-ability assessment package, and developing and field-testing such a tool.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this study a number of major concepts will be discussed. In order to provide clarity and understanding, these terms have been defined or interpreted as follows:

normalization - the "use of culturally normative and optimally even culturally valued, means to enable societally devalued persons to achieve and maintain valued social roles" (Wolfensberger, Wolf & Glenn, 1978).

scope of service - the range of options provided within a program, or the type of service provided (Davidson & Adams, 1989).

extent of service - the degree to which programs provide services, usually reflected by data or number of clients served, amount of money spent on services, or adequacy of services in meeting needs (Davidson & Adams, 1989).

employment - work or duties undertaken under a written or oral agreement between an employer and a person employed whereby the person agrees to render agreed upon services.

employability - ability to find and maintain employment.

employability continuum - employability is not a state, but a continuum of learned abilities leading one towards becoming "more employable". By increasing one's skill level, becoming more experienced or adding knowledge in any area, an individual increases his or her value to the work force, thus becoming more employable.

intake - stage of the vocational counselling process where the program is interpreted to the client, rapport is established, background and current information is gathered, relevant forms are completed, and problems are identified. Eligibility is established and inappropriate referrals are directed appropriately.

assessment - the entire process by which evidence of employability and achievement is obtained and evaluated. Assessment is a stage in the vocational counselling process where relevant data is analyzed and interpreted, individuals interests and aptitudes are identified as well as perceptions or problems.

vocational plan - plan for achieving vocational goal. Includes determination of needs and identification of resources, value clarification, decision making, and setting of short and long term goals.

participant or client - an individual engaged in the process of vocational counselling.

validity - the extent to which a course or program satisfies its vocational purpose.

competence - the ability to perform a task in real or simulated work roles.

Organization of the Practicum Report

This Practicum examines the theoretical basis for vocational counselling, includes the development of an employability assessment package, and evaluates both an existing assessment package and the one developed. The Introduction provides an overview of the purpose, the objectives, and the definition of terms for this study. Chapter One provides a review of the literature relevant to vocational counselling and single parents, the target group served

by the Employment Development Centre. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature with respect to the effectiveness of vocational counselling and assessment services. Chapter Three presents the design of the study including a description of the Employment Development Centre assessment package and development of the new package, data collection and analysis techniques. Chapter Four contains the results and interpretation of the findings, while Chapter Five presents an analysis and discussion of the findings and recommendations for the program. Finally, Chapter Six provides conclusions, limitations, and an evaluation of the study itself.

CHAPTER ONE

VOCATIONAL COUNSELLING AND SINGLE PARENTS

This literature review attempts to identify and summarize the literature in this area, and discusses a variety of factors which have an impact on the vocational counselling process in working with single parent families.

While none of the phases or stages of the vocational counselling process are mutually exclusive, it is the assessment phase - that of gathering and analyzing relevant employment and social information with the client - that helps to arrive at a basis for on-going planning with the client or referral to other services. This stage is the foundation on which the entire vocational plan is built.

Vocational counselling is considered to be a subset of the broad general counselling profession. Generally, vocational counselling, education and training services are designed to provide assistance to individuals seeking opportunities for employment. The assistance that is provided varies according to the needs of the client. Many vocational counselling and training programs combine several approaches from simply job matching to instruction in process skills such as academic preparation, interviewing, confidence building, and motivation. The specific counselling measures undertaken are intended to train and educate individuals for productive lives in the labour force (Mason, 1985). Thus, the intended long-term outcome consists of converting the unemployed, often UIC or social assistance recipients, to productive and self-sufficient

employees.

Participation in vocational counselling usually starts with a screening or selection process, which referred individuals must go through before being formally accepted into the program. The first stage usually involves the initial application procedure, which may consist of simply completing one form to completing standardized interviews or questionnaires. It is here that information on psychological attributes, vocational interests and basic academic preparation is gathered. The next stage may include an orientation, or an assignment to a specific program activity. Actual program enrolment by the individual is the last stage in the selection process.

One of the basic activities in vocational counselling is assessment of psychological attributes, which may include self-esteem, motivation, discipline, etc. Assisting an individual to focus on personal skills early in the assessment phase provides both the vocational counsellor and the client with a solid understanding of a client's attributes and behaviours which may positively or negatively effect employment. In some cases, a client may not have yet acquired simple habits required to function in the labour force such as punctuality and regular attendance. Identifying these habits early in the process can save considerable time and effort for both the client and the counsellor, and can frame the initial steps in the vocational plan. Obviously such habits need to be addressed early in any plan, as they will affect outcomes of not only employment, but participation in educational programs, workshops, etc. Vocational counsellors often argue that the building blocks of attitude and

education are required before one can really examine a life plan for work force participation.

Vocational counselling may involve a process of sequential interactions, particularly when beginning with clients who have a long pattern of receiving social assistance. Clients may move from acquiring self-esteem to improving motivation, to academic preparation to job search and job maintenance.

Traditionally, vocational counselling was directed at students and adults preparing for long range career goals. Increasingly, with the erosion of many families and high numbers of high school drop-outs, a large proportion of society fails to receive such counselling (Prairie Research Associates, 1992). However, with the ever increasing number of adult clients whose career plans are thwarted by socio-economic factors, the contemporary field of employment counselling is characterized by a diverse range of clients in need of more varied assistance. Now there is a need to recognize that non-traditional adult clients include those previously labelled as minorities, disenfranchised, disadvantaged, and culturally different (Giroux, 1983). It is essential that contemporary vocational counsellors both identify and recognize the problems specific to members of disadvantaged groups (Giroux, 1983; Baugher, 1981). Often these problems stem from "inadequate education and low levels of literacy; unstable family and personal relationships; inadequate standard(s) of living; a history of deviant behaviours and/or non-productive lifestyles and inadequate personal maintenance skills; low motivation; periods of short term employment followed by lengthy periods of unemployment; (and) low self-

esteem" (Yellen & Frith, 1989, p.35).

The goals of many employment programs and services include enhancing client social skills, strengthening participants self-esteem, providing academic upgrading or specialized education, job skill development and on-the-job training. For these interventions to be effective however, programs must be guided by a theoretical framework while vocational counsellors "must have a thorough understanding of human behaviour and be able to apply that understanding to the particular set of problems or circumstances presented by the client" (Mackett, 1985, p.61).

According to Baugher (1981), one of the most significant flaws in contemporary vocational counselling programs for the disadvantaged is the absence of any "guiding theoretical or conceptual framework". The specific needs of the participants must first be identified before vocational planning begins. It is in the assessment phase of the vocational counselling process that such needs are identified. Each need or issue specific to a client must be acknowledged and addressed before a realistic vocational plan can be established.

Employment Development Centre Programming

The Employment Development Centre was developed to assist Manitobans who experience particular difficulty in obtaining or sustaining employment, to acquire the social and technical skills necessary to alleviate or eliminate their dependence on social assistance (Prairie Research Associates,

1992). Individuals in receipt of, or likely to be in need of social assistance and express a desire to pursue further training or employment, are targeted for the program. The vast majority of participants in the program are single parents on social assistance, and the majority of these are women.

The Province of Manitoba, Department of Family Services, provides for the basic needs of Manitoba residents by utilizing financial assistance from the Social Allowances Program. The Social Allowance regulations require that recipients accept reasonable employment or vocational training in order to gain self-sufficiency (Special Programs Branch, 1992).

While the jurisdiction and responsibility to deliver training and employment measures is shared between the provincial and federal governments, it is the sole responsibility of the province to ensure linkages between income security programs and employment and training measures. The Employment Development Centre is a program which ensures such a linkage, as the majority of referrals received come directly from Income Security. Income Security or the social allowances program's legislated purpose is to provide for the basic requirements of Manitobans in need.

Experience has shown that job creation, economic development, industry incentives, and retraining programs, while helpful to some, do little to benefit the severely employment disadvantaged unless other supports are provided as well (Special Programs Branch, 1992).

The operating principles contained in the Department of Education and Training mission statement are supported and upheld by the Employment Development Centre. Other guiding principles that are cornerstone to the program delivery model are outlined in Appendix A.

Employment Development Centre Client Group

The number of single-parent families in Canada has increased dramatically in the past twenty years, changing the nature of family life for many Canadians (Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1990). The number of lone parent families in Canada grew by 130 percent between 1966 and 1986, which was three times greater than that of two-parent families (National Welfare Grants, 1995). The great majority of this growing number of families are headed by women. Of all single-parent families in 1992, 82% were headed by a mother (Oderkirk & Lochhead, 1992). In the early to mid 1900's the death of a spouse due to war, lower life expectancies and greater risks in childbirth contributed to single-parent hood. Now, marital breakdown and never-married women raising children on their own contribute to the rise in single-parent families.

Main sources of income for most single-parent families are salaries from employment, followed by income transfer payments such as social assistance or unemployment insurance. In 1989, however, more lone fathers (71%) than lone mothers (57%) had earnings as their major source of income (Oderkirk & Lochhead, 1992). The difference in the proportion of female and male single parents who are employed has remained fairly stable over the last decade.

Single fathers are also more likely to have higher wages than single mothers. Men on average tend to earn higher salaries than women, so this is not surprising. During the late 1980's, over one-half (52%) of all male single parents earned \$30,000 or more annually from wages, salaries and self-employment income, compared with 21% of female single parents (Oderkirk & Lochhead, 1992). Female lone parents (33%) were more likely than male lone parents (25%) to earn between \$10,000 and \$29,000 a year (Oderkirk & Lochhead, 1992).

Additionally, female single parents are less likely to be employed than married women with children. In 1992, 49% of female lone parents with children under the age of sixteen were employed, while 64% of comparable married women were employed (Statistics Canada, 1993). As well, the percentage of female lone parents employed in 1992 (49%) was five percentage points lower than it was in 1981 (54%) (Statistics Canada, 1993). This is contrary to a trend for women in general.

One variable which appears to have a significant impact on the employment of single parents is the age of children at home. In 1992, 27% of female lone parents whose youngest child was less than age three were unemployed, while the figure was 44% for those whose youngest child was aged three to five, and 61% for those whose youngest child was aged six to fifteen years (Statistics Canada, 1993). Child care costs are generally higher for young children, and finding reliable, affordable day care may be a factor. Additionally, younger children tend to wake more often at night, making it

difficult for a single parent to maintain day time employment. The greater the child rearing demands are, the greater the likelihood mothers will try to accommodate these needs by arranging their own schedules.

Part-time work is one way in which women can balance the heavy dual roles of work and home. The proportion of employed female lone parents with part-time jobs rose from 14% in 1981 to 19% in 1992 (Ghulam, 1993). It should be noted that the age of children also plays a factor in the number of single mothers working part-time. As the ages of children increase, the number of single mothers employed part-time decreases. In 1992, 27% of lone parent women with children under three years of age worked part-time, 22% of those whose youngest child was aged three to five worked part-time, and 17% of those whose youngest child was aged six to fifteen worked part-time (Statistics Canada, 1993).

Most women, both single and married, with or without children, continue to work in traditionally female-dominated areas. In 1991, 71% of women were employed in just five occupational groups - teaching, nursing or related health occupations, clerical, sales, and service (Ghulam, 1993). Single mothers are more likely to be service providers than are all female workers, are less likely to be found in white collar jobs, and are more likely to have blue collar jobs (Mulroy, 1988). Many lone parent women hold unstable jobs offering poor wages, poor hours and shifts, little in the way of benefits, and no room for advancement.

Lack of formal education is likely one factor contributing to this situation. As mothers tend to have young children when they become single parents, they often interrupt or completely discontinue educational plans early. The demands of single parenthood limit many parents' ability to pursue higher levels of education and ultimately their employment opportunities.

In 1989, single parent women were more than twice as likely as single parent men to have government transfer payments as their major source of income. During the late 1980's, 56% of lone mothers with children under age eighteen, were living with incomes below Statistics Canada's low income cut-offs (Oderkirk & Lochhead, 1992). In 1991, the average income of single parent mothers was under 60% of the poverty-line, requiring an additional \$9,050.00 annually just to bring their income up to the poverty-line (Canadian Institute of Child Health, 1994). The fact that many single parent families relying on social assistance live below the poverty line is alarming. Many single women with children are forced on to assistance as a last resort, because they are unable to access employment that pays enough to support their families. Yet, on assistance, they continue to live in poverty, and are denied advantages enjoyed by families with a high or even average income level. Access to housing, child care, developmental opportunities for children, education and training opportunities, material rewards and social networks are influenced by the availability of financial resources (Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1990). Families who survive on social assistance spend most of their money on housing, food and clothing, and have little or nothing left over once their basic needs are met. It should be noted that this in itself makes it difficult

for single parents to find work of any kind, as they do not have the finances to cover job search costs (National Welfare Grants, 1995). There is simply no money left for expenses such as transportation or clothing to apply for work or attend job interviews, or even for resumé mail-outs.

It has been reported that children and youth who live in families that receive social assistance are more likely to suffer from physical health problems, psychiatric disorders, poor school performance, poor self-esteem, etc., than those who live in families where the income comes from wages, salaries or other sources (Canadian Institute of Child Health, 1994). Thus, not only are these families denied many material advantages, they are at a disadvantage in many respects. A child with low self-esteem, poor health and a low level of formal education is more apt to repeat the cycle of poverty and lack of employment in adulthood than a child exposed to opportunities such as educational and training programs.

Many of the characteristics of single parent families in Winnipeg are similar to those of single parent families in Manitoba and in Canada (Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1990). In the ten year period from 1981 to 1991, lone parent families in Winnipeg increased by 37%, growing in number from 22,505 in 1986 to 25,035 by 1991 (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994). Still the majority (83.7%) of single parents are female, although the proportion of male-led single parent families is rising slightly, up to 16.3% in 1991 (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, 1994). As it has been predicted this trend will continue, it is crucial that we acknowledge the issues

faced by lone parent families.

In light of the fact that the number of single-parent families are on the increase, it is apparent that programs and services designed to assist this population must be able to identify and address the barriers this group has to face in order to ultimately provide worthwhile services. When focusing on vocational counselling and employment programs, it is important to identify the variables which may hamper or impede a single parent's chance of success. A thorough assessment of an individual's overall circumstances is required. While vocational counsellors must be conscious of all factors common to the general population, when working with this specific target group they must pay particular attention to variables such as child care needs, education and training needs, and income levels required to adequately support a family with only one wage earner.

CHAPTER TWO
EFFECTIVENESS OF VOCATIONAL COUNSELLING
AND ASSESSMENT SERVICES

This literature review attempts to identify and summarize the literature relating to the effectiveness of vocational counselling and assessment services. This review will provide a framework to assist the reader in understanding the significance of vocational assessment and the need to evaluate it as a service.

Vocational Counselling Process

Effective vocational rehabilitation planning requires a solid assessment, and is undertaken in a number of steps (Western Occupational Research Consultants, 1991). The first is information gathering. Client information is really the foundation on which a successful rehabilitation plan is built. It is impossible to facilitate a person's movement along the employment continuum without a thorough knowledge of his strengths, weaknesses and needs. Vocational plans cannot be appropriately established without subjective and objective information. Subjective information is data obtained from an individual's personal perspective. This type of information can be obtained from a variety of sources including intake interviews, interviews with family and friends, interviews with teachers, employers, etc. This data is extremely valuable, as it provides the counsellor with an insight into how the individual, and significant others, view behaviours and personal experiences which will effect employment. What an individual perceives to be true can be as important in the rehabilitation process as verified fact.

Objective information can be gathered in a number of ways, such as through medical reports, physio/occupational therapist reports, mental health worker reports, school transcripts, work references, and a variety of testing procedures (i.e. aptitude tests and interest inventories, work evaluations, neuropsychological tests, etc.). In general, these are the reports initiated by trained professionals. Depending on the individual's barriers to employment some of these sources of information will be more relevant than others. From this information, the counsellor begins to understand the individual's specific barriers to employment and successful integration into the main stream of society. A thorough assessment should include as much information gathering as possible.

The next step in the vocational rehabilitation process is to define the individual's employment strengths and barriers. A clear understanding of which areas will need the counsellor's assistance is required. To create a successful plan, the counsellor will need to identify any areas of concern, and those strengths which can be built on and used to enhance the entire rehabilitation process.

After defining the present situation or current reality, the counsellor makes a determination of long-term or end-point goals. These are statements concerning the outcomes from the vocational rehabilitation process. The goals define the direction of the counselling and the techniques used. By clearly identifying behaviours, attitudes and actions which will enhance the individual's employability, it will provide a common direction to everyone involved in the

process. The more specific and well defined the outcome, the greater the likelihood of achieving success (Western Occupational Resource Consultants, 1991).

The next stage is developing the vocational rehabilitation plan. In this step the counsellor outlines all of the specifics of the vocational rehabilitation plan. The plan sets out parameters including which actions will be undertaken with the client, who is responsible for carrying out the actions of the plan, the time frame and length of the plan, and how the entire plan will be accomplished and goals reached. The plan defines the pathway to reach the previously identified short and long-term goals.

With use of solid planning, the counsellor has a strong foundation or basis from which to carry out the vocational rehabilitation process. Both the individual and the counsellor should be in agreement with the goals for which they are striving, and the methods to be employed and, if possible, should contract to ensure the path is clear. The plan should be well constructed, yet flexible enough to meet the changing and ongoing needs of the individual.

As well, an effective system needs to be put into place to determine the individual's movement towards the defined goals. By monitoring the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation plan, the counsellor is in position to modify the plan to meet the needs of the client, to modify the procedures to enhance the quality of service, to limit or increase the plans time frame and resources, and to add new goals and procedures and/or drop unachievable or

unrealistic goals. This degree of flexibility is required in all plans as individuals and systems are constantly changing and rigid plans can constrict progress.

Monitoring progress and providing support will assist in setting and achieving movement towards employability, and ensure the client is comfortable and clear at all stages in the process.

The final step is follow-up. This phase of the process determines if the goals set out in the original vocational rehabilitation plan were achieved. The individual's movement along the employability continuum is examined to determine the overall effectiveness of the plan and ultimately the process. From this information, more effective systems, materials and resources can be developed to provide a higher quality of programming to the client group. Not all welfare programs conduct either a complete assessment of clients or an assessment of all clients, reflecting differences in their overall designs. "Programs that offer clients a wide choice of activities, without strict rules regarding the sequences in which they may be entered, tend to conduct a full assessment upon entry to the program." (Doolittle & Riccio, 1991, p.23).

Assessment and Employability

Much research has been conducted on welfare-employment policy, including evaluations of program effectiveness, analysis of the determinants of welfare dependency, and identification of successful program operations and service delivery methods (Nightengale, 1989). Several studies of operations have been done, including those that examine the management and service

delivery characteristics that differentiate programs considered to be effective or high performing and those considered ineffective or low performing programs. Research shows that perhaps the weakest part of work programs is client assessment. (Nightengale, 1989). Common sense alone would suggest that a careful assessment of a client's employability, experience, interests, and barriers is important if a program is to help an individual find and keep a job. Yet, for many reasons, even the better programs fall short. (Nightengale, 1989).

From the point of view of the client and the counsellor, assessment fulfills two main functions. First, it offers feedback of a formative kind so that the client is better informed about his or her strengths and weaknesses and can take practical steps to improve performance. It encourages clients to look at themselves critically. Second, it provides a basis or evidence for a plan which contributes to the formal assessment process.

This second purpose is referred to as a summative assessment. It is common in the early stages of vocational programs to set a range of formative "assignments" or tasks which enable the client to gain an idea of what is involved in the process, and the expectations of the counsellor. (Nasta, 1994).

By identifying and listing the important elements in the assessment of an individual's situation and employability, barriers or obstacles may emerge. This becomes the basis for understanding the problems. A thorough assessment, therefore, provides counsellors with information on existing barriers and, by identifying the current reality, counsellors can assist clients to break through the

barriers to reach a desired state. Thus is the thinking and basic premise behind current literature in the education field on creative problem solving (McCluskey, McCluskey, Treffinger and Isaksen, 1994). To formulate a plan, a solid understanding of the current reality is required. A counsellor can only then begin to facilitate or guide an individual to reach the desired goals or outcomes.

A wide array of factors exist which may positively or negatively affect an individuals securing of employment. These include: age, education level, skill level, work experience, job market, income needs, vocational goals, physical and mental health, family and personal resources, communication skills, presentation and appearance, motivation, confidence and self-esteem, housing, legal issues, transportation, child care, and work attitudes or values. It is my opinion that a solid assessment involves gathering of information on each of these factors to determine a clients current reality, so an effective plan that recognizes all barriers and strengths can be implemented, and obstacles eliminated. Vocational assessment is a formal, comprehensive process that helps individuals discover their vocational skills, aptitudes and learning styles, and clarify their career and vocational interests and goals. The assessment is used to isolate vocational strengths and needs, determine work behaviours and training or job readiness, and identify training and employment potential (Leconte, 1985).

The key to successful vocational rehabilitation seems to be the ability to define the areas of need, develop a solid and effective plan of action, and deliver a high quality, effective service. The last of these steps, delivery of

service, usually receives the most attention. Unfortunately, this can result in the failure to achieve long-term positive outcomes, and frustration for the client. Careful assessment and planning combined with quality service enhances the likelihood of success. Individual strengths and weaknesses must be assessed, and comprehensive plans developed directing the rehabilitation process. (Evans, 1993).

Employability Continuum

Normalization is the use of culturally normative and optimally even culturally valued means to enable societally devalued persons to achieve and maintain valued social roles. (Wolfensberger, 1978). Supportive resources and the rehabilitation process affirms the process of moving the client towards those roles in our society that are valued.

The philosophical basis for this is that the rewards from society (e.g. finances, security) are allotted disproportionately. Those who hold socially valued roles gain greater benefits than those who do not. The disadvantaged, poor, disabled, and others are brutalized consistently by the present system. In our culture, these individuals are looked on as "deviant", that is "a social status into which a person is cast (often unconsciously) by the larger society when (a) he or she is perceived as different from most others in society, (b) in one or more dimensions perceived as significant by a majority of the norm-setting segment of the society, and (c) when these perceived significant differences are valued negatively by the society or the norm-setting segment". (Wolfensberger, 1978). The consequences of this perceived deviancy are many, and may

include rejection, distancing, congregation, segregation, involuntary poverty, and impoverishment of experiences.

Normalization implies a person is viewed as "normal", or is able to project an image which does not make him different or deviant in the opinion of others. How a person is perceived often affects the way he is treated. An individual thought of as deviant is very likely to elicit behaviours such as pity or rejection, which can result in diminished self-worth, adjustment and growth. This affects self-image and ultimately the way one will behave. A person perceived as deviant is expected to act in a deviant manner and will often do so, essentially a self-fulfilling prophecy. Deviance tends to be more acceptable if an individual is already highly respected, than if their character or behaviour is in any way questionable. If a person is already perceived as deviant, any deviant behaviour is more damaging to him than to a valued person.

Ideally, a change in the values of the norm-setting segment of society would be of the greatest benefit to these clients. Realistically, however, cultural change takes years to occur and would be of little help to those who are now in need of assistance. This system of vocational rehabilitation asserts that benefits from society increase proportionately with the individual's approximation of its norms. Therefore, there is an increase in societal rewards as there is positive behaviour change. If an individual is given an opportunity to examine his own strengths and weaknesses, and to take steps to accentuate the positives and reduce the negative behaviours, he can take advantage of resources and move towards positive change.

The vocational rehabilitation process reflects this philosophy. All materials, resources, and delivery systems provide as culturally normative an environment as is possible to enhance the individual's rehabilitation process. Expectations, freedom of choice and consequences approach what is the norm in society. Knowledge of generic resources and community employment placement are examples of normalization principles. Clients are exposed to acceptable environments. With the continuous use of normalization techniques and the promotion of culturally normative roles, the individual can directly benefit with employment, increased education, financial security, etc. (Western Occupational Consultants, 1991). Applied behaviour analysts have always placed great stock in the quantitative assessment of behaviour change but have only recently begun to recognize the importance of qualitative measures of change. (Sechrest & Yeaton, 1981).

Employability can be defined as the ability to find and maintain employment. Employability is not a state however, but a continuum of learned skills and abilities which leads individuals to increased levels of employability. Adding knowledge in any area increases an individual's value in general, and even the most experience and knowledgeable members of society can continually add to their abilities to become more employable over time.

The employability continuum extends from those individuals who have few or even no marketable skills to those who are highly qualified and experienced. Suitability for specific kinds of employment must be addressed, as no one individual can perform all tasks of all jobs. The type of work an

individual is skilled to perform must be examined, as well as the potential for learning specific skills.

The job of the vocational counsellor is to assist clients in identification of current skills, and those which may yet be required to reach a particular vocational goal. The distinction between vocational skills (the ability to read, write, tell time, take a bus, or drive, etc.) and marketable skills (the combination and level of vocational skills) must be made. The vocational counsellor facilitates the acquisition of vocational skills and thus the movement along the employability continuum, to make an individual market-able.

In order to become employable, a person requires marketable skills and job maintenance skills. Continual monitoring, support and follow-up by a vocational counsellor helps ensure an individual develops appropriate skills to enter the labour force and maintain employment.

Effectiveness of Vocational Counselling and Assessment Services

Vocational counsellors must have a frame of reference (Western Occupational Resource Consultants, 1991). Because there is a strong subjective element involved, there is a tendency to rate clients according to one's value system. For example, one may rate such subcategories as grooming, hygiene, and assertiveness according to one's own standards of appearance and communication style. The danger is that the vocational counsellor can set himself up as the archetype of employability, and the clients must meet that standard. Another danger is, vocational counsellors are, by

nature, compassionate and caring people and, therefore, may tend to accept actions and behaviours from clients that would not be acceptable in the work place (Western Occupational Resource Consultants, 1991). Further, the vocational counsellor often needs to identify needs of employers and compare them to the skills and the abilities of the client. Once a goal is established and an individual has achieved appropriate marketable skills, matching can begin. The gaps between the needs of the employer and the weaknesses of the client, become the basis for the vocational counsellor and rehabilitation process.

There exists very little in the way of evaluative literature pertaining to the effectiveness of vocational counselling and assessment services. While counselling services for employment have been in existence for a considerable period of time, to date little has been written in academic or even advocacy journals outlining the success of vocational counselling and what does and doesn't work. One reason which may underlie the lack of a response in the literature is the particular difficulty of attributing success to counselling where there are several inputs responsible for an outcome. An employment program's success rate is difficult to judge as it cannot be removed from the success rate of the variety of programs it refers clients to, such as educational institutions or training and work sites, or current labour market factors.

Essentially then, in assessing the effectiveness of vocational counselling services, two approaches can be taken. First, the entire counselling program may be assessed treating the program as a "black box" (Prairie Research Associates, 1992). Under this approach, inputs such as counselling hours are

compared to outputs such as successful completion of specific programs or job holding for a specific length of time.

A second approach would be assessing or analyzing the specific stages and activities of the vocational counselling process, such as intake/assessment, planning/ counselling, training and employment, and follow-up/evaluation. Intake/assessment could be evaluated to determine if clients were accurately assessed and problems consistently and appropriately identified. Planning/counselling could be evaluated to determine if appropriate needs were identified, decisions made, and realistic goals set. Training and employment could be evaluated to assess if appropriate placements in schools and services were facilitated, and if clients achieved their educational pursuits. Finally, follow-up/evaluation could be assessed by determining if ongoing progress was consistently and accurately monitored.

Specifying both the inputs and outcomes requires careful consideration. If the inputs and outcomes are not specific and well defined, evaluation of the vocational counselling process is often misleading. Outcomes limited to only job attainment fail to recognize and allow for severe or numerous barriers individuals may face. Vocational counselling is more than simply job placement, as it involves moving an individual along the employment continuum. It is often a planned series of steps geared at assisting a client to become more employable by increasing motivation, self-confidence, education levels, etc., and this must be considered in the evaluation model. Vocational counselling services can be assessed with complex statistical methods

designed to determine the impact programming has had on participant employment patterns. In contrast, sociological and psychological assessments of participant self-esteem, status attainment, and personal satisfaction provide entirely different measurements of vocational counselling effectiveness (Mason, 1985).

It is often difficult to assess the influence of vocational programs due to the variety of factors that can effect success. The referral process and variables influencing selection of program participants can both positively and negatively impact on the overall success of the program. If only individuals with an educational level of grade ten or higher are targeted for a program, the outcomes might be quite different than if the program accepted individuals who had little or no formal education. When participants complete a particular employment program and are then successful in securing employment, it is usually concluded that the training process was effective. Yet, it may be the case that the program simply acted as a screening device to select those individuals who were better able to complete the training process (Baugher, 1981).

One of the most common approaches to evaluating the overall effectiveness of vocational counselling services is to determine whether participants raised their employment and earning levels "soon" after participating in a vocational counselling program (Hahn & Lerman, 1985; Oliver & Spokane, 1988). If levels have increased after a participant completes a program, it is assumed the program is a success. However, if participants fail on both

accounts, it is concluded that the program itself failed (Baugher, 1981). Again, the specific desired outcome is raising of employment and earning levels. This fails to consider that an increase in motivation or self-esteem, or acquisition of basic work habits such as reliability and punctuality may be the desired initial outcome, and that long term counselling may be required before employment is even a realistic goal. It also does not consider the variety of factors influencing the success or failure of an individual and the particular vocational plan. It may be that individuals selected for the program already possessed the necessary education levels, experience and the work ethic to rapidly increase their employment and earning levels, and presented with many employment strengths. It does not recognize the influence of pre-existing employment barriers such as lack of reliable transportation or child care, health concerns, etc. Additionally, this model does not account for individuals who do not complete the program, who may have been either successful or unsuccessful in raising employment and earning levels. Further, this approach may incorrectly assume that a direct casual relation between program intervention and client success can be established without any controls. Intervention may have only had a slight impact on trainee success (Baugher, 1981).

When evaluating vocational counselling programs, it is essential to recognize that vocational goals vary from individual to individual, as do time frames for reaching these goals. One client may set a goal of increasing their educational level and ultimately their employability, but the time required to do so may be four years. Another client, already possessing the desired education, may set a goal of securing employment in a chosen field within six

months, and further maintaining that employment for a year. If the vocational counselling program was evaluated simply by the number of individuals gaining employment within a year, the first client would not be considered successful. The second client who may have secured work would be considered successful, even though the goal included maintaining of the job for one year. Additionally, clients may take paid employment of any kind if it is available, however it may not be consistent with their vocational goal. Evaluating the program strictly on job attainment, however, would conclude success was achieved.

The desired vocational goals must be considered, and realistic follow-up periods must be identified as this can dramatically effect evaluation outcomes. An example of the influence of time on the evaluation process is demonstrated by Lah, Wolf, Kelly, Christian and Good in a study completed in 1986. Lah, et al (1986) conducted follow-up evaluations of two youth pre-employment programs in the United States - 70,0001 Ltd. and Jobs for Youth. These programs both focus on economically disadvantaged, high school drop-outs between sixteen and twenty-one years of age. These pre-employment programs, both which emphasized the development of short-term readiness skills as opposed to extended skills development, were evaluated at nine and fourteen months post-intake (Lah, et al, 1986). Results revealed both programs had positive effects on the participants. Many of the individuals gained employment as soon as they completed the program. Additional follow-up assessments, however, at twenty-four to forty months after intake, indicated that the influence of these programs on participant employment levels had diminished. Neither the

occupational skill levels nor the annual earnings of the participants were affected by the pre-employment programs twenty-one to thirty-three months after intake. Similarly, Long (1988) evaluated a transitional employment program for school dropouts and other disadvantaged groups, and after interviewing graduating participants every nine months for up to three years, concluded that the programs had little overall impact (Prairie Research Associates, 1992).

These findings do not support the notion that vocational counselling programs have long term impacts. However, it must be recognized that development of short-term job readiness skills may produce an immediate outcome of employment and program success, however not produce desired long term results. If the attainment of vocational goals and not necessarily rapid job attainment is evaluated, the need to conduct thorough assessments and develop appropriate and realistic plans which move individuals towards employability can be supported. Program objectives, time frames and the vocational counselling process must be well defined in any evaluation process.

It is important to recognize that a wide variety of variables can be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of vocational counselling programs. It has been identified that outcomes of employment counselling can be measured by including client characteristics and the types of interventions used (Busque and Sarrazin, 1983). Here a variety of variables can be considered including client and counsellor personalities and styles, physical and social settings, and specific counselling techniques used. Sipps, Sugden

and Faiver (1988) have considered counsellor training and verbal response styles, while others (Gelso, et al, 1985; Ponterotto & Furlong, 1985) have considered the effect of the quality of counsellor's intake evaluations and counsellor effectiveness on evaluation outcomes (Prairie Research Associates, 1992). Countless other variables could be analyzed, including the age, sex, race and experience of the vocational counsellors.

The advantage in this type of evaluation approach is that the counselling process is separated from the entire program. The identification of the various elements in each stage is an even further breakdown. It must be recognized, however, that effectiveness in one element may impact on effectiveness in another, and ultimately on the entire process.

Effectiveness of vocational counselling programs can also be analyzed using qualitative techniques, such as subjective assessments of participant self-confidence and personal satisfaction. Qualitative measures allow for identification of individual changes and growth that may have occurred due to involvement in the program. They are useful for determining just how a program influences and impacts on a client, and can provide a more descriptive picture of movement along the employability continuum.

As with quantitative methods, however, there are problems associated with qualitative measures. Direct measures of the quality of vocational counselling effectiveness are "difficult to obtain at the best of circumstance" while the length of time usually associated with the measurement of qualitative

changes may rate poorly on measures of cost benefit (Baugher, 1981). Usually large samples of longitudinal data are required. Additionally, clients who have developed a positive relationship with their vocational counsellor and achieved their goals are more likely to note an increase in personal satisfaction than those presenting with unrealistic plans that were not supported by their vocational counsellor.

It appears a multiple measures approach which consists of both quantitative and qualitative approaches is most practical when evaluating the effectiveness of vocational counselling programs. Positive movement on an individual along the employment continuum must be identified and recognized in addition to employment placements. At this time there does not appear to be a consensus on how to assess vocational counselling services. Most of the literature on vocational evaluation deals with school counselling and the educational system, and little research appears to have been completed on vocational counselling programs such as the Employment Development Centre. As merits can be found in both quantitative and qualitative techniques, a combination of methods seems most likely to produce the most accurate assessment of such services.

As has been previously mentioned, the Employment Development Centre's current assessment tool or employability index has been found to have many weaknesses, thus the assessment phase may not be as effective as it could be. In this agency, at least one stage or component of the vocational counselling process appears to have serious limitations. It has been identified

that, to serve the clients better and to monitor the Employment Development Centre's performance, a new assessment "package" should be developed. Vocational counsellors could utilize this tool to conduct comprehensive assessments of a client's "employability" and overall situation. The intake evaluation/assessment can be most useful to the treating counsellor if it represents a thoughtful formulation of the client and his or her problem (including dynamics, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment recommendations, counsellors personal reactions, and so on) and transcends a simple description of the problem situation (Gelso & Prince, 1985). The development of a new assessment package would assist the Employment Development Centre's vocational counsellors to take careful note of an individual's circumstances and look critically at a client's strengths and barriers in terms of employment. This, in turn, would assist counsellors to build on an individual's strengths, reduce possible barriers, and ultimately form thoughtful vocational plans. Providing a solid foundation from which to form vocational plans would ultimately establish greater program accountability.

CHAPTER THREE
EVALUATION METHODS, PROCEDURES AND DESIGN

The Practicum Context

The site for this Practicum was the Employment Development Centre (formerly The Human Resources Opportunity Program) at 1500 King Edward Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Employment Development Centre provides a vocational/social counselling service with the objective of improving client employability and assisting individuals to enter or re-enter the competitive labour market. Targeted individuals are those people on or eligible for provincial social assistance. Services provided are vocational in nature, and include client assessments, client career planning, case management, counselling, and referrals to training and job opportunities.

The Employment Development Centre has been described as a developmental process, concerned with the total needs of the individual (Special Programs Branch, 1992). It is therefore understandable that the Employment Development Centre had developed a comprehensive service delivery system to facilitate and provide the vocational rehabilitation services and supports required by dis-advantaged adults to overcome barriers to employment. The Winnipeg Employment Development Centre drew on the resources of, and provided essential linkages with other government departments and programs, as well as the private sector and community resources. The vocational counsellors, acting as case managers, were responsible for tailoring services to meet the specific needs of individual clients, and developing resources as

necessary.

The basic process of program delivery began with the individual client and utilized the entire vocational counselling process. The Employment Development Centre counsellors assisted individual clients to assess their vocational skills, interests and aptitudes, select a vocational goal, and develop and implement a plan of action which would lead to gainful employment. Throughout this process the counsellor's focus was on providing opportunities that enhanced the client's self-esteem and confidence. The client was encouraged to undertake the activities of implementing their vocational plan as part of the whole developmental process. Each vocational plan is naturally unique and might include a number of progressive steps such as participation in a life skills program, participation in programs within the Employment Development Centre, academic upgrading, a technical training program at a community college, or a work experience placement with a host employer.

The Employment Development Centre model optimized client and program success. By offering or ensuring access to a variety of continuum of developmental programming, flexibility in target group selection could be maintained. Developmental or sequential training programs could accommodate a client who required pre-employment training such as life skills, or familiarity with basic work habits, or a client who required academic upgrading or on-the-job training, as well as a client who required job search skills or job placement and referral. Individual needs determined the type and pace of programming. A flow chart of the Employment Development Centre

program process is located in Appendix B.

Voluntary participation at the Employment Development Centre ensured client motivation, while flexibility through individualized client plans increased commitment and likelihood of success. In addition, programming was not time limited, and if difficulties surfaced after a file was closed, the case could be re-opened. The well planned interventions and continual support offered by the Employment Development Centre were predictive of client success.

Employment Development Centre vocational counsellors, as case managers, provided information, counselling, support and referral to appropriate resources as required. The case management function facilitated the client's pursuit of a developmental plan. Counsellors regular liaison with the community helped maintain an accurate and up-to-date familiarity with the range of community resources and service delivery systems, which clients might require.

The Employment Development Centre, in summary, provided a vocational assessment, counselling, referral, placement, and follow-up service which responded to individual client's needs. The case management function ensured a co-ordinated approach to the effective utilization of community resources to meet client objectives. As previously stated, the majority of participants in the Employment Development Centre were single parents on social assistance. The vast majority of these were women. An understanding of the target group and trends surrounding this group is of utmost importance, and

an awareness of the labour market and history of the programming and single parents as a whole was relevant.

The Inception of the Employment Development Centre/History

While the Employment Development Centre has undergone a variety of program and name changes since its inception, it was essentially established almost forty years ago. In the late 1950's the Government of Manitoba was concerned with assisting those persons disadvantaged as a result of environmental, cultural or occupational handicaps. Interventions were initially developed through the Sanatorium Board of Manitoba, with the primary focus on persons affected with tuberculosis who were attempting to return to communities and re-enter the work force. In the early 1960's, a study of the "Native Situation" in Manitoba was commissioned and, as a result of the study, a Community Development Service was set up. This service was developed to help the socially and economically disadvantaged communities identify their problems and needs. One outcome of this initiative was an identification of the need for vocational rehabilitation counsellors to work with individuals toward developing vocational training and employment goals to assist in their return to the work force. A provincial network known as Vocational Opportunity Services was established in an attempt to address vocational issues with the socially and economically disadvantaged. It had been recognized that there were a number of individuals who, although physically and mentally capable, were unable to secure or hold employment due to complex environmental, cultural, social, family or personal problems. The program's emphasis changed from the restoration of the disabled to the rehabilitation of the disadvantaged.

It was demonstrated that individuals previously thought of a unemployable could be helped to set and achieve rewarding vocational goals through a combination of vocational planning services.

In the early 1970's, the separation of counselling and administration of social assistance began. Social workers provided personal counselling and the Income Security Division evolved with their primary purpose being the administration of social assistance. This change identified yet a greater need for employment and vocational counselling and placement.

Due to an increase in unemployment, rising financial costs, increased demands from other departments and agencies, the Task Force relating to the "War on Poverty", and the government's policy objectives as stated in Guidelines for the Seventies, the program was given branch status. A directorate of Employment Services was established to provide program direction and operational linkages with other government departments and the private sector through a central office.

In the late 1970's, discussions and planning occurred toward the development of group programming for single parents. In the early 1980's the Employment Skills Program was approved, placing mothers allowance clients (single parents) receiving provincial social assistance in work training situations and employment opportunities. Programming continued and was expanded upon as part of the Single Parent Job Access Program. The larger program name was changed to The Human Resources Opportunity Program.

In the 1980's the regular program budget was reduced a number of times, and then again in the early nineties. The Human Resources Opportunity Program moved from The Department of Family Services to the Department of Education and Training, and was renamed The Employment Development Centre. Further program changes are anticipated.

The Employment Development Centre has a diverse history. It has evolved from a program originally designed to serve status Indians with tuberculosis re-entering society upon release from sanatoriums, to an initiative designed to serve vocational rehabilitation clients in the fifties and sixties, to a comprehensive employment service designed to serve either people on social assistance or those deemed likely to be in need of social assistance.

Administrative Arrangements

Services are provided to single parents on or eligible for income security, or to the spouses of individuals receiving social assistance as a result of a long term disability. There are currently seven vocational counsellors in Winnipeg, and an additional four counsellors assigned specialized functions under the Single Parent Job Access Program. There is one Regional Co-ordinator in Winnipeg, and one manager for all the regions in Manitoba. There is one administrative secretary, and one other clerical position assigned in Winnipeg. (It should be noted that all vocational counsellors employed by the Employment Development Centres across the province participated in this study.) At this time there are approximately twenty-five vocational counsellors throughout Manitoba, and six regional co-ordinators.

Once a referral is received, it is distributed by the regional co-ordinator to a vocational counsellor according to geographic location. The vocational counsellor is responsible for confirming eligibility. Referrals are received mainly by the provincial department of Family Services - Income Security Counsellors, however, are accepted from any source as long as eligibility criteria are met.

Target Population

Clients of the Employment Development Centre were persons who experienced problems in securing or sustaining employment, and were on or eligible for provincial income security. Under Canada Assistance Plan - part one - eligibility is defined as a person "in need or likely to be in need" of welfare services. Likelihood of need relates to income level. CAP prescribes income levels by family size that define eligibility. If income is at or below the point defined by CAP for the relevant family size, then the client is considered likely to be in need.

In addition, the Employment Development Centre required that clients participate voluntarily, indicate motivation to change, and be able and available to participate in programming.

Service Components

The services the Employment Development Centre offered to assist clients to overcome barriers to employment and reduce social assistance dependency were as follows:

- 1) Outreach/Intake - This stage involves the identification of persons experiencing or likely to experience exceptional difficulty in securing employment or training opportunities. It includes interpreting the program to clients, gathering of information, identification of problems, and referral of ineligible persons to more appropriate services.
- 2) Assessment/Analysis - This stage includes the analysis and interpretation of relevant data, testing, determination of individual attitudes, aptitudes, skills, education, social functioning, mobility, etc., and identification of the individuals perceptions of the problems.
- 3) Planning/Counselling - This stage includes development of individual vocational and social plans, and helps in implementing these plans. Needs are determined, values are clarified, decisions are made, goals are set and resources are identified. Supports are established and appropriate action is initiated. Supportive counselling is provided throughout.
- 4) Training and Employment - Placements into schools, universities, community colleges, trade schools, and other agencies/services and departments are facilitated in this stage.
- 5) Follow-up/Evaluation - This stage involves ongoing assessment of progress, re-assessment as necessary, and monitoring of the plan, including support services until the individual can function independently.

6. Incidental Services - Included in incidental services are single contact counselling, problem-solving, referring to appropriate agencies, re-referral, etc.

Evaluation Mechanisms

A formal evaluation of the program was conducted in 1992, and recommendations followed regarding continuing evaluation methods. To date, none have been formally implemented. Monthly statistics are logged, providing information on numbers of clients serviced by each counsellor, and at which general stage of activity they are at. This information is collected manually. Three and six-month follow-up occurs for clients who have obtained employment.

Program Promotion

The program is not formally promoted in the community and many individuals seem to learn about it through Income Security and other referral agents. Participants also often hear of the program through friends.

A pamphlet is available and is usually provided to individuals who apply through the referral agencies. There is no newsletter.

Procedures

An interest in the development of an employability assessment package was stimulated through work as a vocational counsellor at the Human Resources Opportunity Program. Prior to this Practicum, a formal evaluation

was conducted on the program, and one recommendation included the re-development of such an employability assessment package.

Goals:

To gather information that might suggest ways to improve/revise the assessment package used by the vocational counsellors at the Employment Development Centre.

To develop an assessment package that would meet the needs of the Employment Development Centre and ultimately improve service delivery.

Objectives:

To determine the vocational counsellors actual user satisfaction with the initial assessment package.

To determine how the assessment package could be modified, expanded or revised by identifying important variables/information required in a Employment Development Centre assessment package.

To develop a new employability assessment package and determine user satisfaction with the new instrument.

Evaluation Procedures

In January of 1993 a number of discussions took place with the vocational counsellors, regional coordinators, and the director of the Employment Development Centre, all of whom agreed that a new assessment package would likely benefit the Centres.

The original assessment package (located in Appendix C) - Assessment of Client Employability: Guidelines for Information Gathering, February, 1991, was reviewed for strengths and weaknesses. Information taken into consideration included Prairie Research Associates report on the assessment package (1992), relevant literature on vocational assessment, verbal comments from the regional co-ordinators within the Employment Development Centre, and verbal comments from the Employment Development Centre vocational counsellors who were actually using the assessment package in their day-to-day work.

In February of 1993 a questionnaire was distributed to the Employment Development Centre vocational counsellors across the province (located in Appendix D). This questionnaire was based on comments in a report on employability assessments (Prairie Research Associates, 1992) and asked the vocational counsellors to agree or disagree with fifteen basic statements referring to the assessment package.. A section for comments was included at the end of the questionnaire. A response time of three weeks was provided.

In March of 1993, responses to the questionnaires were tabulated and

distributed to the staff of the Employment Development Centre. Essentially it appeared staff, as a whole, felt the package required improvements.

Other assessment scales and packages were reviewed, including those in use in other provinces (Nova Scotia and Alberta). These are located in Appendices E and F. Information as to improvements was gathered with informal interviews with staff at the Employment Development Centre, as well as at several formal meetings with the regional coordinators and director. These interviews and meetings took place from February to June of 1993. Following a report to those participating in the process, a formal agreement to proceed with the development of a new assessment package was received from the Director of the Employment Development Centres.

Taking into account the above comments, feedback from the questionnaires and previous recommendations (Prairie Research Associates, 1992), a new employability assessment package for use within the Employability Development Centre was developed (located in Appendix G). In June of 1993 the new assessment package was formally presented at a meeting of the Employment Development Centre regional co-ordinators. Their comments were solicited, and they were instructed on the use of the index. In addition, the assessment index was forwarded to all Employment Development Centre vocational counsellors, and they were given the opportunity to make suggestions and further comments. Their feedback was requested in writing by September, 1993.

In September of 1993, the assessment package was presented at an Employability Development Centre staff meeting, and again instructions for its use were reviewed. Issues for evaluation were identified, and agreement to proceed was provided by the Employment Development Centre. Beginning October 1, 1993, all vocational counsellors were required to begin using the new package. All files submitted for opening were required to have the completed assessment index attached.

In November of 1993, another staff meeting was held so counsellors could provide feedback on the assessment package after having had the chance to field test it for six weeks. Generally the comments were positive, however a few small changes were recommended. These were incorporated immediately, and resulted in the final version of the employability assessment package (located in Appendix H).

Counsellors began using the revised package in November, 1993, and were asked to continue its use until December 31, 1993, to provide for a field testing period of three months. (This new assessment package was generally considered an improvement however, and the Employment Development Centre decided to adopt its use permanently. It is still the formal assessment instrument of the Employment Development Centre, and thus has been in continual use since October, 1993.)

In February of 1994, the same questionnaire used to rate the initial assessment index was again forwarded to all the Employment Development

Centre vocational counsellors. However this time they were asked to respond to the fifteen statements as they pertained to the new employability assessment package. The new assessment package had been in use for five months. The questionnaires were returned and the responses tabulated in March of 1994.

The final product, the new employability assessment package, was reviewed by all personnel within the Employment Development Centres in March of 1994, including the field staff, their supervisors, the co-ordinator, and the director. Consultation occurred throughout the entire process, providing ongoing, tangible involvement from the vocational counsellors and various government administrators.

Research Design and Instrumentation

The basic research design of the study was a survey distributed (at two different points in time) to all vocational counsellors employed by the Employment Development Centre. This questionnaire intended to generate data that would provide information on the assessment packages from persons directly responsible for their use. All measures were self-reports based on one's perception or experience using the assessment packages. There were opportunities for the vocational counsellors to comment or provide suggestions on the questionnaire, although admittedly management had the final say with regards to the final fifteen statements.

Assessment Questionnaire

As previously indicated, the three page questionnaire is located in

Appendix D. It was intended to generate information from the vocational counsellors who use the assessment packages, as to their satisfaction with the instruments. The questionnaire was based on a summary of strengths and weaknesses of the original assessment package (Prairie Research Associates, 1992). Management of the Employment Development Centre wanted the vocational counsellors opinions as to whether or not they agreed with the statements, thus the questionnaire was designed around their findings. Management ultimately decided on the fifteen statements they wanted on the questionnaire, in some cases rewording statements (Prairie Research Associates, 1992) for clarity, or adding statements to gain even further information. The questionnaire was therefore designed to meet their needs, however a section for general comments was included.

Staff were asked to respond to fifteen statements by either strongly agreeing, agreeing somewhat, neither agreeing or disagreeing, disagreeing somewhat, or strongly disagreeing. The items were based on three categories of assessment information. Questions 1, 7, 8 and 14 related to the process of data collection, and measured the vocational counsellors perceptions on the specificity of information and manner collected. Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 12 and 13 related to the type and amount of information gathered, and questions 6, 9, 10 and 15 related to standardization of the Employment Development Centre assessment package.

The questionnaire was first administered in February, 1993, and related to the original assessment package which had been in use approximately two

years. This same questionnaire was then distributed to the vocational counsellors in February, 1994. However they were then asked to complete the questionnaire based on the second assessment package which had been in use for five months.

Program Assessment Package Development

The vocational assessment or evaluation is used to isolate vocational strengths and needs, determine work behaviours and training or job readiness, and identify training and employment potential (Leconte, 1985). An attempt was made to address each of the issues of concern which were generally common to the vocational counsellors and managers at the Employment Development Centre, based on their informal verbal comments and responses to the first questionnaire. They were addressed in the design of the new instrument, and as stated in the Statement of Problem section, will be reviewed here.

1. The form was not standardized.

By their own admission, vocational counsellors at the Employment Development Centre often skipped sections in the initial assessment package as it was extremely time-consuming to write the reports on information longhand. Counsellors interpreted the items differently, and thus the type and amount of information collected and ultimately recorded was counsellor dependent.

The new package can be completed by simply highlighting or circling a statement or statements next to each factor. This assists in standardizing

information collected.

2. No rating scale was provided.

While the new assessment package does not have a rating scale attached, it does have a check-off summary list identifying an individuals strengths and barriers to employment. This assists staff to compile a list of a clients strengths, as well as identify one or a number of barriers. Having a handle on the numbers of concerns or barriers to employment assists the vocational counsellor to develop a realistic short or long term plan with a client. If a client has only one barrier to employment (e.g. child care), that is not as serious a problem as having multiple problems (e.g. child care, plus drug problems, plus facing eviction, plus a hostile attitude) (Nightengale, 1986). The potential exists to develop a rating scale with the new employability assessment package.

3. There was a lack of compatibility between the policy statement and the suggested outline for written assessments/recommendations.

The policy statement suggests all assessments should be completed in depth, and located on individual files. Counsellors assessments varied from point form notes to longhand assessments, as no real clear direction was provided for written assessments with the initial assessment package.

Recommendations were not always easy to access on the files.

The new assessment package, assuming it was correctly completed, attempted to ensure an in-depth assessment occurs. Recording of the

information was clear. It also included a summary of findings and recommendations section, and counsellors were advised how to complete it.

4. No clear directions were provided about expectations for report preparation.

As previously mentioned, written reports were previously very counsellor-dependent. The new index has statements incorporated within the tool which simply need to be highlighted or circled. One problem of social work is that the tasks it is expected to perform are unclear and the responsibilities for which it is held to account are often contradictory (Compton & Galaway, 1994). Direction for use of the tool was provided at an Employment Development Centre staff meeting, and expectations for use and disposition of the assessment package were clearly defined.

5. The degree of specificity of information varied.

This was addressed by incorporating possible answers to the various questions asked for each factor in the new assessment package. Each factor was given the same consideration so the degree of specificity would be similar. The employability assessment package was designed to get at any information which might help counsellors help clients to break through employment barriers.

6. The quality of information collected was dependent on the ability of staff to write consistent reports over time and among individuals.

As per concern number 1, information was recorded longhand when

using the initial assessment package. The new assessment instrument eliminates the need to write lengthy reports and ensures all vocational counsellors collect the same basic information.

7. The process of compiling reports longhand was time-consuming.

As per concerns numbers 1 and 6, the newly developed assessment package has addressed this concern by eliminating the need to write reports longhand. It is set up so appropriate information/responses to questions can simply be circled or highlighted. It should be noted a comments section is provided, and use of the new assessment package would not prevent a counsellor from writing a long hand report if desired.

8. The information collected was not quantifiable nor available for further analysis, such as for the information that an annual report might require.

Due to the fact that a number of factors/variables were not addressed with the use of the original assessment package, and additionally information collected was inconsistent amongst counsellors, the above concern appeared valid. The revised assessment instrument requires each counsellor to obtain basically the same information, information which would be part of each client file and thus available for analysis.

9. Program improvement was hampered by inability to create a data bank to assess general trends.

As per concern number 8, data was not collected consistently with the initial assessment package. It is much more difficult to collect data from long

hand reports in files than from one standardized form, thus the new assessment package attempted to address this concern.

10. The form did not provide information in many areas including:
emotional, health, mental health, work ethic, work references, age, etc.
Variables not included in the original assessment package were added. These included information on age, literacy/language, skill level, job/labour market factors, job search skills, vocational goals, family health concerns, general appearance, motivation/self image, substance abuse, child care concerns, and work attitudes, values and references. The new employability assessment package is comprised of twenty-eight factors or variables, as opposed to fourteen considered in the initial assessment package.

The extra barriers were added in order to get a better overall picture of a clients situation or circumstance. Common sense alone would suggest that a careful assessment of a clients employability, experience, interests and barriers is important if a program is to help an individual find and keep a job (Nightengale, 1986).

By identifying possible barriers to employment, paying particular attention to those encountered by single parents, it was possible to come up with employability factors not previously addressed in the original assessment package. As part of the practicum, the review of the literature dealing with single parents and employability in general assisted in the identification of these additional variables.

While the initial assessment package provided information on education and work history of clients, skill level was not specifically addressed. This employability variable is crucial, and was therefore added to the new assessment package. The assessment of skills - core, common or transferable - is central in most vocational programs (Nasta, 1994).

Additionally, factors or variables were added concerning clients work attitudes, values and vocational goals. These factors are also extremely important ones not included in the first assessment instrument. They enable the vocational counsellor to better determine a clients needs, wants and expectations, and get a real under-standing of where the client is coming from. If counsellors have accurate perceptions of the kinds of job characteristics and rewards that clients seek, they should be able to provide more complete and realistic information that would allow individuals to make accurate job decisions as well as enable them to form more realistic expectations about potential job rewards (Davis, Giles & Field, 1985).

Also, employment variables were added which pertained to a variety of personal needs or barriers a client may experience such as family health concerns and child care concerns. While these factors can be relevant to the general population at times, they are certainly issues many single parents are regularly concerned with. Clients unable to identify or access services and supports in these areas often face great barriers to employment by virtue of their existence. For example, a single parent who cannot access day care is unable to get out to work. Identification of social service needs is important to identify

whether or not a lack of specific services will bar a client from direct entry into employment. (Nightingale, 1986).

In summary, in a vocational assessment, any and all barriers or obstacles to employment must be considered in problem solving in order to assist a client to move from their current state to their desired state (see Figure 2.1).

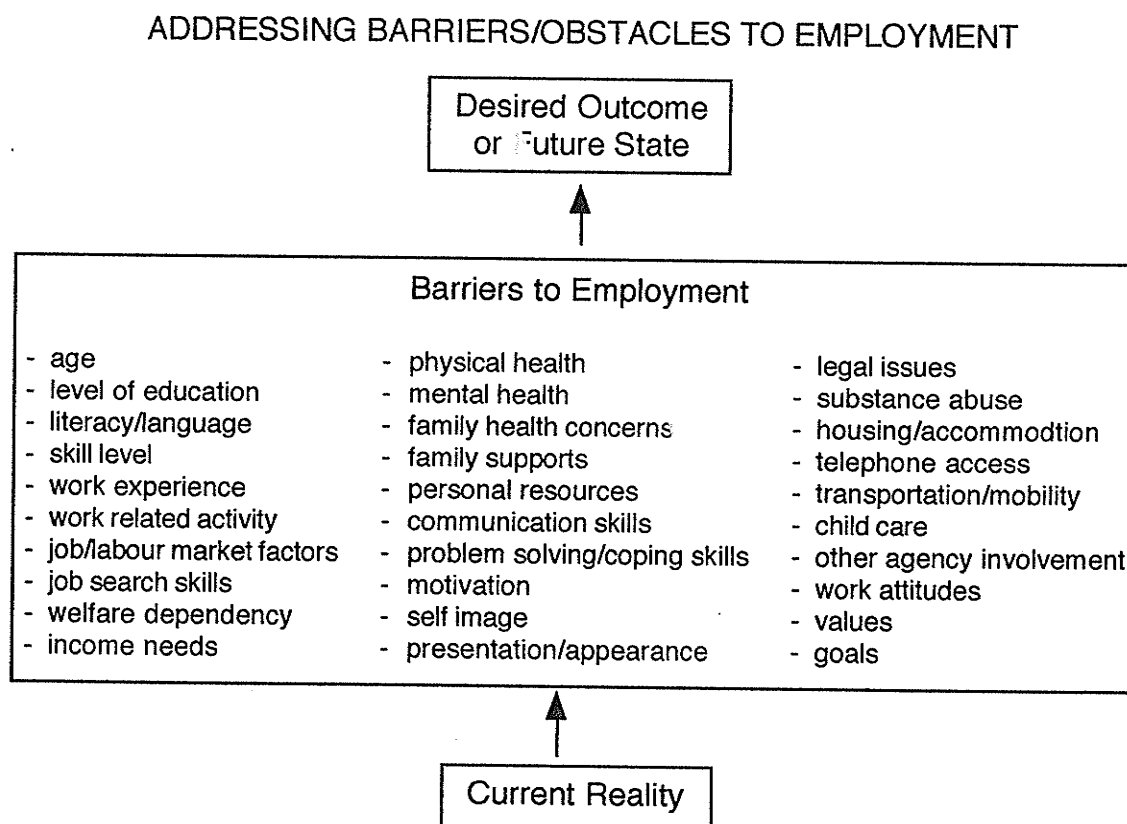


Figure 2.1 Adapted from Creative Problem Solving (Treffinger & Isaksen, 1992)

Sample population

All Employment Development Centre counsellors involved in intake and assessment took part in this study. This included both provision of information by way of interviews and involvement in staff meetings, as well as completion of questionnaires. Thirty-five questionnaires were distributed in February, 1993, for counsellors responses to statements based on their satisfaction with the initial assessment package. Thirty-one counsellors responded, a response rate of 88.6%.

Thirty questionnaires were distributed in February, 1994, for counsellors responses to the statements based on the new assessment package. This reduction in distribution occurred due to staff layoffs which took place in March, 1993. Twenty-five counsellors responded, for a response rate of 83.3%.

Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis were used. As the scale of measurement was not strictly ordinal, and did allow for interval metric information, the mean was used as a measure of central tendency. It is more informative than the median, and allowed for more powerful statistical tests (Rea & Parker, 1992; Steel and Torrie, 1980). The main advantage of using the mean is that it could discriminate between the two versions of the test instrument to determine which package was preferred. Open ended comments were analyzed using qualitative methods, by rating the comments as positive, negative or neutral.

Summary of Dissemination of Results

As previously discussed, the information on the results and recommendations was handled in a variety of ways:

1. All regional co-ordinators and vocational counsellors at the Employment Development Centres were advised of the recommendations that a new assessment package be developed.
2. All regional co-ordinators and vocational counsellors at the Employment Development Centres were advised in writing of the responses (including all comments made) to the first questionnaire.
3. All regional coordinators and vocational counsellors at the Employment Development Centres were provided with the new assessment package three months prior to the implementation of its use, and given the opportunity to provide feedback.
4. A formal presentation of the new employability assessment index and its use occurred at a managers meeting, in order to solicit further suggestions and recommendations.
5. A formal staff meeting was held to instruct vocational counsellors on the use of the new assessment index, and again solicit comments.
6. A formal staff meeting was held after the index had been field tested for

six weeks. Staff suggestions were incorporated, the index was revised, and staff were provided with the new employability assessment package.

7. Vocational counsellors were advised at a staff meeting of the responses to the second questionnaire.
8. Responses and a general summary were shared with management, who made a decision to continue use of the employability assessment index.
9. All staff were advised by management that the employability assessment package would be permanently adopted as the formal assessment instrument of the Employment Development Centre, based on their feedback.

In summary, the new employability assessment package was designed to address concerns identified with the initial assessment package, and to assist vocational counsellors to obtain as much relevant information as possible. The identification of a clients strengths and weaknesses assists the counsellor in working with a client to develop an appropriate vocational plan. Assessment is not conducted for the express purpose of understanding the client, although this is necessary to the extent that it relates to the problem, because you cannot help with a problem unless you understand it. Thus the ultimate purpose of assessment is to contribute under-standing necessary for appropriate planning (Compton & Galaway, 1994). The new assessment package was designed to identify areas of strength and also potential barriers to employment. Only then,

with a basis from which to work, can an appropriate vocational plan be developed. Counsellors can build on strengths and work towards reducing or eliminating barriers to assist a client to reach a meaningful vocational goal.

CHAPTER FOUR
STAFF PERSPECTIVES ON THE EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT
CENTRE ASSESSMENT PACKAGES (RESULTS)

The aims of the practicum were to determine staff satisfaction with the initial assessment package, to alter and expand the assessment index, and to then determine staff perceptions of the new employability assessment package. Although assessment is just one stage in the overall vocational counselling process, the literature suggests it is one of the most important (Nightengale, 1989; Western Occupational Resource Consultants, 1991). This chapter provides the vocational counsellors perspectives regarding the assessment packages.

Counsellors' Survey

This survey or questionnaire, distributed for responses on the initial assessment package (February, 1993) and once again on the newly developed assessment package (February, 1994) was clustered or divided into three sections. These sections represented the process of data collection, type and amount of information gathered, and standardization of information that is collected and recorded. These will be reviewed in succession later in the chapter.

As previously indicated, the questionnaire was designed to determine if the vocational counsellors using the assessment packages agreed with the stated strengths and weaknesses found in the initial assessment tool (Prairie

Research Associates, 1992). As the Employment Development Centre management were specifically interested in these findings, the questionnaire statements were designed around the findings. Some of the statements in the findings were re-worded and other statements added at management's request.

All but two of the fifteen statements on the questionnaire were negative statements, so that agreement with a statement would indicate that the vocational counsellor was not satisfied with that aspect of the assessment package. Two of the statements however, specifically items one and nine, were positive statements, so that agreement with either of these two would indicate that the vocational counsellor was satisfied with that aspect of the assessment package.

In order to be consistent, the data obtained on questions number one and nine was reversed. Therefore, when interpreting the data, statements one and nine were adjusted or rephrased, so that all fifteen statements on the questionnaires are negative statements.

Profile of Vocational Counsellors

As stated earlier, thirty-one vocational counsellors completed the first questionnaire (A), and twenty-five vocational counsellors completed the second questionnaire (B). These vocational counsellors were employed by the Employment Development Centres in Winnipeg, Beausejour, Selkirk, Gimli, Dauphin, Portage la Prairie, Brandon, Swan River, Thompson, and The Pas. Experience varied greatly, with some counsellors having had been with the

Employment Development Centre only a few months, to others who had been employed with the Employment Development Centre almost twenty years. There was almost an equal distribution of male and female counsellors. Winnipeg counsellors made up 38.7% of the respondents to the first questionnaire distribution, and 44% of the responses to the second distribution of the questionnaire.

Procedures and Implementation Efforts

Employment Development Centre vocational counsellors were asked to indicate on a five point scale (5, strongly agree; 4, agree somewhat; 3, neither agree or disagree; 2, disagree somewhat; 1, strongly disagree) whether they agreed with statements about the assessment package in question. Questionnaires were distributed by the Employment Development Centre director to the various regional co-ordinators who, in turn, distributed them to their staff of vocational counsellors.

The questionnaire administered in February, 1993 pertained to the initial Employment Development Centre assessment package, that had been in use approximately two years. The same questionnaire administered in February, 1994 related to the new assessment package, which had been in use five months. The actual field testing period was the three months from October 1, 1993 to December 31, 1993. During this time the new assessment package was used 163 times, that is 163 files were opened by vocational counsellors employed by the Employment Development Centre. This was consistent with data on file openings obtained for the three month period prior to field testing,

as 149 files were opened by the counsellors from July 1, 1993 to September 30, 1993. (July tends to be a slow month due to vacations, however generally August is busy as participants are interested in going to school in September.)

Table 3.1 provides the percentage of respondents who agreed, disagreed or neither agreed or disagreed with each of the fifteen statements on the questionnaire administered in February 1993 - Questionnaire A - applying to the initial assessment package.

As shown in Table 3.1, 29.03% of respondents agreed with statement one. As previously noted, the question was reversed for consistency. Thus, 39.03% agreed with the statement that the initial assessment package was insufficient for their use. However, 61.29% responded in disagreement, indicating a good number of counsellors rated the instrument as sufficient. Interestingly, the responses to many of the other fourteen statements indicated that the counsellors felt many areas of the assessment package required improvement.

Of note are responses to statements number 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, and 15.

On statement number 4, 83.87% of respondents agreed that the degree of information on the initial assessment package varied, while no respondents disagreed. Thus, the vast majority of counsellors felt the assessment package garnered information that was more specific in certain areas than in other areas. It appears in depth information was obtained on certain employment factors,

but only basic information could be obtained on others when using this assessment package.

Statement	(n)	Agreed (5 & 4)	Neutral (3)	Disagreed (2 & 1)
1. The assessment package is not sufficient.	31	29.03	9.68	61.29
2. Too much information is gathered.	31	29.03	29.03	41.94
3. Too little information is gathered.	31	22.58	16.13	61.29
4. The degree of specificity of information varies.	31	83.87	16.13	Ø
5. Important categories of information are missing.	31	41.94	22.58	35.48
6. The assessment package should be standardized.	31	87.10	9.68	3.22
7. Quality of information depends on ability of staff to be consistent in reporting.	31	100.00	Ø	Ø
8. Compiling information is time consuming.	31	87.10	9.68	3.22
9. Information collected is not quantifiable.	31	61.29	12.90	25.81
10. Program improvement is hampered by inability to create a data bank.	31	74.20	19.35	6.45
11. The assessment does not provide information in many areas.	31	51.61	16.13	32.26
12. More information is requested in some areas than necessary.	31	51.61	25.81	22.58
13. Topics encompass both general and specific areas but not to the same degree.	31	67.74	22.58	9.68
14. It is difficult to complete the form in a consistent time efficient manner.	31	77.42	6.45	16.13
15. No clear directions are provided around report writing.	31	74.19	16.13	9.68

On statement number 6, 87.10% of respondents agreed that the assessment package should be standardized, while only 3.22% disagreed. This indicates that, by far, the majority of vocational counsellors felt the assessment package was not standardized, and information gathered varied between counsellors.

On statement number 7, a full 100% of respondents felt the quality of information collected in the initial assessment package was dependent on the ability of staff to write consistent reports over time and among individuals. In other words, all counsellors felt the information collected with the assessment package could be recorded or interpreted differently depending on which counsellor obtained the information. Thus the assessments were counsellor-dependent and inconsistent.

On statement number 8, 87.10% agreed the process of compiling and recording the information in the initial assessment package was time-consuming, while only 3.22% disagreed. That is, a large majority of vocational counsellors felt that completing an assessment with this package took considerable time.

On statement number 10, 74.20% of respondents felt that program improvement was hampered by the inability to create a data bank to assess general trends, while only 6.45% disagreed. Thus, almost three-quarters of the staff felt a data bank which could assess general program and participant trends could not be obtained from information gathered, or reports developed, using

the assessment package.

On statement number 13, 67.74% of counsellors agreed that the topics in the initial assessment package encompassed both very general and very specific areas, but not each to the same degree. Only 9.68% disagreed with this statement. Well over half of the counsellors, then, felt the information collected with the assessment package was not consistent between areas or factors.

On statement number 15, 74.19% of respondents agreed that with the initial assessment package, no clear directions were provided for report preparation, while just 9.68% disagreed. A good majority of counsellors felt that direction was not given as to how the information obtained with the assessment package was to be recorded.

Table 3.2 provides the percentage of respondents who agreed, disagreed, or neither agreed or disagreed with each of the fifteen statements on the questionnaire administered in February, 1994 - Questionnaire B - applying to the newly developed assessment package.

As shown in Table 3.2, 16% of respondents agreed with statement one, that the assessment package was insufficient for their use. This represents a drop of 13% when compared to responses on Questionnaire A, rating the initial assessment package. Seventy-six percent were in disagreement, thus 76% (a rise of 14.71%) felt the newly developed package was sufficient for their use,

suggesting the second assessment index was preferred.

Of note are responses to statements number 2, 3, 6, 7, and 9.

Statement numbers 2 and 3 pertained to the amount of information gathered in the new assessment package. Eighty-four percent of respondents disagreed with the statement that too much information was gathered, and 72% of respondents disagreed with the statement that too little information was gathered on the newly developed package. This suggests counsellors felt there was an overall improvement in amount of information collected with the new assessment index.

On statements number 6, 72% of respondents agreed the assessment package required standardization. When compared to the responses on Questionnaire A, a drop of 15.10% is noticed, suggesting the new package is more standardized than the initial assessment package.

On statement number 7, 68% agreed with the statement that the quality of information collected with the new assessment package was dependent on the ability of staff to write consistent reports over time and among individuals. When responding to the same statement with the initial assessment package, a full 100% of respondents agreed with the statement. In effect, 32% felt there was improvement in the second package, suggesting the new assessment package allowed for more consistency and efficiency.

Table 3.2
Percentage of Respondents Agreeing, Disagreeing, or
Reacting Neutrally to Each Statement on Questionnaire B

Statement	(n)	Agreed (5 & 4)	Neutral (3)	Disagreed (2 & 1)
1. The assessment package is not sufficient.	25	16	8	76
2. Too much information is gathered.	25	8	8	84
3. Too little information is gathered.	25	20	8	72
4. The degree of specificity of information varies.	25	64	16	20
5. Important categories of information are missing.	25	44	12	44
6. The assessment package should be standardized.	25	72	12	16
7. Quality of information depends on ability of staff to be consistent in reporting.	25	68	20	12
8. Compiling information is time consuming.	25	64	28	8
9. Information collected is not quantifiable.	25	24	12	64
10. Program improvement is hampered by inability to create a data bank.	25	60	20	20
11. The assessment does not provide information in many areas.	25	36	4	60
12. More information is requested in some areas than necessary.	25	40	8	52
13. Topics encompass both general and specific areas but not to the same degree.	25	56	16	28
14. It is difficult to complete the form in a consistent time efficient manner.	25	24	16	60
15. No clear directions are provided around report writing.	25	52	20	28

On statement number 9, only 24% of counsellors agreed that the information collected on the new assessment package was not quantifiable or available for further analysis, while 61.29% agreed with this statement as it pertained to the initial assessment package. Thus, well over half of the vocational counsellors felt the information collected with the new assessment package could more readily be analyzed to obtain data for documents such as annual reports.

Table 3.3 provides a comparison of the mean scores for each statement on both questionnaires. The lower the mean the higher the counsellors disagreement with the statements, and thus the greater their overall satisfaction with the assessment package.

As is shown in Table 3.3, the mean ratings of counsellors was lower for every question in Questionnaire B. It appears, then, that counsellors perceive the second, newly developed assessment package as being the most effective instrument. To probe further, t- tests were done comparing the mean responses in each condition. The difference was found to be significant for thirteen of the fifteen statements (all but items three and five). These data are presented graphically in Figure 3.1. A summary table and t- tests are summarized in Table 3.4.

Table 3.3
Means and Standard Deviations for Counsellors
Responses to Each Statements on Questionnaires A & B

Statement	Questionnaire/ Instrument A		Questionnaire/ Instrument B	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
1. The assessment package is not sufficient.	2.58	1.2642527	1.92	1.2936769
2. Too much information was gathered.	2.77	1.2367562	1.88	0.8634813
3. Too little information is gathered.	2.30	1.1414069	2.20	1.2649111
4. The degree of specificity of information varies.	4.16	0.6766516	3.56	1.2674384
5. Important categories of information are missing	3.10	1.162186	2.80	1.4696938
6. The assessment package should be standardized.	4.35	0.7848725	3.88	1.2432216
7. Quality of information depends on ability of staff to be consistent in reporting.	4.61	0.487086	3.80	1.0583005
8. Compiling information is time consuming.	4.58	0.7940989	3.92	0.9765244
9. Information collected is not quantifiable.	3.48	1.1033955	2.36	1.3821722
10. Program improvement is hampered by the inability to create a data bank.	4.00	0.8798626	3.68	1.1906301
11. The assessment does not provide information in many areas.	3.23	1.1276489	2.56	1.4444376
12. More information is requested in some areas than others.	3.32	0.9634312	2.76	1.3937001
13. Topics encompass both general and specific areas but not the same degree.	3.71	0.8109551	3.36	1.2924396
14. It is difficult to complete the form in a consistent time efficient manner.	4.00	1.2181424	2.44	1.2674384
15. No clear directives are provided around report writing.	4.10	0.9953063	3.32	1.2874782

Figure 3.1
Comparison of Means for Counsellors Responses
to each Statement on Questionnaires A & B

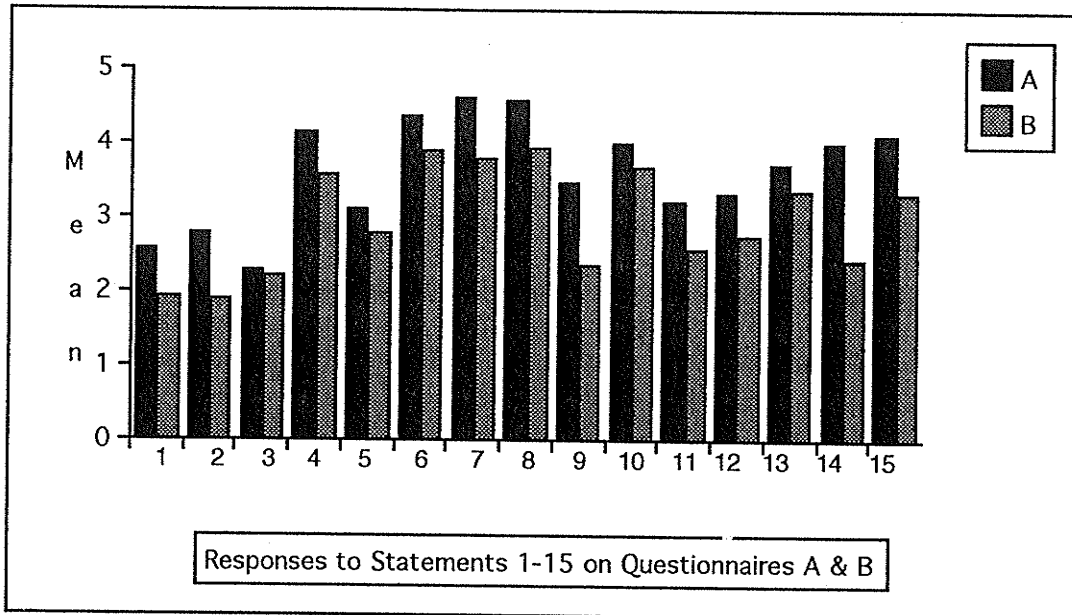


Table 3.4
Summary of t- Results Comparing the Means for Counsellors
Responses to Each Statement on Questionnaires A & B

Question Number	Instrument A			Instrument B			t	Prob. t one-tailed
	Mean	St. Dev.	N1	Mean	St. Dev.	N2		
Q1	2.58	1.26425	31	1.92	1.29368	25	1.92395	0.02982*
Q2	2.77	1.23679	31	1.88	0.86348	25	3.06076	0.00172**
Q3	2.29	1.14141	31	2.20	1.26491	25	0.28051	0.39008
Q4	4.16	0.67665	31	3.56	1.26744	25	2.27317	0.01351*
Q5	3.06	1.16219	31	2.80	1.46969	25	0.75243	0.22753
Q6	4.35	0.78487	31	3.88	1.24322	25	1.74124	0.04367*
Q7	4.61	0.48709	31	3.80	1.05830	25	3.81126	0.00018***
Q8	4.58	0.79410	31	3.92	0.97652	25	2.79326	0.00360**
Q9	3.48	1.10340	31	2.36	1.38217	25	3.38513	0.00067***
Q10	4.00	0.87988	31	3.68	1.19063	25	1.15617	0.12635
Q11	3.23	1.12765	31	2.56	1.44444	25	1.93783	0.02894*
Q12	3.32	0.96343	31	2.76	1.39370	25	1.78224	0.04017*
Q13	3.71	0.81096	31	3.36	1.29244	25	1.23595	0.11091
Q14	4.00	1.21814	31	2.44	1.26744	25	4.67904	0.00001***
Q15	4.10	0.99531	31	3.32	1.28748	25	2.54713	0.00687**

(* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001)

Table 3.5 breaks the statements on the questionnaires into the clusters or categories of 1) process of data collection, 2) type and amount of information gathered, and 3) standardization of information gathered, and presents the mean scores of the three clusters. Note: Questions 1 and 9 were reversed when calculating means, for consistency.

Process of Data Collection

Four statements on the questionnaire refer to the process of information gathering. These statements were numbers 1, 7, 8, and 14, and read as follows:

1. The current assessment package is sufficient for my use as a vocational counsellor.
7. The quality of information collected is dependent on the ability of staff to write consistent reports over time and among individuals.
8. The process of compiling this information and reporting longhand is time-consuming.
14. It is difficult to complete the form in a consistent and time-efficient manner.

Type and Amount of Information Gathered

Seven statements on the questionnaire refer to the type and amount of information gathered. These statements were numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, and 13, and read as follows:

2. Overall, too much information is gathered.
3. Overall, too little information is gathered.

4. The degree of specificity of information varies.
5. Certain important categories of information are missing.
11. The form does not provide information in many areas including emotional health, mental health, work ethic, work references, age, etc.
12. More information is requested in some areas than may be needed to assess a client's employability level.
13. The topics encompass both very general and very specific areas, but not each to the same degree.

Standardization of Information Gathered and Recorded

Four statements on the questionnaire refer to the standardization of the information gathered and recorded. These statements were numbered 6, 9, 10, and 15 and read as follows:

6. The assessment package should be standardized.
9. The information collected is quantifiable and available for further analysis, such as for the information that an annual report might require.
10. Program improvement is hampered by the inability to create a data bank to assess general trends.
15. No clear directions are provided about expectations for report preparation.

In Table 3.5, a lower mean indicates disagreement with the statement which, in turn, suggests greater satisfaction with the assessment package. The magnitude of the difference is highlighted on Table 3.5.

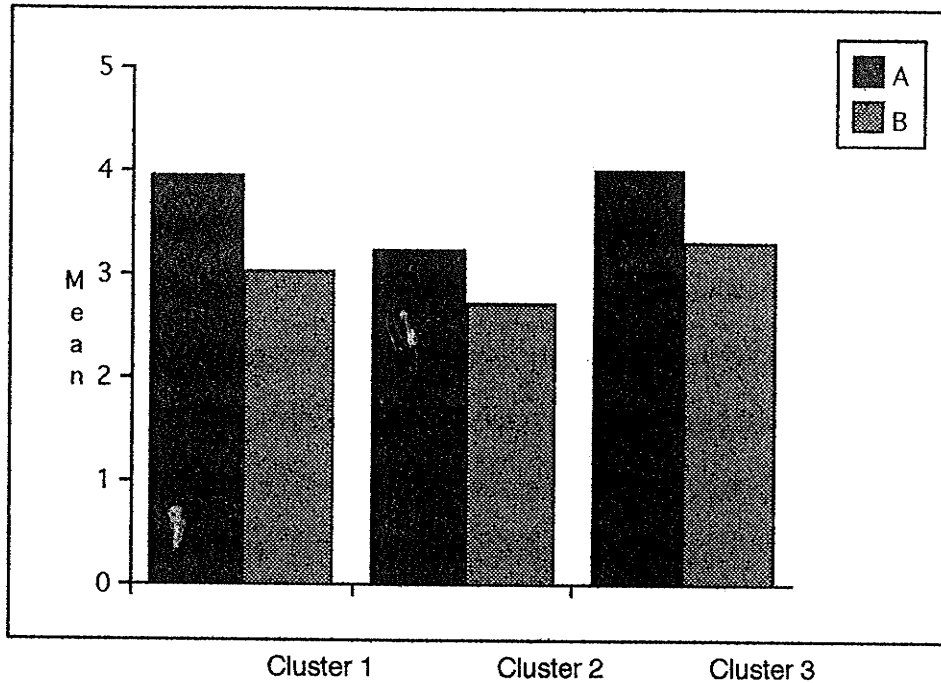
Table 3.5
Means for Counsellors Responses to Three Categories
of Statements on Questionnaires A and B

Categories of Statements	Questionnaire A Mean	Questionnaire B Mean
Cluster 1 Process of Data Collection	3.9425	3.02
Cluster 2 Type and amount of Information Gathered	3.2214	2.7314
Cluster 3 Standardization	3.985	3.31

As shown in Table 3.5, again the means were lower in each category, for Questionnaire B than A. This demonstrates further that the counsellors did perceive the second newly-developed assessment package (as per Questionnaire B) as being the more useful tool.

These data are offered in schematic form in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2
Means of Counsellors Responses to Three Categories
of Statements on Questionnaires A and B



The mean response for each of the three clusters is lower for Questionnaire B than Questionnaire A, as shown in the graph.

It is important to not only consider quantitative data, but the more qualitative subjective comments and feedback as well. The following is a list of the comments made directly by the vocational counsellors on the two questionnaires. This direct input in their own words highlights their opinions on the initial assessment package (comments on Questionnaire A), and their opinions on the newly developed assessment package (comments on Questionnaire B). Very compelling, albeit more subjective data, can be gleaned from these open-ended comments.

Counsellors Comments on Questionnaire A

- **Comments suggesting counsellors felt improvements were required on the initial assessment package:**
 - Certain important categories of information are inappropriately addressed.
 - Reports (file notes) vary now as each counsellor reports to a different degree on different areas.
 - A written outline regarding expectations for report writing was never completed, and direction from the 1991 counsellor training session never provided/ implemented.
 - Specific information should be easier to locate (on file) than our present system allows.
 - Statistical data should be compiled that would give us insights into our effectiveness in different areas.
 - A data bank is necessary as a base for future planning and change.
 - Compiling information for files is not a problem, but reporting it is.
 - A standardized approach should have 'yes/no' and 'fill in the blank' areas, as well as a narrative section.
 - The current assessment package should be reviewed. Categories of information are missing, reporting longhand on intake is time-consuming, and the package is not used consistently by all HROP counsellors.
 - The existing package needs fine tuning. There is too much detail to use when actually with a client.
 - A standardized package that enables us to quantify information gathered is necessary, and should be developed.

- A standardized form should be used across the province. The current package allows counsellors to “write a book” if they want to.
 - Our client group as a whole has changed since the current assessment package was developed. We now need an assessment guide to help the higher functioning clients determine feasible goals (ie. geared to academics, etc.)
 - A form that enables us to capture and to locate relevant data quickly (and uniformly) is required. Narrative can always be added as necessary.
 - More objective and concrete criteria should be established to support or deny specific vocational plans. Measurable criteria to support a counsellors judgement is necessary.
 - A standardized assessment format is necessary (for all regions). One should be developed, and all counsellors trained in it use.
 - A thorough assessment should review all possible factors/areas.
- **Neutral Comments:**
- Although the current package does not provide information in some areas (ie. emotional health, mental health, work ethic, work references, age, etc.), it still can be included by the counsellor.
 - A data bank would be useful, however the danger is data can be manipulated and taken out of context. Social sciences cannot be measured totally accurately by statistics, unlike other sciences.
 - The current process of compiling information long hand is time-consuming, but saves time in the long run (in vocational planning).

- A format which quickly focuses on the following should be developed: 1) hard data (name, SIN, birth date, dependents, SAMIN#, etc.), 2) current data (address, phone, education, work history, etc.), and 3) eligibility criteria - for certain programs (gender, age, aboriginal status, residing in province, C.L.S. status, etc.).
 - Any comprehensive assessment takes time and should be allocated sufficient time if a viable program is to be run.
 - Short-cutting on information gathering will leave clients at risk of having some barriers remaining unidentified.
 - Some barriers are not easy to measure or quantify.
 - Is our current package not standardized, and used by everyone now?
- **Comments suggesting counsellors were satisfied with the initial assessment package:**
- Our package should not be standardized at the expense of losing it as a sound assessment tool.
 - The current assessment package is sufficient and there is no need to change it.
 - Anything can be improved upon.
 - I thought our current assessment package was already standardized.
 - The assessment package works as well as those who are using it.
 - Personally I find the form to be adequate because it's not the only documentation being done. Consistent file recordings are being kept through time, with new information recorded as it becomes available. I see no need to change the format.

Counsellors Comments on Questionnaire B

- **Comments suggesting counsellors feel the new assessment package is an improvement:**
- The assessment package contains the elements necessary for a standard approach to employability assessment. Implemented with clear direction, it promises to provide client information more consistently and organized in the same location on file.
- The quality of information collected no longer depends on the ability of staff to write consistent long hand reports. This assessment tool can save time and help identify clients most effectively served in the Winnipeg office and those who are more appropriately referred to other agencies for service.
- The assessment package used consistently should guide counsellors through the task of client assessment in less time, with more accuracy and, at the same time, assist with selection of the most appropriate clients for our program.
- This package has unlimited possibilities for the purpose of follow-up, feedback or program evaluation. It will allow us to measure and compare individuals progress, plotting client progress, and record removal of employment barriers.
- The assessment tool will be very useful in "quantifying" barriers and strengths and in establishing trends in clients' characteristics.
- The assessment tool offers an improved method of arriving at statistical results. Moreover, it should create a greater consistency in assessment practices and in the determination of a client's vocational barriers.

- I didn't see anything wrong with the old assessment package until I had a chance to use this new format. It's quick and easy to follow, and generally I prefer it.
- The new assessment tool is a great improvement. I really like the fact that I can pick up a co-workers file when covering, and find what I need to know quickly. I can also read it, which helps when co-workers' notes aren't legible.
- I prefer the second assessment package. It is easy to use and all the questions I need to ask on assessment are presented clearly.
- Circling statements is a great idea. I can obtain the information I need much more quickly with the new assessment tool, and it allows me to go back and write long hand notes later if I'm too busy at the time.
- I like the new assessment package and find it easier to use. It eliminates the need to write long transfer summaries when transferring a file to another counsellor.
- Looks good - much improved package.
- Much improved over the initial assessment method.
- Does a good job of covering a great majority of employability factors. It will be useful for more accurate recording and it will be easy to reference.
- This is a good assessment tool. The fact that it is required to be on every file that is opened will ensure counsellors don't skip over aspects of this crucial vocational process.
- This assessment package was long overdue. I find it very helpful in determining focus.
- I like the last page where there is room for a written summary of a clients'

- strengths and weaknesses, and most importantly, a plan of action.
- The new package gets at more information than our old assessment package, and is easier to use. It is, therefore, an improvement in my mind.
 - This tool should save a lot of time taken with lengthy write-ups and give us universality in assessments. I really like the back page which gives us a “quick scan” of clients strengths and weaknesses without pouring through pages of write-ups.
 - I can now do my assessments in an organized fashion and save time writing while interviewing. I am glad, however, that this was presented in such a manner so as we know it's not intended to change how we conduct assessments, but to standardize the approach and type of information collected.
 - All factors receive equal consideration, which is an improvement over the last assessment index.
 - The assessment tool is a marked improvement over the “old” client assessment process. It definitely is a move in the direction of more consistency in the process, and potentially more information being gathered or provided. There is room for improvement, however. We should work toward determining which factors tend to be most significant.
 - I liked the old assessment tool, but like this package even better.
 - Overall I feel the new assessment package is a more effective and descriptive tool than the previous format.
- **Neutral comments:**
- The new assessment tool is a sincere effort to establish some methodology

in the system. The concept of a uniform approach by counsellors in the assessment process has merit in that statistics/results will be more meaningful considering all counsellors are asking the same questions. This observation is to be qualified to the extent that the perceptions/biases of individual counsellors must be taken into account. These perceptions/biases will have some effect on the way in which the assessment tool is utilized.

- Assessments are the foundation of vocational counselling and information gathered during employability assessment has to produce consistent and reliable results.
 - The proposed method of data collection, with some fine-tuning, can be quantified, coded and computerized to provide reliable data for program improvements in the future and offer a timely response to the constantly changing demands in the labour market.
 - To reduce paper, the assessment tool could be photocopied double sided.
 - I would like to see a numerical value placed on the employment factors. Later the form could be used as an interim report (to track client growth), and a termination report (to track success rate, etc.)
- **Comments suggesting counsellors are not satisfied with the new assessment package:**
- The comments section may not be large enough to accommodate counsellors' notes.
 - It is difficult to describe client characteristics with the new package.
 - Basically I like the package but it's too easy to fluff it.

- Too much paper for the amount of information collected.
- There is not enough room for specifics and comments.
- The check-off system makes it difficult for me to accurately document the facts because each clients' situation varies and does not always fit into check points.
- Vocational counselling is a complicated process and a "fill in the blanks" approach simply doesn't work.
- This form is too easy to minimize information.

A review of the comments suggests counsellors in general feel the newly developed package is an improvement over the initial assessment package. There were at least 17 comments on Questionnaire A which suggested counsellors had concerns with the initial package. There were 23 comments on Questionnaire B that could be interpreted as positive regarding the new package, and 11 comments made specifically indicating the second assessment package was an improvement or preferred. A more specific breakdown of the open ended responses, respondent by respondent, can be found in Appendix I.

Summary

It appears the vocational counsellors with the Employment Development Centre generally prefer the second newly developed package over the initial package. Quantitative results indicate significant preference based on the fifteen statements on Questionnaires A and B. Qualitatively, counsellors comments also seem to support a preference for the new assessment package.

Not surprisingly, responses did vary with some counsellors reporting overwhelmingly that the new instrument was more useful, and other counsellors reporting a preference for the first package. This can be attributed to differences in individual styles and perceptions. As noted by some of the counsellors comments, further direction and clarification around process and the use of the assessment package may be required, and further development of the package explored.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was initially exploratory in nature, designed to gather information that might suggest ways to improve on the employability assessment package used by vocational counsellors in the Employment Development Centre. Once gathered, this information was used to assist in the actual development of a new employability assessment package. One major step in the vocational rehabilitation process is to assess or define an individual's strengths and barriers to employment. Without a clear understanding of which areas will need a counsellor's assistance, an undue expenditure of time and resources can take place, which results in an inadequate level of service being provided. To create a successful plan, a counsellor will need to define the areas of concern, and those strengths which can be used to enhance the rehabilitation process (Western Occupational Resource Consultants, 1991).

This section is based on the questionnaire results comparing the two assessment packages. The following discussion will be directed at the objectives specified in the evaluation chapter.

Vocational Counsellors Satisfaction with the Initial Assessment Package

In relation to the first objective, vocational counsellors satisfaction with the initial assessment package, the perceptions of the vocational counsellors were extremely varied. While 61.29% responded that the initial assessment

package was sufficient for their use, responses to further statements on the questionnaire revealed counsellors had a number of concerns with the package. As counsellors responses to the further statements were reviewed, it became clear which dimensions of the package were responsible for dissatisfaction. In this regard, the vocational counsellors identified several key issues and/or concerns relating to the initial assessment package. These included concerns around the process of data collection, where 100% of the vocational counsellors responded that, on the initial assessment package, the quality of information depended upon the ability of staff to write consistent reports over time. Additionally, 87.10% responded that compiling reports long hand was time-consuming, and 77.42% agreed with the statement that it was difficult to complete the assessment package in a consistent, time effective manner.

Another identified area of concern was with the type and amount of information gathered in the initial assessment package. Here 83.87% of vocational counsellors agreed that the degree of specificity of information varied in the initial package. Further, over half, 51.61%, of counsellors agreed with the statement that the initial assessment instrument did not provide information in many areas.

A final group of concerns were identified around standardization of information collected and reported. Eighty-seven and one-tenth% of vocational counsellors felt the assessment package should be standardized, while 74.19% agreed with the statement that no clear directions were provided around report

writing with the use of the initial instrument.

The above statistical information, in combination with written feedback from the vocational counsellors, made it clear they felt the initial assessment package required improvements.

Determining How the Initial Assessment Package Could Be Improved, and Development of a New Employability Assessment Package

A second objective was to determine how the initial assessment package could be improved upon or redeveloped to better meet the needs of the Employment Development Centre vocational counsellors. An examination of the counsellors' responses to the fifteen statements on Questionnaire A and a review of the comments provided clear direction for the development of a new assessment package. The vocational counsellors' responses basically supported findings by the Prairie Research Associates, as well as management who initiated the process.

In relation to the process of data collection, several variables were considered. It was clear the vocational counsellors wanted a package which would ensure quality of information gathered, yet not be dependent on the ability of staff to be consistent in reporting/recording this information. A format where possible answers to questions asked in assessment were already recorded made it possible for counsellors to capture information simply by circling or highlighting the appropriate statements. This, in turn, made compiling information less time-consuming, by eliminating the need to write

each response long hand. Of course, a comments section was made available with every variable/factor, so that additional information not provided for on the assessment instrument could be recorded and not be lost. This also addressed the concern with the initial assessment package that it was difficult to complete in a consistent, time efficient manner. The provision of possible responses to each question asked regarding an employability factor ensured at least a level of consistency amongst counsellors, as well as made a move towards time efficiency.

In relation to the type and amount of information gathered, again several variables were considered. The vocational counsellors appeared to have conflicting opinions on how much information should be gathered, however the majority agreed with the statement that too little information was requested with the initial assessment package. Additionally, the majority of counsellors agreed with the statement that important employability factors or categories of information were missing entirely. The new assessment package provided an additional fourteen employability factors not considered in the initial assessment package. Counsellors comments in informal interviews, recommendations on employability assessments (Prairie Research Associates, 1992), a review of the literature and of other assessment instruments were considered in the development of additional employability factors. Finally, the vocational counsellors appeared to feel that, on the initial assessment package, the degree of specificity of information varied. The newly developed assessment instrument attempted to ensure each employability factor was given equal consideration and all possible responses included. Again, informal

interviews with the counsellors and numerous meetings with management provided direction in this area. A system of circling or highlighting possible responses tried to ensure consistency of information not available with long hand report writing.

Lastly, concerns around standardization of information gathered and recorded were addressed in the development of the new assessment package. The package must now be used on intake, and a file cannot be opened without the completed employability assessment package. This ensures that each vocational counsellor is at least conducting a basic assessment, and ensures Employment Development Centre counsellors throughout the provinces are obtaining similar information. This information could eventually be coded and computerized, and a data bank be developed. Finally, clear directions were provided with regards to expectations for completion and reporting of information collected when using the newly developed employability assessment package.

As previously stated, the concerns the vocational counsellors had with the initial assessment package were considered in the development of the new assessment package, and an attempt was made to directly address these issues. The assessment package was developed over a period of many months and proved to be a monumental undertaking. Developing an assessment component is not simple, but its inclusion in a comprehensive employment program is essential. The benefits of a well-designed assessment that can be integrated with other parts of the welfare-employment system can be

substantial, both to the program in terms of developing staff capabilities in case management and client assignment, and to the client in terms of establishing realistic personal goals (Nightengale, 1986).

Vocational Counsellors Satisfaction with the New Assessment Package

The third objective was to determine the Employment Development Centre vocational counsellors' satisfaction with the new employability assessment package. Seventy-six percent of vocational counsellors agreed with the statement that the new assessment package was sufficient for their use, an increase of 14.71% when compared to the same statement related to the initial assessment package.

A comparison of mean scores showed the vocational counsellors felt there was at least some improvement, with regard to every statement in the new assessment package. It appears the concerns were all addressed to some degree, however the strongest improvements were realized with respect to the process of data collection and standardization of information. Vocational counsellors found the new tool less difficult to complete in a consistent, time efficient manner, and that the quality of information collected was less dependent on the ability of staff to be consistent in reporting. Improvements were also noted in that the new assessment package provided for information that was quantifiable, and direction was provided for reporting and recording of information. Additionally, overall written comments were positive with respect to the second assessment package.

By virtue of the responses gleaned from the statistical data and the vocational counsellors comments (that is, both quantitative and qualitative data), it can be said that the vocational counsellors prefer the newly developed assessment package. Management have given their approval, and the instrument having been well received overall, is still in use at the Employment Development Centre.

Recommendations

In general, the employability assessment package meets many of the needs of the vocational counsellors employed by the Employment Development Centre. Continual work towards expanding the assessment package to address remaining concerns would strengthen the assessment process, and further improve the efficiency of this stage of the vocational counselling process. Having a mechanism, such as an assessment committee with strong leadership, would greatly enhance development and ensure further attention is given to this task.

The recommendations are based on the feedback provided by the vocational counsellors and managers of the Employment Development Centre.

1. To form a group or committee to continue to address issues surrounding the assessment process and methods. This committee should function on an ongoing basis to promote further development of the assessment package, ensure co-ordination, review implementation concerns, and make recommendations to

management.

2. That guidelines for assessment and report writing be reviewed and specified annually, so as all staff are clear as to the expectations for such.
3. That vocational counsellors roles and responsibilities in relation to conducting assessments can be further clarified in order to enhance co-ordination and standardization. A number of staff have noted difficulties in terms of expectations for report writing, time at which information should be collected, and where information should be stored on file.
4. That a written guide outlining expectations for completion of the assessment package be developed, for a reference for seasoned staff and a guide for new staff.
5. That an easily accessible data base or information system be developed and implemented, and that the specific information needs for this system be defined. Further, that the information be made available directly to the vocational counsellors so they can continually evaluate the assessment package in relation to gathering information for the system.
6. That a copy of the final page of the employability assessment

package be duplicated, so a copy can remain on a clients' file and a copy be given to the client.

7. That the assessment package on each client file be reviewed every six months to determine if there have been any changes in identified strengths and/or weaknesses, and to capture changes in information.
8. That the comments section be enlarged, perhaps by using legal sized paper.
9. That the assessment package be double-sided to reduce the amount of paper on files.
10. That consideration be given to determining which employability factors are most likely to effect employability, or be most significant in the assessment phase.

Generally, the vocational counsellors at the Employment Development Centre seem satisfied with the overall quality of the newly developed assessment package. The strength of the assessment package seems to be related to the interest taken by staff in this particular stage of the vocational counselling process. A primary result of a good assessment is that general case management and client assignment improve. When vocational counsellors conduct in-depth assessments, they gather a wealth of information

and become aware of past patterns and possible shortcomings which may interfere with vocational plans. Armed with such knowledge, they can make more appropriate recommendations and discuss these realistically with the client. This forms the basis of the vocational plan. The results of the assessment can be used by the counsellor and the client together to decide what choices or services might be appropriate (Nightengale, 1989). Efforts to address remaining concerns by further developing and expanding the assessment package would enhance the assessment process, a vital part of the overall service provided by the Employment Development Centre.

CHAPTER 6 PRACTICUM EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

The summary and conclusions will be discussed in relation to the objectives set for the practicum as put forth in the Introduction. The limitations of the research and further recommendations for research will also be presented.

Development and Evaluation of the Employability Assessment Package

The development of an assessment instrument to provide a solid indicator of a client's circumstance/situation was the first objective of the practicum. This task was monumental, involving a review of the initial assessment package, a review of the literature pertaining to the assessment phase of vocational counselling, comparison with similar instruments/packages in use, and consultation with personnel involved in the vocational counselling phase and their supervisors. Soliciting opinions from individuals regularly using such packages proved to be valuable in pinpointing specific elements/variables required in an effective assessment tool. This approach also allowed counsellors to provide their views on the design and overall development of the package.

Similarly, a counsellor survey provided information on isolated aspects of the initial package that were of concern, and thus areas requiring improvements. The feedback and suggestions were useful in making modifications to improve the day to day use of the package.

Another objective was to evaluate the employability assessment package from the perspective of the Employment Development Centre vocational counsellors. Developing the instrumentation (questionnaire) proved frustrating as upper management of the Employment Development Centre basically set the format and questions. While this provided a good base, some of the statements were confusing and leading. Although the vocational counsellors were asked to comment on the questionnaire, no suggestions were made. This may have occurred as they were aware that management had a large part to do with its development.

The data analysis provided another challenge both in terms of the quantitative and qualitative data. Developing some degree of competency with computerized statistical analysis was important. However having only a beginners knowledge, this was, at times, exasperating. The most valuable lesson had to do with the importance of questionnaire design, and making a decision on how to deal with the fact that only two statements on the questionnaire were positive, while the remaining statements were negative.

The qualitative data was useful in clarifying views, but using qualitative methods was extremely time-consuming given the magnitude of the comments, and the fact that a good number of counsellors were not located in Winnipeg. Finding suitable and sufficient time to meet with both counsellors and managers was often difficult. While individuals seemed interested, time restrictions were frequently noted. Interestingly, many staff were surprised by the individual differences in perceptions. It became obvious that ultimately it is not possible to

please all players involved in such an undertaking.

Another objective of this study was to provide a way of interpreting and analyzing the informational data collected. The Employment Development Centre does not yet have automation capabilities so this issue has not been fully addressed. The basis has been set, however, in that the information collected has now been standardized and is on one form, so it is consistently available for analysis.

Outstanding in the overall process was the number of details and decisions that needed to be made, including everything from the number of employability factors to include in the assessment package to the number of pages and page length of the assessment package. This in itself was a valuable learning experience, as it became clear each counsellor and manager had their own ideas of how the final product should look. Incorporating all the suggestions was impossible for, at times, these were directly conflicting, so the challenge was to come up with a package that included the relevant employments factors in as concise a format as possible.

The Literature Review

In respect to the literature review, there was an early realization that there exists relatively little in the way of evaluative literature pertaining to the effectiveness of vocational counselling and assessment services. Little has been written in academic or even advocacy journals outlining what does and what doesn't work. As stated earlier, it is difficult to attribute success when there

are several inputs responsible for an outcome, as is the case with vocational counselling. There are many stages in the vocational counselling process, and often several external agencies and resources including employability training and schooling programs involved, which makes it difficult to isolate what is responsible for success. It is obvious, however, that a thorough assessment of a client's situation is essential in order to assist the client to reach his/her vocational goal. Common sense alone would suggest that a careful assessment of a client's employability, experience, interests and barriers is important if a program is to help an individual find and keep a job (Nightengale, 1986).

Involving the counsellors using the assessment package provided credence to the perceived requirements of a solid employability assessment package, and also acknowledged that they should have a voice in the design and development of a package intended for their use. The knowledge and skill possessed by professionals often gives them powerful control over persons and things. Because of the specialized knowledge involved, the persons using the services of the professional may not have the expertise to judge the adequacy of the services they are receiving (Compton & Galaway, 1994). It is important that the vocational counsellors have an assessment package that they find useful, as the information collected with the instrument will serve as a basis to construct a plan to alleviate client barriers or act on strengths, and effect the outcome of the service as it is perceived by the public/community which they serve. The purpose of assessment is to reach an understanding of problem, client and situation so that you can construct a plan to solve or alleviate the

problem (Compton & Galaway, 1994).

Internal vs External Input

At many points during the development process, knowledge of the program and familiarity with it provided a basis for exploring issues and raising questions. Being in a unique position of an "insider" through the initial stages of the practicum and during the development of the employability assessment instrument was a benefit in understanding the organizational structure, in having had first-hand experience with the initial assessment package, and in facilitating of communication. At times there was a subjective sense that interpretation and/or recommendations may be biased, however on several occasions opinions of counsellors and managers were helpful in dealing with this issue. As I was one of the individuals personally affected by program cutbacks in 1993, I was no longer on staff once the new assessment package was completed and implemented. Therefore, remaining counsellors were able to rate the new assessment package without the biases that may have been created by the mere fact that I was a co-worker.

Limitations of the Study/Suggestions for Further Study

As stated in the Introduction, the study was planned and implemented for a specific population of staff (vocational counsellors) within a specific agency. Because the study used a purposive sample, the findings are relevant to the context of the program, and the results cannot be generalized beyond the agency. However, findings provide useful information for agencies involved in this area.

A limitation of this study concerns the questionnaire or instrument used to evaluate/compare the two assessment packages via the vocational counsellors. It was based on statements made regarding the first assessment tool (Prairie Research Associates, 1992) and management of the Employment Development Centre essentially controlled the statements making up the questionnaire, providing little latitude. Improvements could have been made by rewording the statements so as to have an equal number of positive and negative statements. This would also have ensured consistency in data analysis, eliminating the need to reverse two of the statements on the questionnaire at that stage. Further, a pre-test of the questionnaire would have been beneficial, to avoid any confusion or misunderstanding with the statements, and ensure they were not leading. However, because of the context of the practicum, there was not complete flexibility in this regard.

While the newly implemented employability assessment package has addressed and eliminated, or at least lessened, the concerns noted with the initial package, further improvements can be made. It will be necessary to continue to review the package to keep up with the changing needs of the target group served and the labour market. It would be interesting to again survey the vocational counsellors, after they have had an opportunity to "iron out the bugs" in the implementation of the package and become comfortable with its use over a period of time.

This assessment package does not specifically identify the most powerful employability predictors, that is, it does not attempt to rate the employability

factors. Further research to determine the significance and validity of each employability factor could provide the ability to weigh the different variables considered. A scale to predict which employment strengths or barriers may have more impact on a client's chance of success could be developed. This scale would certainly be useful in a vocational program such as the Employment Development Centre.

This practicum provided the opportunity to integrate theory and practice, and to work closely with different levels within a government department. The experience in developing an employability assessment package has been a valuable one that has yielded many insights. This initiative was, in effect, part of a process of translating ethereal comments on an unproven instrument, into tangible, useful questions to guide counsellors in their assessment of a client's situation. An effective assessment makes possible more effective interventions. The new package helps counsellors help clients in a meaningful fashion, and provides counsellors with a basis to structure and plan their intervention strategies.

The assessment package assists counsellors to think critically about a client's strengths and weaknesses as related to employability. Vocational counsellors with the Employment Development Centre now have a package divided into twenty-eight variables requiring consideration. This forms a basis from which to formulate a plan of action, dependent on the number and combination of an individual client's strengths and weaknesses. A client presenting with numerous employment barriers such as no child care

arrangements, lack of stable housing, little in the way of a support system, and poor problem solving skills may require pre-vocational services such as life skills programming or pre-employment workshops. A client presenting with a low education level or lack of appropriate job skills may require upgrading or further education/ training, while a client with few barriers and several significant strengths (such as solid level of education, steady work history, and high level of motivation) may require job leads and referral. Each situation is, of course, unique and must be treated as such. However, the new assessment package allows counsellors to gather relevant background information and organize it in terms of employment strengths and weaknesses, which is an integral part of the assessment process. After defining the situation, the counsellors and client can identify short and long term goals, which define the direction of the counselling and the techniques used. Then the specifics of the vocational plan can be outlined, based on a solid understanding of the current situation and goals. Essentially this assessment package assists counsellors to do their entire job.

Additionally, the newly developed assessment package assists the Employment Development Centre vocational counsellors to glean and synthesize this background information quickly. It was obvious through the many informal discussions with the counsellors that they feel overwhelmed by high caseload numbers, and that time is indeed a precious commodity. The entire process has proved to be a useful one, resulting in a package which continues to be utilized in day-to-day service delivery, assisting the Employment Development Centre vocational counsellors to do their jobs more efficiently. In

addition, other provincial government departments have expressed an interest in the assessment package and, with some modifications, it can be used in other programs with a vocational focus.

The Employment Development Centre counsellors, having been involved in this process of revisiting the previous assessment package, have been provided with the opportunity to look closely and critically at assessment tools. The assessment package has now been refined to gather more relevant data in a timely fashion, and counsellors clearly have noticed and appreciate the difference. In essence, they have been provided with a new perspective or mindset, and it is expected that they will continue to look critically at instruments and services to continue to improve them, and continue to strive to better meet their clients needs.

This study has reinforced the notion that it is important to look critically at models and instruments and not simply assume they are effective. Additionally, the need for teamwork has become increasingly clear. The importance of staff involvement, motivation and ownership has been emphasized, and this process has allowed the Employment Development Centre counsellors to be active partners in assessment and program development. The need to continually review and design tools to ultimately improve levels of service to clients is fundamental to providing programs that are responsive and effective.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PRINCIPLES CORNERSTONE TO THE EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT CENTRE'S PROGRAM DELIVERY MODEL

1. Voluntary participation helps to provide a screening mechanism which ensures that clients are personally motivated to make changes. (Clients who are motivated have the best chance of success.)
2. Social assistance recipients require a longer term development process which focuses on the positive growth of clients progressing along a continuum of improved functioning towards self-sufficiency.
3. Financial incentives to address financial barriers to participation, and enhance and maintain participant motivation, are considered essential and are included in the program.
4. The best "laid plans" begin with a clear grasp of the problem and the resources that can be accessed. (If the assessment is inaccurate or incomplete, the plan may not work.)
5. There should always be a contingency plan. (There is usually more than one way to reach a goal and unforeseen obstacles can arise.)
6. The client is an adult who owns the problem and must be part of the solution and implementation of any plan. The client exercises informed choices and control. A client who doesn't participate in the solution won't be committed to the plan.

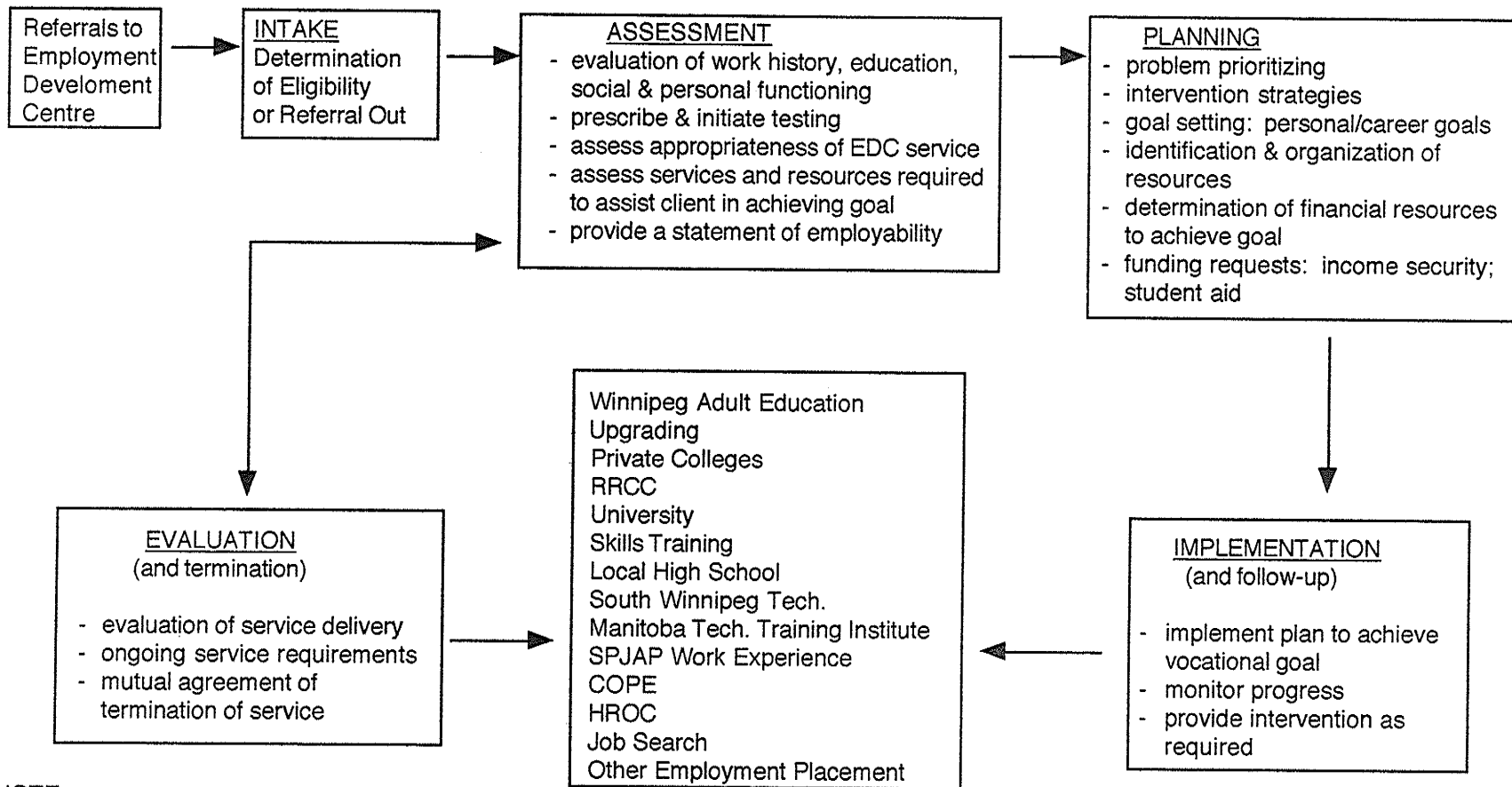
7. Teach the client how to better access resources and to solve their own problems and they will cope better in the future. (Services should empower clients and encourage independence.)
8. Clients should be encouraged to pursue a realistic academic course of attainment that will lead to employment which will offer them and their families economic independence and comfort (i.e. better paying jobs, future advancement possibilities, etc.)
9. Not all clients function effectively in a traditional educational setting. Alternative learning styles should be accommodated.
10. Special training courses which adapt to and consider learning requirements (i.e. show don't tell, provide immediate feedback, etc.) are often best done in a supported environment - where counsellors are available to offer support.
11. A flexible and holistic approach is required to allow for personalized planning based on individual needs.
12. The client's developmental needs are balanced with, but must take priority over, work base commitments or community employer demands.
13. The Employment Development Programs are inter-dependent with the communities in which they are located. (Referrals and requests for

service come from the communities and service is provided to the community.)

14. Clients deserve to be treated with respect. (Treating clients with dignity increases their self-esteem.)
15. Confidentiality is essential, being an ethical code which protects clients. Trust in the counselling relationship is enhanced which facilitates the ability of the counsellor to effect change in the client's behaviour (Special Programs Branch, 1992).

APPENDIX B

EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT CENTRE PARTICIPANT FLOW CHART, PROGRAM PROCESS



NOTE:

- This is a cyclical process involving the implementation of plans on an ongoing basis following completion of initial plan.
- Referral to external resources occurs at any stage of the process.
- Evaluation occurs following each step.

APPENDIX C

ASSESSMENT OF CLIENT EMPLOYABILITY

GUIDELINES FOR INFORMATION GATHERING

February 1991

GUIDELINES FOR INFORMATION GATHERING

This section provides a more detailed listing of potential areas of information gathering related to employability.

1. Work History:

- number of paid jobs
- kind of jobs
- job skills required
- length of jobs
- times of unemployment
- location of jobs - geographic
- reason for leaving jobs: fired, quit, laid off, circumstances
- follow-up with previous employers re work habits/skills
- best/least liked job
- unpaid work
- the ways and means of getting jobs (job search, resumé, agency)
- did you work shift work in previous jobs?

If No Work History:

- why not? (experience, opportunities, at home, etc.)
- why are you looking now? (motivation?)

2. Education History:

- public school - level of achievement
- high/secondary school - level of achievement
- adult education - sponsorships, how many X's
- trades training
- number of schools attended and where?
- positive/negative experience - academic/socially
- importance of education to the person
- subject areas liked/disliked/difficult.

3. Family Background:

- Single - parents (married, single, divorced)
- number of children in family
- general idea of family support
- financial status

- Married - family support for present planning
- aspirations for the family/kids
- availability of child care services

4. Financial Circumstances:

- past/current source of income
- debts
- present living expenses
- assets and present income
- money management skills
- income from spousal maintenance
- C.S.L. in default

5. Medical/Health Concerns:

- physical/mental health problems
- periods of hospitalization and where/why?
- type of medications
- use of medications (frequent/seldom)
- any ongoing medical supervision
- doctor's name/names person sees
- general idea of how person feels about health concerns
- physical aids, if any
- pregnancy

6. Mobility:

- is person prepared/able to relocate
- resources - financial/supportive in new community
- family support towards relocation
- where would person want to relocate
- awareness of advantages/disadvantages of relocation
- reasons for relocation

7. Nature of Community/Clients Relationship to it:

- length of time in community
- support and ties to community (presence/lack of)
- reputation in the community according to community's cultural values/norms

8. Legal Involvement:

- periods of incarceration: number of times and length of stay
- nature of offences
- pending court appearances:
 - what are the charges
 - when is court (day/time)
 - where is court
- fines outstanding:
 - total amount owing
 - when is payment due
 - how much has been paid to date
- warrants outstanding:
 - for what charge(s)
 - when was warrant issued
 - what has been done to respond to warrant
- legal issues regarding separation, divorce, common-law, adoption, child custody, or other family related matters.

9. Extra-Curricular Activities:

- what are they?
- general satisfaction with activities
- transferrable skills from volunteer or other activities

10. Communications/Relating Skills:

- how client expresses him/herself:
 - aggressive
 - assertive
 - passive
- ability to communicate ideas:
 - are statements made clearly
 - is there a sequence to argument
 - are terms defined
- level of verbal skills:
 - choice of words are appropriate
 - pronunciation is correct
 - response is congruent with question
- adaptability to new social situation:
 - behaviour is congruent regardless of setting
- ability to get along with other people:
 - no display of hostility
 - not perceived as isolating
- grooming and personal hygiene
- attending skills:
 - demonstrates through body language and verbal cues that attending is occurring
- Openness to discuss self:
 - self disclosure occurs when prompted
 - appropriate self-disclosure
- appropriateness of social behaviour

11. Peer Contact and Social Relationships:

- personal satisfaction with peer contact

- nature of the peer group and significant social contacts:
 - what social activities is client involved in
 - does client consider peer group supportive
 - have peer relationships resulted in negative social behaviour/activities
- influence of the peer group - positive/negative:
 - are group activities of a positive social nature
 - have peer activities resulted in negative social behaviour
 - has client stated that peer support is negative/positive

12. Problem Solving and Coping Skills:

- can the client apply the problem solving process to day-to-day problems: Work/family/community/self
- gather facts
- define the problem
- identify alternatives
- explore consequences of each alternative
- decide on a solution
- implement a solution
- evaluate the outcome and the process
 - when things are going well, what do you do to celebrate?
 - when things get tough, what do you do?

13. Transportation:

- valid driver's license:
 - class of license
 - driver's abstract
- access to vehicle or other modes of transportation
- reliability of transportation
- familiarity with the city transit system
- can read a bus schedule or a street map

14. Accommodation:

- stability in accommodation: • how many times have you moved in the last few years
- adequacy of present housing:
 - does client identify home as a potential problem area
 - is client identifying a need to relocate
 - are there any landlord/tenant issues
- housing needs:
 - does client feel that housing is satisfactory
 - does housing accommodate family size
 - is housing located too far from training/work/school

15. Vocational Goals:

- undefined: no vocational goal
- defined: vocational goal is stated
- areas of interest: can identify what they like/dislike in terms of employment setting, tasks, and other characteristics
- how realistic is vocational goal: availability of training, education and employment opportunities
- potential to compete in that occupational area:
 - does client fully understand the expectations of the specific vocational field
 - are there specific barriers which would lessen the client's ability to compete with others
- assess level of awareness of occupational areas:
 - can client describe tasks involved
 - is client able to describe physical setting
 - can client identify and describe various jobs within an occupational field or setting

- motivation/personal goals:
 - what has client done to meet personal goals
 - what is client willing to do to meet personal goals
 - how much time is client willing to spend to reach objectives

- aptitudes testing:
 - has client completed any aptitude tests
 - is client academically able to do standard tests
 - is testing necessary to check vocational goal for reality base

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire refers to the current assessment package used by HROP/ HROC/ SPJAP counsellors. Please indicate how you feel about the assessment tool in relation to the following questions/concerns. Number 16 is for comments. Please let us know what you think.

- 1) The current HROP assessment package is sufficient for my use as a vocational counsellor.

_____ strongly agree
_____ agree somewhat
_____ neither agree nor disagree
_____ disagree somewhat
_____ strongly disagree

- 2) Overall, too much information is gathered.

_____ strongly agree
_____ agree somewhat
_____ neither agree nor disagree
_____ disagree somewhat
_____ strongly disagree

- 3) Overall, too little information is gathered.

_____ strongly agree
_____ agree somewhat
_____ neither agree nor disagree
_____ disagree somewhat
_____ strongly disagree

- 4) The degree of specificity of information varies.

_____ strongly agree
_____ agree somewhat
_____ neither agree nor disagree
_____ disagree somewhat
_____ strongly disagree

5) Certain important categories of information are missing.

- strongly agree
- agree somewhat
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree somewhat
- strongly disagree

6) The assessment package should be standardized.

- strongly agree
- agree somewhat
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree somewhat
- strongly disagree

7) The quality of information collected is dependent on the ability of staff to write consistent reports over time and among individuals.

- strongly agree
- agree somewhat
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree somewhat
- strongly disagree

8) The process of compiling this information and reporting longhand is time-consuming.

- strongly agree
- agree somewhat
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree somewhat
- strongly disagree

9) The information collected is quantifiable and available for further analysis, such as for the information that an annual report might require.

- strongly agree
- agree somewhat
- neither agree nor disagree
- disagree somewhat
- strongly disagree

- 10) Program improvement is hampered by the inability to create a data bank to assess general trends.

_____ strongly agree
_____ agree somewhat
_____ neither agree nor disagree
_____ disagree somewhat
_____ strongly disagree

- 11) The form does not provide information in many areas including emotional health, mental health, work ethic, work references, age, etc.

_____ strongly agree
_____ agree somewhat
_____ neither agree nor disagree
_____ disagree somewhat
_____ strongly disagree

- 12) More information is requested in some areas than may be needed to assess a client's employability level.

_____ strongly agree
_____ agree somewhat
_____ neither agree nor disagree
_____ disagree somewhat
_____ strongly disagree

- 13) The topics encompass both very general and very specific areas but not each to the same degree.

_____ strongly agree
_____ agree somewhat
_____ neither agree nor disagree
_____ disagree somewhat
_____ strongly disagree

- 14) It is difficult to complete the form in a consistent and time-efficient manner.

_____ strongly agree
_____ agree somewhat
_____ neither agree nor disagree
_____ disagree somewhat
_____ strongly disagree

15) No clear directions are provided about expectations for report preparation.

- _____ strongly agree
- _____ agree somewhat
- _____ neither agree nor disagree
- _____ disagree somewhat
- _____ strongly disagree

16) Comments:

APPENDIX E

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT CENTRE
2156 Brunswick Street
Room #100
Alexandra Centre
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3K 2Y8
TELEPHONE: 421-7868

ASSESSMENT
FORM

CLIENT NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ASSESSMENT WORKER: _____

	<u>Employment Strengths</u>	<u>Low Employment Barriers</u>	<u>Moderate Employment Barriers</u>	<u>High Employment Barriers</u>
A) EDUCATION: What is the highest education level obtained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completed Post Secondary - Journeyman Trade Certificate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic Grade 12 - Apprentice Level - Some Post Secondary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grade 10, 11 - Grade 12 General - GED 12 - BSTD Training *CAAT Test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grade 0-3 - Grade 9 - Special Education - Alternative School Programs

COMMENTS: _____

B) SKILLS: That is, a combination of formal skill training and/or on-the-job training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paper qualification and practical experience on the job. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paper qualifications NO experience or - Short term experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only on-the-job training NO paper qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sporadic work history in early level work
---	--	--	--	---

COMMENTS: _____

C) WORK EXPERIENCE: That is labour force attachment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stable employment history; full time or permanent part-time work. - Has worked within last year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seasonal work: consistent. - Self Employed - Contract Worker - Has worked within last year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Casual or on-call work - Sporadic employment history. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Never worked - Has not worked in last 2 years or longer. - Less than 1 year work experience.
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COMMENTS: _____

	<u>Employment Strengths</u>	<u>Low Employment Barriers</u>	<u>Moderate Employment Barriers</u>	<u>High Employment Barriers</u>
D) JOB MARKET FACTOR: That is, skills and work experience coincide with local labour market demands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stable permanent employment opportunities available. - Skills in demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seasonal employment. - Skills are needed but not locally, willing to relocate. - Skills not in demand; willing to consider re-training or other occupation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment opportunities changing or decreasing - Retraining necessary but not immediately available. - Limited employment opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recent industry shut-down lay-off. - Skills not in demand locally; unwilling to relocate. - Skills not in demand; unwilling or unable to retrain.

COMMENTS: _____

E) WORK RELATED ACTIVITY: That is, recency of work related activities, skills and habits, e.g. training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work related activity and routine within last 3 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work related activity and routine within last 3 to 6 months 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work related activity 7 months to 1 year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No work related activity routine for more than 1 year
--	--	---	--	---

COMMENTS: _____

F) JOB SEARCH SKILLS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well prepared resumé - Verbal in interview and high Personal sale-ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has job search skills but needs more input ideas. - Could benefit from referrals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires resumé - Has limited job search techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not looking for work or sporadically seeking work - Cannot complete application
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<u>Employment Strengths</u>	<u>Low Employment Barriers</u>	<u>Moderate Employment Barriers</u>	<u>High Employment Barriers</u>
F) JOB SEARCH SKILLS, continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has job search skills but needs new input 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not aware of or cannot use job search techniques - Doesn't understand labour market conditions.

COMMENTS: _____

G) INCOME NEEDS: Re: Wage expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Earning potential is realistic given qualification and experience. - Financial situation is in control - Financial independence is an important value - Awareness of community resources, i.e. Food Banks - Willingness to accept lower paying job or short term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Somewhat unrealistic income expectations - Debt load is a concern but currently manageable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires financial counselling, assistance with budgeting - Not aware of community resources - Questionable if earning potential will be a financial benefit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited earning potential impacts in financial motivation - Unrealistic income expectations - Long term dependence on income assistance; greater than 1 year
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COMMENTS: _____

	<u>Employment Strengths</u>	<u>Low Employment Barriers</u>	<u>Moderate Employment Barriers</u>	<u>High Employment Barriers</u>
H) M.S.A. HISTORY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First time in receipt of assistance - Length of time in receipt of assistance 1-3 months - M.S.A. supplements UIC or wages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - M.S.A. recipient 4 to 6 months; M.S.A. supplements UIC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - M.S.A. recipient 7 months to 1 year - UIC exhausted - Not eligible for UIC - Has been in receipt of assistance in past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - M.S.A. recipient for more than 1 year - In receipt of assistance 3 times or more

COMMENTS:

I) LITERACY: Refers to CAAT levels	I) READING: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Functional; CAAT Level C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can read words but difficulties with comprehending CAAT Level B 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Word recognition but limited vocabulary and comprehension CAAT Level A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cannot recognize words - Cannot read sentences
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COMMENTS

II) WRITING: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fluent writing style - Complete sentences - Correct spelling and grammar - Completed application form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mixes upper and lower case letters - Uses script and print alternatively - Spelling errors - Grammar errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can only complete parts of application - Answers with single word responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cannot fill out application form
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Employment Strengths

Low Employment Barriers

Moderate Employment Barriers

High Employment Barriers

I) LITERACY - WRITING, continued

COMMENTS:

III) NUMERACY:
- CAAT LEVEL 'C'

CAAT LEVEL 'B'

CAAT LEVEL 'A'

Cannot perform
basic operations

COMMENTS:

J) AGE:

- 25 to 45 years old

- 21 to 24 years old

- 19 to 10; 45 to
54 years old

- 18 or under;
over 55 years old

COMMENTS:

K) PHYSICAL HEALTH:

- Good physical health

- Stable medical
condition

- Pregnancy

- Chronic medical
problems

- Minor or short term
health problem

- Some limitation to
employment due to
medical problems;
i.e. migraine, bad back

- Unstable medical
condition

- Terminal illness

COMMENTS:

<u>Employment Strengths</u>	<u>Low Employment Barriers</u>	<u>Moderate Employment Barriers</u>	<u>High Employment Barriers</u>	
L) MENTAL HEALTH:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good mental health, i.e. good self esteem, good coping skills, good control of his/her life, good understanding of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Situational short term mental health problem or expressing difficulty coping with employment or family - Recognizes problem and willing to actively work with related community resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On medication - Mental health problem which is stable - Willing to seek help but unaware of resources - Actively involved in mental health community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chronic ill health; Unstable - Activity involved daily/weekly with mental health community - Heavily medicated - Denial of mental health problem - Confused, fragmented thoughts and ideas - Unable to concentrate on any topic - Withdrawn, over- animated

COMMENTS:

	<u>Employment Strengths</u>	<u>Low Employment Barriers</u>	<u>Moderate Employment Barriers</u>	<u>High Employment Barriers</u>
M) SUBSTANCE ABUSE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No involvement in substance abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No involvement in substance abuse in last 2 years - Aware of resources - Good support system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No involvement in 6 months to 2 years - Actively involved in life style change - May need use of community resource periodically - Current impaired driving charge or repeated driving charge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Denial of substance abuse - Active substance abuse user - Substance abuse affecting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Employment ii) Family iii) Health iv) Law v) Social Contacts - Recover less than 6 months

COMMENTS:

N) PERSONAL RESOURCES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has good family/ personal support - All conditions stable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some support systems in place - Recently resolved personal problems - Child care reliable with back-up system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of personal problems unstable; i.e. family situation relocated recently, unaware but willing to utilize community resources - Inconsistent care of dependents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crisis personal situation severe - Family illness, domestic problems at crisis level - Unaware of or not willing to seek community resources
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	<u>Employment Strengths</u>	<u>Low Employment Barriers</u>	<u>Moderate Employment Barriers</u>	<u>High Employment Barriers</u>
N) PERSONAL RESOURCES, continued			- No back-up support system for child care	- Dependent requires 24 hour care and no care available
COMMENTS:	_____	_____	_____	_____
O) HOUSING:	- Permanent address - Adequate accommodation	- Has adequate housing but seeking new accommodations - Planning a move in the near future	- Half-way house, group home setting, temporary shelter - Seeking better accommodations; rent is too high for income level	- Homeless or unsafe living accommodations - Pending eviction - Has had more than 3 moves last year
COMMENTS:	_____	_____	_____	_____
P) PHONE:	- Has resident phone or message machine	- Has phone at easy access outside of their residence - Reliable phone number for message	- Limited access to phone - No reliable phone number for messages	- No phone and no number to leave messages
COMMENTS:	_____	_____	_____	_____
Q) TRANSPORTATION:	- One vehicle or reliable public transit - Valid driver's licence	- Access to reliable private transportation system	- Infrequent public transit system to employment site	- No access to public transportation and no vehicle
COMMENTS:	_____	_____	_____	_____

	<u>Employment Strengths</u>	<u>Low Employment Barriers</u>	<u>Moderate Employment Barriers</u>	<u>High Employment Barriers</u>
R) LEGAL:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No record and no involvement with the law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Criminal record not within 5 years - Court or family suit pending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involved in probation services - Has suspended sentence - Owes fines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recent criminal record - On parole - Have charges pending

COMMENTS: _____

S) VOCATIONAL GOALS: Client knowing what he wants to do (Work-Define) (Training-Define) as it relates to the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific vocational goals - Attainable and realistic goals related to present labour market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has specific vocational goals but needs training/work experience and has ability to be retrained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has some ideas of goals but requires clarification - Has some developed skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has no idea of goal - Has unrealistic goals related to training or education - Has little education or training - Indecisive - Does not have ability to obtain goals they want
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COMMENTS: _____

	<u>Employment Strengths</u>	<u>Low Employment Barriers</u>	<u>Moderate Employment Barriers</u>	<u>High Employment Barriers</u>
T) WORK ATTITUDES: Observe behaviour Assessor sees and hears through interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good grooming - Maintenance of eye contact - Punctual for appointment - Appropriate response to questions - Self-directed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Punctual - Open to guidance in seeking employment or training - Open to new ideas or suggestions from other sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural values may conflict with employment - Difficulty understanding questions - Sporadic contact - Hesitant, unsure about direction - Willingness to review suggestions is questionable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural values seriously limit employment opportunities. - Frequently cancelled appointments - No eye contact - Answers mono syllables - Raises voice unnecessarily - Inflexible in employment choices - Inappropriate comments

COMMENTS:

Alberta EMPLOYABILITY ASSESSMENT

Employment Support Services

- This assessment consists of two parts, pages 1 to 3. Please complete all pages and process as instructed.
- For each factor, please tick the box which best describes the client's situation. In cases where more than one statement may apply, choose the barrier which would most inhibit the client's ability to obtain employment.

Last Name			First Name			Marital Status		
Reason	Assessment Date	Sex	Date of Birth	Age	# Dept.	Home/Message Phone		
Occupation			Primary			Secondary (if applicable)		
Treaty Indian YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	Country of Origin		Date Arrived		Alberta Resident for more than one year YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>			

FACTOR	LOW BARRIER	MODERATE BARRIER	HIGH BARRIER	COMMENTS
A. EDUCATION • highest completed education level • accredited training	Diploma/Training <input type="checkbox"/> Trade Certificate <input type="checkbox"/> Post Secondary <input type="checkbox"/> _____ specify	Grade 10 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 11 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 12 <input type="checkbox"/>	Grade 0 - 8 <input type="checkbox"/> Grade 9 <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education <input type="checkbox"/>	
B. WORK EXPERIENCE • labour force attachment, marketability reliability	Stable employment history, full time or permanent part-time employment <input type="checkbox"/>	Sporadic employment, history of layoffs, quitting <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time or casual employment <input type="checkbox"/>	Never worked <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year work experience <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed for one year or more <input type="checkbox"/>	
C. WORK REFERENCES • reputation in the labour market	Positive work references available <input type="checkbox"/>	References not available or questionable <input type="checkbox"/>	References not favourable <input type="checkbox"/>	
D. SKILL LEVEL • combination of formal skill training and/or on-the-job training	Skilled <input type="checkbox"/>	Semi-skilled <input type="checkbox"/> Skills not recently used <input type="checkbox"/>	Unskilled <input type="checkbox"/>	
E. INCOME NEEDS • earning potential compared to expectations • importance of financial independence	Realistic income expectations, <input type="checkbox"/>	Somewhat unrealistic income expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Income requirement exceeds earning potential <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrealistic income expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Refuses to accept low paying job <input type="checkbox"/> Limited earning potential impacts motivation <input type="checkbox"/>	

FACTOR	LOW BARRIER	MODERATE BARRIER	HIGH BARRIER	COMMENTS
F. JOB MARKET FACTORS • skills and work experience coincide with labour market demands	Stable, permanent employment opportunities available/skills in demand <input type="checkbox"/>	Seasonal employment <input type="checkbox"/> Employment opportunities decreasing <input type="checkbox"/>	Limited employment opportunities/skills not in demand <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> _____ Specify	
G. CRIMINAL RECORD • impact on type of employment sought.	Not applicable <input type="checkbox"/>	Does not limit job options <input type="checkbox"/>	Limits job options <input type="checkbox"/>	
H. PHYSICAL HEALTH • well-being/ physical limitations may restrict type of job or training	Good physical health <input type="checkbox"/>	Minor or short term health problems <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy (first 2 trimesters) <input type="checkbox"/> Stable medical condition <input type="checkbox"/>	Chronic physical complaints <input type="checkbox"/> Unstable medical condition <input type="checkbox"/> _____ Specify Long term illness <input type="checkbox"/>	
I. DRUG/ALCOHOL • impact on employment/lifestyle	Not applicable <input type="checkbox"/>	Suspected substance abuse <input type="checkbox"/> Inactive drug/alcohol dependence <input type="checkbox"/>	Active drug/alcohol dependence <input type="checkbox"/>	
J. PRESENTATION • the interview is the entry into employment	Favourable presentation/appearance <input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation/appearance may affect employability <input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation/appearance will impact employability <input type="checkbox"/>	
K. MENTAL HEALTH • psychological well-being	Good mental/psychological health <input type="checkbox"/>	Short-term health concerns <input type="checkbox"/> Situational stresses impacting well-being <input type="checkbox"/>	Chronic psychological ill health <input type="checkbox"/>	
L. MOTIVATION/SELF IMAGE/VALUES • includes cultural factors	Positive attitudes values independence <input type="checkbox"/>	Self concept/attitudes may affect employability <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural values may conflict with work requirement <input type="checkbox"/>	Negative self concept/attitudes will limit ability to get employment <input type="checkbox"/> Accepts financial dependence <input type="checkbox"/>	
M. FAMILY HEALTH • well-being of dependents and/or spouse	No health problems <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable <input type="checkbox"/>	Some medical needs which may interfere with work <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> _____ Specify	Problems of spouse or children interferes with work <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> _____ Specify	

FACTOR	LOW BARRIER	MODERATE BARRIER	HIGH BARRIER	COMMENTS
N. CHILD CARE • complexity of child care arrangements • compatibility of working hours relative to child care	Reliable child care including back-up support <input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable <input type="checkbox"/>	Care available but no back-up support <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> _____ Specify	Child(ren) with special needs <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate/appropriate child care not available <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> _____ Specify	
O. AGE • can be a factor in screening	25-34 years <input type="checkbox"/>	35-44 years <input type="checkbox"/>	16-24 years <input type="checkbox"/> 45 or more years <input type="checkbox"/>	
P. TRANSPORTATION • accessibility of work/training sites	Vehicle/public transport available and accessible <input type="checkbox"/>	License suspended <input type="checkbox"/> Public transport impractical <input type="checkbox"/>	No accessible public transport and no vehicle <input type="checkbox"/>	
Q. TELEPHONE • accessibility of client to potential employers	Resident telephone <input type="checkbox"/>	Message system <input type="checkbox"/>	Unable to obtain a telephone (outstanding account, poor credit rating) <input type="checkbox"/>	
R. ACCOMMODATION • stability of living situation	Safe/adequate affordable housing <input type="checkbox"/>	In need of adequate housing <input type="checkbox"/>	Housing inadequate/unsafe <input type="checkbox"/> High rent, eviction, transience <input type="checkbox"/>	
S. LITERACY • hiring practices rely on communication skills	Fluent English (written and spoken) <input type="checkbox"/>	Functional, can complete forms <input type="checkbox"/> Spoken English satisfactory, poor written skills <input type="checkbox"/>	Unable to read or speak English fluently/unable to fill out applications <input type="checkbox"/>	
T. VOCATIONAL GOALS • a sense of direction	Realistic/attainable goals; definite plan of action <input type="checkbox"/>	Unclear but flexible/realistic <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrealistic/lacks goals; immature/indecisive <input type="checkbox"/>	

SUMMARY: Identify (by letter) major employment barriers.

Using this information, arrive at a conclusion as to the client's ability to obtain and maintain competitive employment and identify the support services required to make this transition.

CLIENT'S NAME _____

APPENDIX G

DATE & SOURCE OF REFERRAL _____

DATE OF INTAKE ASSESSMENT _____

COUNSELLOR _____

(circle all appropriate indicators)

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
I. AGE (can be a factor in screening)	- 25 - 40 years	- 21 - 24 years - 41 - 44 years	- 19 - 20 years - 45 - 54 years - 18 years or under - 55 years or older	
II. EDUCATION LEVEL ATTAINED (highest) (accredited training highest completed education level)	- completed post-secondary - journeyman trade certificate	- some post-secondary - completed Grade 12 (U.E.) - trades training - grade 10-11 - grade 12 (business/vocational) - GED (XII) - adult basic education (upgraded) - education in another country	- grades 1-6 - grades 7-9 - special education - alternative school programs	
III. LITERACY/LANGUAGE written work ability to locate work/training (i.e. read, write) hiring practices rely on ability to communicate	- fluent English (written & spoken) - strong spelling and grammar skills - knowledge of other languages - strong learning ability	- spelling/grammar errors - can only complete parts of application forms - limited vocabulary - difficult to understand at times	- unable to speak English fluently - unable to complete applications, poor pronunciation, cannot read - learning ability questionable	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW-MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
IV. SKILL LEVEL (SKILLS) (combination of formal skill training and/or on-the-job training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - skilled (practical experiences on the job) - paper qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - paper qualifications but no experience - only on-the-job training that is short term - skills not recently used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unskilled 	
V. WORK EXPERIENCE (employment history) (labour force attachment) (marketability) (number & length of jobs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stable employment (full-time or permanent part-time) - has worked within last year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seasonal work (consistent) - self-employment - contract work - sporadic work history - variety-short term jobs only - casual work (on call) - history of lay-offs/quitting - fired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - never been employed - has not been employed in last 2 years - less than 1 year of work experience - numerous job losses 	
VI. WORK RELATED ACTIVITY (volunteer work) clubs, hobbies (work habits development of routine/ organization & recent participation/extra-curricular activity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extensive volunteer work - work related activity and routine within last three months - well organized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work related activity and routine within last three years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no work related activity or routine - lack of organizational skills 	
VII. JOB/LABOUR MARKET FACTORS (skills & work experience coincide with labour market demands)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stable permanent employment opportunities available - skills in demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited to seasonal and/or part-time work - limited/decreasing employment opportunities - retraining required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extremely limited or no employment opportunities - skills not in demand (surplus) - training unavailable 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
VIII. JOB SEARCH SKILLS (and reputation in labour market)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - well prepared resumé - has references - well developed job search techniques - personal saleability - solid knowledge of labour market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has some job search skills - resumé needs work - limited job search skills/ techniques - no references 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not motivated to look for work - no job search skills - cannot complete applications - no understanding of labour market conditions - no/poor references - no resumé 	
IX. INCOME NEEDS (wage expectations) (earning potential compared to expectations, importance of financial independence, money managing skills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - realistic income expectations - financial situation in control (good money management) financial independence is important value - willing to accept short term or lower paying job - aware of community resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some problems with budgeting in past - income requirement exceeds earning ability, questionable if earning potential will be of financial benefit - somewhat unrealistic income expectations - requires financial counselling/ assistance with budgeting - high debt load - Canada Student Loan default 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unrealistic income expectations - limited earning potential impacts on financial motivation - long term PSA dependence - refusal to accept entry level wages - training allowance/wage will not meet needs 	
X. PROVINCIAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE (PSA HISTORY) (dependence/ stability patterns)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on P.S.A. three months or less - first time in receipt of P.S.A. - supplemented only by P.S.A. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on P.S.A. less than 6 months - supplemented (ie) wages or UIC - not eligible for UIC - has been in receipt of P.S.A. (any assistance) in past - on P.S.A. greater than 6 months - 2 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on P.S.A. greater than two years - on P.S.A. greater than 2 separate times 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
XI. VOCATIONAL GOALS (sense of direction, client knowing what he wants to do work/ training as it relates to the labour market, goal setting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - specific vocational goals (solid sense of direction) - attainable and realistic goals - definite plan of action - good knowledge of resources - has undergone testing to support vocational goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has specific goals and abilities but requires retraining - needs further career/ training information (little knowledge of resources) - has short term goals - requires clarification - knows interests, but no knowledge of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no idea of goal (undefined) - unrealistic goals related to training or education - indecisive - immature - does not have ability to plan or obtain goals 	
XII. PHYSICAL HEALTH (well being/physical limitations; accommodation required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good physical health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - minor or short term health problem - stable medical condition (controlled by medication) - some limitation or accommodation to employment due to medical problems (ie frequent migraines, bad back) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - major or long term health problem 	
XIII. FAMILY HEALTH CONCERNS (well being of dependents/ spouse or close family members, affects commitment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no health problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - two or more young children (day care or early school age) - some medical needs which may interfere with work (ie children - frequent medical appointments, asthma, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - family member with disability/special needs - family member frequently hospitalized - more than one family member with medical concern/need - family member requiring 24 hour care - no reliable care available 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
XIV. MENTAL HEALTH (psychological well-being)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good mental/ psychological health - good coping skills, solid self-esteem and control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - situational short term mental health problems affect coping - recognizes problem but has knowledge of resources and is willing to work actively - previous hospitalization (unstable diagnosis) on medication - unaware of resources - situational stresses impact well-being - involved in mental health community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - chronic ill health/unstable heavily medicated - denial of mental health problem - confused, fragmented thoughts and ideas - depressed - unable to concentrate - actively involved with mental health (outpatient) 	
XV. FAMILY (BACKGROUND/ SUPPORTS) (is there a pattern/cycle, marital status?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reports/speaks of happy childhood - stable - contact with one or more family of origin members regularly - positive family role models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contact with one positive role model from family of origin - a number of significant problems in family of origin - no family of origin role models that are positive - family of origin dependent on client 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reports/speaks of unhappy childhood - multi-problem family of origin - second generation welfare dependence - cut all ties with family of origin 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
XVI.PERSONAL RESOURCES/ SOCIAL NETWORK & SUPPORT SYSTEM social network & support system (community resources, is there support for clients undertakings)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has good family/personal support - all conditions stable - aware of community resources - involved in a community activity (clubs, hobbies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some support systems in place - aware of some resources available - willing to utilize - number of personal problems - unstable with few supports available, willing to utilize - number of personal problems - recently relocated with few contacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - crisis: personal situation severe - unaware of or not willing to seek community resources/supports - unhealthy social network 	
XVII.COMMUNICATION SKILLS (hiring practices rely on ability to communicate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - solid communication skills (verbal and written) - relates appropriately to others (good inter-personal skills) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relates inappropriately to others at times - unclear statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - poor verbal and written communication skills - consistently inappropriate communication - oblivious to affect on others 	
XVIII.PROBLEM SOLVING/ COPING SKILLS (can client solve problems that may arise, client perception of problem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stable - accepts constructive criticism and takes positive steps - proven ability to cope (good skills) - can define problems and explore consequences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inconsistent coping methods - some negative reaction to criticism - few coping skills - little ability to problem solve - cannot define problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - does nothing about constructive criticism or has negative reactions - unrealistic perceptions - no problem solving skills (immobilized) panics - unaware of consequences of actions 	
XIX.PRESENTATION/ APPEARANCE (the interview is the entry to employment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - favourable presentation/appearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - moderate change in presentation/appearance required - presentation/appearance may impact on employability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation/appearance will impact employability negatively - poor grooming/hygiene - clothing unkept 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW-MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
XX. MOTIVATION/ SELF-IMAGE (is client committed to employment accountability and responsibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive attitudes - strong sense of self (self-directed) - motivated/organized - maintains eye contact - assertive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - willingness to review issues/ suggestions - shy - requires some confidence building - sporadic eye contact - hesitant/unsure about direction - self-concept may affect employability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - negative self-concept - answers mono-syllables - passive/aggressive - no eye contact - hostile or withdrawn - unmotivated 	
XXI. LEGAL ISSUES/ CRIMINAL RECORD (impact on type of employment sought)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no record - no involvement with the law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - doing community work to pay off fines (fine-option) - court/family suit pending - criminal record over 5 years old - involved with probation services - owes fines/warrants outstanding, has suspended sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recent criminal record - previous record of incarceration - on parole - charges pending - custody (of children) removed - serious nature of offenses 	
XXII. SUBSTANCE ABUSE (ALCOHOL/DRUGS) (impact on employment lifestyle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no involvement in substance abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no involvement in substance abuse in over 2 years (inactive drug/alcohol dependence) - actively involved in lifestyle change - aware of resources/support - suspected alcohol/drug use - past involvement in residential treatment or detox - current impaired driving charge or repeated drinking charges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - active drug/alcohol dependence - denial of known substance abuse - substance abuse affecting <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) employment 2) family 3) health 4) law 5) social contact - less than six months sobriety/recovery 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
XXIII.HOUSING/ ACCOMMODATION (stability of living situation - practicality, length of time in community area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - permanent address - safe/adequate affordable housing - stable (in same place over 4 years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seeking better accommodations, housing (rooms) too small - must move in near future - has adequate housing but seeking new accommodations - lien on house - half-way house, group home - temporary shelter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - homeless - housing inadequate or unsafe - landlord/tenant issues pending eviction (forced move) - has had more than 3 moves last year (transient) - rent is too high (for income level) 	
XXIV.TELEPHONE (accessibility of client to potential employers, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has residential telephone - has answering machine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reliable phone number for messages - phone at easy access outside residence - limited access to telephone (or messages) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unable to obtain a telephone - no reliable phone number for messages 	
XXV.TRANSPORTATION/ MOBILITY (accessibility of work/ training sites - day care mobility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - valid drivers license - reliable access to vehicle or public transit - prepared to relocate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - license not applied for - access to private transportation system - no reliable private transportation - public transportation available but inconvenient or impractical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no access to public transportation and no vehicle - unfamiliar with transportation system - license suspended 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW-MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
XXVI.CHILD CARE (complexity of child care arrangements) (compatibility of working hours relative to child care)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - none required (not applicable) - reliable affordable child care - reliable back-up arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reliable/affordable care available but no back-up support - only private care available (costly) - works shifts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - children with special needs - child under 1 year old - no adequate/appropriate child care - five or more children under 12 	
XXVII.OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT (and past involvement, knowledge of resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - aware of resources but not in need - working with employment related agencies (ie, registered) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - working with employment services (longer than a year) - unaware of employment agencies support - second HROP involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - completely unaware of community/agencies and resources - involved with: probation services or child and family services, etc. for over 2 years re: serious ongoing issues 	
XXVIII.WORK ATTITUDES/ VALUES cultural barriers (includes attitudes, observe behaviour, assessor sees and hears through interview)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - values independence - punctual - good grooming - appropriate responses to questions - seeks feedback - responsible - flexible/adaptable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - open to guidance in seeking employment or training - open to new ideas or suggestions from other sources - cultural values may conflict with work requirements - difficulty understanding questions - willingness to review suggestions is questionable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accepts financial dependence - cultural values seriously limit employment opportunities - irresponsible - inflexible in employment choices - raises voice unnecessarily - disruptive - inappropriate comments/ inflexible 	

EMPLOYABILITY ASSESSMENT INDEX
PART I - ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX H

CLIENT'S NAME _____ DATE OF INTAKE ASSESSMENT _____

DATE & SOURCE OF REFERRAL _____ COUNSELLOR _____

(circle all appropriate indicators)

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
1. AGE (can be a factor in screening)	- 25 - 40 years	- 21 - 24 years - 41 - 44 years	- 19 - 20 years - 45 - 54 years - 18 years or under - 55 years or older	
2. EDUCATION LEVEL ATTAINED (highest) (accredited training highest completed education level)	- completed post-secondary - journeyman trade certificate	- some post-secondary - completed Grade 12 (U.E.) - trades training - grade 10-11 - grade 12 (business/vocational) - GED (XII) - adult basic education (upgraded) - education in another country	- grades 1-6 - grades 7-9 - special education - alternative school programs	
3. LITERACY/LANGUAGE written work ability to locate work/training (i.e. read, write) - hiring practices rely on ability to communicate	- fluent English - written - fluent English - spoken - strong spelling and grammar skills - knowledge of other languages - strong learning ability	- spelling/grammar errors - can only complete parts of application forms - limited vocabulary - difficult to understand at times	- unable to speak English fluently - unable to complete applications, poor pronunciation, cannot read - learning ability questionable	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
4. SKILL LEVEL (SKILLS) (combination of formal skill training and/or on-the-job training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - skilled (practical experiences on the job) - paper qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - paper qualifications but no experience - only on-the-job training that is short term - skills not recently used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unskilled 	
5. WORK EXPERIENCE (employment history) (labour force attachment) (marketability) (number & length of jobs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stable employment history (full-time or permanent part-time) - has worked within last year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seasonal work (consistent) - self-employment - contract work - sporadic work history - variety-short term jobs only - casual work (on call) - history of lay-offs/quitting - fired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - never been employed - has not been employed in last 2 years - less than 1 year of work experience - numerous job losses 	
6. WORK RELATED ACTIVITY (volunteer work) clubs, hobbies (work habits development of routine/ organization & recent participation/extra-curricular activity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extensive volunteer work - work related activity and routine within last three months - well organized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work related activity and routine within last three years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no work related activity or routine - lack of organizational skills 	
7. JOB/LABOUR MARKET FACTORS (skills & work experience coincide with local labour market demands)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stable permanent employment opportunities available - skills in demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - limited to seasonal and/or part-time work - limited/decreasing employment opportunities - retraining required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - extremely limited or no employment opportunities - skills not in demand (surplus) - training unavailable 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW-MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
8. JOB SEARCH SKILLS (and reputation in labour market)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - well prepared resumé - has references - well developed job search techniques (interview experience) - personal saleability - solid knowledge of labour market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has some job search skills - resumé needs work - limited job search skills/ techniques - poor references 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not motivated to look for work - no job search skills - cannot complete applications - no understanding of labour market conditions - no personal marketing skills - no resumé - no references 	
9. INCOME NEEDS (wage expectations) (earning potential compared to expectations, importance of financial independence, money managing skills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - realistic income expectations - financial situation in control (good money management) financial independence is important value - willing to accept short term or lower paying job - aware of community resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some problems with budgeting in past - income requirement exceeds earning ability, questionable if earning potential will be of financial benefit - somewhat unrealistic income expectations - requires financial counselling/ assistance with budgeting - high debt load - Canada Student Loan in default 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unrealistic income expectations - limited earning potential impacts on financial motivation - long term PSA dependence - refusal to accept entry level wages - training allowance/wage will not meet needs 	
10. PROVINCIAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE (PSA HISTORY) (MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE) (dependence/ stability patterns)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on P.S.A. (Municipal) three months or less - first time in receipt of P.S.A./Municipal - supplemented only by P.S.A./Municipal - not on social assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on P.S.A./Municipal less than 6 months - supplemented (ie) wages or UIC - not eligible for UIC - has been in receipt of P.S.A. (any assistance) in past - on P.S.A./Municipal greater than 6 months - 2 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on P.S.A./Municipal greater than two years - on P.S.A./Municipal greater than 2 separate times 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW-MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
11. VOCATIONAL GOALS (sense of direction, client knowing what he wants to do work/ training as it relates to the labour market, goal setting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - specific vocational goals (solid sense of direction) - attainable and realistic goals - definite plan of action - good knowledge of resources - has undergone testing to support vocational goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has specific goals & abilities but requires retraining - needs further career/ training information (little knowledge of resources) - has short term goals - has some idea of goals - requires clarification - knows interests, but no knowledge of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no idea of goal (undefined) - unrealistic goals related to training or education - indecisive - immature - does not have ability to plan or obtain goals 	
12. PHYSICAL HEALTH (well being/physical limitations; accommodation required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good physical health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - minor or short term health problem - stable medical condition (controlled by medication) - some limitation or accommodation to employment due to medical problems (ie frequent migraines, bad back) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - major or long term health problem 	
13. FAMILY HEALTH CONCERNS (well being of dependents/ spouse or close family members, affects commitment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no health problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - two or more young children (day care or early school age) - some medical needs which may interfere with work (ie children - frequent medical appointments, asthma, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - family member with disability/special needs - family member frequently hospitalized - more than one family member with medical concern/need - family member requiring 24 hour care - no reliable care available 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
14. MENTAL HEALTH (psychological well-being)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good mental/ psychological health - good coping skills - demonstrates positive self-esteem and control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - situational short term mental health problems affect coping - recognizes problem but has knowledge of resources and is willing to work actively - previous hospitalization (unstable diagnosis), on medication - unaware of resources - situational stresses impact well-being - involved in mental health community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - chronic ill health/unstable heavily medicated - denial of mental health problem - confused, fragmented thoughts and ideas - depressed - unable to concentrate - actively involved with mental health (outpatient) 	
15. FAMILY (BACKGROUND/ SUPPORTS) (is there a pattern/cycle, marital status?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reports/speaks of happy childhood - stable - contact with one or more family of origin members regularly - positive family role models - positive family support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - contact with one positive role model from family of origin - a number of significant problems in family of origin - no family of origin role models that are positive - family of origin dependent on client 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reports/speaks of unhappy childhood - multi-problem family of origin - second generation welfare dependence - cut all ties with family of origin - family responds negatively to change 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
16. PERSONAL RESOURCES/ SOCIAL NETWORK & SUPPORT SYSTEM social network & support system (community resources, is there support for clients undertakings?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has good family/personal support - all conditions stable - aware of community resources - involved in a community activity (clubs, hobbies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some support systems in place - aware of some resources available - willing to utilize - number of personal problems - unstable with few supports available, willing to utilize - number of personal problems - recently relocated with few contacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - crisis: personal situation severe - unaware of or not willing to seek community resources/supports - unhealthy social network 	
17. COMMUNICATION SKILLS (hiring practices rely on ability to communicate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - effective verbal communication skills - effective written communication skills - relates appropriately to others (good inter-personal skills) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relates inappropriately to others at times - unclear statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - poor verbal communication skills - poor written communication skills - consistently inappropriate communication - oblivious to affect on others 	
18. PROBLEM SOLVING/ COPING SKILLS (can client solve problems that may arise, client perception of problem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stable - accepts constructive criticism and takes positive steps - proven ability to cope (good skills) - can define problems and explore consequences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inconsistent coping methods - some negative reaction to criticism - few coping skills - little ability to problem solve - cannot define problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - does nothing about constructive criticism or has negative reactions - unrealistic perceptions - no problem solving skills (immobilized), panics - unaware of consequences of actions 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
19. PRESENTATION/ APPEARANCE (the interview is the entry to employment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - favourable presentation/ appearance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - moderate changes in presentation/ appearance required - presentation/appearance may impact on employability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - presentation/appearance will impact employability negatively - poor grooming/hygiene - clothing unkept 	
20. MOTIVATION/ SELF-IMAGE (is client committed to employment accountability and responsibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive attitudes - strong sense of self (self-directed) - motivated - asserts self in a positive manner - organized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shy - requires some confidence building - sporadic eye contact - hesitant/unsure about direction but has a willingness to review issues/suggestions - self-concept may affect employability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - negative self-concept - answers mono-syllables - passive - no eye contact - hostile or withdrawn - unmotivated - aggressive 	
21. LEGAL ISSUES/ CRIMINAL RECORD (impact on type of employment sought)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no record - no involvement with the law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - doing community work to pay off fines (fine-option) - court/family suit pending - criminal record over 5 years old - involved with probation services - owes fines/warrants outstanding, has suspended sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - recent criminal record - previous record of incarceration - on parole - charges pending - custody (of children) removed - serious nature of offenses 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
22. SUBSTANCE ABUSE (ALCOHOL/DRUGS) (impact on employment/lifestyle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no involvement in substance abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no involvement in substance abuse in over 2 years (inactive drug/alcohol dependence) - actively involved in lifestyle change - aware of resources/support - suspected alcohol/drug use - past involvement in residential treatment or detox - current impaired driving charge or repeated drinking charges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - active drug/alcohol dependence - denial of known substance abuse - substance abuse affecting <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) employment 2) family 3) health 4) law 5) social contact - less than six months sobriety/recovery 	
23. HOUSING/ ACCOMMODATION (stability of living situation - practicality, length of time in community area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - permanent address - safe/adequate affordable housing - stable (in same place over 4 years) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - seeking better accommodations, housing (rooms) too small - must move in near future - has adequate housing but seeking new accommodations - lien on house - half-way house, group home - temporary shelter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - homeless - housing inadequate or unsafe - landlord/tenant issues pending eviction (forced move) - has had more than 3 moves last year (transient) - rent is too high (for income level) 	
24. TELEPHONE (accessibility of client to potential employers, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has residential telephone - has answering machine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reliable phone number for messages - phone at easy access outside residence - limited access to telephone (or messages) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unable to obtain a telephone - no reliable phone number for messages 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
25. TRANSPORTATION/ MOBILITY (accessibility of work/ training sites - day care mobility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - valid drivers license - reliable access to vehicle or public transit - prepared to relocate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - license not applied for - access to private transportation system - public transportation available but inconvenient or impractical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no access to public transportation and no vehicle - unfamiliar with transportation system - license suspended - no reliable public transportation 	
26. CHILD CARE (complexity of child care arrangements) (compatibility of working hours relative to child care)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - none required (not applicable) - reliable affordable child care - reliable back-up arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reliable/affordable care available but no back-up support - only private care available (costly) - works shifts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - children with special needs - child under 1 year old - no adequate/appropriate child care - five or more children under 12 	
27. OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT (and past involvement, knowledge of resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - aware of resources but not in need - working with employment related agencies (ie, registered) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - working with employment services (longer than a year) - unaware of employment agencies supports - second HROP involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - highly dependent on community agencies - completely unaware of community/agencies and resources - involved with: probation services or child and family services, etc. for over 2 years re: serious ongoing issues 	

FACTORS	EMPLOYMENT STRENGTHS	LOW - MODERATE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	HIGH EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS	COMMENTS
28. WORK ATTITUDES/ VALUES cultural barriers (includes attitudes, observe behaviour, assessor sees and hears through interview)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - values independence - punctual - good grooming - appropriate responses to questions - seeks feedback - responsible flexible/ adaptable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - open to guidance in seeking employment or training - open to new ideas or suggestions from other sources - cultural values may conflict with work requirements - difficulty understanding questions - willingness to review suggestions is questionable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accepts financial dependence - cultural values seriously limit employment opportunities - irresponsible - inflexible in employment choices - raises voice unnecessarily - disruptive - inappropriate comments/ inflexible 	

EMPLOYMENT FACTORS

	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Low-Moderate</u>	<u>High Barriers</u>
1. Age	_____	_____	_____
2. Education Level Attained	_____	_____	_____
3. Literacy/Language	_____	_____	_____
4. Skills Level	_____	_____	_____
5. Work Experience	_____	_____	_____
6. Work Related Activity	_____	_____	_____
7. Job/Labour Market Factors	_____	_____	_____
8. Job Search Skills	_____	_____	_____
9. Income Needs	_____	_____	_____
10. P.S.A. History	_____	_____	_____
11. Vocational Goals	_____	_____	_____
12. Physical Health	_____	_____	_____
13. Family Health Concerns	_____	_____	_____
14. Mental Health	_____	_____	_____
15. Family Supports	_____	_____	_____
16. Personal Resources/Social Network	_____	_____	_____
17. Communication Skills	_____	_____	_____
18. Problem Solving/Coping Skills	_____	_____	_____
19. Presentation/Appearance	_____	_____	_____
20. Motivation/Self-Image	_____	_____	_____
21. Legal Issues	_____	_____	_____
22. Substance Abuse	_____	_____	_____
23. Housing/Accommodations	_____	_____	_____
24. Telephone	_____	_____	_____
25. Transportation/Mobility	_____	_____	_____
26. Child Care	_____	_____	_____
27. Other Agency Involvement	_____	_____	_____
28. Work Attitudes/Values	_____	_____	_____

PART III - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Strength Factors:

Barriers:

Counsellor Recommendations/Plan:

Comments:

APPENDIX I

COUNSELLORS OPEN ENDED RESPONSES TO EACH QUESTIONNAIRE - RESPONDENT BY RESPONDENT

Responses (Comments) on Questionnaire A

- Respondent 1
- Although the current package does not provide information in some areas (i.e. emotional health, mental health, work ethic, work references, age, etc.), it still can be included by the counsellor.
- Respondent 2
- Certain important categories of information are inappropriately addressed.
 - Reports (file notes) vary now as each counsellor reports to a different degree on different areas.
- Respondent 3
- Compiling information for files is not a problem, but reporting it is.
 - A written outline regarding expectations for report writing was never completed, and direction from the 1991 counsellor training session never provided/implemented.
- Respondent 4
- The existing package needs fine tuning. There is too much detail to use when actually with a client.
 - A standardized approach should have 'yes/no' and 'fill in the blank' areas, as well as a narrative section.
- Respondent 5
- More objective and concrete criteria should be established to support or deny specific vocational plans. Measurable criteria to support a counsellors judgement is necessary.
- Respondent 6
- A format which quickly focuses on the following should be developed: 1) hard data (name, SIN, birth date, dependents, SAMIN#, etc.), 2) current data (address, phone, education, work history, etc.), and 3) eligibility criteria - for certain programs (gender, age, aboriginal status, residing in province, C.L.S. status, etc.)
- Respondent 7
- A standardized assessment format is necessary (for all regions). One should be developed and all counsellors trained in its use.
- Respondent 8
- Our client group as a whole has changed since the current assessment package was developed. We now need an

assessment guide to help the higher functioning clients determine feasible goals (i.e. geared to academics, etc.)

- Respondent 11 • Specific information should be easier to locate (on file) than our present system allows.
- Respondent 12 • A data bank would be useful, however the danger is data can be manipulated and taken out of context. Social sciences cannot be measured totally accurately by statistics, unlike other sciences.
- Respondent 13 • Statistical data should be compiled that would give us insights into our effectiveness in different areas.
- Respondent 14 • A data bank is necessary as a base for future planning and change.
- Respondent 15 • The current process of compiling information long-hand is time-consuming, but saves time in the long run (in vocational planning).
- Respondent 16 • The current assessment package should be reviewed. Categories of information are missing, reporting long-hand on intake is time-consuming, and the package is not used consistently by all HROP counsellors.
 - A thorough assessment should review all possible factors/areas.
 - A standardized package that enables us to quantify information gathered is necessary and should be developed.
- Respondent 17 • A standardized form should be used across the province. The current package allows counsellors to "write a book" if they want to.
- Respondent 18 • Our package should not be standardized at the expense of losing it as a sound assessment tool.
- Respondent 19 • I thought our current assessment package was already standard-ized.
- Respondent 20 • A form that enables us to capture and to locate relevant data quickly (and uniformly) is required. Narrative can always be added as necessary.

- Respondent 21
- Any comprehensive assessment takes time and should be allocated sufficient time if a viable program is to be run.
 - Personally I find the form to be adequate because it's not the only documentation being done. Consistent file recordings are being kept through time, with new information recorded as it becomes available. I see no need to change the format.
- Respondent 22
- Short-cutting on information gathering will leave clients at risk of having some barriers remain unidentified.
- Respondent 23
- Some barriers are not easy to measure or quantify.
- Respondent 24
- The current assessment package is sufficient and there is no need to change it.
- Respondent 25
- Anything can be improved on.
- Respondent 26
- Is our current package not standardized, and used by everyone now?
 - The assessment package works as well as those who are using it.

- Respondent 9
- The new assessment tool is a great improvement. I really like the fact that I can pick up a co-workers file when covering, and find what I need to know quickly. I can also read it, which helps when co-workers' notes aren't legible.
 - The assessment package used consistently should guide counsellors through the task of client assessment in less time, with more accuracy and, at the same time, assist with selection of the most appropriate clients for our program.
- Respondent 10
- Too much paper for the amount of information collected.
 - To reduce paper, the assessment tool could be photocopied double sided.
- Respondent 11
- The check-off system makes it difficult for me to accurately document the facts because each clients' situation varies and does not always fit into check points.
 - Does a good job of covering a great majority of employability factors. It will be useful for more accurate recording and it will be easy to reference.
- Respondent 13
- The new assessment tool is a sincere effort to establish some methodology in the system. The concept of a uniform approach by counsellors in the assessment process has merit in that statistics/ results will be more meaningful considering all counsellors are asking the same questions. This observation is to be qualified to the extent that the perceptions/biases of individual counsellors must be taken into account. These perceptions/biases will have some effect on the way in which the assessment tool is utilized.
- Respondent 14
- I like the new assessment package and find it easier to use. It eliminates the need to write long transfer summaries when transferring a file to another counsellor.
 - The proposed method of data collection, with some fine-tuning, can be quantified, coded and computerized to provide reliable data for program improvements in the future and offer a timely response to the constantly changing demands in the labour market.
- Respondent 16
- Overall I feel the new assessment package is a more effective and descriptive tool than the previous format
 - All factors receive equal consideration, which is an improvement over the last assessment index.

- Respondent 17
- The quality of information collected no longer depends on the ability of staff to write consistent long-hand reports. This assessment tool can save time and help identify clients most effectively served in the Winnipeg office and those who are more appropriately referred to other agencies for service.
 - This tool should save a lot of time taken with lengthy write-ups and give us universality in assessments. I really like the back page which gives us a "quick scan" of client strengths and weaknesses without pouring through pages of write-ups.
- Respondent 19
- I didn't see anything wrong with the old assessment package until I had a chance to use this new format. It's quick and easy to follow, and generally I prefer it.
 - The new package gets at more information than our old assessment package, and is easier to use. It is, therefore, an improvement in my mind.
- Respondent 20
- Circling statements is a great idea. I can obtain the information I need much more quickly with the new assessment tool, and it allows me to go back and write long-hand notes later if I'm too busy at the time.
 - This is a good assessment tool. The fact that it is required to be on every file that is opened will ensure counsellors don't skip over aspects of this crucial vocational process.
- Respondent 21
- I liked the old assessment tool, but like this package even better.
- Respondent 22
- There is not enough room for specifics and comments.
- Respondent 23
- Assessments are the foundation of vocational counselling and information gathered during employability assessment has to produce consistent and reliable results.
 - This package has unlimited possibilities for the purpose of follow-up, feedback, or program evaluation. It will allow us to measure and compare individuals progress, plotting client progress, and record removal of employment barriers.
 - I like the last page where there is room for a written summary of a clients' strengths and weaknesses and, most importantly, a plan of action.

- Respondent 24
- It is difficult to describe client characteristics with the new package.
 - The comments section may not be large enough to accommodate counsellors' notes.
- Respondent 25
- The assessment tool offers an improved method of arriving at statistical results. Moreover, it should create a greater consistency in assessment practices and in the determination of a client's vocational barriers.
 - Much improved over the initial assessment method.