



## Project Summary: **Quality Assurance** **For Wisconsin Benefits Specialists**

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### **ABSTRACT**

#### **ISSUE:**

Consumers, purchasers and practitioners of benefits specialist services in Wisconsin are not protected by measurable standards by which the profession can be identified, trained, monitored or supported.

#### **GOAL:**

*As set by the Wisconsin Benefits Specialist Quality Assurance Task Force... By December of 2009 a professional credential and unified quality assurance system will be created and implemented for Wisconsin benefits specialists who serve seniors and people with disabilities.*

#### **RATIONALE:**

Wisconsin is unique in that we have three types of benefits specialists including Disability Benefits Specialists (DBS), Work Incentives Benefits Specialists (WIBS), and Elderly Benefits Specialists (EBS). The field and specialty areas continue to expand in Wisconsin. A benefits specialist must be an information gatherer, system navigator, mathematician and expert communicator to provide complete, understandable information so that a person can make an informed choice regarding their benefits. Giving inaccurate information can have devastating results, such as denial of benefits, large overpayments, loss of health care benefits or disincentive to work. Supervisors, co-workers and purchasers of the service usually have very little knowledge of the complexities of the issues, constant change in entitlements, quality indicators for the service, or the criticality of ongoing training and peer support.

#### **STATUS:**

The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) and Department of Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) purchase approximately \$600,000 in WIBS services annually. Neither require from practitioners any proof of knowledge, quality assessment of products delivered or continuing education. The EBS and DBS programs have quality control tools such as mandatory participation in training and oversight by legal service providers, however, practitioners are eager for the development of a professional identity and quality standards by which to be measured. Representatives from both DHFS and DVR are participating in discussions and planning regarding quality assurance for Wisconsin benefits specialists.

#### **TIMELINE:**

##### **2008**

**SUMMER 2008 • RESEARCH** to determine Role and Function/Practice Analysis

**SUMMER 2008 • TRAINING COMPARISONS** for EBS, DBS, WIBS curriculum commonalities

**FALL 2008 • CODE OF CONDUCT** to guide ethical values and practices

**FALL 2008 • STANDARDS** to establish common core skills/competencies

**WINTER 2008 • REQUIREMENTS** to establish ongoing continuing education

**WINTER 2008 • CORE TRAINING** from practice analysis, core competencies, training commonalities for use by training entities

**WINTER 2008 • READY** to develop assessment tools and implement body for monitoring of credential

##### **2009**

Develop testing, monitoring standards, implement credentialing body

#### **PARTNERS:**

**CWAG** • Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups

**DBS** • WI Disability Benefit Specialist Program

**DHS** • WI Department of Health Services

**DRW** • Disability Rights Wisconsin

**DWD/DVR** • WI Department of Workforce Development, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

**EBS** • WI Elderly Benefit Specialist Program

**EDI** • Cornell University Employment & Disability Institute

**ERI** • Employment Resources, Inc.

**NABWIS** • National Association of Benefits & Work Incentives Specialists

**NADBS** • National Association of Disability Benefits Specialists

**SVRI** • University of WI-Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute

**WABS** • WI Association of Benefit Specialists

**WDBN** • WI Disability Benefits Network

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*Developed by the Wisconsin Benefits Specialist Quality Assurance Task Force*

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