

Where Are They Now?

SSI Ohio Project Client Snapshot Survey Report

BACKGROUND and METHODS:

Participant selection:

SSI Ohio Specialists from Project Phase One and Phase Two were asked to identify 3-5 clients who had been approved for Social Security benefits, would be able and willing to participate in the snapshot survey and who also satisfied one of the three categories listed below:

1. Chronically Homeless
2. Homeless less than one year or at risk of becoming homeless
3. Released from prison less than 6 months before working with SSI Ohio Specialist

These categories were identified to help ensure diverse representation from clients served and also to help understand the effects of Social Security benefits for clients with various backgrounds and histories.

Data Collection:

During November and December 2010, 21 clients served by the SSI Ohio Project were interviewed. 16 of the interviews were conducted by telephone and 5 were conducted during face-to-face meetings at a community agency or at the clients' residences. During April and May 2011, 12 SSI Ohio Project clients were interviewed by telephone.

All clients who participated in the snapshot survey were asked the following questions:

1. *Was this the first time you applied for Social Security benefits?*
2. *Can you tell me what it was like working with the Specialist to apply for Social Security benefits?*
3. *Do you currently receive benefits from Social Security?*
4. *What were your living arrangements before you applied for/received benefits?*
5. *What are your living arrangements now that you have applied for/started receiving benefits?*
6. *Are there any services or programs that you think could help you maintain/achieve stability? What do you think they are?*

An additional question was added after a midpoint analysis during the Phase One Interviews when it was determined that more information could be helpful in understanding the clients' needs to transition to stability:

7. *What benefits have been most helpful for you to become stable/maintain stability?*

At the end of the survey questions, participating clients were asked if they had any questions for the interviewer or if there were any additional thoughts or statements that they would like to share.

Data Analysis:

Clients' responses to questions were first recorded on paper and immediately typed after completing the interview. When the interviews had been completed, clients' responses were sorted by interview question to create a "master transcript." This allowed for the identification of any themes present in the clients' experiences with the SSI Ohio Project.

Also, each client was assigned a letter of the alphabet ranging from A – Z, and AA - GG, to code their identity for analysis and reporting purposes. These are used to identify quotes from clients in the following pages.

Themes & Findings:

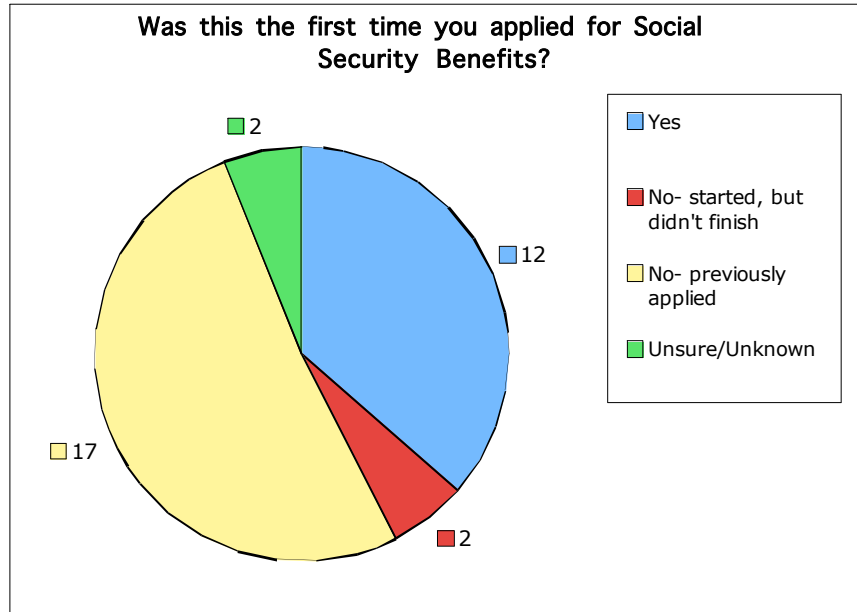
From the analysis of clients' responses, the following 5 themes were identified:

1. Social Security benefits are awarded with the methods and processes employed through the SSI Ohio Project.
2. SSI Ohio Specialists are not only crucial to assisting with Social Security applications; they also gain a personal importance to their clients.
3. The client base of the SSI Ohio Project is diverse in its housing history.
4. Receiving Social Security benefits facilitates stability.
5. Social Security benefits alone don't eliminate the need for continued support.

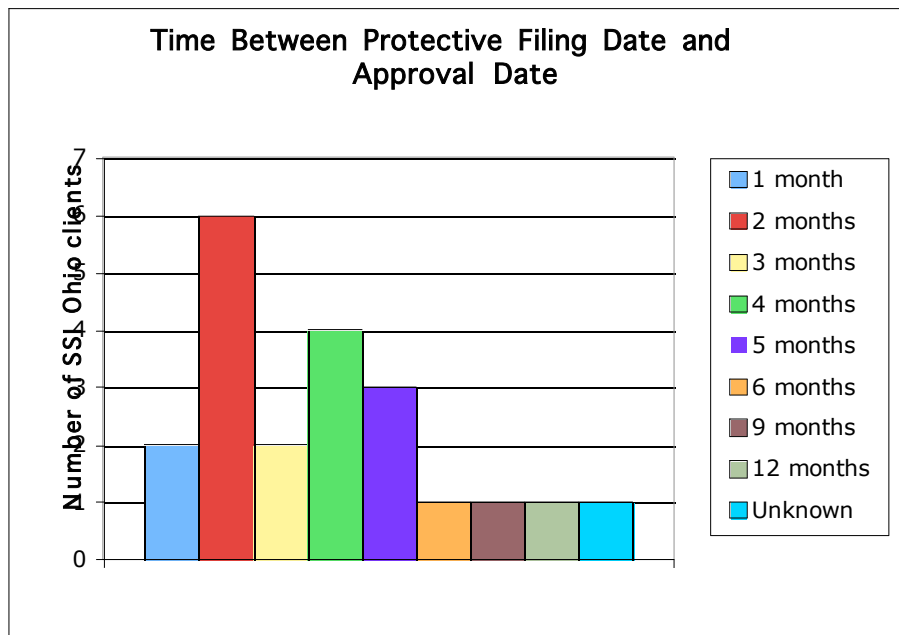
Where Are They Now? SNAPSHOT FINDINGS

1. Social Security benefits are awarded with the methods and processes employed through the SSI Ohio Project.

Through analysis of the snapshot survey question “Was this the first time you applied for Social Security benefits?” it was found that 17 of 33 clients interviewed had previously applied for Social Security benefits and been denied. Two had started their application, but did not complete it.

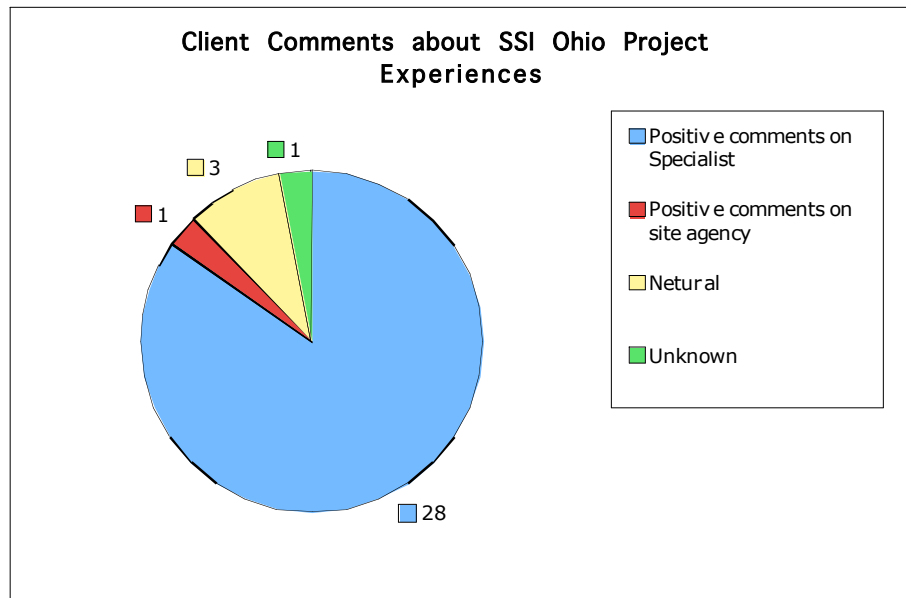


Specialist documentation revealed that all clients were approved for Social Security benefits in a time frame ranging from one to twelve months. 81% of Phase One clients were approved in 5 months or less. Complete data from Phase 2 was not available at the time of this report.



2. SSI Ohio Specialists are not only crucial to assisting with Social Security applications; they are also highly regarded and important to clients.

Analysis of responses to Question 2 “Can you tell me what it was like working with the Specialist to apply for Social Security benefits?” indicated that 28 clients verbally praised the SSI Ohio Specialist they had worked with to complete the SSI/SSDI applications. One client verbally praised the SSI Ohio Specialist site agency and its staff. Three clients held neutral opinions on Specialists. Data and selected quotes from interviewed clients are listed below:



Question 2: Can you tell me what it was like working with the Specialist to apply for Social Security benefits?

Positive Comments from Clients:

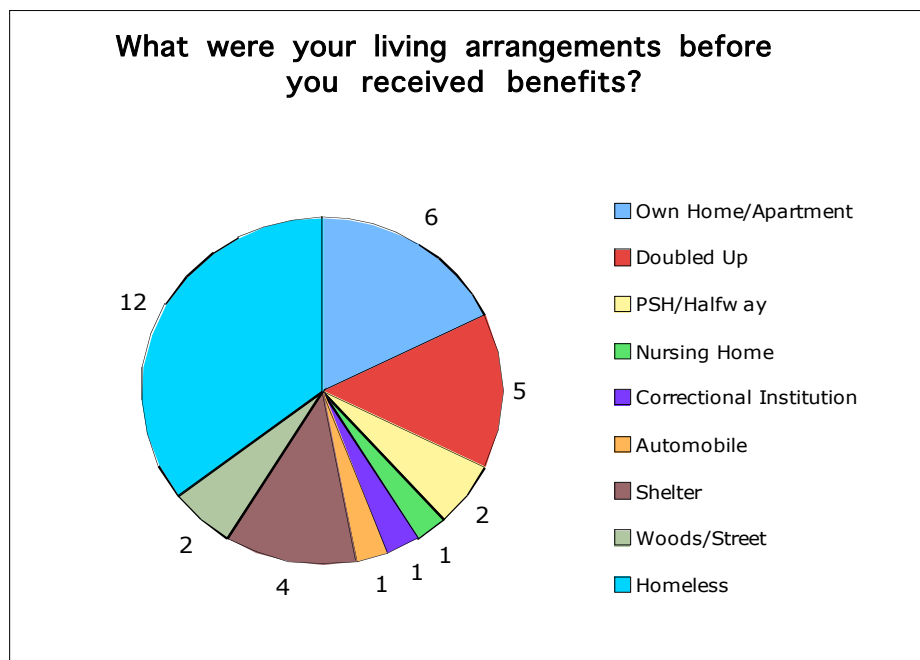
- C: She’s been a blessing for so many people. She’s a good person. She goes out of the way to help. I would have been lost without her. She’s helped me so much.
- G: It was fine. She was perfect. She helped me with the questions. She’s a sweetheart, too. I love her! I wish I had her address for Christmas cards!
- S: It was quite wonderful. She totally went to bat for me at a time when I needed someone. I can’t say anything but good things about the experience.
- Z: She done a real fine job. She’s got a good personality and character. I enjoyed working with her.
- CC: I was very pleased with what she did. I don’t know if she’s an overachiever, but she truly is passionate about getting people the help they need.
- FF: I had heard really good things about her. Everyone at the shelter had nice things to say about her. She works hard.

Neutral Comments from Clients:

- O: Fine. She just took the ball and ran with it. I didn’t really have to do anything.
- EE: Well, I only seen her, I think, twice or three times maybe. I have a short memory that doesn’t work.

3. The client base of the SSI Ohio Project is diverse in its housing history.

The range of living arrangements that clients experienced prior to receiving benefits varied from at risk of foreclosure to chronically homeless for 10 years.



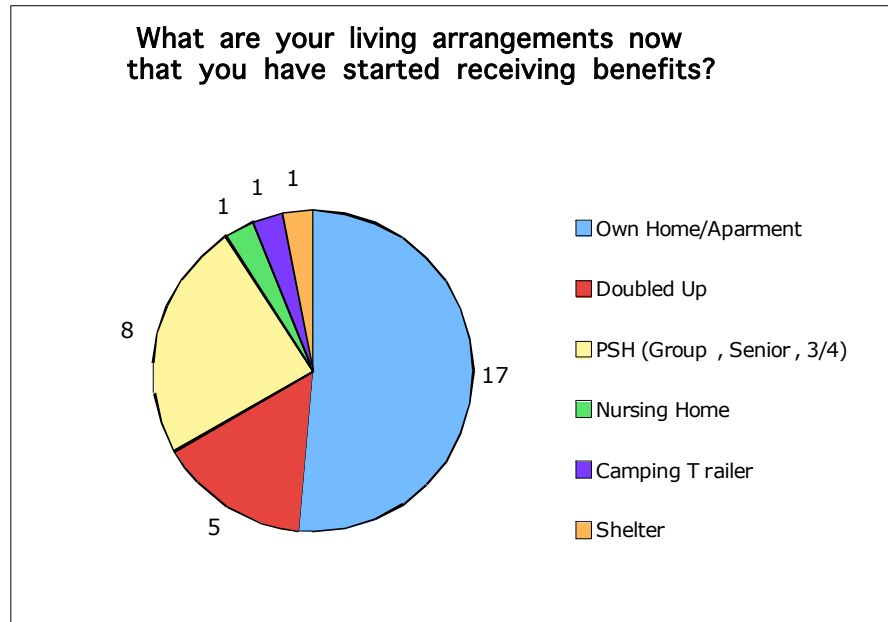
* Many clients did not or could not specify their living arrangements. Their response was "I was homeless."

What were your living arrangements before you received Social Security benefits?

- A: We were living in the woods for 3-5 years. We stayed in Youngstown near the soup kitchen.
- C: I was sleeping in my truck. That's where I lived up until about 2 months ago.
- D: I was homeless for 9 years. Well, really more like 10 years.
- E: My husband was drawing sick pay. We were living in our house. We were at risk for losing our house. It was hard making ends meet.
- F: I was homeless for 8½ months prior to getting benefits and back on mental health meds.
- H: I was homeless. For about 6-7 years.
- K: I have been living with my mom for years. My house burnt down. I went with my mom. She has a lot of land. I lived out in a field five acres [away] from her. The only reason I came in was because I got bronchitis.
- L: I was homeless. Probably for about 2 months. I had my own apartment and I lost my job.
- N: I was homeless.
- O: I was homeless for 9 months.
- S: I was living with my daughter. I love her very much, but if you ever have to do it you'll understand.
- U: I was living on the street. For two years.

4. Housing stability is facilitated with Social Security benefits.

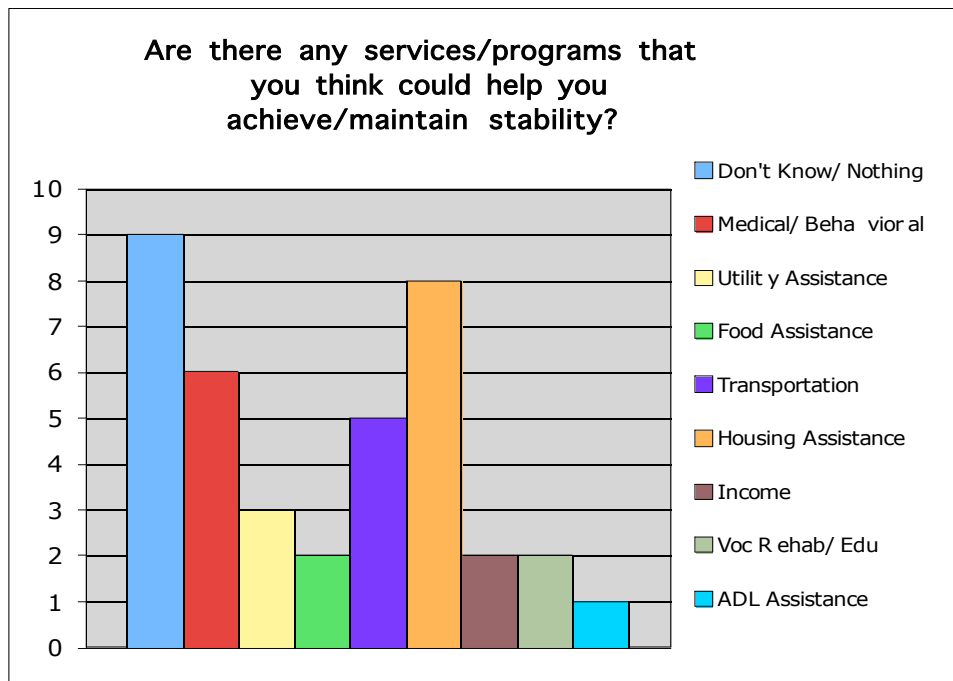
Seventeen clients interviewed had secured their own residence. Five clients were housed in “doubled up” situations with a relative or friend. Nine clients resided in supportive housing environments, including a nursing home. One client moved from living off the land to a camping trailer. One client remained in a shelter, but was working to secure housing upon receiving their first benefit check.



What are your living arrangements now that you have started receiving benefits?

- A: Now with SSI we can take over the rent and pay more.
- C: I bought a camping trailer with all the facilities.
- E: We are still in the house.
- F: I'm in my own apartment. I'm waiting for AMHA to send in my Section 8 voucher. I pay \$323 and they pay \$172. I bought a computer. I'm getting Internet today. I have furniture. I cook. I still struggle with my medicine.
- G: I lived at Phoenix House since February 18. Getting benefits helped me get here. It's nice. It's quiet. We have a nurse coming and a foot doctor.
- I: I am still staying with my brother. I'm not getting full benefits. I can't save enough to move out.
- K: I live in my mother's house. I stay in the room that she stores junk in. I visit my kids and my boyfriend. I will stay with her until I decide to move. SSI helps with rent and pays for bills.
- N: I'm living in a group home. They have programs to help people find housing. A Shelter + Care Program? I'm on a list or something for that.
- P: I'm still at International Towers. With new management, people on zero income, they were starting a campaign to get more people out, to get in people that could pay. But now that I can contribute to the rent, they should be more satisfied.
- Q: I moved to an apartment on the west side. It's very nice there. I can sit and joke...I can get rest. My daughter visited for the last two weekends.
- S: Now I have an apartment at Senior Towers. It took less than 2 months to move in.
- U: I have my own apartment.

5. Benefits help facilitate stability, but are not the only forms of support necessary to achieve or maintain stability.



Are there any services or programs that you think could help you keep or get housing?
What do you think they are?

A: I'm still waiting on Medicaid. ... We're going to try to put utilities in my husband's name for lower payments.

F: I am taken care of. I think I'm an important person and deserve to be dealt with fairly. I deal with an atypical medicine and I think the medicine I take, other people lie about.

G: More food stamps. I can't get a budget. They increased rent. Also, help with grocery shopping. There's no way to get to the grocery store or anything. And they need a grocery store in this neighborhood.

I: I can't live by myself, that's what I've been trying to tell you. I have a nurse and doctor come out to see me. I have trouble taking showers and stuff like that.

K: No. I could use transportation once in a while.

M: I feel like I'm taken care of.

O: I'm looking at several agencies that can help. I believe I'll be fine. I have a subsidized apartment. I only have to pay 30%.

P: Maybe knowing about places for free food and monthly giveaways. On my part, I'm supposed to go to the welfare office for Medicaid. I need to go to the mental health place, too.

R: I'm doing well. I initiated contact with the Bureau of Vocational and Rehabilitation Services. They can help with books and stuff if my GPA is at a satisfactory level. I'm working this semester to raise my GPA and get help with that. I'm doing the best I've done in 5 to 10 years.

S: I'm well taken care of and happy.

T: Any programs helping with electric or gas.

6. Analysis of client statements reflects the successful implementation of SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) Methodology.

1. Employing strategies to engage individuals who are homeless and who have a serious and persistent mental illness, by encouraging choice and control and creating a comfortable, safe and respectful environment.

K: She never made me feel like an idiot.

D: It was frustrating because with getting the paperwork filled out, I couldn't remember much. ... It took me about 10 hours to fill out the application. I had to split it into two parts because I got frustrated.

H: She asked me all the questions, and split up sessions. ... Some of the questions are personal, but I answered them and she never judged me on them.

2. Fulfilling the responsibility of a Representative and advocate during the application process by focusing on the struggles of people who are homeless or at-risk.

BB: I was staying at St. Paul's [homeless shelter] and we started meeting in the back room. Then we started meeting at NPI because it was a better environment. If you needed a bus pass, she would give you one to get back.

GG: She did everything I needed her to do and then some. If I needed a ride to an appointment, I'd call her and she'd come pick me up.

J: She kept me up to date. Whenever I had a problem I would call her and she helped me with the solution.

3. Completing the disability application with detailed medical evidence and functional information required for an effective, efficient disability determination.

G: She helped me with the questions. ... She was helpful and informative and showed me how to word things for the application.

R: She got ahold of all my medical records. It was amazing because in four months she got my benefits, where I had tried several times over ten years.

X: I had applied a year ago. It was very hard for me, but going through the process with her was easier because you had to be more detailed. With the application you get in the mail, you don't know you have to give dates and everything, you just kind of fill out the form and you're not going to be detailed.