

Overdose Prevention and Recovery Peer Workforce Survey Results

October 2026

In June 2026, the Vermont Department of Health Division of Substance Use Programs (DSU) conducted a survey on Vermont's substance use services workforce. Responses from navigators who worked in community-based recovery centers or overdose prevention programs were included. Navigators, as defined by The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), are staff who work with people at risk of overdose to help address barriers to seeking treatment, recovery, care and community resources.

The survey included questions to better understand the compensation, benefits, job satisfaction and training needs of navigators. Thirty complete responses were received from navigators. Those who responded to the survey may not be representative of the overall workforce.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact:

AHS.VDHDSU@Vermont.gov

Employment Profile

80% were working in community-based recovery centers

20% were working in a community-based overdose prevention programs.

77% were employed full-time.

43% were managers.

57% provided primarily direct service to clients and the remainder provided both direct and indirect services to clients equally.

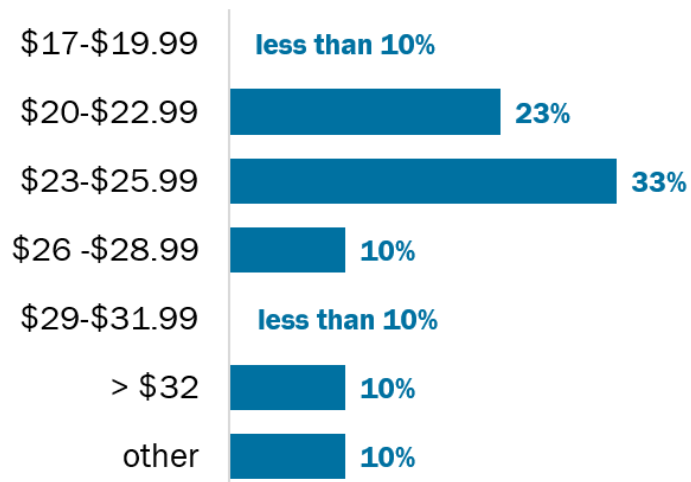


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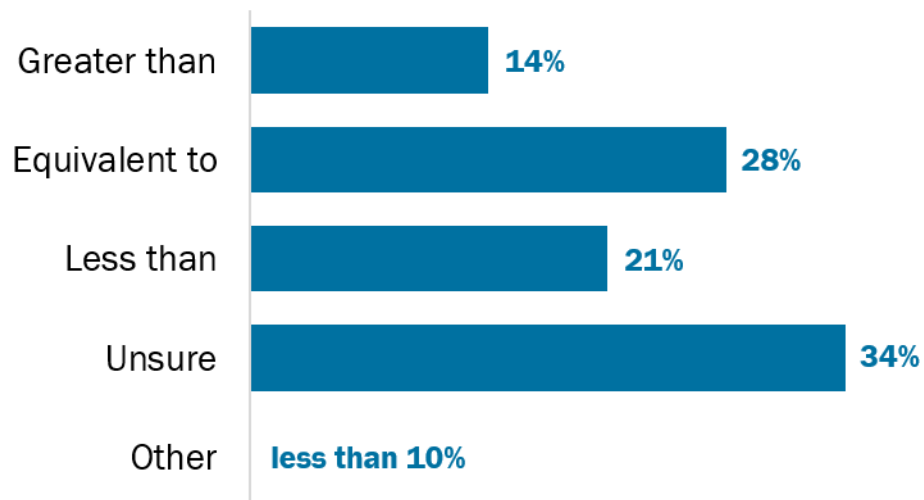
Compensation and Benefits

Most navigators reported making between \$20 - \$26 per hour



When compared to similar positions outside of the substance use field, 28% of navigators thought their compensation and benefits were equivalent, and 34% were unsure.

Compensation and benefit comparison to similar positions

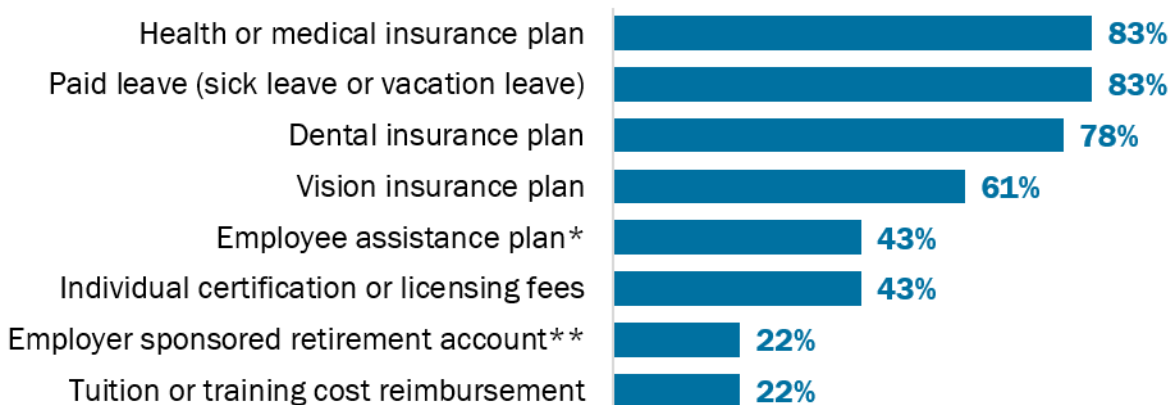


Employer-sponsored benefits of navigator survey respondents.

- Less than 20% of full-time navigators reported having a paid-parental leave benefit.
- Part-time navigators reported receiving some employer-sponsored benefits, including medical and dental insurance coverage, but these benefits were less common among part-time workers than among full-time workers.

“The compensation and benefits packages still have room for improvement but have definitely improved significantly over the... years”

Employer-sponsored benefits of full-time navigators.

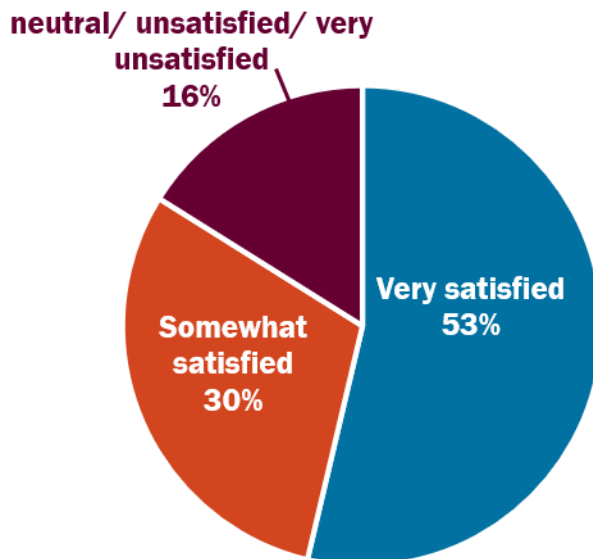


*Employee assistance programs are external resources for employees to seek counseling, as well as referral services for personal and job-related challenges.

** This indicated that employees have an employer-sponsored retirement plan. However, less than 20% of navigators reported having employer contributions to a retirement plan.

Job Satisfaction, Years of Service and Employee Retention

Most navigators were very or somewhat satisfied with their current position:



- 70% percent of navigators have worked in the substance use field for five years or less.
- Median years of service in the field was 3.5 years.
- More than 90% of navigators state that they are likely to continue working in the substance use field one year from now.

“I am thrilled to be in this field and may consider doing more hours when my schedule allows for this”

Almost half of navigators reported that inconsistent funding for their position decreases their job satisfaction:

Reasons for Job Dissatisfaction



Additional reasons for job dissatisfaction from write-in comments

- Lack of support from community, state and federal partners generating burnout

“Increased guaranteed funding for the services we provide so we are able to attract good, educated professionals.”

More than half of navigators selected that improved compensation and benefits would improve their job satisfaction.

Strategies to increase job satisfaction



Additional suggested approaches to increase job satisfaction from write-in comments

- More work hours, allowance to work overtime and additional staff to share their workload.
- Consistent and clear guidance and requirements from grantors

“...it is difficult to support staff sufficiently to make up for the stress of the work...”

Training Needs

More than 90% of navigators report they have the skills needed to manage the challenges of their job on a daily basis. But many navigators have less than five years of experience in the

substance use field and are still developing their skills. The topics below are the most frequently requested training topics, listed in order of interest level:

- Communicating with policymakers
- Business, leadership or non-profit management
- Management training on how to lead and support direct service staff working in the substance use field
- Trauma-informed service practices
- Advanced motivational interviewing
- Ethics in the substance use field
- Overdose prevention and integration with other substance use services
- Self-care strategies for workers to combat stress and burnout
- Outreach or recruitment strategies to engage new clients in services

“My job gives me a sense of purpose.”

Additional training suggestions from write-in comments:

- Formal and consistent use of the recovery data platform (RDP). RDP is a data platform used by recovery organizations to track services and referrals provided to individuals
- Basic understanding of child custody proceedings and protection from abuse orders in order to better support some of their clients' recovery plans

Utilization of Survey Information

Information from this survey will be included in the overall evaluation of navigation services as defined by the CDC Overdose Data to Action grant.

The [2025-2028 Vermont Department of Health, Division of Substance Use Programs \(DSU\) Strategic Plan](#) prioritizes expansion of training, education, and awareness initiatives.

The findings in this report will be used to:

- plan training events in the upcoming year.
- Improve DSU programming, services, and interactions with community organizations.
- assist community organizations employing navigators in improving internal processes, employee wellbeing, and retention.

“We have a strong state with amazing community partners doing important work.”