
Executive Summary:

SPD Consumer Survey for Use with Recipients of In-Home Services: Survey Development and Field Test Report

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I. INTRODUCTION

As part of a contact with the Oregon Department of Human Services, Division of Seniors and People with Disabilities (SPD), the Human Service Research Institute (HSRI) and its partners¹ developed a consumer survey to explore the satisfaction of individuals being served by SPD in-home programs. The target population includes people served through three Oregon Medicaid waiver programs – the In-home Comprehensive Services program, the Support Services Brokerages (both serving people with developmental disabilities), and the Client-Employed Provider program (serving seniors and people with physical disabilities). The project team worked collaboratively with SPD staff and members of the project Stakeholder Group to develop a survey instrument and process that adequately addresses the interests and concerns of all involved. This Executive Summary briefly describes the field test findings and recommendations for the consumer survey, which are fully presented in the report, entitled SPD Consumer Survey for Use with Recipients of In-Home Services: Survey Development and Field Test Report.

II. FIELD TEST OF CONSUMER SURVEY

Development of the SPD consumer survey occurred between December, 2004 and July, 2005. During the summer of 2005, the project team planned and conducted a field test of the survey to obtain feedback on how to improve both the survey instrument and the survey methodology before the final recommendations were submitted to SPD. The field test included three phases: planning and recruitment, conducting the field test, and data analysis and reporting. A brief summary of the major activities are described below:

- *Recruiting Field Test Sites:* Sites were recruited to represent the developmental disability population (DD) and the senior and physical disability population (APD). Five agencies agreed to participate: Resource Connections of Oregon, Full Access Brokerage, Lane and Clackamas County In-Home Comprehensive programs, and Northwest Senior & Disability Services.
- *Obtaining a Sample from SPD:* SPD extracted a list of current service recipients, who currently received in-home Waiver services, were 18 years of age or older, and had received waiver services for at least a year. The structure of DHS information systems made this process very labor intensive for state staff; a method to streamline this process will be necessary for statewide implementation.
- *Collecting Background information:* The project team asked the five pilot sites to gather background information on all individuals identified in the SPD sample, in order to assign individuals to receive a mail survey or a face-to-face interview to complete the survey. Because this process was very labor intensive for the pilot sites, we recommend separating the needed background information into two portions: information needed immediately to make the decision on which type of survey an individual should receive would be obtained from the SPD data systems and local agencies; additional demographic information needed for analysis purposes could be

¹ HSRI is working in collaboration with the Oregon Technical Assistance Corporation (OTAC) and Loki Innovations.

collected directly from the survey respondent though background forms attached to the survey instrument.

- *Preparing Spanish Versions of the Survey:* All survey materials were translated into Spanish; we received four completed Spanish surveys. Because the SPD target population does include people who speak primary languages other than English and Spanish, it may be important for SPD to prepare other translations when implementing the survey in the future.
- *Implementing Face-to-Face Interviews:* Activities included: 1) identifying interviewers (both agency staff and volunteers), 2) training interviewers, 3) coordinating interviews, 4) obtaining signed consent forms, 5) conducting interviews, and 6) collecting completed interview materials. The overall level of effort for this activity was significant: it is estimated that each interview took about two hours to complete a 20-minute interview.
- *Implementing Mail Surveys:* The project team provided each site with all necessary materials for the mail survey portion of the field test. HSRI sent copies of the survey form, unaddressed mailing envelopes, and self-addressed stamped return envelopes to each pilot site. SPD provided each pilot site with the list of sampled individuals who were to receive the mail survey. The pilot sites filled in the survey recipient addresses and then mailed the surveys. Once a respondent completed the survey, he/she put it in the stamped envelope to be returned directly to HSRI.
- *Data Collection:* Loki Innovations developed a website to assist in data collection. Survey recipients had the option of completing the survey on-line: three respondents chose to do so. In addition, the website was extremely valuable for inputting survey data and made it possible to see reports of results in ‘real time’. HSRI compiled and analyzed the field test data.

III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FIELD TEST

The primary goal of the field test was to offer insight into the clarity of the survey questions and the viability of the survey methods. The following bullets provide an overview of field test findings and recommendations :

- *Who Participated in the Survey?* The project team received 135 completed surveys. Overall response rates were 54% for mail survey and 35% for face-to-face interviews.

	Number of Completed Surveys Received		
	Mail Survey	Face-to-Face Interviews	Total
People with Developmental Disabilities (Brokerages and In-Home Comprehensive)	25	26	51
Seniors (AAAs)	61	11	84
People with Physical Disabilities (DSOs)		12	
Total	86	49	135

- How was the Survey Administered? Face-to-Face Interviews Vs. Mail Surveys:* While we might have expected the face-to-face interviews to provide different survey results than the mail survey, the field test revealed very little difference between the two methods of administering the survey. There was no clear trend that face-to-face interviews resulted with fewer questions left unanswered and there were no notable difference in the way questions were answered (i.e. more positive responses) in comparing face-to-face vs. mail responses. Therefore, in determining a preferred method of survey implementation, both methods should be considered equally. The decision should be based on organizational/policy preferences, along with logistical and resource considerations. Ideally, SPD should consider using a combination of methods, perhaps routinely distributing mail surveys to all individuals in the sample, and supplement this with a smaller sample of face-to-face interviews concentrated in a different geographic area each cycle.
- Who Should Administer the Survey?* In conducting the face-to-face interviews, the project team recruited two types of interviewers – professional staff from the participating agencies (“agency staff”) and volunteers, including those from local advocacy groups (“third party”). The field test was designed to explore if different interviewer types elicited a different response to survey questions. The type of person who administers the survey does appear to elicit some different survey responses: respondents interviewed by agency staff did tend to respond more favorably on some questions. However, the impact is not as might have been expected: for example, while we might have expected to see questions related to the service/supports an individual receives answered more positively in the presence of agency staff², this was not the case. Rather, the impacted questions were usually unrelated to the individual’s experience with the agency. This leads to the conclusion that the nature of the interviewer does not systematically bias survey results. Therefore, we recommend that both agency staff and third party volunteers could be used to conduct the interviews, thus allowing logistical and resource considerations to determine the matter. It is important to note, however, that successful use of third party interviewers requires substantial support. In particular, careful consideration should be given to training, ongoing support during interviews, and financial compensation.
- Who Responded to the Survey Questions?* The field test explored whether having a proxy³ assist an individual in completing the survey impacts survey results. Many individuals who receive this survey will need assistance due to their cognitive ability, but this must be balanced by the concern that a proxy respondent may not accurately reflect the perspective of the survey recipient. In the field test, we learned that it is very difficult to determine whether responses represent the individual’s or the proxy’s opinions. However, because the use of proxy respondents will be an issue with the SPD consumer survey, there does need to be some mechanism to determine whose views are reflected. After using several methods to try to gather this information in

² “Does your personal agent/case manager give you the help you need?”

³ A proxy is an individual such as family member, caregiver, friend who answers the survey questions when the individual has difficulty understanding or answering the questions on their own.

the field test, we recommend including a single question on the survey such as ‘who helped you answer this survey’ to identify the use of a proxy.

Field test findings suggest that proxy respondents somewhat influence survey responses. We found several survey questions where proxy respondents did answer more positively than individuals. However, we did not find this effect across all the survey questions, including questions where we might have expected to see an impact (i.e. questions asking about the adequacy of the individual’s support system). These mixed findings indicate the need for SPD to continue to periodically monitor the use of proxy assistance, examining differences between the groups’ responses.

- *Were Some Questions More Difficult than Others?* Designing a survey for the diverse populations served by SPD in-home waiver programs is challenging. The potential survey respondents vary both in experience and concerns, as well as in cognitive ability and the language used when describing the services they received. During the analysis of the field test data, we identified a number of questions which received low response rates due to higher numbers of ‘don’t know’s or missing responses⁴. Difficulty with these particular questions was also noted by the face-to-face interviewers: these questions were identified as difficult to answer because respondents had trouble understanding the wording of the question (i.e. ‘your plan’) or the intent of the question (i.e. ‘happen in a reasonable amount of time’). For this reason, the project team has recommends edits to these particular questions to make them less difficult to understand and thus improve the response rates on these questions. We recommend that SPD continue to review survey results to identify particular questions with which respondents are having difficulty and to respond accordingly.
- *How Well Did the Required DAS Questions Work?* Part of the impetus for the development of this consumer survey was changes made to the Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS) 2005-07 budget instructions, which direct each state agency to incorporate consumer satisfaction measures into their mandated activities. DAS identified six questions which are now required to be included in consumer surveys administered by SPD. The required questions were incorporated into our draft survey, with the wording modified somewhat to reflect the SPD’s target audience. However, the field test findings indicated that survey respondents still often had difficulty answering the DAS questions: the DAS questions consistently received low response rates and were noted by face-to-face interviewers as difficult for respondents to answer. Therefore, we further modified the wording of these DAS questions, ensuring that the mandated questions are asked, but changing the language to better address the issues faced by the SPD population.
- *Recommendations for Changes in the Survey Instrument:* Based on the field test findings, the project team recognized the need to make changes to several of the survey questions. These changes are reflected in the final version of the survey. The

⁴ Low response rates were noted on four core questions asked to all survey respondents and three questions asked a sub-group of survey respondents.

final consumer survey does not include several population-specific questions which were asked only of the DD or the APD version of the survey during the field test. Since three of the four of these questions were difficult for respondents to answer, we recommend dropping all four questions. We then modified five other survey questions which had been worded slightly differently in the DD vs. APD version of the survey: now all 14 questions are appropriate for the entire SPD population⁵. This yields a single survey that fits both the DD and APD population, making it more feasible as a template for potential expansion to other SPD populations.

Attached to the end of this Executive Summary, we have included the consumer survey questions which are recommended as a result of the field test findings and reflecting the changes described above.

The field test experience proved to be extremely valuable in providing the project team with a vast amount of information on which to base recommendations regarding the consumer survey instrument and implementation process. Following the submission of this report, HSRI will provide SPD with electronic versions of all materials used in the field test, including a single version of the survey instrument with recommended changes. With this information, SPD can begin to make final implementation decisions, such as which survey method to use, how often to survey, data collection responsibilities, etc. SPD will also have to make some decisions regarding issues which were not addressed by the field test: proportion of SPD population to sample, how to address concerns about individual risks identified through survey responses, distribution of survey finding to local entities, reporting findings to DAS, etc.

⁵ In the field test version of the survey, we had questions worded differently for the DD and APD population: i.e. DD version referred to a 'personal agent' and APD version referred to a 'case manager'.

Recommended Final Version of Consumer Survey

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5	Don't Know 6
<p>1. Do you have a person who speaks up for you when needed? (a person such as a friend, family member or an advocate - but not case manager or staff)</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>2. Does your service plan include the things that you need? (a plan is a formal document that lists the services and supports you will receive, often called a Client Plan or Individual Service Plan)</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>3. Does someone help you understand the risks of your choices? (choices such as declining services offered, choosing to live in an unsafe neighborhood, etc.)</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6

Recommended Final Version of Consumer Survey

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5	Don't Know 6
4. Do you have people you can talk to about your personal relationships, thoughts and feelings?	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Can you go to the places that you choose when you want to? (such as shopping, entertainment, religious services, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Do you know what to do in case of an emergency? (an emergency such as when your staff person does not show up, a fire, a tsunami, or anyone or anything that may hurt you)	1	2	3	4	5	6

Recommended Final Version of Consumer Survey

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5	Don't Know 6
<p>7. Do you have someone you can call to help you during an emergency?</p> <p>(an emergency such as when your staff person does not show up, a fire, a tsunami, or anyone or anything that may hurt you)</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>8. Do you understand your health needs?</p> <p>(health needs such as why you take medication, managing conditions like diabetes, the reasons you need to visit your doctor)</p>	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>9. Are services provided in the way you want?</p> <p><i>DAS- Accuracy</i></p>	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>10. Are changes in your services made in a reasonable amount of time when a change is needed?</p> <p><i>DAS- Timeliness</i></p>	1	2	3	4	5	6

Recommended Final Version of Consumer Survey

	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5	Don't Know 6
11. Does your Case Manager and/or Personal Agent give you the help you need? <i>DAS- Helpfulness</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Are you happy/satisfied with the services you currently receive? <i>DAS- Overall Satisfaction</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Do you think your paid caregiver knows how to help you in the way that you need and want? <i>DAS- Expertise</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Do you get the information you need to make choices about your services and supports? <i>DAS- Information</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6