

Consumer Survey News—Family Edition

SEPTEMBER 2005

This newsletter presents the results of the FY 2005 Texas Youth Services Survey for Families (YSSF), an annual survey of parents whose children received mental health services from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), formerly the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation (TDMHMR). ★

Inside this issue:

How were the Results Calculated?	2
How Many Parents Completed the Survey?	2
Who Completed the Survey?	3
Domain Results: What Did Parents Say?	4
What Did Different Groups Say?	6
Item Results: What Did Parents Say?	7
What were the Results of the Pilot Items?	8

What is the Texas Youth Services Survey for Families (YSSF)?

One of the most important ways to evaluate the performance of a mental health system is to ask the people who received the services. On an annual basis since 2002, Texas has been conducting the Youth Services Survey for Families (YSSF) to ask parents their opinions of the state’s mental health services received by their children. The YSSF is a nationally recognized survey for parents of children receiving mental health services, the results of which are reported to the federal agency, the Center

for Mental Health Services (CMHS). A counterpart for children aged 13 and older is often administered concurrently, but due to resource limitations, this year Texas only conducted the YSSF. The YSSF consists of 21 items that relate to services the child received over the past six months. A list of these items is included on pages 7 and 9. Each item is a positive statement about services, such as “Overall, I am satisfied with the services I received.” The survey items cluster into the following five “domains:”

Access (to services), Participation in Treatment, Cultural Sensitivity (of services), Satisfaction (with services), and Outcome (of services). This year, the survey also included new domains that the Mental Health Statistics Improvement Program (part of CMHS) requested the states pilot test. A number of these pilot items fell into two new domains: *Social Connectedness and Functioning*. In addition, there were pilot items about *school attendance and criminal justice involvement*. ★

How was the Survey Conducted?

To accurately represent the people who received services from DSHS, a random sample of 1,870 mental health consumers 17 years old and younger were selected in February 2005. The parents or guardians of the selected consumers was sent a survey. In the past, enough surveys were sent to parents at each Mental Health Authority (MHA) to allow comparison between MHAs. The MHAs were responsible for hand-

delivering or mailing the surveys to the parents. This year, to reduce the MHAs’ workload, HHSC designed a smaller survey at the overall state level. The surveys were mailed directly to the parents in March 2005. Parents were informed that the survey was voluntary and confidential. They were asked to return the completed survey directly to HHSC in a business reply envelope by June 16, 2005. When a survey was re-



turned unopened due to an incorrect address, HHSC contacted the consumer’s MHA to find a more recent address and resend the survey. ★

How were the Results Calculated?

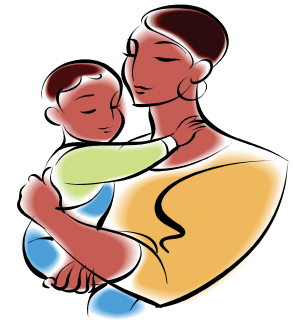
Parents rated each of the survey items on a scale of 1-5:

- 1) Strongly Agree,
- 2) Agree,
- 3) Neutral,
- 4) Disagree, and
- 5) Strongly Disagree.

In the analysis, ratings of Agree and Strongly Agree

were combined and ratings of Disagree and Strongly Disagree were combined. For simplicity, the table column headings of Agree, Neutral, and Disagree in this newsletter refer to these collapsed categories. The survey results focus on the “agreement rates,” which refer to the “positive” responses. For

example, a 90% *Cultural Sensitivity* agreement rate means that 90% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the items in the *Cultural Sensitivity* domain. ★



One of the most important ways to evaluate the performance of a mental health system is to ask the people who received the services.

How Many Parents Received and Completed the Survey?

At the time the sample was created, there were 14,116 child mental health consumers in services at one of the MHAs. Sampling protocols indicated that we needed at least 375 completed surveys to be confident in the results. Because our past experience has shown that only 20% of all mailed surveys are completed, we sent five times that number (1,870) to increase the

possibility of achieving that target. HHSC received 328 completed surveys, short of the desired target, but still yielding a respectable +/-5.3% margin of error at a 95% confidence level. What this means is that if 85% of the parents surveyed agreed with the items in the *Participation in Treatment* domain, we are 95% confident that 85% +/- 5.3% of all parents in the state whose children re-

ceived services would agree with the *Participation in Treatment* items. Another way to put this is that we are 95% certain that approximately 80-90% of all parents whose children received services in Texas are satisfied with *Participation in Treatment*. The return rate was 21% excluding surveys that were returned unopened due to incorrect addresses. ★

Population Size	Surveys Sent	Surveys Sent Adjusted	Surveys Needed	Completed Surveys Returned	Return Rate	Margin of Error at 95% Confidence
14,116	1,870	1,563	375	328	21%	+/- 5.3%

Who Completed the Survey?

Two thirds of the children whose parents responded to the survey were male. Approximately three quarters of the respondents' children were 0-12 years old and the other quarter were teenagers (13-17). Respondents' children were most frequently

White (42%), followed by Hispanic (28%), then Black (26%). By far the greatest percentage of the respondents' children (42%) had a primary diagnosis of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. The demographics of the children whose parents responded

to the survey generally reflected the demographics of the children whose parents were sent surveys and the service population as a whole. ★

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	Consumers Who Responded		Consumers Sent Surveys	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Gender				
Female	111	34%	614	33%
Male	217	66%	1,256	67%
Age				
0-12	251	77%	1,339	72%
13-17	77	24%	531	28%
Race/Ethnicity				
Black	85	26%	425	23%
Hispanic	93	28%	614	33%
White	137	42%	782	42%
Other	13	4%	49	3%
Primary Diagnosis				
Attention Deficit Disorder	136	42%	817	44%
Bipolar Disorder	57	18%	255	14%
Conduct Disorder	29	9%	172	9%
Major Depression	38	12%	248	14%
Other Mood Disorder	22	7%	122	7%
Other	44	14%	225	12%

Domain Results: What Did Parents Say About the Services Their Children Received?

The survey agreement rates were relatively stable until this year when they decreased across the board. There were significant changes made to the survey method, which may have contributed to this decrease.

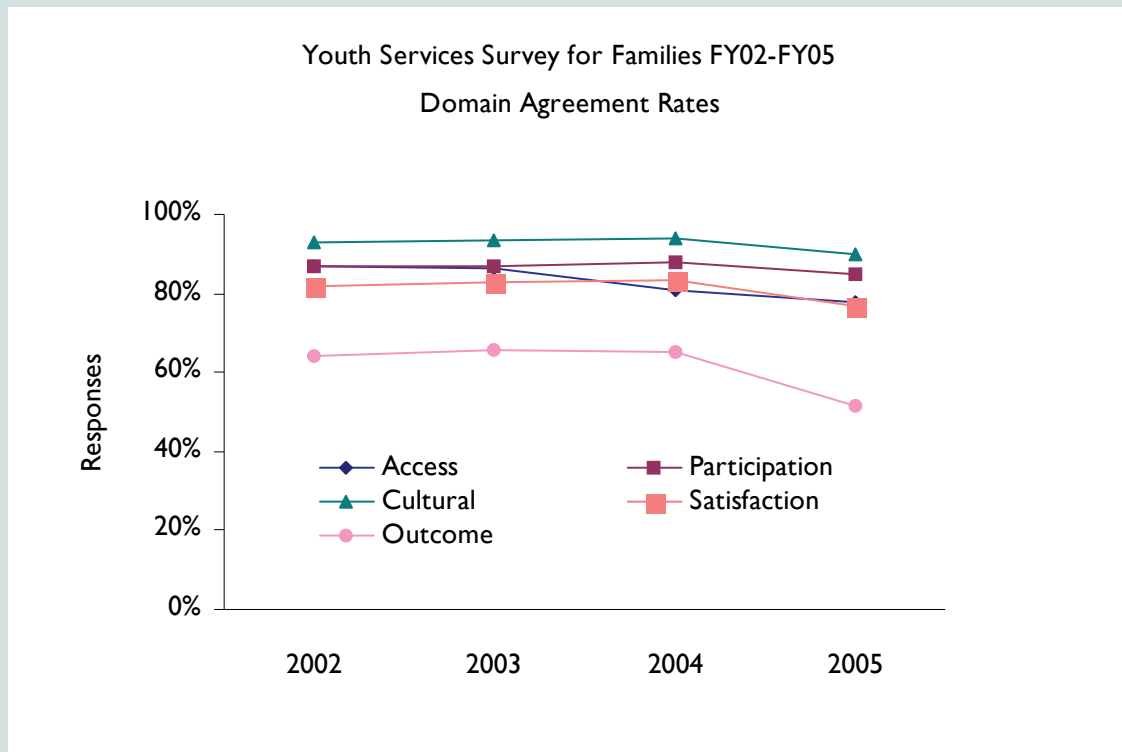
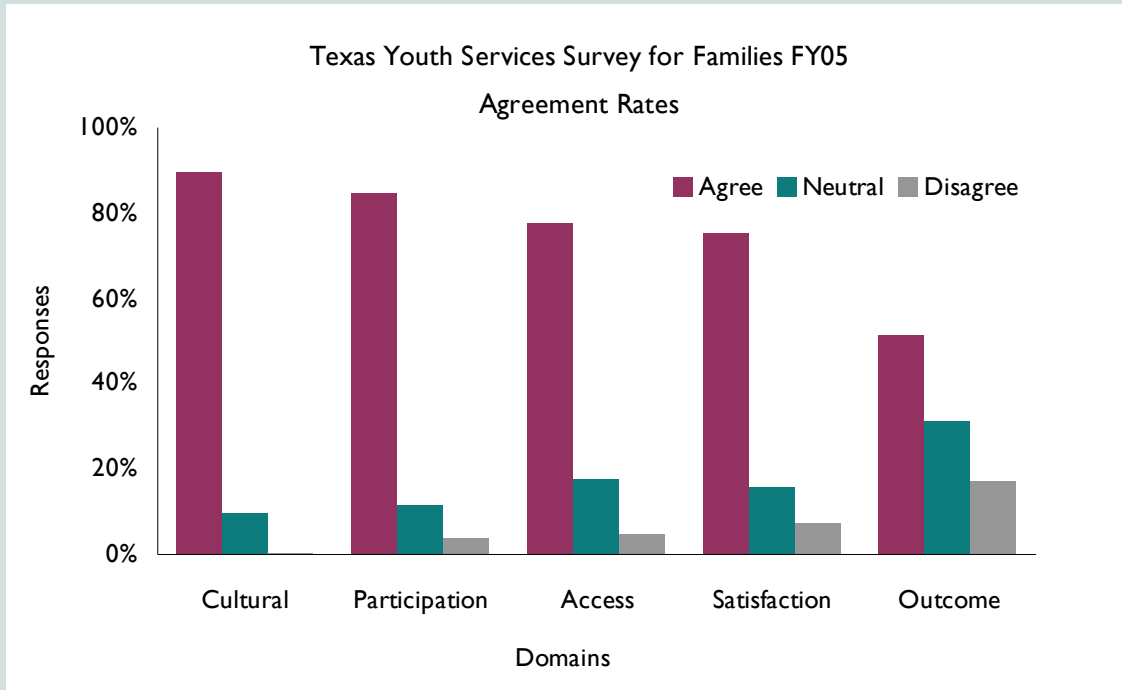
The majority of parents (90%) reported a positive perception of the *Cultural Sensitivity* of services, with only one percent reporting negatively about their experience in this area. A high proportion of parents (85%) also responded positively to items related to their *Participation in Treatment*. Fewer parents, just over three-quarters, responded positively to items regarding their *Access to services* and *Satisfaction with services* (78% and 77% respectively). Only approximately half of

all the parents responded positively to their children’s *Outcome* of services (52%). In all states that administer the YSSF, *Outcome* is generally the lowest scoring domain. The same is true for the Adult Mental Health Consumer Survey.

The graphs on the following page show the domain agreement rates over the past four years. The survey agreement rates were relatively stable until this year when they decreased across the board. There

were significant changes made to the survey method, which may have contributed to this decrease. What is interesting is that while most of the agreement rates decreased within the +/-5.3% margin of error, *Outcome* decreased much more, almost 14 percentage points. It will be important to track these scores over the next several years to see if this trend continues. ★

Domains	Number of Responses	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Cultural	323	90%	10%	1%
Participation	325	85%	12%	4%
Access	323	78%	18%	5%
Satisfaction	325	77%	16%	7%
Outcome	318	52%	31%	17%



		Cultural	Participation	Access	Satisfaction	Outcome
	Number of Responses	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Gender						
Female	111	92%	86%	79%	76%	49%
Male	217	89%	84%	77%	77%	53%
Age						
0-12	251	90%	85%	77%	76%	51%
13-17	77	89%	83%	80%	79%	53%
Race/Ethnicity						
Black	85	98%	92%	85%	81%	44%
Hispanic	93	90%	85%	78%	77%	51%
White	137	84%	81%	73%	73%	56%
Other	13	92%	77%	77%	77%	62%
Primary Diagnosis						
Attention Deficit	136	93%	88%	81%	81%	53%
Bipolar Disorder	57	87%	84%	76%	71%	40%
Conduct Disorder	29	82%	83%	66%	66%	45%
Major Depression	38	90%	84%	84%	84%	51%
Other Mood Disorder	22	96%	86%	59%	64%	64%
Other Diagnosis	44	86%	77%	82%	80%	61%

What Did Different Groups of Parents Say?

A child's gender or age group (child or teen) did not appear to be related to the parent's opinion of services. In terms of racial/ethnic groups, parents of Black consumers had the highest agreement

rates for all the domains except for *Outcome*, where their agreement rate was lowest (44%). This agreement rate is six percentage points lower than the overall *Outcome* agreement of 52% and outside the +/-

5.3% margin of error. Among the diagnostic groups, there were many variations in the agreement rates but no clear pattern.



Item Results: What Did Parents Say About the Services Their Children Received?

There was a broad range in the agreement rates of the individual survey items. The highest agreement of 94% was for #14, "Staff

spoke with me in a way that I understood." On the other end of the scale, the lowest agreement rate was 52% for #20, "My

child is better able to cope when things go



Domain	Item	Number of Responses	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Satisfaction	1. Overall, I am satisfied with the services my child received.	324	85%	9%	7%
Participation	2. I helped to choose my child's services.	322	82%	10%	9%
Participation	3. I helped to choose my child's treatment goals.	324	82%	9%	8%
Satisfaction	4. The people helping my child stuck with us no matter what.	322	79%	11%	10%
Satisfaction	5. I felt my child had someone to talk to when he/she was troubled.	324	77%	12%	12%
Participation	6. I participated in my child's treatment.	322	91%	6%	3%
Satisfaction	7. The services that my child and/or family received were right for us.	322	83%	10%	8%
Access	8. The location of services was convenient.	324	83%	9%	7%
Access	9. Services were available at times that were convenient for us.	324	83%	8%	8%
Satisfaction	10. My family got the help we wanted for my child.	318	77%	12%	11%
Satisfaction	11. My family got as much help as we needed for my family.	320	74%	14%	12%
Cultural	12. Staff treated me with respect.	322	92%	5%	3%
Cultural	13. Staff respected my family's religious/spiritual beliefs.	323	91%	8%	1%
Cultural	14. Staff spoke with me in a way that I understood.	324	94%	4%	2%
Cultural	15. Staff were sensitive to my cultural/ethnic background.	322	89%	10%	2%
Outcome	16. My child is better at handling daily life.	318	60%	20%	19%
Outcome	17. My child gets along better with family members.	315	57%	25%	18%
Outcome	18. My child gets along better with friends and other people.	318	59%	26%	15%
Outcome	19. My child is doing better in school and/or work.	316	62%	20%	18%
Outcome	20. My child is better able to cope when things go wrong.	318	52%	25%	23%
Outcome	21. I am satisfied with our family life right now.	317	58%	21%	21%

What were the Results of the Pilot Items?

The *Social Connectedness* domain relates to the strength of the parent's connections to social supports outside the mental health system.

In addition to the 21 items on the regular YSSF, this year the Mental Health Statistics Improvement Program (MHSIP) requested that states using the survey test new items related to *Social Connectedness*, *Functioning*, *School Attendance*, and *Criminal Justice Involvement*.

The *Functioning* domain relates to the parent's perception of how well the child deals with life situations and routine activities of daily living as a result of services. The *Social Connectedness* domain relates to the strength of the parent's connections to social supports outside the mental health system. The *School Attendance* and *Criminal Justice Involvement* items seek to measure whether the child's school attendance increased and criminal justice involvement decreased in the past year.

There was one item for *Functioning*, "As a result of services, my child is better able to do things he or she wants to do." Only 58% of the parents responded positively to this item, which is low compared to the other survey items,

but similar to the items in the *Outcome* domain. There were seven items related to *Social Connectedness*, the lead-in being, "Other than my service providers..." On average, 78% of the parents agreed with the *Social Connectedness* items, which is mid-range compared to the other items on the survey.

The *Criminal Justice Involvement* items ask the parent about the child's arrest history during "the past 12 months" and the "12 months prior to that." Only 11% of parents reported that their child had been arrested in the past 12 months; even fewer (6%) reported that their child had been arrested in the 12 months prior. These results may suggest that arrests increased over time, the opposite of the desired result that arrests should decrease.

The *School Attendance* items ask the parent about the child's suspension/expulsion history in "the past 12 months" and "the 12 months prior." While 24% of parents reported that their child had been suspended or expelled from school in the past 12

months, fewer (19%) reported that their child had been suspended or expelled the 12 months prior, suggesting an increase in suspensions and expulsions. There are several explanations for the apparent negative results of these two measures, such as that respondents may not remember the 12 month period prior to the past year as well as the past 12 month period; that the child's school or arrest problems only recently emerged, causing the family to seek services; or that the children have not been in services long enough for the services to positively affect these outcomes. The national analysis of all states' pilot data will allow further exploration of these results.

When asked if, since starting to receive services, the number of days their child was in school was Greater, About the Same, or Less, almost half (48%) reported About the Same, while 33% reported Greater. The rest of the parents responded Less or Does not Apply. ★

Domain	Item	Number of Responses	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Functioning	22. My child is better able to do things he or she wants to do.	316	58%	24%	18%
Social Connectedness	23. I know people who will listen and understand me when I need to talk.	318	79%	12%	9%
Social Connectedness	24. In a crisis, I would have the support I need from family or friends.	317	76%	14%	10%
Social Connectedness	25. I have people that I am comfortable talking with about my child's problems.	318	82%	10%	7%
Social Connectedness	26. I have people that I am comfortable talking with about private things.	317	77%	12%	11%
Social Connectedness	27. I have more than one friend.	318	77%	12%	12%
Social Connectedness	28. I am happy with the friendships I have.	318	80%	13%	8%
Social Connectedness	29. I have people with whom I can do enjoyable things.	319	76%	15%	9%

Domain	Item	Number of Responses	Yes	No
Criminal Involvement	30. Was your child arrested during the past 12 months?	316	11%	89%
Criminal Involvement	31. Was your child arrested during the 12 months prior to that?	317	6%	94%
School Attendance	32. Was your child expelled or suspended during the past 12 months?	314	24%	76%
School Attendance	33. Was your child expelled or suspended during the 12 months prior to that?	316	19%	81%

Domain	Item	Number of Responses	Greater	About The Same	Less	Does Not Apply
School Attendance	34. Since starting to receive services, the number of days my child was in school is:	314	33%	48%	7%	12%

This newsletter is produced by the Center for Strategic Decision Support, a division of the Health and Human Services Commission. Please direct any questions or comments regarding this newsletter or its contents to:
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