

SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT  
Student Research Brief  
*Client Satisfaction Surveys*

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**SCORE: 10/30; you didn't follow the instructions in the syllabus which asked you to examine a SOCIAL POLICY from a local and national perspective.**

### Introduction

Client satisfaction is an important area of feedback for social agencies to utilize to know how to serve their clients better. If an agency does not have policies and procedures in place to help ensure this information is collected, it can sometimes be lost. Throughout the literature it is apparent that there are several main areas where assessments need to be utilized in order to ensure the best care for the clients are being seen.

### Summary of Primary Findings

Younger agencies may not have the benefit of a long-standing document stating their policy and procedures about program evaluation or assessing client satisfaction, which can make it difficult for them to know if their agency is being effective within their target population. The literature consistently states the importance of an evaluation process (Barbeito, 2004) and gives examples of what types of methods to use for assessing client satisfaction (Schmidt & Strickland, 1998). In Blankertz and Hazem's opinion, there are certain benefits to having an unstructured system for evaluation because the agency is more flexible to adapt programs to the clients needs when they come to the agency's attention. One study that was conducted took careful consideration of the reasons satisfaction surveys result in skewed answers and attempted to correct them. If the consumer feels it is important to "gain approval of those seen by participants to hold positions of power in the specific programs" (Blankertz & Hazem,

2002, 279) they may be more likely to give favorable answers rather than honest ones. Another problem is that surveys typically do not ask questions that allow the client to point out specific elements of the services that needs to be improved (Blankertz & Hazem, 2002). In Schmidt and Strickland's Common Measurement Tool, they discuss five main areas that need to be considered when beginning to develop a policy about assessing client satisfaction: Client expectations, their perception of the experience, the level of importance, the level of their satisfaction, and what the priorities for improvement should be (1998). These elements are diagramed in the chart that follows on the second page. It shows the relationship between all of these elements and how they effect the client. Callahan and Gilbert found in their study that there was a high correlation between client satisfaction and the client's "increased discretionary powers" (Callahan & Gilbert, 2005, 59). They also noted that when client satisfaction had an effect on whether the program or agency would continue, the satisfaction surveys seemed to indicate a higher degree of overall satisfaction.

### Implications for Social Work Practice

Satisfaction assessments can be very useful in an agency to help decide what direction the agency needs to take in the future. It can also let them know if the current services are accomplishing what they are striving for. As social agencies it is our responsibility to keep our social work practice client centered. Without policies to ensure that clients have the opportunity to submit satisfaction surveys, there is no consistent way for them to give input about the services they receive.

**DATA AT A GLANCE**  
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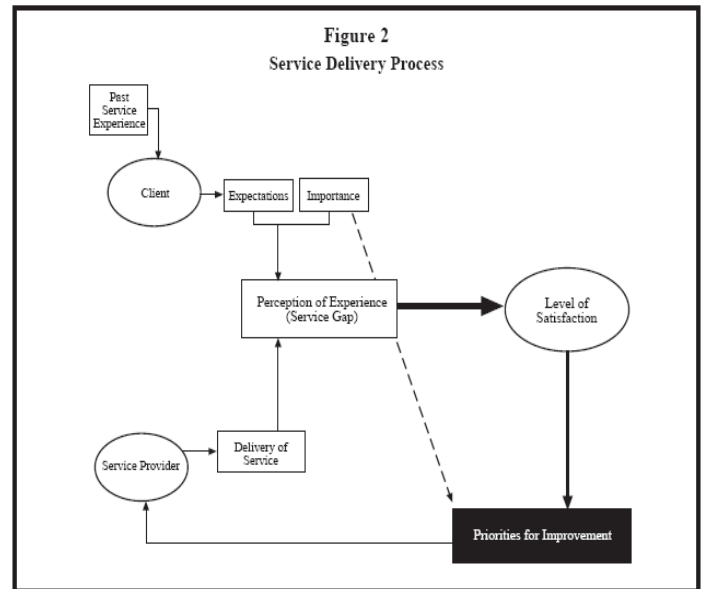
### 10 Recommendations for Practice with Systems of All Sizes

1. When writing policy concerning assessing agency programs, always involve the client in the process.
2. Be aware that all clients are going to have different standards of what constitutes satisfaction.
3. Include as many clients in the satisfaction survey as possible to give them a voice as well as give the agency valuable feedback.
4. Consider using non-traditional methods for collecting satisfaction information depending on your clientele.
5. Specify in the policy and procedures where the survey will be given out. Pick a neutral place like a waiting area or sent out by mail.
6. Specify in the policy and procedures who will be administering the surveys. It could be volunteer, a willing client, or a staff member.
7. Do not ask only general questions about the agency. Be specific when asking questions about the services the agency offers.
8. Allow places for the client to voice what concerns they have with the agency. Incorporate open-ended questions into the survey process.
9. Besides satisfaction surveys for clients, there should be other forms of program evaluations as well. Some ideas of these are volunteer, or staff competency assessments, program outcome assessments, or cultural competency assessments.
10. Ensure that a client is able to share openly about any area of service for which they have feedback.

### Conclusion

In order for an agency to ensure it meets its mission and does so in a way that is convenient, respectful, and beneficial to the clients it is crucial for the agency to consider the satisfaction of the client. Feedback from a variety of sources is important to have many perspectives on the process and to make suggestions according to what is best for everyone involved, but if the client is the focus of the agency, they cannot be forgotten in this process. They must be approached in a way that is non-threatening to them or the services they receive. It should also be done in a way

that can encourage honest positive or negative answers. Policies in an agency bring stability to the procedures they follow and therefore it is critical not to forget the satisfaction of the client when writing or adapting policies within the agency.



(Schmidt & Strickland, 1998, 9)

### References

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