

Why CQI Conducts Interviews in Person©

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B11PDF- Mental health consumer survey methodologies, which often rely on mail and telephone techniques, have not been effective in producing the high quality data due to poor sample representations and a lack of respondent openness (Holbrook, Green and & Krosnick, 2003). People with mental illness are oftentimes a “vulnerable segment of the population,” and thus less likely to have phones or even get mail, particularly homeless people. And when responding by phone, this group tends to be less than candid in their responses, having a tendency to satisfice (Holbrook, 2003).

[D]ata obtained from telephone interviews appear to be more distorted by satisficing and a desire to appear socially desirable than are data obtained from face-to-face interviewing, and respondents interviewed by telephone are more suspicious and less motivated to optimize (ie., less cooperative and less interested in the survey) (Holbrook et al, 2003).

Also, respondents who have learned to distrust the system are less likely to open up to staff or student interviewers, as compared to consumers interviewers (Simpson & House, 2002; Clark et al, 1999). Because of their personal experience with mental illnesses, CQI interviewers are able to build a rapport with respondents that help them speak honestly and openly about their treatment experiences. This is part of the hard-earned expertise that consumers gain through as having been or being service recipient (Deegan,1993).

Mental health systems and programs have usually dictated to consumers how things will be run, with limited opportunity for input. As a result, most mental health consumers are not in the habit of thinking critically about the quality of their care. Program clients have sometimes been given written questionnaires to fill out, but many have not filled them out due to a lack of understanding of how they would be used, a lack of trust, and reading comprehension problems. And since the parameters of the questionnaires have been defined by non-consumers, consumers are not necessary given the opportunity to respond to questions that most matter to them. Interviews also help breach any reading comprehension gaps.

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