

Massachusetts CST Initiative

Survey Development Toolkit

The Massachusetts Consumer Satisfaction Team Initiative surveys consumers receiving mental health and substance abuse services to evaluate and report on their satisfaction with services, their assessment of the quality/value of their care, and how they believe they have progressed while receiving such services. Each interview is conducted in person, by two interviewers, who are either consumers or family members. In person interviews are utilized to:

- increase response rates;
- actively engage the interviewee by developing a sense of trust and empathy;
- to encourage them to discuss in some detail their likes and dislikes about services, and to seek their suggestions for improvement.

This toolkit has been designed based primarily on the experience of the Massachusetts Consumer Satisfaction Team pilot study that was completed in June of 1999. We continue to review ways to refine our process based on our ongoing efforts to devise survey instruments.

Each survey instrument we design has between 20 – 35 quantitative questions and either three or four open-ended questions. Each interviewee is asked to fill out a fairly standard demographic questionnaire and an informed consent form. The instruments are designed so that the average interview can be completed in 30 minutes. Below are the steps we take to complete the development of a consumer assessment survey, something we endeavor to complete within three months.

Step I Establish the purpose and scope of survey

The purpose and scope are often based on the needs and requests of the funding source. As such, CST staff meets with funding source representatives to determine the purpose of the survey. The most common purposes are for:

- Quality Improvement
- Planning
- Accountability
- Informed Consumer Choice
- Management

For the contract with the Partnership, Quality Improvement was the main purpose, and as a result, questions were designed to create actionable outcomes.

The Scope of the Consumer Assessment survey is often based on:

- population
- program type

- state-wide v substate areas
- funding streams

Because our contract was with MBHP, for each site we surveyed, we were interviewing only Medicaid clients.

Step 2 Establish Survey Development Working Group

CST Executive Director and Director of Operations and Development, sometimes in collaboration with a consultant, recruit and organize a 7 – 9 person working group made of people who have had direct experience with the type of services or program for which the survey is to be developed. Two thirds of the group’s members shall be primary consumers, but also included are family members and provider representatives.

The working group is to meet three times over a period of 10 weeks to develop consensus on what performance indicators to measure, the general content of the survey, and on the survey protocol. CST staff facilitates the meetings and other staff members may be present to participate. Each meeting is approximately 4 hours to allow for open discussion and friendly debate.

Step 3- Meeting One of the Survey Development Working Group

Agenda:

1. Introductions- why I am here
2. Facilitator explains what the purpose and the scope of the survey is to be, introducing several questions to the group
 - “What underlying values are we trying to reflect”
 - “What do we want to measure?”
3. Domains of Quality and Satisfaction
 - The key domains for behavioral health care are listed below. Are there additional domains that are important for this type of program/services:
 - 1) Access to care
 - 2) Quality of personal interactions and communications with providers
 - respect for consumer patient rights
 - consumer–patient participation in the treatment process
 - information about benefits and risks of psychotropic medications and other services
 - 3) Quality of services provided
 - 4) Outcomes
 - expansion and acquisition of skills
 - regaining and expanding social roles
 - wellness
4. What are the critical Performance Indicators for each domain, ranking all performance indicators for their significance.

Step 4 Meeting Two of the Working Group (approximately 2 weeks later)

The working group continues to review and assess the significance of the various performance indicators and begins to formulate questions that might provide effective measurements of those indicators. Group also reviews how the survey cycle protocol should be altered for the type of program and population that is being surveyed.

Step 5 Draft Survey is designed by CST staff

CST staff and consultants formulate questions for each indicator with accompanying Lykert scale. A variety of open-ended questions are created to reflect consensus of Working Group.

The questions are formatted into a script to be tested for significance and comprehension.

Step 6 Focus Groups

3 –5 focus groups of between 6 – 8 people are conducted to assess the significance and comprehension of the questions. CST staff further refines questions.

Step 7 Cognitive Lab Interviews are conducted individually with 4 – 6 consumers. Paid volunteers are asked about how they understand the questions and about the way in which they answered them. Sometimes they are asked to “think aloud” while preparing their answers. The goal of the interviews is identify questions that are not consistently understood or that are not being answered in a way hoped for.

Step 8 The survey is pretested

During pretesting, interviewers are asked to be both interviewers and observers of the data collection process. Interviewers are asked to observe whether or not each question is 1) easy to read as worded, 2) the respondents understand the question in a consistent way, and 3) whether the respondent gave an adequate response. A group debriefing is conducted after the pretest to talk about and record shared experiences

Step 9 Meeting three of the Working group

The group reviews the findings of the focus groups, the Cognitive Lab Interviews and the Pretesting to recommend final alterations to the survey and the survey protocol.

Step 10 CST staff finalizes survey instrument and Survey Protocol.