



Project of the *Vermont Research Partnership* among the Vermont Agency of Human Services, Vermont Department of Education, Vermont Association of Regional Partnerships, and The University of Vermont

Project: A Study of Consumer Satisfaction with Services and Supports provided by the Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS)

AHS Outcome of Well-Being: *Communities provide safety and support for individuals and families (#10)*

Project Participants: The study includes approximately two thousand two hundred (2200) randomly selected individuals who received services and/or financial support from the Vermont Agency of Human Services within the past year. Eligible participants will be adults 18 years and older, with current address and telephone contact information.

Project Location(s): State-wide across Vermont

Project Description:

In May 2003, the Vermont legislature passed Act 45 which provided a framework to guide the AHS re-organization process. Through this process, Agency stakeholders identified ten themes related to the changes needed within AHS to improve service delivery: *Collaboration with Key Partners, Respectful Service, Valuing the assets and strengths of individuals and families, Emphasis on Prevention, Access to Services, Effective Service Coordination, Use of Flexible Funding to address gaps in services, Support for People through Transition, Services Provided Before a Crisis, Information Systems and Communication, and Continuous Improvement and Accountability, including Staff Development.* These ten themes have become the standards that AHS uses to judge its effectiveness in terms of *how its services are delivered* with the premise that attention to these areas will ultimately improve outcomes for the individuals and families served.

This study is an evaluation of services and supports offered to Vermonters through the Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS) using indicators developed from the ten themes of reorganization. The purpose is to determine customer satisfaction levels and to identify areas for potential improvement. Through a ten minute telephone interview, consumers will be asked to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with 36 survey items that address the themes. Findings will help to guide and prioritize the Agency's strategic planning and future human resource development activities.

Selected Indicators Used to Track Progress:

1. Selected Indicators for reorganization theme of **Respectful Service**
 - ❖ Individuals and families report that environments are welcoming
 - ❖ Individuals and families report that staff are respectful and helpful

- ❖ Individuals and families report that their diversity and strengths were recognized, respected and incorporated into services

2. Selected Indicators for reorganization theme of ***Access to Services***

- ❖ Individuals and families report that agency staff provided them with information they needed about AHS services and programs.
- ❖ Individuals and families report that service is provided in a timely, courteous and respectful manner
- ❖ Individuals and families report that the written information they receive is easy to understand, timely and respectful.

3. Selected Indicators for reorganization theme of ***Continuous Improvement and Accountability***

- ❖ Individual and families report that satisfaction and complaint data are solicited on a routine basis and are used for quality improvement
- ❖ Individuals and families report that they know how to, and feel safe to, file a complaint if they are dissatisfied with a service or employee.
- ❖ Individuals and families report that when they provide feedback and/or suggestions, their ideas are taken seriously.

Project Timeline / Status:

In February and March 2005, researchers from the University of Vermont and their partners at the Agency of Human Services developed a survey to assess levels of customer satisfaction and to identify areas for potential improvement. In addition to Vermont stakeholder reviews of the instrument, feedback was solicited from nationally regarded experts in the area of interagency collaboration and consumer satisfaction: Patti Hackett of the Health and Ready to Work National Center and Dean Corrigan from Texas A& M University. A pilot study of the consumer satisfaction survey took place in April and May, 2005. The full scale staff survey is scheduled for implementation in June, 2005. Preliminary results will be available in October 2005. A written report will be completed in November, 2005.

Program Partners: Agency of Human Services and AHS Consumers

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