

DHHS Procedures for Conducting Customer Surveys

Background

The work of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS) is customer centered. DHHS staff often serve more than one customer group. Customers may include but are not limited to direct service clients, family members, advocates for clients, other agencies or staff (either internal or external).

Customer service is about the way any organization or business, including DHHS, responds to needs and requests from its internal and external customers. DHHS employees shall make it a priority to anticipate customer needs and provide effective, resourceful and caring services while inspiring the highest level of customer trust.

The purpose of this document is to supplement the DHHS Communications: Customer Service policy by providing guidelines for the collection and assessment of data from customers.

Assessing Customer Satisfaction

A customer satisfaction survey is defined as one that attempts to gauge the level of satisfaction that customers have regarding the employees delivering the products or services of a DHHS entity; as well as the entity itself.

An employee satisfaction survey is defined as one that attempts to gauge the level of satisfaction that employees have working for DHHS, including, but not limited to satisfaction with DHHS and divisional/office/facility/school leadership, satisfaction with one's job, working environment, salary and benefits, and any other aspect of working for DHHS.

Customers can be key sources of information for assessing the extent to which organizations are providing efficient, effective and high quality services. This information can be very useful for assessing and improving programs and services. Although many different methods have to be used to appropriately reach our diverse customer base and to ensure reliable, valid results, DHHS has developed *SurveyMax* (MAX), a web-based survey tool as one method that can be used to collect timely information regarding customer satisfaction with services. MAX can also be used to assess employee satisfaction with working conditions, salaries and benefits, and other aspects of working for DHHS and its offices and divisions.

Key Customer Satisfaction Attributes

Customer satisfaction survey methods used for the assessment of the divisions/offices/facilities/schools primary customers shall at a minimum, include the five (5) key attributes of customer service that have been incorporated into all employee job descriptions and work plans. The following five (5) attributes are intended to be broad and related to the general work of the department. In addition, employees may have specific program duties as defined by management or statute. These too shall be reviewed to identify ways of involving the customer perception of service delivery.

Job Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employees know all parts of their job - Understands the division/facility/school - Gets the job done - Shares information and resources - Knows how to solve problems - Knows how to get answers to question
Willingness to Help Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifies problems and offers to assist in resolving the issue - Takes responsibility for problem solving - Readily volunteers to support/assist customers (external/internal) - Good team player - Helps find answers if not immediately available
Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responds in a timely manner - Always gives the customer more than he or she expects - Serves as a mentor to others - Recognizes when another employees needs help and responds - Consistently returns calls or emails promptly
Respectful of Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Treats others i.e. clients, customers, staff as equal - Looks at positive side of issue - Open to new ideas and cultures - Says thank you to customer - Recognizes others' work - Reinforces others' self confidence
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listens to customers and tries to understand their needs - Uses positive body language (smiling to put people at ease and making eye contact) - Speaks clearly - Shows a positive attitude at work

Modes of Surveying and Data Collection

There are many different methods to collect data each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Survey methods which include face-to-face, telephone or computer-assisted interviewing or surveying, self administered surveys through the mail or web-based or other survey types are among the most commonly used methods for collecting data.

As stated in departmental policy Section III: Communications-Customer Service, each division/office/ facility/school shall have and formalize an implementation plan that specifies the methods and procedures used for assessing customer service and satisfaction; and describes the process to be used for evaluating and applying the results obtained to improve the quality and effectiveness of services and products provided. The implementation plans shall be in place by the division/office/ facility/school prior to conducting the customer or employee satisfaction surveys and shall be submitted to the DHHS Office of Citizen Services (OCS).

Survey Data Reporting

At a minimum, divisions/offices/facilities/schools shall provide the DHHS Secretary and the Office of Citizen Services with an annual report of findings of customer service/satisfaction

surveys that are administered to their respective primary customers. The following elements are required to be included in the reporting:

Purpose/ Survey Objectives

- The name of the organization for which the study was conducted and the name of the organization conducting it.
- The purpose of the study, including the specific objectives.
- The dates on or between which the data collection was done.

Methodology

- A definition of the universe that the survey is intended to represent and a description of the population frame(s) that was actually sampled.
- A description of how the survey was designed and conducted in enough detail for a reader to fully understand.
- A description of the sample, providing demographic statistics, sample size and explanation of how participants were selected. If data from some participants was excluded from the final analyses, explain why.
- A description of any measures that were used, along with the provision of evidence of validity and reliability.
- An explanation of any sample weighting procedures or scoring of survey responses that affect the reported results if applicable. Weighting is generally used in survey analysis to compensate for patterns of non-response that might bias results.

Findings/Results

- An explanation of the research results in detail including response rates.
- A reporting and explanation of the frequencies and percentages that were used as the basis of conclusions.
- An identification of the statistical analyses that were used along with standard deviations or standard errors for survey data analysis.
- An explanation of the survey results as related to the assessment of the five (5) key attributes of customer service defined in the Customer service policy and further addressed in this document.
- A discussion, interpretation or explanation of how well the survey research met the intent along with any problems or limitations that were encountered if any.

A copy of the questionnaire or exact wording of the questions used, including Interviewer directions and visual exhibits.

Any other information that would be needed to make a reasonable assessment of the reported findings.

Divisions/offices/facilities/schools shall also have available if requested by the DHHS Secretary and/or the Office of Citizen Services, the following:

1. Estimates of the sampling error and of data should be shown when appropriate, but when shown they should include reference to other possible sources of error so that a misleading impression of accuracy or precision is not conveyed.
2. The basis for any specific "completion rate" percentages should be fully documented and described.
3. Statistical tables clearly labeled and identified as to questionnaire source, including the number of raw cases forming the base for each cross-tabulation.
4. A description of any special scoring, data adjustment or indexing procedures used. (Where the division/office/facility/school uses proprietary techniques, these should be described in general and the division/office/facility/school should be prepared to provide technical information on demand from qualified and technically competent persons who have agreed to honor the confidentiality of such information).
5. Copies of Interviewer instructions, validation results, code books, and other important working papers.

Electronic Surveys

SurveyMax

The DHHS has used surveys for many years to gather information both internally and externally for a variety of reasons, but primarily in order to evaluate the accessibility and quality of programs and services. An increasing number of these surveys have been conducted electronically as employees, providers, clients, constituents and residents - our customers - become more connected through the internet and other electronic media. Such surveys have typically been conducted through the use of one of the many commercially - available software packages and sometimes lack the flexibility needed to be comprehensive in scope and accessible to certain segments of populations being surveyed. Additionally, the confidentiality of data collected with the software used by those companies cannot always be assured.

The department's in-house tool, SurveyMax (MAX) was developed primarily as a tool to conduct electronic customer satisfaction surveys and eventually eliminate the need for most commercial survey instruments. Therefore, DHHS entities are encouraged to use MAX for web-based surveys related to customer and employee satisfaction. MAX includes an interactive [help menu](#) to guide the user through design and delivery of the survey.

In addition, DHHS entities are encouraged to use MAX for other web-based surveys that are not related to customer and employee satisfaction. Although the primary focus for MAX is to provide a means for conducting web-based surveys, either electronic or hard copy surveys can also be designed and delivered through MAX and should be used accordingly. As enhancements

occur, the survey tool will become more and more appropriate for use with a wide variety of information gathering and opinion surveys.

1. DHHS directors shall identify at least one individual trained in survey theory and the use of the survey tool to serve in the role of division, office, school or facility survey administrator for SurveyMax.
2. The portal for entry and authentication of SurveyMax user's is the DHHS Web Identity Role Management (WIRM) interface.
3. The process for acquiring user access to SurveyMax is as follows:
 - A. Access to SurveyMax must be designated by the Director of a division/office/facility/school to include what role the user needs.
 - B. The division/office/facility/school's designated Information Technology Security Person shall send the request to DHHS.Customer.Support.Center@ncmail.net.
 - C. Information that is required to set up each requested user in WIRM includes:

Name: First and Last

Division: (for which he/she works) (Divisions or Towns, etc will need use specific abbreviations that have been created for this purpose. This document is also attached.)

E-Mail Address:

County: (in which he/she works)

Title: (State Employee or Contractor)

Telephone Number:

Office Address: (street address)

City:

Zip Code:

Role to be Assigned (Note: User can only have one role for SurveyMax):

OLCSSurveyAdmin - read/write access to any survey within their division

OLCSSurveyAuthor - read/write access to surveys a user creates

- D. For others not utilizing the Web Identity Role Management (WIRM) portal, the division/office/facility/school Director shall send via e-mail the information requested to the designated Security Person for their division who shall ensure notification to the users for which access is being requested.
- E. The Security Person is given the "standard temporary password" to sign into WIRM and passes that on to the users if set up by the Web Team. If set up by DHHS Customer Support, they give different passwords for each day.
- F. Users can get their passwords reset by having their Security Person send a request to DHHS.Customer.Support.Center@ncmail.net or call 855-3200, option 2 .

4. Once a WIRM account is established for an individual, the SurveyMax site is accessed at www.ncsurveymax.com
5. If you enter your password incorrectly in SurveyMax three consecutive times, you will be locked out of the system and will need to have your password reset. .
6. On an as-needed basis, the DHHS Division of Information Resource Management (DIRM) will offer training to individuals who have been identified to oversee, develop,

or conduct electronic surveys for their division/ office/facility/school. However, for the most part, DHHS will follow a “train the trainer” model to expand knowledge of and expertise with the survey tool. All trained MAX users will be registered by DIRM and will be provided access to the MAX software and unrestricted information in the database.

7. The Customer Service Task Force (CSTF) Data Committee will review nominated SurveyMax surveys and select high quality surveys to be archived and accessible by all trained MAX users. Such surveys may be adapted for use by others who wish to use previously developed questions or formats. Information generated through surveys will be available for analysis by any authorized user unless the developer has restricted access based on confidentiality requirements or other concerns.
8. The Customer Service Task Force (CSTF) will sponsor a MAX survey users group consisting of MAX users throughout DHHS. This voluntary group shares information regarding survey development so that the quality, accuracy and appropriate use of DHHS surveys may be enhanced.

SurveyMax Users Group and Administrator Roles

Division SurveyMax Administrator’s Role

- Serves as the division/office/facility/school’s primary point of contact for SurveyMax issues and surveys.
- Communicates with division/office/facility/school director and other staff in their organization on Survey Max survey issues.
- Has access rights to all division/office/facility/school SurveyMax surveys.
- Ensures that SurveyMax survey design and administration competence exists and is enhanced in the division.
- Ensure SurveyMax surveys comply with DHHS SurveyMax policies and procedures, especially regarding the issues of customer confidentiality and privacy.
- Ensures that SurveyMax surveys are reviewed by the division/office/facility/school Director and the DHHS Public Information Office.
- Trains division staff on the use of SurveyMax.
- Attends SurveyMax Administrators Group meeting.
- Ensures that surveys pertaining to programs and services provided jointly or under a Memorandum of Agreement (or other arrangement) by two or more divisions/offices/facilities/schools are coordinated with those division SurveyMax administrators.

SurveyMax Administrators Group

- Addresses common SurveyMax survey development and implementation issues
- Develops a basic executive summary format for use in distributing survey information to division/office/facility/school directors.
- Shapes SurveyMax policy and procedures.
- Serves as a point of contact to advise SurveyMax Administrators or Authors on any SurveyMax issues, “bugs” or potential enhancements.

- Serves as the initial reviewing body for requested Survey enhancements, including changes to the SurveyMax report utility and makes recommendations the CSTF Data Committee and DIRM.

Customer Service Task Force (CSTF) Data Committee

- Reviews DHHS wide customer service survey analysis provided by the individual divisions/offices/facilities/schools or prepared by DHHS staff as designated by the DHHS Secretary and presents with comments to CSTF.
- Ensures that the five attributes of customer satisfaction are covered in each primary customer service satisfaction surveys.
- Ensures that the divisions/offices/facilities/schools provide reports in accordance with outlined requirements.
- Approves a basic executive summary format for distributing survey information to management. Format will be developed and recommended by the SurveyMax Administrators Group.
- Communicates with and receives updates and recommendations from the SurveyMax Administrators Group for review and consideration
- Advocates on behalf of the users for improvements and potential enhancements.
- Prepares survey related reports for the CSTF which in turn may be presented to the Secretary's Office.
- Increase awareness of customer survey policy among DHHS employees.
- Ensures that the five attributes of customer satisfaction are covered in each primary customer service satisfaction surveys.
- Develops the criteria for exceptions from using the Demographic page.
- Determine the demographic data required by the Customer Service Taskforce, i.e., what demographic, geographic data is required.

Exception to the Use of the SurveyMax Tool

Should a division/office/facility/ school desire to conduct a web-based customer/employee satisfaction survey using any other tool than MAX, the division/office/facility/ school shall adhere to the following process:

1. The division/office/facility/school Director shall submit a letter of justification to the Director of the Office of Citizen Services that details the specific reason(s) for not using SurveyMax as its customer or employee satisfaction survey tool. The letter will include the financial impact on the Division or program of adopting SurveyMax as its customer or employee satisfaction survey tool.
2. The Director of the Office of Citizen Services will review the letter for clarification of any issues identified in the exemption request.
3. After its initial review, a committee with representatives of the Office of Citizen Services and the Division of Information Resource Management will review the exemption request. The Director of the Office of Citizen Services will forward the exemption request with a recommendation to approve or deny the request to the DHHS Office of the Secretary for final determination.

4. Divisions/offices/facilities/schools may be exempted from the use of SurveyMax if it would present a significant financial hardship to convert to the use of SurveyMax or if certain functionality is available in their current system that is not currently available in SurveyMax. DHHS divisions/offices/facilities/schools should describe their plans and timeline for adopting SurveyMax as its customer service survey tool.
5. The primary criteria for exceptions include:
 - A. Funding sources require a specific survey/data analysis tool;
 - B. SurveyMax is not able to deliver reports or analysis which would meet funding requirements;
 - C. Transition to SurveyMax would represent a significant economic cost to the agency; or
 - D. SurveyMax is not able to deliver its surveys in manner to meet the needs of an agency's clients
6. Those divisions/offices/facilities/schools that are exempted from using SurveyMax by the Secretary will be expected to provide an annual report in accordance with the requirements outlined in this document and non-confidential raw survey data if requested to the Customer Services Task Force Data Committee or designee of the DHHS Secretary regarding the customer satisfaction survey of the division's/office's/facility's/school's primary customers. For direct service providers, this would be their primary client group.
7. Information on the reasons for exemption will be forwarded to the Survey Administrators Group and the Customer Service Task Force Data Committee for their review and to provide direction for needed SurveyMax enhancements.
8. Any exemption would require continuing participation with the SurveyMax Administrators Group and the stipulation that SurveyMax would be used when it meets the agency's needs.

The following sections are procedures and guidelines for any customer survey regardless of the methods used.

Division/Office/Facility/School Review

All proposals for surveys must be reviewed and approved at the division/facility/school level before it is sent to the DHHS Office of Public Affairs for review and approval. The division/office/facility/school level review process shall include the following:

- Appropriate use of MAX when this tool is used, in terms of the objectives of the survey and the intended respondents to participate in the survey.
- Reliability, validity and generalization of data that is likely to result from the survey.
- Appropriateness of demographic, needs, satisfaction and other data to be collected by the survey.
- Adequacy of proposed plans for protecting personal and identifying information and the confidentiality of persons who respond to the survey.

- Plans for analyzing the data and disseminating the results, taking into account existing research literature and ongoing data collection of survey and other data.

DHHS Office of Public Affairs Review

The Office of Public Affairs shall review proposals for surveys only after they have been reviewed and approved at the DHHS office/division level. All surveys must be approved by the Office of Public Affairs as per the [DHHS Publications Review](#) policy prior to release whether the survey is to be conducted on-line, in print, or a combination of methods. The Office of Public Affairs will provide timely approval upon receipt..

Survey Ethics

Any survey should be conducted in an ethical manner and one that accords with best research practice. Two important ethical issues to adhere to when conducting a survey are confidentiality and informed consent.

At a minimum, the following general ethical guidelines shall be followed for all customer surveys:

- Respondent cooperation shall be voluntary
- Researcher's identity should be disclosed to respondents
- Respondents' rights to anonymity should be safeguarded
- Privacy policy statements should be posted online
- Data security should be maintained
- Reliability and validity of data should be disclosed when presenting the findings of the survey
- Researchers interviewing minors via electronic means should adhere to the [Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998](#) and other safeguards
- Unsolicited email should not be sent to those requesting not to receive any further email

Privacy of Personal and /or Identifying Information

Personal information is defined as a person's first name or first initial and last name in combination with identifying information. Identifying information is considered to be:

- Social security or employer taxpayer identification numbers
- Drivers license, state identification card, or passport numbers (except drivers license numbers appearing on law enforcement records)
- Checking and savings account numbers
- Credit and debit card numbers
- Personal identification number ("PIN") code
- Digital signatures
- Any other numbers or information that can be used to access a person's financial resources

- Biometric data
- Fingerprints
- Passwords

No personal or identifying information should be collected unless that information relates directly to and is necessary for the program or activity. If you plan to collect personal or identifying information in conducting a survey, then instructions on how to review the appropriate privacy statement shall be given at the time of collection. Any personal information obtained shall be collected and retained only as long as necessary for the fulfillment of those specific purposes for which it was collected. Please also refer to [DHHS Policy Section VIII: Privacy and Security-ID Theft and Security Breach](#).

Anonymous Surveys

Ideally, surveys should be conducted anonymously. That is, the survey responses do not identify and cannot be used to identify an individual because no personal information, such as name, address or other identifier that would enable identification of the respondent, is being collected. This eliminates the risk of unauthorized or inappropriate use or disclosure of personal information because no personal information is collected. It may also encourage more openness by survey participants because the opinions or comments are not linked to them as individuals.

Anonymous surveys present some research design challenges. Since there is no way of knowing who has responded to anonymous surveys, targeted follow-up with those who do not respond is not possible. A lack of follow-up could result in a poor response rate and lower the statistical reliability of the survey. Follow-up could be done by contacting all survey participants or by having participants return separately a confirmation that they had responded. These confirmations could be checked against the original list of participants and follow-up done with those who had not sent in confirmations of response.

Another challenge is that anonymous surveys do not permit verification or clarification of information provided. Nor can they be linked to information obtained in later surveys or to information available through other sources such as a client or employee database. Such linking would be data matching, which raises additional privacy issues that should be addressed through a privacy impact assessment. While this will not be an issue in most survey research, sometimes there may be a clear rationale for linking information across time and/or sources or for following up with participants.

Confidential Surveys

An alternative to having completely anonymous survey responses is to replace all personally identifiable data in the survey with a special code or identification number. This code or identifier should not, in and of itself, identify the individual but could be used to link the survey data with personal information for limited and specific purposes. For example, the original personal information may be needed to facilitate follow-up and linking of information across time and sources. The survey data with the special code should be retained separately from the personal information that identifies participants. The only link between the two (2) sets of data should be the code.

Demographics Requirements

The SurveyMax tool contains basic demographic question areas for surveyors' use. Surveys designed for and administered to consumers/customers who receive direct services or care, basic demographic information or questions must be included in the survey.

The minimum basic demographic information for customer service or satisfaction surveys of consumers/customers who receive direct services will be gender, age, ethnicity/race and county of residence. Other demographic questions that a surveyor might ask could include but are not limited to income, education or marital status.

For surveys designed for and administered to organizational or agency customers, demographic questions may be omitted. Examples of organizations, agencies or partners who receive services from DHHS, include but are not limited to Mental Health Local Management Entities (LME), County Departments of Health or Social Services, Area Agencies on Aging, organizations who provide direct services or Councils of Government.

Demographic questions are not required when the number of survey recipients is fifty or fewer or if the use of demographic questions would compromise the privacy of survey recipients.

Federal program requirements for specific demographic information may override these demographic requirements.

Employee Surveys

All surveys developed by any division/office/facility/school to be administered to DHHS employees or contract employees shall be reviewed and approved by the Director of the DHHS Division of Human Resources or designee prior to conducting the survey. Surveys requiring review and approval may be submitted electronically or hard copy accompanied by a brief description of the survey project, the intended audience, timelines for conducting the survey project and contact information of the person who can respond to questions regarding the survey.

Surveys conducted by staff development coordinators or other trainers throughout the department/divisions/offices/facilities/schools to evaluate the effectiveness of a particular training session are not defined as surveys requiring prior approval the Director of the DHHS Division of Human Resources before administering.

If an employee survey is approved by the DHHS Division of Human Resources, demographic information captured shall be consistent with the demographic data used and collected in the department's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) reports.

HIPAA

All surveys shall comply with privacy provisions of [HIPAA](#) regulations on the use and disclosure of Protected Health Information (PHI). PHI is any information about health status,

provision of health care, or payment for health care that can be linked to an individual. For example, when conducting a survey in which a medical diagnosis is defined, the survey author cannot collect any personal identifying information such as name, address, etc

Minors and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

All web-based surveys shall be in compliance with the provisions of the [Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998](#) set by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The act applies to the online collection of personal information from children under 13 years old.

Regardless of the method used, no survey shall be administered to any customer under the age of 18 without verifiable parental or guardian consent. The survey author and responsible division/office/ facility/school shall retain on file parental consent. The survey author or responsible division/office/ facility/school shall also retain documentation that the parent or guardian authorizes the collection, use and disclosure, as applicable, of personal information and the subsequent use of that information before that information is collected from any minor aged 13 to 17.