

**The Self-directed Family Support Program
of
New Mexico**

Families' Satisfaction Survey

June, 2007

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■ INTRODUCTION

The Self-Directed Family Support Program provides flexible support funds to a group of New Mexico families who have a child or family member with developmental disabilities. Project participants direct their own spending of the allocated budget of \$2600. Guidance for this is provided by one of the Program's five Family Resource Support Specialists (FRSS), who are themselves the parent of a child with a developmental disability and reside in the region they serve. The FRSS works in partnership with the family to develop a service plan. Ninety-eight families started with the Project in 2001 and a further 48 families joined it in 2002. The current survey was mailed to 212 families participating in the program, including 35 families who had received their service plan at the end of FY 06.

Participants purchased a broad range of services and items, such as: assistive devices, tuition fees, social supports, housing supports, transportation/travel, health care, respite/personal care and tangible personal property. For a fuller account of the administrative and financial arrangements, as well as the range of purchasing choices, see the program's Annual Report for 2006.

This year the survey was shortened to just four questions on a one-page letter (see attachment 1).

■ PROCEDURE

- The 212 surveys were mailed in April 2007.
- The first question asked about the effect on the family's daily life; question two evaluated the help received from the family resource specialist in accessing resources; questions three elicited an overall satisfaction score. For each of

these questions, a space was provided for respondents to comment further. In question four, respondents were asked whether they had been with the program for more than one year.

- The primary care-provider, normally a parent, was asked to complete the questionnaire. Seven were returned as ‘undeliverable’. Ninety-four completed surveys were returned for review, yielding a 46% response rate. This was lower than for the previous year’s survey, when the response rate was 50%.
- Participants were mailed a different color survey depending in which of the five New Mexico regions they resided. By this means differences in satisfaction with services between regions could be examined. Between 42% and 48% of the questionnaires were returned from each of the regions – Metro area (48%, 48 from 100 mailed), Northeast (42%, 10 / 24), Northwest (42%, 8 / 19), Southeast (42%, 10 / 24), and Southwest (47%, 18 / 38).
- Surveys were anonymous in order to encourage candid responses.

■ FINDINGS

a) Effect on Family Day-to-Day Life

Table 1 shows that 95% of respondents are either satisfied or highly satisfied that the items and/or support received from the project helped their family have a better day-to-day life. In fact 82% of all respondents were highly satisfied with the impact on their day-to-day life. The one respondent who was not at all satisfied stated that he/she has not received any support yet, despite calling.

Table1
Respondents’ Level of Satisfaction with Program’s Impact on Family’s Day-to-Day Life

	Level of Satisfaction (number of respondents & % of total responses)			
	<i>Highly Satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Somewhat Satisfied</i>	<i>Not at all Satisfied</i>
1. Are you satisfied that the items and/or support received from the project have helped you and your family have a better day-to-day life?	76 (82%)	12 (13%)	4 (4%)	1 (1%)

Over half the respondents (48) took the opportunity to comment on the program’s impact on their family, and were overwhelmingly very positive in tone. Some examples are listed below:

“This program has had a giant impact on our family & has helped our daughter”

“Through this wonderful program we were able to purchase a computer and software for our son. It has opened up his world and helping him learn to read. Thank you!”

“After so many years on the DD waiting list it is good to know we have not been forgotten.”

“Extra income & support really dignifies the family and has an emotionally satisfying effect.”

“I was very overwhelmed and impacted with the program.”

b) Support from the Family Resource Specialist

Table 2 shows that 95% respondents are either satisfied or highly satisfied with the way the Family Specialist has helped increase their knowledge about resources, supports and services for their child. The same respondent who had not received services was not at all satisfied.

Table2
Respondents’ Level of Satisfaction with Family Specialists’ Help Increasing Their Knowledge about Resources, Supports and Services

	Level of Satisfaction (number of respondents & % of total responses)			
	<i>Highly Satisfied</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Somewhat Satisfied</i>	<i>Not at all Satisfied</i>
2. Are you satisfied with how your family resource specialist has helped increase your knowledge about resources supports and/or services for your child?	73 (78%)	16 (17%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)

Comments about the family specialists included:

“By listening - sometimes families just need to talk. She was not only empathetic and compassionate but helped us get support through a local support group for families.”

“Our resource specialist gave good information to us to get more, OT, PT, & SLP.”

“She has been extremely helpful in suggesting resources to help (our son). She is very good at her job.”

“She makes me feel that there is help for (son). I have feelings of relief and am not so scared.”

“She is very knowledgeable. Materials that were given help with so much information.”

c) Overall Satisfaction with the Program

1. Overall Satisfaction

Respondents were asked to express their overall satisfaction with how the program had worked for their family.

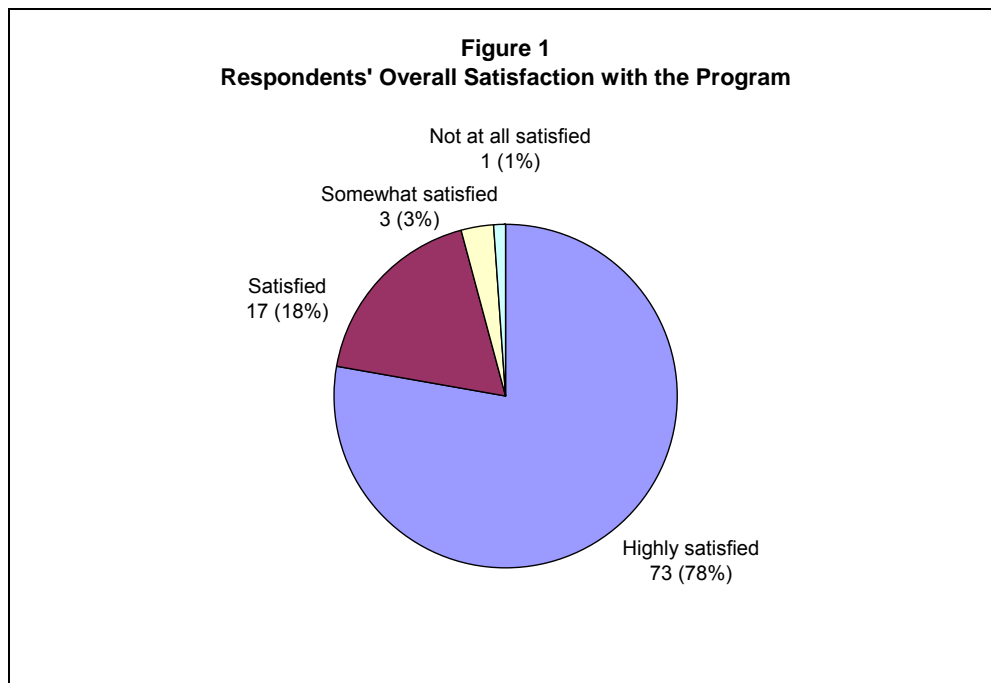


Figure 1 shows that 90 respondents (96%) were satisfied with the program (78% 'highly satisfied'), three respondents were 'somewhat satisfied', and the same respondent was 'Not at all satisfied'. This continues the high level of satisfaction shown in the 2005 survey when 99% of respondents were satisfied.

There were 41 further comments, of which 37 were very positive. For example:

"I can't thank you enough for everything. Thank you for the great job you're doing. I will never forget this wonderful experience of all the help we got."

"The support program has allowed Matthew to have more comfortable living conditions, and to be able to participate in more community events which he has not been able to afford earlier."

"This program helped us to get a much needed ramp at our home."

"Because the wait period is so long to get on the DD waiver, this program was a blessing and huge support for our child. We got things we could have never been able to afford. (This program is the best!! I hope it is always available to help families)."

"I want it to be a permanent program offered by DD waiver."

Three respondents pointed out their difficulties with the program:

"It's nice to have the money, but what is hard is having to dish it out of pocket when you don't have it, so you end up losing the \$2500."

"There should be an easier way to purchase the stuff you need instead of having to send receipts in. We have not bought a lot of stuff because, for example, at Walmart you have to go get the stuff rung up, get a receipt, send it in, then go back to the store again."

"Acumen sometimes is unable to locate claim forms I have submitted, needing me to re-submit them."

2. Time with program

Four respondents missed out the question regarding their length of time with the program. Of the 90 responses, Table 3 shows that the majority (49) have been with the program more than one year. It also shows that all 41 respondents who have been with

the program less than a year are satisfied with it (83% highly satisfied), but there is some residual dissatisfaction among four respondents who have been with the program over a year. This includes the respondent who has not received services yet.

Table3
Respondents' Level of Overall Satisfaction

	Number Respondents	Average score	Level of satisfaction			
			Highly Satisfied (4)	Satisfied (3)	Somewhat satisfied (2)	Not at all Satisfied (1)
Respondents with the program less than one year	41	3.8	34 (83%)	7 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Respondents with the program more than one year	49	3.6	35 (71%)	10 (20%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)

3. Region

The program serves five different regions and the levels of satisfaction within each region are listed in Table 4. There is a discernible difference in average satisfaction between the Northwest and Southeast (3.4) and the other three regions (≥ 3.7), but in each of the former two regions, with such small numbers of total respondents (8 and 10 respectively), the average is brought down by just one respondent.

Table4
Respondents' Level of Overall Satisfaction

	Number Respondents	Average Score	Level of satisfaction			
			Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Not at all satisfied
Metro	48	3.8	41 (85%)	5 (10%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
Northeast	10	3.7	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Northwest	8	3.4	5 (63%)	2 (25%)	0 (0%)	1 (12%)
Southeast	10	3.4	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)
Southwest	18	3.9	16 (89%)	2 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

■ CONCLUSION

Although this year's survey was shorter than the three-page survey mailed to participants in 2005, nevertheless it gave them the opportunity to voice problems or suggestions about the program. In fact, some of the issues that arose following the 2005 survey (see attachment 2) were hardly mentioned this time around, and others were not mentioned at all. Only one respondent each mentioned a problem with Acumen and Walmart. This indicates that some review of procedures may have taken place since then.

The hope that a shorter survey might encourage a higher response rate did not come to fruition. The 2005 survey yielded a 50% response rate compared with 46% this year. This may be explained by the age of the program. There are now participants who have been with the program up to four years. It is a common finding that when program participants are surveyed year after year, the response rate decreases.

Overall, it is clear that the Program continues to run very well. There is widespread satisfaction among the respondents, and their comments indicate its huge positive impact on many of the families.

SELF-DIRECTED FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM OF NEW MEXICO

Follow-up Survey

Dear parent or guardian,

Please take a few moments to complete this brief anonymous survey about your experience with the Self-Directed Family Support Program in the past year.

1. Are you satisfied that the items and/or support received from the project have helped you and your family have a better day-to-day life? (circle one):

Highly satisfied Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Not At All Satisfied

Please write below if you have something else to say about the program's impact on your family:

2. Are you satisfied with how your family resource specialist has helped increase your knowledge about resources, supports and/or services for your child? (circle one)

Highly satisfied Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Not At All Satisfied

Please write below if you have something else to say about how your family resource specialist has helped you:

3. Overall, which of the following best reflects your level of satisfaction with the Self-Directed Family Support Program? (Circle one)

Highly satisfied Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Not At All Satisfied

Is there anything more you would like to add to your responses?

4. Finally, how long have you been in the Self-Directed Family Support Program? (Circle one)

Up to one year More than one year

All feedback helps the Self-Directed Family Support Program improve its service. Please use the enclosed self-addressed envelope to return this survey as soon as possible. If you have any further questions, please call: 1 (866) 383-3820 and ask to be put through to me.

Thank you very much for taking the time to do this.

Sincerely,

Trish Peebles, Ph.D.

Suggested issues for program managers to consider from Survey Report, September, 2005 (p.12):

- Several respondents referred to the ‘paperwork’ and how rushed they felt to make decisions. Program managers and family specialists may consider ways in which they can make the initial procedures even more user-friendly for new participants.
- One respondent, new to the system, suggested “*Written information outlining the different organizations and what they have available would be helpful*”. Program managers may want to work on this option.
- Several respondents also referred to financial concerns such as: the gap between July & September when no checks are issued; tax accounting; flexibility in dispensing the money, namely as a total payment or spread over many months; difficulty with voided checks; etc. Some of these issues may have been considered already, but the respondents’ comments on budgeting and finances (pp. 11-12) should be reviewed to ascertain whether any could, or should, be incorporated into revised procedures.
- One respondent referred to the ‘mapping’ and ‘path-finding’ activities, saying their “disabled daughter” did not enjoy them. Program managers may want to ask questions about this part of the process in future surveys.
- There is a slight impression that occasionally participants feel demeaned when they try to get their checks accepted, such as in the respondent’s experience an Albuquerque Walmart, and having to get voided receipts, or ask for layaways. This may be an issue that improves with time as various stores and organizations become used to the program.