2024 MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES CLIENT PERCEPTIONS OF CARE



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services

Quality Management

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Mental Health and Substance Use Services Client Perceptions of Care

The North Carolina Mental Health and Substance Use Services Client Perceptions of Care Survey assesses client satisfaction and perceptions of quality and outcomes of publicly funded, community-based Mental Health (MH) and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) services. The annual survey satisfies a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reporting requirement for the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant.

Statewide survey results are reported to SAMHSA each year for compilation and comparison to national data. To support quality monitoring at the regional level, the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS) publishes this annual report and shares survey data with the Tailored Plan (TP).

Survey Administration

Community-based MH and SUD service providers assist with administration of confidential surveys during a specified time each year. This year, surveys were administered to ongoing service clients from August 12th, 2024 to September 20th, 2024 using the three methods described in Table 1. ¹ For all methods, survey respondents were informed that their responses would be confidential, participation was voluntary and would not affect their services in any way, and individual identifying information would not be associated with their answers to survey questions.

Survey Method	Description
In person, electronic/ web-based	Self-administered web-based survey completed by client, with assistance as needed, at provider service location using provider laptop or desktop computer, tablet, kiosk, or other electronic device
In person, paper	Self-administered paper survey completed by client, with assistance as needed, at provider service location
Remote, telephone or two-way audio-video connection	Provider-administered survey using telephonic or two-way audio and video connection

TABLE 1: 2024 SURVEY Administration Methods

2024 NC Department of Health and Human Services MH/SU Client Perceptions of Care Survey

¹ Survey sampling and administration procedures for the 2020 survey were adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 survey administration guidelines were extended to the 2024 survey year and included flexibilities such as the use of web-based surveys and provider administration of surveys via two-way audio-video connection.

Nearly one-third (29.6%) of all surveys were administered remotely by telephone or twoway audio-video connection. Nearly half (53.4%) were completed by clients as paper-and-pencil surveys. Fewer than one out of five (17%) were completed as web-based surveys using electronic devices supplied by the provider. Additionally, less than one percent were administered in person by provider staff or with a combination or methods, or the administration method could not be determined from the response documented.

Each Tailored Plan identified contracted providers in its catchment area to assist with survey administration and determined the number of surveys to request from each participating provider. Surveys were offered in English or in Spanish, and client participation was voluntary.

Adult surveys are intended for individuals 18 years and older. Youth surveys are for individuals ages 12 to 17 years. Child Family surveys are designed for parents, family members, and guardians of children ages 11 years and younger. Table 2 shows the numbers of 2024 surveys of each type submitted by each Tailored Plan. The 2024 survey saw a 14% increase in survey responses from the prior year.

LME-MCO	Adult	Youth	Child Family	Total	Percent of State Total
Alliance Behavioral					
Healthcare	1333	366	159	1858	32.6%
Partners Behavioral Health	787	156	100	1043	18.3%
Trillium Health Resources	1378	396	275	2049	36.0%
Vaya Health	573	129	46	748	13.1%
State Total	4071	1047	580	5698	100.0%
Percent of State Total	71.4%	18.4%	10.2%	100.0%	

 TABLE 2: 2024 CLIENT SURVEYS SUBMITTED PER TAILORED PLAN*

* Respondent answered at least one question about their services.

Survey administration methods varied by respondent age group. Compared to youth and child family members, a smaller percentage of adults completed remotely administered surveys and a larger percentage completed paper surveys.



FIGURE 1: 2024 SURVEY ADMINISTRATION METHOD BY SURVEY POPULATION

Survey Domains

Surveys for adults, youth, and child client family members include a small number of demographic background questions as well as the national Mental Health Statistics Improvement Program (MHSIP) survey for each age group. MHSIP survey questions measure perceptions about the services individuals have received in the past year. Survey questions are shown in the Appendix of this report. Each question relates to one of the following domains of care:

- Access to Services
- Treatment Planning
- Quality and Appropriateness
- Cultural Sensitivity

- Outcomes
- Functioning
- Social Connectedness
- General Satisfaction

Adult, Youth, and Child Family surveys also assess different subsets of the eight MHSIP domains.

TABLE 3: CLIENT PERCEPTIONS OF CARE MHSIP SURVEY DOMAINS

	Adult Survey (18 Years and Older)	Youth Survey (12 to 17 Years)	Family Survey (Children Under 12)
Access to Services	\checkmark	\checkmark	\checkmark
Treatment Planning	✓	\checkmark	\checkmark
Quality and Appropriateness	✓		
Cultural Sensitivity		\checkmark	\checkmark
Outcomes	✓	\checkmark	\checkmark
Functioning	✓		\checkmark
Social Connectedness	✓		\checkmark
General Satisfaction	✓	\checkmark	\checkmark

Survey Domain Scores

To calculate respondent scores for each survey domain, responses to MHSIP survey questions are assigned numerical scores from 1 (Strongly Agree, indicating a positive perception) to 5 (Strongly Disagree, indicating a negative perception), with a neutral point of 3. Each domain score is computed as the average number score for the items that count toward the domain.

For analysis and reporting, the domain scores are categorized as Positive, Neutral, or Negative based on their numerical values. Positive scores range from 1.00 to 2.49, neutral scores from 2.50 to 3.49, and negative scores from 3.50 to 5.00. The percentage of positive scores ("percent positive") is the proportion of respondents with an average score between 1.00 and 2.49.

A domain score is calculated only if a respondent answered two-thirds or more of the domain items with a response other than "N/A" (not applicable). For this reason, total numbers of respondents with calculated scores for each domain vary and generally are smaller than the total number of survey respondents.

Survey Respondent Demographics

Adult Survey

The 2024 Adult Survey sample included 4,071 individuals with a reported age within the requested range of 18 years and older.² Average respondent age was 43.5 years. The sample consisted of 49.7 percent female respondents, 50 percent male respondents, and 0.3 percent who identified as transgender, non-binary, or a self-described gender.



FIGURE 2: ADULT RESPONDENT AGE DISTRIBUTION

Of those who reported ethnicity, 51.1 percent self-identified as White, and 40.6 percent as Black/African American, 3.3 percent Multiracial, five percent other ethnicities. In response to a separate question, 5.9 percent of the sample also identified as Hispanic or Latino.

FIGURE 3: ADULT RESPONDENT RACE/ETHNICITY



 ² Analyses in later sections of this report included surveys from respondents who did not report their age.
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Descriptive analysis also revealed that 68.6% of adult respondents reported that their primary reason for receiving services was related to mental health while 31.4% reported the primary reason was substance use. MH services clients included more likely to be women than men, while a slightly higher proportion of SUD clients were male.



FIGURE 4: ADULT RESPONDENT GENDER AND PRIMARY REASON FOR SERVICES, PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SAMPLE

Youth Survey

The Youth Survey sample included 1,005 respondents within the requested range of 12 to 17 years, 22 reported ages younger than 12 years, and five aged 18-19 years of age. In total, there were 1,032 youth respondents under the age of 20.³ On average, respondents were 14.41 years old. The sample consisted of 51.8% male respondents, 47.3% female, and 0.9% self-described as non-binary, in transition, or other.



FIGURE 5: YOUTH RESPONDENT AGE DISTRIBUTION

³Analyses in later sections of this report include surveys from respondents who did not report age.

The ethnic distribution of respondents was assessed to be, 41.9% identified as white, 41.2% Black/African American, 10.3% Multiracial, and 6.6% other ethnicities including American Indian/Native America, Asian, other and unknown. In response to a separate question, 11.8% identified as Hispanic or Latino.



FIGURE 6: YOUTH RESPONDENT RACE/ETHNICITY

The majority of youth respondents indicated mental health as the primary reason (98.2%). A total of 1.8% of youth respondents reported receiving treatment for substance use disorders. This included 0.7% of males and 1.1% of females youth respondents. This was an overall increase in female SUD services of 0.7% from 2023.



FIGURE 7: YOUTH RESPONDENT GENDER AND PRIMARY REASON FOR SERVICES

Child Family Survey

Child Family Surveys were completed for over 540 children within the requested age range of up to 11 years, and for an additional 30 clients ages 12 to 17 years, for a total of 570 surveys. 64.2% identified as male and 35.8% as female. Less than one percent identified as other/non-binary or did not respond. The average child age was 8.65 years old.



FIGURE 8: CHILD FAMILY SURVEY CHILD AGE DISTRIBUTION

Among respondents who reported child racial background, 44.6% reported a background of white, 40.9% identified as Black/African American, 9.8% multiracial, and 4.8% other ethnicities including American Indian/Native America, Asian, other and unknown. In response to a separate question, 10.7 percent of child clients identified as Hispanic or Latino.

FIGURE 9: FAMILY SURVEY CHILD RACE/ETHNICITY



Moreover, 99.7 percent of respondents reported seeking mental health services. Of that pool, 64.2 percent were male and 35.5 percent were female. Among the child population only 0.3% sought treatment for substance use disorder services.



FIGURE 10: CHILD FAMILY RESPONDENT GENDER AND PRIMARY REASON FOR SERVICES

Statewide Annual Scores and Trends in Client Perceptions of Care

Statewide 2024 Adult, Youth, and Child Family survey MHSIP domain scores are shown in Figures 11A and 11B. Annual Adult, Youth, and Child Family survey results for 2015 through 2024 are shown in Figures 12, 13, and 14.

Survey Domains						
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Access to Services	Treatment Planning	Quality & Appropriateness/ Cultural Sensitivity	Outcomes	Functioning	Social Connectedness	General Satisfaction
 Location Seen When Needed Returned Calls In 24 Hours Convenient Receive All Needed Services Able To See Psychiatrist 	 Choose Services Choose Treatment/Treat ment Goals Participated In Treatment Comfortable Asking Questions 	 Believe I Can Recover Information To Manage Illness Free To Complain Treated With Respect Respected Beliefs/Backgrou nd Felt Free To Complain 	 Dealing With Daily Problems Control of Life Better Able To Deal With Crisis Better In Social Situations Better At Work/School Improved Housing Satisfied With Life 	 Reduced Symptoms Take Care of Needs Able To Handle Things When They Go Wrong Able To The Things I Want Child Gets Along With Family/Friends 	 In A Crisis, Have Family Support Happy With Friendships I Can Do Enjoyable Things I Belong In My Community 	 Like My Services Would Stay With Agency Recommend Agency People Stuck With Me I Had Someone To Talk To I Got The Help I Wanted/Needed

Several trends in client perceptions were observed over the years:

- Adult and Child family members and clients reported more positive perceptions on average than youth respondents.
- Overall, respondents from each of the three survey populations reported positive perceptions about their experiences with providers and services (*Access, Treatment Planning, Quality and Appropriateness*, and *Cultural Sensitivity* domains) with *General Satisfaction* being among the highest rated domain.
- Less highly rated domains represented consumer views about their treatment outcomes and relationships (*Outcomes, Functioning*, and *Social Connectedness* domains).
- Domains rated positively by 90 percent or more respondents include:
 - Adult, Youth, and Child Family survey *General Satisfaction* and *Quality and Appropriateness* or *Cultural Sensitivity*
 - o Adult and Child Family survey Access and General Satisfaction
- Domains rated positively by fewer than 80 percent of respondents include:
 - Youth, and Child Family survey *Outcomes* and *Functioning*

FIGURE 11A: 2024 CLIENT PERCEPTIONS OF CARE AT A GLANCE: ADULT, YOUTH, AND CHILD FAMILY SURVEYS



FIGURE 11B: 2024 CLIENT PERCEPTIONS OF CARE AT A GLANCE: ADULT, YOUTH, AND CHILD FAMILY SURVEYS



Figure 11A illustrates the relative scores for all MHSIP domains within each survey population. Figure 11B shows more detail in the upper range of the percentage scale. The thin black vertical lines atop Figure 11B indicate the 95% confidence intervals (CI) around the MHSIP domain positive percentage scores. Within survey population (Adult, Youth, or Child Family), scores with non-overlapping CIs are significantly different, which means the scores in the population are probably different. Because larger samples produce more reliable estimates of population scores, the CIs around Adult Survey scores contain less sampling error and are smaller than the CIs around Youth and Child Family Survey scores, which are based on smaller samples. Given equal sample sizes, confidence intervals for more extreme scores - those close to zero or 100 percent - will also be smaller than those for scores that are closer to 50 percent.



FIGURE 12: STATEWIDE ANNUAL TRENDS IN ADULT SURVEY DOMAINS

FIGURE 13: STATEWIDE ANNUAL TRENDS IN YOUTH SURVEY DOMAINS





FIGURE 14: STATEWIDE ANNUAL TRENDS IN CHILD FAMILY SURVEY DOMAINS

*Family Survey *Outcomes* and *Functioning* MHSIP domain scores are based on five common items, and both domains include one additional unique item. *Family Survey *Outcomes* and *Functioning* MHSIP domain scores are based on five common items, and both domains include one additional unique item.

Respondent Demographics and Perceptions of Care

Within Adult, Youth, and Family Survey populations, there were no substantial differences related to client age or racial/ethnic background. Client gender was not related to Youth or Family respondent perceptions. Adult Survey respondent perceptions in some domains varied by gender and primary service type.

Client Age

Client age was not meaningfully related to MHSIP survey domain scores among any of the three survey populations. All correlations between client age in years and numerical survey domain scores were ± -0.09 or smaller.

Race/Ethnic Background

MHSIP survey domain response patterns were compared for racial/ethnic groups with at least 100 respondents. Adult, Youth, and Child Family Survey client samples each included 100 or more non-Hispanic Black/African American, non-Hispanic white, and Hispanic/Latino clients.⁴ Percentages of respondents with positive, neutral, and negative scores did not significantly vary by racial/ethnic background in any MHSIP domain for any respondent age group.

Gender and Primary Service Type

Overall, larger percentages of adults with primary substance use services reported their perceptions of Outcomes, Functioning, and Social Connectedness domains more positively than those with primary mental health services. As shown in Figure 15, a significantly larger percentage of both male and female SUD clients reported positive perceptions in the Functioning domain compared to male or female MH clients. Moreover, at least 94% of all service types reported a high degree of General Satisfaction with services.



Figure 15: Adult Respondent Gender and Primary Service Type Differences

⁴ The Hispanic/Latino category was created by selecting all individuals who identified as Hispanic/Latino regardless of other reported racial/ethnic background. Large percentages of individuals who identified as multiracial also identified as Hispanic/Latino, resulting in non-Hispanic multiracial sample sizes that were smaller than the threshold for this analysis.

Telehealth Services

Background

As part of the 2024 North Carolina Mental Health (MH) and Substance Use (SUD) Services Client Perceptions of Care Survey^I, clients across the state responded to supplemental questions about their experiences using telehealth and teletherapy services.

Community-based MH and SUD service providers assisted with survey administration from August 12th, 2024 to September 20th, 2024. Respondents were asked about their experiences using telehealth services in the past six months.

A total of 5,698 respondents completed surveys administered remotely, by telephone or two-way audio-video connection, on paper, and web-based versions. Of that total 5,616 reported an age. Regardless of data collection method, all surveys were entered into a web-based survey platform.



Use of Telehealth Services

Across all age groups, 43.1% of individuals surveyed reported they or their child received telehealth services in the past six months. Youth (50.5%) respondents utilized telehealth services at the highest rate. While Child (36.5%) consumers utilized telehealth services less than Adults (40.5%). The percentage of telehealth usage also varied by LME-MCO^{iv}. Telehealth usage was common among many racial/ethnic groups for all survey populations.





*Less than 5 Asian respondents.

Among adult survey respondents, MH service clients (44%) were slightly more likely to use telehealth than SUD service clients (38.3%).



Perceptions of Telehealth Helpfulness

Adult SUD service clients were less likely to report using telehealth services than MH clients. However, the majority of both groups of clients reported not using telehealth services. Moreover, 17.1% of MH clients and 20.3 % of SUD clients reported telehealth services were less helpful than seeing a provider in person. Moreover, 41.9% of MH clients and 37.9% of SUD clients indicated that telehealth services were more helpful than seeing their provider in person.



Approximately 1 in 3 of adult, youth, and child respondents reported the telehealth services received were more helpful than seeing their provider in person. Data indicated that 20.5% of youth respondents reported that telehealth was less helpful than seeing a provider in person. However, nearly half of child respondents rated telehealth about the same as seeing their provider in person.





Perceived helpfulness also varied across racial/ethnic and age groups. Telehealth was perceived to be more helpful for Adult respondents across all ethnicities. In comparison, the helpfulness of telehealth was not perceived as favorably by Child Family respondents. It was also observed that American Indian/Native American child family, Hispanic/Latino Youth, and Multiracial Youth respondents rated telehealth services as less helpful than seeing a provider in-person.





Obstacles to Receiving Telehealth

The figures below show the frequently cited obstacles to receiving telehealth services across each survey age category. Consumers were asked: "In the past six months, did any of the following interfere with your ability to receive teletherapy or telehealth services from your mental health or substance use provider(s)?" Approximately 10 obstacles to treatment were categorized into four areas: technology-related, access/provider, discomfort/privacy, and personal preference. Respondents could select multiple obstacles within each category. Technology-related issues represented the most often cited hindrance.

Examples of statements that highlighted obstacles to telehealth include: "My provider didn't offer telehealth services," "Telehealth appointments weren't available at convenient times for me," "I don't have a smartphone or computer," "I'm not comfortable using the technology for telehealth (smartphone/computer, internet, etc.)," and "I don't think telehealth would be helpful."









The chart below shows the frequently cited obstacles to receiving telehealth services across LME-MCO for all age populations. Providers not offering telehealth services or appointment availability/inconvenience were common "Access and Provider" obstacles. Consumers also indicated a personal preference or belief that telehealth "…isn't right for me" or "…don't think telehealth would be helpful" as a reasons for not utilizing telehealth services. Moreover, a lack of ownership of a phone or computer, discomfort with technology, and cost/financial barriers represented additional impediments to receiving telehealth services.



- iii. In April 2020, in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, NC Medicaid and the NCDHHS Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services modified Behavioral Health and other Clinical Coverage Policies to include telehealth service delivery. "Telehealth" is the use of two-way real time interactive audio and video to provide care and services when providers and service clients are in different physical locations.
- iv. Due to the COVID-19 emergency, LME-MCO provider and participant sampling guidelines included flexibilities that may have impacted representativeness of resulting survey samples. The impact of these modifications on final participant samples and observed differences between LMEs-MCOs is unknown.

i. The annual Perceptions of Care survey assesses client satisfaction and perceptions of quality and outcomes of publicly funded mental health and substance use disorder services. The survey satisfies a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reporting requirement for the Community Mental Health Services Block Grant. Please refer to the 2024 Mental Health and Substance Use Services Client Perceptions of Care report for additional information about survey administration and respondent samples.

ii. On March 10, 2020, Governor Roy Cooper issued an Executive Order declaring a State of Emergency to coordinate response and protective actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Subsequent orders were issued in the following months, including statewide stay-at-home orders and orders to limit social gatherings, close public schools and some businesses, require the use of face coverings, and encourage everyone to stay at least six feet apart from others.

Domain	Adult Survey	Youth Survey	Child Family Survey
Access to Services	 The location of services was convenient (parking, public transportation, distance, etc.). Staff were willing to see me as often as I felt it was necessary. Staff returned my call in 24 hours. Services were available at times that were good for me. I was able to get all the services I thought I needed. I was able to see a psychiatrist when I wanted to. 	 The location of services was convenient. Services were available at times that were convenient for me. 	 The location of services was convenient for us. Services were available at times that were convenient for us.
Treatment Planning	 I felt comfortable asking questions about my treatment and medication. I, not staff, decided my treatment goals. 	 I helped to choose my services. I helped to choose my treatment goals. I participated in my own treatment. 	 I helped to choose my child's services. I helped to choose my child's treatment goals. I participated in my child's treatment.
Quality and Appropriateness (Adult) <i>Cultural</i> <i>Sensitivity</i> (Youth, Child Family)	 Staff here believe that I can grow, change and recover. I felt free to complain. Staff told me what side effects to watch out for. Staff respected my wishes about who is, and who is not, to be given information about my treatment. Staff were sensitive to my cultural background. Staff helped me obtain the information I needed so that I could take charge of managing my illness. I was given information about my rights. 	 Staff treated me with respect. Staff respected my family's religious/spiritual beliefs. Staff spoke with me in a way that I understood. Staff were sensitive to my cultural/ethnic background. 	 Staff treated me with respect. Staff respected my family's religious/spiritual beliefs. Staff spoke with me in a way that I understood. Staff were sensitive to my cultural/ethnic background.

Appendix: Mental Health Statistics Improvement Program (MHSIP) Survey Domain Questions

Domain	Adult Survey	Youth Survey	Child Family Survey
Quality/Cultural Sensitivity (cont.)	 I was encouraged to used consumer-run programs. Staff encouraged me to take responsibility for how I live my life. 		
Outcomes	 As a direct result of the services I received I deal more effectively with daily problems. I am better able to control my life. I am better able to deal with crisis. I am getting along better with my family. I do better in social situations. I do better in school and/or work. My symptoms are not bothering me as much.* My housing situation has improved. *Item also counts toward Functioning domain 	 As a direct result of the services I received I am better at handling daily life. I get along better with family members. I get along better with friends and other people. I do better in school and/or work. I am better able to cope when things go wrong. I am satisfied with our family life right now. 	 As a direct result of the services my child received My child is better at handling daily life.* My child gets along better with family members.* My child gets along better with friends and other people.* My child is doing better in school and/or work.* My child is better able to cope when things go wrong.* I am satisfied with our family life right now. *Items also count toward Functioning domain.
Functioning Functioning (cont.)	 As a direct result of the services I received My symptoms are not bothering me as much.* I do things that are more meaningful to me. I am better able to take care of my needs. I am better able to handle things when they go wrong. I am better able to do things that I want to do. <i>*Item also counts toward</i> Outcomes <i>domain</i>. 	N/A	 As a direct result of the services my child received My child is better at handling daily life.* My child gets along better with family members.* My child gets along better with friends and other people.* My child is doing better in school and/or work.* My child is better able to cope when things go wrong.* My child is better able to do things he or she wants.

	Adult Survey	Youth Survey	Child Family Survey
Domain			
			*Items also count toward Outcomes domain.
Social Connectedness	 In a crisis, I would have the support I need from family or friends. I am happy with the friendships I have. I have people with whom I can do enjoyable things. I feel I belong in my community. 	N/A	 I know people who will listen and understand me when I need to talk. I have people that I am comfortable talking with about my child's problems. In a crisis, I would have the support I need from family or friends. I have people with whom I can do enjoyable things.
General Satisfaction	 I like the services that I received here. If I had other choices, I would still get services from this agency. I would recommend this agency to a friend or family member. 	 Overall, I am satisfied with the services I received. The people helping me stuck with me no matter what. I felt I had someone to talk to when I was troubled. I received services that were right for me. I got the help I wanted. I got as much help as I needed. 	 Overall, I am satisfied with the services my child received. The people helping my child stuck with us no matter what. I felt my child had someone to talk to when he/she was troubled. The services my child and/or family received were right for us. My family got the help we wanted for my child. My family got as much help as we needed for my child.



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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