

Stakeholder Survey

The Stakeholder Survey was administered to gather service delivery information from agencies and organizations in the District of Thunder Bay that provide services under contract with Thunder Bay District Social services Administration Board (TBDSSAB). The purpose of this survey was to explore the experiences of various service providers' in order to assist TBDSSAB to identify service delivery areas that may require improvement and to guide future decisions in relation to its mandate to provide services.

Methodology

In January 2007 ninety-six (96) survey packages were mailed to agencies or organizations that provide services under contract with TBDSSAB. Included in each package was an addressed envelope for returning responses. Completed surveys were received and compiled by a third party. There were 43 completed surveys returned by March, 2007, an overall response rate of 44.8%.

Results

Identified Programs and Services

Agencies and organizations were asked to describe programs and services they provide under contract with the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Department. The agencies that responded to the survey identified various programs and services as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Program and Services

| Program/Services | Number of respondent agencies providing identified program/services |
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| 1. Licensed child care or nursery program | 12 |
| 2. Services to children with special needs | 6 |
| 3. Family resource center | 7 |
| 4. Addiction related services | 2 |
| 5. Mental health services | 2 |
| 6. Education services | 1 |
| 7. Employment counseling | 2 |
| 8. Community placements | 2 |
| 9. Employment placements | 3 |
| 10. Services to victims of domestic violence | 2 |
| 11. Subsidized housing | 10 |
| 12. Emergency hostel | 1 |
| 13. Emergency food services | 3 |
| 14. Services to Aboriginals | 3 |
| 15. Other: | 11 |

Service Areas

As illustrated in Table 2, respondents identified 26 services in the City of Thunder Bay. Twelve of the services were identified in rural areas outside of Thunder Bay, 10 in Nipigon/Red Rock/Terrace Bay/Schreiber/Dorion area, six (6) in Marathon/Manitouowadge area, five (5) in Greenstone (Geraldton/Longlac/Nakina/Beardmore) area, and five (5) in other areas.

Table: 2 Service Areas

| Service Areas | Number of services* | Percentage** |
|---|---------------------|--------------|
| City of Thunder Bay | 26 | 40.0 |
| Rural Area Outside of Thunder Bay | 12 | 18.8 |
| Nipigon/Red Rock/Terrace Bay/Schreiber/Dorion | 10 | 15.6 |
| Marathon/Manitouowadge | 6 | 9.4 |
| Greenstone (Geraldton/Longlac/Nakina/Beardmore) | 5 | 7.8 |
| Other | 5 | 7.8 |
| Total | 64 | |

*Some agencies identified 2 or more service areas.

** These percentages are not definitive because they are based on the 64 (multiple) responses made by 43 respondents.

Respondents Perception of Service Delivery

The following statements assess respondents' perception of services provided under contract with District of Thunder Bay Social Services Department.

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| 1. DTBSSD staff possesses the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide quality services. |
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Table 3 shows that 83.7% of respondents stated that DTBSSD staff possesses the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide quality services, with 53% indicating "almost always" while 30% stated "usually". Seven percent (7%) of respondents stated "on occasion" or "rarely". Four percent (4.7%) stated the statement is "not applicable" to them and 4.7% did not provide a response.

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|---|
| 2. DTBSSD staff is approachable and respond promptly to client inquiries or requests. |
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Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents indicated that DTBSSD staff are approachable and respond promptly to client inquiries or requests. Two percent (2%) of respondents reported that staff are approachable "on occasion" and 2% indicated "rarely". Further, 4% of the respondents indicated this statement is "not applicable" to them and 4% did not respond.

3. Clients are made aware of other community programs and services that may benefit them.

Fifty-three percent (53%) of respondents reported that clients are made aware “almost always” or “usually” of other community programs and services that may benefit them. Nine percent (9%) of respondents indicated that clients are “on occasion” or “rarely” made aware of other community programs and services that may benefit them. Nine percent of (9.3%) respondents indicated the statement was “not applicable” to them (4.7%) or they did not respond (4.7%).

4. Client’s personal information is treated confidentially and only released to others when informed consent is provided.

Seventy-four percent (74.4%) of respondents indicated “almost always” or “usually” that client’s personal information is treated confidentially and only released to others when informed consent is provided. A small proportion of respondents (7%) reported “on occasion”. Eleven percent (11.6%) of respondents stated this statement was “not applicable” to them while 7% did not respond.

5. Printed material on the Department’s programs and services is readily available and easy to understand.

Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents indicated that printed material on the Department’s programs and services is readily available and easy to understand “almost always (34.9%) or “usually” (30.2%). Four percent (4.6%) of respondents reported “on occasion” or “rarely”. Eighteen percent (18.6%) of respondents indicated this statement is “not applicable” to them and 11.6% provided no response.

6. Referrals made to service providers are thorough and accurate

Sixty-five percent (65.1%) of respondents reported “almost always” or “usually” that referrals made to service providers are thorough and accurate. A small minority of respondents (2.3%) felt that referrals made to service providers are only “on occasion” thorough and accurate. Further, 23.3% of respondents reported this statement is “not applicable” to them and 9.3% did not provide a response.

7. The Department’s offices are accessible and client-friendly/ family-friendly.

Fifty-five percent (55.8%) of respondents indicated that the Department’s offices are accessible and client-friendly/family-friendly “almost always” or “usually”.

Nine percent (9.3%) of respondents indicated this “on occasion” and 4% stated, “rarely”. Twenty percent (20.9%) of respondents reported this statement is “not applicable” to them and 9.3% did not respond.

Table 3 Service Delivery

| | Almost Always (%) | Usually (%) | On Occasion (%) | Rarely (%) | N/A (%) | Did Not Respond (%) |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| DTBSSD staff possesses the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide quality services. | 53.5 | 30.2 | 4.7 | 2.3 | 4.7 | 4.7 |
| DTBSSD staff is approachable and respond promptly to client inquiries or requests. | 55.8 | 30.2 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 4.7 | 4.7 |
| Clients are made aware of other community programs and services that may benefit them. | 32.6 | 20.9 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 23.3 | 14.0 |
| Client’s personal information is treated confidentially and only released to others when informed consent is provided. | 65.1 | 9.3 | 7.0 | - | 11.6 | 7.0 |
| Printed material on the Department’s programs and services is readily available and easy to understand | 34.9 | 30.2 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 18.6 | 11.6 |
| Referrals made to service providers are thorough and accurate | 37.2 | 27.9 | 2.3 | - | 23.3 | 9.3 |
| The Department’s offices are accessible and client-friendly/ family-friendly | 25.6 | 30.2 | 9.3 | 4.7 | 20.9 | 9.3 |

Comments (Open-ended)

Respondents were asked to provide comments in relation to their perception of service delivery provided by DTBSSD. Of the 43 respondents 11 respondents (25.6%) provided comments while 32 respondents (74.4%) did not provide any comments. The following two themes emerged from respondents comments:

1. Accessibility (need for daily access to programs and services).
2. Compliments (satisfaction with service delivery)

Contract Administration

1. Opportunities for improvement are positively received.

Forty-four percent (44%) of the 43 respondents indicated “almost always” or “usually” that the opportunities for improvement are positively received by DTBSSD. Twenty-three percent (23%) of respondents reported that the opportunities for improvement are positively received “on occasion” or “rarely” by the Administration. Sixteen percent (16%) of respondents reported this statement was “not applicable” to their situation and 16% did not respond to this statement.

2. Conflicts and disputes are responded to within two business days.

Forty-one percent (41%) of respondents indicated that conflicts and disputes are responded to “almost always” or “usually” within two business days. Seven percent (7%) indicated “on occasion” and 2% said “rarely”. Thirty-four percent (34%) of respondents stated this statement was “not applicable” to them or they did not provide a response.

3. Administrative processes are streamlined to minimize the impact on service providers.

Sixty-five percent (65.2%) of respondents indicated that administrative processes are streamlined to minimize the impact on service providers “almost always” or “usually”. Nine percent (9%) of respondents stated that administrative processes are streamlined “on occasion” or “rarely” to minimize the impact on service providers. Twenty percent (20.9%) of respondents indicated this statement was “not applicable” to them or did not respond.

4. Reporting requirements are clearly articulated.

The majority of respondents (79%) indicated that “almost always” or “usually” the reporting requirements are clearly articulated. Seven percent (7%) of respondents (7%) stated the reporting requirements are clearly articulated “on occasion” or “rarely”. Nine percent (9.3%) of respondents said this statement was “not applicable” to them and 4.7% did not provide a response.

5. A process is in place for service providers to report ‘serious incidents’

Forty-eight percent (48.8%) of respondents indicated that a process is in place for service providers to report serious incidents, “almost always” or “usually”. Four percent (4%) of respondents stated that a process is “on occasion” or “rarely” in place for service providers to report serious incidents. The remainder of respondents (46.5%) indicated this statement does not either apply to them (32.6%) or they did not provide a response (13%).

6. Invoices are accurately processed in a timely fashion

Sixty percent (60.5%) of respondents reported that invoices are accurately processed in a timely fashion, with 51.2% indicating “almost always” and 9.3%, “usually”. Twenty-seven percent (27.9%) indicated this statement was “not applicable” to them and 11.6% of respondents did not provide a response to this statement.

7. The approved unit cost of service is reasonable.

Twenty-seven percent (27.9%) of respondents indicated that the approved unit cost of services is reasonable “almost always” and 14% said “usually”. Six-percent (6%) of respondents felt the approved unit cost of service is reasonable “on occasion” or “rarely”. A total of 32.6% of respondents indicated this statement was “not applicable” to them and 18.6% did not respond.

Table 4 Contract Administration

| | Almost Always (%) | Usually (%) | On Occasion (%) | Rarely (%) | N/A (%) | Did Not Respond (%) |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Opportunities for improvement are positively received. | 20.9 | 23.3 | 16.3 | 7.0 | 16.3 | 16.3 |
| Conflicts and disputes are responded to within two business days. | 20.9 | 20.9 | 7.0 | 2.3 | 34.9 | 14.0 |
| Administrative processes are streamlined to minimize the impact on service providers. | 32.6 | 32.6 | 9.3 | 4.7 | 9.3 | 11.6 |
| Reporting requirements are clearly articulated. | 51.2 | 27.9 | 4.7 | 2.3 | 9.3 | 4.7 |
| A process is in place for service providers to report 'serious incidents'. | 37.2 | 11.6 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 32.6 | 14.0 |
| Invoices are accurately processed in a timely fashion. | 51.2 | 9.3 | - | - | 27.9 | 11.6 |
| The approved unit cost of service is reasonable. | 27.9 | 14.0 | 2.3 | 4.7 | 32.6 | 18.6 |

Comments (Open-ended)

Respondents were invited to provide written comments in relation to their experience with the contract administration. Of the 43 respondents, 7 (16.3%) provided comments. A total of 36 respondents (83.7%) did not provide any comments in this section. The seven (7) respondents' comments are grouped under the following two themes.

1. Need to improve the reporting protocol (too much paper work, documentation)
2. Positive comments about staff and program (Helpful, knowledgeable, efficient, courteous)

Open-ended Questions:

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| 1. Are there any other comments you would like to make about your experiences with the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Department Staff? |
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Respondents were invited to make comments in relation to their experiences with the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Department Staff. Of the 43 respondents in the survey, 22 respondents (51.2%) provided comments while 21 respondents (48.8%) did not provide any comment to this question. The following themes emerged from respondents' comments:

1. Excessive documentation (high demands for accountability)
2. Micro-managing of contracted services
3. Positive comments about staff (helpful, courteous, efficient)
4. Day Care services in the summer (irregularity of services, excessive paperwork requirements for holds/withdrawals and reinstatements)
5. Openness (Communication issues)

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| 2. Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve our services? |
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Eighteen (18) respondents (41%) out of 43 responded to this question. Twenty-five respondents (58%) did not respond to this question. The respondents' who commented provided the following suggestions.

1. Training (new service providers be matched with mentors to improve accountability processes).
2. Administration Responsibilities and Accountability (need to provide clearly written terms of contract to avoid overlapping 'micro and macro' managing).

3. Location of “Needs Testing” (current location not flexible enough to accommodate the needs of parents with young children).
4. Information (need for administration to keep everyone in the district up to date with information).
5. Support (provide Professional Development opportunities)
6. Advocacy (need for DTBSSD to lobby provincial government for funding services in the community).
7. Meeting Room (more than one meeting room is required so that families don’t have to wait a long time before they see the worker).
8. Inclusion of District Administrators (in Supervisory meetings or trainings).
9. Communication (difficult to communicate directly with any of the TBDSSAB staff).
10. Good service (the services are good and be kept as is).
11. Other (made comments that are not relevant).

3. Do you have any other general comments?

Of the 43 respondents only 20 respondents (44.5%) provided comments while 23 respondents (53.5%) did not respond to this question. The 20 respondents made the following general comments:

1. Social Housing new funding model (current system is not flexible enough to adept, and/or respond to changing conditions).
4. Allocation of responsibilities (day care centers are shouldering too much responsibility with limited resources).
5. Positive comments about staff and program (generally respondents are satisfied with staff and the support that they provide).

Conclusion:

The purpose of the Stakeholder Survey was to explore the experiences of various service providers’ as it relates to DTBSSD’s current service delivery. Level of satisfaction with various services provided by DTBSSD was examined. The results of the survey indicated that the majority of respondents are either

“almost always” or “usually” satisfied with DTBSSD level of service delivery. Respondents’ responses indicated that DTBSSD provides a range of services effectively and efficiently. Respondents rated the following aspects of service delivery positively:

1. Professionalism

- Services provided by DTBSSD staff were highlight as being professional, efficient, helpful and supportive. Eighty six percent (86%) of respondents indicated that staff are approachable and respond promptly to client inquiries; “almost always” (55.8%), “usually” (30.2).
- Eighty-three percent (83.7%) reported that DTBSSD staff possesses the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide quality services; “almost always” (53.5%), “usually” (30.2%).

2. Contract administration

- Seventy-nine percent (79.1%) of respondents indicated that reporting requirements are clearly articulated; “almost always” (51.2%), “usually” (27.9%).
- Sixty-five percent (65.2%) of respondents reported that administrative processes are streamlined to minimize the impact of service providers; “almost always” (32.6%), “usually” (32.6%).

The above outcome reflects the support, knowledge and professionalism of the DTBSSD staff. While satisfaction is high, some specific areas of service delivery (as indicated earlier) may require attention. A notably few respondents (18) provided suggestions on how services could be improved. These suggestions were as follows:

- Streamline training to enhance the ability of staff to adjust to various protocols (reporting codes, subsidy protocols)
- Improve the dissemination of information (provide information on pertinent up-to date issues)
- Provide clear written terms of negotiated contracts

Overall, respondents were satisfied with most aspects of services they receive and provided positive rating for staff in relation to professionalism, support, helpfulness and courteousness. [This outcome also mirrors the commitment of DTBSSD to provide services effectively and efficiently and its capacity to adapt to the ever evolving situations.]