



	REPORT No.: 2019-43
MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 26, 2019	DATE PREPARED: AUGUST 12, 2019
SUBJECT: 2019 ONTARIO WORKS CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY	

RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with the results from the 2019 Ontario Works (OW) Client Satisfaction Survey.

BACKGROUND

To help fulfill the Strategic Plan directive to enhance communication with clients, as well as to gauge the success of current initiatives and supports, Research and Social Policy conducted a survey of clients in receipt of Ontario Works (OW) assistance. A previous version of the survey was administered in 2016, but it has been revised for simplification.

The OW Client Satisfaction Survey was distributed with May cheques, along with a letter detailing that the survey was voluntary and anonymous. The survey asked a variety of questions pertaining to the clients' experiences with TBDSSAB staff.

COMMENTS

As of the end of April, the official OW caseload was 2,983 clients. Surveys were distributed with May cheques to all OW clients, as well as made available at the front desk of all TBDSSAB offices. A total of 407 surveys were collected, representing 13.6% of the total OW caseload. With this rate of response, the survey is statistically significant, with the results representing the opinions of the OW caseload 99% of the time, plus or minus 6%.

In order to simplify the survey, and to encourage a higher response rate, the 2016 survey was revised for length and clarity. The question matrices were modified for simplicity and to lower non-response rates in individual questions, and the scope of the survey was narrowed to OW program staff.

Similar to the survey conducted previously, clients from the City of Thunder Bay constitute the majority of respondents (85%); responses were returned from clients living in two-thirds of TBDSSAB member municipalities.

Of note, 72% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement “TBDSSAB staff are friendly, courteous and helpful,” with 22% choosing somewhat agree (question 8a). This demonstrates that social assistance recipients are predominately positive about the quality of service from TBDSSAB OW staff.

The survey indicated that there has been a decrease in the clarity and consistency of information provided to clients. While still at rates in the high 80th percentile, indicating a predominantly positive experience, the responses have indicated a need for Administration to make efforts to ensure all case workers are fully informed and provide consistency in support services across TBDSSAB. One example of this is that only 49% of clients reported remembering discussion of OW Employment Programs by OW staff (question 10 – “Has your caseworker told you about any of the following?”). This is an area where Client Services will continue to improve job aids and training with staff.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no financial implications related to this report.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the 2019 OW Client Satisfaction Survey addresses the TBDSSAB Strategic Plan by enhancing communication with clients, following the Communications Strategy as a method to highlight accomplishments and identify issues. Further, the information gathered will influence program and policy decisions in the future.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

Attachment #1 [2019 Ontario Works Client Satisfaction Survey Report](#)

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**THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD**

**2019 Ontario Works Client Satisfaction
Survey Report**

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July 8, 2019

Ontario Works Client Satisfaction Survey 2019 Results Overview

Introduction

As part of the fulfillment of the Strategic Plan directive to enhance communication with clients, as well as to gauge the success of current initiatives and supports, The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) administration conducted a survey of Ontario Works (OW) recipients in 2019.

This is the second OW Client Satisfaction Survey that TBDSSAB has conducted. In order to simplify the survey, and to encourage a higher response rate, the 2016 survey was revised for length and clarity. The question matrices were modified for simplicity, which worked to lower non-response rates in individual questions, and the scope of the survey was narrowed to OW program staff.

Survey Distribution

The survey was distributed on paper to allow for easier responses for clients without internet access. A survey package was included with all May Ontario Works cheques, as well as made available at the front desk of all TBDSSAB offices. The package included a pre-paid envelope, a draw ballot, and the survey along with a letter outlining the intentions of the data collection.

The survey was conducted during the months of May and June 2019, with a closing date of June 14th; however, surveys were accepted via the internal drop box and Canada Post business return mail for an additional week.

Response Rate

As of the end of the April, the official Ontario Works caseload was 2,983 clients. Surveys were distributed to all active cases on the caseload as of the end of April. In total, 407 surveys were completed and returned to TBDSSAB, representing 13.6% of the total caseload, making the response rate statistically significant; the responses represent the entire Ontario Works caseload 99% of the time plus or minus 6%.

Response Analysis

Client Profile

Similar to the previous survey, the majority of respondents identified as being single, however there was an increase in the number of single parents responding from the 2016 survey. It is interesting to note that while statistically significant, the survey sample does not follow the demographic trends of the caseload outlined in the Caseload-at-a-Glance report provided by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). This discrepancy is seen in both family status and age demographics.

Ontario Works Client Satisfaction Survey 2019 Results Overview

Family Status	2016 Survey	2019 Survey	March 2019 Caseload Statistics ¹	Within +/- 6% of 2019 Survey
Single	59.4%	49.4%	64.0%	No
Couple without children	6.4%	3.4%	1.6%	Yes
Single parent with children	26.5%	33.7%	29.9%	Yes
Couple with children	7.7%	8.9%	4.5%	Yes
No response/decline to answer	0.0%	4.7%	N/A	-

It is of note that clients identifying as single did not respond at the expected rate, while an increased number of survey respondents have children.² It is also interesting to note that the non-response rate for the family status question increased in 2019, while the non-response rate for age decreased.

Age of Main Client	2016 Survey	2019 Survey	March 2019 Caseload Statistics ³	Within +/- 6% of 2019 Survey
Under 18 years	0.3%	1.0%	0.4%	Yes
18 – 24 years	13.1%	9.8%	20.0%	No
25 – 34 years	26.8%	23.6%	37.4%	No
35 – 44 years	20.1%	23.1%	21.6%	Yes
45 – 54 years	18.2%	20.6%	13.8%	No
55 – 64 years	17.3%	17.4%	6.5%	No
Over 65 years	1.0%	3.2%	0.1%	Yes
No response/decline to answer	3.2%	1.2%	N/A	-

Despite these differences in demographics, the overall opinions of the sample clientele will still represent the entire caseload 99% of the time, plus or minus 6%.

¹ Social Assistance Operations. "Ontario Works Caseload at a Glance." March 2019.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Ontario Works Client Satisfaction Survey 2019 Results Overview

Time Receiving Social Assistance

There has been a large decrease in the number of declined/no response answers since 2016, which likely accounts for the increase in the number of people reporting being in receipt of Ontario Works for 0-6 months. There has been a small increase in the number of people reporting being in receipt of OW for over 5 years.

Length of time on OW	2016	2019
0-6 Months	16.0%	21.1%
7-12 Months	16.3%	12.8%
1-2 Years	22.7%	23.6%
3-5 Years	18.2%	20.2%
Over 5 Years	13.4%	17.2%
Decline to answer	13.4%	3.2%
No response		2.0%

When asked how many times they had applied for Ontario Works assistance, 71.7% of respondents answered 2 or less. The answers on this question are consistent with the 2016 survey.

How many times applied for OW	2016	2019
One	50.2%	51.1%
Two	21.7%	20.6%
Three	5.1%	8.4%
Four	1.6%	2.0%
Five	1.6%	1.2%
Six	2.2%	2.7%
Does not apply	17.6%	10.8%
No response/decline to answer		3.2%

Ontario Works Program Staff Questions

As the scope of the survey was narrowed to Ontario Works program staff in 2019, any comparisons to 2016 responses exclude any other staff (such as intake and finance). It is of note that the non-response rates have decreased for the majority of these questions in the 2019 survey.

In the key questions about staff demeanour, such as “Staff are friendly, courteous and helpful,” and “staff are knowledgeable,” respondents answered *Strongly Agree* 71.7% and 63.9% of the time, respectively. Responses to these questions indicate an overall positive view of interactions with TBDSSAB OW program staff.

In 2019, for the statement “staff are friendly, courteous and helpful,” 93.6% of respondents answered favourably; this is an increase from 90.8% in 2016.

Ontario Works Client Satisfaction Survey 2019 Results Overview

Staff are friendly, courteous and helpful	2016	2019
Strongly agree	78.0%	71.7%
Somewhat agree	12.8%	21.9%
Somewhat disagree	4.5%	3.4%
Strongly disagree	1.3%	1.2%
Does not apply	3.5%	0.7%
No response/Decline to answer ⁴		1.0%

For “staff are knowledgeable,” 89% of respondents answered favourably; this similar to 2016 at 88.2%.

Staff are knowledgeable	2016	2019
Strongly agree	73.5%	63.9%
Somewhat agree	14.7%	25.1%
Somewhat disagree	3.2%	5.7%
Strongly disagree	2.2%	1.5%
Does not apply	6.4%	0.5%
No response/Decline to answer		3.4%

For the statement “staff respect your culture,” 78.9% of respondents answered favourably; this is an increase from 71.2% in 2016.

Staff respect your culture	2016	2019
Strongly agree	61.0%	62.2%
Somewhat agree	10.2%	16.7%
Somewhat disagree	2.6%	3.9%
Strongly disagree	1.6%	1.5%
Does not apply	24.6%	11.3%
No response/Decline to answer		4.4%

For the statement “staff protect your privacy,” respondents answered favourably 88.2% of the time; this is similar to 2016 at 89.5%.

Staff protect your privacy	2016	2019
Strongly agree	81.5%	71.7%
Somewhat agree	8.0%	16.5%
Somewhat disagree	1.6%	3.2%
Strongly disagree	0.6%	2.2%
Does not apply	8.3%	2.5%
No response/Decline to answer		3.9%

⁴ Note – in 2016, Does Not Apply and No Response/Decline to Answer were merged into one statistic. They have been split for 2019

Ontario Works Client Satisfaction Survey 2019 Results Overview

For the statement “staff let you know when to contact them,” 86.7% of respondents answered affirmatively, showing no change from 2016.

Staff let you know when to contact them	2016	2019
Yes	86.6%	86.7%
No	7.0%	6.1%
Can't Remember	3.5%	3.9%
Does not apply	2.9%	2.7%
No response/Decline to answer		0.5%

For the statement “staff explain when you need to report changes to circumstances,” 87.7% of respondents answered affirmatively; this shows a small decrease from 88.2% in 2016.

Staff explain when you need to report changes to circumstances	2016	2019
Yes	88.2%	87.7%
No	6.4%	4.9%
Can't Remember	3.2%	3.4%
Does not apply	2.2%	3.0%
No response/Decline to answer		0.5%

For the statement “staff show you how to fill out your Statement of Income,” 76.7% of respondents responded affirmatively, representing a decrease from 83.4% in 2016.⁵⁶

Staff show you how to fill out your Statement of Income	2016	2019
Yes	83.4%	76.7%
No	10.9%	11.3%
Can't Remember	3.2%	4.9%
Does not apply	2.6%	6.4%
No response/Decline to answer		0.7%

For the statement “staff explain your rights and responsibilities,” 88.9% of respondents answered affirmatively, showing a slight increase since 2016.

Staff explain your rights and responsibilities	2016	2019
Yes	87.2%	88.9%
No	5.4%	5.7%
Can't Remember	6.1%	3.2%
Does not apply	1.3%	1.5%
No response/Decline to answer		0.7%

⁵ Note – 2016 survey asked about Income Reporting Statement; there was a change in the name of the report since.

⁶ Note - It should be noted that exception reporting, where clients with fixed or no income are required to report less frequently, came into effect prior to the distribution of the survey, which may account for this decrease. This should be monitored in future surveys.

Ontario Works Client Satisfaction Survey 2019 Results Overview

For the statement “staff inform you of how to appeal decisions you disagree with,” 71.3% of respondents answered affirmatively, marking a large increase from 48.6% in 2016.

Staff inform you of how to appeal decisions you disagree with	2016	2019
Yes	48.6%	71.3%
No	23.0%	12.5%
Can't Remember	8.3%	8.4%
Does not apply	20.1%	6.1%
No response/Decline to answer		0.3%

The following table outlines responses for all survey respondents when asked if “your caseworker told you about any of the following.” While it is important to note that some of these topics would not be applicable to all clients, there has been a decrease in almost every category in this question, except for discussions about ODSP and subsidized housing.

Has your caseworker told you about any of the following: ⁷	2016 Yes	2019 Yes
OW Employment Programs	64.2%	49.4%
ODSP	30.0%	33.1%
Community Employment Programs	57.5%	21.7%
Education Programs	54.0%	25.1%
Child Support	20.1%	15.1%
Child Care Costs	16.0%	15.6%
Subsidized Housing	29.4%	33.3%
Community Health Programs	58.1%	17.5%
No Response/Decline to Answer	- ⁸	20.2%

Discussions of child support would only apply to those clients with a family status of sole support/single parent, while child care costs would apply to all families with children. Of those clients who identified themselves as a single parent with children, 27.7% reported having discussions about child support, and 28.5% reported discussions about child care costs. Of those clients who identified themselves as a couple with children, 25% reported having discussions about child support and 27.8% reported discussions about child care costs.

⁷ Note - Respondents could choose more than one option. Totals will not add to 100%.

⁸ Note – question was reframed to be one question with multiple options – Non-response/decline to answer is not comparable between 2016 and 2019.

Ontario Works Client Satisfaction Survey 2019 Results Overview

When asked if clients knew who to contact in case of a question or issue, 93.1% responded favourably, which is a small decrease from 94.9% in 2016.

I know who to get in touch with if I have a question or problem	2016	2019
Strongly agree	70.6%	67.1%
Somewhat agree	24.3%	26.0%
Somewhat disagree	2.2%	3.4%
Strongly disagree	2.2%	1.5%
Does not apply	0.6%	1.0%
No response/Decline to answer		1.0%

When asked if they receive consistent and clear information from OW staff, 84.7% responded positively. This has decreased from 88.5% in 2016.

I get consistent and clear information from OW program staff	2016	2019
Strongly agree	58.5%	55.0%
Somewhat agree	30.0%	29.7%
Somewhat disagree	6.7%	8.4%
Strongly disagree	2.6%	2.5%
Does not apply	2.2%	2.7%
No response/Decline to answer		1.7%

When asked if things are well explained, 87.7% of respondents answered positively, but this still represents a slight decrease from 89.8% in 2016.

Things are well explained to me	2016	2019
Strongly agree	59.4%	61.9%
Somewhat agree	30.4%	25.8%
Somewhat disagree	4.2%	7.1%
Strongly disagree	2.9%	3.0%
Does not apply	3.2%	1.2%
No response/Decline to answer		1.0%

When asked if they were informed about what to bring to appointments, 94.4% responded positively, indicating clients feel prepared for appointments. This represents a small increase from 93% in 2016.

I know what information I need to bring to my appointment	2016	2019
Strongly agree	71.9%	73.5%
Somewhat agree	21.1%	20.9%
Somewhat disagree	3.5%	2.7%
Strongly disagree	1.3%	1.0%
Does not apply	2.2%	1.2%
No response/Decline to answer		0.8%

Ontario Works Client Satisfaction Survey 2019 Results Overview

When asked if they understand the written information TBDSSAB provides, 91.9% of clients responded positively; this indicator remains constant from 2016.

I understand all the written information I receive	2016	2019
Strongly agree	65.2%	68.6%
Somewhat agree	26.5%	23.3%
Somewhat disagree	5.4%	4.9%
Strongly disagree	1.0%	1.5%
Does not apply		1.0%
No response/Decline to answer	1.9%	0.7%

Comments

The survey included an open-ended comment question, asking if respondents had other feedback about anything not included in the survey. A total of 153 comments were received: 45.1% of the comments were positive, which is an increase from 2016 at 40.8%.

Type of Comment	Number of Respondents ⁹	Percentage of All Surveys with Comments*
Positive	69	45.1%
Negative	26	17.0%
Program or Service Comment/Suggestion	60	39.2%
Other	7	4.6%

Conclusion

The results of the 2019 OW Client Satisfaction Survey indicate that social assistance recipients are predominantly positive about the quality of service they receive from TBDSSAB staff. The results of this survey also present an opportunity to continue improving the quality of service for OW clients throughout the District of Thunder Bay, especially in the clarity and consistency of information being provided to clients.

⁹ Some respondents provided several comments that fell into more than one category. Those comments were counted in each category that applied, so totals will not equal 100%.