

Using Satisfaction Surveys as a Quality Improvement Tool: Lessons Learned from the Center for People With Disabilities

Satisfaction surveys can help Veteran Directed Care (VDC) providers understand participant experiences, identify training needs, and strengthen program operations. The Center for People With Disabilities (CPWD), a VDC Super Hub, uses its annual satisfaction survey as a continuous quality improvement tool to improve the Veteran experience. Below are the steps that CPWD takes to inform its continuous quality improvement.

Design an Accessible Survey Process

CPWD uses a consistent annual survey format and platform (SurveyMonkey), reviews questions for clarity before distribution, and sends the survey electronically while offering paper copies upon request. During intake, CPWD asks Veterans about their preferred language and ensures the survey is provided in that language which has helped increase survey response rate. In the most recent cycle, CPWD emailed the survey to approximately 295 Veterans, provided about 27 paper copies, and received approximately 87 responses (a response rate of 27 percent). To support participation, CPWD asks each Veteran's primary program contact to alert them that the survey is coming and explain that their feedback is helpful to the program.

Provider Tip: Make surveys easy to complete, offer accessible options such as paper copies, and use trusted staff to encourage participation. Consider whether a small incentive, such as a drawing for a gift card, could help increase voluntary participation while keeping survey responses anonymous.

Review Results for Trends

Provider Tip: Look for themes across responses, including repeated mentions of specific processes, staff members, or service barriers. Use positive feedback for recognition and outreach and use concerns to prioritize improvement opportunities.

After the responses are compiled, CPWD reviews the feedback for recurring concerns, positive themes, frequently mentioned staff, and patterns across the program. The supervisory team looks for issues mentioned by more than one Veteran, distinguishes broader trends from one-off situations, and considers whether feedback points to program-wide training needs, individual staff support, or opportunities to recognize what is working well.

Turn Feedback into Action

CPWD uses survey findings to guide practical improvements. For example, when Veterans reported difficulty submitting timesheets and completing the first payroll, CPWD created a clear website resource outlining the process, developed best practices for staff supporting new Veterans, and held team training on how to help Veterans get started. When feedback showed confusion around new hire and employee paperwork, CPWD scheduled training with its Financial Management Services team so person-centered counselors could walk through the forms, understand their purpose, and better support Veterans and employees.

Provider Tip: Translate survey findings into concrete tools, trainings, partner coordination, or process updates. Consider both groupwide training and individualized coaching when feedback points to specific staff support needs.

CPWD also uses the survey results to determine whether retraining should be provided to the full team or targeted to specific staff. In one recent review, CPWD identified two staff members who needed additional support and scheduled one-on-one retraining to address issues reflected in survey feedback.

Plan for Better Data Segmentation

As CPWD has grown to work with multiple spoke agencies, the team has identified a need to sort survey results by agency, Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), and staff member. CPWD currently receives responses from multiple agencies, but the data are not

Provider Tip: Build survey questions and reporting processes so results can be analyzed by the categories most useful for quality improvement, such as agency, VAMC, and staff assignment.

yet structured in a way that allows the team to provide agency- or VAMC-specific summaries. Within the year, CPWD plans to add tools or survey fields that make this level of analysis possible.

Close the Feedback Loop

CPWD shares summarized survey findings with Veterans, person-centered counselors, and VA partners to promote transparency and show how feedback results in program improvement. Veterans can see how their feedback informs the program, person-centered counselors can use the results to strengthen their work, and VA partners conducting outreach can use the results to help demonstrate Veteran satisfaction and build support for the program. CPWD provides additional feedback channels

Provider Tip: Share high-level results, communicate changes made in response to feedback, and provide multiple ways for participants to share input throughout the year, including direct contact options for more urgent or individualized concerns.

throughout the year, including the program director's phone number in the Veteran handbook, a general feedback email address, and a 90-day check-in process for new enrollments that continues to be refined.