

MN Department of Education Part C Family Outcome Survey Redesign

Wilder Research conducted in-reach interviews with providers across the state of Minnesota as well as families that have used Part C services. Based on the in-reach, and the Wilder Survey Design Team's support, a new version of the Part C Family Outcome Survey was redesigned. The draft survey can be found here:

https://wilder.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3IQRI RJKTNHQBOM

Below we provide summative takeaways in Table A, with the following **key considerations** to guide the findings. Following the table are quotes from in-reach to provide context for each of the themes and how they informed the changes.

Clarifying the purpose

The primary observation across the interviews is that many families do not seem to know the purpose of this survey. They seem to think the survey is to give feedback to improve their services, and thus are focused on giving provider feedback at times. This is partially why they requested more open-ended opportunities to write about specific providers and are also open to multiple survey points across the year. One way to clarify the purpose of the survey could be in the letter at the beginning of the survey. The letter could restate the purpose of the survey as a mechanism to inform the state and federal governments about key outcomes for MN Part C families. However, if the state wants to consider using the survey for broader purposes, then that may be a separate consideration.

Geography

For the purpose of the analysis, geography only mattered when it came to language options requested. However, geography did not limit families experiencing hardship, poverty, lower education achievement for parents, and access to (knowledge of) community resources. Thus, we did not end up including geography as a categorical tool as it proved to not be as meaningful as we expected to how the survey ultimately was received. For language needs, we still recommend providing translated survey options.

Timing

One of the research questions we did not find a conclusive answer to was on the best times to implement, but several ideas for consideration. Many families were very open to the idea of taking the survey at multiple points throughout the year to provide additional feedback. Timing will be dependent on who uses what information for which purpose. For example, if the survey is meant to inform providers about families, then that timing looks different than if the purpose is to provide the state feedback about providers from families.

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Finally, the timing would be different if the purpose is to continue to inform the state about family outcomes and their knowledge of their rights to be reported back federally.

Survey design

In re-designing the family outcome survey, a few items remain suggestions and are open to revising based on feedback. We provide a few such considerations here for places we may want to brainstorm collaboratively to reach decisions on the final version of the survey.

- Visuals were recommended a few times, but remain something Wilder wasn't sure could be implemented on the MDE survey platform, but simple visual options/alternatives on the Likert might help with interpretation.
- Providing a neutral option in the survey responses remain a contentious issue. People reported that they definitely do not think five choice options are needed, but three might not provide sufficient opportunities for nuance, so ultimately the Wilder team chose to remove the neutral option based on some parent feedback and to stay in alignment with reducing the number of options overall.
- Families really want more open-ended questions, and many providers suggested the same (some individuals even requesting one open end at the end of each question). However, our team at Wilder still maintains that is too many open ends for the data to be managed and used efficiently and feasibly. We did add a few new spots to provide those open-ended responses.
- For concepts that posed the highest challenge – “knowing their rights” was the number one topic that providers mentioned. Therefore, this is one of the questions we completely re-designed and created an entirely new section for in the survey. We made this decision due to the significance of the federal reporting requirements as well in order to share back more accurate information.

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TABLE A: Summary In-Reach Findings			
Themes	Providers	Families	Changes to Survey
Survey feels too long	Consensus in agreement	Consensus	Restructured the survey to feel less burdensome. More sections but fewer questions in each section keeping interest. Families reported finishing in ten minutes – with a maximum time of twenty minutes. Some finished in five minutes if they didn't fill out open ends.
More open ends requested	Consensus in agreement	Consensus in agreement	Balanced this by including a few open ends towards the end of the survey to still provide fewer questions overall and to reduce the burden of taking the survey and analyzing it later. A separate story banking site could be useful.
Electronic versions needed	Consensus	Consensus	We created an electronic version of the survey as a model. Some people requested this be available via app. Others requested that the survey be able to be accessed via text.
Fewer response options would reduce burden	Consensus	No consensus – different people said	We reduced the options for Likert to 4 options.

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		different things.	
Some wanted a neutral option while others recommended removing it	No consensus	Some wanted the neutral option some did not.	4 options removed a need for a neutral option.
Knowing rights concept too vague and challenging	Consensus		We redesigned this question as a new section of prompts to incorporate what it would mean for a "right" to be exercised in the real world.
Need more awareness communication regarding the survey from all levels	Consensus	Consensus	App should be leveraged, more email notices, and newsletter reminders.

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In-Reach Findings

Providers

Implementation Process:

- I would normally hand the survey to the families with the return envelope. This is normally done in our last visit- I would ask them to complete the survey and once completed I will take it from them to return to MDE.
- A lot of our families, after working with them, as long as they know the intent of the survey, I know that they are most likely to complete it. Also it is helpful for the providers to know why the families need to complete the survey. Also the length of time we have worked with them will help too.
- When I go on a visit, normally an interpreter would come with me, so I would ask them what is most comfortable for them and ask whether an interpreter is needed for them so that the interpreter can help read or answer the questions for them if needed.
- In Austin: Our most recent and most often used is for our secretary to send it out to the families and then she will include that self-addressed envelope to send it back to MDE. We use the family outcome survey in 2 different ways. In our program, we use it (first page) at the beginning of their services to gather background information about like how familiar they are with services, and then we use it. We don't mail that pre-test information to MDE. It is mostly on page 1. Then when the kids turn 3, so that they get that closure information back by completing the whole form and return it to MDE.
- In Duluth: [FOS] Very familiar. I do part A as the intake process. It is more of an interview and we don't mail out that part to the MDE. It is used to help gauge what the family think about their kids, priority or strengths, etc. We let them know that they will get a survey as part of the transition. About 75% will be mailed out and it is up to them to fill out the survey and return to the MDE. We do have reminder postcards that we can send out to the families.

Length

- The survey has many words in it. I work with a lot of families who read at a 4 or 5th grade level. It isn't very clear to understand. The variety of options (how helpful) the services were are also confusing. I do not think mailing the survey is the most reliable either.

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- There are a lot of questions and that's the part that is hard. We ask families to fill out so much paperwork.
- Naturally, the questions are good but can be **overwhelming**. So looking to get the same information with fewer questions. I want something for what we are doing- incentives to complete the survey. The ease of doing it such as electronic options.

Modality

- It would be nice to have electronic copy like something that they can text a link to or send through via email. Something that I can text (coming from me) would make them more likely to open the survey. Something that comes directly from me will help because they know me.
- The big barrier is it comes in the mail and it is probably along with a bunch of other junk mails. If it was in an electronic option, it would be a lot easier for the family where they can scan the QR code on their last visit and fill it out. It can come from an email too.
- What needs to change- they probably need someone to go through the survey with them, being able to ask the questions in a way that they understand or a very simplified survey that they can understand.
- Another barrier is if teachers were to complete the survey with the families, the family's responses might not be truthful because they do not want us to know that.
- A survey is done digitally in some way would be a huge difference, especially text message to distribute it. A lot of families (those are marginalized) need to find a reason to complete the survey. So some incentives or coupons would incentivize them to do so.
- Having a variety of way of completing it such as an electronic option. There needs to be a push to support their confidence and that we want to hear their voices so that the future families that we serve can benefit from it.
- Having electronic forms would be helpful that we can do it on the phone and laptop. It would be nice to have it as an option. Just ensuring that we as staff are able to provide that support.
- We have a successful program that has full-time and part-time success coaches and interpreters. So they assist with completing the survey. Most of the time they already meet with the families so they have a relationship. Without them, it would be a challenge. We came across many refugees and they speak very well in their language but cannot read in their language so the success coaches are

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instrumental in this.

- We have a few families that fall into the homeless area, and that's when we try to do the survey in person together with them. Also asking some of the questions about services can also make them feel uncomfortable. As a team, we try to work as a close group and try to get those needed services to those families.
- The reading level might be a bit too high for these groups of families. It has to be at the 6th-grade level for us here. The barriers are like having to take care of young families or finding time to drop off the survey in the post office. Having it available electronically would help too.

Concepts:

- Rights: "Knowing the rights"- I don't think it needs that many questions because they can be tied together easily. It is very confusing to families because their rights with children with disabilities are different than other rights that they have. These families have many barriers to understand what their rights are in some situations.
- Knowing your rights- Q1, it is about the timing of the services. Is it asking whether the current services are helpful or the future services that they are receiving? It might be good to clarify that.
- Understanding their right is a confusing one. Helping them develop and learn can be scary for them.
- Community resources- we continue to provide the information about what they need to know.

Options/Types of Answers:

- It is sometimes hard with that many options. Just hard to pick one even myself. It sounds very similar.
- I have not completed that section with them. If I would, I would try to break it down by "percentage", for example 50% would be "somewhat" which is right in the middle and "a little" would be at 25%. We think a lot in percentages in our work with the children and families. It is something that the family is used to hearing.
- It is hard for the families to fill that out. When completing a survey, I try to add visuals for example a "thumb down" as not helpful. It is easier for the families to visually understand.

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- So generally we try to add number (1-5) or descriptions next to me. Visuals can be helpful like the pain scale for the kids.
- The odd number response options also encourage them to choose the middle one.
- Using the number scale is more helpful because that is the language that they are more familiar with the work that we have done with them.
- Giving a chance to give them examples would be helpful. Make them feel like it is about their child and not just numbers. So maybe some **open-ended questions**, not all of them but some options for them to do so.
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Timing

- We have the start of the new school year in July. Without having students in at that time, so having the data in mid-summer months would be nice.
- I don't know what data/information would be useful but maybe a lot on how we listen to the family and respect their choices and priorities and how helpful we are in providing them the strategies.
- The time of receiving is hard because November is very busy. So, at a slower time would be better so like March or July so we have the time to think together as a team and come up with plans/strategies for success for next school year.
- I don't know the time of the year either because we work all year. District-specific would be helpful because different districts have different needs.

Families

Modalities

- Have used the app to provide feedback to providers... will upload the activities...
- Will put surveys... newsletters.. and other times... **SEESAW** – it's great a tool for communication... flyers and notices are put on there.
- In person talking about it. [why?] it's more personal and they can get more of a clear definite answer that way. Through texting you can't really read the how it was supposed to be said. On the phone too. You can understand my tone better than text. If there is a negative response or feedback I like to do it nice that won't come off as rude.
- Survey option is good – printing option is necessary for people without internet

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- Via text or message remind App. Or email. leaves a notification on my phone and can get back to it.
- Probably an interview like this or the paperwork that is discussed or plan of action.
- Me personally with children the easiest way is text or email and in visits also. Don't like to talk about struggles in front of them for older kids. Also busy with a family that easier when I have the moment.
- Face to face
- Update them on what's going on via text and also use monthly meetings to update if didn't share with them prior.

Item **Language** Feedback

- Would answer all of the questions on the survey without a problem...
- I do have a special edu background. So I feel like parents who don't have that special edu background might say "what are my rights?"
- [answer?] for me, I know I'm doing a service for my child and it does feel a little bit iffy to hear your child has special needs and is developmentally delayed.
- Little harsh. Not sure how else to word it. Very blunt, your child has delays and needs. That's it.

Negative thought when reading it.

- [feel to answer] feels a little personal? I don't know. [comfortable answering?] yes but trying to, especially doing a survey, want to give useful information about how program is doing, and if they can give me useful information or not or if it's useful or not.

Options/Choices

- Sometimes like to have yes/no and could have a writing space to explain it. In the somewhat would be helpful.
- Not hard to choose an answer – too many options, might get skewed results, don't need as many options for some of these questions. An agree or an disagree might be more appropriate – so subjective... a little an somewhat could be the same thing... could be difficult to get good outcomes from that...

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- So I guess I go with what the least vague is... what I see on most Likert scale questions – somewhat is the most on other scales... so I use the more common terms... my experience – having done research more, I pick the ones that are more common terms...
- Don't provide a neutral option. - Less options you give people – the less data to go through... less room you give people to hem or haw... just did or didn't – but people will pick neutral – without giving you meaningful info, because it's easier and faster... doesn't give you information anyways, so fewer choices will give you actual information and benefit from the program.
- I would just go with my gut and wouldn't second guess. A little and somewhat feel very similar. If I had one that I was a definite yes or no, then thought of a little or somewhat, then chose whatever mind decided to go with fi
- Maybe like a 3-point scale, yes/no/somewhat. Not so many options. Less options is better.

Open-ended

- Storytelling, text, I think paper surveys are too concrete doesn't give enough information and kind of limit what's actually having and give the wrong picture of what's happening. Prefer verbal contact. I think text is convenient – how I communicate with provider's in this program. I prefer storytelling.
- Open –ended question or space
- I would like to be able to give more personal examples... and specific examples... those specific examples would be so helpful for anecdotes... what kind of impact these programs are making on these people's lives... scale is helpful... would also be nice to provide additional stories and anecdotes...

Timing

- *Surveys throughout the year... trimesters or semesters.... And end of the year and asking about how things are going thus far... stuff comes up during the year that would be helpful. Just more access to providing feedback throughout the year... to give their ideas... might be more helpful...*
- Three months after you start the program would also be helpful... a first time parent... asking parents right away what benefits they are getting is helpful... a reassuring thing to me... you are going to get a lot better and raw information that would be better to compare it to. Asking multiple times would be helpful.

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- No this would be the right time after services have ended.
- [Should] happen more often. Did need to make adjustments to make them more often. Maybe every 6 months? 3 months seems too much. A little more often would be helpful. They could fix what was going on in the middle

Data Sharing

- I have no problem with it being shared... helpful for them to know who is accessing these programs.
- I work with county so to me they are always trying to collect demo things. I have no problem providing demographic information.

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Survey Redesign

Cognitive interviews takeaways post survey re-design

1. **Visibility/tracking responses on digital survey was better for usability experience.**

I like that I can see what my answer was. In the short list, I can see what I have put. Sometimes with other surveys when I fill them out, they move it to the next question and I cannot see it anymore. I really like the ease of completing it.

2. **Outcome of taking the survey offered opportunity for reflection.**

I had good experiences with Part C. The survey reminded me that I had good experience. It caused me to reflect a bit about if I am ready or have the skills to support my child. **The way the question asked made me reflect.** It is a reminder that I need to do a bit more of those things.

Not any strong emotions. It makes me **reflect** on the different experiences that I have for my son. It provides reflective moments.

3. **Options – people appreciated fewer options than five, and not having a neutral option which often prevents people from making a choice, and reflecting deeply.**

*If anything that is hard to answer, it would be me deciding which response options I would choose. Also adding another response option to neutral would not help much either. **4 is a good number.***

4. **Community Resources section may not be useful, consider keeping or not.**

The last resource section is not as applicable because we didn't receive any community services. Not applicable because we haven't experienced that.

The question about access to transportation, clothing, and food. Those never came up to me during my experiences. I was not sure whether those services were available to us. It was not an issue to us so that's probably why it didn't come up.

5. **Feasibility:** Web survey is easy and it is easier that it is through a text instead of an email. I responded to my text more quickly.

The only thing that I can think of is that it was as easy to do it on the **phone** as on the computer screen.

It is pretty easy.

Length – the length was viewed as appropriate and felt shorter than previous iterations:

It is good and I didn't feel as many questions and it is efficient.

It was a good short survey but it encompasses everything that I wanted to answer from referral to services and to next steps.

Meaning, people had no issues understanding the questions:

It is self-explanatory.

6. There are still requests for some additional question formats, and open ends. Something for MDE to brainstorm if needed.

I would like to provide some information about the transition from Part C to Part B. I feel that was an important experience

When I was thinking of providers, in my mind, it wonders if it asks me about providers as a whole team or an individual provider. I grouped it together as a team.

When I was going through the yes/no section or the "disagree or agree", I wished there was a small open-ended space to provide additional comments to my response for each one of them.

The only thing I can think of is asking about community parent supports. There was not a parent support or parent education group in section 4. If it is under "Social or recreational activities for family" it maybe helpful to give examples next to it.

Wilder Survey Design Team technical survey improvement ideas

New survey design incorporates these technical improvement suggestions*

Survey Section A:

- Instructions on top, not in letter.
- Do you need the ID numbers on there? Are they pre-filled?
- If they have multiple children who are we talking about?
- Bold "right now" in instructions.
- Get rid of large grid. Use smaller grids or less questions and question by question layout.
- Double barreled questions/mentions two or more things:
 - Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q9, Q18, Q21, Q24
- Q4, progress on what?
- Q13, very generic, should be more specific.
- On Q21 and Q23 could be different for different members of the family.

Survey Section B:

- Scale, use "not very" instead of "a little" so it is symmetric.
- Statements are very long, should be shortened.
- Q1 is double barreled
- Q6-Q10, scale does not really match questions being asked.
- Are Q9 and Q10 specifically "talking" or is it providing info?

Methods:

- Staff should not be helping them fill it out or asking it as an interview. Respondents will likely respond more positively.
- Provide multiple options (paper and web)
- Paper should be one page and a sealed envelope to return it.
- Web option should be a QR code, or mobile device provide to them to fill it out.

Recommendations from Wilder Survey Design Team for increasing response

Ask respondents to complete the survey **on the spot**. If they are given a paper survey or survey link to take home and complete at a later time, the chances of them doing so are greatly reduced as they walk out the door. That being said, if they refuse or do not have the time to do it right away, give them the option to do it at another time.

Give the respondent **multiple options** to complete the survey. Let them choose from a paper version of the survey or a web version. Web versions should have a simple link they can type in or a QR code they can scan. Allow the respondent to complete the survey on their own mobile device, but be prepared to provide them with a tablet or laptop so they can complete the survey if they do not have their own. For those who prefer to do on paper at a later time, a prepaid return envelope should be provided to them, so they can just drop it in the mail free of charge.

Provide the respondent with **privacy**. They should feel like they are given adequate space and time to do the survey without someone watching them. If you are collecting paper surveys make sure respondents are given an envelope in which they can place the completed survey and seal it before returning to the administrator. Administrators should remind all respondents that the survey is voluntary and confidential, and that their decision to participate will not affect their services. Never administer the survey directly to respondents in an interview format unless that is the only way for them to complete the survey.

Provide the respondent with some sort of **incentive** for completing the survey. This could be a monetary incentive like a gift card or entry into a raffle, or something as simple as a snack (food or drink item), or some other small token item to show appreciation for their time. Some people are not interested in self gain, but could be persuaded by promising that a small donation is made to a charitable organization for each survey that is completed.

People like to know what is being done with the information they are providing. Ask respondents if they are interested in **learning** about the results of the survey, and what will be done with the data. Create a sign-up list for follow-up at a later time.

Partner with respected industry leaders, community leaders, or influencers relevant to your audience. Their endorsement can give your survey a personal touch and credibility boost, encouraging participation.