



**STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION  
DIVISION OF MENTAL RETARDATION SERVICES  
ANDREW JACKSON BUILDING, 15TH FLOOR  
500 DEADERICK STREET  
NASHVILLE, TN 37243**

**TITLE:** Program Participant Experience Surveys

**POLICY #:** P - 014

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- A. PURPOSE:** This policy outlines the process for conducting program participant experience surveys for individuals receiving services through a Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver program administered by the Division of Mental Retardation Services (DMRS) or through an Intermediate Care Facility for the Mentally Retarded (ICF/MR) operated by DMRS.
- B. APPLICABILITY:** This policy applies to all DMRS staff, service providers and individuals who are responsible for conducting program participant experience surveys.
- C. DEFINITIONS**
1. **“Adult Protective Services”** means the unit within the Department of Human Services which has the statutory authority to receive and investigate reports of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of adults age 18 and over who are unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect or exploitation.
  2. **“HCBS waiver”** or **“waiver”** means a Home and Community-Based Services waiver for persons with mental retardation that includes the following:
    - a. Home and Community-Based Services Waiver for the Mentally Retarded and Developmentally Disabled (#0128.90.R2A.02) and any amendments thereto;
    - b. Home and Community-Based Services Waiver for Persons with Mental Retardation (#0357.90.02) and any amendments thereto; and
    - c. Self-Determination Waiver Program (#0427.R01) and any amendments thereto.
  3. **“Intermediate Care Facility for the Mentally Retarded (ICF/MR)”** means an institution for the mentally retarded or persons with related conditions that:
    - (a) Is primarily for the diagnosis, treatment, or rehabilitation of the mentally retarded or persons with related conditions; and
    - (b) Provides, in a protected residential setting, ongoing evaluation, planning, 24-hour supervision, coordination, and integration of health or rehabilitative services to help each individual function at his greatest ability.
  4. **“Program Participant”** means an individual who is receiving HCBS waiver services or an individual who is receiving services in state-operated Intermediate Care Facility for the Mentally Retarded.

5. **“Program Participant Experience Survey”** means the process by which the experience of individuals who receive HCBS waiver services or ICF/MR services is assessed through face-to-face interviews with the program participant or through other means (e.g., telephone interview, mail-in questionnaire) approved by DMRS.

**D. DESCRIPTION OF POLICY**

1. DMRS shall conduct annual program participant experience surveys. These surveys will be performed on a sample of individuals receiving HCBS waiver services and individuals receiving services in state-operated Intermediate Care Facilities for the Mentally Retarded (ICFs/MR).
2. The purpose of the surveys is to assess the experience of individuals who receive HCBS waiver services or ICF/MR services, and the results of the surveys will be used to identify participant problems and concerns, to make appropriate referrals for resolution, and to identify opportunities for quality improvement.
3. Sampling Methodology
  - a. A stratified random sampling process will be used to generate a list of program participants to be interviewed.
    - (1) The sample will be stratified by county within each DMRS region, by program type (HCBS waiver versus ICF/MR) and by HCBS waiver type.
    - (2) The sample will be drawn from individuals who receive HCBS waiver services or who reside in a state-operated ICF/MR.
  - b. DMRS may adjust the size of the sample to assure an appropriate stratified random sample.
4. Contracting for the Program Participant Surveys: DMRS may contract with an outside entity (e.g., non-profit community agency or a state or private university) to perform the program participant experience surveys.
5. Responsibilities of the Contractor: The contractor selected to perform the program participant experience surveys shall:
  - a. Solicit and screen survey interviewers;
  - b. Require each interviewer to sign a confidentiality agreement upon being hired;
  - c. Provide interviewer training as a part of new employee orientation and on an annual basis, including training in:
    - (1) How to recognize and report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation;
    - (2) How to report complaints through the DMRS Complaint Resolution system;
    - (3) Program participant rights, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and
    - (4) Interview techniques, including communication skills.
  - d. Utilize standardized interview procedures and protocols;
  - e. Use a nationally-tested survey instrument approved by DMRS to assess the program participants' experience with HCBS waiver and/or ICF/MR services;
  - f. Schedule program participant interviews;

- g. Accurately record and report survey findings to DMRS;
  - h. Notify DMRS of any survey responses requiring referral or follow-up in accordance with time lines established by DMRS;
  - i. Prepare an annual program report; and
  - j. Perform other survey-related activities as designated by DMRS.
6. Interviewer Recruitment and Selection
- a. The contractor will recruit and select survey interviewers.
    - (1) The contractor will encourage a diverse group of candidates (e.g., individuals with developmental disabilities, family members, or individuals with experience working with individuals with developmental disabilities) to apply for interviewer positions.
    - (2) To create a large pool of candidates from which interviewers can be selected, the contractor may utilize marketing and advertising techniques including, but not limited to, the following:
      - (a) Sending interviewer job announcements by email or other means to family members, stakeholders, and program participants;
      - (b) Notifying management, staff, and board members of agencies serving people with developmental disabilities of interviewer job opportunities;
      - (c) Sending interviewer job announcements to advocacy and other organizations which serve people with developmental disabilities; and
      - (d) Attending developmental disability meetings or conferences and providing notice of interviewer recruitment activities.
  - b. As part of the interview process, applicants may be required to demonstrate their interviewing and/or computer skills.
7. Program Participant Interviews
- a. Interviewers shall conduct interviews face-to-face with the program participant or shall obtain information through other means (e.g., telephone interview, mail-in questionnaire) approved by DMRS.
  - b. Participation in the DMRS Program Participant Experience Survey is voluntary. Program participants have the right to refuse to be interviewed.
    - (1) Permission of the conservator or provider agency is not required if the program participant is age 18 or older and agrees to be interviewed (unless the Order of Conservatorship specifically allows such restrictions).
    - (2) If the program participant is under 18 years of age, the guardian must be present during the interview.
  - c. Interviews shall be scheduled at the convenience of the program participant.

- (1) Interviews may be scheduled in the evening or on weekends, as well as during the day.
  - (2) Interviews may be conducted in the program participant's home or at other locations convenient for the program participant and the interviewer.
- d. Interviewers may conduct individual focused follow-up surveys to assess resolution of problems or issues identified during the interview process.
- (1) Focused follow-up surveys may be conducted at any time and do not require advance notice.
  - (2) The scope of a follow-up survey may be expanded if new problems or issues are identified during the follow-up survey.
8. Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation and Complaints Involving Other Issues
- a. Reporting of Problems:
- (1) Tennessee Code Annotated (71-6-103 (b)(1)) requires reporting of any instance of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an adult or vulnerable person.
  - (2) If an interviewer believes that a program participant is in immediate jeopardy due to abuse, neglect, exploitation, or unsafe living conditions, the interviewer shall immediately contact Adult Protective Services (APS) and DMRS.
  - (3) If the program participant has a complaint that does not qualify as abuse, neglect, or exploitation, the interviewer shall report the complaint in accordance with the DMRS policy on reporting complaints.
- b. Resolution of Problems:
- (1) DMRS will attempt to resolve all reported issues within 30 calendar days; however, occasionally an issue may require a longer period for resolution due to the nature and complexity of the issue.

9. Prohibition of Retaliation:

- a. Retaliation of any type is prohibited against a program participant, service provider staff, or DMRS staff because the program participant:
- (1) Was involved in a survey interview; or
  - (2) Reported abuse, neglect, or exploitation or reported a complaint or problem.

**E. ATTACHMENTS:** Not applicable

**F. PREVIOUS POLICY:** Not applicable

**G. DATE APPROVED BY TENNCARE:** September 26, 2008 (pk)

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H. **POLICY APPROVAL**

Joanna Damons by W Moore  
Signature of Assistant Commissioner  
Office of Policy, Planning, and Consumer Services

10/14/2008  
Date

Stephen H. Davis  
Signature of Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Mental Retardation Services

10/14/2008  
Date