

**Independent Living Services  
Consumer Satisfaction Survey**

**Follow Up Survey of Independent Living Consumers of the  
Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped**

Submitted to

The Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped

By

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# Follow Up Survey of Independent Living Consumers of the Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped

**Purpose of the Project** - The New York Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH) contracted with the Center for Essential Management Services (CEMS) to conduct a statewide follow up survey of individuals with disabilities who had received independent living services from CBVH. The purpose of the survey was to gain feedback from experienced consumers who had completed the course of services.

**Introduction** - In 2009 CEMS conducted a survey of similar individuals and, where possible, the results of the current survey will be compared to the results of the earlier study. This report focuses on the independent living services component of services provided by CBVH. The project sought to gain from consumers their perceptions of the services they received, what outcomes they achieved, and how satisfied they were with them. It was expected that insight would be gained regarding how services relate to outcomes based on consumers' feedback about their experiences, as well as the extent of their satisfaction with their services from CBVH. This feedback is useful for considering how to change service delivery approaches and policies. This study builds on the foundation that CBVH had begun in 2009 to implement a more systematic and ongoing effort to identify the independent living needs of people with disabilities who are blind and who have vision impairments throughout the state.

## Methodology: Consumer Follow Up Survey

**Sample:** The study sample was drawn from the consumers who completed their independent living services program with CBVH during the year prior to the survey, which was completed during the first quarter of 2013. Sixty-eight persons were included in the original sample. These persons were sent an alert letter prior to the staff of CEMS contacting them by telephone. Response rates based on this original sample were as follows:

Response Rate	2009	2013
<b>Initial Sample</b>	37	68
<b>Completed Interview</b>	16 (43%)	28 (41%)
<b>Wrong/Disconnected Number</b>	7 (19%)	14 (21%)
<b>Not Available After Five Contacts*</b>	7 (19%)	8 (12%)
<b>Refused to Participate</b>	6 (13%)	9 (13%)
<b>Deceased</b>	1 (3%)	0
<b>Moved</b>	0	3 (4%)
<b>Unable to Participate</b>	0	6 (9%)
<b>Total</b>	37 (100%)	68 (100%)
<b>Number of Persons Actually Contacted</b>	22 (59%)	37 (54%)
<b>Response Rate for those Contacted</b>	73%	76%

\* In 2009 this was set at three contacts

The experience of the current survey, in reaching out to consumers, is quite similar to the previous survey. In the 2013 survey we were able to ascertain reasons behind unwillingness to participate in the interview and one of these is the inability to do so, primarily due to functional limitations, such as an inability to communicate, or limited cognitive ability. These reasons were offered primarily by family members or caregivers.

**The Survey Interview (Appendix 1):** CBVH developed the initial set of interview questions based on the previous study and input from the NYSILC Consumer Satisfaction Committee. CEMS staff reviewed these and offered suggestions for minor changes. The interview included a total of fifteen items. Ten items were focused on the experiences of the respondents during their service delivery programs. A major difference in the 2013 survey was that these questions were repeated for up to three vendor agencies which had actually delivered services to consumers. In the 2009 survey, participants were asked to respond in general, over all service providers, and not to their experience with specific service providers. There were four questions related to outcomes achieved due to services received and the last six focused on the delivery of services, or impressions about the case management process experienced by respondents as they received services. Five additional items asked respondents to reflect on their experiences with CBVH. Items consisted of ratings and frequently offered the option to explain in open-ended fashion the meaning behind the ratings. All the items were programmed into a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview platform which presented the items in sequence and permitted immediate data entry as the interview proceeded.

**Results Related to Outcomes Achieved and Services Received from Providers**

This section presents the results by question. The data are aggregated across all providers and, thus, the number of responses exceeds the number of respondents since many had more than one service provider. For each item that called for open ended responses, selected verbatim or paraphrased responses are provided to indicate a context for understanding the meaning of the items

Outcomes from Services

**Question #1:** Did the services you received give you more confidence?<sup>1</sup>

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	44	76%
Somewhat	7	12%
No	7	12%
Not Applicable	0	0%

Clearly, this outcome was achieved by a strong majority of consumers.

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<sup>1</sup> The percentages within the tables may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

**Question #2:** Did the services you received lead to you being more independent?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	43	74%
Somewhat	11	19%
No	4	7%
Not Applicable	0	0%

A strong majority of respondents reported they were more independent as a result of services.

**Question #3:** This question had five sub-items. Each will be reported separately.

**Item#1:** Did the services received help you take care of your daily living needs?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	34	71%
Somewhat	10	21%
No	4	8%
Not Applicable	10	-

A strong majority of respondents felt they were helped in taking care of their daily living needs.

**Item#2:** Did the services received help you manage your home more independently?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	32	67%
Somewhat	12	25%
No	4	8%
Not Applicable	10	-

Although this outcome was noted as achieved somewhat less than the previous ones, still a strong majority indicated improvement in managing their homes independently.

**Item #3:** Did the services received help you manage your finances more independently?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	15	54%
Somewhat	6	21%
No	7	25%
Not Applicable	30	-

This outcome was not seen as applicable to the respondents as the others. Although a majority of those who did think it was applicable believed the outcome was positive, a rather high percentage felt they did not achieve it.

**Item #4:** Did the services received help you care for your family?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	19	59%
Somewhat	5	16%
No	8	25%
Not Applicable	26	-

Although many respondents also felt this outcome was not applicable to the services they received from certain providers, many who did felt this outcome was achieved.

**Item #5:** Did the services received help you travel more independently in your community?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	31	67%
Somewhat	8	17%
No	7	15%
Not Applicable	12	-

This outcome was applicable to more respondents and a strong majority felt they had accomplished this outcome, in part or completely.

*Comments Offered Regarding Outcomes*

For the most part, comments indicated the services and outcomes received were viewed positively by respondents. Selected comments which illustrate the range of feedback are:

1. Prescription for new glasses helped facilitate mobility, comfort;
2. Confidence to go in new directions, without help;
3. 3-4 products like talking thermostat which saved money on oil bill! Best product!
4. Very helpful in mobility training, shown how to take trains;
5. Met my needs at a particular time and there were a variety of needs;
6. Only used once, didn't understand it, sent it back; and,
7. Did not help in way he wanted.

**Summary:** The average percent of respondents indicating they obtained these outcomes was 67%. On average, another 19% indicated that they achieved the outcomes somewhat. Thus, a total of 86% of respondents, on average, believed they achieved the desired outcomes, at least to some extent.

*Case Management Impressions*

**Question # 1:** Did staff treat you respectfully?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	56	97%
Somewhat	2	3%
No	0	0%

An overwhelming majority believed they were treated respectfully by vendor staff. Selected comments include:

1. Very professional and kind;
2. Went out of way to give me everything at one time. I needed glasses, TV glasses, reading glasses and magnifiers;
3. Courteous, talked as though we knew each other, didn't talk down or as though just a patient;
4. The few moments spent with me didn't help, wasn't long enough; tapes continued to be sent, mailed back, complicated; and,
5. Didn't receive what he wanted, disappointed.

**Question #2:** Were you and the staff able to communicate clearly?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	56	97%
Somewhat	1	2%
No	1	2%

Respondents also strongly believed their communications with vendor staff were clear. Selected comments include:

1. Very nice to me and appreciated what they did;
2. So great, nice, so patient, learned so much and will learn more and go out into the world for a job;
3. Very respectful and polite; and,
4. When called got quick responses.

**Question #3:** Did staff have a positive attitude while working with you?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	57	98%
Somewhat	1	2%
No	0	0%

Almost all respondents felt that vendor staff had a positive attitude while working with them. Selected comments included:

1. She is an amazing teacher, very patient;
2. Encouraged you to do new things;
3. So supportive when I did the right thing, really gave confidence, very patient when I made mistakes; and,
4. Gracious, but not time to teach, in a rush, came late.

**Question #4:** Did you have opportunity to ask questions while planning for and receiving services?

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	54	93%
Somewhat	1	2%
No	3	5%

Only slightly fewer respondents indicated that they did not have an opportunity to ask questions of vendor staff. Still, a very large percentage felt that they did. Selected comments include:

1. They were great and listened to whatever I had to say;
2. Very helpful, friendly, made me feel comfortable because I was scared, not knowing of program;
3. Asked continually, and still do by email;
4. Less than one day in office was not time enough for questions; and,
5. Language barrier, got what was needed.

**Question #5:** Did you have an opportunity to set goals?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	31	53%
Somewhat	13	22%
No	14	24%

Regarding opportunity to set goals, only a slight majority felt they accomplished this while almost a quarter of them felt they had no opportunity to set goals with vendor staff. Selected comments include:

1. Didn't really ask me about goals;
2. Most goals already achieved;
3. No time;
4. Asked for help so I could do things by myself, but weren't able to teach me on computer, I don't know why; and,
5. Set them and met them.

**Question #6:** Did staff respond back to you in a timely manner?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	53	91%
Somewhat	3	5%
No	2	3%

Here again, respondents believed they received timely responses from vendor staff. Selected comments include:

1. Once approved, they called me for appointment;
2. Went out of way; volunteer 2x picked me up/drove me home; my magnifier is like heaven, like gold to me;
3. Very responsive and still are;
4. Never really called back, facilitator would set up; and,
5. Too busy with other customers.

**Summary:** On average across all case management categories, over 88% of respondents indicated that they received their case management service in the desired way and an additional 6% indicated they received it to some extent. The category of setting goals was an outlier and if it is excluded from the averages, the percentages would be 95% and 3%.

## Results Related to Services Received from CBVH and Outcomes Achieved

These questions concern how well respondents perceived the case management actions they received from CBVH and the general outcomes that resulted.

**Questions #1:** Did your CBVH counselor work collaboratively with you on the service plan that was put in place for you?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	16	57%
Somewhat	8	29%
No	4	14%

Fifty-seven percent of respondents agreed with this statement and another 29% agreed somewhat. Selected comments include:

1. In certain way during visit, telephone calls;
2. The counselor was great!
3. Very good and patient;
4. Don't know who; and,
5. Yes, but first counselor not helpful, seemed disinterested in her work with me; second one extremely helpful, much more responsive to needs.

**Question #2:** Did your CBVH counselor inform you accurately about what to expect from the service providers they referred you to?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	15	54%
Somewhat	5	18%
No	8	29%

Respondents were less inclined to think their counselor informed them accurately with 54% agreeing and only 18% agreeing somewhat. Selected comments include:

1. Couldn't always understand his explanations;
2. Everything chosen swiftly and I'm almost to the goal, hopefully;
3. Did not have counselor or advocate, except for phone survey;
4. Gave him as much information as they knew of;
5. Very professional in all his work; and
6. They just set up appointments but didn't really explain the services.

**Question #3:** Did the services help you to improve your ability to become more involved in your community?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	15	54%
Somewhat	5	18%
No	8	29%

To this outcome question, 54% of respondents agreed that they were more able to be involved in their community and another 18% felt they were somewhat more able. Selected comments include:

1. Volunteer in church, receptionist, hope I'll be offered a job there, if not other things in the mix I'll be doing;
2. I don't want to get involved! I have enough to do around here!
3. As soon as I'm brave enough! I have the opportunity and training!
4. Not involved outside of home; and,
5. Helped very much.

**Question #4:** Thinking about the services you received, did they help you to improve your quality of life overall?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	20	71%
Somewhat	4	14%
No	4	14%

Seventy-one percent agreed that this important outcome was achieved and another 14% felt it was achieved somewhat. Selected comments include:

1. Taught so much which helps give me independence, self-esteem-all to use when in world;
2. Wanted service like magnifiers; when received them, learned about other programs;
3. Services made me happy;
4. Being a blind home owner has greatly increased quality of life, especially with young daughter; shown I could live alone, tenfold! I know of other homeowners who live with families and get help, but I love living on my own! and,
5. Gave me more freedom, confidence to try new things.

**Question #5:** Again, thinking about all the services you received, were you satisfied with these services?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	22	79%
Somewhat	5	18%
No	1	4%

In terms of overall satisfaction with the services received, 79% were satisfied and 18% were somewhat satisfied. In 2009, 69% were satisfied with their services with 44% agreeing strongly. Thirty-one percent had some level of dissatisfaction with services, with 19% disagreeing strongly that they were satisfied. Selected comments include:

1. I loved them all!
2. Helped me as much as could, not expecting miracles, got what was needed;
3. Very satisfied;
4. I really needed a lot more help than I received; and,
5. Pretty much satisfied.

**Summary:** In terms of overall agreement regarding outcomes and services received directly from CBVH, 63% of respondents agreed that outcomes and services met expectations. Another 19% felt that expectations were met somewhat, while 18% did not feel their expectations were met.

## **Conclusions**

It appears that the strategy to separate out the respondents' impressions regarding their relationship with CBVH from their relationship with vendors providing services was a good one, as it provides a clearer picture of where fine tuning can be implemented. Overall, it does appear that the vendors CBVH works with are meeting the needs of CBVH consumers, particularly in terms of how case management is provided. In terms of helping consumers achieve desired outcomes, the performance of vendors is quite good but improvement is certainly possible. A majority of consumers report achieving outcomes and still more feel that some progress was made in achieving outcomes. Getting this total percentage over 90% would be a significant achievement. This is not far off as the percentage now stands at 86%. The only clue from the case management data is the outlier result regarding the relatively low percentage of respondents who felt that they had the opportunity to set goals with vendor staff. Perhaps more joint meetings or discussion concerning goals and outcomes that were expected through vendor services would help to improve this performance target. Otherwise, it would seem that vendors, in general, are providing a high level of services to CBVH consumers.

Regarding CBVH, the feedback suggests that improvements can be made that correlate with the findings reported regarding vendors. Consumers would like to have a greater degree of collaboration in developing plans for their service programs and to have clearer expectations of what vendors are to provide them with. This certainly corresponds with the desire of consumers to be more involved in goal setting with service vendors. A considerable majority (85%) of consumers recognize CBVH for helping them improve the overall quality of their lives. Almost 80% are satisfied with their involvement with CBVH with another 18% somewhat satisfied. It would appear that the Independent Living Services program of CBVH is functioning at a relatively high level but that program improvements, particularly in planning and goal setting, would result in even better levels of performance and outcomes.

Recommendations for improving the evaluation process include the following:

1. Rather than waiting for closure to occur before initiating the evaluation, surveys regarding the satisfaction of consumers with the service delivery process and their interactions with their counselors would likely yield better information if a sample of consumers with open cases would be surveyed every three months. They need not be the same individuals each time and a random sampling of current cases would be sufficient. The measurement of satisfaction with outcomes would continue to occur only after closure. This would eliminate two possible problems when surveys are completed only with closed consumers:
  - a. As time passes from the point when service planning occurred to the time of closure the memory of consumers is not as accurate as at a time shortly after participating in this process; and,

- b. Perceptions of an earlier time are likely to be colored by events that have intervened when measured after closure. An unsuccessful closure may influence consumers to view their experiences during service delivery more negatively than they really were. A successful closure may result in more positive impressions than would have occurred if measured shortly after these experiences. In either case, actions taken as a result of responses would be misguided.
2. Survey items should be expanded to include examples of what the questions are actually attempting to measure. The current language may reflect professional jargon and not really be understood well by consumers.
3. When a household or family member indicates a consumer is unable to participate in the interview due to a limitation, consideration should be given as to whether it would be useful to ask this person to respond to the questions on behalf of the consumer. If this is attempted, the responses should not be aggregated and analyzed with those of consumers and only used for program change purposes if responses are similar to those of consumers.

## Appendix 1: Interview Protocol

CBVH  
Independent Living Survey Questionnaire  
(10-26-2012)

Name of respondent: \_\_\_\_\_

Control number: \_\_\_\_\_

I am \_\_\_\_\_ from the Center for Essential Management Services. You recently received a letter from the Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped that someone would be contacting you to participate in a survey about the services you received from them.

Our records indicate that you recently received independent living services which were provided by \_\_\_\_\_.

Please tell us which organizations provided services to you in the last x years. Focus on just two with whom you spent the most time. We will discuss these providers in more detail in just a moment.

In order to ensure the continuous improvement of these services, we ask that you please take a few minutes to answer some questions regarding your experiences. Your answers will be kept confidential. Once we have completed all the surveys, we will analyze responses and prepare a report for CBVH. Is it ok for me to conduct the interview with you now or do you prefer to reschedule for a more convenient time?

conduct interview now

reschedule

Time and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

refuses to interview

cannot reach after 5 tries

disconnected or phone number not working

person no longer available at this number

person moved, deceased, etc.

Think about \_\_\_\_\_ (provider #1).

1. Did the services you received give you more confidence?

Yes No Somewhat

2. Did the services you received lead to you being more independent?

Yes No Somewhat

3. Did the services received help you:
  - a. Take care of your daily living needs?  
Yes No Somewhat
  - b. Manage your home more independently?  
Yes No Somewhat
  - c. Manage your finances more independently?  
Yes No Somewhat
  - d. Care for your family?  
Yes No Somewhat Not Applicable
  - e. Travel more independently in your community?  
Yes No Somewhat

4. How else did these services help you?

5. Did staff treat you respectfully?  
Yes No Somewhat  
Please describe

6. Were you and the staff able to communicate clearly?  
Yes No Somewhat  
Please describe

7. Did staff have a positive attitude while working with you?  
Yes No Somewhat  
Please describe

8. Did you have opportunity to ask questions while planning for and receiving services?  
Yes No Somewhat  
Please describe

9. Did you have an opportunity to set goals?  
Yes No Somewhat  
Please describe

10. Did staff respond back to you in a timely manner?  
Yes No Somewhat  
Please describe

This set of questions will be repeated for the remaining provider(s) and CBVH (if CBVH staff were the direct service providers. The follow questions apply only to experience with CBVH.

11. Did you CBVH counselor work collaboratively with you on the service plan that was put in place for you?

Yes No Somewhat

Please describe

12. Did your CBVH counselor inform you accurately about what to expect from the service providers they referred you to?

Yes No Somewhat

Please describe

13. Did the services help you to improve your ability to become more involved in your community?

Yes No Somewhat

Please describe

14. Thinking about the services you received, did they help you to improve your quality of life overall?

Yes No Somewhat

Please describe

15. Again, thinking about all the services you received, were you satisfied with these services?

Yes No Somewhat

Please describe