

Guide to Assessing Client Satisfaction at District Hospitals

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Guide to Assessing Client Satisfaction

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Cover Photograph

Mootaz Jackson at the Red Cross Children's Hospital, before her departure home after three years, with her portable respirator which is going home with her for the first time.

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Introduction

About Client Satisfaction

Measuring client or patient satisfaction has become an integral part of health facility management strategies across the globe. Moreover, the quality assurance and accreditation process in most countries requires that the satisfaction of clients be measured on a regular basis.

Client satisfaction is the level of satisfaction that clients experience having used a service. It therefore reflects the gap between the **expected service** and the **experience of the service**, from the client/patient's point of view. As the expectations of clients increase over time, the quality of the service has to keep on improving to maintain or increase a level of satisfaction.

Factors influencing Client Satisfaction

The factors that influence client satisfaction are those that influence what clients **expect** of a service as well as those that influence the **experience** of the service:

- ▶ Factors that influence what clients **expect of a service** are:
 - Past experience – how a previous encounter with a hospital was experienced
 - External influences – such as the media
 - Personal needs – although there are common things clients require to feel satisfied, some clients might have special needs such as religious dietary requirements
 - Word of mouth – experiences, especially negative ones, are easily shared amongst communities. This might influence the expectation of a client.
- ▶ Factors that influence how patients **experienced the service** are:
 - Tangibles – the quality of equipment and of the physical surroundings
 - Reliability – the ability to accurately perform the service offered
 - Responsiveness – willingness to assist clients
 - Assurance – ability of the service provider to be knowledgeable and to inspire confidence and trust
 - Empathy – ability to care and display compassion towards clients; and

- Access – the cost and time for patients to use a service as well as hospital hours.

About this Guide

The main aim of the Guide is to assist health management teams to assess the perception of clients/patients who use their facilities. This strengthens the voice of the community it serves.

Furthermore, it aims to ensure a uniform approach and common instrument across South Africa. It is important to note that the assessment of client satisfaction augments and does not replace other approaches to assess the quality of care.

The client satisfaction tool (CS Tool) included in this guide draws on the experience of listening to concerns of patients and of measuring client satisfaction at two district hospitals, East Griqualand and Usher Memorial Hospital in Kokstad and Gordonia Hospital in Upington.

Experience is also drawn from a number of international studies, particularly from Ghana, the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

This Guide outlines how best to administer the CS Tool or questionnaire. There is a step-by-step guide to the process and a checklist that can be used to assist in gathering the data.

The data from the Client satisfaction surveys can be analysed manually or by computer. Included is a step-by-step guide towards manual analysis.

A software programme has been developed to assist with electronic analysis. This Guide does not include the guidelines to use the software programme as these are available separately from the Health Systems Trust or the Department of Health. See contact details at the end of the document.

About the Client Satisfaction Tool

The CS Tool in this Guide measures 6 domains (areas) of client satisfaction, each domain having a range of questions that would indicate a level of satisfaction. The domains are:

- Tangibles – equipment, physical surroundings

- Reliability – the ability to accurately perform the service offered
- Responsiveness – willingness to assist clients
- Assurance – ability to be knowledgeable and to inspire confidence and trust
- Empathy – ability to care and display compassion towards clients; and
- Access – the cost and time for patients to reach the health facility as well as service hours.

The domains and the questions that relate to the respective domains cover all factors of health care delivery identified as important to patients. Therefore, if a health facility performs well on all of these, it will almost certainly be satisfying its patients. The results have important implications for making services more responsive to clients' expectations and improving satisfaction.

To ensure full participation from the client, the CS tool has been designed to be easily understood, and to take cognisance of the client's ability to complete the survey while maintaining confidentiality. The questionnaire was tested for these criteria.

The questionnaires attached are in English (addendum 1), Afrikaans (addendum 2), and Xhosa (addendum 3).

Who should use this Guide

This Guide was developed in order to be used by managers of hospitals or facilities with both in and outpatient services.¹

The step-by-step layout that follows guides the hospital staff member selected to co-ordinate the process and the fieldworker who administers the CS tool.

¹ With a little modification the questionnaire could be used in facilities that provide only in or outpatients