

Appendix C

Survey Questions for Agency Staff

Welcome to the Allegheny County Staff Survey for the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Next Generation (BIAS-NG) project! An independent research team wants to hear your thoughts about the interventions mailed and texted to clients as part of the project, and about your casework with clients.

Informed Consent: Staff Survey

You are invited to participate in a short survey for the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency Next Generation (BIAS-NG) project.

What is the study?

MDRC, a nonprofit social policy research organization, and its partner MEF Associates, are conducting this project under contract to the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its goal is to use behavioral science, which incorporates psychology and economics, to improve family engagement in the early part of a case with the Office of Children, Youth, and Families (CYF). We developed a flyer to include with the accept-for-service letter as well as a sequence of text messages for families in the first several weeks of their case, and randomly assigned half of new cases to receive this outreach.

What will I need to do?

We are surveying staff who have interacted with clients who received our interventions to provide their thoughts and experiences with the flyer and text messages. The survey will take up to 15 minutes. It focuses on your thoughts, experiences, and feedback on how you and the families on your caseload interacted with the interventions.

What are the risks and benefits of participating in this survey?

There are no significant risks to your participation. Participating in the survey will not benefit you directly, but your responses may help improve the experiences of families involved in CYF.

Will you share information from the survey?

Only the study team will see the survey responses. Your name will not be listed in any published reports, and comments will not be attributed to you. Your answers will be kept private to the extent permissible by law.

Do I have to do the survey?

Your participation in the survey is voluntary. Your participation will have no effect on your employment.

Questions:

If you have questions about the study, you can call the project director, Rekha Balu at MDRC at 212-340-8616.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this collection is 0970-0502 and the expiration date is 08/31/2020.

By clicking CONTINUE, you agree to share your responses with the study team.

“CONTINUE”

1. Background

How long have you been a caseworker in Allegheny County? (dropdown menu for 1-20+ years)

2. General perceptions of the intervention

To what extent were you aware of the flyer sent out with the accept for service letter, which was tested in 2018 for some new case openings?

- A lot
- A little
- Not at all

[Only asked if respondent replied “A lot” or “a little” to the previous question.] Overall, how would you rate the usefulness of the new flyer for new case openings?

- Excellent
- Above average
- Average
- Below average
- Poor

To what extent were you aware of the automatic text message procedures introduced in 2018 for new case openings?

- A lot
- A little
- Not at all

[Only asked if respondent replied “A lot” or “a little” to the previous question.] Overall, how would you rate the usefulness of the new text messages introduced in 2018 for new case openings?

- Excellent
- Above average
- Average
- Below average
- Poor

Generally speaking, how do the new flyer and text messages compare to the previous way of doing things?

- Much better
- A little better
- About the same
- A little worse
- Much worse
- Don't know/not applicable

How would you describe staff satisfaction and morale since the county implemented the new flyer and text messages?

- Much better
- A little better
- About the same
- A little worse
- Much worse
- Don't know/not applicable

[If the respondent indicated they were not aware of either intervention, they would skip to Section 3.]

How would you rate the fit between the new flyer and text messages and the agency goals?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Fair
- Poor

In the last three months, how often have you interacted with a case on your caseload that received the intervention materials?

- Every day or almost every day
- 3 or 4 times per week
- 1 or 2 times per week
- Every other week
- Once a month
- Less than once a month
- Not at all

In the last three months, how often have you interacted with a case on your caseload that did NOT receive the intervention materials?

- Every day or almost every day
- 3 or 4 times per week
- 1 or 2 times per week
- Every other week
- Once a month
- Less than once a month
- Not at all

Overall, how would you rate your interactions with clients since using the new flyer and text messages?

- Excellent
- Above average
- Average
- Below average
- Poor

Generally speaking, how have your interactions with clients changed since the new flyer and text messages started?

- Much better
- A little better
- About the same
- A little worse
- Much worse

To what extent do you think clients who received the intervention flyer and text messages were more prepared for the necessary steps in their case than those who did not receive the flyer and text messages?

- Much better
- A little better
- About the same
- A little worse
- Much worse

To what extent do you think clients who received the intervention flyer and text messages were more aware of the family conference than those who did not receive the flyer and text messages?

- Much better
- A little better
- About the same
- A little worse
- Much worse

To what extent do you think the intervention flyer and text messages helped a family on your caseload work with you to complete a family plan?

- A lot
- A little
- Not at all

3. Family Outcomes

Imagine that, after a new case is opened, a family similar to families on your current caseload does not show up for a scheduled visit or meeting.

Q1. *As a caseworker, how often does the scenario described happen to you?*

- [1 = rarely/never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often]

Q2. *There may be many reasons why a family similar to those on your caseload would not be present, and several possibilities are listed below. Based on your own experience, tell us how much you agree with each of the following statements as a reason why families do not appear? [5 point Agreement scale; order randomized]:*

- The family is avoiding contact assuming the message will be negative (for example, they fear child removal).
- The family forgot about the appointment.
- The family faces multiple challenges and cannot prioritize this particular case-related action.
- The family lacks the motivation to participate.
- The family does not understand what is involved to participate in the visit or meeting due to lack of literacy.
- The family is unavailable due to a lack of childcare or necessary transportation.
- In my last interaction with the family, the family left the meeting confused.
- I didn't give the family enough time during the last interaction for them to fully understand the next steps involved.
- The last time I interacted with the family, I shared bad news.
- I didn't give the family enough advanced notice for scheduling.
- Other _____
- Other _____

OPTIONAL MODULE

4. Case Perceptions

Instructions: *Below are some statements about your experiences as a caseworker. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Please select the number that honestly reflects how frequently a particular statement is true about yourself or your situation.*

(1 = rarely/never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often)

[Order below randomized]:

- I believe I can make a difference through my work.
- In my job, people can pretty much accomplish what they set out to accomplish.
- I am able to do my job well if I make the effort.
- Problems with the bureaucracy (red-tape, unnecessary tasks) hinder my ability to succeed as a caseworker.
- I feel like the worth of my efforts is minimal because I'm "bogged down" by the system.
- I feel like the worth of my efforts is minimal because my clients are stuck in the cycle of poverty.
- I prevent my own personal values and opinions from intruding into my work with clients.
- If a case goes better than expected, it influences the way I think about my full caseload/other clients.
- If one of my cases experiences a setback, I think about whether something similar will happen in my other cases.
- When a case goes very poorly, it really sticks in my mind.
- I can tell whether a new case will end up working out, right from the start.
- I can tell whether I will be able to help a new client, right from the start.
- I believe that I am in control of the success of my case.
- I have a sense of hopelessness associated with working with those I help.
- I have a sense of disillusionment associated with my role as a caseworker.

- When a case doesn't work out, it's because "the system"/ bureaucracy is broken.
- Other_____
- Other_____

5. What else would you like us to know?

Thank you for your time! All survey responses are private and will help improve the intervention and services for your clients.

Introduction, Reminder, and Thank You Emails

Intro Email from Research Team

Dear [Name of CYF Caseworker]:

As you may be aware, MDRC and its partner, MEF Associates, are supporting the Office of Children, Youth and Families (CYF) in its efforts to increase family engagement in the first 60 days of an open CYF case through sending a flyer along with the Accept for Service Letter and sending a text message sequence. Both the flyer and the text messages are being sent to a randomly selected subset of families. This work is part of a project called Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-sufficiency Next Generation (BIAS-NG). The project is funded by the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As a part of this study, the research team invites all case-carrying caseworkers to complete this online survey to provide information about your experiences with and perceptions of the intervention, as well as some of your more general experiences. The below link will take you directly to the survey. If you need to start and stop, you will be able to save and return to it later.

[link]

Please submit your completed survey by [date]. We estimate the survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. This survey is voluntary. Your answers will be seen only by the research team and will not be shared with anyone at CYF. If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact me at the phone number below. If you have any questions about the BIAS-NG project more broadly, you can contact Rekha Balu at MDRC at rekha.balu@mdrc.org or 212-340-8618.

Thank you in advance for your help with this important project.

Best,

Kimberly Foley
Research Associate, MEF Associates
kimberly.foley@mefassociates.com
206-653-0169

Follow up email [two weeks after no response]:

Dear [Name of CYF Caseworker]:

Two weeks ago, we sent you a link to an online survey for CYF caseworkers. The survey collects information about your experiences with and perceptions of the flyer and text message sequence that the project has implemented with some families, as well as some of your general experiences. The goal of the flyer and messages is to improve family engagement in the first 60 days of their case, and your thoughts on the intervention are instrumental in helping us understand how the intervention is working.

The survey takes about 15 minutes to complete and is very important to us as we learn about your experiences and perceptions of this intervention in Allegheny County. This survey is voluntary. Your answers will be seen only by the research team and will not be shared with anyone at CYF.

Please complete the survey by [date]. We have already received responses from other CYF caseworkers, but we hope to include the perspectives of as many caseworkers as possible.

If you have any questions about the survey, or the BIAS-NG project, you can contact me at the phone number below. If you have any questions about the BIAS-NG project more broadly, you can contact Rekha Balu at MDRC at rekha.balu@mdrc.org or 212-340-8618.

Best,

Kimberly Foley
Research Associate, MEF Associates
kimberly.foley@mefassociates.com
206-653-0169

Thank You Email

Dear [Name of CYF Caseworker]:

Thank you again for taking the time to complete the online survey of caseworkers. This email confirms that your responses have been received. Thank you for your contribution to this important project!

Best,

Kimberly Foley
Research Associate, MEF Associates
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206-653-0169