

# Improvements to Consumer Satisfaction Tool for Supporting Families Affected by Substance Use: Phase 1

Emma Sexton, LMSW, MPH; Emily Siedlik, MPH; Melissa Vaughns-Guein, LCSW, LSCSW

## Introduction

## Methods

## Results

The **Team for Infants Exposed to Substance use (TIES) Program** is a home-based family support program providing a multi-disciplinary, community-based approach to *address the complex needs of families with young children affected by maternal substance use [1]*. The TIES Program regularly solicits feedback from participants about their program experience via the **TIES Consumer Satisfaction Survey (CSS)**.

**TIES CSS (1991)**: Survey created by the UMKC Institute for Human Development (IHD) specifically for the TIES Program to assess participants' perceptions of various program features (Appendix A). This tool has not been validated or been determined to be reliable, thus the need for further exploration.

- Three timepoint: **3-7 months, 9-13 months, and 18-24 months**
- Administered by **external evaluator** (IHD)
- Generally administered via **telephone**, without TIES caseworker present

## Objectives

The first portion of the CSS asks participants to rate how *"fair, caring, capable, knowledgeable, helpful, and easy to reach"* their caseworker is using Likert rating scale and then immediately asks the participant to respond to the question, *"What do you like best about your caseworker?"* (Appendix B).

We hypothesize that **anchoring bias** (the tendency to rely heavily on previously mentioned information [2]) and **gratitude bias** (when participants overinflate their satisfaction because of fear of a possible loss of care or the idea that doing something is better than doing nothing [3]) may impact these open-ended responses, thus impacting the reliability of the feedback.

**Sample**: CSS data from all time points from 2018-2024. This timeframe was chosen so that data from the peak-COVID period (2020-2022) would not interfere with the analysis. Survey data from 2 open-ended questions (Appendix B) were collected from 145 individual participants over 3 timepoints. In total, 456 excerpts were analyzed. See Appendix C for a breakdown of excerpt by timepoint and descriptive statistics of the sample.

**Analysis**: Qualitative, **content analysis** of open-ended responses in Dedoose. First, we coded all **anchoring terms** and **organic descriptions** within a single excerpt of what the participant liked best about their caseworker. Next, we coded the **context** of the entire excerpt. See Appendix D for the detailed codebook.

Anchoring Bias	Organic Descriptions
"Fair"	"Fair"-Adjacent
"Caring"	"Caring"-Adjacent
"Gets Things Done"	"Gets Things Done"-Adjacent
"Knowledgeable"	"Knowledgeable"-Adjacent
"Helpful"	"Helpful"-Adjacent
"Easy/Hard to Reach"	"Easy/Hard to Reach"-Adjacent
	Cheerleader
	Engagement
	Role
Context (double coded**)	
Positive, Detailed/Specific	Positive, Lacks Specificity
Neutral	Minimizing Negative
Negative	Anchoring Repetition**

- **Anchoring bias was present in 37% of excerpts.** Helpful and Caring were mentioned most frequently.
- **Most frequently used organic descriptions:** *Honest, Supportive, Good Advice, Resourceful, Understanding, Good with Children, Non-Judgmental, Easy Manner, Nice, and Cares About My Children.*
- **There were very few opportunities to provide neutral, negative, or critical feedback through this question, or through any other questions on the CSS survey.** Several statements included language that used softening language, expressed understanding, or highlighted positives despite negative experiences.

*"I don't know. She's able to meet some of my needs."*

*"She's more realistic than (previous TIES caseworker)."*

## Conclusions

Although **anchoring bias did impact responses**, participants also:

- described what they liked most about their caseworker by listing personality traits or qualities,
- described how their caseworker was the best or what the caseworker does that makes them the best using narrative examples,
- described why their caseworker was the best (using a combination of the above methods).

This study is a part of a larger study to redesign the TIES CSS. These findings will help us to better understand how to elicit reliable feedback that is valuable to program developers from participants who may have experienced systemic and historical injustice, racism, and oppression.

← Scan here to find the Appendix & References!

