

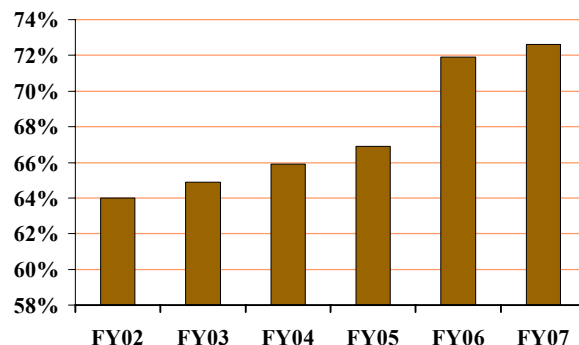
Ask Me!sm FY 2007 Executive Summary

The FY2007 Ask Me! collected information between August 2006 and June 2007 for 1,172 people 18 years and over supported by 43 community agencies. These represented a probability sample of 12,113 adults supported by 145 community provider agencies with funds from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). Three-fourths (73%) of the people responded for themselves, including 25% of those classified with profound retardation.

Quality of Life Change in Maryland

Maryland adults with developmental disabilities expressed a positive level of rights that increased from 64% in FY2002 to 73% in FY2007. While the biggest increase occurred between FY2005 and FY2006, the pattern suggests rights will keep increasing. Self-determination also had a pattern of increases that suggests it also may continue to increase. Quality of life in the other six domains increased rapidly from FY2002 through FY2004, but then leveled off or declined slightly between FY2005 and FY2007.

Rights increased significantly between FY2002 and FY2007

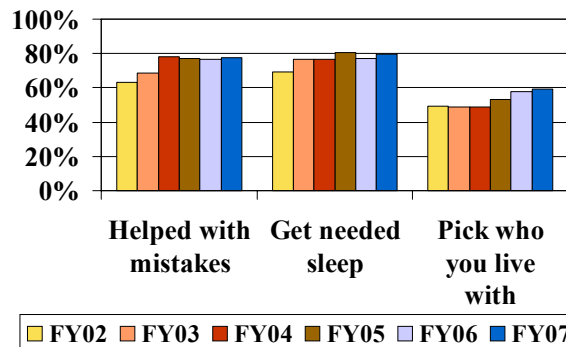


Consideration 1: Continue to focus on rights and self-determination where the opportunities for improvement are greatest.

Consideration 2: Remain vigilant that quality of life does not decline in the other six domains.

The three questions that increased most in favorable responses between FY2002 and FY2007 suggest specific ways that community agencies are enhancing quality of life. The percent who said people helped them when they made a mistake, and the percent who reported getting the sleep they needed, increased rapidly from FY2002 to FY2004 and then leveled off. The percent who picked who they lived with may have declined between FY2002 and FY2004, but then increased since then. The right to lock the bathroom door significantly declined between FY2002 and FY2005, but then increased significantly in FY2006 and again in FY2007.

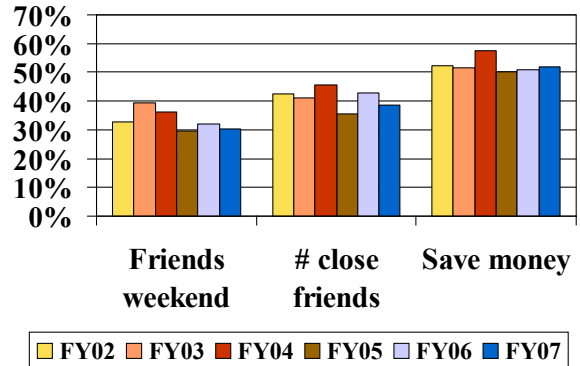
Housemate choice has recently increased



Consideration 3: Believe that systemwide and agency-specific efforts can enhance people's quality of life, while recognizing that they do not determine them.

Friendships remain a substantial problem. The percent who said they often saw friends on weekends declined from 33% in FY2002 to 30% in FY2007, even though it was slightly higher in some years than other. Those who said they had lots of close friends declined from 43% in FY2002 to 39% in FY2007. Saving money may not have decreased, but it certainly has not increased over the six years of the Ask Me! Survey.

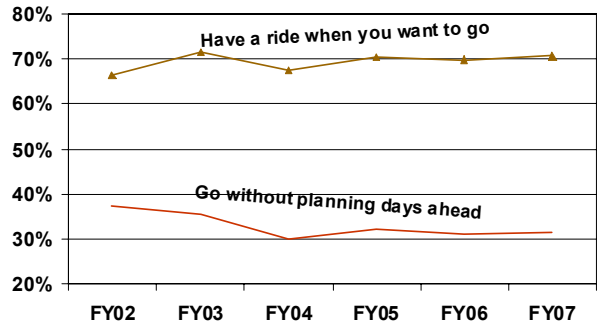
Questions with negative change



Consideration 4: Help people develop friends and be with their friends on weekends.

Transportation is a major issue in our society, is a cost factor for most agencies, and the perceived availability of transportation affects the quality of life of people with developmental disabilities. People's perception of having a ride when they want to go somewhere increased slightly while being able to go without planning days in advance decreased. However, the positive effect of having a ride outweighed the negative effect of greater planning on both rights and self-determination. The dependability of a planned ride is equally as important as arranging the in the first place. Public transportation use, frequently associated with employment, became increasingly important over the six years.

Transportation availability changed in opposite directions

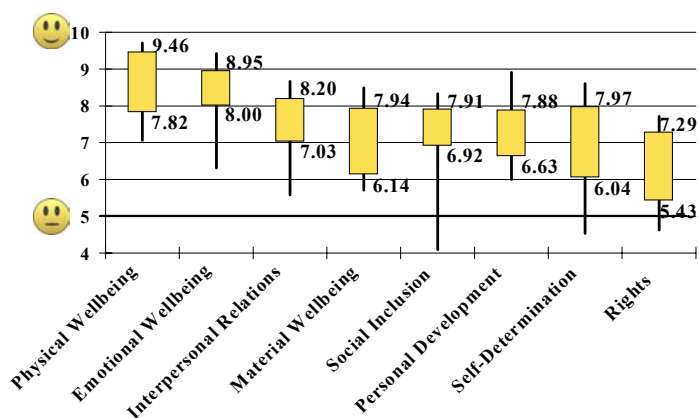


Consideration 5: Continue to help people have rides they can depend on when they want to go somewhere, and incorporate public transportation wherever possible.

Quality of Life at Maryland Agencies

The average quality of life people report differs among agencies. One-fifth of the agencies in FY2007 had average physical well-being scores above 9.46 out of a possible 10.0, and none had a score less than 7.07. In social inclusion, self-determination, and rights, however, some agencies had negative scores, less than 5.0. The appendix to this report includes the comparisons of the FY2005 report, and the actual average scores for each year the agency was selected for interviews.

Quality of life differs among agencies, very positive at some but negative at others



Consideration 6: Agencies should review what the people they support say about their quality of life--levels, trends, or lack of trends. People with disabilities and their families should ask potential support agencies what they are doing to enhance quality of life.

Summary of Past Ask Me! Findings

- Characteristics of Individuals--intellectual ability, particularly the ability to understand questions and to express oneself, is the only characteristic consistently related to quality of life, and agencies can help people develop this skill;
- Characteristics of Proxies--family and staff of people who cannot respond for themselves see quality of life through their own filters of experience and self-interest;
- Characteristics of Services--supported employment is the major contributor to quality of life, but residential settings close to society's norms, available transportation, and open relationships with service coordinators also help;
- Characteristics of Staff--low turnover of direct care staff and first line supervisors contributes to quality of life, as does a low ratio of direct care staff to first line supervisors;
- Characteristics of Agency Leadership--agency goals to increase rights, self-determination, and personal development contribute to consumers quality of life; as does the value management places on understanding and using what their consumers say.

Consideration 7: Help people develop the skill of expressing themselves, since ideas expressed by others will be limited by their experiences and self interest. This help can best be given through supporting people to reach goals in the areas of rights, self-determination and personal development, and through retaining direct support staff and supervisors who know the individuals and actively encourage self-expression.

Conclusion on System Change

The increases between FY2002 and FY2007 in the quality of life of adults in Maryland with developmental disabilities suggest that the Ask Me! Survey has had an effect by giving a voice to people supported by Maryland community provider agencies. The Developmental Disabilities Administration used Ask Me! results and recommendations to develop its first “Managing for Results” submission. Its goal of increased personal development was achieved over the next two years. The *Ask Me! FY2003* report (p. ii) recommended shifting the focus to self-determination and rights. Although DDA did not change its “Managing for Results” goals, it did change its training to emphasize self-determination and rights. The Arc of Maryland also used Ask Me! results to focus its self-advocacy training in these two areas. By FY2004, substantial increases in self-determination had occurred, and rights had increased by FY2006. The data in this report suggest that increases have and will continue to occur in rights and self-development as attention is paid to them, but cautions that state and community agencies cannot neglect the other quality of life domains in the process.