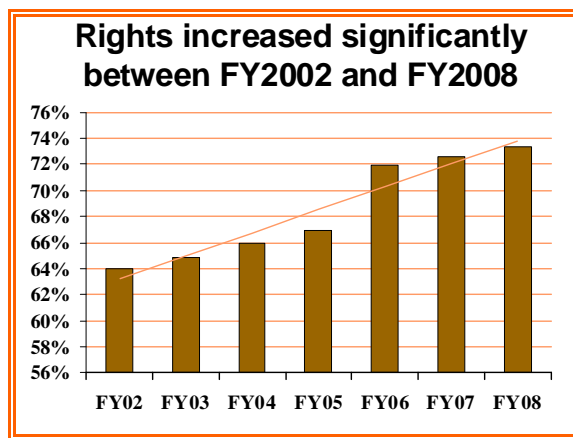


Ask Me!sm FY 2008 Executive Summary

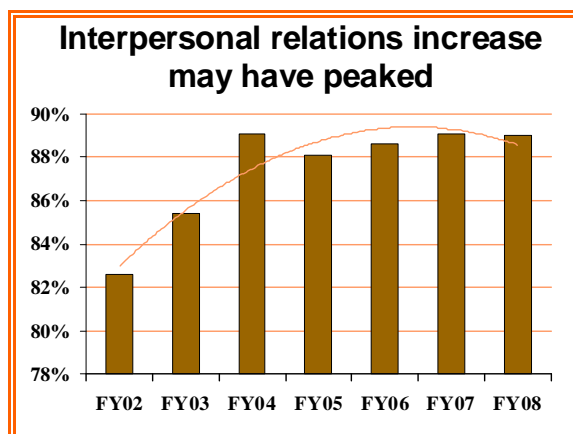
The FY2008 Ask Me! collected information between August 2007 and June 2008 for 1,269 people 18 years and over supported by 45 community agencies. These represented a probability sample of all 12,615 adults supported by all 151 community provider agencies with funds from the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). Three-fourths (74%) of the people responded for themselves, including 21% of those classified with profound retardation.

Quality of Life Change in Maryland

Quality of life increased between FY2002 and FY2008 in all eight domains, whether measured by the percent reporting a positive quality of life, or the average quality of life. However, two different patterns are reflected in the eight domains. The quality of life increased continuously throughout the time period in three: Rights, Self-determination and Personal Development. Rights had the greatest increase of the three where 64.0% reported a positive score in FY2002 and 73.4% did so in FY2008 (see chart). This is an average increase of about 2.0 percentage points per year as reflected by the regression line in the chart. The percent reporting positive Self-determination increased an average of 1.1 points a year, and the percent reporting positive Personal Development increased an average of 0.6 points. The average quality of life, however, increased more in Personal Development (0.15) than in Rights (0.11) and Self-determination (0.08).



The change in quality of life in the other five domains is better represented by a curve than a straight line. Interpersonal Relations (see chart) reflects the pattern that is also found in Physical Well-being, Emotional Well-being, Material Well-being, and Social Inclusion. This regression curve shows a rapid increase in the quality of life between FY2002 and FY2004, a peak around FY2006 or FY2007, and then signs of a decrease. The percent reporting a positive quality of life in Social Inclusion, Material Well-being, and Emotional Well-being did increase slightly between FY2007 and FY2008, but it will take another year to determine if this represents a return to increasing quality of life, or is a one-year variation around a trend of decrease from the peak years.

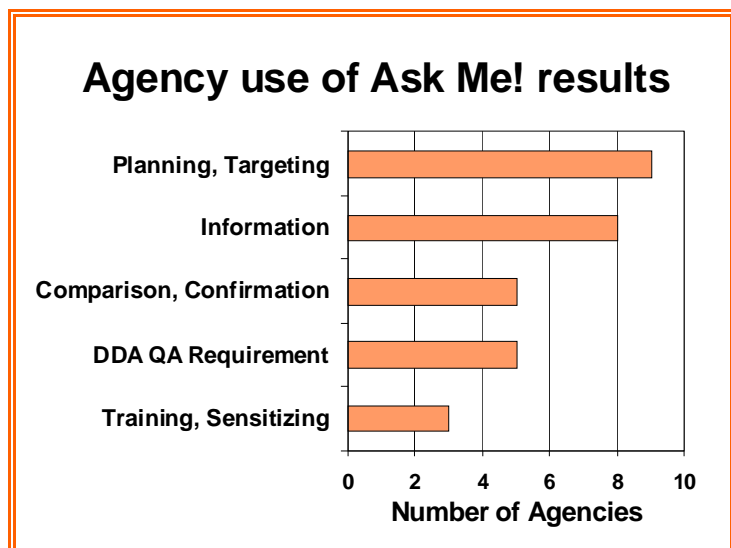


People significantly increased their favorable responses between FY2002 and FY2008 to 32 of the 48 indicator questions for the eight domains. Their responses remained statistically the same for the remaining 16 questions. No question had a significant decrease in favorable responses, nor a significant increase in unfavorable responses. However, 7 of the 32 questions with increases had greater increases in the earlier years of Ask Me! than in the later years. The greatest overall increases were in the percent who said that people help them when they make a mistake (2.3 point annual increase) and the percent with staff asking before coming into the home or room (2.2 point annual increase). Significant increases between FY2007 and FY2008 in favorable responses to five questions helped them have an overall increase: health being good, neighbors liking them, what they did every day allowed them to look good to others, having lots of friends from places other than work or home, and getting the information they needed on sexuality.

Quality of Life at Maryland Agencies

The average reported quality of life varies among agencies. Only some of this variation relates to the characteristics of the people supported. Thirty-one (70%) of the agencies had an average reported Physical Well-being score between 8.07 and 9.14, not statistically different from the overall Maryland average. Nine (20%) had average Physical Well-being scores above 9.14, and five (10%) had scores below 8.07, significantly different from the Maryland average. At the other end of the chart, 70% of the agencies had Rights scores between 5.81 and 7.42, with 20% above and 10% below. No agencies had negative average scores (below 5.0) in six of the quality of life domains, but one agency had a negative average scores in the domains of Self-determination and Rights. Agencies varied least in the domain of Emotional Well-being, and varied most in the domain of Material Well-being.

Agencies also vary in the use of their Ask Me! results. In a survey during FY2008, two-thirds of the responding agencies reported using the results that were sent to them. They were most likely to say they used them planning and targeting purposes, e.g., *“Helping us to establish Q&A goals. Helping us focus on weaknesses (scores) and build on strengths (scores).”* Next most frequent was use in training, sensitizing, and conducting their own evaluations, e.g., *“Reminder to consider opinions of consumers when making decisions.”*



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, yet do provide data that are useful;
- 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 that management places on understanding and using what their consumers say;
- Involvement of People with Disabilities--The *Ask Me! Survey* involves people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities in all stages of the research that affects them. It asks people directly about themselves, and peer interviewers help achieve the highest reported level of self-response of any survey of people with disabilities.

Conclusion

The increases between FY2002 and FY2008 in the quality of life of adults in Maryland with developmental disabilities suggest that the *Ask Me! Survey* has been effective in giving a voice to people supported by Maryland community provider agencies. The increase has been the greatest and most consistent in the two domains with the lowest quality of life in FY2002, and generally in line with the goals set by DDA. Extensive analysis will be made for the FY2009 report about what is associated with quality of life, how this may have changed from FY2002 to FY2009, and what may have contributed to the increase in quality of life.

The *Ask Me! Survey* will revise some questions for the third cycle of interviews that begins in FY2010. The changes will keep the *Ask Me! Survey* up to date in terms of what is important to people with developmental disabilities.