

# Quality of Behavioral Health Services in Washington State: Adult Enrollees Speak Out



The link between quality of service and outcome is well established in health care. Better services lead to more positive results and higher levels of client satisfaction. Assessing the quality of behavioral health services is essential because it offers policy makers, providers, and other stakeholders the opportunity to improve outcomes and to ensure that enrollees receive needed services to support their recovery. This brief report presents key findings from a 2019 survey of behavioral health (BH) adult enrollees receiving publicly funded mental health (MH) and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment services in Washington State. The survey applies measures from the Uniform Reporting System (URS) designed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to assess dimensions of care for adult enrollees.

## The 2019 Behavioral Health Enrollee Survey

The Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA), Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR), contracts with the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) to conduct an annual statewide survey to assess enrollees' perception of the quality of publicly funded behavioral health treatment services they receive. DBHR uses the results to meet federal, state, and other reporting requirements.

The survey was conducted from mid-April until early November 2019. A random sample of adults (age 18 and over) were invited to answer questions about their experience in receiving behavioral health services in a mixed-mode telephone, web, and mail-in survey. A total of 1,878 adult enrollees responded to the survey.

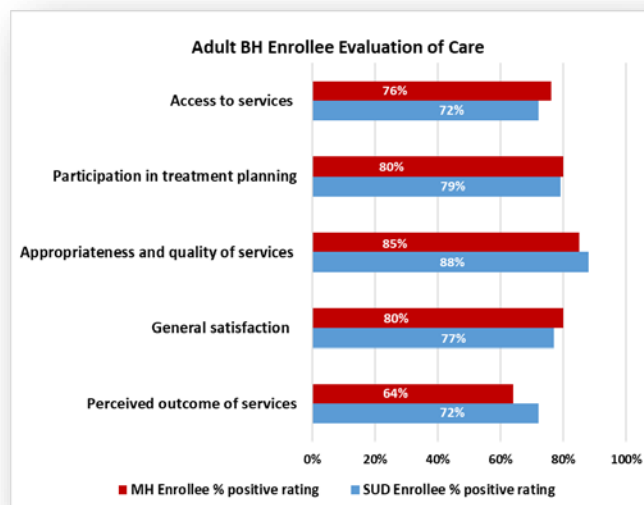
This number represents 18.1% of the 10,397 randomly selected adults who received Medicaid or state funded outpatient MH or SUD treatment services from May through October 2018. It consists of 1,626 (86.6%) MH and 252 (13.4%) SUD clients. There were 1,461 enrollees (77.8%) that participated by telephone, 205 (10.9%) by web, and 212 (11.3%) by mail.

Sixty percent of respondents are female, 38% are male, and 3% did not specify. Thirty-five percent have a minority status. Across age groups, 4% are 18-20 years old, 43% are 21-40, 41% are 41-60, 11 are 61-75, and the remaining 1% of respondents are over 75 years old. Twenty-five percent of adults were employed at the time of the survey with over half of those working less than 35 hours per week.

- Eighty-five percent of MH and 88% of SUD enrollees gave the highest proportion of positive ratings to *appropriateness and quality of services*.
- A high proportion of both MH and SUD enrollees, 72% or higher, gave positive ratings to *access to services, participation in treatment planning, and general satisfaction*.
- Slightly fewer MH and SUD enrollees reported positive ratings on *perceived outcome of services* relative to other dimensions, but still a majority: 64% for MH enrollees and 72% for SUD enrollees.

In addition, the survey uses two metrics from the National Outcome Measures (NOMS) monitored by SAMHSA: *social connectedness* and *improved functioning*. Sixty-two percent or more of enrollees gave positive ratings; however, more SUD than MH enrollees gave positive ratings to both measures.

**Conclusion:** Most of the adult enrollees believe the services they receive are right for them. Many agree they can access needed care, feel enabled to set recovery goals, and are satisfied with services. However, more can benefit from a continued effort by behavioral health care providers to improve treatment outcomes.

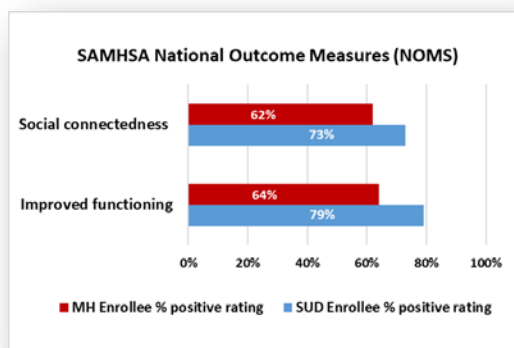


*"I feel genuinely supported by my care providers."*

*"I can go to absolutely anybody with a problem and I know that it will get to the right person and be resolved. I feel heard, supported, and safe."*

*"They are good listeners especially the therapist, the feedback was amazing. The passion towards my situation was great."*

*"The staff is compassionate and I receive services in a timely manner and services that fit my needs."*



*"I was able to get out and get a job and be able to function as a normal living being in society and I gained confidence that I never had before."*

*"They help me live a daily life."*

*"I like how passionate they are, open and understanding, see from others and my perspective, show me new perspective or lens to improve the situation."*

