

Hey team!

I was asked to take a look at the customer satisfaction survey, as we've historically not received a ton of responses from it (for a lot of reasons, including counselors not promoting it before their clients terminate). I've given it some thought and wanted to share a few observations and proposals for your consideration. I'd love your feedback, and your go-ahead if any of this feels right to you.

The Current Survey

[ORGANIZATION NAME] Client Evaluation of Counseling Services

Please help us improve our program by answering some questions about the services you have received. We are interested in your honest opinions, whether they are positive or negative. Your answers will not be seen by your therapist, so please answer as truthfully as possible. We welcome your comments and suggestions at the end of the survey. Thank you very much for your time, we really appreciate your help!

What is your name (if you would like to remain anonymous leave this blank)?

Please list the name of your counselor or counselors

What is today's date?*

What services did you receive from [ORGANIZATION NAME] most recently?*(
(Individual therapy, Relationship therapy, Family therapy, Group therapy)

How would you rate the quality of service you have received? (Poor → Excellent)

Did you get the kind of service you wanted? (Definitely not → Yes, definitely)

To what extent has our program met your needs? (None of my needs have been met → Almost all of my needs have been met)

If a friend was in need of similar help, would you recommend our program to them? (No, definitely not → Yes, definitely)

How satisfied are you with the amount of help you received? (Quite dissatisfied → Very satisfied)

Have the services you received helped you to deal more effectively with your problems? (No, they seemed to make things worse → Yes, they helped a great deal)

Overall, how satisfied are you with the service you received? (Quite dissatisfied → Very satisfied)

If you were to seek help again would you come back to our program? (No, definitely not → Yes, definitely)

Please list any comments or suggestions you have for our program (Open text box)

Would you allow us to share quotes you provided above for the purpose of program promotion? In these instances you would be anonymous or de-identified to protect your identity. (Yes, No)

If you would be interested in sharing more about your experience with our program further for follow-up or program marketing purposes, please list your name and contact information below. (Open text box)

Redesigning Client Feedback at [Organization Name]

The introduction tells clients their answers won't be seen by their therapist — the right thing to say to encourage honest responses — but then immediately asks for their name and their counselor's name. That contradiction is likely to make people either abandon the form or give sanitized answers. Removing both name fields, as well as the date field, would reduce friction. Every extra field is a reason to stop.

The current form also has six Likert-scale items that are essentially all measuring the same thing — whether counseling helped and whether the client is glad they came. That's not six questions; it's one question asked six ways. Trimming to three questions, with a minimal introduction, would make the form significantly more completable.

Proposed redesign: three-item survey

Question 1: Did counseling at [Organization Name] help you, and are you glad you tried it?*

- **It didn't help, and I wish I hadn't come**
- **It helped a little, but I'm not sure it was worth it**
- **It helped, and I'm glad I came**
- **It helped me a great deal, and I'm very glad I came**

This is plain-language, honest on both ends of the scale, and provides a single clean outcome measure. The language on the negative end is deliberately frank — "I wish I hadn't come" gives people genuine permission to say something critical, which matters for response validity.

For reference, the validated Client Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ-3), used widely in community mental health settings, offers an alternative if grant reporting ever requires a recognized instrument. Its three items cover extent of needs met, overall satisfaction, and likelihood to return. The CSQ-3 is psychometrically sound and recognized by many funders — but the plain-language version above asks the same things more directly and in language that feels less clinical, which is likely to serve response rates better.

Question 2: If a friend or family member mentioned they were looking for a counselor, would you recommend [Organization Name]?*

No, definitely not → Yes, definitely

Question 3: Is there anything you'd like us to know about your experience at [Organization Name]?

Open text

Short, anonymous, and actionable.

A note on the grievance option

The current survey's offer to meet directly with staff inadvertently conflates "we want your feedback" with "you can bring a complaint in person." A cleaner approach: a dedicated paper grievance form with a lockbox, a grievance submission option on the website, and a note about the grievance process in intake paperwork. That way clients always know how to raise a concern, without it being bundled into a satisfaction survey.

Development quotes

The current survey asks clients for quotes that can be used in program promotion. Those quotes are genuinely valuable for annual reports and donor communications — but asking for them at the end of a post-termination satisfaction survey is an awkward fit. Clients who've just ended treatment may not be in the most generous headspace.

A better approach: lean on interns for this instead. Once per semester, as a programmatic requirement, each intern would identify a willing client, obtain a signed quote release form, and bring a client quote to supervision — parallel to how schools' evaluation paperwork is processed each term. The quote would clear the supervisor's desk and then leadership before going to development.

This is good for more than just development. Asking an intern to find and share a positive story about their work is genuinely good for clinical confidence, and it builds the habit of recognizing impact early in their careers. A clean, standalone quote release form would be created for this purpose — separate from therapeutic consent paperwork so clients are never unclear about what they're agreeing to. No photo release would be included.

Program feedback: a participatory design session

Even a redesigned satisfaction survey can only tell us so much. It measures whether clients felt helped, but says little about the experience of becoming a client — finding the organization, navigating the website, filling out the request form, waiting, and going through intake. That's the part of the experience most directly improvable, and also the least understood, because staff have never been through it themselves.

Format and logistics

An annual participatory design session — a working lunch — would invite a small group of current clients to help redesign the front-end client experience. Rather than asking how they felt about processes, participants would be given actual materials and asked for their help building something better. Clients who've been through intake have domain expertise that staff simply don't have, and treating them as consultants rather than survey respondents yields genuinely useful ideas.

The session would be held in a space suited for collaborative work. Timing in September — close enough to the intern transition to keep the intake experience fresh — is recommended. A counseling staff member without existing therapeutic relationships with any participants would facilitate, working from a structured agenda prepared in advance.

Eight to ten current clients would be invited, drawn from both early and later stages of treatment to capture fresh memory of intake and fuller perspective on the arc of services.

Session structure

Opening framing: "We're not here to hear complaints, and we're not here to defend what we do. We're here because you've been through our intake process and we haven't, and we think you can help us design something better."

Real constraints are shared plainly upfront: the training clinic model, fixed intern placement schedules, waitlist realities, and non-negotiable clinical and legal paperwork components. People are more creative and generous when they're not designing in a vacuum.

The opening question — "Think back to when you first decided to look for counseling. What made you choose to reach out to [Organization Name]?" — warms up the room and primes participants to think like someone on the outside looking in.

Design prompts (12–15 minutes each)

Prompt 1: Finding us

Participants are given a printed copy of the website homepage and services page and asked to mark it up — circling what works, crossing out what doesn't, writing in what's missing. Group discussion follows: "If you were redesigning this page for someone who'd never heard of us and was nervous about asking for help, what would you change first?" This prompt externalizes criticism onto a piece of paper rather than a feeling, and tends to generate specific, actionable feedback quickly.

Prompt 2: The request for services form

Participants review the current intake form and mark it up. Group question: "If you were designing this form, what's the one thing you'd definitely keep, and what's the first thing you'd cut?" Participants often have strong reactions; the key is keeping the conversation forward-facing.

Prompt 3: The wait

No printed materials. One large sheet of paper, with one horizontal line drawn on each side of the paper. Participants draw a simple timeline from form submission to first session — marking communications received, moments of feeling informed or uninformed, and points of uncertainty. They then draw what they wish had happened on the other side. Group question: "What's the single most important thing we could do to make the wait better for the next person?" The gap between the two timelines is the clearest design brief the session produces.

Prompt 4: Intake day

Participants review the intake paperwork packet. Group question: "If you were designing a first appointment from scratch — knowing some of this paperwork is legally required and some isn't — what would it look like?" This prompt occasionally surfaces more emotional responses. Hold space briefly, then redirect: "If you were advising us on how to make that moment easier for someone, what would you tell us?"

Closing round

"Last question, going around the table — everyone answers. If you were designing this whole process from scratch, for someone in your exact shoes, knowing everything we've told you today about our constraints — what's the one thing you'd make sure was different?" Collect answers without discussion. Thank each person. Distribute gift cards.

Estimated annual budget

Catered lunch for approximately 12 people	\$100–120
Visa gift cards, \$10 each, up to 10 participants	\$100
Estimated annual total	\$200–220

A report from the session would go to program leadership and the development office, as findings will likely include website feedback relevant to their work. The space will need to be reserved in advance.