How well does *your* agency provide client-centered services?

Having your entire staff complete the assessment below will provide you with a broad perspective of how well you're doing, plus will open the door for further exploration and discussion of service improvement. **Note:** There are many indicators for client-centered services. This is just a starting point!

Client-Centered Care Organizational Assessment

1.	Vision/goals and clinical protocols emphasize client-centered care.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
2.	Patient educators/counselors give all clients the same information.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
3.	Client satisfaction surveys determine what clients *want or expect* in addition to how satisfied they are with services.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
4.	A new client's visit is usually over two hours.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
5.	Clients go through more than five "stations" or stops in a visit.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
6.	Waiting areas are clean, pleasant, and consistently tidy .	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
7.	All staff participate in initial orientation and ongoing training to enhance client-centered skills, incl. customer service, communication skills, etc.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
8.	Waiting areas do not have toys for children.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
9.	Job descriptions of all client-contact staff specifically address client-centered behavior.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
10.	Input from clients is sought regularly (at least twice per year).	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
11.	There are no evening and/or weekend hours at the clinic.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
12.	Client education is conducted in private areas, with no interruptions.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
13.	Changes are made in clinic hours, structure, staffing, etc. based on client input.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
14.	Staff regularly observe one another and give feedback on client-centered skills (i.e., use of open-ended questions, active listening).	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
15.	Staff strive to spend the same amount of time with each client.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
16.	The clinic primarily serves people in the local neighborhood.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
17.	Clients are able to receive an appointment within two weeks.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
18.	Patient educators and clinicians direct their sessions with clients by asking a routine series of close-ended (i.e., "yes" or "no") questions.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
19.	A client's visit is never longer than two hours.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
20.	Clients sign in within the first five minutes of arrival at the clinic.	Agree	Disagree	Don't know

Scoring–listed below are the most client-centered responses.
1.Agree 2.Disagree 3.Agree 4.Disagree 5.Disagree 6.Agree 7.Agree 8.Disagree 9.Agree 10.Agree 11.Disagree 12.Agree 13.Agree 14.Agree 15.Disagree 16.Disagree 17.Agree 18.Disagree 19.Agree 20.Agree

So what?

For services to be truly client-centered, efforts must be made on many levels:

- Direct impact on the client: the agency asks what clients want and acts on it; services and information are individualized; clients receive information and services specific to their needs–staff don't assume that all clients need the same amount of time or the same information
- Support for staff: staff receive skills training (e.g., staff are trained to ask open-ended questions rather than closed to elicit more information; staff are trained to individualize their sessions with clients depending on client needs, etc.); staff receive management support for their client-centered behavior (e.g., job descriptions, protocols, etc.)
- Systems issues: systems are in place to ensure that clients can receive an appointment quickly, and can get in and out of the clinic quickly, with a minimum of hassle, and that the clinic is clean and hospitable; the clinic should also be accessible to people from the entire community, via bus lines, etc.

If your responses were different from the key for any of the items, your agency is creating inconveniences for clients.

- Different answers on items 1, 3, 6, 10, 12, 13, and 14 may indicate that agency *systems,* protocols and procedures are problematic.
- Different answers on items 1, 2, 7, 9, 14, 15 indicate that your agency could do more to support *staff* in providing client-centered care.

Now what?

If your answers indicate that your services are client-centered, congratulations! Keep up the good work, but don't be complacent. There's always room for improvement. How can you use this to keep learning about client-centered services and keep improving?

If you think there's room for improvement (and isn't there always?) use the following questions to keep exploring ways for your services to truly focus on your clients' needs.

- What kinds of support do staff receive for being client-centered?
- How do our policies and protocols support staff?
- Who in the agency needs to be involved in an effort to become more client-centered?
- How do agency communication systems support client-centeredness?
- How do staff development plans support client-centeredness?
- How efficient are your services? What's the patient flow like?
- What kind of intervention might help–patient flow studies, clinic efficiency improvements, staff skills training, technical assistance?