



# Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

## Findings from Focus Groups with DVR Clientele

Michael Sears, PhD  
Brian Robertson, PhD



# Presentation Outline

- Background and Purpose
- Focus Group Details
- Issue Summaries
- Key Findings and Conclusions



# Background

- Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VT DVR) has conducted a client satisfaction survey every two to three years
- Satisfaction steadily **increased** from 2003-2011
  - However, satisfaction **declined** in 2013

# Purpose of DVR Focus Groups

To understand typical experiences and uncover aspects of dissatisfaction among VT DVR clientele so that the division can develop an action plan to improve client satisfaction

- Understand the concerns of clientele
- Determine what can be done to improve satisfaction

# Presentation Outline

- Background and Purpose
- **Focus Group Details**
- Issue Summaries
- Key Findings and Conclusion



# Focus Groups

- Four groups conducted in four towns
  - Rutland
  - St. Johnsbury
  - Brattleboro
  - Burlington
- Recruited clientele who utilized various offices located across the state

# Recruitment

- Vermont residents who had utilized the DVR program were recruited based on:
  1. Entered program in last 12 months
  2. Case status (still in program or not)
  3. Mix of ages and genders
  4. Satisfaction with services received
  
- Respondents received a \$60 cash incentive as well as a gas card provided by the DVR

# Screening

727 valid cases in sample (2013 survey respondents)

- 82% (599) satisfied
- 8% (57) neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- 10% (71) dissatisfied

Dissatisfied potential recruits:

1. Were mostly **very** dissatisfied (disqualified)
2. Were more difficult to reach



# Group Participants

- Total of 32 respondents
  - 17 Males and 15 Females
  - Ages ranged from 18 to 65+
  - 22 Open Cases and 10 Closed Cases
  - 4 Dissatisfied
  - 2 Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
  - 26 Satisfied

# Presentation Outline

- Background and Purpose
- Focus Group Details
- **Issue Summaries**
- Key Findings and Conclusions



# Issue Areas

Four issue areas in moderator's guide:

1. Individual Experiences
2. Program Expectations
3. Program Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction
4. Ideal Program and Ideas for Improvement

# First Impressions and Experiences

- Overall, respondents indicated they had positive first experiences in their local DVR office
  - Felt welcomed and supported
  - Staff was friendly, attentive, and respectful
- Most respondents remembered more about how they came into contact with DVR, and less about what their initial experiences were like
- Frustration with intake process
  - Unsure what to expect
  - DVR's function, capabilities, and limits unclear

# Program Orientation

- Only a handful of respondents said they remembered attending an orientation to the program
  - Some filled out paperwork, waited, met with a counselor one-on-one
  - Others did not remember an orientation or any introduction to the program
  
  - **Amount of paperwork**
  - **Length of wait**
  - **Unsure of what was to come**
  - **Paperwork was a waste of time – ultimately forgotten, lost, or disregarded**

# Issue Areas

Four issue areas in moderator's guide:

1. Individual Experiences
- 2. Program Expectations**
3. Program Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction
4. Ideal Program and Ideas for Improvement

# Overall Expectations

- Expectations were generally low, or respondents did not know what to expect
- Some respondents said they expected to receive financial assistance in some shape or form
- Most respondents did eventually say they expected to get a job or to become employed/employable
  - Specifically a long-term, sufficiently-paying job

# Exceeding or Meeting Expectations

- Respondents who got jobs said that their expectations were exceeded
- Other expectations were met or exceeded when:
  - New disabilities were identified
  - DVR provided financial assistance
  - Gained work experience
  - Met new people



# Not Meeting Expectations

- Many respondents said their expectation of getting a job or being employable were not met
  - Some jobs were too short, did not last; other jobs were not in the desired field of work
  - Others were unable to get enough experience or training required to keep or land a job
- Assistance with finances or being helped in ways they expected to be

# Issue Areas

Four issue areas in moderator's guide:

1. Individual Experiences
2. Program Expectations
- 3. Program Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction**
4. Ideal Program and Ideas for Improvement

# Aspects of Satisfaction

- Most were satisfied with services and assistance provided by the DVR
  - Variety of services, allocation of resources, financial support, training, different types of classes
- Some respondents were satisfied with counselors
  - Interactions, treatment, feeling that someone is on their side, loved working with counselor
- Very few respondents said they were satisfied with their overall experience in the program

# Aspects of Dissatisfaction

## 1. DVR

- Not doing everything they could
- Not networking or being well networked with other services or businesses
- Need to update technology and develop or try new/additional resources for finding jobs and job opportunities
- Not collecting feedback directly from clients at any point in the program
- Not feeling like DVR truly understands, as in DVR does not put themselves in clients' shoes

# Dissatisfaction (continued)

## 2. Program Services and Outcomes

- Not enough research by DVR into classes and programs
- Dissatisfied with classes – waste of time, too short, not providing enough experience
- Unable to gain an edge to become employable
- Need more time in training, classes, gaining experience
- More than just working on job placement – more help with resumes, interview prep, and how to make contacts or network for people with less severe disabilities
- Program unable to make goals become realities
- Not employed in the end

# Dissatisfaction (continued)

## 3. Counselors

- Communication in general
- Unavailable or difficult to get a hold of
- Not responding to clients in a timely manner, or responding at all in some cases
- Constantly traveling
- Overworked, having too many clients
- Disconnected, not feeling that counselor cared
- Not communicating clearly
- Unresponsive or just too busy
- Cannot turn to anyone else when something is not resolved

# Issue Areas

Four issue areas in moderator's guide:

1. Individual Experiences
2. Program Expectations
3. Program Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction
4. **Ideal Program and Ideas for Improvement**

# Ideal Program

## Communication

- Improved counselor-client communication
- Steps, limitations, and capabilities of program

## Feedback

- Collect directly from clients at different intervals

## Networking

- DVR connected to other services, promoting itself
- New, different opportunities
- Researching classes and programs in-depth



# Ideas for Improvement

## **Communication with counselors**

- Establish time frame for responding to clients
- More training for counselors on communication
- Improving accessibility of counselors
- Require counselors to respond
- Regular follow-ups by counselors and possibly even unscheduled calls or check-ups
- Not leaving it up to clients to reach counselors

# Ideas for Improvement

## Counselors in general

- Hiring more, reducing workload
- Better training to help people with disabilities, either understanding what it's like or how to best help
- Better communication about goals, what to expect, steps of program, available services
- Providing more in-office help with résumés, computers, researching jobs, finding jobs, prep
- Keeping counselors in just one office
- Allow clients more time to meet counselors

# Ideas for Improvement

## **Collecting feedback/listening to client concerns**

- Implement a follow up survey at different times
- Multiple assessment tools or evaluations and use them
- Collect feedback as clients exit or finish program
- Ask clients open-ended questions and listen
- Use all the tests and paperwork that clients fill out
- Regularly checking on progress towards goals

# Ideas for Improvement

## **DVR offices and programs**

- Update methods for finding jobs
- More promotion of DVR to government, potential clients, businesses, and other agencies/services
- Improving technology in offices (computers) and making more computers available for use
- Better research of programs and classes
- Providing more time in training, classes, or work experience
- Clarify purpose, direction of program, steps to come, limitations, possible final outcomes
- Less training, more networking and connecting

# Presentation Outline

- Background and Purpose
- Focus Group Details
- Issue Summaries
- **Key Findings and Conclusions**



# Key Findings

Respondents did **not** have grandiose expectations, and rather most respondents were dissatisfied or disappointed with specific experiences or aspects of the program or DVR

- Orientation not experienced or not memorable
- An orientation that clarifies the goals, role, capabilities, reasonable expectations, and limitations of program would be well received and informative
- Employment is extremely important: driving satisfaction but also a desired final outcome

# Conclusions

Strong sense of appreciation among respondents for everything DVR does

- Need to educate and inform clientele about program, build and manage expectations
- Major issues with counselors, specifically communication and workload/availability
- Consensus across groups that DVR should implement a feedback worksheet or questionnaire

# Tracking Customer Satisfaction



- VT DVR currently conducts a survey among customers as a part of the DVR counselor evaluation process.
- This survey is conducted on an on-going basis throughout the year.
- The survey provided an opportunity to track satisfaction on some overall measures as well as measures related to staff communication with clients.
- It is not a random sample of all customers, just those receiving services from counselors that are being evaluated.
- It does provide a way to look at customer satisfaction between the larger customer surveys .

# The Survey Questions

## **Six items were added to the staff evaluation survey from the customer satisfaction survey:**

- Overall, how satisfied are you with The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's program?
- How satisfied would you say you are with the services provided by Vocational Rehabilitation?
- How easy was it for you to contact your vocational rehabilitation counselor?
- How satisfied were you with how long it took your counselor to answer your questions or address your concerns?
- How satisfied were you with the kind and amount of information you were given about the choices you had?
- How satisfied were you with your control and involvement in your vocational rehabilitation experience?

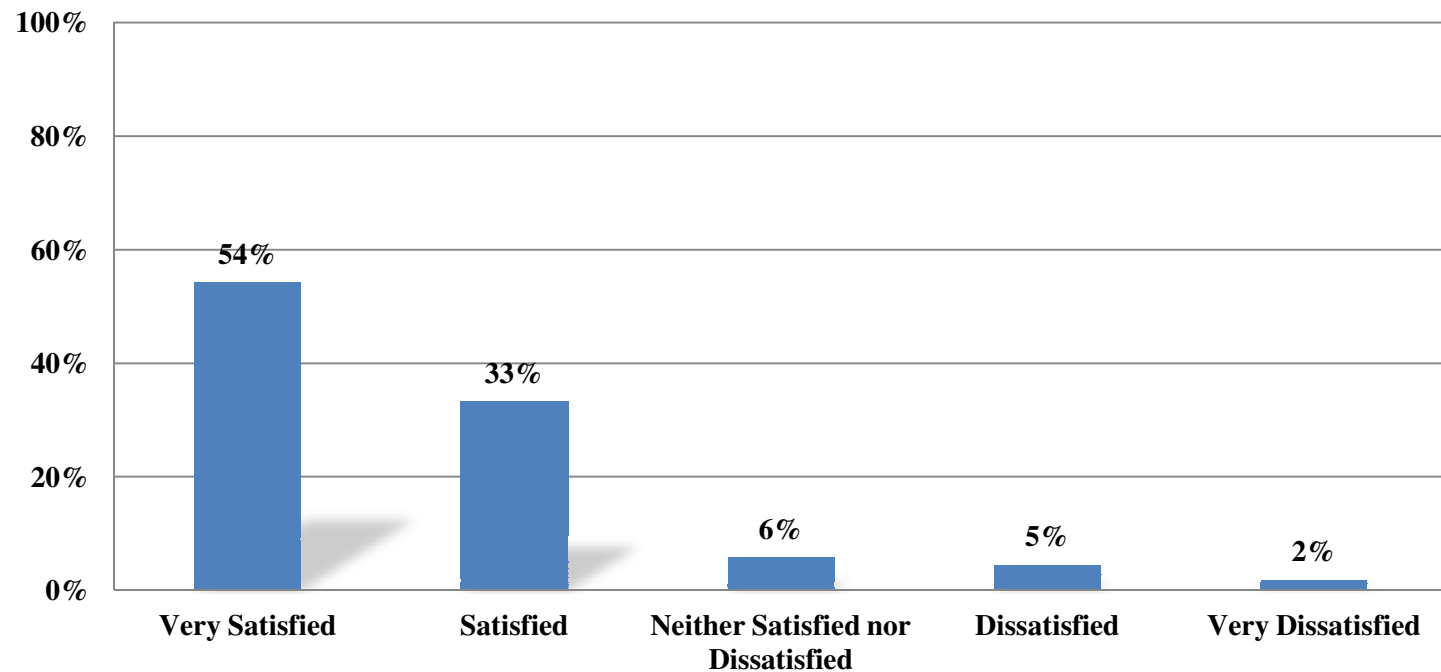
## Number of Surveys Completed by District

District	# of Surveys
BARRE	5
BENNINGTON	13
BRATTLEBORO	45
BURLINGTON	51
MIDDLEBURY	6
MORRISVILLE	21
NEWPORT	28
RUTLAND	47
SPRINGFIELD	6
ST. ALBANS	24
ST. JOHNSBURY	12
WHITE RIVER JCT	41
Not Specified	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>332</b>

# Overall Satisfaction

## Overall, 88% of customers are satisfied with the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's program.

NQ03 - Overall, how satisfied are you with The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's program?



\* 83% of customers responding to 2013 survey were very satisfied or satisfied.

**Overall, how satisfied are you with The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's program?**

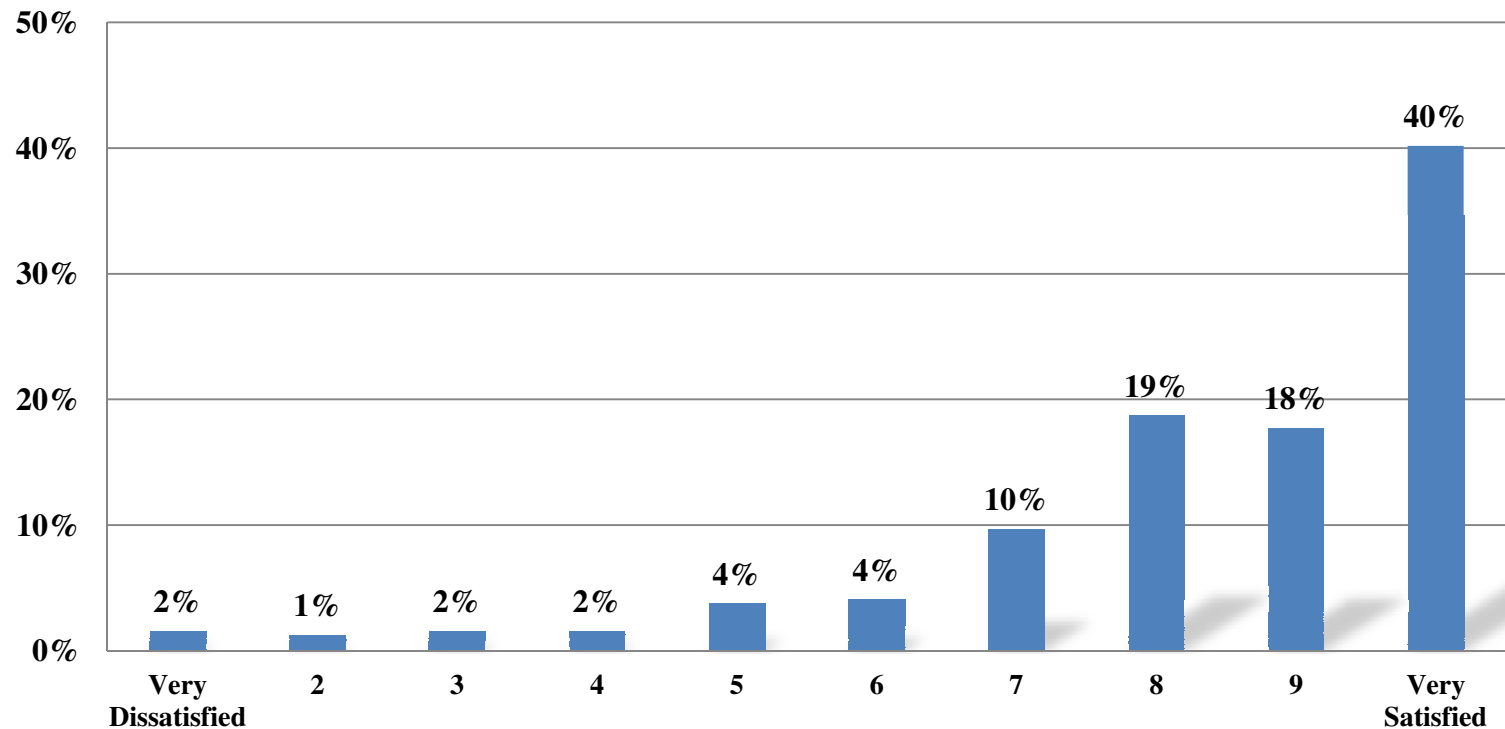
<b>VT DVR</b> <b>88%</b>	<b>Barre</b>	<b>Bennington</b>	<b>Brattleboro</b>	<b>Burlington</b>	<b>Middlebury</b>	<b>Morrisville</b>
	<b>80%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>90%</b>
	<b>Newport</b>	<b>Rutland</b>	<b>Springfield</b>	<b>St. Albans</b>	<b>St. Johnsbury</b>	<b>White River Jct.</b>
	<b>93%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>95%</b>

**% Very Satisfied or Satisfied**

**90% of customers are satisfied with the services they receive.**

**NQ06 - How satisfied would you say you are with the services provided by Vocational Rehabilitation?**

**(Rated on a 10 point scale where 1 is very dissatisfied and 10 is very satisfied)**



**\* 83% of customers responding to 2013 survey were very satisfied or satisfied.**

## How satisfied would you say you are with the services provided by Vocational Rehabilitation?

<b>VT DVR 90%</b>	<b>Barre</b>	<b>Bennington</b>	<b>Brattleboro</b>	<b>Burlington</b>	<b>Middlebury</b>	<b>Morrisville</b>
	<b>80%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>95%</b>
	<b>Newport</b>	<b>Rutland</b>	<b>Springfield</b>	<b>St. Albans</b>	<b>St. Johnsbury</b>	<b>White River Jct.</b>
	<b>96%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>95%</b>

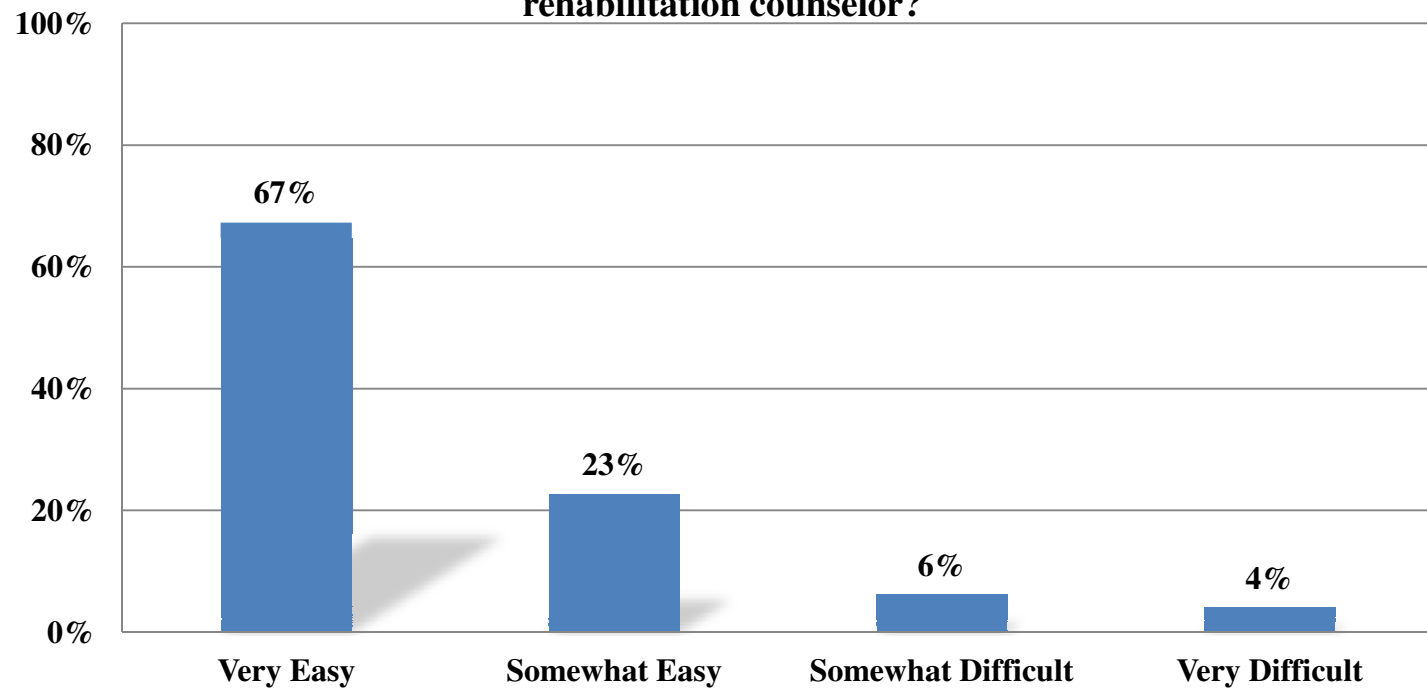
**% Very Satisfied or Satisfied**



# Staff Communications

**90% of customers indicate it was easy to contact their vocational rehabilitation counselor.**

**NQ01 - How easy was it for you to contact your vocational rehabilitation counselor?**



**\* 83% of customers responding to 2013 survey indicated very easy or easy.**

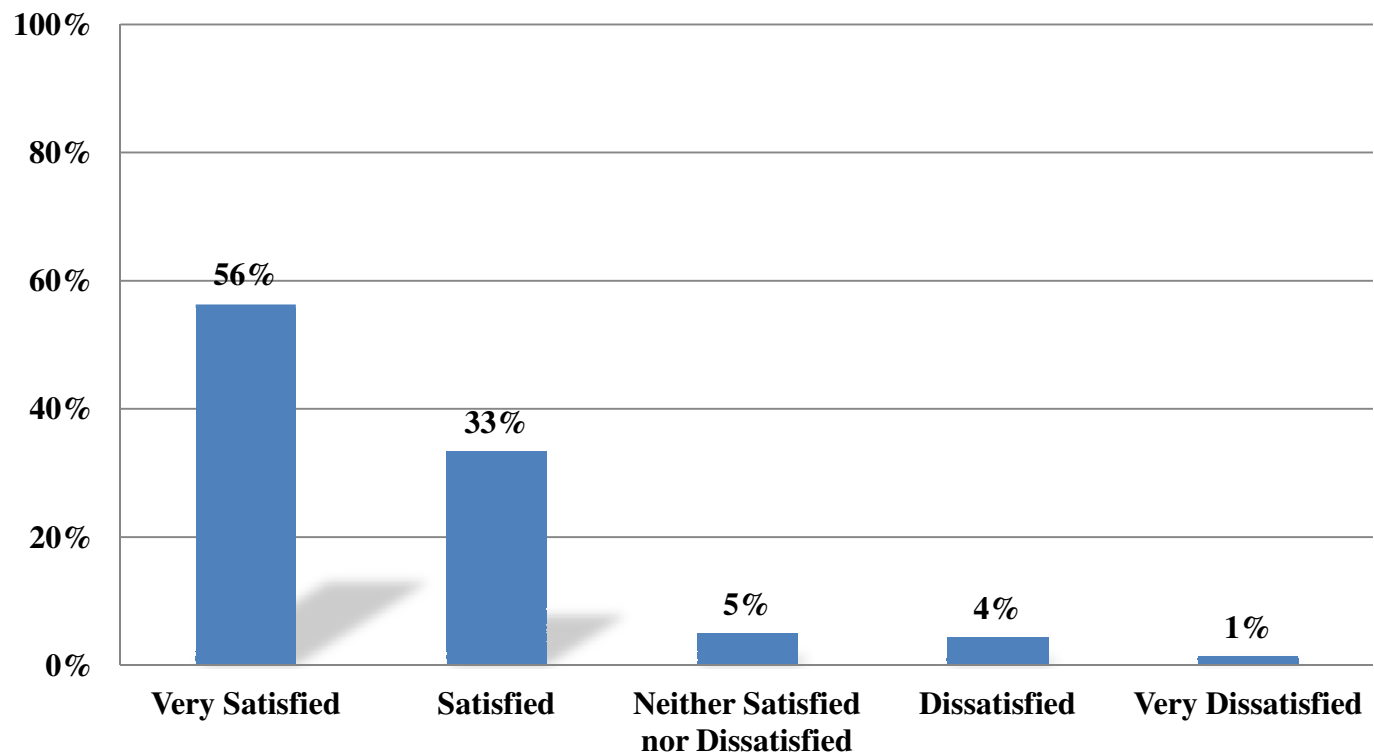
## How easy was it for you to contact your vocational rehabilitation counselor?

<b>VT DVR 90%</b>	<b>Barre</b>	<b>Bennington</b>	<b>Brattleboro</b>	<b>Burlington</b>	<b>Middlebury</b>	<b>Morrisville</b>
	<b>80%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>95%</b>
	<b>Newport</b>	<b>Rutland</b>	<b>Springfield</b>	<b>St. Albans</b>	<b>St. Johnsbury</b>	<b>White River Jct.</b>
	<b>86%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>95%</b>

**% Very Easy or Easy**

## 90% of customers are satisfied with how long it took their counselor to answer questions or address concerns.

NQ02 - How satisfied were you with how long it took your counselor to answer your questions or address your concerns?



\* 84% of customers responding to 2013 survey were very satisfied or satisfied.

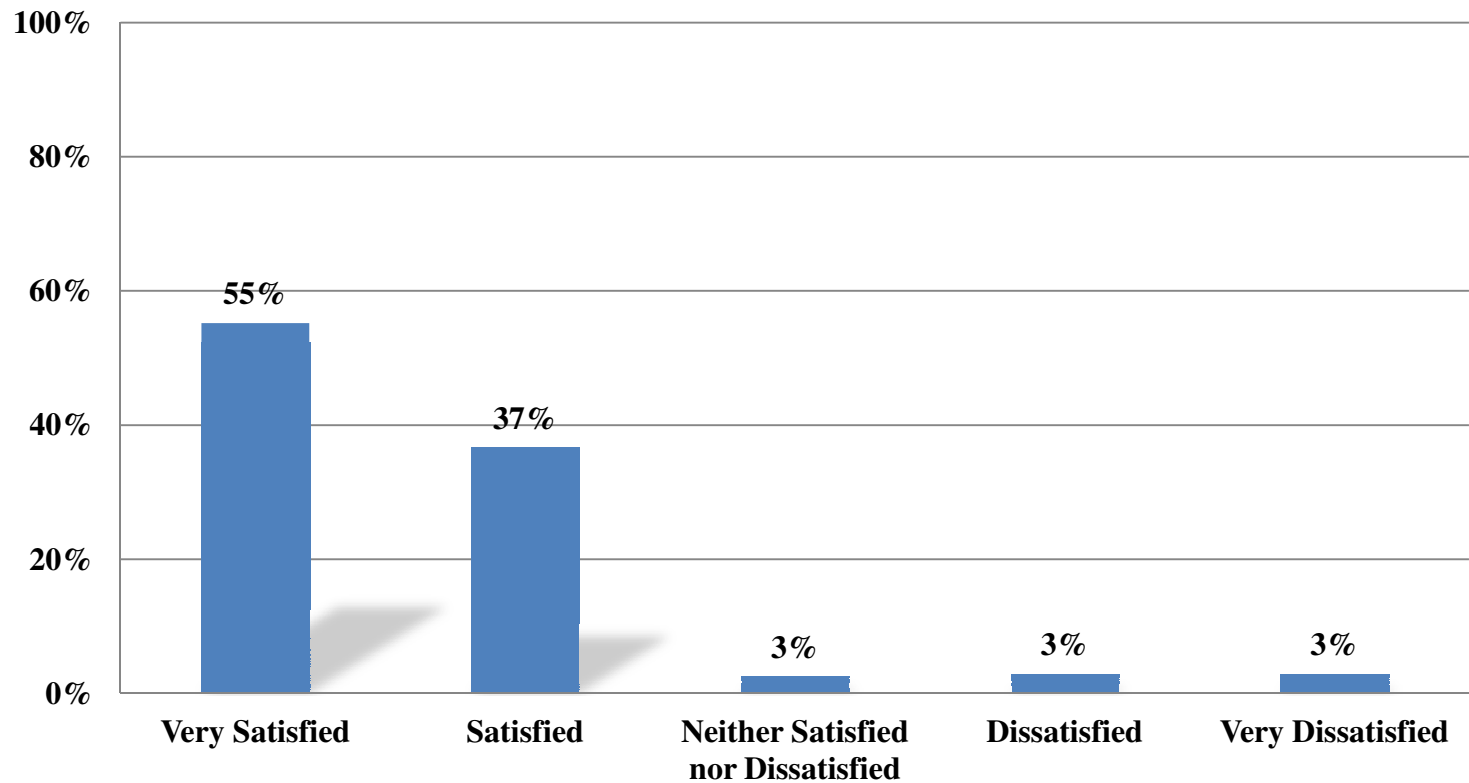
**How satisfied were you with how long it took your counselor to answer your questions or address your concerns?**

<b>VT DVR 90%</b>	<b>Barre</b>	<b>Bennington</b>	<b>Brattleboro</b>	<b>Burlington</b>	<b>Middlebury</b>	<b>Morrisville</b>
	<b>80%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>85%</b>
	<b>Newport</b>	<b>Rutland</b>	<b>Springfield</b>	<b>St. Albans</b>	<b>St. Johnsbury</b>	<b>White River Jct.</b>
	<b>100%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>95%</b>

**% Very Satisfied or Satisfied**

**92% of customers are satisfied with the kind and amount of information they were given about the choices they had.**

**NQ05 - How satisfied were you with the kind and amount of information you were given about the choices you had?**



**\* 84% of customers responding to 2013 survey were very satisfied or satisfied.**

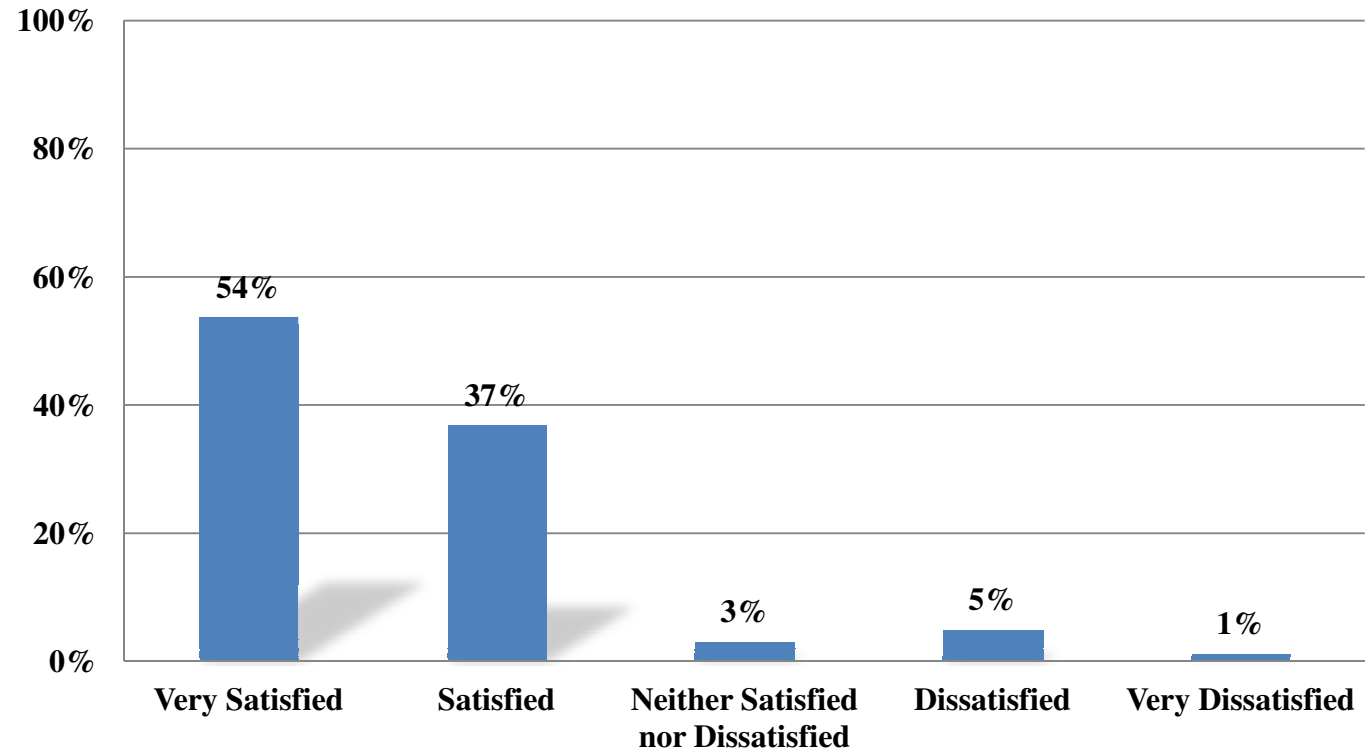
**How satisfied were you with the kind and amount of information you were given about the choices you had?**

<b>VT DVR 92%</b>	<b>Barre</b>	<b>Bennington</b>	<b>Brattleboro</b>	<b>Burlington</b>	<b>Middlebury</b>	<b>Morrisville</b>
	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	<b>Newport</b>	<b>Rutland</b>	<b>Springfield</b>	<b>St. Albans</b>	<b>St. Johnsbury</b>	<b>White River Jct.</b>
	<b>93%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>98%</b>

**% Very Satisfied or Satisfied**

**91% of customers are satisfied with their control and involvement in the vocational rehabilitation experience.**

**NQ04 - How satisfied were you with your control and involvement in your vocational rehabilitation experience?**



**\* 86% of customers responding to 2013 survey were very satisfied or satisfied.**



## How satisfied were you with your control and involvement in your vocational rehabilitation experience?

<b>VT DVR</b> 91%	<b>Barre</b>	<b>Bennington</b>	<b>Brattleboro</b>	<b>Burlington</b>	<b>Middlebury</b>	<b>Morrisville</b>
	<b>80%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>95%</b>
	<b>Newport</b>	<b>Rutland</b>	<b>Springfield</b>	<b>St. Albans</b>	<b>St. Johnsbury</b>	<b>White River Jct.</b>
	<b>96%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>95%</b>

**% Very Satisfied or Satisfied**



# Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

**Thank You. We'd be Happy to Answer any Questions**

**Michael Sears, PhD  
Brian Robertson, PhD**

