



WHO ARE “CONSUMERS”?

First, it is unfortunate that a label is imposed on a group of individuals.

Consumers is currently the generally acceptable term used for identifying adults with a severe and persistent mental illness, individuals with a developmental disability and children with a serious emotional disturbance. Also, family members are considered **secondary consumers**.

Ultimately, consumers are individuals who are **intended to benefit** from the implementation (provision of supports and services) and management (planning, direction and oversight) as organized through the relationship between the Michigan Department of Community Health and the local public community mental health system. Communities are also intended to benefit.

WHY INVOLVE CONSUMERS IN EVALUATION EFFORTS?

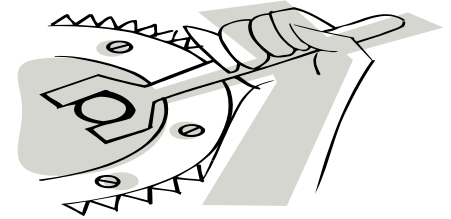
In free market business, consumers of goods and services are in full command. They seek to become as informed as possible regarding what they individually desire and value and determine their expected Return on Investment before making a purchase. The market desires to be as informed as possible regarding what can be sold and at what price. If the buyers don't purchase from a business, the business needs to make changes to attract buyers or simply exit the market.

Our system does not operate as a “vote with your feet” free market. However, public policy is moving us further down the path of consumers taking command of their lives and the system. As this progresses, it is critical that we expand consumers voice and influence of the system.



HOW CAN CONSUMERS BE INVOLVED IN EVALUATION EFFORTS?

There are a number of ways consumers can play a meaningful and valued role in evaluation efforts.



Examples include:

- * Identifying a proposed evaluation effort.
- * Planning the scope of an evaluation effort.
- * Carrying out an evaluation effort.
- * Participating in an evaluation effort.
- * Reporting findings and recommendations resulting from an evaluation effort.
- * Implementing recommended changes resulting from an evaluation effort.