

## DHS implements SMS surveys

Gathering feedback from important DHS audiences has gotten much easier, thanks to SMS – or text message – surveys.

Last year, DHS issued an RFP searching for technology solutions designed to enhance client feedback and community engagement. This resulted in several new initiatives, such as the [HappyorNot kiosks](#). SMS surveying is another solution that is now being piloted, in partnership with Community Connect Labs.

“Traditional paper surveys are labor-intensive, time consuming, and offer limited confidentiality, which may cause survey participants to feel as though they cannot be as candid,” said Emma Wallis Jones, analyst, in the Office of Data Analysis, Research and Evaluation (DARE). “SMS surveys offer a number of benefits over paper surveys. It’s possible for SMS surveys to be input to the platform and distributed to clients’ phones within hours, allowing for data gathering at any time; results are automatically captured, decreasing staff time and labor; and participants maintain confidentiality.”

In the last few months, SMS surveys have been used in various applications, including the Case Competition as well as Homeless Services and Support Coordination and understanding experiences with Family Court. DARE staff is now working on their largest undertaking in piloting this technology: the homeless systems satisfaction survey. The survey, which went live on February 12, attempts to get feedback from more than 3,500 clients in 119 programs offered through 28 providers.

“In piloting this technology on such a large scale, we are partnering with provider agencies to recruit clients to participate in the survey. We have created tip sheets and fliers to aid staff in their recruitment,” Emma said. “I am really looking forward to better understanding the advantages that this technology provides to all involved in the survey process: DHS staff, clients, and provider staff.”

To learn more about DHS efforts with SMS surveys, please contact Emma at [emma.wallisjones@alleghenycounty.us](mailto:emma.wallisjones@alleghenycounty.us).