



# Performance Improvement Guide

## Fiscal Year 2005

**Purpose of the Guide:** This instrument is used on an annual basis by the ICON Management Team to assess program accomplishments. Asking the same questions each year fosters consistency in our approach to data analysis and provides us with information on our program that may be compared over a long period of time. We share these program outcomes with our customers, our staff, our funders, and the general public. This and related documents may be found on our website at <http://www.iconservices.org/pig.html> or requested by phone at 703-548-4048, ext. 101. We also use this information internally as a part of our ongoing quality improvement process.

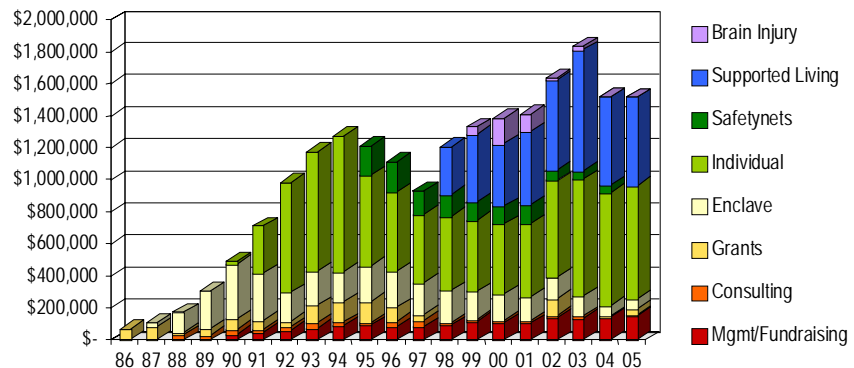
### Overview of ICON's Services

This section is intended to give the reader a basic understanding of the major activities of ICON and the source of funding for these services.

#### 1. What sort of services does ICON deliver?

ICON was founded in 1985 to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to work in real jobs in the community. Until 1997 our services and other projects

*Fig. 1 – Program Expenditures by Type of Service*



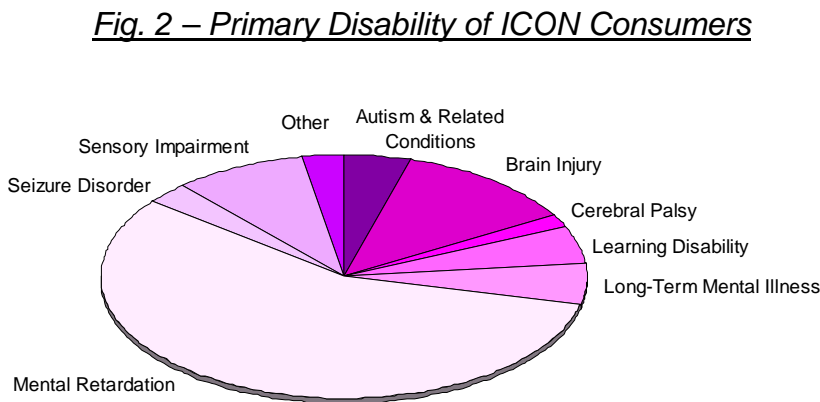
were largely focused on employment. In July of that year, ICON acquired the assets of Shared Housing of Virginia, Inc., a provider of community living services. The acquisition of the community living program enabled ICON to expand its sphere of activities in pursuit of the long-term goal of full inclusion of people with disabilities in the life of the community.

From its inception, ICON has engaged in demonstration grants and other projects funded by government and private sources. A complete list of these projects may be found on our website<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. Who does ICON serve?

During FY '05, ICON served 181 people: 133 in employment services and 48 in community living services.

Of those in employment services, 86 received long-term support; the remainder received short-term 'place and train' services or other employment-related services such as assessment or travel training.



The primary disability of approximately 57% of ICON's consumers is mental retardation (41% of those in employment services and 100% of those receiving community living services). Survivors of brain injury account for 12%; 9% experience one or more sensory

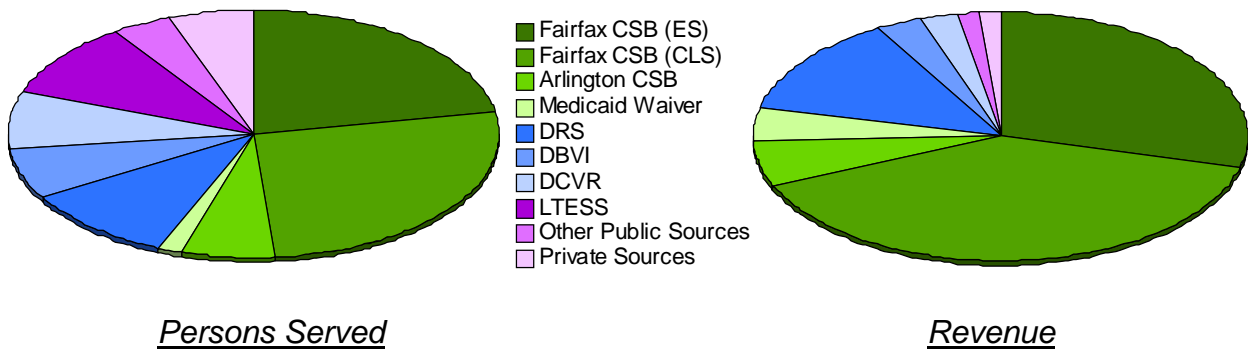
impairments, 6% have long-term mental illness, 5% have a learning disability, and 4% experience autism or a related condition. The remaining 8% experience a variety of other disabilities such as epilepsy, cerebral palsy, or mobility impairments. More than half experience multiple disabilities.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.iconservices.org/www.html>

### 3. Who pays for this?

In FY '05, 99% of ICON's revenue came from fees for services delivered. The relative percentages of persons and dollars from the various funding sources are illustrated in Figure 3. The reason the Community Services Boards account for nearly 75% of revenue, but less than 60% of persons, is that they supply long-term

*Fig. 3 – Number of Persons Served and Revenue, by Funding Source*



funding, while DRS and most other sources provide only short-term employment services (ES). The Fairfax-Falls Church CSB also funds nearly all of the people served in community living services (CLS), which again are long-term services, and can be fairly intensive especially for those with medical issues. Figure 4 shows the actual numbers on which these graphs are based.

*Fig. 4 – Persons Served and Revenue*

Funder	No. of People	\$	Avg. \$ per Person
Fairfax CSB (ES)	40	414,307	10,358
Fairfax CSB (CLS)	48	558,403	11,633
Arlington CSB	11	84,948	7,723
Medicaid	3	60,880	20,293
DRS	18	126,485	7,027
DBVI	12	43,759	3,647
DCVR	14	37,733	2,695
LTESS	18	56,048	3,114
Other Public Sources	7	19,879	2,840
Private Sources	10	17,775	1,778

## Customer Choice and Satisfaction

ICON is strongly committed to ensuring that our customers have the support and the tools they need to exercise real choice in all aspects of the services they receive, and that they are satisfied with the quality of the services. While ICON understands that employers, family members, and funders are also customers, the primary focus of this section is on individuals with disabilities.

### **4. How do customers participate in planning their services and supports?**

All consumers referred to ICON begin their services with an initial meeting with ICON staff; other interested persons such as family, funder representatives, etc. may be included if the consumer desires. The outcome of this meeting is an individual services plan agreement (ISPA) outlining the consumer's preferences, strengths, and needs, and a plan of action for achieving the consumer's goals.

For those receiving short-term services such as 'place and train' employment services, the ISPA is the primary document which determines the form and extent of the services ICON will provide. It may be revised over the course of time to reflect changes in the individual's situation and the outcome of assessment or career development opportunities.

For those receiving long-term services, the ISPA typically describes the services ICON will provide initially to help the consumer identify personal goals, strengths, and needs. Later a formal statement of goals and objectives is drafted, reviewed with the consumer, revised as necessary, and forwarded to the CSB or other funding agency. The individual's progress in meeting the objectives is monitored throughout the year and goals and objectives are revised if necessary based on the consumer's input. Quarterly reports on goals and objectives are reviewed with the consumer before being submitted to the funder.

In either case, constant informal feedback is solicited from consumers, funders, family members, and others. This feedback is monitored, recorded, and acted upon as appropriate throughout the period of ICON's relationship with the consumer.

### **5. Describe ICON's system for assessing customer choice and satisfaction.**

Over the years ICON has experimented with many different systems for assessing customer satisfaction. At present, our approach consists of various formal survey instruments combined with ongoing solicitation of customer opinion, comments, and suggestions, as well as a substantial database of outcome measures.

A formal survey was conducted in July and August of 2005 with consumers of employment and community living services, the families of these groups, and funding agents. During July of 2005, ICON conducted a survey of all CSB

consumers as requested by the Arlington, Prince William, and Fairfax-Falls Church CSBs.

In recent years we have departed from the 'scale of 1 to 5' format for our stakeholder surveys, in the hope that a more free-form questionnaire would elicit more meaningful responses. We believe that it does, and plan to continue with this format, even though it makes it more difficult to summarize and present the responses, which range from basic yes/no answers to comments which fill both sides of the page. Because of this, the results of our surveys for this fiscal year have been summarized in another document, the *FY 2005 Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys*.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to these surveys, our database captures many measures which can be used to assess customer satisfaction, such as length of time from referral to job placement and whether the person was placed in the type of job they had initially requested. These and other measures are presented later in this report.

## **6. What have we learned from this?**

The fact that we now have a fourteen-year history of many different measures of our employment services lets us graphically see our progress and change over time. In addition, we can use this historical data to measure the effectiveness of our efforts to improve in specific areas. Community living services is more difficult to measure, but we now have a five-year history of what we believe are the most significant measures of our effectiveness as well as the satisfaction of our customers.

## **Employment Services**

The desired outcome for these services is that individuals receiving employment or employment-related supports find and maintain jobs in integrated settings and earn a decent wage. The following questions are focused on assessing how well we are accomplishing this:

### **7. What percentage of supported employees work in integrated settings?**

100%. ICON does not have a sheltered workshop or any other segregated facility. The one remaining group employment site supported by ICON is a true enclave – supported workers are not 'interchangeable' but have their own individual jobs; they

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<sup>2</sup> This document may be found on our website at <http://www.iconservices.org/pig.html> or requested by phone at 703-548-4048 ext. 101.

are employed directly by the host company, work side-by-side with non-disabled employees, and receive the same benefits as other employees.

**8. What is the general response of people receiving ICON's services with respect to the quality of the services?**

In answer to the question "Are you satisfied with ICON's services, overall?" 69% of those receiving employment services responded with an unequivocal "yes"; the rest said they are satisfied "most of the time". Over 90% of the family members of those receiving employment services responded "yes" to this question. Two people (10%) were dissatisfied. Detail on this and other direct measures of our consumers' response to services may be found in *FY 2005 Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys*. (see p. 5 for information on obtaining this document).

**9. How many jobs were obtained in FY '05?**

Twenty-six new jobs were obtained this year with ICON's support. Four were volunteer positions; the rest were individual paid employment. Of those starting paid jobs, seven were recipients of short-term 'place and train' services and the rest were people who will receive long-term support.

**10. Do jobseekers obtain the type of job they initially indicated they wanted?**

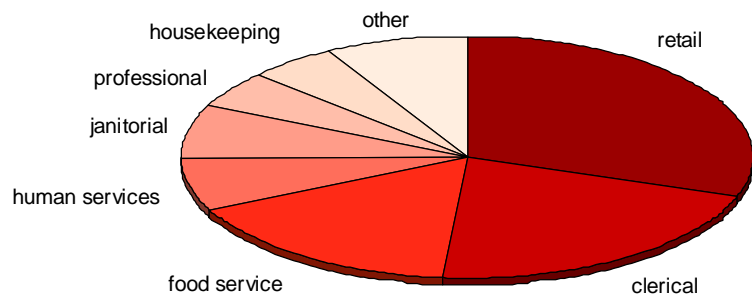
Of the 25 persons placed in FY '05 who indicated a clear preference, 21 (84%) got the type of job they initially said they wanted and four decided to take something else in order to be employed.

**11. What sorts of jobs have been obtained?**

Of the 88 paid jobs supported by ICON in FY '05, the most common were retail (30), clerical (21), and food service (16). Seven were in human services and seven were working in janitorial jobs, five did professional

work (including two who were self-employed), and five worked in housekeeping. The remaining eight worked in material handling, groundskeeping, and the trades, and operating an elevator on Capitol Hill.

Fig. 5 -- Types of Jobs Supported



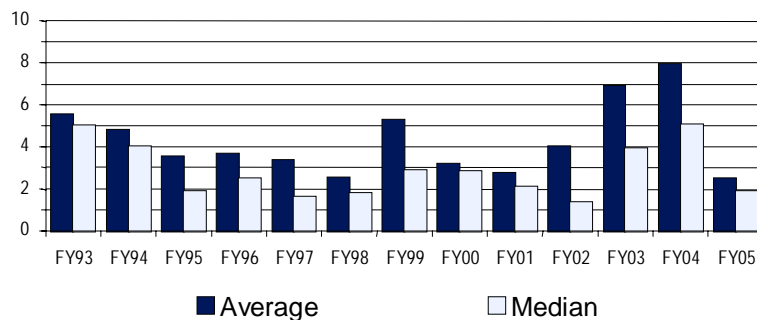
**12. How many FY '05 jobseekers were separated from ICON without getting a job, and why?**

Of 78 jobseekers, 23 separated from services during the fiscal year without having obtained a job. The reasons for separation varied widely, and most people had more than one reason for deciding to separate from services. Of the primary reasons, some 62% are factors outside ICON's control; the largest single category was people who were not actually ready to work when referred. The remaining 38% are situations that ICON might have been able to avoid: six felt we had taken too long to find a job, two refused services outright, and four were separated because of unrealistic expectations about the job market.

**13. How long does it take to obtain a job?**

For jobs obtained during FY '05, the average length of the job development process was two and a half months, the median was a just under two months, the low was just three days, and the high was just under one year. This rate was exceptionally better than that of the last two years, and may reflect improvement in the economy. It should be noted that just one person's experience in job development can have a significant effect on the average for a fiscal year; the median is a more accurate measure of our efficiency in this area. It must also be noted, of course, that each individual has different circumstances, and the difficulty of finding a job is also related to the state of the economy, therefore aggregate figures cannot predict what any given person's actual experience may be.

*Fig. 6 -- Months in Job Development For Those Placed During the Fiscal Year*



The number of hours devoted specifically to job development ranged from two to 44, with a median of 16. On average, just over 50% of hours spent by ICON during the job development period represent actual job development activities. The remaining percentage includes hours principally used for travel, service coordination, and reporting. The total reported expenditure of hours during job development ranged from six to 100, with a median of 29, or \$1,734. This is almost certainly significantly less than the true rate, in that it is frequently necessary to deliver services without a formal authorization from the funding agency; because these hours cannot be billed, employment specialists tend not to report them as well.

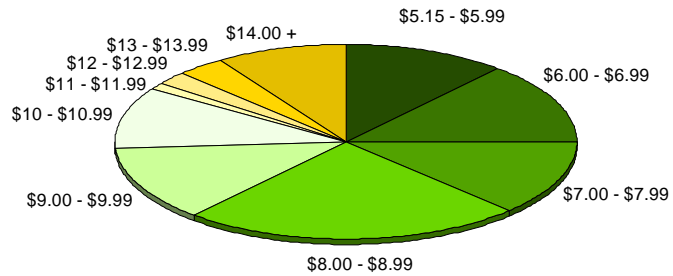
**14. What is the percentage of people who earn less than the minimum wage?**

Zero. All persons supported by ICON in FY '05 were earning at least 10¢ more than the minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour.

**15. What are the hourly wages of the people who are receiving ICON's Employment Services?**

Hourly wages in the 88 paid jobs supported by ICON this fiscal year ranged from \$5.25 to \$35.00; the average of \$9.67 represents a 2.6% increase over the average in FY '05.

*Fig. 7 -- Hourly Wages Earned in FY '05*



**16. What percentage of persons employed one year or more got a raise this year?**

According to our database, 20% of people with long-term support who have been employed for more than a year received a raise in the same job during FY '05. An additional five (6%) moved to a new job with better pay. The average raise was \$0.44 per hour; raises ranged from 15¢ to just under a dollar per hour. The average worker had gone 1.5 years since the last raise.

This may be a good place to state that our wage data is not 100% reliable. We try to deliver the minimum level of support based on each individual's need, in order to maximize both funding dollars and individual independence. For this reason we often aren't aware that an individual has received a raise in pay unless we specifically ask. We do make a point of asking at the end of the fiscal year, but both the employee and the employer tend to forget that a raise has occurred, and both are frequently unsure of current wage rates.

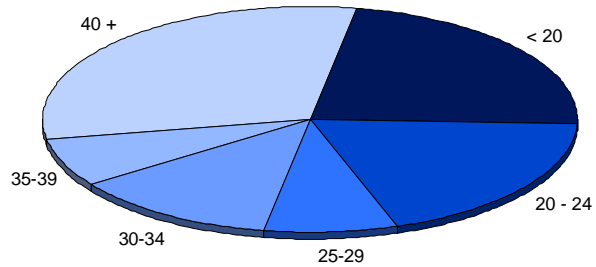
**17. How many people received promotions within the same work site, or through changing employers or job sites?**

No one received a promotion within the same work site this year, but five moved on to better jobs.

**18. What is the percentage of jobholders who are working the number of hours they initially asked for?**

Of the 25 jobseekers placed in FY '05 who expressed a clear preference, over 90% got the number of hours they had initially requested.

*Fig. 8 -- Hours Worked Per Week*

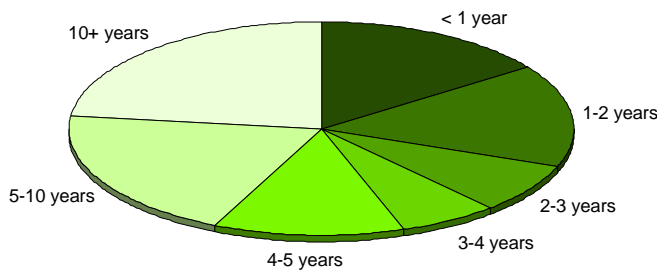


In ICON's Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey, 78% of respondents said they are happy with their current hours; this represents a substantial improvement over FY '04, when only 57% reported satisfaction with this measure. The remaining 22% would prefer to be working more.

Average hours worked per week by employees supported by ICON is just over 27 and the median is 29, with individual employees working from 2 to 40 hours per week.

**19. What is the length of current employment for those individuals receiving long term support?**

*Fig. 9 -- Length of Time in Employment for Those Working at 6/30/05*



The average length of employment for the 65 individuals with long-term support working at 6/30/05 was 5.4 years. Fifteen of these individuals have been employed in the same job for over ten years and an additional 13 have been employed five years or more. Individual lengths of employment range from less than a month to more than 15 years.

**20. How many people have left their jobs and why?**

Twenty-two people left a job in FY '05; of these, one was a volunteer position. Of the 21 individuals who left paid employment, three moved directly to better jobs. Of the remainder, half lost their jobs for reasons substantially beyond their control, including economic layoff, physical or mental health issues, transportation, parental choice, and funding issues.

Absenteeism and behavioral issues were responsible for the loss of four jobs, and poor job match or insufficient training account for the remaining five.

**21. What kinds of barriers do ICON's Employment Services staff encounter in the course of pursuing and supporting employment in the community?**

Attitudinal barriers continue to be the main obstacle the employment specialists face when talking to potential employers. We continue to have employers who ask for specific information regarding the disability or the diagnosis of the individual we are supporting, and why they would need a job coach. Turnover within the employer's organization is another barrier. We spend time developing relationships with one supervisor or department manager. When they move on, ICON has to start the education and advocacy process all over again. In doing this, we encountered a new manager at a company with whom ICON has had a long-term relationship. In a meeting with this manager to help her with understanding our relationship to her organization, she stated that she felt they had enough of "those people" working for them. The education process continues.

The application process for jobs has also changed significantly in recent years. More companies have computerized their employment applications. Computerized questionnaires and personality surveys are increasingly part of the screening for new applicants. The online application process can take up to two hours to complete even with the assistance of the job coach. Many of our consumers need the assistance of a job coach to understand and complete the 100 questions of the personality surveys. Once the individual is hired, new employee orientation is often completed through an interactive computer program

Communication barriers are the next most frequent obstacles that the job coach address with employers. In many situation the staff or supervisors on a job site will address the job coach rather than their employee. For example, a supervisor will say to the job coach, in the presence of the employee, "Tell him I need it done this way." In other situations we have seen supervisors ignore the questions of their employee and address their comments to the job coach.

Funding issues continue to be a barrier in adequately supporting our consumers. We continue to see that many of the funders have a limited understanding of the process that is required to secure employment for their consumers with severe disabilities. This process includes identifying the job lead, securing the interview, negotiate the duties, hours, and wages if needed, and then pre-employment testing. Referral sources also often have preconceived notions of the abilities of our consumers and tend to underestimate an individual's skills. Vocational evaluations frequently contribute to this perception. There is a common assumption that an individual needs to start in a workshop or an enclave and work their way out of that setting because they have behaviors that could affect their ability to be in a community based job situation. We find that such behaviors often disappear once

an individual has a job in the community, working alongside non-disabled co-workers.

Transportation issues continue to be a factor with employment. Many of our consumers are dependent upon specialized sources of transportation, such as Metro Access. The service continues to be unreliable and the drivers have been rude. While Metro Access has attempted to improve this situation by requiring drivers to complete sensitivity training, these behaviors continue. Such incidents are reported to the Quality Assurance department as they occur.

## **22. Independent Assessment of ICON's Employment Services**

In FY 2003 ICON's employment programs were surveyed by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). CARF certification is required of all programs which are funded by the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services. The outcome of the process was a full, three-year CARF certification for Employment Planning Services and Community Employment Services.

## **Community Living Services**

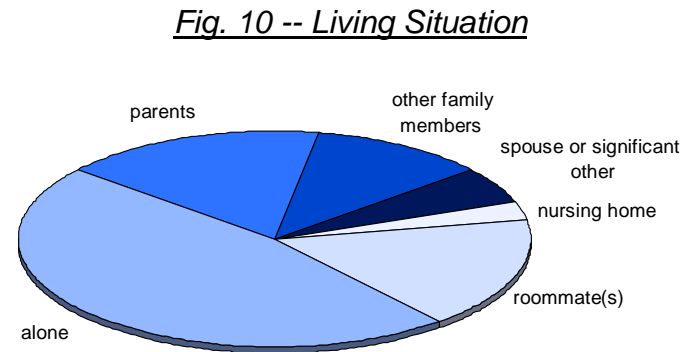
The desired outcome for these services has been that individuals with disabilities will be supported in developing satisfying lifestyles. This is individually defined and can certainly be difficult to measure. We therefore assist people in developing and accomplishing specific goals that help them to attain competence and choice in the conduct of their daily lives.

As part of the ongoing budget struggle, the scope of these activities was dramatically curtailed at the beginning of FY '04. Some individuals lost services altogether; nearly all had their authorized hours of service reduced, and we were told by our funder that we could offer only services which directly contribute to the health or safety of the consumers.

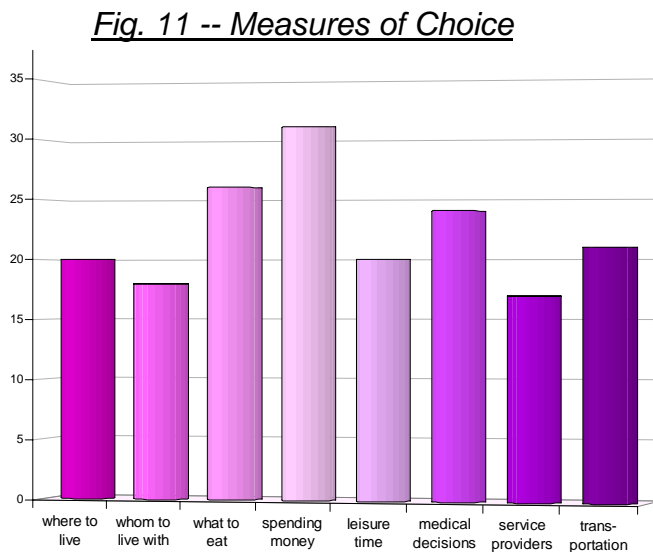
This policy makes it very difficult for us to honor our commitment to the principle that consumer choice is paramount when it comes to choosing goals for the service. In some cases, the goals that the individuals chose had enough of a bearing on health or safety in the community that they were approved by the funder. In other cases, people simply lost an important chunk of their lives when we were no longer able to support their chosen activities. This happened at the beginning of FY '04, but continues to have a profound effect on the lives of many of the people we serve.

**23. What is the most common living situation?**

Forty-seven percent of consumers of Community Living Services live alone, 17% live with one or more roommates, 17% live with their parents, and 19% live in some other situation – typically with another family member, a spouse or significant other.



**24. What proportion of people make choices about their important life decisions? When answering this question, consider decisions such as where they will live, with whom they will live, how they will spend their time, and how they will spend their money.**



This is an area which is very difficult to measure objectively, yet it is central to our mission. This year, it appears that 54% of the people we serve have chosen where to live and 49% have chosen whom to live with. More than 70% are able to choose what they will eat. Eighty-four percent have control of how they will spend their money, and 54% choose how to spend their leisure time. In nearly every category, consumer choice has decreased, in some cases substantially, between

FY '04 and FY '05. Further interviews will be needed to determine the cause, but in some cases we know that choice has been restricted because of restrictions on they types of activities we are permitted to support.

**25. How many have relationships in their communities?**

This year, 67% of consumers have at least one person they consider a friend, and 75% have what we have characterized as 'caring relationships'. These are typically family members, but not always. Ninety-one-one percent have acquaintances in the community – at the bank, the grocery store, the laundromat, etc.

## 26. What types of activities are supported?

As mentioned, all consumers of community living services set goals and objectives for themselves each year, which serve to determine the types of service they will receive. Activities relating to these goals appear in the following table, as do other activities such as working on personal finances or housekeeping, which may not rate as a goal, but is nevertheless an essential part of independent living.

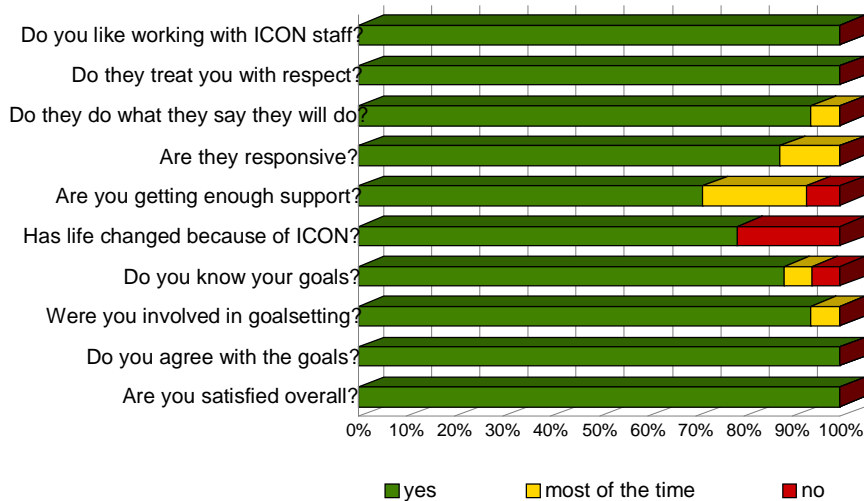
making choices / setting goals	81%	parenting skills	3%
talk (counseling)	97%	learning new things	47%
basic living skills	67%	academics (reading/math)	19%
behavior / manners	39%	computer skills	6%
personal hygiene	36%	learning community access	56%
housekeeping	58%	eating out	39%
laundry	3%	learning public transportation	22%
grocery shopping	69%	physical recreation	19%
other kinds of shopping	61%	safety in the community	67%
cooking	28%	cultural activities	11%
help with health care needs	81%	community social activities	39%
help with personal finances	69%	group ("special") activities	6%
help with housing	31%	special olympics	3%
help navigating service system	36%	in-home leisure activities	8%

## 27. Are customers satisfied with the supports provided?

Yes -- according to the responses we received to a survey conducted in July, 2005, in which 100% of those responding indicated that they are completely satisfied.

Further detail on this survey may be found in the *FY 2005 Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys* report (see p. 5 for information on obtaining this document). Responses to the Community Services Boards' FY 2005 Consumer Satisfaction Survey indicated that over 99% of consumers of community living services were satisfied with the services they receive.

Fig. 12 – Community Living Services  
FY '05 Survey Response



## Organizational Management

The desired outcome here is that ICON maintain an organizational structure that supports its mission and ensures its financial viability.

### 28. Do the organizational structure, accomplishments, and strategies support the mission of the organization?

Our core mission is to promote the integration of people with disabilities into the life of the community. That goal is a primary factor in every decision we make.

As ICON matures, we continue to refine our organizational structure to ensure that high-quality services are delivered in the most cost-effective manner possible. We continue to believe that a very flat structure is best as it tends to keep those with the most experience and most highly-developed skills closest to the consumer. It also keeps overhead to a minimum so that we can maximize the salaries of direct service staff and as a result attract and keep quality staff. With the recent proliferation of new regulations, unfunded mandates and ever-increasing paperwork demands from our funding agencies, we cannot escape the conclusion that additional administrative overhead is now a necessity. We know from our relationships with other service providers in the area that all are experiencing this squeeze, which has reached crisis proportions.

### 29. What are the characteristics of the governing body?

ICON's by-laws call for a Board of Directors of between five and fifteen "civic minded individuals who have an interest and/or capacity in the field of disabilities and/or business expertise and experience." One new board member, Bill Cleveland, was elected during the fiscal year. At year-end, ICON's Board consisted

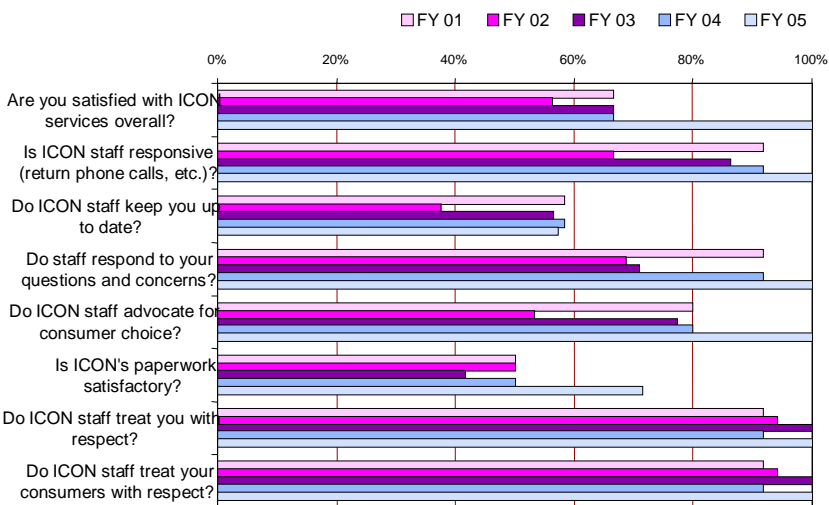
of ten members, five from the business community, two from the disability community, and three who have both disability and business connections. Two of the ten experience disability themselves; an additional member is the parent of a person with a disability.

**30. What is the relationship with public funders?**

The response rate from funders to ICON's annual satisfaction survey somewhat disappointing at only 16%. Those who responded seem to be pleased overall with ICON's services; 100% are satisfied at least "most of the time" with six of the eight categories measured.

Paperwork is still a problem, although this year's satisfaction rate of 71% is up more than twenty percentage points over last year's rate. Keeping funders up to date with progress remains at 58%, which is consistent with FY '04 and FY '03. More detail on this year's survey may be found in *FY 2005 Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys* (see p. 5 for information on obtaining this document).

*Fig. 13 – Funder Satisfaction Survey Response (those responding "yes" or "most of the time")*



**31. What are the characteristics of ICON's staff?**

At 6/30/05 ICON employed a total of 36 staff persons, 29 of whom were direct service staff. There were 27 full-time and nine part-time staff; eight of the part-time staff are Community Living Specialists, and the ninth is engaged in a privately-funded special project to improve opportunities for community integration among citizens with severe disabilities in Prince William County.

The median age of direct service staff is 38. The length of employment with ICON ranges from 17 years to less than two months; the average is five and a half years. More than 77% of staff have had at least some college-level education; and 31% hold a four-year degree. Three have earned masters' degrees in the field and two more are studying for advanced degrees.

**32. How are opportunities for staff job enhancement and advancement promoted by the organization?**

Because of our commitment to a flat organizational structure, there is not much room for advancement within the organization in terms of promotion to a new level. However, ICON believes strongly in enhancing the skills and the horizons of staff. This is accomplished through staff training, a limited tuition reimbursement program, an interest-free loan program for the purchase of computer equipment, and by encouraging staff to pursue individual projects and specialized areas of expertise.

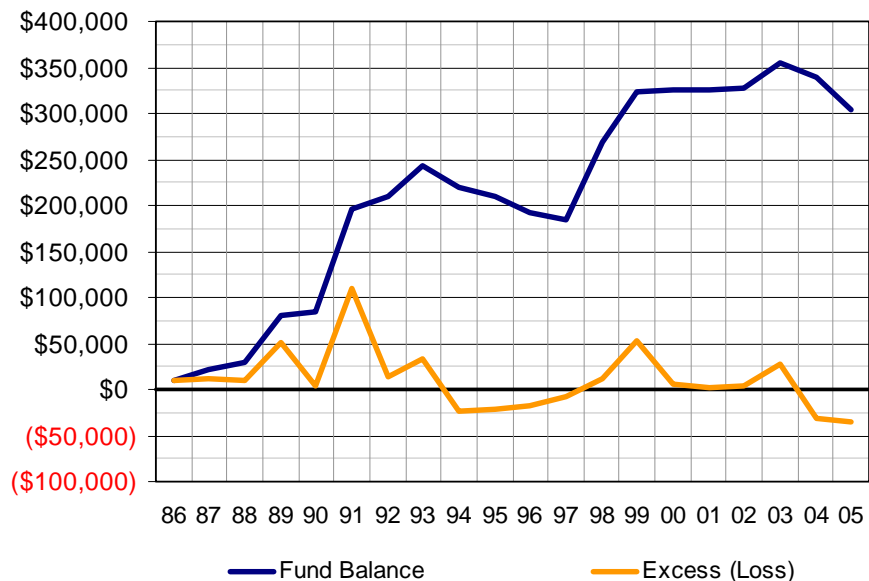
In FY '05, two staff persons took advantage of the tuition reimbursement program. We were able to provide two of our staff (and one consumer) with refurbished computers from among those donated to ICON by local businesses and individuals.

**33. What are the outcomes of our financial analysis?**

ICON's independent audit for FY '05 was prepared by Goodman and Company. It shows a year-end loss of \$35,430 on revenues of \$1.5 million. \$16,354 of the loss represented services that had to be delivered without prior authorization (and therefore were not billable) but were essential in order to ensure that individuals we serve could get and/or keep a job.

FY	Fund Balance	Excess (Loss)
86	10,021	9,680
87	20,889	10,868
88	30,192	9,303
89	80,228	50,037
90	84,582	4,354
91	195,256	110,674
92	209,682	14,426
93	243,918	34,236
94	220,416	(23,502)
95	209,003	(21,860)
96	192,221	(16,782)
97	183,653	(8,568)
98	268,306	10,819
99	324,450	52,537
00	325,792	6,406
01	326,327	2,710
02	327,982	3,615
03	355,278	27,296
04	338,630	(31,546)
05	303,199	(35,430)

*Fig. 14 -- Fund Balance and Annual Excess (Loss)*



## Related Documents

- FY '05 Stakeholder Survey Summary:  
<http://www.iconservices.org/quality/surveys/icon-fy05surveyreport.pdf>
- FY '05 Stakeholder Survey Instruments:  
<http://www.iconservices.org/quality/surveys/icon-fy05surveys.pdf>
- FY '05 Independent Financial Audit:  
<http://www.iconservices.org/quality/audits/fy05/cover.html>
- Similar documents from prior years:  
<http://www.iconservices.org/pig.html>

Any of these documents can also be requested either at 703-548-4048 or by email to [pig@iconservices.org](mailto:pig@iconservices.org).

## Final Words

This document is a work in progress. We plan to continue to work on this document to make it more accessible to readers outside the human services system. We also plan to condense the material into two much smaller brochures, one edited to answer questions important to the people we serve, and another for potential employers and donors.

Please check the Quality Documents area of our website at <http://iconservices.org/pig.html> to access the most up-to-date versions. Please also share your comments and questions with us either at 703-548-4048 or by email to [pig@iconservices.org](mailto:pig@iconservices.org).