



# Performance Improvement Guide

Fiscal Year 1999

**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. We also use this information internally as part of our ongoing continuous quality improvement process. While we could measure many things, we have chosen to focus on what we consider the essential accomplishments through which we achieve our mission.

## 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?

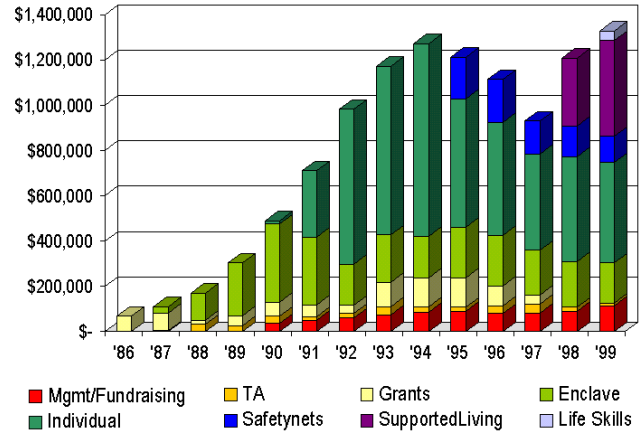
ICON was founded to further the opportunities for people with disabilities to work in real jobs in the community, and until 1997 our services and other projects were primarily focused on employment. In July of 1997, ICON acquired the assets of Shared Housing of Virginia, Inc., a provider of community 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. During FY '99, ICON began its Life Skills Training program: an intensive, short-term service designed to provide survivors of brain injury with the compensatory strategies they will need in order to meet the demands of the workplace.

**2. Who does ICON serve?**

During FY '99, we served a total of 297 people: 74% received employment services, 25% received community living services, and 1% received life skills training.

Of those receiving employment services, just under 50% were people who receive long-term job support; the remainder received short-term 'place and train' services (36%) or other employment-related services (17%).

*Fig. 1 – Revenue by Type of Service*

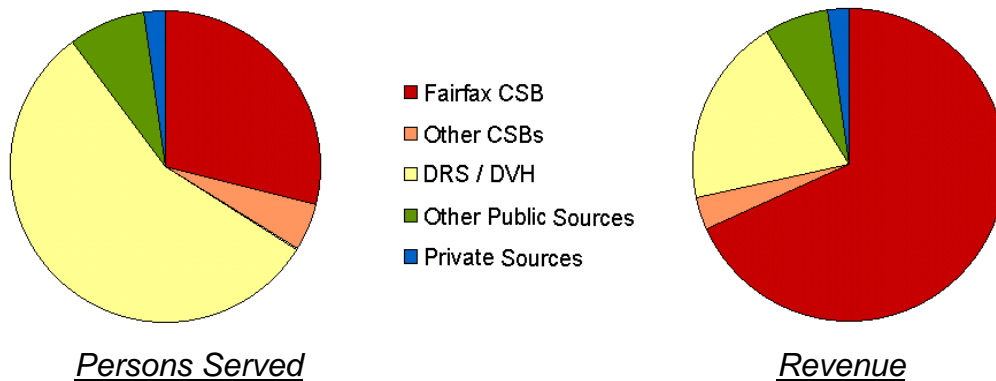


With respect to the primary disability of ICON's consumers, among those receiving employment services just over 50% have a developmental disability, 20% have a sensory impairment, and 13% are survivors of brain injury. The remaining 17% experience a variety of other disabilities, including mobility impairments and long-term mental illness. Almost 40% experience one or more secondary disabilities.

**3. Who pays for this?**

In most years, a small portion of ICON's programs are funded by research or demonstration grants, but in FY '99 nearly all of ICON's revenue came from

*Fig. 2 -- Persons Served and Revenue, by Funding Source*



fees for services delivered. The relative percentage of persons and dollars from the various funding sources are illustrated in Figure 2.

## Customer Choice and Satisfaction

The desired outcome here is that people exercise choice and are satisfied with the quality of the services received. 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 for individual employment or community living services begin their services with an initial meeting with ICON staff as well as other interested persons such as family, funder representatives, etc. The outcome of this meeting is an individual service plan outlining the consumer's preferences, strengths, and needs, and a plan of action for achieving the consumer's goals.

In the case of group supported employment and safetynet sites, individuals are typically referred for an existing opening, so the immediate goal is clear – a new job or volunteer opportunity. ICON staff then works with the individual to determine personal goals, strengths, and needs. From this information a formal statement of goals and objectives is drafted, reviewed with the consumer, revised as necessary, and forwarded to CSB staff. 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 CSB.

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.**

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 for improvement, as well as a substantial database of outcome measures.

This year, a formal survey was conducted during June, 1999, requesting input from consumers of employment services, safety net services, and community living services. At the same time, ICON conducted a survey of Fairfax-Falls Church CSB consumers as requested by the CSB.

In addition, our database captures many measures which can be used to judge customer satisfaction, such as length of time in job development 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 an eight-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. We are working to build a similarly useful set of measures for our Community Living Services (which became a part of ICON in July, 1997), as well as the Life Skills Training program (which began in early 1999).

We are still experimenting with an effective, useful survey of consumers' responses to our services. We believe fairly strongly that surveys should be anonymous so that responses will be honest, but the response to this year's mail-in surveys was disappointingly small, particularly with respect to employment services (34% of people who are currently employed, and only 13% of those who are currently seeking a job). We also feel that some of the questions we are asking may not be returning particularly useful information, and plan to make changes to the next version of the survey instrument.

We are also hoping to develop this year an agency-wide database for the recording of individual, anecdotal feedback, which has not been systematically captured heretofore.

## 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 increased wages. The following questions are focused on assessing how well we are accomplishing this:

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

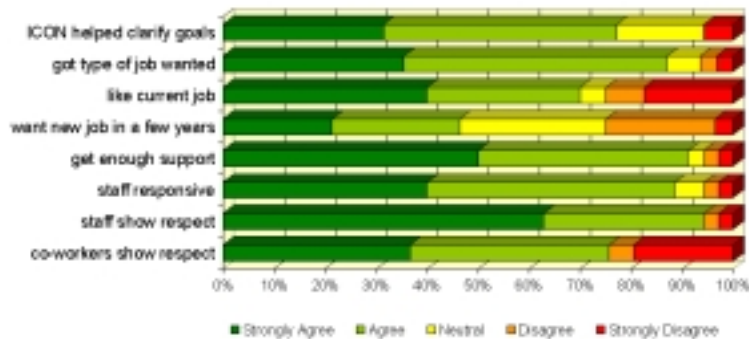
100%. ICON does not have a sheltered workshop or any other segregated facility. The three group employment sites supported by ICON are true enclaves -- supported workers are employed by the host company, work side-by-side with non-disabled employees, receive the same benefits as other employees, and have their own individual jobs.

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

According to a survey conducted in June, 1999, 87% reported that they got the type of job they wanted, and 91% say that they get enough support to be successful on the job. 89% report that ICON staff is responsive to their questions

and concerns, and 94% agree that ICON staff treat them with respect. 25% disagree with the statement, "I like the job I have." While this is a fairly high percentage, it is probably lower than the percentage for the workforce as a whole, and may be related to the fact that 25% report that co-workers don't always treat them with respect. Less than 50% say that they would like to have a new job within the next few years.

*Fig. 3 -- FY '99 Consumer Satisfaction Survey for Employment Services*



**9. What are the percentages of people who earn above and below the minimum wage?**

Three people (5.6%) made less than the minimum wage in FY '99; all are supported employees at ICON's Fairfax Hospital enclave and are paid on the basis of their productivity. The remaining 94.4% earned at or above minimum wage during FY '99.

*Fig. 4 -- Wages Earned in FY '99*



**10. What are the hourly wages of the people who have received ICON's Employment Services?**

Hourly wages in the 117 jobs supported by ICON in FY '99 ranged from \$2.96 to \$21.53; the average was \$7.25. The median wage of \$6.75 represents a 13.5% increase over wages recorded in FY '98.

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

One individual moved from Fairfax County government to a federal job which pays more and provides better benefits. Two other federal workers received step increases, though their jobs did not change.

**12. What percentage of persons employed one year or more received a raise in this year (including raises due to promotions or increases in hours)?**

Forty-eight percent (43/90) received a raise in wage during FY '99 – two received two raises within the year and another turned an unpaid work experience into a paying job.

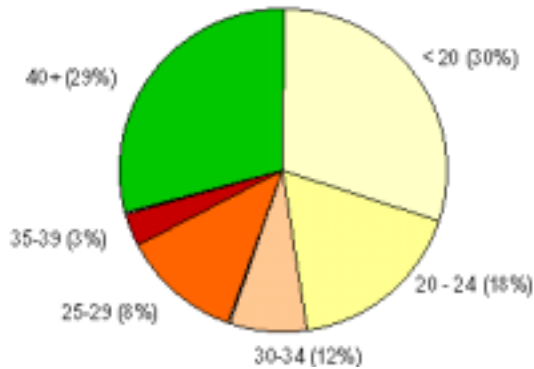
**13. How many people have left their jobs and why? What percentage was due to employee issues and what percentage was due to employer issues?**

Of the ten individuals whose employment terminated in FY '99, personal choice to quit working, medical issues, and behavioral issues accounted for three each. The tenth person was in a summer job which ended as expected when the school year began.

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

Of eight jobseekers placed in FY '99 who expressed a clear preference, seven got the number of hours they had initially requested.

*Fig. 5 -- Hours Worked Per Week*



ICON's Consumer Satisfaction Survey results indicate that of those responding, 60% are working the number of hours they would prefer; 33% would like to work more hours, and 7% would prefer to work less. Only 24% want to work a full 40-hour week, and all but one of those individuals do have a full-time, 40 hour per week job.

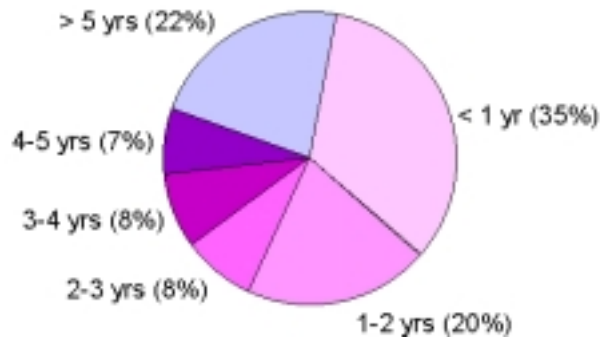
Average hours worked per week by employees supported by

ICON is just over 25, with individual employees working from 4 to 40 hours per week.

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

The average length of employment for the 73 individuals with long-term support working at 6/30/99 was 3.56 years. Two individuals have been employed in the same job for over ten years; at the opposite end of the scale, the most recently hired individual in this category started work on April 19, 1999.

*Fig. 6 -- Length of Time in Employment for Those Working at 6/30/99*



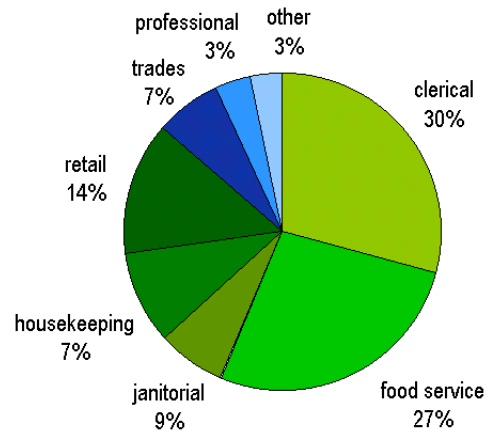
Of the ten people who left their jobs in FY '99, five had been employed less than one year (two were employed less than one month). Of the five, one job was temporary and ended at the end of the summer. Two individuals made a personal choice to quit working, another was forced to

resign due to medical complications, and the fifth was terminated due to extremes of behavior.

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

Of the 117 paid jobs supported by ICON in FY '99, the most common were clerical (34), food service (32), and retail (16). Eleven people were working in janitorial jobs, eight in housekeeping, eight in the trades, four in professional jobs, two as groundskeepers, and two in human services.

*Fig. 7 -- Types of Jobs Supported*



**17. Do job seekers obtain the type of job they indicated that they wanted in their service plan?**

Of the 29 persons placed in FY '99 who indicated a clear preference, 24 (83%) got the type of job they wanted.

**18. How many FY '99 jobseekers were separated from ICON without getting a job, and why?**

Of 99 jobseekers in FY '99, 18 separated from services during the fiscal year without having obtained a job. The reasons for separation varied widely, and of course most people had more than one reason for deciding to separate from services. Of the primary reasons, we believe that 81% are factors outside ICON's control, such as moving away or medical complications. The remaining 19% are situations that ICON might have been able to avoid: a perception that job development had taken too long and what we have termed 'unrealistic expectations'. (It should be noted that these 'unrealistic expectations' most often pertain not to the individual's potential but to factors such as the amount of paid vacation required, or the number of available jobs of a particular type located within walking distance of the person's home.

**19. How long does it take for people to obtain a job?**

For jobs obtained during FY '99, the average length of time in job development was 5.29 months and the median, 2.94 months; the low was less than a week, and the high was almost two and a half years. These figures are higher than they have been in the years immediately prior to this one; this can be explained at least in part by the difficulty we had this year in hiring new staff. This is an area we are already focusing on as a priority in FY '00.

## **Safetynet Services**

The desired outcome for these services is that, during times of unemployment, individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to maintain their job and interpersonal skills. For some people, this will be a time to explore new opportunities through volunteer experiences and job trials.

**20. What percentage of the day do participants spend in integrated settings in the community?**

All participants in ICON's safetynet services are volunteers in community locations; most perform their volunteer service at Fairfax County RECenters. All activities are fully integrated.

**21. How many individual objectives were met on service plans, and what percentage is this of the whole?**

Eleven consumers supported in safetynet sites at some time during FY '99 collectively achieved 51 of 87 objectives; this represents an achievement rate of 59%. Individual rates ranged from 0% to 100%.

**22. What are the new skills which individuals are demonstrating that are being used in everyday life?**

At the Lee District RECenter, all seven participants worked on improving their social skills during the year. For some, this meant learning to communicate in socially acceptable ways rather than through extremes of behavior; others learned more complex social skills such as how to interact with others without appearing confrontational. One man has learned to read words for the first time, and another has substantially improved his literacy and math skills through clerical tasks at the center, including learning how to make change for the first time. Three of the individuals have regularly taken

advantage of the recreational opportunities at the center to increase their mobility and stamina.

A young woman who graduated from school in 1999 spent a few weeks at the Wakefield RECenter before she found a job. During that time she got real-world experience in office tasks such as copying, faxing, filing, and collating. Another long-time consumer at this site beefed up his computer skills during FY '99, learning to use the latest release of PrintShop, which he used to develop flyers for RECenter events and displays for the bulletin boards. A third individual, also a recent school graduate, has become a valued member of the center's administrative team. When she first came to the center, she was shy and tended to stay close to other ICON consumers there; now, whenever she has completed a task she independently goes to the main office and asks for something else to do.

**23. What sorts of jobs have been obtained for individuals in safetynet services?**

Six of the participants in the safetynet program during FY '99 were looking for a job for at least part of the year. Four are now employed. Perhaps the most interesting placement was for a recent school graduate, who went to work in her father's business ... something her father had not considered possible until ICON showed him how to carve a job for his daughter and at the same time improve the productivity of his other workers.

**24. What proportion of people have made friends with people at the RECenter other than those who are paid to work with them?**

All of the individuals who participate in the safetynet program have made friends among the RECenter staff and patrons.

**25. To what extent have we helped people to expand their horizons? Consider the kinds of individual goals that have been chosen and the activities in which people are engaged.**

One man at Lee District has expanded his interest in sports through activities at the center and is learning how to take advantage of his leisure time. Several of the people there have learned clerical skills that will open up their opportunities for future employment.

**26. Describe the mechanism for obtaining feedback from the Fairfax County Park Authority. What do county employees say about the program?**

ICON staff hold regular meetings with staff at both Lee District and Wakefield RECenters. In addition, staff communicate daily with RECenter staff to make sure we are aware of any issues before they have a chance to become major issues.

Most of the RECenter staff seem to be pleased to be associated with ICON's safetynet program. At a Park Authority retreat in the fall of '97, RECenter staff were asked to name the top five things that are great about their place of employment. ICON's safetynet program came out in the top five overall, even though we are currently working with only two RECenter sites. In FY '99, park personnel at both the Mount Vernon RECenter and the Providence RECenter have expressed the desire to have Safetynet volunteers in their sites; only a dearth of referrals for the program has prevented us from expanding into these RECenters.

## Community Living Services

The desired outcome for these services is that individuals with disabilities develop 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 gain competence in conducting their daily lives, live in a place of their choosing, live with people of their choosing, participate in both necessary and preferred activities in their community, and spend time with their friends. We then look to see if individuals are accomplishing their goals. In order to provide a framework within which to assess outcomes for community living services, we have chosen to focus on community inclusion, self-determination, supporting families, independence, and relationships.

**27. What proportion of people use community resources independent of staff? When answering this question, consider the broad range of community resources such as banks, post offices, hairdressers, places of worship, and medical services.**

In order to quantify the response to this question, we have chosen ten typical community activities such as shopping at the grocery store and visiting friends; the definition of these measures was developed at the University of Oregon. This year we find that more people are attending community events and visiting friends, while a lower percentage is accessing transportation independently. Nearly twice as many are shopping independently at the grocery store.

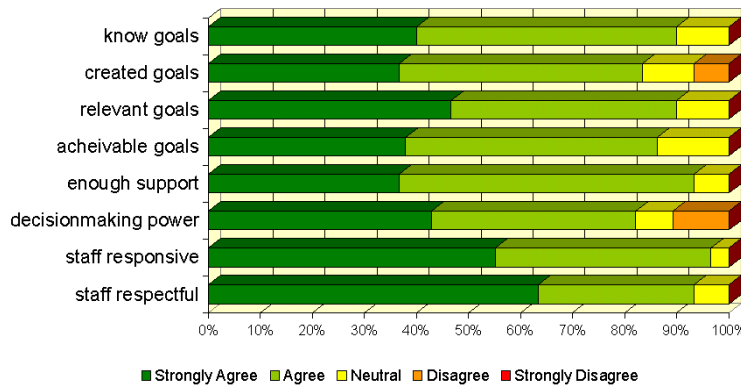
We realize that the aggregate of these measures leads to conclusions which are fuzzy at best. The real measure of our success in this area will be the number of people who have *achieved* independence in each of these areas in the preceding year. We plan to gather data next year in such a way as to enable us to quantify these achievements

**28. 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 can be a very difficult question to answer and the answers ultimately must be a matter of opinion, but we believe that 73% of the people we serve have made the decision as to where they want to live, and nearly as many (62%) have also chosen the persons they wish to live with. As might be expected, consumer choice rated lowest in the area of transportation (36%). A substantially higher percentage (89%) feel that they have control of the choice of service provider, compared with last year's 60%. The other measures of choice (how to spend money, what to do with leisure time, and what to eat) have changed little since last year (73%, 87% and 67% respectively).

**29. Are customers satisfied with the supports provided?**

Fig. 8 – Community Living Survey Results



Yes -- according to the responses we received to a survey conducted in June, 1999. 97% of respondents agreed that ICON staff are responsive to them, and 93% agreed that ICON staff treat them with respect. More than 90% agree that their goals are relevant to their life and that

they get enough support to meet their goals. Still, we feel that our service needs improvement, in that only 83% of our consumers indicated that they helped to create their goals, and only 82% say that they choose what

activities they will engage in with ICON staff. Clearly, our staff need more training in the area of consumer empowerment.

**30. What proportion of people report having friends and caring relationships with people other than those who are paid to work with them?**

Last year, 70% reported having friends in the community; this year that number is up to 76%, which gives us some encouragement that our goal of helping people to find friends in the community has been successful.

**31. To what extent have we helped people to expand their horizons? Consider the kinds of individual goals that have been chosen and the activities in which people are engaged.**

One long-time consumer of supported living services now has a non-disabled roommate, a woman she's known for years at work. Neither this consumer nor her parents believed it was possible for her to have a non-disabled roommate but now she does.

At an annual meeting recently, another consumer and members of his team expressed all around amazement at the change he's made over the last year in terms of his feelings of self-control in his life. He is seeing for the first time that he can work in a less restrictive environment; he's no longer afraid of people because he now has more confidence in himself, and he recognizes that people are there to help him.

## **Life Skills Training Program**

As mentioned, ICON's Life Skills Training program is new in this fiscal year, and as yet we have few statistics to gauge its effectiveness. In concept, each person receiving this service has the same major goal: to develop personal strategies to overcome the effects of their disability which impacts their ability to get or maintain a job; thus a primary measure of the program's success will be the number of people who go on from the program to get and keep the job of their choice or are able to maintain their present employment.

The particular objectives of each individual will of course be different, and the accomplishment of individual objectives and the time spent in the pursuit of these objectives will form another measure for the success of these services.

Finally, those participating in Life Skills Training services during the year will be surveyed for their general reactions to the services they received from ICON and their suggestions for the improvement of the program.

## Organizational Management

The desired outcome here is that ICON maintain an organizational structure that supports its mission and is financially solvent.

### 32. 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. The implementation of the Life Skills Training program in FY '99 is a clear example of our long-standing policy of attempting to create new paradigms for the accomplishment of this mission.

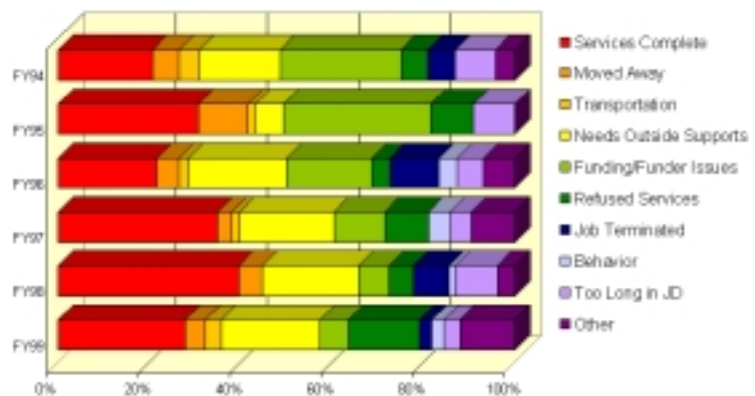
As ICON matures, we continue to refine our organizational structure to ensure that high-quality services are delivered in the most cost-effective manner possible. We continue to believe that a very flat structure is best as it tends to keep those with the most experience and most highly-developed skills closest to the consumer. We also have attempted to keep overhead to a minimum so that we can maximize the salaries of direct service staff and as a result attract and keep quality staff.

*Fig 9 -- Reasons for Separation Over Time*

### 33. What is the relationship with public funders?

Generally the feedback received from CSB and DRS personnel is positive in that our administrative practices provide information that is easily understood, to the point, and timely.

When issues of concern have been brought to our attention, they have been resolved quickly.



A review of the reasons for separation from ICON's employment services over the past eight years reveals that the number of persons separated due to funding issues has fallen from a high of 21 in FY '95 to just seven in FY '99. Of course, some of these 'funding issues' had nothing to do with ICON's relationship to our funders, but still we feel this confirms the success of our effort to improve our relationship with our funders on every level.

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

ICON believes strongly in enhancing the skills and the horizons of staff. While this has been difficult in recent years due to financial constraints, the easing of these constraints in FY '99 has meant that more staff have had the opportunity to attend training and conferences.

In addition, in FY '99, two staff persons took advantage of our limited tuition reimbursement program for job-related courses. We were able to help an additional three individuals to expand their computer skills through our no-interest computer equipment loan program.

Staff also receive encouragement to pursue areas of special interest and to suggest strategies to improve and extend services. The new Life Skills program was developed in part by an Employment Specialist with an interest and experience in the needs of survivors of brain injury. This year we were also able to pilot a program we have been discussing for many years in which two senior direct service staff were freed up four hours per week to provide mentoring to newer staff. One of these 'supercoaches' also found time to develop a new orientation handbook for new employment services staff which clearly sets out the techniques and requirements of ICON's employment services program.

An additional Employment Specialist was freed up during part of the year to pursue her interest in developing a seminar series for employers which addresses ten practical aspects of hiring and supervising employees with disabilities. ICON is currently pursuing funding to complete the development of this program and implement it in the community.

**35. Are staff satisfied with job roles, opportunities, and input into the strategies of the organization?**

Comments on the occasion of performance reviews and exit interviews indicate that staff are very satisfied with their position in the ICON team. Nearly all feel that they have a voice in shaping the organization and

appreciate the autonomy they experience in the workplace. This is borne out in staff attrition rates. During FY '99, of 38 full-time employees, nine left the company: four for personal reasons unrelated to the job, four sought other positions in order to get an increase in pay, and one was terminated.

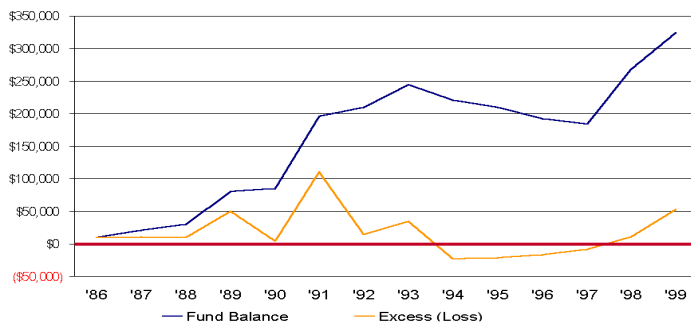
A further measure of staff satisfaction may be found in a recently-conducted survey which invited direct service and administrative staff to anonymously rate the performance of the organization's management team. Results indicate that staff as a whole rate management staff well above 'satisfactory'. We believe that this is a valuable general measure of staff morale, in addition to being a tool individual management team members may use to set goals for improvement.

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

We have not yet received our audit for FY '99 but the unaudited financial statement at 6/30/99 shows a year-end excess of \$52,537 on revenues of \$1.37 million. This excess is largely due to the fact that ICON's Executive

*Figure 10 -- Fund Balance and Annual Excess (Loss)*

	Fund Balance	Excess (Loss)
'86	\$ 10,021	\$ 8,680
'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	208,003	(21,860)
'96	192,221	(16,782)
'97	183,653	(6,568)
'98	268,306	10,819
'99	324,450	52,537



Director, Robyn Fitzgerald, was promoted into that position at the beginning of the fiscal year, and a replacement for her previous position as Program Director for Employment Services was not found until early March. In addition, ICON was able to change health insurance vendors, resulting in a decrease in this rapidly-escalating cost. The excess of \$52,537 in FY '99 helps to offset losses of \$70,712 experienced during the 'lean years' of FY '94 to FY '97.