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# Division of Vocational Rehabilitation 2008 Consumer Satisfaction Survey Results

Prepared in Collaboration with the  
Governor's Committee on Employment and  
Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

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***The mission of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is to assist individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.***

## **Executive Summary**

In an effort to ensure that DVR is meeting its program responsibilities to its consumers while providing the best services possible, the Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities (GCERPD) in collaboration with DVR conducts an on-going Consumer Satisfaction Survey. The survey contains a series of statements designed to measure consumers' attitudes and satisfaction levels. A survey was mailed to all DVR consumers whose cases were closed during FFY2008 after having received services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This report summarizes the results of those surveys.

### **Key Findings**

- 863 surveys were mailed; 11% or 97 were returned undeliverable; 24% or 186 consumers responded.
- Overall satisfaction with VR services was at 85% which is an increase from FFY2007. Those respondents who left employed expressed an 88% satisfaction with DVR while those who left unemployed rated their satisfaction at 73%.
- 90% of respondents were willing to refer either friends or family to DVR.
- 85% reported they were aware of the Client Assistance Program (CAP) which represents a 21% increase from the FFY2007 survey.
- Overall, the survey results show an increase over the FFY2007 survey. The most positive responses were in the areas of understanding the purpose of DVR, their treatment, and their involvement in choosing their vocational goal and services.
- The top three items respondents reported they liked about their experience with DVR are: (1) the relationship with their VR counselor, (2) the help they received, and (3) the DVR program in general.
- 12% of the respondents reported what they disliked the most about their experience with DVR was the time required to move through the VR process.
- The results are skewed slightly towards urban and employed consumers. The urban consumers greatly out-number those from the other areas. Those consumers who were employed after VR services responded at higher rate than those were unemployed.

## **Background**

34 CFR § 361.17 (h)(4) charges the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to review and analyze consumer satisfaction with DVR. In Alaska, the GCREPD functions as the SRC.

In an effort to measure the level of satisfaction and examine the general attitudes of DVR consumers, the GCREPD and DVR jointly implemented an on-going consumer satisfaction survey process in July 2007. The survey is a series of statements designed to measure the consumer's attitudes and satisfaction level in the broad categories of:

1. Program Satisfaction: overall satisfaction with the program with a focus on employment.
2. Program Information: are we conveying our mission and providing adequate information about the VR program.
3. Consumer Involvement: this area focuses on client choice in both VR services and the vocational goal.
4. Consumer and Staff Interaction: this area focuses on the counselor/client relationship and overall interaction with all VR staff.

The survey results become part of the GCREPD's annual report and are used in DVR's strategic planning process, the comprehensive needs assessment and throughout the year by DVR in an on-going attempt to improve VR services.

## **Methodology**

- Surveys are mailed monthly to all consumers whose cases were closed in the previous month after receiving services on an IPE. Timely surveying helps to maximize the response rate. This group of consumers was initially targeted as they have been through the entire VR process and DVR does not want to continually resurvey consumers with open cases. The GCREPD and DVR are currently designing a means of surveying open cases without over-burdening the consumer.
- The survey utilizes a Likert Scale format with a comment section.
- The survey is sent from the GCREPD and includes a postage paid return envelope.
- Follow-up surveys are not sent to non-respondents due to the staff time required for this activity.
- Descriptive statistics are used to summarize the results. The survey data will be kept and used for longitudinal comparisons and trend analysis.

## Survey Results

### Validity

Of the 863 surveys mailed, 11% or 97 were returned as undeliverable leaving a total population of 766. From this group, 186 consumers responded thus achieving a valid statistical sample size with a confidence level of 95%, plus or minus 6.26%.

The results are skewed toward employed consumers over unemployed consumers as those who exited employed responded at a higher rate than those whose cases were closed unemployed. The percentage of the responses from the geographic areas of the state, closely resemble the percentages of those surveyed. The results are therefore considered to be a valid representation along geographic lines. Even so, the consumers from the more urban communities of Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau greatly outnumber those from the other areas, thus skewing the results toward an urban setting.

<b>Breakdown of Percent Surveyed and Responses By Geographic Location and Employment Status</b>				
	<b>Mailed Surveys</b>		<b>Returned Surveys</b>	
<b>Geographic Location</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Urban	563	63%	118	65%
Marine Highway or Road	260	32%	24	30%
Remote	40	5%	9	5%
<b>Employment Status</b>				
Employed	568	66%	145	78%
Unemployed	295	34%	41	22%

### Comparison to Last Year's Survey

All but two questions showed an increase in consumer satisfaction over last year's survey. The most noticeable increase was 21% more consumers agreed they were aware of the Client Assistance Program (CAP). This increase is most likely a result of the awareness raised with staff when the FFY2007 were lower than expected. In the same program area, there was a 10% increase in knowing about the right to appeal DVR's decisions. Phone calls being returned, the consumer's involvement in the planning of the services they received, and VR helping them reach their vocational goal also showed marked increases.

The table below shows the changes in consumer satisfaction for each statement in the survey from last year to this year.

<b>Change in Satisfaction from FFY2007 to FFY2008</b>			
<b>for</b>			
<b>All Consumers Responding to Survey</b>			
<b>Statements</b>	<b>FFY07</b>	<b>FFY08</b>	<b>% Change</b>
I was aware of CAP & it could help me with disputes.	64%	85%	+21%
I was informed of my right to appeal DVR's decisions.	81%	91%	+10%
My phone calls were returned.	80%	90%	+10%
I helped plan the services I received.	83%	92%	+9%
VR helped me reach my vocational goal.	70%	81%	+11%
My counselor and I had a good working relationship.	86%	92%	+6%
I received enough information to make good choices.	80%	86%	+6%
I was able to see my counselor when I needed to.	81%	87%	+6%
I was treated with courtesy and respect.	91%	96%	+5%
I feel my counselor explained all services available.	81%	86%	+5%
DVR staff were available to help me when needed.	86%	89%	+4%
I was involved in choosing my vocational goal.	89%	92%	+3%
Overall, I am satisfied with the services I received.	82%	85%	+3%
I knew DVR services were to help me find a job.	95%	97%	+2%
I am satisfied with my job.	84%	86%	+2%
I would refer a friend or relative to DVR	91%	90%	-1%
Services provided in a reasonable amount of time.	84%	82%	-2%

Highlights of the survey results are briefly analyzed below including consumer comments about their experience with DVR followed by graphs showing all the survey results.

Overall Results

Graph 1 shows the results grouped by the survey areas. No one category stands out as particularly stronger or weaker than the rest; all have strengths that can be built upon and areas that could be improved. Overall, the DVR program appears to be rather consistent and stable in all areas.

Graph 2 ranks all the survey statements for all respondents. The results show a strong, positive VR staff/consumer relationships as well as the consumer's involvement in the VR process. What is less positive and somewhat perplexing are the lowest ranked

statements both of which pertain to obtaining employment which are answered only by those consumers who are employed (see Graph 3).

#### Results by Employment Status

As would be expected, a higher percentage of surveys were returned and the overall satisfaction scores were higher for those employed than those unemployed. Both groups ranked knowing the purpose of DVR services and being treated with respect in the mid-nineties. Most of the remaining responses for those employed remained above the 90% level while all of the remaining responses for the unemployed dropped to below 90%. Both had similar scores of 85% for the awareness of the Client Assistance Program. The lowest response for the unemployed group was 69% which was for services being received in a reasonable amount of time.

Graph 3 shows this group has a very strong sense of the purpose of DVR, yet does not agree at nearly the same level that VR services helped them with employment. Survey comments might provide some insight as the comments indicate people often felt they obtained their job themselves, even though they were satisfied with the VR services they received. One interpretation of this data could be that DVR services have helped the consumers become skilled and independent enough to actively obtain their own job.

#### Results by Geographic Areas

As a statewide program, DVR has an obligation to provide services as equitably across the state as possible. This is a challenge given the size of the state and the itinerant nature of VR services provided in some areas. The satisfaction with VR services and the program directly relates to the ready access of such services with the more urban areas of the state the most satisfied and the remote areas of the state the least satisfied with VR services. Even so, 100% of the remote respondents would refer a friend or family member to DVR and also felt they were treated with respect.

#### Results by Transfer Cases

The FFY2008 survey asked a question if the consumer's case had ever been transferred. Anecdotal information over the years has indicated transfer cases are problematic as the service delivery is interrupted and a relationship must be developed with a new VR counselor.

Thirty-three percent of those surveyed reported their case had been transferred at sometime during life of the case. The primary reason given for the transfer was DVR initiated which is typically a result of VR counselor turnover. Of those transfer cases, 76% became employed. This is slightly lower than the 78% of total respondents, although not considered significant. This indicates that successful service delivery continues even with the aforementioned delays. The rate for the overall satisfaction with VR services is at 77% for transfer cases compared to a rate of 87% for those who did not have their case transferred. DVR considers this to be significant.

#### Consumer Comments

The consumer's comments about experience with DVR are grouped by common themes and shown in the tables below.

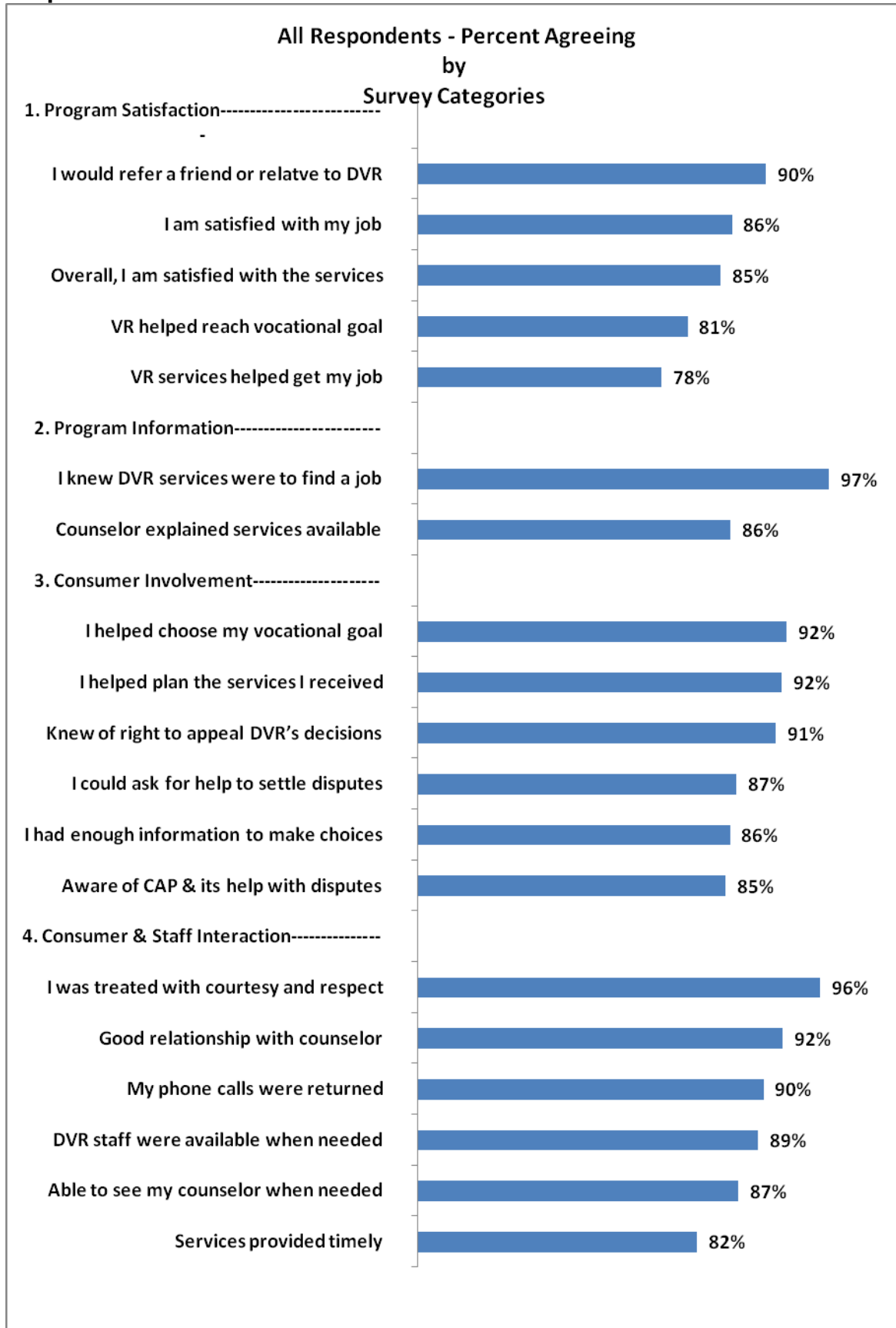
Eighty-eight percent of the consumers surveyed registered positive comments while 49% registered a negative comment about their DVR experience. The counselor relationship was the most liked aspect of the overall DVR experience while the time required for services was the most disliked.

<b>What Consumers Liked the Most About Their Experience with DVR</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Number on</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>
Counselor relationship	37	20%
Help received	34	18%
Overall program	27	15%
Treated respectfully	24	13%
Entire Staff	24	13%
Employment assistance	18	10%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>88%</b>

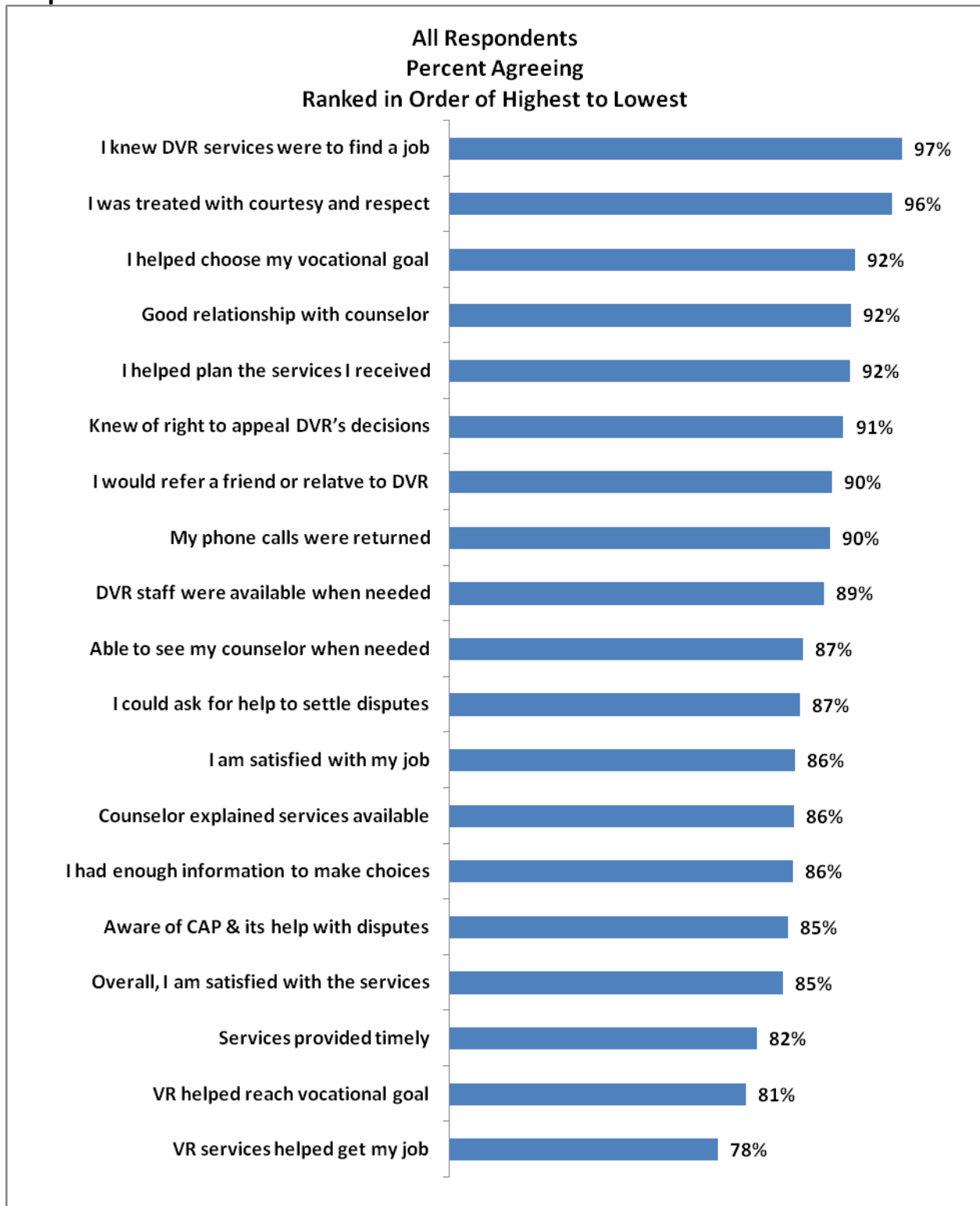
<b>What Consumers Disliked the Most About Their Experience with DVR</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>
Time required	22	12%
Services not provided	20	11%
Lack of support	17	9%
Staff	15	8%
Overall program	6	3%
Offices – location and facility	6	3%
Vendors	2	1%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>49%</b>



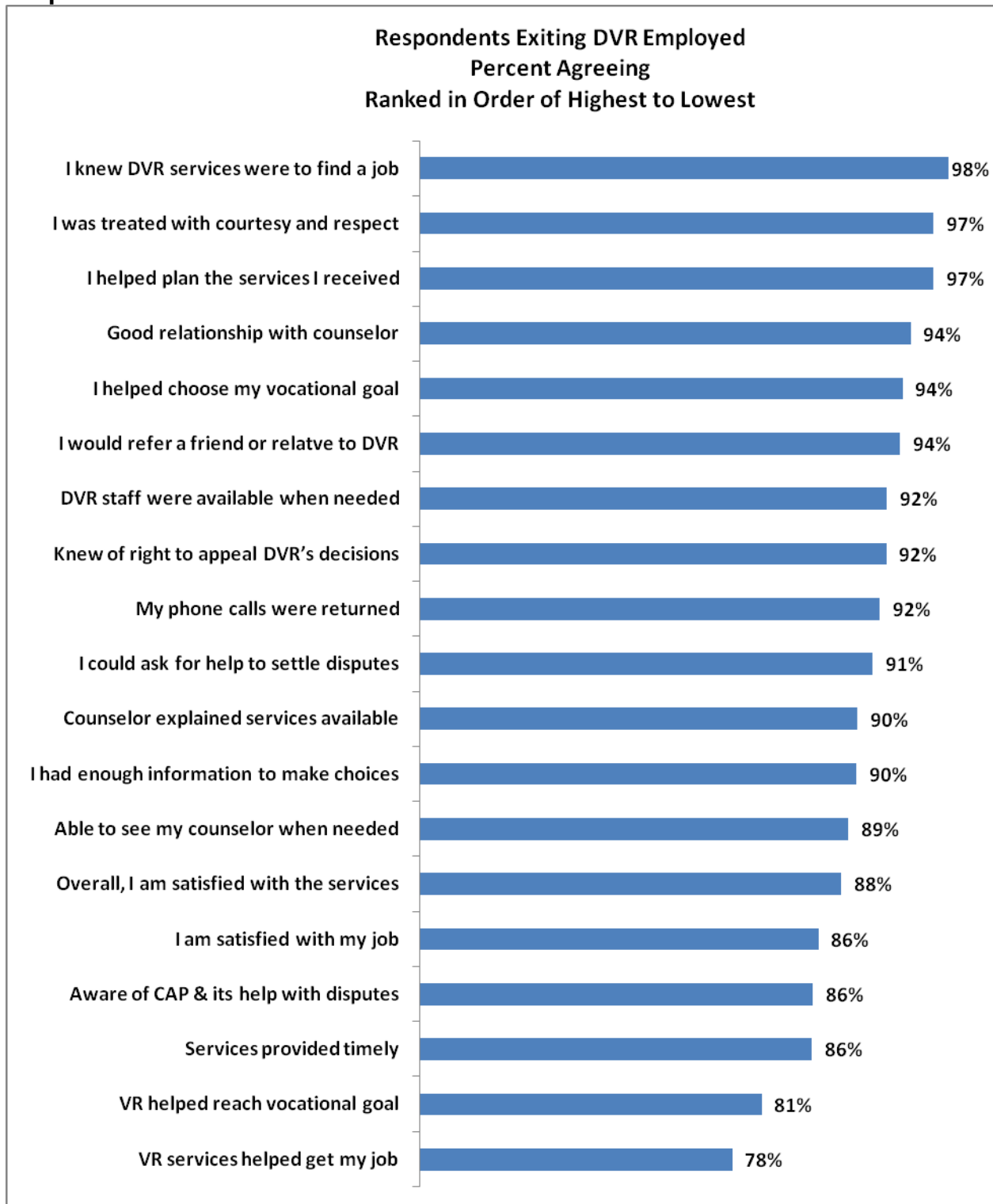
**Graph 1**



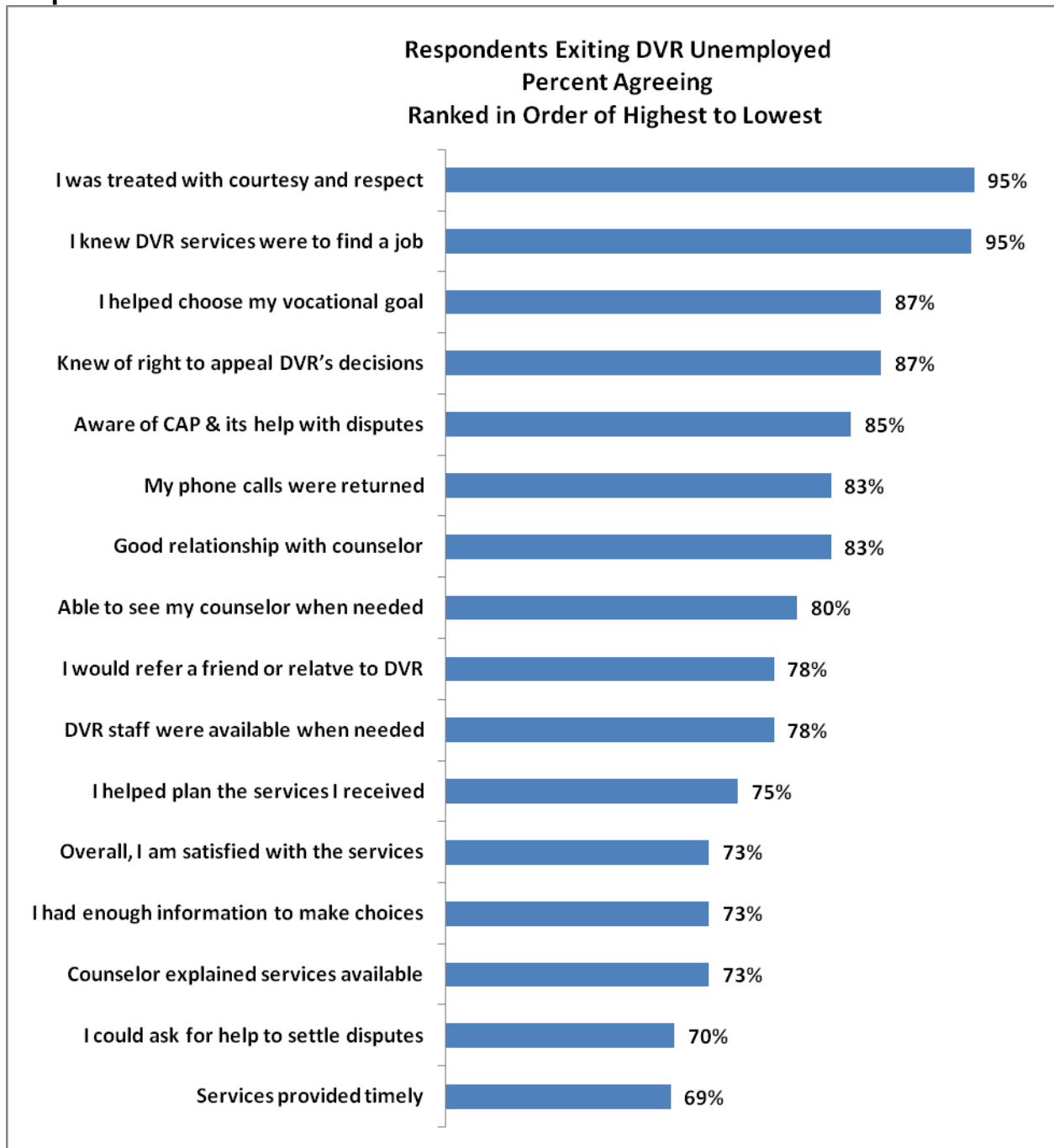
**Graph 2**



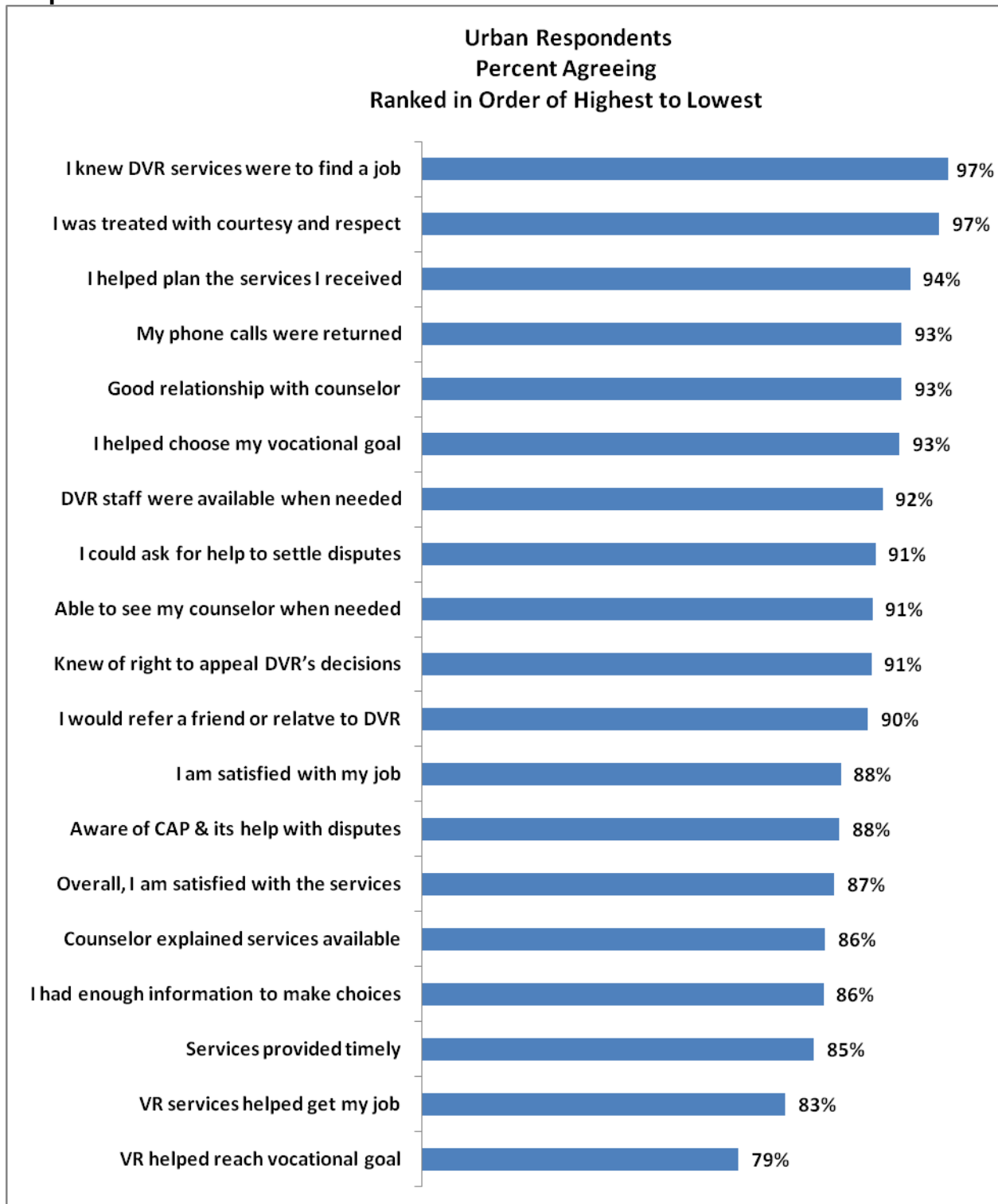
**Graph 3**



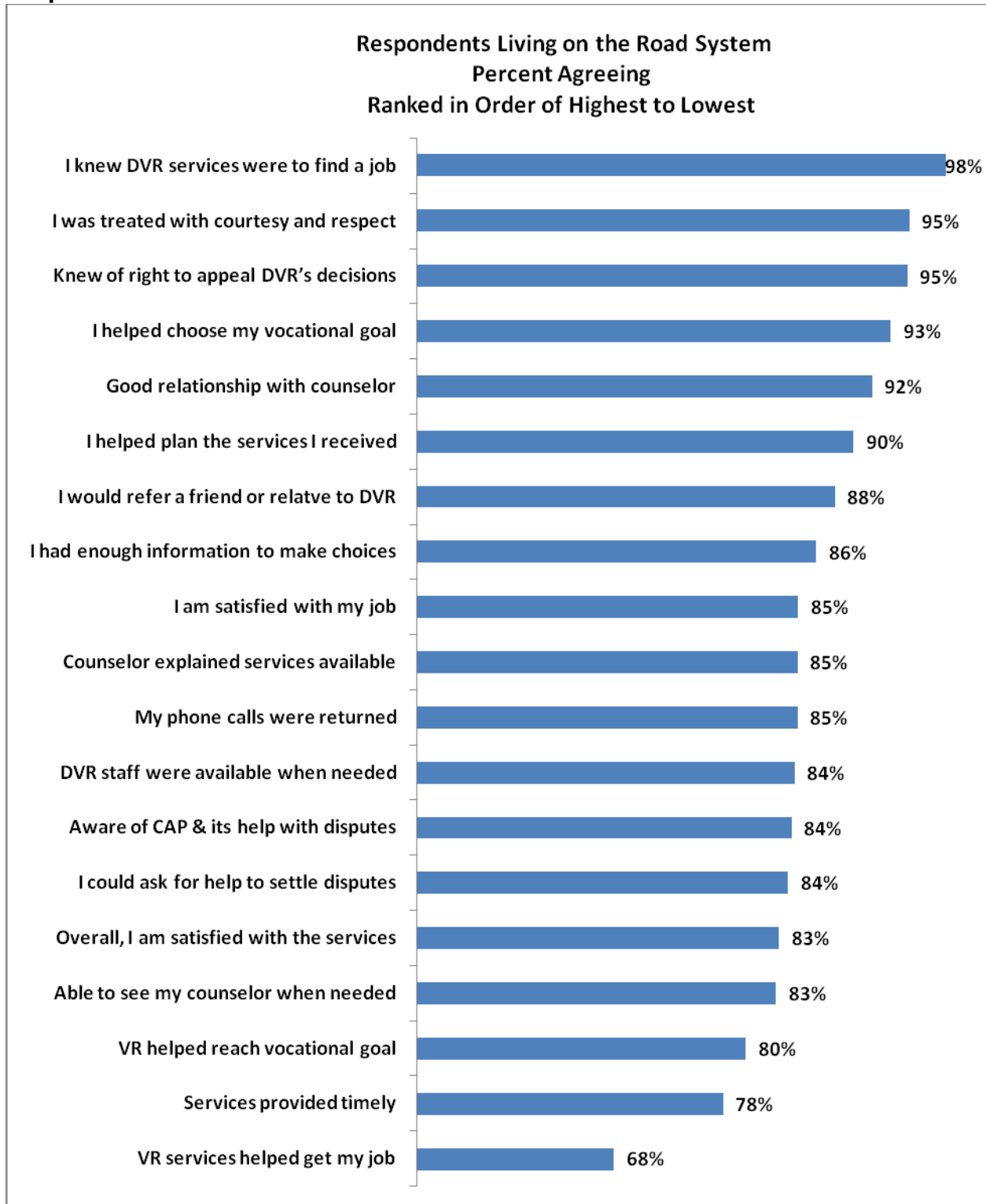
**Graph 4**



**Graph 5**



**Graph 6**



**Graph 7**

