



# The Outcomes Data Mart: What It Is and How It Works

**First Time Users: Be Sure to Read Question 5**

## 1. What Is the Outcomes Data Mart?

Welcome to the Ohio Mental Health Consumer Outcomes Data Mart (ODM). The ODM is designed to help you ask meaningful questions about Consumer Outcomes and get them answered. This document should provide some basic background to get you started on exploring the ODM and seeing what it has to offer.

## 2. Where Can I Find the ODM?

The ODM is accessible directly from the Outcomes Web Site:

***<http://www.mh.state.oh.us/oper/outcomes/outcomes.index.html>***

## 3. How Does the ODM Work?

A key strength of the ODM is its ability to allow a user with little or no knowledge of the details of the Outcomes Initiative to frame meaningful questions and get them answered. The ODM accomplishes this end by guiding you to the desired information through two sets of simple, easily understood questions supported by on-screen lists and instructions. Some prompts require an entry; others are optional. As you respond to each prompt, the ODM will present you with the next appropriate options based upon what you selected before. Although the on-screen labels are simple and basic, the general prompts explained in the Help Screens are as follows:

- Consumer Population (Required): Do you want to look at Outcomes information for adult consumers or child & adolescent consumers?
- Source (Required): Consumer Outcomes scores come from multiple sources. Whose measurements of the consumer would you like to see?
- Consumer Characteristics (Optional): List any special characteristics of the consumers for whom you'd like to see Outcomes scores. If you're not interested in making a specific selection for a given characteristic, select the "All Combined" response (i.e., the first selection in each section).
- Time the Consumers Have Been in Treatment (Required): Outcomes are measured at various points during a consumer's treatment. Indicate the approximate time in treatment (as measured in time since last admission) that best describes the consumers for whom you'd like to see Outcomes scores.
- Reporting Period (Optional): Outcomes can be examined according to the fiscal or calendar year in which they were obtained. For what period would you like to see information?
- Outcomes to be Reported (Required): Outcomes are measured for several areas of a consumer's life. From which area would you like to see information?
- Report Format (Required): Outcomes can be displayed as bar graphs or tables. How would you like to display the Outcomes you have selected?

In keeping with the philosophy of not trying to be everything to everyone, the ODM offers only two types of results displays — simple bar graphs and two-dimensional tables.

- Bar Graphs: Bar graphs show a selected Outcome and the percentage of responses represented by each answer. Sample size, mean score and standard deviation are reported with each graph. Bar graphs can be prepared for an individual service board, an individual residence board, an individual provider agency, or for the entire state.

- Tables: Tables are available for the entire state and show the responses for a selected Outcome as the columns, and service boards, residence boards, provider agencies, or a selected demographic characteristic (e.g., gender, education) as the rows.

#### 4. What Do I Need to Know Before Using the ODM?

Conventional Windows: The ODM is a relatively conventional Microsoft Windows application, so if you already know how to use Windows and a web browser you shouldn't have many problems. If you don't know Windows or browsers you should probably get familiar with them before trying the ODM. But let's face it; if you found the ODM you must know something about what you're doing.

Symbols Used: Before you start, there are several symbols you should understand:



Each on-screen ODM prompt is preceded by a blue information symbol. Click on the symbol and you will see a brief explanation of what the current question is asking. The explanation will disappear when you start to enter information for the question.



Following each prompt, you will be given the opportunity to specify what option you'd like to select for that question. If you want to see all the possible options for a particular item, click on the small down arrow. Then select the option you want by clicking on it. It will appear in the window next to the field and you can continue with the next item.



Occasionally you will see questions where several items in a list are preceded by an open circle. To select one of the items in the list, simply click on the circle next to that item. If you wish to select a different item, click on the circle next to that item and the first selection will go away.

What You See Is What You Get: As mentioned earlier, the ODM will guide you through a series of questions that will help you select the particular Outcomes you'd like to see and how you'd like them reported. Some questions are required, and have to be answered in order to continue. Other questions are optional, and can be bypassed. However, whatever information is displayed in the window next to an item is the information that will be used for the report. So check to make sure the information you want is the information shown, because what you see is what you get.

Grayed Out Fields: Sometimes items may appear grayed out ([like this](#)), and you will not be able to make selections for those items. This is because the items in question are not appropriate given the previous selections you have made.

#### 5. Are There Other Things That Might Be Helpful to Know?

Absolutely. There are some interesting points that relate to how the ODM works, how the ODM appears on your computer, and still others that constitute an interesting trick or two. Read on.

- Printing Agency Tables: Although almost all reports will print in a reasonable period of time ranging from a few seconds to a minute or so, a table with a separate row for each agency may take many minutes to print, and may even time out on some computers. This unfortunate fact is caused by a known limitation of the report writer software used in the ODM and is being worked on with the hope that a remedy will be found. In the interim, however, there are some possible workarounds if you want to print information from such a table including using the Print Screen key and copying the desired information into another document which can be printed. If you're only interested in the performance of a single agency, you can run a bar graph for that agency and print it. Bar graphs don't have the raw numbers, but they do contain totals and percentages from which you can compute close estimates.
- Pop-Up Windows: Once you have selected the reporting criteria and confirmed that you want to prepare a report, the ODM will display the report in a separate window on your computer. If the report does not appear, it may be because your web browser is set to block "pop-up" windows. You may have to temporarily disable the blocking in order to see the reports.
- Other Web Browsers: The ODM was created using Microsoft's Internet Explorer. Some other web browsers such as Mozilla's Firefox may display results slightly differently and may result in slight misalignments of labels and other information. All the data will be correct, but the report may not look quite the same.

- Portrait vs. Landscape Printing: Is your printed table missing a column or two on the right side? If so, it's probably because your web browser is set to print pages in "portrait" mode. Wider reports may require a "landscape" setting in order for all the columns to fit on the page. Most browsers can be reset by selecting the [File] command followed by the [Page Setup] command. Change the orientation from "Portrait" to "Landscape" and you should be on your way.
- Downloading Data: Sorry. The ODM does not support the export of tables and other information into external software packages such as Microsoft Office applications or SPSS. This is not due to an oversight; the restriction was a conscious decision made to protect consumer confidentiality by limiting the ways in which consumer-related information can be viewed (e.g., restricting tables to statewide analyses).
- Using Outcomes Data for Program Planning – A Note of Caution: The Ohio Mental Health Consumer Outcomes System provides valuable information to users and purchasers of services. However, there are two key cautions and qualifications that must be taken into account before using the Consumer Outcomes information for funding and selective contracting with agencies/provider organizations: (1) there are very few empirically established causal links between specific mental health system services, specific agencies, or specific workers/clinicians and consumer outcomes; and (2) comparisons of Outcomes across mental health boards, or agencies/provider organizations, or workers/clinicians should be viewed with extreme caution.
  - i. Outcomes findings should be used as indicators of areas requiring further exploration and subsequent treatment, program, and system planning.
  - ii. It is not appropriate to assume the cause of a given finding can be attributed only to the mental health system or to a specific provider or practitioner.
  - iii. Caution must be exercised in interpreting Outcomes data.
  - iv. Potential data users should resist the temptation to compare providers or board areas based on simple analyses that don't reflect the differences in programs and the consumers they serve.
  - v. Data users must recognize their responsibility to monitor such inappropriate use of the data.
- Progress Indicator: Some reports can take a significant time to prepare. If you find yourself wondering what's going on with the ODM, you can often use your browser's "progress indicator" as a clue. When your browser opens a new window for a report you've selected, it will also display a green bar graph at the foot of the window that expands as the task progresses. It's not a perfect indicator of what's happening, but it should at least let you know that your browser hasn't completely gone to sleep.
- Multiple Agency Identifiers: If you want to prepare a report for a particular agency, you may find several entries for that agency when you go to select it for the report. This occurs because some agencies have submitted Outcomes data using several identifiers over time. We are taking steps to minimize the problem, but for the present you may have to run multiple reports to get all the data for those agencies.
- Duplicate or Confusing Agency Names: Which agency is which? I often seems like deciphering provider agency names is like trying to find your bag at the airport baggage claim. They all seem the same. The ODM can't help change the names, but there's a link on the Outcomes Data Mart Web Site that will take you to a listing of all Ohio providers and their MACSIS contact information, which may help you identify the exact agency you want for a given ODM report.
- Stacking Bar Graphs: There is one nifty trick you might want to try. The ODM opens up reports in separate windows on your computer. One of the nice things about that feature is that you can easily jump back and forth between the data selection screen and any reports you have run by simply clicking on the right item in the tray at the bottom of your screen.  
 That means you can run multiple reports by clicking on the selection screen tab, changing the responses to only those prompts you wish, and preparing another report. Each new report will open in a separate window. One trick you might find useful is to run several reports with slightly different selection criteria and have them open in several separate maximized windows. Then by selecting

one tab after another you can see how the results differ by watching the bar graphs change each time you click on a different report. Click, click, click. Just like in the movies!

## 6. Is the ODM a Powerful Data Base for Research?

No. The ODM is a simple tool to provide limited basic and accurate decision-support information about reported consumer Outcomes in Ohio; it is not an attempt to be “all things to all people.” The primary uses of ODM information are for clinical and organizational management rather than research.

## 7. Can the ODM Report Individual Consumers’ Changes?

No. The ODM allows comparisons of consumer groups with given sets of characteristics to similar groups at different points in time (even though the individuals in the groups may not be the same). In that regard, the design of the ODM is similar to the design of the U.S. Census, which can tell us about how communities are changing without knowing if any of the same people were present in both the “before” and “after” measures.

So, keep in mind that the ODM does not provide information about how particular consumers are doing; rather, it provides objective information about reported consumer Outcomes. The basic “unit” of the ODM is a single administration of an Outcomes instrument with no reference to the individual consumer other than some basic HIPAA-compliant demographic information.

Data integrity and confidentiality issues precluded the option of a “within-consumer” design where change measures within individuals could be measured at multiple points during treatment. In addition, no implicit value judgments about consumers getting “better” or “worse” are included in the design. One can only speak about “change” for similar groups at different times. Therefore, it is inappropriate to attach simple explanations to why some score changes do or do not occur without having other supporting data.

## 8. How Confidential Is the Information in the ODM?

Best practice, Ohio statute and HIPAA requirements mandate that information contained in the ODM be completely confidential; it should not be possible to use any information in the ODM to identify any specific individual. Therefore: (1) no consumer identifiers are contained in the ODM; (2) the number of reporting formats and options is limited by the design; and (3) no user downloading of raw data sets is allowed.

## 9. How Up-to-Date Is the ODM Information?

The ODM data base is updated by the ODMH Office of Information Services (OIS) every three months. Each time the ODM data base is refreshed it is completely replaced with a new data base prepared from the Outcomes System production data base. That way, any corrections or changes that get made to the production data base automatically flow to the ODM the next time it is refreshed.