

2. YOUR JOB AS A FIELD INTERVIEWER

2.1 Introduction

Many factors make a NSDUH field interviewer successful. The best interviewers are quick, efficient, and cost-effective without sacrificing response rates or high data quality. The key is to combine your knowledge of NSDUH protocols and procedures with your natural talents, creativity, and social skills. Some general guidelines are:

- follow **all** procedures and instructions carefully
- know the study
- listen and reply to respondents' needs and concerns
- be convinced of the importance of the survey
- maintain open communication with your supervisor.

Other skills crucial to success are timeliness, organization, attention to detail, and persuasiveness. This chapter outlines your responsibilities as an FI and shows in general how the above factors come together for a successful and enjoyable NSDUH experience.

2.2 Screening and Interviewing Process

During the screening and interviewing process, you are responsible for the following activities:

1. review your assigned segment materials (maps, Selected DU List, etc.)
2. prepare and mail a lead letter to each SDU with a mailable address
3. locate (using the segment materials) and contact each sample dwelling unit
4. determine that the SDU is a true HU or true GQU, and check for missed dwelling units
5. identify and locate an eligible screening respondent (SR), obtain cooperation, and complete screening informed consent procedures using the Study Description
6. conduct screening by presenting the questions **exactly** as shown on the iPAQ
7. if no one is selected for an interview, obtain verification information for quality control procedures and thank the screening respondent
8. if one or two persons are selected, attempt to begin the interview right away; if not possible, obtain appointment information, trying to schedule the interview(s) in the near future
9. obtain informed consent from a respondent (and gain permission from a parent/guardian before approaching a youth respondent aged 12-17) by reading verbatim the Introduction and Informed Consent script
10. conduct the interview(s) following project protocols, including:
 - reading all FI administered questions exactly as shown on the screen
 - using neutral probes as necessary
 - completing the calendar as instructed with the respondent

- explaining the computer to the respondent, then allowing the individual to complete the practice session
- using the Showcards as instructed
- obtaining verification information for quality control (QC) procedures
- giving the respondent the cash payment
- thanking the respondent.

11. transmit the data to RTI on a daily basis.

In order to be successful, it is important to plan adequate time for your field visits. This includes travel time to the area, spending at least four hours in the sample areas for screening and interviewing, and travel time home.

Exhibit 2.1 illustrates the basic steps in the screening and interviewing process. Review this exhibit carefully before you continue reading the manual.

2.3 Field Interviewer Responsibilities

Exhibit 2.2 provides a job description for a NSDUH Field Interviewer. A summary of your job responsibilities follows:

- read this manual carefully and complete the home study exercises prior to training
- successfully complete the FI training program
- maintain the confidentiality of all survey data and materials at all times
- prepare and mail lead letters to SDUs
- locate your assignment areas and plan the best travel routes to/from areas
- locate and contact the SDUs, obtaining participation of residents
- conduct screenings at SDUs with eligible screening respondents, presenting all questions exactly as shown on the iPAQ screen
- conduct interviews with selected respondent(s) precisely following all project procedures; as needed, schedule appointments for interviews at units with selected respondent(s)
- maintain daily records of your data collection activities
- transmit information to RTI at the end of each day of work
- carefully handle and track all money used for cash incentive payments to interview respondents
- review the status of cases during telephone conferences with your supervisor, providing detailed information about any problems with pending cases and cases put on hold
- complete and submit to your FS weekly Production, Time, and Expense reports (ePTE reports) and other administrative forms in a timely manner and according to prescribed schedules
- meet or exceed project efficiency targets
- meet or exceed project quality standards.

Exhibit 2.1 Screening and Interviewing Process

1. Review segment materials to locate area and plot the best and most direct travel route to and from the area.
2. Prepare and mail lead letters.
3. Locate (using the segment materials) and contact selected DU.
4. Determine that the SDU is a true HU or true GQU, and check for missed dwelling units.
5. Is anyone home?
No → Complete Record of Calls (ROC) in iPAQ. Try DU later.
If unit is vacant, not a DU, or only a temporary residence, verify with neighbor or other knowledgeable person. Complete verification (QC) information and complete ROC.
Yes ↓
6. Is an eligible SR (resident of DU, 18+) available?
No → Try to determine a good time to return. Complete ROC.
Yes ↓
7. Complete the household roster and selection process with the SR.
8. Any respondents selected?
No → Obtain verification (QC) information and thank SR. Complete ROC.
Yes ↓
9. Can the selected R complete interview now?
No → Establish an appointment. Complete ROC, including an entry about the interview appointment.
Yes ↓
10. Introduce self, study, and obtain informed consent from respondent. (Obtain parent/guardian consent before approaching a selected youth.)
11. Conduct interview.
12. Complete end of the interview tasks, including Quality Control Form.
13. Give respondent cash payment.
14. Thank respondent, complete ROC.
15. Transmit data to RTI.

Exhibit 2.2 Job Description for a NSDUH Field Interviewer

FIELD INTERVIEWER JOB DESCRIPTION

General

POSITION DESCRIPTION:

The Field Interviewer (FI) conducts field work for survey research projects conducted by Research Triangle Institute (RTI). FIs prepare for and conduct data collection operations according to project protocols. Field interviewers ensure that field data collection activities are carried out in an efficient and cost effective manner, that the data collected are of the highest possible quality, and that all activities are conducted in a professional manner following established procedures.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Available for entire training and data collection period.
- Able to successfully complete training.
- Have reliable personal automobile available for business use.
- Must be willing to work evenings and weekends on a weekly and regular basis.
- Able to keep project information confidential.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS:

- Successful experience with field interviewing activities.
- Demonstrate the ability to work with supervisor and complete assignments on schedule.
- Use maps to locate sample units.
- Obtain cooperation of survey respondents by effectively answering questions and addressing concerns.
- Conduct personal interviews following prescribed protocols.
- Accurately complete all project documents including electronic survey instruments, and all reporting forms.
- Adhere strictly to project deadlines for completing interviews, reporting progress, and returning materials and equipment.
- Maintain accurate, up-to-date records of progress in the field.
- Submit timely and accurate reports.
- Maintain a professional, cooperative relationship with your supervisor and other project staff, objectively sharing your thoughts while displaying an understanding of project management's concerns.
- Be receptive—not defensive—when given feedback from project personnel about your performance, striving to learn and improve.
- Keep supervisor informed of problem areas that might affect progress.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

- Travel frequently to respondent locations.
- Be outside and exposed to all types of weather.
- Be exposed to fumes and odors as might be expected in any outdoor environment.
- Stand, walk, and climb stairs.
- Communicate through speech and listening.
- May be required to transport equipment and materials such as laptop computers and notebooks weighing 15 pounds or more.

Exhibit 2.2 Job Description for a NSDUH Field Interviewer (continued)

FIELD INTERVIEWER JOB DESCRIPTION **PROJECT 9009** **National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)**

The Field Interviewer (FI) for the NSDUH will be responsible for:

- In-person screening/interviewing of selected households with the sample distributed over the four calendar quarters (see schedule in Chapter 1).
- Proper administration of a computer-assisted interview (CAI), approximately one hour in length, to selected individuals throughout the four quarters of the data collection period.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR FIs:

- For FIs who are new to the project: Attend and successfully complete an FI project training session scheduled to last 6-7 days. Additionally, participate in on-the-job training with a mentor or FS, as needed.
- For FIs who are NSDUH veterans: Attend and successfully complete a veteran FI project training session scheduled to last 2-3 days.
- Bilingual Spanish-speaking interviewers will be required to review the translated instruments and other procedures unique to bilingual interviewing. For FIs who are new to the project, this bilingual training session will last approximately an additional day.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SCREENING/INTERVIEWING ACTIVITY:

- Available for approximately 15-25 hours per week to conduct screening/interviewing during field data collection periods.
- Available and willing to work evening and weekend hours as required by your specific assignments.
- Perform field work according to expectations defined in the general FI Job Description (Major Requirements), completing the required number of interviews in the designated FI Region(s) by the end of each quarterly field period.
- Available for quarterly Field Observations by a member of the NSDUH management staff.
- Prompt, reliable, and accurate reporting to FS.
- Must have regular access to an analog phone line for data transmissions.
- Assume responsibility for and carefully track all money used for cash incentive payments.
- Available for possible overnight travel if remote segments are involved in the assignment area.
- Assume full and legal responsibility for use and care of computers, taking reasonable and appropriate steps to safeguard them against damage, loss, or theft, and returning all equipment at the conclusion of the NSDUH assignment or at the request of your supervisor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT RTI AND THE NSDUH, VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

<http://nsduhweb.rti.org>

2.4 Professional Ethics and Respondents' Rights

Ethics can be broadly defined as a set of moral values or principles of conduct governing an individual or a group. Organizations must show their clients, employees, and the public, a prevailing sense of integrity, honesty, and responsibility in all aspects of work.

All survey research conducted by RTI is based on the highest ethical standards. Interviewers are expected to maintain the same professional ethics as all RTI researchers. These standards are taken very seriously! RTI's professional reputation depends upon all employees and all field staff making the commitment to ethical standards a high priority.

As part of professional ethics, the rights of survey respondents **must** be protected by all RTI and Headway personnel. These rights include:

- The right of informed consent refers to the legal requirement that respondents be given complete and accurate information so that they can make an informed decision about their participation in the survey.
- To ensure that all RTI studies meet the legal and ethical requirements of informed consent, all projects involving human subjects must be approved by our Office of Research Protection, which serves as RTI's Institutional Review Board (IRB) under Federal regulations. This committee looks very closely at the written introduction to the study to be sure that the respondents are being properly informed.
- The right to refuse refers to an individual's right to decline to participate in the study or to refuse to answer individual questions once an interview has begun.
- The right of privacy is guaranteed by the federal **Privacy Act of 1974**. This Act prohibits the release of data gathered by or for a federal agency without the written consent of the respondent. Fines and penalties apply to individuals or organizations that violate this law. You can explain this to a respondent when trying to gain his or her trust.
- The right to accurate representation requires honesty in dealing with respondents and answering their questions about the survey. For example, you cannot tell the respondent that an interview will take only a few minutes if you know it will last about an hour, or say that you work for a government agency such as the Census Bureau.

All staff involved in the collection, processing, and analysis of the survey data must be continually aware of the important responsibility to safeguard the rights of the survey participants. Since interviewers are in direct contact with these respondents, you must demonstrate high ethical standards in **all** project contacts.

2.5 Importance of Confidentiality

Much of the data collected during the NSDUH interview are sensitive. You must ask all questions and record all responses in a completely objective and nonjudgmental manner. Be aware of the sensitivity issue and of the need to treat as confidential any and all information you learn about respondents, whether directly from a response you receive or simply through casual observations before, during, or after your visit.

Because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter, the project staff have taken special precautions to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

- The confidentiality of all responses to the questions is protected under federal law by the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002. All answers are only used for research and analysis and cannot be used for any other purpose.
- The NSDUH is one of the few surveys where the name of the respondent completing the interview is never recorded. While the respondents' addresses are known, this information is kept separate from the respondents' answers through the use of two different computers. The iPAQ contains the addresses of selected DUs, but the interview data are collected and stored in the laptop until transmission to RTI. Once at RTI, it would be possible to link the address information in the iPAQ and the more sensitive data collected in the laptop—but project staff NEVER link the data.
- Respondents should be reassured that any potentially identifying data, such as their address, are never made available to anyone outside the project staff.
- Individual responses are only analyzed in combination with other responses collected nationwide.

All NSDUH staff including project planners at SAMHSA, RTI managers and technical staff, and all field staff must share the commitment to protect the confidentiality of the respondents.

2.6 Adherence to Procedures

At training, you will be asked to sign a Data Collection Agreement (shown in *Exhibit 2.3*). By signing, you are entering into a contractual agreement that you will keep confidential all data you collect. It also certifies that you will carry out all project procedures precisely as they are presented in this manual and at training. It is **very** important that you understand and agree to this policy and understand that failure to comply could result in the termination of your employment with Headway as an FI on the NSDUH. If you have any questions regarding this policy, discuss them with your supervisor prior to making arrangements to attend training.

Exhibit 2.3 Data Collection Agreement



Project Name: National Survey on Drug
Use and Health
Project No.: 9009

I, _____, an employee of Headway, agree to provide field data collection services for the benefit of RTI in connection with the RTI Project shown above. Further, I

- 1) am aware that the research being conducted by RTI is being performed under contractual arrangement with the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**;
- 2) hereby accept all duties and responsibilities of performing specified data collection tasks and will do so **personally** in accordance with the training and guidelines provided to me. At no time will I engage the services of another person for the purpose of performing any data collection tasks for me without the prior written approval of RTI;
- 3) agree to treat as **confidential** all information secured during interviews or obtained in any project-related way during the period I am providing services to RTI, as required by the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002, and understand under Section 513 of this Act that I am subject to criminal felony penalties of imprisonment for not more than five years, or fines of not more than \$250,000, or both, for voluntary disclosure of confidential information;
- 4) agree to treat as **confidential and proprietary** to RTI any and all survey instruments, materials, and documentation provided or accessed during the course of my service on this project;
- 5) am aware that the survey instruments completed form the basis from which all the analysis will be drawn, and therefore, agree that all work for which I submit invoices will be of high quality and performed in compliance with all project specifications;
- 6) understand that I am fully and legally responsible for taking reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure that any computer equipment issued to me for use on this project is safeguarded against damage, loss, or theft. I also understand that I have a legal obligation to immediately return all equipment at the conclusion of this project or at the request of my supervisor;
- 7) fully agree to conduct myself at all times in a manner that will obtain the respect and confidence of all individuals from whom data will be collected and I will not betray this confidence by divulging information obtained to anyone other than authorized representatives of RTI;
- 8) understand that evidence of falsification or fabrication of interview results will be reported to RTI's Scientific Integrity Committee, and that falsification of results is grounds for termination of employment. If these charges are substantiated, in certain circumstances RTI will have to forward this information to government agencies, and as a result it is possible that I could be suspended from participating as an interviewer in government funded research for some period of time; and
- 9) understand that my obligations under this agreement will survive the termination of any assignment with RTI and/or my employment by Headway.

Employee's Signature

Date

Disposition: Original to Headway, Yellow retained by employee.

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2.7 Performance Expectations

The data collection effort is vitally important to the success of any research study. Data collection procedures are standardized to maximize the quality of the data. We are depending on you to follow the procedures described in this manual. It is equally important to conduct data collection activities efficiently to ensure the study is completed within budget and schedule constraints. The time and mileage spent while traveling to and from sample dwelling units is one of the major costs in any field survey. Keep travel to a minimum by carefully planning your route.

Another strategy is to conduct activities efficiently while at the selected dwelling unit. If you are thoroughly familiar with the study procedures, you can complete your activities quickly without sacrificing accuracy. Be prepared, have the necessary equipment and materials, and be organized. You must also be very comfortable with explaining the purpose of the study and how the information gathered will be used. The established criteria used to rate an FI's performance are presented in *Exhibit 2.4*.

Use your supervisor as a resource to discuss unusual situations, review standardized procedures, or to answer questions about any aspect of the study. This will help to ensure that the study is being conducted in the same way by all interviewers.

RTI has in place a program of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) for the field staff. In CQI, the aim is to continually support you and improve your work while keeping errors to a minimum. The objectives of this program are four-fold:

- to increase screening and interviewing response rates
- to reduce field costs while maximizing data quality
- to provide FIs with the tools and support they need to strengthen their interviewing skills and abilities
- to monetarily reward and recognize FIs who contribute to reaching gains in performance.

To achieve these project objectives, NSDUH created the FI Performance Incentive Program. Each group of FIs who report to the same FS have an opportunity to earn rewards based on performance, willingness to work to meet objectives and willingness to cooperate with others in the group. This program allows us to recognize and appropriately reward staff who demonstrate steady improvement and commitment to the project by helping us meet performance objectives.

2.8 Materials, Supplies, and Equipment

There are a variety of materials, supplies, and equipment you will use to conduct the NSDUH. Adequate quantities of materials and supplies are sent to you prior to your data collection activities. You must use the correct and official NSDUH materials for each interview. Be sure to monitor your level of supplies for upcoming work. If you require additional supplies, contact your supervisor. Descriptions of the purpose and use of each item can be found throughout the manual. *Chapter 12* of this manual contains an inclusive list of interviewer project materials, supplies, and equipment.

Exhibit 2.4 FI Performance Criteria

Knowledge of Data Collection Techniques – Masters the information and skills concerning work duties that an individual should know for satisfactory job performance; ability to perform professional work in a versatile and creative manner.

Adherence to Deadlines – Meets deadlines set for production and for submission of administrative information consistently.

Response Rates – Maintains satisfactory response rates as defined by project expectations with consideration given to unusual site-specific circumstances beyond the control of the field interviewer.

Communication – Keeps supervisor adequately informed of progress and problems. Communicates effectively orally and in writing.

Productivity – Completes expected quantities of work. Plans and organizes workload effectively.

Quality of Work – Completes work accurately, with a minimum number of data quality errors. Follows project protocols and procedures.

Dependability – Performs required jobs well with a minimum of supervision. Consistently works the expected number of hours and keeps appointments for conference calls and interviews.

Conversion Skills – Demonstrates satisfactory skills in converting hesitant and uncooperative respondents.

Judgment – Makes sound decisions in terms of weighing facts, past practice and theory where applicable, especially in the absence of detailed instructions or in emergency situations.

Cost Efficiency – Completes assignments efficiently to keep field costs, wages, and expenses to a minimum. Note: This criterion will be evaluated considering unusual field circumstances beyond the field interviewer's control.

REVIEW OF CHAPTER 2

Your Job as a Field Interviewer

To assist your learning process, read the following summary of key points in this chapter. Following the summary are several questions to ask yourself. These questions will help you identify those areas you understand, and pinpoint the areas where you would benefit from re-reading a particular section.

SUMMARY

- Successful field interviewers on the NSDUH work efficiently and cost-effectively without sacrificing response rates or high data quality.
- Screening and interviewing on the NSDUH is a multi-step process which demands that you follow all procedures and protocols.
- Your responsibilities on this study are substantial. They cover such diverse tasks as locating your assignment area, contacting the correct sample dwelling units, obtaining resident participation, and transmitting information to RTI. The first component of your responsibilities is to read this manual carefully and complete your home study exercises prior to training.
- It is a requirement of this job that you be available to work at least 15-25 productive hours (non-travel or administrative) each week during field data collection periods. You must be available and willing to work on week nights and weekends.
- The planning and implementation of the NSDUH survey is based on the highest ethical standards. It is your job to protect the rights and confidentiality of our survey respondents.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. What is the first step of the screening and interview process?
2. List five of your job responsibilities.
3. How many hours are you expected to commit to this project each week?
4. What are the four basic rights of survey respondents?
5. Answer these true/false questions:
 - T F During the screening, you will ask the last name of the respondent.
 - T F If a respondent has already started the interview, he/she is not allowed to refuse to answer an individual question.
 - T F I am not allowed to interview a youth respondent (aged 12-17) before I have obtained consent from a parent or guardian.