

Best Practices for Collecting Survey Data Virtually

Organizations collect data on programs to understand their accomplishments, challenges, and whether they are achieving their objectives. Organizations can collect these data through virtual surveys when they cannot administer surveys in person or when virtual administration is the best fit for the program or population. Virtual surveys can be conducted either over the telephone or online. Although the accompanying video mainly focused on online individual administration, other ways to collect survey data virtually include online group administration and in-person online group administration. The following list describes the different steps to conducting virtual surveys. See Table 1 for key terms and their definitions and Table 2 for descriptions of the different virtual data collection methods.



Obtain parental or guardian consent for youth younger than 18. Youth 18 and older may be able to provide their own consent.



Obtain assent from youth younger than 18 and whose parents or guardians have already consented. You can include wording about assent on the first page of the online survey or at the beginning of a telephone survey.



Ensure the youth's privacy. Youth should be encouraged to complete the survey in a location that is safe and where others cannot see or hear their responses. Also, at the beginning of the survey, tell youth verbally or in writing their answers are confidential and they can skip questions that make them uncomfortable.



Work to achieve high response rates by sending or posting regular reminders to complete the survey, keeping the survey short and user-friendly, and offering an incentive.



Address all questions and concerns. Consider creating a frequently asked questions (FAQs) page to link in the survey or putting a phone number and email address at the bottom of the screen so youth can contact someone with questions or concerns.



Have data collectors be prepared to direct youth to resources if the survey prompts them to disclose sensitive information or a traumatic experience.

Table 1. Key terms

Term	Definition
Response rate	The percentage of surveys completed and returned out of total surveys distributed.
Assent process	Provides youth younger than 18 with the choice of participating or not participating in the study, even if their parents or guardians have given consent.
Consent process	Provides youth 18 and older with the choice of participating in the survey. For youth younger than 18, parental consent is required. Parental consent provides parents or guardians the ability to choose whether their child can participate in the survey.
Neutral responses	Occur when data collectors respond to youth questions about a survey with impartial answers (e.g., "whatever it means to you") to reduce potential biases and ensure consistency across survey administrations. This includes avoiding clarifications or definitions of words or phrases.

Table 2. Different virtual data collection methods

Method	Description
Telephone administration	Youth complete surveys over the phone that are administered by trained staff. Consider who will obtain youth contact information in a way that maintains their privacy and protects the sensitivity of the information. Consider the best days and times to reach youth, such as evenings and weekends.
Online individual administration	Youth complete an online survey at their convenience, asynchronously on their own and without an administrator.
Online group administration	Youth complete an online survey remotely, at a designated time, with an online administrator and synchronously with other youth taking the survey.
In-person online group administration	Youth complete an online survey in an in-person group setting, at a designated time with an in-person administrator, and synchronously with other youth taking the survey.

For more on youth assent:

This web page provides webinars on performance measures and youth assent. Specifically, the webinar “Human Subjects Research and Privacy Protections for SRAE Performance Measures Data – January 11, 2021” and the materials that accompany it are helpful for obtaining youth assent:

<https://www.sraepas.com/webinars/>

This web page answers FAQs about online data collection: <https://www.prepeval.com/DataCollection/FAQs%20online%20data%20collection.pdf>

This web page provides a webinar on virtual data collection: <https://sraene.com/index.php/resource/Virtual%20Data%20Collection%20for%20Local%20Evaluations%20Webinar>

This web page provides tips on evaluation strategies for virtual implementation: <https://opa.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/virtual-implementation-covid-tip-sheet-2020.pdf>

For more on ensuring privacy:

This web page provides webinars on data collection. Specifically, the webinar “Human Subjects and Privacy Protections for SRAE Performance Measures Data – January 11, 2021” discusses privacy:

<https://www.sraepas.com/webinars/>

For more on response rates:

This web page provides tips on how to increase survey response rates: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3062139/>

This infographic provides additional strategies to increase response rates: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief21.pdf>

About this series

This video series, and the accompanying tip sheets on understanding and collecting high-quality data, were created as part of the [Sexual Risk Avoidance Education National Evaluation \(SRAENE\)](#). The series covers a range of data-related topics to help grantees understand the importance of high-quality data and provide guidance on how they can collect them in their program. Although some of the resources are drawn from topic areas that are not related to SRAE, the content on data is still relevant.

FYSB does not recommend any particular survey platform or data system that may be referenced in tip sheets.

For more information or questions, contact the SRAENE team at SRAETA@mathematica-mpr.com.

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