

Frequently Asked Questions About Online Data Collection

This frequently asked questions (FAQs) document provides guidance to prepare for and administer Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) participant entry and exit surveys to youth online to collect performance measures data.

General questions

1. Are all PREP grantees required to administer participant entry and exit surveys as part of their performance measures?

Yes, PREP grantees are required to collect performance measures data. Entry and exit survey data should be collected for all youth participating in PREP programming. Grantees should submit entry survey data for all youth who **began** participating in PREP programs during the reporting period and submit exit survey data for all youth who **completed** PREP programs during the reporting period.

2. Are PREP grantees required to shift to online data collection for participant entry and exit surveys as part of their performance measures?

No, online data collection is not required. Grantees may collect data in person, by telephone or mail, or online, depending on their circumstances. However, grantees are encouraged to consider using online data collection methods for administering participant entry and exit surveys, particularly if the grantees provide PREP programming online and completing paper-and-pencil surveys is not possible.

3. Can grantees administer participant entry and exit surveys by telephone or by mail?

Yes, grantees can choose their mode of survey administration, including in-person, online, by telephone, or by mail. Grantees may decide to mail a hard-copy survey along with prepaid mailing materials for respondents to return their completed surveys. Because youth will return surveys that contain data, it is important to consider return methods that allow for tracking the package (such as FedEx or Priority Mail), should anything happen to it in transit.

Grantees may also consider contacting youth by phone to ask them to complete surveys. Before beginning to administer the survey over the phone, interviewers should confirm that youth are in a location where they feel comfortable responding to questions and have some privacy.

Adapting survey instruments for online use

4. How can grantees obtain Microsoft Word versions of the participant entry and exit survey instruments to use in programming online surveys?

Grantees will have to request a Word document copy of the survey instruments from their Federal Project Officer. Portable document format (PDF) file versions of the entry and exit surveys are available online:

<https://www.prepeval.com/DataCollectionToolsAndGuidance.html>.

5. What online survey platforms are available?

The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) does not recommend any particular survey platform or data system. Some of the more frequently used platforms include REDCap, Qualtrics, and Survey Monkey. Grantees will have to do their own research to choose a survey platform that best suits their individual needs. When choosing online survey software, grantees should keep in mind a number of factors, including (but not limited to) cost, access to customer support, data security, and the format of the reports provided by the vendor.

6. Does responsibility for developing online versions of the participant entry and exit surveys rest with PREP grantees or with their subrecipient providers?

Grantees are ultimately responsible for submitting performance measures data. While they have discretion as to how data are collected, they should ensure that program providers, including subrecipients, administer the entry and exit surveys to comply with the performance measures reporting requirement. There may be cases in which the mode of data collection varies by program provider, depending on their setting and circumstances.

7. Does the online version have to match the exact wording of the participant entry and exit surveys approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)? For example, can grantees revise instructions to align with formatting changes? Does the entire OMB Paperwork Reduction Act statement need to be included?

Entry and exit surveys must be administered in their entirety, with no omissions or modifications. Grantees should not change the question wording, the response categories, or skip logic on the approved survey items. In addition, the cover page of the online survey must include the OMB control number, expiration date, and OMB Paperwork Reduction Act statement.

However, grantees may change formatting and general survey instructions as necessary for online administration. For example, they should modify "PLEASE MARK ALL ANSWERS WITHIN THE WHITE BOXES PROVIDED" and "USE A PEN OR PENCIL" to align with the online version.

8. When developing an online version of the participant entry and exit surveys that OMB approved, may grantees add questions?

Grantees may choose to add other items to the entry or exit surveys, but all OMB-approved items must be administered first, in the order presented in the approved

survey, before any additional items are presented. If a grantee adds other questions, the grantee should include the following language at the end of the OMB-approved survey before the additional questions:

“The questions above are part of a national effort to measure whether programs meet their goals. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The next questions are not part of this national effort.”

Online survey administration

9. Can grantees and program providers offer incentives to increase participant entry and exit survey response rates?

Yes, grantees may choose to offer incentives. However, incentives should comply with HHS grants policies, and grantees should consult with their Federal Project Officer if incentives are not included in their existing budget. Incentives must also be approved by Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), if applicable, and comply with any relevant local rules.

10. What steps should grantees take to promote privacy for youth completing online surveys in their homes?

Although grantees cannot guarantee absolute privacy at home, they should instruct youth to complete the survey in a private place where others cannot see their answers. It might also be helpful to instruct youth how to minimize the survey screen to avoid others seeing their answers.

11. What should grantees do if some youth participants do not have access to an appropriate device for completing online data collection?

If youth participants do not have access to the technology needed to complete online surveys, telephone and mail surveys can be administered to them. See the response to Question 3 for additional considerations related to telephone and mail surveys.

12. Should grantees administer the survey during one session or leave the survey open for an extended period to allow youth to complete the survey on their own?

Grantees should choose the type of administration that works best for their population and their specific situation. The single session approach enables an administrator to oversee the survey administration and respond to questions or provide assistance in real time. However, a single session could miss youth who cannot attend at that specific time and might not allow sufficient time for youth with special needs, so grantees should consider scheduling make-up sessions or additional time, as needed.

Leaving the survey open for an extended period enables youth to complete the survey at their own convenience. However, this type of administration puts the burden of responding to the survey on the youth, and some might require several reminders to complete the survey. Grantees can offer a help line or email if youth have questions, but depending on staffing availability questions might not be answered immediately, which can lead to break-offs and incomplete surveys.

13. How can grantees track surveys by school, teacher, cohort, and so on?

Grantees can create separate survey links to the online survey for each cohort, school, or teacher. For instance, a cohort-specific link could be sent only to youth in that cohort. Grantees who link the surveys to a unique ID (a numeric or alphanumeric string used to identify a specific individual without revealing personal information) can store the school, teacher, and cohort information in a separate file and link it to the survey data using the unique ID.

Communicating with IRBs, partners, and parents about changes

14. Is IRB approval needed to provide PREP programming online?

No, implementing the program does not require IRB approval. IRB approval applies only to research involving human subjects.

15. How should grantees determine whether IRB approval is needed for online data collection of the participant entry and exit survey?

Because there can be variation among IRBs, grantees should confirm specific requirements with their own IRB. Grantees should communicate any changes to previously approved data collection plans to their IRB to determine whether approval is needed for the changes. Changing to online data collection could affect grantees' previous IRB approval or exemption status or conditions because the changes could increase risks for youth, particularly if youth will be contacted about the web-based survey by email or text, or if a partner or vendor will have access to the data. Grantees who previously received IRB approval for paper-and-pencil survey administration might be asked to submit an amendment if they plan a shift to collecting data online. Grantees who previously received an IRB exemption (or a letter of determination that they did not require IRB review) for paper-and-pencil survey administration should inform the IRB if they plan to change to online data collection.

16. Under what circumstances are grantees required to inform parents of changes to data collection? For example, if youth and parents have already consented to online surveys, do grantees need to inform parents of changes to data collection post-COVID?

Grantees should confirm specific parent notification and consent requirements with their partners and IRB, as applicable. Based on your existing procedures and planned changes to data collection, your IRB will determine whether any additional notification or consent is needed.

17. How can grantees obtain parental consent for data collection if youth are not meeting in person?

Alternative modes of consent include telephone, mail, and online. Verbal consent can be collected from parents via telephone. An example of a verbal consent process is to contact parents or guardians, read the consent form aloud to them over the phone, and obtain their response. The caller should then fill out the form and another staff member who is present when the call is made should initial the form as a witness. Another option is to program the parental consent form into an online database so parents or guardians

can access the form online and provide their response, which will automatically be recorded in the database.

Grantees partnering with schools may explore coordinating with the schools' communications with parents, such as including consent forms with other materials they send home or posting the consent form online on message boards. Grantees should discuss options with their partners and IRB (if applicable) and consider any data security implications specific to that mode if collecting personally identifiable information.

18. What topics should be covered in a memorandum of understanding with a subrecipient or vendor that is collecting participant entry and exit survey data online?

Memorandums of understanding with a subrecipient or vendor that collects survey data online should address the specifics of managing, storing, and destroying the data. Grantees should carefully review the vendor's procedures for storing data, any potential sharing of data, and transmitting and destroying data to ensure the procedures do not pose risks to the security of participants' data. For instance, are the data encrypted at rest, meaning when they are stored, or only when they are transmitted? Where are the data held? How are the data stored? What happens to the data when data collection is complete? Does the vendor or partner keep the data or will they destroy the data? How (and when) are the data destroyed? Is there a possibility the vendor would share the data—or contact information of the respondents—with another party? It is important to investigate these questions if grantees partner with an organization that will have access to the data.

Other

19. Where can I find additional information about online data collection?

The slides and recording of the Guidance for Online Survey Data Collection webinar held on May 28, 2020 and the accompanying [handout](#) that provides detailed guidance on preparing for, administering, and closing out online surveys are available at <https://www.prepeval.com/DataCollectionTraining.html>.

20. Who should grantees contact for additional assistance?

Grantees should contact their FYSB Project Officer or the Mathematica PREP Performance Measures technical assistance team at PREPPerformanceMeasures@mathematica-mpr.com or call toll-free 1-855-267-6270.

Additional information about the Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) performance measures is available at www.prepeval.com. For further support, contact the Mathematica PREP Performance Measures technical assistance team at PREPPerformanceMeasures@mathematica-mpr.com or call toll-free 1-855-267-6270.