

Data Collection During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Eight Tips for Evaluators of Projects for Older Adults with a History of Trauma

1

Do No Harm

Prioritize respondents' safety, security, and comfort when conducting an evaluation with older adults with a history of trauma. Respondents may have different needs based on their trauma histories, and require a Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed (PCTI) approach. The COVID-19 pandemic can be a triggering time for many trauma survivors and thus, it is imperative that data collection is conducted in a PCTI way.

2

Reassess Your Goals

Reassess your project's short-, intermediate-, and long-term goals. If needed, adjust goals and logic model to accommodate virtual programming and adjustments for the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has largely affected what activities agencies can do. If your activities have changed, so too your project goals may have shifted.

3

Reassess Your Indicators

Reassess your project's metrics or indicators of success. If needed, adjust project metrics to accommodate virtual programming and new project goals. Remember, an indicator of success for your project must be SMART – it must be specific, **measurable**, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. If it is not **measurable** in a COVID-19 environment, it may not be the best indicator of your project's success.

4

Transform Your Tools

Transform your evaluation tools to collect data virtually. Just as the COVID-19 pandemic has forced projects to shift to virtual activities, so too will data collection methods need to be virtual. Although many evaluators collected data through in-person and paper-based forms, or through case management, many are shifting data collection to structured surveys that can be administered online, by mail, or over the phone. See next page for details.

5

Simplify Your Tools

Simplify data collection tools to focus on those questions that are most important to your evaluation as virtual data collection may be more time consuming for your respondents. You can identify the questions most important to your evaluation by referencing your project goals, logic model, and indicators. It may be helpful to ask yourself, "what questions are most crucial to understand the outcomes and process of my project?".

6

Support Your Respondents

Support your respondents in completing surveys based on their individual capacity and comfort as virtual data collection may be new for many. This may include supporting respondents with technology, collecting data in multiple languages, and adjusting data collection for various impairments (visual, cognitive, auditory, etc.). This is eased by developing rapport and trust with respondents prior and throughout the data collection process.

7

Reassess Your Data Analysis Plans

Reassess your plans for analyzing and reporting data as changes associated with COVID-19 may have shifted the reporting needs of your stakeholders. This may mean collecting and reporting new data or stopping data collection no longer relevant to your project. Ensure you have a meaningful way to analyze and use data before it is collected.

8

Share Your Insights

Share learnings with other agencies when you encounter a new challenge or promising practice. Transitioning projects from in-person to virtual data collection is new and complex. Learning from one another leverages our collective experience to better serve older adults with a history of trauma and their family caregivers.

*Changes to projects funded by the Center should be coordinated with Center staff.

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How to Transform Your Tools

Transforming data collection tools to work in a virtual environment can be challenging as it requires careful consideration between the needs of respondents and the reporting requirements of your project. To balance these considerations, many evaluators of projects for older adults are transitioning their paper-based or in-person data collection efforts to a virtual format using a structured survey administered online, by mail, by phone, or a combination of these methods. The table below can help you determine which data collection method is best for your project.

Benefits	Challenges
Survey Data Collection By Mail	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allows respondents privacy in survey completion ✓ Allows respondents flexibility to complete the form when convenient ✓ Allows respondents independence ✓ Respondents may feel more comfortable if this is like previous methods of data collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Requires postage and return instructions ✗ Does not allow follow-up questions and clarifications ✗ May not illicit a high response rate as it does not accompany social interaction ✗ Does not fit respondents who require additional assistance in survey completion
Survey Data Collection By Phone	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provides support for respondents who require additional assistance in completing the survey ✓ Can be integrated into check-in calls ✓ May produce higher response rates as it is accompanied by social interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ May require additional staff time for calls ✗ Does not allow respondents confidentiality ✗ May lead to bias as respondents may skew responses positively ✗ May not fit respondents who have auditory challenges or discomfort with using the phone
Survey Data Collection Online	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allows respondents privacy in survey completion ✓ Allows respondents independence ✓ Allows respondents flexibility to complete the form when convenient ✓ Allows for conditional follow-up questions and more complex survey formats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ May require an additional software program ✗ May not illicit a high response rate as it does not accompany social interaction ✗ Does not fit respondents who require additional assistance in survey completion ✗ May not fit respondents who have challenges or discomfort with using the the computer
Survey Data Collection By Mixed Methods (Phone, Mail, and Online)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Allows for inclusive evaluations as the diverse needs of respondents can be met ✓ Allows respondents to feel empowered about the method in which they respond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Requires the management of multiple data collection processes