



Family Outcomes Survey Considerations

December 2022

Purpose: This resource is designed to help teams, including diverse stakeholders, unpack their Family Outcomes survey methodology to examine its effectiveness and determine what might need enhancement to achieve the survey objective, attain an acceptable return rate, and ensure representativeness.

Organization: Included are three different sections.

Section One (Overview) provides a brief overview of survey methodology considerations summarized from Dillman's Total Design Method.

¹Source: Total Design Method, Dillman

²The timing under Additional Notes in the Contacting Respondents section may vary but the point is not to wait too long in between contacts. The methodologies listed under the Considerations section in the Contacting Respondents section are used as examples and do not imply that a state has to follow or use this mixed mode methodology.

Section Two (Practices, Perks, Problems, and Possibilities) includes a survey methodology table for unpacking and cataloging the current and past survey implementation practices. The table also includes space for documenting the perks, problems, and possibilities for each of the different steps in the survey implementation practices. This is considered a critical step for examining survey effectiveness and defining areas for improvement, particularly when the survey is not working as planned. When this occurs, it is helpful to explore the survey implementation steps and practices to identify and resolve incremental problems rather than overhauling the entire survey implementation process. Cataloging the survey practices, perks, problems, and possibilities is also useful for reviewing survey practices and defining changes and reasons for changes along the way. As systems change and staff come and go this type of information can also ease the process for future stakeholders.

Section Three (Practice Questions) includes a variety of questions organized around the different survey methodology steps to assist teams in cataloging the practices and identifying perks, problems, and possibilities.

Section 1

Family Outcomes Survey Overview Consideration	Additional Notes
<i>Methodology</i> • Telephone • Internet or web based • Mixed Mode • Mail • Face-to-Face	Strength and Weaknesses for each
<i>Survey Construction</i> Question Structure • Open-ended questions • Close-ended questions with ordered answer choices • Close-ended questions with unordered answer choices • Partially closed-ended questions	The type of questions depends on what you want to know.
Question Wording <i>Good questions:</i> • Are understood by all respondents • Identify abbreviations or unconventional phrases • Are technically accurate • Have mutually exclusive answer choices • Appropriate time referent provided • Responses can be compared with existing information	<i>Poor questions:</i> • Too vague or cryptic • Too precise • Biased • Objectionable • Too demanding • Double question • Have double negative • Assume too much knowledge • Assume too much about respondent behavior
Survey Length • Rule of thumb is that it takes 1 minute to answer 3 questions • How long can families reasonably be expected to complete the survey?	
Survey Structure • Can respondents easily navigate the survey questions and items (e.g., are there skip patterns) or is it burdensome to answer applicable questions? • Item nonresponse - Are respondents answering all questions/only applicable ones?	
<i>Contacting Respondents</i>	
Incentives – Incentives can be used to encourage participation. • Are incentives realistic and if so what might they be?	
Heads-Up Reminders (pre-survey) • Who (e.g., service coordinator) reminds the parents or guardians that they will receive a survey? When in the process is the reminder given?	A few days before the survey is provided.
Initial Dissemination of Survey • E.g., at the six-month service date the survey is delivered.	Send 3-7 days after heads-up reminder.
Thank You • Send thank you response to responders	After receipt
Ticklers (Reminders) • The tickler serves as a reminder for non-respondents.	Send 7 to 10 days after initial survey.

Family Outcomes Survey Overview Consideration	Additional Notes
Non-Responder Follow Up Reminders • <i>First Follow Up</i> (E.g., the survey is to the parents or guardians, hard copy is sent at the request of the parents or guardians.) • <i>Second Follow Up</i> (E.g., the survey is sent to the parents or guardians, hard copy is sent at the request of the parents or guardians.) • <i>Additional Follow Ups</i> (E.g., telephone follow-up is initiated for all non-respondents.)	Send 7-14 days after tickler was sent. Send 7-14 days after the second survey. Send 7 to 14 days after last mailing.

Section Two: Practices, Perks, Problems, and Possibilities

Practices

Survey Purpose

Perks:

Problems:

Possibilities:

Survey Tool

Perks:

Problems:

Possibilities:

Survey Population

Perks:

Problems:

Possibilities:

Dissemination

Perks:

Problems:

Possibilities:

Dissemination Timing

Perks:

Problems:

Possibilities:

Reminders/ Timelines

Perks:

Problems:

Possibilities:

Incentives

Perks:

Problems:

Possibilities:

Survey Return

Perks:

Problems:

Possibilities:

Survey Analysis

Perks:

Problems:

Possibilities:

Section Three: Practice Questions

Practices	Questions to consider when describing the survey practices, perks, problems, and possibilities
Survey Tool	• What is the purpose? • What are the questions we hope to answer? • What is the survey design? – Number of items – Item interest – high interest up front – One thought per each question/item – Type of items/response options (e.g., scale responses, multiple choice, open field...) – Reading level – Clarity in directions – Language/translation – Completion time – Layout design – Marketing logo – program familiarity – Skip patterns or not – Survey scoring plan • Does the survey and it's design generate the information needed to answer the purpose questions? • What design measures are being taken to ensure confidentiality?
Survey Population	• What is the target audience you hope to respond to the survey? (e.g., time in EI, completion of X EI process, all in EI with an IFPS, all exiting EI, all exiting EI after X months, etc.) • Does your selected population include all the people important for answering the survey purpose question/s? If not, why not? How can they be included? • Are there people included that do not contribute to answering the survey purpose questions? • Do you need to consider using a sample instead of surveying all families or guardians?
Dissemination	• How do you gain access to the people in the determined survey population to invite them to complete the survey? • How is the survey disseminated (e.g., mail, phone, text, online...)? Is a combination of approaches needed? • Does the dissemination approach reach the intended survey population? • Are there groups or sub-groups of this population that are harder to reach? Why? If so, what other dissemination approaches are feasible and needed to reach all groups? • How are service providers or others working with the survey population alerting and informing the identified survey population about the survey purpose and process? • What pre-messaging and information about the survey and its purpose are being shared or need to be shared?
Dissemination & Timing	• When will the survey be disseminated? • What type of alerts are provided prior to survey dissemination? • What is provided with the initial survey? How will survey respondents recognize it as coming from EI? • Is a cover letter/introduction be provided? – Is it brief, informative, encouraging, personalized, tied to the program logo?
Reminder/ Timelines	• What reminders are provided? When? How? How often? • What is included with the reminder (e.g., a reminder or reminder and the survey)?
Incentive	• What incentives, if any, are provided? • How are the survey respondents informed about the incentive? • How do the incentives entice to the survey recipients/responders? • How is the incentive approach reviewed and evaluated to know if it is working?
Survey Return Options	• What are the ways that survey responders can respond to the survey? What variations are needed? • What resources/access do families need to return the survey?

Practices	Questions to consider when describing the survey practices, perks, problems, and possibilities
Survey Analysis	• Do the survey analysis questions clearly link back to the survey purpose? • What are the defined survey analysis questions? For example: – What is the return rate? How has it changed over time? What are contributing factors? – Are the responses received representative of the defined population? – Are responses representative across factors such as race/ethnicity served, geographic regions, age of child, etc.). – What outcomes do families achieve during their time in EI/ESCE (e.g., helping their child develop and learn, being able to advocate for their rights)? – How do the outcomes vary by different factors (e.g., race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, parents or guardians whose primary language is other than English and who have limited English proficiency, maternal education, geographic location, time in program, gender, age of child, disability/eligibility category, etc.). – How have family outcomes changed over time, and how do the trends compare across outcomes (for the state and local programs)? – How do family outcomes differ by child and family characteristics (e.g., disability, demographics, and risk)? – How do outcomes for families differ by characteristics of IDEA services received (e.g., length of time in service, type and quantity of service, service setting, service delivery model, and quality of services)? – How do outcomes for families differ by characteristics of the workforce (e.g., years of experience, level of education, and participation in professional development)?

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