



## R2P Toolkit Series, December 2002, Issue 3

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*Keeping Child Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being at the Forefront*

# Surveys for Intermediate Users

*This guide furthers agency understanding of survey construction, design, data entry, and costs. Helpful websites are included.*

### **Steps in survey construction:**

- Decide what you want to know.
- Write a rough draft of the survey.
- Think carefully about how the information is to be used.
- Conduct a pilot test, if time and money allow.
- Use feedback to revise the survey.
- Set up a database.
- Administer the survey.

### **More on writing survey questions:**

- Ask general questions before specific ones.
- Use open-ended follow-ups to closed-ended questions.
- Open-ended questions are better for measuring sensitive behavior.
- Ask multiple questions on a topic.

### **More on survey design:**

- Statement: Use agree or disagree options to measure intensity.
- Likert-type scale: Have an odd number of options to choose from (i.e., agree, neutral, disagree).
- Open-ended questions: Respondents provide their own answers to questions. These take more time to analyze.
- Closed-ended questions: Fixed responses and response categories are mutually exclusive.
- Contingency questions: The second question is dependent on the answer to the first question (i.e., "If yes, what is your opinion on...?").

### **Pilot testing:**

- **Participation pilot testing:** Respondents know this is a pilot test, can examine questions in detail, and often are not knowledgeable about the research.
- **Undeclared pilot testing:** Respondents do not know this is a pilot test, can probe a few questions for meaning, and can test more questions overall.

### **Data entry:**

- Determine best format for data entry (i.e., SPSS database, Excel spreadsheet).
- Determine who should enter the data into the database or spreadsheet.

### **Survey costs:**

- Design of survey: Staff surveys are less costly than client surveys.
- Design elements (i.e., respondent's interpretation of questions).
- Sample size and scope affect cost.
- Database design: The more complicated the design is, the more it costs.
- Implementation of survey: Administration by mail, in person, on the phone, or online?
- Data entry: How and by whom?
- Data analysis: How and by whom?
- Report writing: In-house or outsource?
- Presentation of results (i.e., in-house report, funder report, issue brief).

### **Visit these websites on survey design:**

<http://www.surveysystem.com/sdesign.htm>

Provides a sample size calculator and more in-depth discussion of design types.

<http://www.statpac.com/surveys/>

Includes a tutorial and information on bias, incentives, and significance.

### **Reference:**

Neuman, W. L. (1997). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

*"To accelerate the rate at which communities and agencies prepare for and adopt the most effective known practices in support of a comprehensive system for ensuring healthy child, youth, and family development."*



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