

## Best Practices for Collecting Survey Data in Person

Organizations often want to collect information about their programs to determine whether goals are being achieved. Administering surveys in person can help ensure respondents have easy access, available support on-site, and dedicated space and time to complete a survey with few distractions. In-person surveys can be administered with paper and pencil or online if there is access to a computer lab, laptops, tablets, or mobile devices for all participating youth. The accompanying video introduced steps to collect survey data in person from as many respondents as possible, so the results accurately reflect the experiences of all program participants, and in an ethical way. The following list describes the steps for conducting in-person surveys. See Table 1 for key terms and their definitions and Table 2 for descriptions of the different in-person data collection methods.



**Obtain parental or guardian consent** for youth younger than 18. Youth 18 or 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 an online survey or at the beginning of a paper and pencil survey.



**Ensure the youth's privacy.** Do this by using privacy screens or placing youth around the room, separated from each other.



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



**Address questions and concerns youth have during the survey.** Two adults who are trained to facilitate surveys with sensitive information should be present in the room so youth can ask questions. Data collectors should be trained to provide neutral responses to questions and concerns from youth.



**Prepare data collectors to direct youth to resources** if the survey prompts them to disclose sensitive information or a traumatic experience. Resources may include mental health professionals or school counselors available to help youth who have an emotional response to the survey questions.

**Table 1. Key terms**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Response rate</b>	The percentage of surveys completed and returned out of total surveys distributed.
<b>Assent process</b>	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.
<b>Consent process</b>	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.
<b>Neutral responses</b>	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 in-person data collection methods**

<b>Method</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>In-person paper-and-pencil group administration</b>	Youth complete a paper-and-pencil survey in an in-person group setting, at a designated time administered by trained staff, and synchronously with other youth taking the survey.
<b>In-person online group administration</b>	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.
<b>In-person paper-and-pencil individual administration</b>	Youth complete a paper-and-pencil survey individually, at a designated time with an in-person administrator. This is often used when youth miss a group administration.
<b>In-person online individual administration</b>	Youth complete an online survey individually, at a designated time with an in-person administrator. This is often used when youth miss a group administration.

## For more on parent or guardian consent and 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 – November 10, 2021” and the materials that accompany it are helpful for obtaining youth assent: <https://www.sraepas.com/webinars/>

This web page provides guidance on writing assent language for youth: <https://www.tc.columbia.edu/institutional-review-board/how-to-submit/guides--resources/the-assent-process-with-minors/>

This web page provides guidance on the consent process and IRBs: <https://aapor.org/standards-and-ethics/institutional-review-boards/#1668710251098-560e9bd6-7b6c>

## 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 – November 10, 2021” discusses privacy: <https://www.sraepas.com/webinars/>

This web page provides an overview of ensuring privacy during in-person surveys: [https://www.prepeval.com/DataCollection/Survey\\_Admin\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.prepeval.com/DataCollection/Survey_Admin_Guidelines.pdf)

## 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](mailto:SRAETA@mathematica-mpr.com).

**Suggested citation:** Tabackman, W., White, S., Eddins, K. (2023). *SRAENE – Best Practices for Collecting Survey Data in Person Tip Sheet* (OPRE Report No. #2023-155). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.