

Training Data Collectors

Training data collectors to gather data consistently and without bias helps ensure the data are high quality and accurately reflect reality. Organizations collecting data will need to determine who to train, what topics to cover, and the best format for training data collectors. Before training begins, organizations should develop standardized training materials. During training, organizations should review the materials and have data collectors practice using them. After training, organizations should verify data collectors' knowledge and confidence. The accompanying video introduced strategies organizations can use to train data collectors to collect accurate and high-quality data. The following points expand on these strategies. Table 1 lists definitions of key terms.



Choose people to train who are not directly affected by the results of the data collection and have the skills and knowledge needed for the specific type of data you want to collect. For example, for focus groups, you might choose a data collector with experience working with youth and general knowledge of the topics being covered, whereas less experienced staff might administer surveys.



Cover relevant training topics, including the purpose of the data collection effort and how the data will be used. You should discuss collecting consent from parents or guardians and youth 18 years or older and assent from youth under 18 years of age. You can also discuss responding to questions in a neutral way, becoming familiar with the location or platform of the data collection, and protecting respondents' data. Before the training, develop a training packet with standardized materials that your institutional review board has approved and review the materials during the training.



Deliver training in an appropriate and engaging structure by using a variety of formats, such as interweaving presentations and hands-on activities. Include breaks, or consider splitting long trainings into multiple days. After training, administer a post-training quiz or hold one-on-one sessions to verify data collectors' knowledge and confidence of the data collection process. For example, have trained data collectors practice several pre-written scenarios they might face when administering a survey to ensure they respond consist

Table 1. Key terms

| Key term | Definition |
|---|---|
| Assent process | 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. |
| Consent process | 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. |
| Institutional review board (IRB) | A group that oversees data collection about people and ensures data collection follows ethical procedures. All IRBs must be registered with the Office for Human Research Protection in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. |
| Neutral responses | 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. |

For more on selecting data collectors:

This web page identifies the key skills and training needed for different types of data collectors: <https://www.equitytool.org/preparing-the-data-collection-team/>

For more on topics to include in training:

This brief provides guidelines on preparing for and administering surveys to youth: https://www.prepeval.com/DataCollection/Survey_Admin_Guidelines.pdf

This presentation reviews best practices for collecting data from youth with special needs: https://www.sraepas.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/SRAE_PAS-PM-Data-from-Youth-with-Special-Needs-2021-APP-Conference.pdf

This tip sheet provides best practices for obtaining parental consent for online data collections: <https://www.sraepas.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/SRAE-PAS-Parent-Consent-Tip-Sheet-5081.pdf>

This tip sheet provides guidelines on preparing for and conducting focus groups with youth: <https://opa.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2021-08/focus-group-tip-sheet-april-2020.pdf>

This web page discusses the importance of training data collectors and topics to cover in training: <https://aapor.org/standards-and-ethics/best-practices/>

This document is a template staff confidentiality form for protecting youth data: <https://www.sraepas.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Handout-9-Example-Staff-Confidentiality-Agreement.pdf>

This web page provides an overview of best practices for data storage: <https://ria.princeton.edu/human-research-protection/data/best-practices-for-data-a>

These web pages provide an overview on best practices for data destruction: <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/best-practices-data-destruction>, <https://research.viu.ca/research-ethics-board/data-retention-and-destruction>

For more on creating engaging trainings:

These documents explain the elements of successful online trainings: <https://www.cdc.gov/training/development/pdfs/design/e-learning-essentials-508.pdf>, https://ucanr.edu/sites/Professional_Development/files/319874.pdf

These resources provide guidance on developing engaging in-person trainings: <https://www.cdc.gov/training/development/pdfs/design/adult-learning-guide-508.pdf>, https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/2018-12/fy11_sh-22240-11_HowAdultsLearn.pdf

For more on verifying knowledge after training:

This web page provides an overview of how to gauge the effectiveness of a training: <https://www.cdc.gov/training/development/evaluate/training-effectiveness.html>

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.

Suggested citation: Tabackman, W., Fleischman, B., Eddins, K. (2023). *SRAENE – Training Data Collectors Tip Sheet* (OPRE Report No. #2023-218). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.