Data Collection Methods for Evaluation

# Survey Questionnaires

A survey questionnaire is a set of questions for gathering information from individuals. A questionnaire is useful in gathering information about knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. They can be answered anonymously and confidentially.

Including closed-ended questions are easiest to analyze by offering a set of predetermined answers. Opened-ended questions are useful when you do not know the possible answers or they can provide insight into the more closed-end responses.

Excerpt from CDC Evaluation Briefs: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief14.pdf>

# Observations

Observations gather information by watching the behaviors of individuals as they engage directly in an activity. They can occur while the action is taking place or by watching the results of the interactions, processes, or behaviors.

Observations are useful for understanding an ongoing process and monitoring how a situation progresses. Observations collect information on individual behaviors or interactions among participants.

Data is collected during an observation via a standardized record with predetermined questions and responses. They will also include narrative data guided by a list of interactions, processes, or behaviors to be observed.

Excerpt from CDC Evaluation Briefs: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief16.pdf>

# Focus Groups

A focus group is a group interview of six to twelve individuals who share characteristics or common interests. The conversation is guided by a facilitator using a predetermined set of topics and questions. The facilitator is expected to create an environment where all participants feel comfortable sharing their ideas and all opinions are valued.

Focus groups are best used for gathering qualitative data on subjective perceptions from key stakeholders. They do not collect information on individuals. They are useful in providing context and insights around information gathered through quantitative methods.

Excerpt from CDC Evaluation Briefs: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief13.pdf>

# Interviews

An interview is a method of asking questions directly to a set of key participants. Questions may be both quantitative and qualitative in order to gather more in-depth information about subjective perspectives from participants. They can be informal and conversational without a predetermined set of questions or they can be structured with open=ended questions and formal protocol.

Interviews are useful to better understand differences between respondents’ experiences and outcomes and as a follow-up method after conducting surveys or observations.

Excerpt from CDC Evaluation Briefs: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief17.pdf>

# Document Review

Data can also be collected by reviewing existing information that is either internal or external to the program. Information gathered can be useful in determining how the program is implemented as well as assisting in the development of other data collection methods. Most often it is used to gather information about the program participants in terms of number and type, but may also include secondary source data like school assessments and attendance.

Excerpt from CDC Evaluation Briefs: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief18.pdf>