THE SURVEY CENTER MANUAL

Survey Research Center

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Preface

The Survey Center Manual is a comprehensive instructional document designed to assist the interviewer in successfully completing a standardized interview. It contains everything from standardized interviewing procedures to information about processing protocols and updates. It provides the general principles and framework for conducting a scientific survey over the telephone by an interviewer. The manual will continue to evolve as we revise protocols and procedures and embark on new scientific endeavors.

Many individuals have contributed to the Survey Center Manual. We are now on the third edition of the manual. Interviewers have shaped its development by asking questions, making great suggestions, and pointing out the obvious and not-so-obvious. For that we are very grateful. A special thanks goes to Debbie Levesque, Karen Taraska, Heidi Recksiek, Dave Armitage, Nancy Knott, and Lynda Hurditch for their work on the first edition of the Survey Center Manual. For the second edition, I would like to thank Lisa Davey, Chuck Persky, Julie Padula, Jack McGillvray, Gina Ruggieri, Jordan Harrison, Maria Kenney, and Heidi Reckseik (again!) for their thoughts, comments, and suggestions.

A special note of gratitude goes to Chuck Persky, Julie Padula, and Keith Brown for their work on the Survey Management System documentation. They are the principle authors on this section of the manual and they did an outstanding job. We would also like to thank Keith Sanzen for his contributions to this section and this edition of the manual.

Sara Cottrill & Robert Laforge

June, 1997

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Cancer Prevention Research Center (CPRC) was founded in 1989, when researchers at the University of Rhode Island, Brown University, and Miriam Hospital received a grant from the National Cancer Institute as one of two sites in the country focusing on how to change high risk health behaviors. The directors of the CPRC, James O. Prochaska, Ph.D. and Wayne F. Velicer, Ph.D. have received wide recognition for their multi-disciplinary work in the field of behavioral change. Since 1989, the center has received more than $40 million in grants to support studies designed to help people reduce their risk of cancer. The CPRC has conducted projects in smoking cessation, diet, sun exposure, mammography screening, HIV risk behaviors, and contraceptive use. The scope of research is constantly expanding to include other high risk health behaviors.

The basic aim of the CPRC's research is to help people live longer, healthier lives. To achieve this goal, researchers must first determine what people's experiences and attitudes are towards a health issue in order to create effective programs that will help a wide range of people. At the CPRC, researchers collect and examine people's attitudes and experiences in a systematic and objective way. When information is gathered in a scientific manner, where samples are random and certain variables are being controlled, the outcomes from the study can be generalized and applied to most people.

At the CPRC, there are two ways a survey can be completed: through the mail and through a phone interview. Some studies require surveys to be mailed to respondents and then the people that do not return them are called and asked to complete the survey over the phone. Other studies are conducted solely through telephone interviews. The intervention center takes care of mailing questionnaires and processing survey forms. The survey center is where the phone interviews take place.

The intervention and survey centers comprise the CPRC Survey Research Center. Over the past 6 years, the Survey Research Center has been responsible for conducting many important studies. The studies have ranged from a simple random digit dialing(rdd) questionnaire with one health risk factor, surveying 400 people to a complex multi-risk, multi-site longitudinal study with a sample size of 30 - 40 thousand people. The Center has been very successful in recruiting individuals for these studies. It has also been successful maintaining high standards in data collection and subject tracking.

Depending on the parameters of the study, the Survey Research Center will employ one of two methods for conducting the study. The first method is what we call the "paper and pencil" in which processing of the study is done manually. The second method uses an automated computer system which is called the Survey Management System (SMS). This is a sophisticated CATI(computer assisted telephone interviewing) system inter-linked with a data processing and intervention delivery systems. Regardless of the method for conducting the study, as a **survey telephone interviewer**, you will play an **integral role** in recruiting subjects and obtaining information from them.

Your Role as a Telephone Interviewer

Recruiting respondents and conducting a standardized interview takes skill and experience. As a telephone interviewer you are not only someone who asks questions and collects data in a rigorous scientific manner, you are the representative of the survey itself. To insure the success of the study and the continued support of the people who contribute to our research, it is essential that the experience they have on the telephone is as pleasant as possible. There is a limited number of respondents to interview and therefore each respondent becomes extremely important and irreplaceable

It is important to treat each person we call as a distinct personality and realize their individual needs. As a telephone interviewer you will need to take time to review each record and pay careful attention to the notes made by other interviewers who have called before you. In doing so, you will be able to anticipate the respondent's needs before you speak with them and secure the interview.

Although it may seem like securing the interview is the most difficult part of telephone interviewing, ending of the survey is just as important. At the close of the survey you are "setting up" the subject for a complete for the next interviewer (which may be you) at the next time point. You must be aware of the importance of each respondent and to thank the respondent for their participation and write any comments that may help the next interviewer for the next time we call them.

In addition to keeping proper relations with the people participating in our project, it is also necessary to keep careful records so that we may continue contacting them in the future. Once they enter the study at baseline, we will remain in contact with them for a period of time. Also, in longitudinal studies, not only is each subject irreplaceable, but there is a limited amount of time to complete the survey with each subject. Because these types of studies are plotted over a series of time points, it cannot afford to be "backed up" by delaying the completion at any given stage. To insure the quality of our results we must meet certain deadlines to complete each time point on schedule. In order to keep work flowing in a consistent manner at the appropriate time point, it is vital that each interviewer fulfills their scheduling commitment so that we can maintain a steady staff to deal with the job which has been put before us.

Regardless of the advances in technology, there will never be a time when we will not need the skills of a well trained interviewer. With the development of the computerized interviewing system, the interviewer's role is not diminished, but intensified as. It is because of the role that you play in these studies that we ask that you are very serious in absorbing all the material given to you and conduct your job in a highly professional manner.

The second chapter of this manual explains the basic techniques and principles of standardized interviewing you must learn and follow each time you are on the phone with a respondent. The third chapter discusses the topic of persuasion and ways of dealing with reluctant respondents. Chapter four explains how to process paper and pencil surveys and computer driven surveys. A short section on employment policies is also included.

After reading through this manual, you will have a foundation on which to build through practice, practice and more practice. During your training period, you will be introduced to the various surveys currently being conducted. Some surveys are computer driven, meaning questions for the survey will appear on the computer screen and you will enter respondent answers into the computer. Other surveys are done on paper, usually on a bubble form, although some are just typed questions with answer spaces. You will also learn fallback statements, which are answers for questions commonly asked by respondents, for each study.

You should spend some time listening to certified interviewers on the phone, to get a feel for how an interview proceeds. Call managers and supervisors are always available to answer any questions you have. The more you practice and listen and ask questions, the sooner you will feel comfortable on the phone. Remember that your reading and training will give you a good solid start but only through role playing and conducting actual interviews will you gain confidence and skill as a phone interviewer. So, have patience—there is a lot of information to absorb. At the end of the first two chapters is a review to help you synthesize the main ideas of each section.

Survey Center Staff

You are not alone when you are calling. The shifts are supervised by a supervisor and/or a call manager. Please ask them any questions you may have before, during, or after an interview. Supervisors are also senior interviewers; they will be calling some of the more difficult respondents. Call Managers oversee various projects within the survey center and ensure they are running smoothly. They are also responsible for hiring, training and monitoring interviewers. Co-Director of the Survey Research Center, Sara Cottrill supervises the Call Managers and Supervisors, assigns study tasks to Call Managers, and monitors the progress of each study. Co-Director of the Survey Research Center, Robert Laforge oversees various aspects of the survey center, participates in grant writing to bring projects to the CPRC, and coordinates which projects will be undertaken by the survey center staff. Remember that everyone from the Co-Director, Sara Cottrill to supervisors have spent significant amounts of their time conducting telephone interviews--we know what it is like to call respondents. Use our knowledge and our experience when you encounter a difficult respondent or situation.

Chapter 2: The Principles of Standardized Telephone Survey Interviewing*

What is standardized interviewing?

Obtaining information from respondents in a standardized manner is a very different experience from telemarketing or making a phone call to a friend. You aren't selling anything or having a two way conversation. You are calling someone you do not know and asking him/her to give you information on the topic of the survey.

Standardized telephone interviewing ensures that all surveys are conducted the same way, so that a respondent's answers stay consistent no matter which interviewer is calling. Because the respondent is interacting with an interviewer, the potential for bias is great. Ideally, you, the interviewer, are so neutral that the information from a survey given over the phone is the same as a survey done at home alone by the respondent. There are seven important points to remember about conducting a standardized telephone interview:

The basics of conducting a standardized interview

1) Conduct the survey with an attentive, non-judgmental style
2) Read the survey questions at a reasonable pace
3) Read all survey instructions and questions verbatim
4) Do not interpret questions for the respondent
5) Use neutral probes to ensure respondents are answering the question asked without biasing their answer
6) When questions must be answered on a scale, ALWAYS read the entire scale
7) Verify scale responses if a respondent answers with a number

The only parts of the interview that can be "ad-libbed" are the introduction to the study and the conclusion. Within the actual survey however, you must strive to keep <u>you</u> out of the interview. Each interview should be conducted in the same manner and at the same pace to ensure we are hearing the respondents' opinions and not your own!!!

A Note about Scientific Studies

* Adapted from the MINNESOTA HEART HEALTH PLAN PROGRAM EDUCATION EVALUATION TELEPHONE INTERVIEWERS' MANUAL (Benson, Virnig, & Pirie, 1985).

Remember in Psych 101 when you learned about double blind studies? Guess who's blind in this study... Yes, that's right—**you**. Because you have direct contact with respondents, we will give you a general working knowledge of a study but not many details about how the study is structured. There are three reasons for this:

a) We want to ensure the quality of the data you collect. If you are aware of the research design, you may unconsciously influence a respondent's answers

b) We don't want you to accidentally tell a respondent something s/he is not supposed to know—if you don't know, then you can't pass on information that may taint their data and cause the respondent to be dropped from the study

c) We don't want to put you in a moral position of having to lie when a respondent has a question about the research design. You can honestly say you don't know instead of hedging or lying outright, which isn't fair to you or the respondent.

Questions and answers pertaining to each survey are a part of every study manual in the form of fallback statements. This is the information that can be passed on to respondents when they have questions about the study.

Beginning an Interview

In telephone interviews you make "blind contacts". Respondents pick up the phone and, without any visual cues, decide whether or not to grant an interview. Because respondents make this decision within a few seconds, how you present yourself and the study is extremely important.

The Initial Contact: The Introduction

When making an initial contact with a household, you should present yourself in a polite, interesting, and businesslike manner. People can detect many things about you through your tone of voice, your pauses, and your rate of speech. Don't rush through your introduction; it will make you sound unsure of yourself and like you expect rejection. Feeling confident about how to present the study carries over to the respondent. Several studies have shown that people listening to speeches over the phone can determine when someone believes in what they are saying and when they do not.

A respondent usually makes a decision about the phone call in the first 30 seconds of the call. Therefore, the initial impression you make is very important. Sounding competent and trustworthy are key to people deciding to listen. Using a positive tone makes a huge difference. In experimental studies, tone of voice influenced subjects more than any other factor—even more than the information conveyed!! A negative tone resulted in a negative opinion, while a positive tone contributed to subjects understanding and agreeing with the message being given.

Remember, what is said is important, but what is just as important is how it is said. Your rate of speech, rhythm pattern, pitch, hesitations, non-verbal sounds like "um" and even sounds like sighing, clearing your throat and swallowing can convey how nervous or confident you are. By the end of the training and practicing period for each study, you should feel ready to address most questions respondents will have and feel capable of explaining the study in sufficient detail to respondents.

A suggested introduction is provided for each survey. Although you may find it easier at first just to read the introduction as written, the introduction is the one part of the interview in which it is permissible and desirable to ad-lib and allow your personality to show through. As you become more comfortable with interviewing, you will develop an introduction that works best for you. A strong introduction assists in securing an interview, so develop a style that "fits" you. Some interviewers use a soft-spoken approach, while others use a more assertive and outgoing style. Both interviewers are successful, yet their approaches are very different. Always maintain a polite and professional manner**. The following information should be included in any introduction:**

1) **Your name**. Giving your name encourages trust from respondents.. They see that they are not talking to a machine or an organization, but to an individual.
2) **The institution you represent**. Saying that you are calling from the University of Rhode Island encourages cooperation. People are generally flattered to be included in an academic study.
3) **Your reason for calling**. You should provide a general description of the survey and it's purpose ("a health questionnaire to learn more about people's health habits"). It's important that you avoid introducing the survey in a way that might bias respondents and predispose them to respond in a certain way. Also, don't launch into a long-winded description of the study, or you may find the respondent losing interest before you ask the first question. Don't give more information unless a respondent asks. Assume the respondent will be interested in the study and make your introduction with this in mind. Use specific fallback statements when a respondent has a question, so that you respond in a uniform and informative manner.
4) **The reason you are contacting this particular household**. Describe how the household was selected (e.g., random digit dial method or names provided by their physician or employer).

The initial contact should, at the very least, verify that the correct household has been telephoned.

Securing the Interview

There are two approaches that interviewers use to secure an interview. Some interviewers jump right into the survey after the introduction. You read the confidentiality statement and begin with the first survey question. Assuming most people are interested and ready to continue, you proceed with the interview.

Another technique that interviewers use is to ask a **closed question** to gain a respondent's permission to proceed with the interview. The difference between a closed and open question is that you aren't really asking a question, you are stating something, such as "because this survey is so important, I'd like to complete it with you now, over the phone." Then you go into the confidentiality statement. Stay away from open questions such as "Do you have the time?" or "I was wondering if you'd like to complete the survey now". Respondents can easily say "no" to these types of questions or hang-up. A respondent will usually give you more information with a closed question, such as "I'm busy right now" to which you can then set up a callback time.

Occasionally a respondent will ask some questions about the survey or the purpose of the study. You will stand a much better chance of completing the interview if you are able to answer the questions honestly and professionally. Included in every current study manual are questions commonly asked by participants, and suggested responses to these questions. Study the list as you train for each study, and practice responses so that you will be comfortable and assured when answering questions. **If you are asked a question that you cannot answer, don't lie or make up a response**. Say that you don't know the answer but would be happy to check with your supervisor.

If the respondent questions the validity of a call

Sometimes respondents are skeptical about the legitimacy of survey calls. The word "survey" has been misused to disguise sales pitches and pranks. If a respondent questions the validity of the call or seems skeptical, the best approach is to be reassuring.

The following can be used to deal with respondents' skepticism:

1) Assure the respondent that you understand their concerns. There are a lot of survey calls that aren't legitimate.
2) Emphasize that this is not a sales pitch. You are doing research for the University of Rhode Island, which is funded by the federal government.
3) Give your name again and offer the study director's name and number (keep this information handy). You can suggest that they call the director collect.
4) For some studies, respondents will get an introductory letter or hear from another source, such as an employer, about the study. In these cases, you can refer to the letter they received to assure respondents that this is a legitimate call.

Interviewing Styles

When interviewing you use some of the same skills that you bring to any two-way conversation. However, the central purpose of an "interviewing conversation" is to collect information from the respondent without coloring it with your own personal biases or knowledge. The survey **must** reflect the respondent's opinions. The respondent should be answering the questions over the phone with the same answers they would have given if the survey was mailed and they completed it alone. **The ONLY interviewing style that is acceptable for phone interviewing is an attentive, non-judgmental approach.**

Interviewing characteristics to avoid

There are characteristics of regular conversations that may negatively influence the quality of your work as a telephone interviewer, so watch for these characteristics in your own interviewing style:

1) **Self-Expression**. People enjoy talking! You must channel the respondents' conversational urges so that they meet the information-gathering needs of the study. You must also avoid giving way to your own urge for self-expression.

2) **Therapy**. People talking to non-judgmental interviewers may seek to unburden themselves of guilt or seek support (e.g., "I shouldn't have taken the cigarette", or, "I've gained so much weight over the winter".) Often, we're inclined to offer advice or support. DO NOT DO THIS. Offer non-judgmental comments such as "Uh-huh" or "I see", and move on to the next question.

3) **Ritual**. When interviewing we must learn how to detect ritualistic answers in respondents and avoid using them ourselves. For example, when a respondent asks, "Do you know what I mean?", an interviewer might respond with a ritualistic "Uh-huh", when he or she really does not know what the respondent means. A better response might be, "I'm not sure I know exactly what you mean. Could you tell me more?"

4) **Judgments**. On the telephone you should avoid making and expressing your own personal judgments about the questionnaire topics ("I think it's important to watch your diet"), the respondent ("You deserve a medal for quitting!"), or anything the respondent says. You must strive to be neutral, but not cold.

5) **Exchange of Information**. Of course, an interviewer must be attentive to and interact with the respondent while collecting information. However, the interaction should not be a two-way exchange of information. To let the respondent know that you are attentive, use non-leading reinforcements such as "uh-huh", "I see", and "let me get that down". Reinforcements reassure the respondent that you are listening and recording the information that he or she is giving. They encourage the respondent to continue with the survey and help build rapport. A list of neutral reinforcements is provided below:

REINFORCEMENTS

1) Thanks, it's important to get your opinion on that.
2) I see.
3) It's important to find out what people think about this.
4) Uh-huh, I see.
5) Let me get that down.
6) I see (then repeat the answer).
7) I want to make sure I have that right.

Pacing

The pace at which the survey is conducted may dramatically effect the outcome of the survey. Questions should be read slowly. Studies have indicated that the ideal reading pace for survey interviewing is two words per second. Remember, even though you may be reading a question for the tenth or even the hundredth time, the respondent may have never heard the question before.

Reading a question too quickly may have negative effects. First, it may frighten the respondent. Second, the interviewer may sound nervous or uninterested in the content of the question. Third, the respondent may feel the need to hurry through his or her answers, or that he or she cannot ask for clarification when needed. Alternatively, the respondent may ask you to repeat questions if they are read too quickly.

If a respondent says, "I only have a few minutes, you'll have to hurry", often an interviewer will do just that—at the expense of the interview. If the respondent seems very hurried, tell him or her that you would like to begin the survey now, but can complete it at another date if you run out of time. Then, begin to conduct the interview at a comfortable pace—without rushing.

Methods for slowing down the pace of a survey

You must take the initiative for establishing a thoughtful, deliberative mood for the survey.

> **Speak slowly and clearly at all times**. If a respondent repeatedly asks for you to re-read questions, you are probably speaking too quickly.

> **Use a silent probe**. Research has shown that there is a positive correlation between the amount of silence used by the interviewer and the respondent's general level of spontaneity.

An interviewer, when trying to maintain a comfortable flow of conversation, may leap to fill in silences with the next question. If the interviewer pauses instead, he or she may be surprised to find that the respondent will fill in the gap by elaborating upon a thought or providing further information. The appropriate use of silence creates a slower pace and a more thoughtful mood.

Asking Questions Verbatim

Ask each question exactly as it is written. If answer choices are offered, read all the choices in the order in which they are listed on the survey form. In general, you should not provide subjects with definitions or clarifications. (The **question by question prompts** (Q-by-Q's) for the various surveys spell out exactly what you are allowed to tell the respondents.) The accuracy of the study requires that each question be asked verbatim so that all respondents respond to the same questions, regardless of who talks with them or whether they complete the survey on the phone or mail it in. Please write down unusual responses or a respondent's clarifying comments to a question on paper while doing the survey. After the interview is complete, record the assessment, section, question number and verbatim comments in the comments section of the tracking sheet.

There is another more subtle issue to reading questions verbatim. Words should not be stressed or emphasized unless they are underlined, in capital letters, or bolded. The meaning of a question changes depending on which words are emphasized. For example, the sentence "I am selling the car to John" can be taken different ways when a particular word is stressed:

I am selling the car to John	The emphasis is on the speaker's act
I am ***selling*** the car to John	The car is being sold, not given away
I am selling the ***car*** to John	Only the car is being sold, nothing else
I am selling the car to ***John***	The car is only for John, not Jim or Sally[*]

[*] This example was taken from Bettinghaus, Erwin P. (1973). *Persuasive Communication.* Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, p.139.

The interview should not be conducted in a monotone voice. Simply use a conversational tone, giving equal weight to all words in the sentence so that the meaning of the questions stay the same across interviews.

Probing

One of the most challenging and important aspects of interviewing is getting the respondent to answer the question which was asked. If a respondent gives an incomplete, ambiguous, or irrelevant answer, misunderstands the question, or gets off track and moves on to another topic, it is your responsibility to get him or her back on track through careful, neutral techniques. Probing skills are the tools you will use to get past a troublesome question or response. The quality of the interview depends a great deal on your ability to probe successfully.

Successful probing requires that you recognize immediately just how the respondent's answer has failed to meet the objectives of the question. It is your responsibility to understand the objectives of each question and of the study as a whole. In probing it will be sometimes useful to appear slightly bewildered by the respondent's answer and suggest with your probe that it may be you who failed to understand. For example: "I'm not sure I know what you mean by that. Could you tell me a little more?" This technique can arouse the respondent's desire to cooperate with someone whom he or she thinks is trying to do a careful job.

Nondirective Probing

Good probes motivate respondents to communicate more fully and focus on specific topics. Probing must not introduce bias, although the potential for bias is great. For instance, an interviewer might imply quite unintentionally that some responses are more acceptable than others, or hint that the respondent might wish to consider or include this or that in his or her responses.

Because you know the survey objectives, you may find yourself looking for a particular response to a question. You must be careful not to introduce a thought not presented in the question.

Kinds of Probes

The following are different neutral techniques that can be used to evoke a clearer, more complete response:

Repeating the question. When the respondent doesn't seem to understand the question, misinterprets it, seems unable to make up his or her mind, or strays from the subject, the most useful technique is to repeat the question exactly as it is written in the questionnaire. The respondent may not have heard the question fully the first time, or may have missed the question's emphasis. Repeating the question is often the only probe that is necessary.

The expectant pause. Being silent is the simplest way to convey to respondents that you think they have more to say. The pause gives respondents time to gather their thoughts.

Repeating the respondent's reply. Repeating what the respondent has said is often an excellent probe. This should be done as you write down the respondent's reply. Hearing his or her ideas repeated stimulates the respondent to further thought.

Neutral questions or comments. Neutral questions or comments are frequently used to obtain clearer and fuller responses (e.g., "I see...").

What to do when a respondent asks you to clarify a question

When a respondent asks you for your opinion about a question, or is having trouble answering a question and asks for your help, you must say **"I'm sorry, I'm not allowed to interpret the question. It is whatever it means to you."** You can say that you are only a phone interviewer and however they interpret the question is how they should answer it. The researchers are looking for the respondent's answers, not your answers. You could seriously bias an answer by giving a respondent your version of the question—your interpretation could be very different from their own.

Most questions that may be difficult to answer or that have difficult words in them will have **Q-by-Q's**. If a respondent requires clarification, you can read the information contained in the Q-by-Q, but this is the most that you can do. If you go beyond the Q-by-Q, you are starting to bias the interview.

Reading and Verifying Scale Responses

Reading Scale Responses

Always read the ENTIRE scale (numbers and answers) in the order it is presented on the survey. If a respondent asks for one specific number to be read again, (i.e. "What was 3?"), tell them you have to repeat the entire scale. When a respondent is filling out a survey on paper, he or she has the opportunity to view the entire scale. During a phone interview, a respondent does not have the scale in front of them. Reading just one scale response could influence the respondent's answer, therefore the entire scale must be presented each time.

Sometimes a respondent will give a scale answer that is not on the scale. For example, the scale runs from 5=repeatedly, 4=often, 3=sometimes, 2=seldom and 1=never and the respondent answers the question with “rarely”. You should repeat the scale to the respondent, by saying something like, “Oh, this scale goes from...” and repeat the scale numbers and answers.

Another situation that you may encounter is when a respondent answers a scaled question with a “yes” or a “no”. You can simply say “So, where would you put your answer on the scale?” and wait for their answer.

Verifying scale responses

On questions with scale responses, a respondent can give the scale answer or the number corresponding to a scale answer. If the respondent answers with a number, you must verify the number. Read the scale answer associated with the number to the respondent in a neutral voice. Do not use a questioning tone because the respondent may think you are questioning his or her choice. The respondent does not need to say “yes” or “no” to the verification, just read the scale answer and immediately read the next question.

For example, for the question “Would you say your health in general is: 5=Excellent, 4=Very Good, 3=Good, 2=Fair and 1=Poor.” When asked the question, a respondent says “4”. You would say “Very Good” and then read the next question. The respondent may say, “Oh, I meant my health is not very good, its fair.” If a respondent has given the wrong number, hearing the corresponding answer will point out his or her misunderstanding and the scale answer can be changed.

Concluding the Interview

Here, as in the introduction, you are free to ad-lib. Always thank the respondent for participating in the study. Make sure they know how important their opinions and answers are. If they are taking part in a longitudinal study, confirm that they will be contacted again in the future. If a respondent was reluctant to complete the interview, you may want to reinforce the remarks you made in the introduction that persuaded the respondent to participate. **The impression you leave may determine whether another interviewer will be granted an interview in the future**.

Special Circumstances During an Interview

Depressed Respondents

You may encounter a respondent who is going through a difficult time. This could be reflected in the way that s/he is responding to your request to complete the survey. If the respondent comes across as being extremely depressed, agitated, or in a state of heightened emotion/duress, you should terminate the interview and arrange another time when the survey can be completed. An interview should never be conducted when a respondent is incoherent, emotional, or in a volatile situation.

Given that we are not a social service agency, we are not capable of offering assistance to these individuals. We are not trained as counselors or crisis intervention workers. To offer assistance, may make a bad situation worse.

However, if the respondent asks for assistance or makes an explicit statement that s/he will do harm to themselves such as, "If you don't stay on the phone, I will commit suicide", "I'm going to kill myself", or other explicit statements, call the supervisor to the phone. Document on the tracking sheet any explicit comments made by the respondent so that the supervisor can read them. Pass the call over to the supervisor and stand by for instructions.

Angry Respondents

If a respondent claims we are harassing them or they express a lot of anger, try to remain calm and listen carefully to the respondent. Apologize as many times as it takes. **Know your facts beforehand—READ THE TRACKING SHEET** (previous ones as well, if it is a longitudinal study). This type of call can often be anticipated in a long term study. More often than not it will be a special call, a refusal conversion, or the tracking sheet will have many NH's or CB's recorded. Please consult your supervisor if you have any concerns before or during the call!

Be helpful and try to explain why we are calling (to get very important information).

Explain why it is helpful to get a specific time to callback (so we aren't calling a lot and disturbing the household).

For a longitudinal study, remind the respondent of the importance of the study. By the 3rd or 4th contact, they may have forgotten what they volunteered for.

If the respondent remains irate and angry and specifically says "**Don't ever call me again**!!" conclude the call with "I'm sorry to have disturbed you." Immediately bring the call to the attention of a call manager.

Be sure to document the incident on the tracking sheet.

Review

Now that you have finished the first part of the manual here are some questions, which are designed to clarify the main messages of the sections.

1) What is the main point of standardized interviewing?

a. To ensure that each interview is unique
b. To collect information in a consistent manner from a respondent without coloring it with your own personal biases or knowledge
c. To conduct each interview differently depending on your mood and on how you decide to interpret the questions that day
d. To have an equal exchange of information between a respondent and an interviewer

2) An introduction should include four things. What are they?

1. ____
2. ____
3. ____
4. ____

3) An ideal way to ask a respondent's permission to start an interview is:

a. I was wondering if you had the time to do the survey with me
b. I know you're really busy and I'm sure you have a lot to do, but would you have a moment to complete this survey over the phone with me?
c. Because this survey is so important, I'd like to complete it with you now, over the phone
d. Is this a good time to complete the survey?

4) A respondent tells you that she really wants to quit smoking and she's tried seven times in the past year. She starts telling you all the ways she's tried to quit and then starts talking about how the daughter-in-law of her best friend's neighbor is trying to quit. How would you get her attention refocused on the survey?

____

____

____

b) What interviewing styles would you avoid in this situation? (choose 2)

a. Therapeutic   b. Non-judgmental   c. Judgmental   d. Ritualistic

5) A respondent is in a hurry, but agrees to do the survey as long as you go quickly. What would you do?:

____

____

____

____

b) Who is responsible for establishing the pace of the interview? _______________

c) When an interviewer rushes, what may happen?

1. The respondent may feel pressured to answer quickly and may not ask for clarification when he/she needs to
2. The respondent may think the interviewer is relaxed and interested in the survey
3. The survey answers will be exactly the same as if the interviewer read the questions slowly
4. The respondent will probably <u>not</u> ask you to re-read questions

6) Here are some True/False questions:

a. You must read each question exactly as it is written   T   F

b. If answer choices are offered, read the ones you think might apply to the respondent   T   F

c. If a respondent asks you for a definition or a clarification, you should interpret the answer or word for the respondent   T   F

d. The information from a survey completed over the phone should be very different from a survey mailed in by a respondent   T   F

e. Unusual answers or clarifications to an answer should be recorded by the interviewer T F

f. You should stress or emphasize whichever words in the questionnaire seem appropriate to you during the interview, no matter if they are bolded, underlined, capitalized or not T F

7) A respondent has told you during the interview that he needs to smoke as soon as he gets up in the morning. Later, you ask the survey question: “How tempted would you be to smoke when you first get up in the morning?” and he answers “One” (which is not at all tempted). In order to make sure he understands the five point scale and has given the correct number, you could say:

a. “Oh, Mr. Smith, I think you meant 5, extremely tempted...”
b. “I think you have the scale backwards, would you like to revise your answer...”
c. “Are you sure about that?”
d. “So, you would say you are not very tempted to smoke when you first get up in the morning...”

8) You ask the respondent the question “I notice its easier to find low fat foods in the stores now” and the scale answers are 5=repeatedly, 4=often, 3=occasionally, 2=seldom, and 1=never. The respondent says, “Oh, yes that’s so true. Why yesterday I found low fat sour cream. I never knew it existed...” To get her back on track, you could say:

a. “Wow that’s really great. What store was this?”
b. “So, for the question ‘I notice its easier to find low fat foods in the stores now’ where would you put your answer on the scale?”
c. “So, would you say repeatedly for that question?”
d. “I think you’re right. Low fat foods are easier to find.”

9) A respondent is asked “In the future, what would be the two or three most important things that might keep you from having a mammogram?” She states one reason and stops. You could:

a. Say “Is that it???”
b. Repeat the question, heavily stressing the words ***two or three*** even though the words aren’t bolded or underlined or capitalized and the Q by Q does not have this listed as an option
c. Say “Are you sure you don’t want to consider natural disasters?”
d. Not say anything for a few seconds

10) A respondent asks "what does that mean?" when asked the question "I have someone who provides feedback about my exercise" (the scale responses are 5=repeatedly, 4=often, 3=occasionally, 2=seldom and 1=never). You can say:

a. "Well, if I were answering the question, I'd try to think of people who have told me things about exercise"
b. "I'm sorry, I'm not allowed to interpret the question, but I can repeat the question and/or scale for you."
c. "Another way of wording the question is this: There is a person in my life that tells me I look really great when I work out"
d. "I could read you the Q by Q, but I think my version is better. The researchers want to know if someone gives you advice about exercise"

11) Some more true/false questions:

a. You can read the scale numbers and answers in any order. T F

b. You can read a scale number without the scale answer. T F

c. If the respondent asks what one scale number is, you have to repeat the entire scale to him/her. T F

d. When a respondent gives an answer that is not on the scale, such as "all the time", you can choose "repeatedly" because its close enough T F

e. If a respondent says "yes" to a question instead of answering with the scale answers from 5=strongly agree, 4=somewhat agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 2=somewhat disagree, and 1=strongly disagree, you can say, "so you strongly agree with that?" T F

f. When a respondent answers with a scale answer rather than a number, you must verify his/her response by saying the scale number T F

12) When a respondent is incoherent or emotional or in volatile situation you should:

a) Try as hard as you can to complete the interview
b) Terminate the call after trying to set up a callback time
c) Try to figure out the person's problems by acting as their therapist
d) Hang up on them without saying anything

13) If a respondent threatens to harm him/herself if you do not stay on the phone, what should you do?

a) Call your supervisor to the phone and document explicit comments made by the respondent on the tracking sheet and pass the call to the supervisor
b) Try to handle the call by yourself
c) Hang up on the respondent
d) Ask them to complete the survey with you since you have to stay on the phone anyway

Chapter 3: Persuading Reluctant Respondents*

Scientific research has many practical applications in today's world. For example, who would have thought that basic physics research on magnetic fields and light waves would result in microwave ovens? The fact that gasoline combustion can be harnessed into mechanical energy gave birth to the automobile. Research is essential for developing new products that change and improve our lives. At the CPRC, the information we gather from respondents is applied in concrete ways. Programs are being developed to help people change harmful health habits, which will hopefully lead to people living longer, healthier lives. Being aware of the central role research plays in our daily lives helps you convey to respondents how important their participation and information is.

One of the most important skills you can develop as an interviewer is persuasion. When researchers do not obtain a representative sample, the results of the study cannot be generalized. If response rates are low, or if people drop out of a longitudinal study, valid generalizations cannot be made about the information gathered. Unfortunately, a lot of time, energy and money is lost when a study does not represent the general public. Researchers cannot say the study represents the attitudes and behaviors of all segments of the population when some representatives of the entire population have refused to participate or have dropped out of the study. Persuading respondents to participate in a study or to continue in a longitudinal study is crucial. This chapter is devoted to techniques that can be used for persuading reluctant respondents to participate or continue their participation in a research project.

Defining a Refusal Conversion

Every once in awhile you will call a respondent who refuses to participate or is reluctant to continue in a study. Part of your job as an interviewer is to persuade the respondent to join or stay in a study. This process is called a refusal conversion. A refusal conversion can be difficult and takes skill and experience. You must know the difference between coercing or manipulating a respondent and persuading a respondent to participate. Manipulation involves omitting or presenting information that is not true and coercion involves threatening the respondent in some form. Persuasion, on the other hand, involves changing someone's decision through reason. There are many effective techniques you can use to persuade or "convert" a reluctant respondent. **Manipulating or coercing a**

* I compiled information about persuasion and general interviewing techniques from many sources. I would like to cite: The survey center at New England Research Institute, Watertown, MA; Robert M.Grove, Robert B. Cialdini, and Mick P. Couper's article entitled "Understanding the Decision to Participate in a Survey"; and Kathleen Kelley Reardon's book entitled *Persuasion in Practice*--L.A.D. 1/25/95

respondent to participate is not acceptable . This section discusses refusal conversions in depth.

Being Prepared for a Refusal Conversion

Sometimes, in spite of your best efforts, a respondent will refuse to be interviewed. However, **it is crucial to the success of a study that interviewers be prepared for refusals**. In a longitudinal study, you may know in advance that a person is not happy being in the study, but sometimes the respondent refusal may come as a surprise. For a random digit dial (RDD) study, a refusal will almost always come unexpectedly.

There are different kinds of refusal conversions, depending on the type of study that is being conducted. Some refusal conversions will be more effective for recruiting as many people as possible to ensure a representative sample. Other refusal conversions will only apply to longitudinal studies, when you are convincing respondents to stay in the study over time.

Interviewers must be prepared to do a refusal conversion at anytime! **READ THE ENTIRE TRACKING SHEET BEFORE MAKING A CALL**. If there are previous comments, prepare answers—write down potential rebuttals if necessary. Use the script provided by your supervisors if one is available. The easiest refusal conversion is the one made when the respondent first refuses. Specific rebuttals to commonly voiced concerns will be addressed later on in this section. Five important ways of being prepared are to:

A) ***Be Knowledgeable*** about why the study and the respondent's answers are important. The Cancer Prevention Research Center at the University of Rhode Island is developing programs that improve people's health. In order to help people live longer, healthier lives, we first need to know what people's attitudes and experiences are towards the behavior being studied. In all studies, the respondent represents a group of people with similar experiences. When the study is longitudinal, respondents cannot be replaced because we need to know how their unique answers change or do not change over time.

Sounding well-informed will help respondents respond more positively and you will be able to answer more questions. You have to believe in the importance of the study and the respondent before you can hope to persuade a resistant respondent. Many researchers have found that respondents can detect insincerity by the tone of voice an interviewer uses. Using a friendly, pleasant tone of voice and understanding why the study is so important will assist in securing the interview.

B) ***Listen*** to the respondent and keep the respondent in an **open, informative dialogue**. If they are unhappy, uninterested or angry about the study and about the call, try to determine <u>WHY</u>. You cannot make assumptions about the respondent's reason for refusing. The respondent sees the world in a different way and what is important to them may not be important to you. You have to put yourself in the respondent's place and figure out what is important to him or her and why they are having a problem with the study.

Often the respondent's real reason for refusing is not the first one given. Once you know why a respondent is unhappy, target that area of concern and address it specifically and respectfully. Empathizing with the respondent is important. Sometimes just knowing that the interviewer is really hearing and responding to his/her issue reassures the respondent enough to agree to complete the interview. **Good probing is essential**. When you ask good questions, you receive more information from the respondent and in turn, can respond more thoroughly to a respondent's concerns.

C) ***Let the respondent know their contribution is important.*** Thank the respondent for all their help and let them know how much their participation is appreciated. <u>Every respondent is critical to the success of the project</u>. Respondents are asked to participate because we need to learn more about **their** personal experiences and opinions. NO ONE ELSE can represent that person's experiences and opinions. Once a respondent starts in a longitudinal study, we cannot call someone else and say "hey, would you mind being (the respondent) for the rest of our study?" A respondent's experiences are unique. Another person will not answer the questions in the same way. Once a respondent drops out, we have lost some of our power to generalize and therefore, we cannot help as many people with the study results.

D) ***Avoid outright refusals and leave the door open for another try at a later time***. If you find that you are not getting anywhere at all during your first call to a respondent, try to end the call before you get a final "no" and before the respondent begins to think that you are a pest. Listen to a respondent's tone of voice. Many times a respondent will refuse to complete the survey simply because you called at a bad time. If the respondent sounds busy, stressed, or tired try to arrange a good callback time. If a respondent refuses to give a callback time, try probing to find out what the problem is and address their concerns. Make sure to record the nature of the call in the "Comments" section of the tracking sheet. Give the call to a Supervisor if you think the call might require special handling.

E) ***Try not to let another member of the household refuse for the selected respondent***. If you get a "gatekeeper refusal", or a refusal from the spouse or parent of a respondent, diplomatically explain that while they may be correct in their assessment of your chances for an interview, your job requires that you speak with the selected respondent. To avoid gatekeeper refusals, try making the call when you are most likely to find the selected respondent at home.

Coping with Refusals

A refusal is a difficult thing to deal with, even for the most seasoned interviewer. The "best medicine" for dealing with a negative situation is to follow it up with a positive one. Look through the call backs, and choose a respondent who looks particularly friendly or willing to participate, or try a new respondent. Remember, a refusal is not a reflection on you or your efforts.

Types of refusal conversions

There are two refusal conversions that you will know of before making the call: **1) Refusal Conversion:** a respondent who refused two weeks before and we are calling back to verify their decision and **2) Previous Refusal:** a respondent who has refused once at a previous timepoint and is being called for the next timepoint. In both instances, supervisors will provide a suggested script of important points to mention. For a Refusal Conversion, you can:

A) **Acknowledge the original refusal** and state the reason for the call back (to thank them for all their help, the importance of their information and we hoped we had just caught them at a bad time last time).

B) If the person sounds rushed, tired, or stressed **arrange a callback time**. If you do take a remail, make it clear we will follow-up with another call if we don't receive it.

There are two additional steps that can be taken for a longitudinal study:

C) If the respondent refuses because they are overwhelmed tell them **we will call them back** at the next timepoint to see if their situation has changed.

D) If the respondent refuses this option, **thank them for listening to you and for their past help.**

For a Previous Refusal, it is not necessary to acknowledge the past refusal. However, you may want to be very appreciative when the respondent answers and stress how important their opinions are. Most likely you will be making a refusal conversion, so be prepared with the script provided and by reading the previous tracking sheets. You can follow steps B-D above as needed.

Specific Interviewing Tools

A. ***Have a positive attitude going into the interview***. If you already know you have to make a refusal conversion, try to do it after a complete, or at the beginning of a shift when you are feeling more upbeat. Try to remain as relaxed as possible. Being positive and relaxed helps you respond more effectively to respondent concerns and may help avoid a refusal in the first place—many times people respond in a similar tone to the one in which they are addressed.

B. ***Set a relaxed pace and tone for the interview***. A hurried introduction can come across as uncaring or abrupt. Also, information is lost when it is presented too quickly.

C. When converting a respondent***, try to stick to one or two main points***. Providing too much information can confuse the respondent. Too much information also confuses the points you are trying to make. But if the respondent stays on the phone, and seems to be listening, keep talking—try to engage them in a dialogue so you can figure out why they are refusing.

D. ***Use authority*** if you think it will convince a respondent. For example, if the study is being funded by the National Institute of Health, remind them that they are taking part project that has grant from the federal government. This isn't someone's graduate thesis, this is an issue that concerns the U.S. government and taxpayers such as themselves.

E. ***Most people like to help others***. Reminding respondents of the study's purpose and that their information will benefit many others in the future may convince some reluctant respondents. Especially with older respondents, mentioning that they are helping other people live longer lives by reducing heart disease or cancer (if applicable to the topic being studied) may strengthen your refusal conversion.

****

****A Reminder****

Do not compromise the data by being afraid of the respondent's mood. Read questions at a reasonable pace. When the survey is completed, continue with the refusal conversion. For example, reiterate some of your statements that convinced the respondent to complete the survey and thank them again. A respondent needs to know how important they are to the success of the study.

****

Documentation

Documenting your contact with a respondent is critical so that the next interviewer or supervisor calling has information about how the respondent is reacting to being called. **Record as much information as you can**, especially verbatim comments by the respondent.

There are four areas to document:

A. ***The reason*** for the refusal.

B. ***What you said*** to try to persuade them to participate (or continue).

C. ***Explicit requests or demands*** made by the respondent. Record verbatim if possible.

D. ***The tone or mood*** of the respondent. Use behavioral terms, such as "the respondent sounded angry, tired, upset, etc." AVOID judgmental terms like "the rude/obnoxious respondent" or "the respondent was a jerk/weirdo/grump, etc.". Write down as many specific comments the respondent made as possible to support your assessment of the respondent's mood.

Dealing with Challenging Respondents

You will encounter a wide variety of responses from a participant when he or she is asked to complete the survey over the phone. For the more challenging responses, the following list will provide you with some examples of what can be said when the participant gives a reluctant response. Use as much or as little as you need. Many of these responses are from interviewers who have called for a long period of time. Remember that these are just sample responses. We do not want you to memorize these word for word. You need to remember the basic points and integrate them as needed into your discussion with a respondent.

General guidelines to use when a respondent says “no” when asked to complete a phone interview:

- Politely ask why the respondent feels that they do not want to complete the study on the phone. Attempt to convert them by addressing their specific concerns directly. They may simply be misinformed about the study, or have questions that you can answer, or they may need you to call at another time.
- Ask if there would be a more convenient time for you to call. Suggest some alternative times.
- If the respondent has received the survey in the mail, and the refusal to the phone interview is firm, ask the respondent to please try to return the mailed questionnaire to us. If the respondent maintains that he or she no longer has the questionnaire or was never sent one, state that you will remail the questionnaire. However, only offer to remail if it is apparent that the respondent will not be converted and will not be convinced to complete the survey over the phone. Remails are always a last resort. **Verify the respondent’s address when taking a remail**.
- If the person says that he or she is unable to complete the survey “at this time”, either over the phone or through the mail, ask if you can schedule an interview at some time in the distant future. (This usually happens if the respondent is ill, has had a death in the family, is caring for a sick relative, etc.)
- Whether or not the respondent consents to participate at this point, remember to keep a polite tone throughout and thank the respondent at the close of the call. Record the results of the conversation on the tracking sheet.

Common refusal conversions used when recruiting a sample

“I’M JUST NOT INTERESTED”

- I’m required to list a reason why you don’t want to participate in the study.
- The importance of scientific research (they are helping others)
- Respondent represents a segment of the population that is important to include in the study

“I’M TOO BUSY”

- Stress how quickly the survey can be done over the phone and if now is not a good time, we are willing to call at a more convenient time (BE AWARE OF SURVEY CENTER CALLING HOURS).
- We could start the questionnaire now and then call back later to complete the rest if necessary.

“I DON’T WANT TO TALK ABOUT MY (SMOKING, DIET, SUN EXPOSURE, EXERCISE HABITS, ETC...)”

- Sympathize with how difficult it can be to talk about a behavior, but stress how the study is helping others.
- Stress how important their opinions are
- Can skip a question that makes respondent too uncomfortable

Sample scripts:

“I understand that many people find it difficult to talk about their (smoking, etc.), but the research we are doing is very important. One of our goals is to find the best ways to help other people change their behavior (quit smoking, etc.); and although we’re not trying to make you change, your attitudes and experiences are very important to us. Regardless of whether you have, do, or don’t want to change, you are important to us. We can skip any questions that you might feel uncomfortable with. Is that fair enough?”

OR

"I see. We know sometimes it can be difficult. However, we hope you know that it is this type of feedback which is vital in letting us know how people feel. Your responses will help us out a great deal, and we can skip any questions you don't want to answer. Does that sound all right?"

OR

"Okay, I can understand how you feel. But I want to stress just how important your individual participation is. Your experiences are unique, and no one can replace you in the study. If you would please allow me to start the survey with you, we can skip any question you don't want to answer, OK?"

"TOO MANY CALLS"/"YOU CALL AT INCONVENIENT TIMES"

- We are persistent because your information is so important
- We try to get a specific callback time so we aren't calling randomly

Sample scripts:

"I'm sorry! I realize we have called a number of times, but we don't mean to call a lot. We are persistent only because the research is so important. We try to minimize the number of calls we make by trying to get a specific time to call you back. But we still haven't been able to complete your survey. We need to get it done as soon as possible. It would only take about ____ minutes. Because its so important, I'd like to complete the survey with you now, over the phone...

If now is a bad time, can we set up a callback time and we'll call back then to complete the survey. When is a good time that you will be home and have about ____ minutes to complete the survey?"

"THIS IS A BAD TIME"/"I CAN'T DO IT RIGHT NOW"

- Apologize and get a better time to call back

"I DON'T WANT TO CHANGE"

- We are interested in the respondent's opinions and experiences, what he/she thinks is important
- Not asking him/her to change, just want to hear his/her opinions and experiences about what is being studied

Sample script:

"Oh, I see. We're not asking you to change. We are interested in your experiences and attitudes towards (smoking, diet, etc.) so we can develop programs to help OTHER people change in the future."

"TOO MANY SURVEYS"/"I DON'T WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN A LONGITUDINAL STUDY"

- Emphasize overall time commitment (e.g. "its only an hour of your time in the next 3 years")
- One of the best ways to develop programs to help others is to study people's opinions over time

Sample script:

"I understand how you feel, a _____ (time period of study) study does sound like a long time commitment. However, each time we contact you will only take about _____ (minutes to complete survey) at the longest. It boils down to only _____ (total amount of time) over the ______ (time period of study—the amount of time they have left depends on how far into it they are). That's not a lot of time, especially when compared with how many people will benefit from the research we're doing."

OR

"We will try as hard as possible to make this study convenient for you. You may complete by mail (make sure this option is available!!), or you may choose to do it over the phone. We only contact you every _____ (time span between surveys), and each time only takes about _____ (time to complete survey). This research is very important, and your responses are important to us."

Common longitudinal study refusal conversions to use

"I'M JUST NOT INTERESTED ANYMORE"

Sample script:

"I understand that you are no longer interested in the __________ research project. We would like to understand why you feel this way, especially because you have helped us for the last __________ (time period—year and a half, two years, etc.). Could you tell me why you are no longer interested?"

Respond to reason if one is given. If respondent persists with "I'm not interested" continue with:

"Other respondents have told us they do not wish to continue for various reasons. Some of them have been:

1. Because they are really busy, too many things are going on...
2. They feel pressure from us to change their behavior and they don't want to change...
3. The questions are all the same and nothing has changed for me...

Are any of these reasons close to the way you feel?"

If so, try to respond to the concern and if not you could try:

- I'm required to list a reason why you don't want to continue in the study.
- The importance of scientific research (they are helping others)
- They represent a segment of the population and can't be replaced.

"I'M TOO BUSY"

- If the survey was mailed before the call, suggest a respondent could fill it out when he/she had a few minutes and send it in at his/her convenience—but stress that we are approaching a deadline and if he/she could send it soon we wouldn't have to call back.

"I DON'T (SMOKE, EAT POORLY, TAN, ETC.) ANYMORE"/"I QUIT/CHANGED"

- Still important to the study because we want to see how respondent's opinions and attitudes change or do not change over time

Sample script:

"Oh, Okay. Your responses are still very valuable to us. As you know, one of the goals of our research is to find ways to help other people change their behavior and live longer, healthier lives. So, we need the attitudes and experiences of people who have changed as well as people who haven't to help us achieve this goal. We are looking at how people's experiences and attitudes change or do not change over time. You've been in the study since the beginning and this makes you a very important member of our project."

"I DON'T SEE HOW THIS IS HELPING OTHERS"

Sample script:

"I understand how you feel, because I didn't either, until I became involved in the research project. By examining the experiences and attitudes of people over time, we will determine the best ways to help others change their behavior in the future."

"THE QUESTIONS ARE THE SAME/BORING"

- Have to ask the same questions to see how answers change or do not change over time

Sample script:

"Yes, I can understand how answering the same questions over and over again might get a little boring (you could interject that you have to read the survey at least 3-4 times a night to people!) But we need to examine how your experiences change or do not change over time and if we don't ask the same questions, we won't be able to compare your answers."

OR

“Yes, you’re right. But your responses may or may not vary slightly over time and this gives us important information for our research. The only way we can achieve the goal of our research is to ask the same questions at each timepoint.”

“THE SURVEYS ARE A WASTE OF TIME/TOTALLY FOOLISH RESEARCH”

- Only when we understand what is important to people can we develop programs to help other people change in the future, so that’s why the surveys are so important
- The programs being developed that are based on these surveys are already helping many different people

Sample script:

“The surveys may seem a waste of time, but the questions are structured in such a way that the researchers can abstract important information from them. The results (your answers) will be used in the near future to develop better programs which will help people live longer, healthier lives.”

OR

“I understand how you feel, but our research is already helping people across the country. Our study involves a wide range of people, so the findings will be applicable to almost anyone.”

“MY ANSWERS HAVEN’T CHANGED”

Sample script:

“Well, that may be the case, but your answers may have changed very slightly so that you do not detect a difference. Or your answers may not have changed at all. In either case, slight differences or no difference at all, the patterns of the answers give the researchers vital information.”

OR

“Your answers are still important to us because they will contrast with those people whose answers have changed. When the project is complete, we will then analyze why some people have different experiences from others.”

"I THOUGHT THAT THIS WAS A ONE TIME DEAL"/"I ALREADY DID ONE AND I DON'T WANT TO DO ANYMORE"

- In order to see how people's opinions change or do not change, we need to ask questions over a period of time

Sample script:

"Oh, well I apologize if you did not have the correct information. We really wouldn't learn too much by looking at just one survey. This is a longitudinal study where we contact you periodically over a ___ period."

OR

"I see. Well, one of the goals of our study is to find the best ways to help other people change their health behavior, and the only way we can do this is to look at the way your experiences change or do not change over time. We contact you every _____ (time--3-6 months, 2-4 weeks, etc.) for ______ (time period of study). This may sound like a long time commitment, but each time we contact you will require about ___ (minutes, etc.) of your time. This boils down to less ____ (time added together) over ______ (time period of study), which isn't very much at all when you think of all the people that will be helped in the future."

"THE LETTER SAID I COULD DROP OUT AT ANY TIME"

- Once a person starts in the project, he/she cannot be replaced
- Expensive to lose anyone because their information cannot be replaced

Sample script:

"Well, that is true, but it is very costly to lose anyone from the study. You see, when you first participated, you became an important part of our research. Now that you are involved in this research, no one can replace you."

OR

"Yes, that is correct. However, please consider how important you are to us. You are one of the 'pioneers' of our project, and our research will not be as effective if people such as yourself drop out."

OR

"You're right, but because this is a longitudinal study, we need to contact people periodically over a period of time so we can see what attitudes and experiences are important. If anyone drops out at any point, our research is negatively affected."

Summary

Refusal conversion:

Persuading a reluctant respondent to participate or continue in a study.

Preparation for Refusals:

Read the entire tracking sheet and script provided by supervisor

Be knowledgeable about the study's importance

Keep respondent in an open, informative dialogue

- Develop probing skills
- Try to stay within respondent's frame of reference

Let respondent know their contribution is important

Avoid outright refusals by arranging for a convenient callback

Refusal Conversion (refused 2 weeks ago):

Acknowledge the original refusal

Arrange a good callback if respondent is busy

In a longitudinal study, if the respondent is overwhelmed and unwilling to do within the four week period, confirm that we will be calling back at the next timepoint

If respondent still refuses, thank them for their past help and for taking the time to listen to you

Specific Interviewing Tools:

Positive attitude

Relaxed pace and tone of voice

Stick to one or two points to convey to respondent

Use authority if seen as helpful

People like to help others; stress how respondent is helping others by participating

Documentation:

Reason for refusal

What you said

Explicit demands or requests made by respondent

Tone or mood of the respondent

Summary of Recruiting Refusal Conversions:

I'm required to list a reason why you are not interested

Stress the importance of scientific research

Respondent represents a segment of the population that is important to include in the study

Survey can be done quickly and I can start it and then call back at another time if you have to stop

Empathy - be aware that it is hard to talk about certain behaviors.

Can skip uncomfortable questions

Just looking at how people's attitudes and experiences change or do not change over time, not asking respondent to change

CPRC trying to help people live healthier, longer lives

Try to breakdown in minutes or hours how much more time commitment the respondent has until the end of the study. Make them understand the time commitment is not large for the number of people they are helping in the future

Summary of Longitudinal Refusal Conversions:

Even if people have changed, their information is extremely important. We want to keep them in the study

Have to ask same questions to compare answers over time—to see how they vary or stay the same

Costly to lose people from the study because respondent cannot be replaced

Review

1) What happens when a study has a high refusal rate?

   a. The results of the study cannot be generalized and therefore are not as useful for developing programs to help most people
   b. The results of the study will be the same as a study with a low refusal rate
   c. The programs developed from the study will help all people
   d. Time, energy and money has been well-spent

2) A refusal conversion involves

   a. Threatening to tell a respondent's physician that he/she does not want to participate in the study
   b. Telling someone that they will receive money for participating in the study (when they won't)
   c. Attempting to change a respondent's decision through reason and logic
   d. Ending the conversation when someone says "no" without finding out why

3) There are five ways to be prepared for a refusal. They are:

   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.

4) Some True/False questions:

   a. Having a negative attitude and being tense will help you respond effectively to respondent's concerns T F
   b. Hurrying through the introduction can come across as abrupt and uncaring T F
   c. Engaging the respondent in a dialogue is important to try to find out why he/she is unhappy about being called T F
   d. Reminding people that they will be helping others is a good technique to use T F

5) Documenting your contact with a respondent is important so that

a. The next interviewer who calls knows how the respondent is reacting
b. The supervisor has a record of what happened during the call
c. Call managers know why a respondent is refusing
d. All of the above

6) A respondent listens to your introduction of the study and then says "I'm not interested in participating." What would you say to her?

____

____

____

7) A respondent says "I don't want to stop smoking and I don't want to talk about it, so no, I won't do your study." What would you say to change his mind?

____

____

____

8) A respondent has been in the study for a year and a half. Suddenly, she tells you she doesn't want to do it anymore. You ask her what her concerns are about the study, and she says she's just tired of doing it. What would you say to her?

____

____

____

____

Chapter 4: Processing Surveys

In the survey center, interviewers collect data in one of two ways: 1) using the traditional paper and pencil method or 2) using a computer, which is known as the Survey Management System (SMS). One of the major components of the SMS is a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. Both methods of collection data have pros and cons. For instance, the paper and pencil method offers tremendous flexibility. However, there is a burdensome amount of clerical processing which goes along with this method. The SMS, on the other hand, provides an efficient way of collecting and storing data, yet the method is somewhat inflexible.

The parameters of each study determine the data collection method. For instance, if a study is going to last only a few months or has a simple survey without complex skip patterns or even has a small pool of subjects, then the paper and pencil method would be seriously considered. On the other hand, if a study is complex and long in terms of design and duration of the study, then the computer system would be preferable. When a decision is being made in regards to the method for collecting data, a careful analysis of the parameters of the study must be made and based on those factors a decision can be rendered.

In this chapter we will be reviewing the procedures for both forms of data collection. Although the procedures may differ for the two methods, the content and type of the information being recorded is the same. For instance, in the paper and pencil method, if an interviewer discovers that a respondent's address has changed, he/she would have to fill out a special form that is being used for the study. If the SMS was being utilized, then the change of address would be manipulated directly on the SMS demographic screen. The way in which the information is ascertained and verified would be similar. However, the procedures used to facilitate changes in the database would differ for these two methods.

In the first section of this chapter, we will use as an example the The Harvard Community Health Plan (HCHP) study to illustrate processing paper and pencil surveys,. Processing any paper and pencil survey will be similar to processing a Harvard Community Health Plan study. Information on how to use the forms are provided on the following pages. The second section introduces SMS processing, covering everything from logging on to completing the survey. Given that this is a completely different modality for data collection, information will be presented in a more detailed way.

Processing Paper and Pencil Surveys

The Tracking Sheet

This form allows important information to be recorded and communicated to interviewers and all involved in the processing of surveys. The tracking sheet is a record of each time the respondent is called and the comments made by the respondent or another person in the household, relating to good times to callback or other comments pertaining to how the respondent feels about the survey. All surveys we administer have a tracking sheet with a unique color to help us identify them quickly. For studies that are longitudinal, or need to be divided into groups (for example, when we call nationwide and need to identify tracking sheets by time zone), we will assign different colors for each group or timepoint. Studies that do not need to be divided into groups will have only one color to identify it. An example of a longitudinal study, where respondents are contacted every 3-6 months, is listed below. As you can see, each time a respondent is contacted, the tracking sheet is a different color:

HCHP Tracking Sheets:

General Health Survey...........white
Baseline.................................pink
3 months Timepoint..............green
6 months Timepoint..............purple
9 months Timepoint..............cream
12 months Timepoint.............gray
15 months Timepoint.............orange
18 months Timepoint.............raspberry
24 months Timepoint.............light blue
30 months Timepoint.............gray
36 months Timepoint.............yellow

An example of a HCHP tracking sheet is given on the next page. Fill in the tracking sheet in the following manner. When you make a call, record your interviewer ID#, the date, the day (Sunday-Saturday), the time you make the call, active calling disposition abbreviation and any comments that will be helpful for the next interviewer.

DO NOT record comments such as “ He was a jerk!” Try to give descriptive comments about how the respondent reacted without making a judgment about the reaction. If the disposition is a “complete (C)”, be sure to record how the interview went and any unusual circumstances during the interview. Record specific callbacks or general information about the best times to call under the “Comments” section as well.

Remember: If you are making the 15th call on the tracking sheet you are responsible for attaching the new section, which can be found on top of the file cabinet.

The Tally Sheet

All interviewers are required to complete a tally sheet for each shift that he or she works. On the tally sheet, the interviewer records the disposition for each call made on a particular study during a shift. This is done by simply recording a hash mark after the appropriate disposition. The tally sheets help us to assess the daily and weekly progress of both individual interviewers and of the Survey Center as a whole. It is a record of what each interviewer has encountered during each of his or her calls during a shift.

Follow the steps listed below when filling out a tally:

1) Record your ID number, name, today's date, and the shift time on the first line. The shift time is the entire time of your shift, such as 3-6pm or 6-9pm, even if you do not call for the entire shift.

2) Put a check mark next to the type of survey and the time point (if applicable) you are administering.

3) Each time you make a call, record a hash mark next to the correct disposition.

4) For each tally sheet, at the end of the shift add the hash marks for each disposition, and record these sums in the right-hand column. Then, add all of these totals up for a grand total of calls made during the shift at the bottom of the page.

5) Hours on the telephone will generally be 3 or 4 hours, the full duration of the shift. If you are administering more than one type of survey during the course of a shift, use separate tally sheets for each study. **Divide your calling time among the tally sheets**, so that the amount of interviewing time reported on the separate tally sheets is equal to the number of hours spent calling. For example, record 1:30 hours for 30 month HCHP and 1:30 hours on 36 month HCHP if you spent equal amounts of time on the two timepoints.

   NOTE: Your break is included in your calling time. If you call only one type of survey, you will record 3 hours, <u>not</u> 2:45 hours.

A copy of a Harvard Community Health Plan study tally sheet is included on the next page.

The Change Of Address Form

If a respondent's name, address or telephone number (including the area code), is different from the one printed on the tracking sheet, a change of address form must be completed. It should be started by the first person to discover the discrepancy.

1. Enter a check mark to indicate the type of survey.
2. For HCHP surveys, write in the mail date (found at the bottom of the survey).
3. Write today's date, your ID number, and the respondent's ID number.
4. Write the respondent's name.

Record any changes by writing the original information on the left side of the form. This form stays with the survey until it is completed or closed out. If the survey is completed, the interviewer completing the survey verifies all altered information with the respondent and then enters his or her ID in the "verified by" space.

It is very important to record **ONLY NEW** information on the right hand side of the Change of Address form (information which is different from the original information given on the tracking sheet). We use this form to update our computer data base. For example, if only the last name of the respondent has changed from Joe Smith to Joe Linden, record "Joe Linden" on the right side on the first line under New name/New address. Do not record his address or telephone number if that has not changed.

The phone number search form (on the bottom half and back side of the sheet) is a form to track respondents, and is completed by a search team member only.

Active Calling Dispositions

Use the following disposition abbreviations to record each phone call you make on the tracking sheet under "Disp" and place a hash mark next to the disposition on the tally sheet. The following dispositions are used in the Harvard Community Health Plan study, although most will be applicable to any paper and pencil survey.

C Completed Interview. Participant completed the interview over the phone. **Be certain to verify the address.**

AM Answering Machine. Do NOT leave messages unless instructed by a supervisor.

B Busy. Because a busy signal indicates that someone is home, call again within 10 minutes.

CB Call Back. Use this disposition only if you have arranged call back **with the respondent**. Try to get specific time and date, and in "comments" section record information that might be useful to next caller (e.g., best time to call, participant works mornings, is elderly, etc.). Interviewers are available to conduct interviews during the following hours:

Monday - Thursday	**9:00am-9:00pm**
Friday	**9:00am-12:00pm; 4:00pm-8:00pm**
Saturday	**9:30am-3:30pm**
Sunday	**3:00pm-9:00pm**

If these hours are not convenient for the respondents, then arrange a time that is convenient arrange a time that is convenient and inform the supervisor.

D Deceased. The respondent is deceased.

GR Gatekeeper Refusal. The "gatekeeper" (e.g., spouse, mother, father, etc.) will not allow us to speak to the respondent. He/she refuses to allow access to the respondent.

HD Hold. The respondent said that he or she already returned the survey or will do so in the next day or two. You can let the respondent know that we will call back in 10 days if we do not receive the survey in the mail.

HG Hang up. Subject hung up the phone without giving an explicit refusal to participate in the study.

NH Not Home. The respondent was not home. Ask the person answering for a good day and time to CB.

IC Unable to Complete Interview. This code is only applicable if you **have started** the interview and are unable to finish it because the respondent is unable to comprehend the questions or seems incapacitated by illness, drugs or alcohol, or has to leave the phone for some reason.

MIS Missing Number. No home number is provided on the tracking sheet. **DO NOT CALL THE WORK NUMBER INSTEAD!!**

NA No Answer. No telephone pick-up after 10 rings.

NER No Eligible Respondent. Use if the participant does not speak English, is deaf, or is in some other way incapable of participating. Make sure to explain reason(s) for ineligibility in "comments" section, and bring it to the attention of a supervisor.

NW Non-Working Number. Use for numbers that are out of order, disconnected or temporarily out of service. Before recording this disposition, always dial the number again to be absolutely sure it's not working. If the number has been changed and the operator provides the new number, record this number clearly on the tracking sheet, cross out the old number and call it. Remember to complete change of address/phone forms where appropriate and attach them to the survey.

R Refusal by Participant. Use this disposition only if the respondent you've called states explicitly that he or she does not want to participate in our study. If the person hangs up during the introduction or makes a rude comment that is not really a refusal, record HG in the disposition column, and record details of your interaction. However, if the individual states "I'm not interested", regardless of how far through the introduction you get, this is a refusal.

RM Request for Remail. Respondent refuses to participate in a telephone interview and requests that we send a survey questionnaire to him or her through the mail. **Verify the address.** Use **RM** only as a last resort.

UP Unpublished Number. Use this disposition if the number we have for the respondent has been changed to an unpublished number.

WN Wrong Number. The respondent does not live at this number. Ask if further information about how we might contact him or her is available. Make sure to verify address, because we want to know whether the address on the tracking sheet may still be correct.

O Other. Situations in which no other code is deemed appropriate. Always describe the nature of the call in the "comments" section.

Final Dispositions

Final dispositions are assigned by Call Managers. You will never write one of these dispositions on a tracking sheet. However, you should know what each final disposition number means, in order to understand what has happened at past timepoints. For example, a respondent may not have completed the survey 3 months ago, maybe they were a "03". So when you reintroduce the study to the respondent at this timepoint, you may have to give them a more complete explanation because there was a greater time between interviews. Below are the final dispositions for HCHP.

Harvard Community Health Plan Final Dispositions

<u>Remain in the Study</u>

01 The survey questionnaire is completed over the phone by interviewer/supervisor. If a respondent refuses to answer a question, please note it on the tracking sheet.

02 The supervisor is not successful in persuading the respondent to participate in the study. The respondent explicitly states that he/she does not want to complete the survey.

03 There has been no contact in 15 or more tries.

04 Respondent is a long term critically ill patient who is unable to complete the survey questionnaire at this time as a result of this condition.

05 We are only able to reach answering machine after 15 calls.

06 Respondent insists that he/she returned mail survey and refuses to complete the survey questionnaire over the telephone.

07 Telephone number is out of order, disconnected, temporarily out of service or changed to and unpublished number. Note: the number will be checked on four separate occasions.

08 Survey staff are not able to complete the survey questionnaire with the respondent within four weeks of "start date."

<u>Dropped from Study</u>

09 Respondent has moved and we are not able to ascertain a new address or telephone number.

10 Respondent had moved out of the country for one year or more.

11 Respondent requests to be dropped from the study.

12 The respondent does not speak English, is deaf, or is in some way incapable of participating. Make sure to explain reason(s) for ineligibility in "comments" section.

13 The respondent is deceased.

Other studies may vary somewhat in that they may not include all of these dispositions, or may include others, or the meanings of each number may change depending on the parameters of the study. When a study is introduced to the interviewers by survey center staff, a list of dispositions specific to a study will be part of the training.

Processing Electronic Surveys

Unlike paper and pencil surveys, you will input information directly into the computer. For example, the **tracking sheet** will be one of the first screen that appears when making a call. The same information included on the paper and pencil tracking sheet will be included on this screen. You will be able to access past timepoint dispositions and comments as well as the present ones. **Change of addressees** can also be made right on the computer. There will be spaces to enter a new address or phone number. So, in other words, all documents and scripts used by the interviewer (tracking sheets, demographics, q by q's, background information, etc.) appear on the computer screen and will always be available to the interviewer with the press of a function key.

It is very important to ask questions if you are confused about using a computer. For some, this may be the first time using a computer and may feel overwhelmed. However, electronic processing of surveys offer distinct advantages. To reiterate, the paper and pencil method offers tremendous flexibility. However, there is a burdensome amount of clerical processing which goes along with this method. The SMS, on the other hand, provides an efficient way of collecting and storing data. So be patient and don't be afraid to another staff person for help. Experience tells us that you will love using the computer to collect data.

SMS Operational Overview

In making a telephone call on the SMS system, use the following procedure:

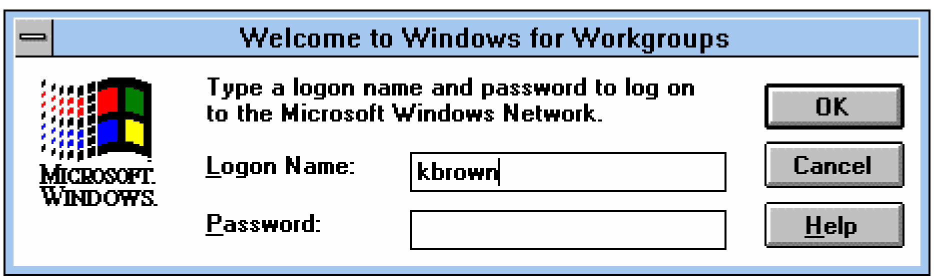
A) Logon - Network

There are essentially two screens which ask users to log in. The first enables the user to be connected to the network and the second allows the user to access the survey system itself. Generally individual computers are set up by the technical support staff so that the login screens come up automatically once the Windows operating system loads. If it does not come up, or you wish to login as another user, you may do so under the "Start" option on the Windows menu bar.

Login procedures are generally provided by the network administrator. Individuals may have their own personalized ID or certain groups may have a common login group name and shared password. In the case of the Survey Center staff, access is gained by typing:

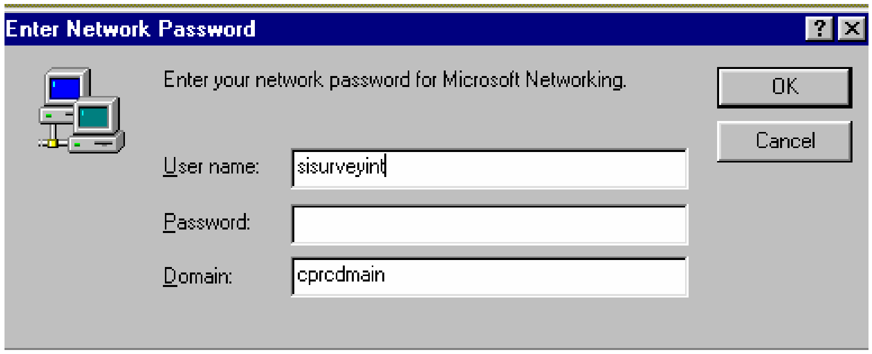
Logon Name : ***SiSurveyint***
Password : ***30seats***

NOTE: When logging on at a machine in which you have previously entered your network logon name and password, you will have to validate your password by entering it two more times in two more windows that will open.



(above: sample of early version of network logon screen)

Setting the Domain



(above : most recent version of the network logon)

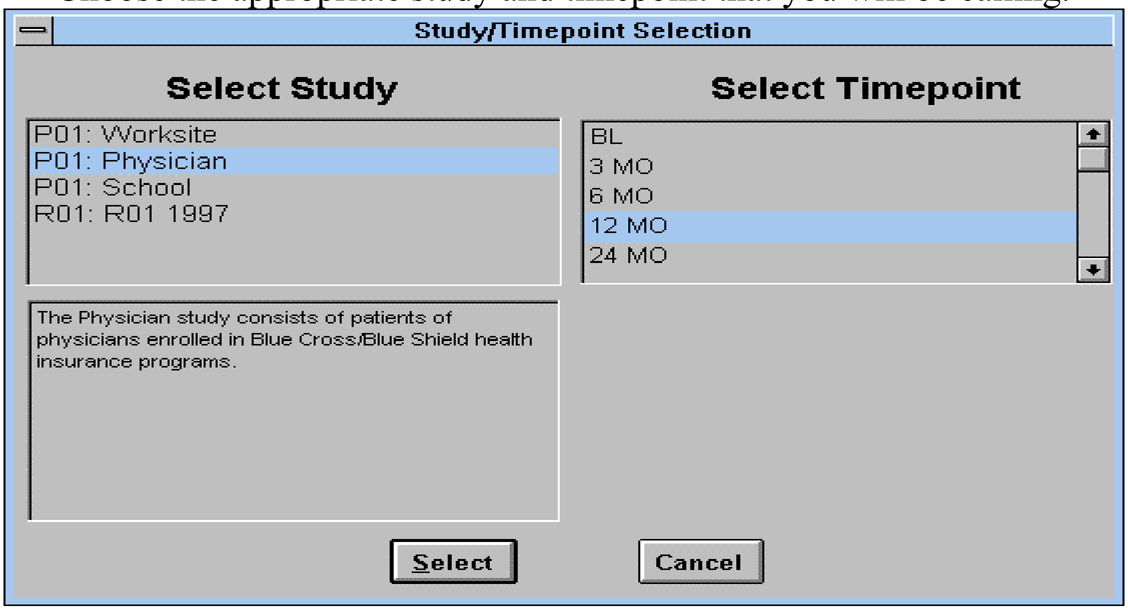
Note that in the above example of the network logon the additional window of "**DOMAIN**" appears. Although the **domain** option will come up automatically without typing it in, accidental altering this field will prohibit proper logon and an error message stating that the "**domain can not be found**" will occur. In this case the domain needs to be set at **CPRCDMAIN**. This **domain** is created by the network administrator and may vary system to system.

B) At *SMS* login screen, type login name and password again.

Once again, the SMS Logon should come up automatically after the Network Logon, but it can also be found by selecting the "Start" menu option, scrolling up to Programs and selecting the black and yellow CPRC icon . Once the individual interviewer ID and password are entered, the SMS provides the Study/Timepoint Selection menu.

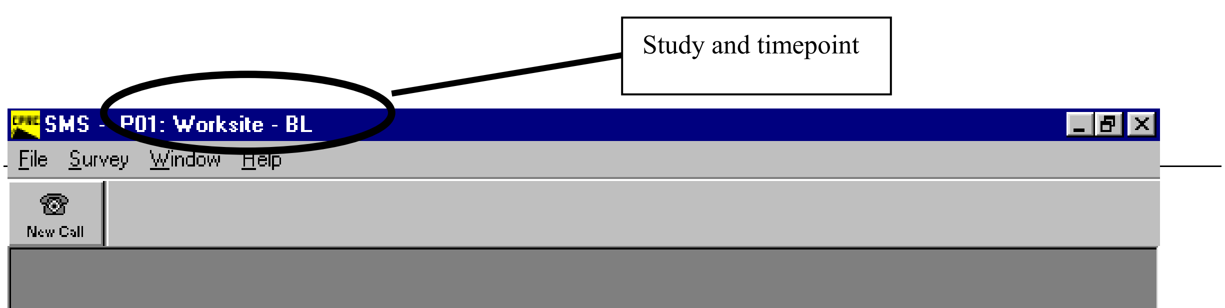
C) Select Study

Choose the appropriate study and timepoint that you will be calling.

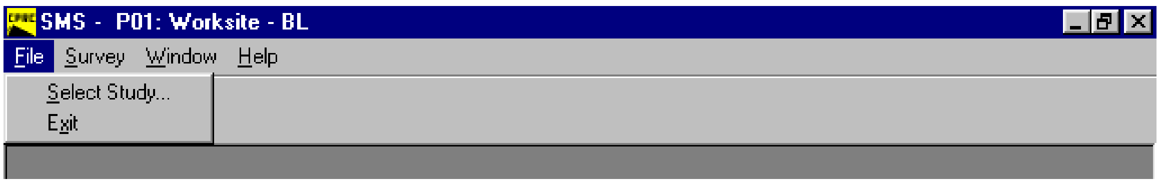


The system allows you the option of selecting the study and timepoint and provides general background information concerning that study. Although the system may provide the option to select an inactive timepoint, it will not allow you to pull up any calls at the next screen. Once the appropriate options are chosen click on "**Select**" in order to advance to the "SMS Main Menu Options" or depress the "Entry" key.

SMS MAIN MENU SCREEN – Grades 1 & 2



This screen is brought up directly after the select study and the project and timepoint which was selected appears at the top. This is also the main screen which the system returns to as the interviewer processes the individual calls. The SMS MAIN MENU SCREEN provides several options, for interviewers although only a few of the menu functions will be called into use on a regular basis. Generally the interviewer will use it to summon a new call or close out at the end of the day.



<u>File</u> : has two subcategories: **Select Study** and **Exit.**

Select Study

This window allows the user to choose which project and timepoint they will call at their station without having to close out the application. This option merely brings the previous option screen to make a new selection. This option is helpful if an interviewer is assigned to call more than one timepoint in a shift or if you notice that you have incorrectly chosen the wrong study or timepoint.

Exit

This option closes the SMS program. Once the system is exited it can be reentered by selecting START on the Windows Menu, then scroll through the options listed in PROGRAMS to select the SMS icon.

<u>Survey</u>

This menu option allows for a "New Call" to be brought from the scheduled activities. This option is rarely used as most interviewers find it easier to use the New Call telephone icon found at the top of the screen. A New Call may also be summoned by pressing Ctrl + C on the keyboard.

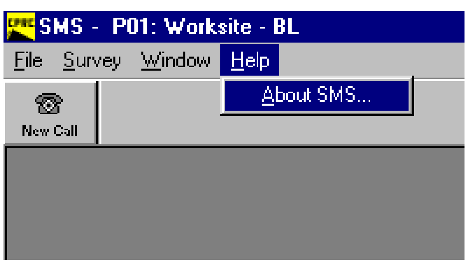
The method which the Survey Management System determines which call to bring up will be discussed in a later section (***see Grade 4 Options - Scheduled Activities***).

Window

This option helps organize multiple windows which may be open at one time. Prior to a new call being selected there is only has one window open to view so selecting any of these menu options will not create a noticeable effect.

Help

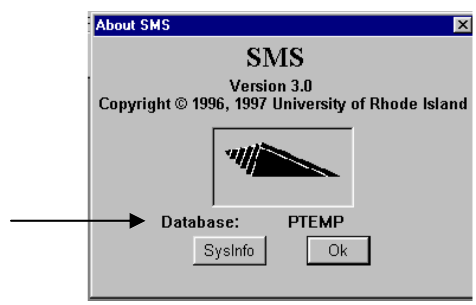
Help gives the menu option to view information concerning the SMS system. Although this option does not have a practical purpose in the telephone interviewing process, it can be a quick check to see which database the individual computer is connected. In the below example the Database is set to PTEMP signifying the practice database.



Production Database:
URI_CPRC_PACS

Practice Database:
PTEMP

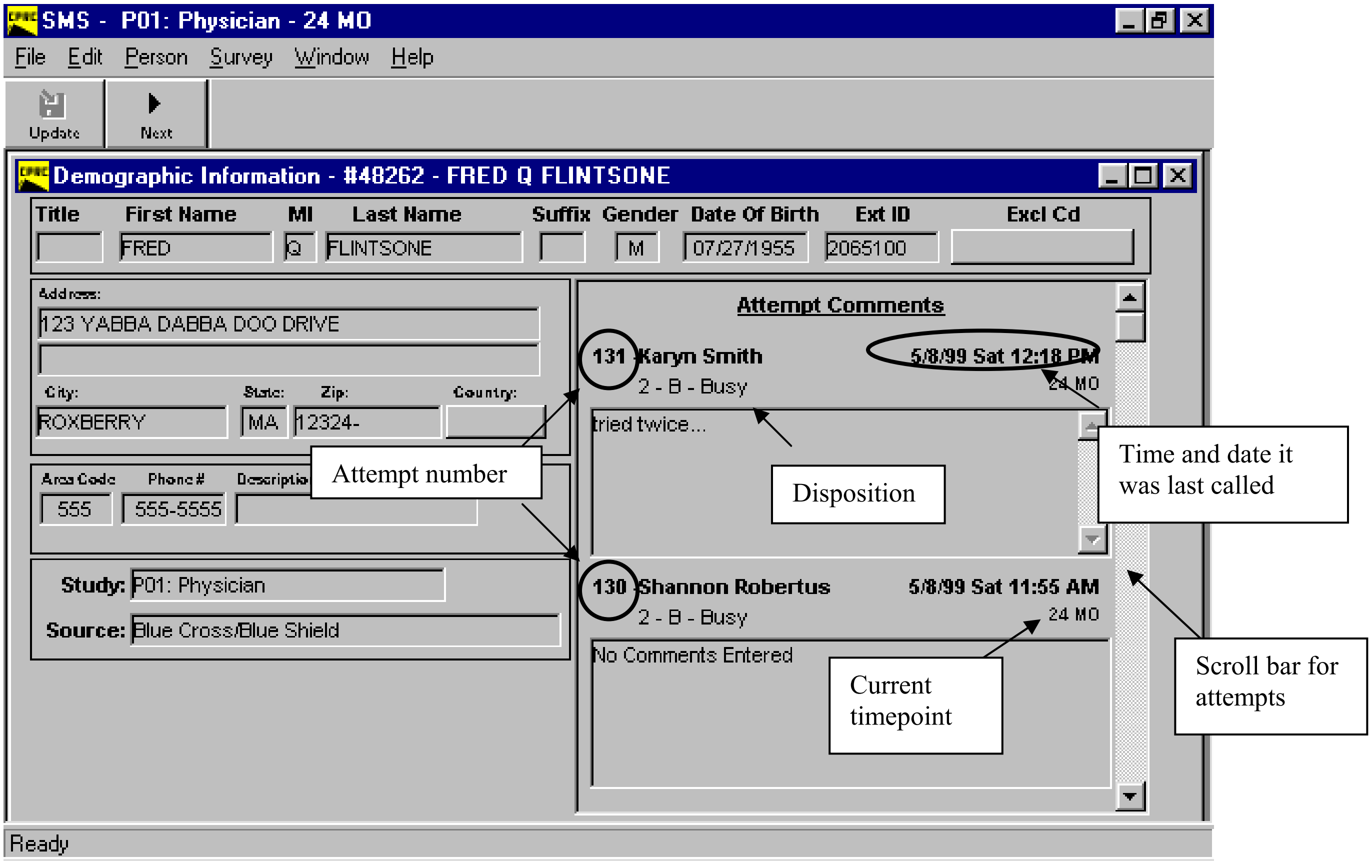
Test Database:
P_DON



Reviewing the Respondent Calling Record

Once a New Call has been selected three new windows will appear on the screen and the primary menu options will change. These three windows constitute the respondent's calling record. They are layered on top of one another and will always be opened in the following order: **Assessment History, Person Comments and Demographic Information**. Depending on the speed of the individual computer, the user may be able to scan the necessary information as the three screens open. Since the demographic information screen is the primary screen in which the call is reviewed we will start with a brief overview of this screen.

The right portion of the screen contains a complete record of the contacts we have made to the household whole the left portion of the screen displays the most current contact information.

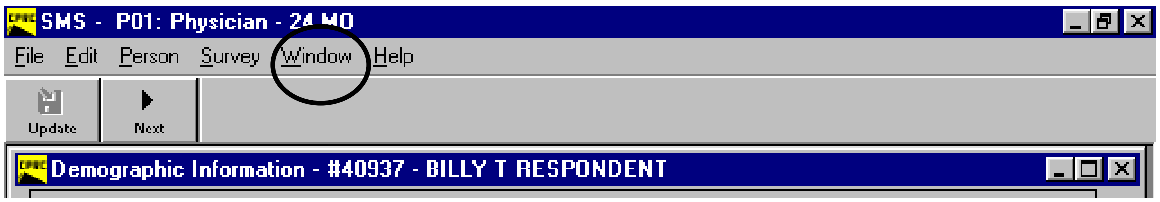


Viewing the Demographic Information Screen

The components of the attempt comments are diagramed above.
Each attempt comment consists of: The attempt number (the most recent attempt is always displayed on top), the name of the interviewer who called the respondent, the time and date of the attempt, the timepoint, comments concerning the call and the disposition it was assigned. The number next to the disposition does not have any real significance beyond its ordering in the list of dispositions and the tendency for the more common dispositions listed toward the top of the scale.

The only material on the left portion of the screen can be altered (Name, Date of Birth, Gender, Address, Phone Number). Information is updated by clicking on the desired field, highlighting and typing in the updated information. If more than one phone number is required select EDIT and INSERT to create an additional field to type in. EDIT/INSERT also creates a scroll bar to go in between multiple phone number listings.

The Demographic Information Menu

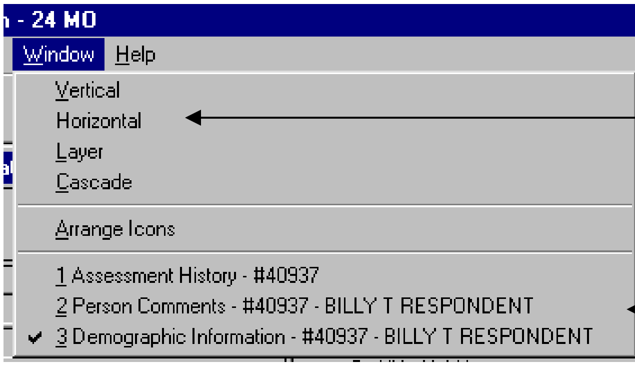


As mentioned before, once the demographic screen is opened the system provides additional menu options at the top of the screen. Once again the "HELP" option does not provide any information beyond listing the name of the database and the system memory requirements (as shown on page 54). We will therefore start with the "WINDOW" option.

Window

The window option is divided into three sections. The top portion allows you arrange in the windows in various orders for accessibility (**Vertical, Horizontal, Layer and Cascade**), the second section lists the option to arrange icons and the lower portion lists the current windows which are open.

The individual may experiment with window alignment, however, it will be readily obvious that the "LAYER" option is the most useful as it is the only choice which does not completely obscure portions of the demographic screen. Although the other windows will need checking on occasion, the demographic screen contains a large portion of the information on which you will need to focus.



Four different arrangements of windows. Layer is the default setting and the most practical set up while calling the individual.

Windows which are currently open on the screen.

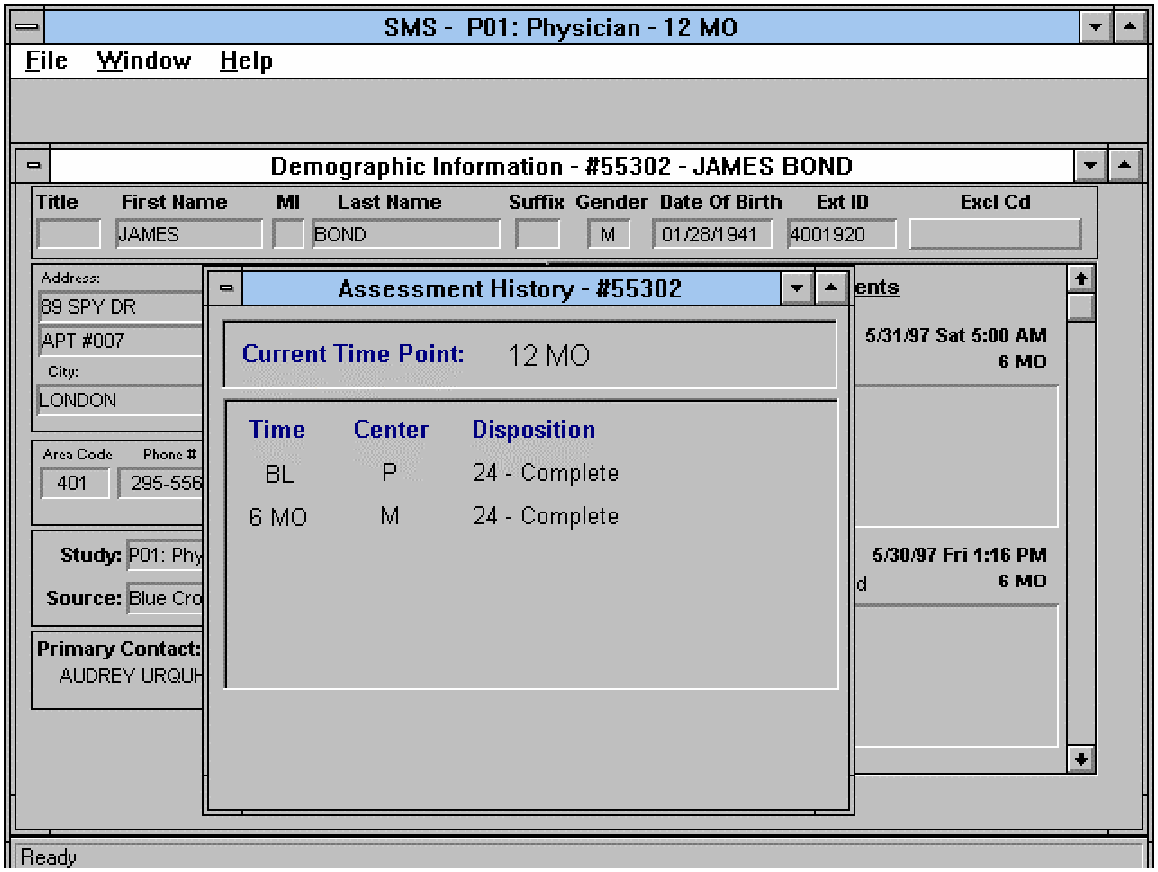
The next section provides the option to arrange icons, but this does not seem to have an apparent function on this screen.

The bottom portion of the screen provides the most useful function of the WINDOW option. It is here that the system lists the three windows which are currently open and allows the user to toggle between them. A “check” appears next to the window that is currently on “top” and being viewed.

To view any of the windows listed, the user needs to either select the desired option using the mouse or by pressing the corresponding numeric key next to the various options.

Assessment History

This window allows the user to view the final disposition of each time point, as well as which center [Survey = Phone (P), Intervention = Mail (M)] obtained the final disposition. Note: This function is irrelevant at the baseline timepoint and will appear “blank” as the respondent does not have “history” at first contact.



This window is especially helpful at later timepoints when the interviewer wants to gain a quick overall view concerning the respondent before reading all of the attempt comments in detail. Speaking to a respondent who has mailed back the survey at every timepoint and says that they will put it in the mail tomorrow should be handled slightly different when speaking to a respondent whom has not completed a survey by mail or telephone.

Person Comments

In this window, the user can enter or view special comments about the respondent. These comments should be limited to special information about the respondent that is consistent across all timepoints. Information pertaining to a specific attempt or timepoint should not be documented in this window.

Scripts for **refusal conversions** or **special calls** may be found in this window THIS WINDOW SHOULD ALWAYS BE VIEWED BEFORE CALLING.

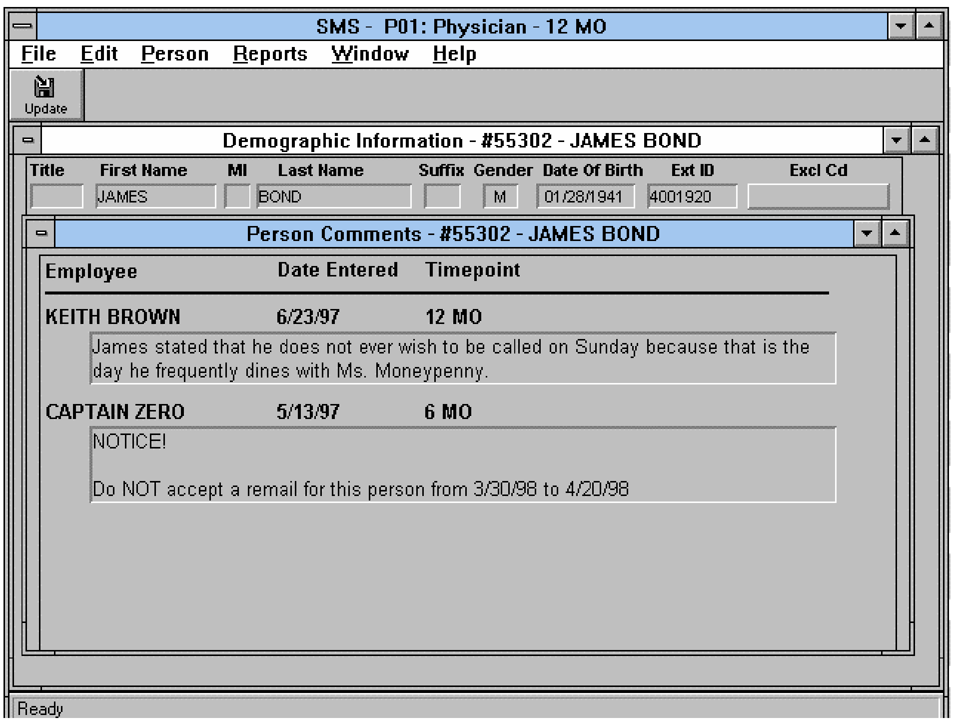
Acceptable Person Comments:

1) Don't ever call me on Sunday.
2) He works 3rd shift and wants to be called in the late morning.
3) Is very upset with her "Working Healthy" program at work.

Unnecessary Special Comments:

1) Mom said to call tomorrow at 6 PM.
2) Does not want to be called anymore.
3) Respondent is pregnant and is not eating as she normally does.

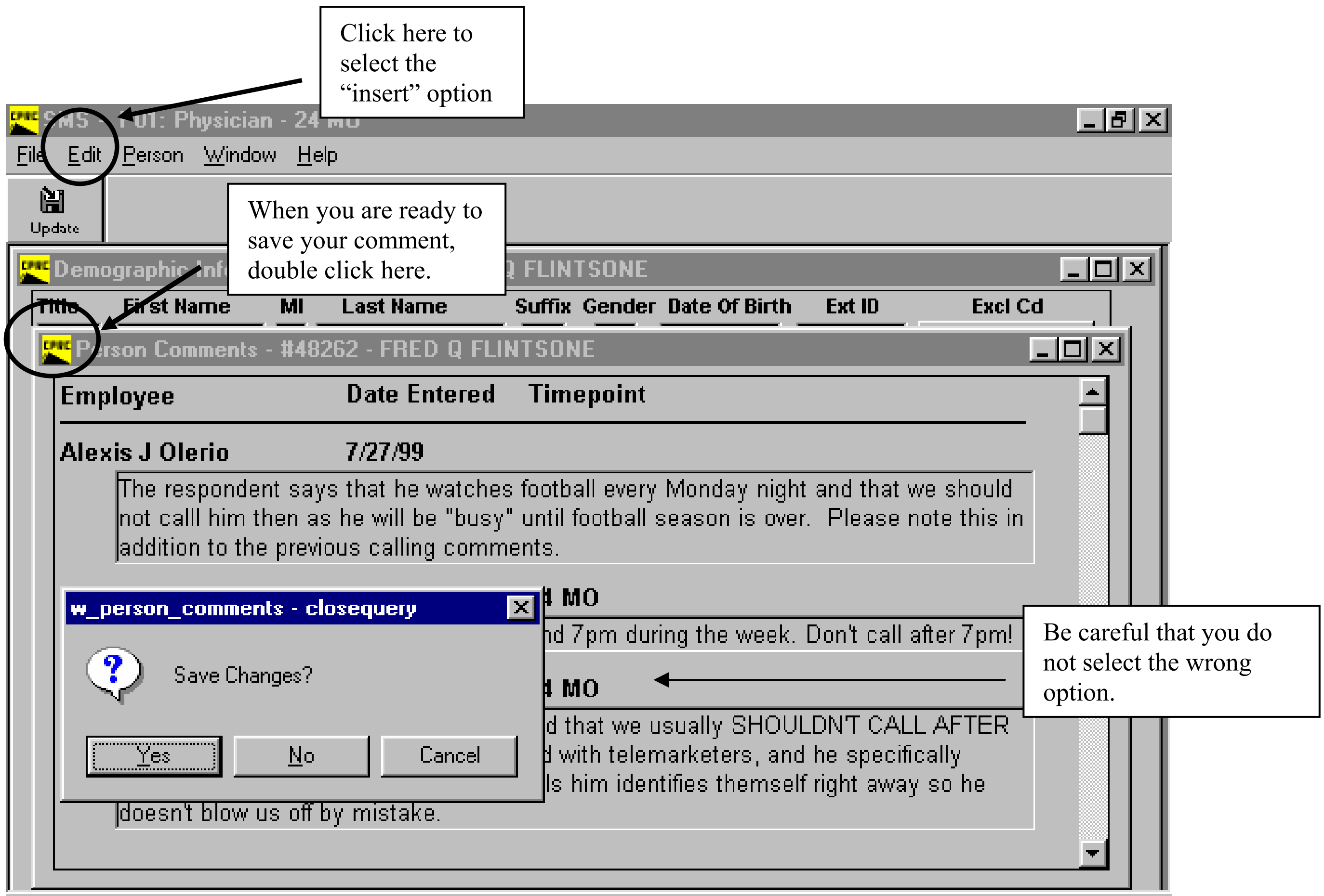
Deleting a special comment is not possible. If you discover that a special comment is no longer valid, insert a new comment to explain this.



Inserting a Person Comment

With the person comment screen in the foreground, click on EDIT from the menu options and then select INSERT. This will create a blank field with your name and the current date on top. As you type in this box, you will notice that the text will continue in a horizontal line and will not wrap down in a readable paragraph fashion. The computer will format the text in the appropriate space. Pressing <RETURN> will make the text look awkward at the end, so it is best to keep typing in the horizontal line.

Once you have completed your comment, click the yellow CPRC icon to the left of the Person Comments title bar and scroll down to "Close".



Closing the Person Comment Window

Once you have closed, a window will open up that will ask you if you would like to save changes giving you the options of : **YES, NO** and **CANCEL.**

It is important to understand the three options which are presented.

YES – Saves the PERSON COMMENTS and makes them a part of the respondent's permanent calling record.

NO – Does not save the comments. The PERSON COMMENTS will close without any of the new information being saved.

CANCEL – Cancels the options window and allows interviewer to go back and edit.

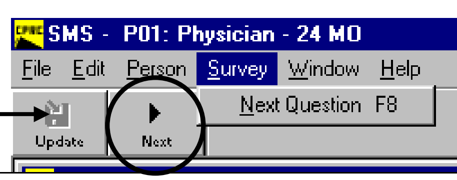
A common mistake is to see an error that you wish to correct and responding to the question "Save changes?" and instantly answer "NO." This will erase everything you have typed and you will have to type it again.

If the "save changes" box is obscuring your preview of the Person Comments, as with all Windows you can position the arrow on the blue strip of the window, hold the left mouse button down and drag it to a more convenient location.

SURVEY

Selecting the SURVEY option on the Demographic screen allows the user to enter into the computer generated survey should the toolbar containing the "NEXT" key become unavailable.

The "NEXT" icon is usually the easiest method of getting into the survey, although there are several other options.

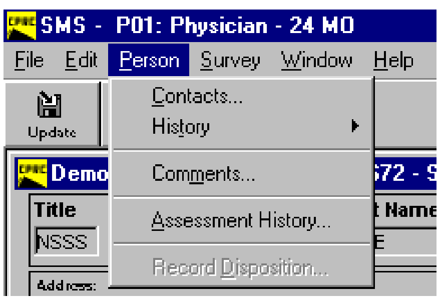


Methods for entering into the survey from the Demographics Screen:

- ❑ NEXT ICON on tool bar
- ❑ Use the mouse to select Survey/Next
- ❑ Press Alt, S and then N

Person

The PERSON menu option allows the user to open various windows to update and view respondent information. As we have already discussed the functionality of PERSON COMMENTS and ASSESSMENT HISTORY, we will not do so again here. In addition the option RECORD DISPOSITION can also be seen at the bottom of this screen. This is an option which is only available to grade 3 and 4 callers and will viewed as "gray" for grades 1 and 2.



Whereas the WINDOW function allows you to view PERSON COMMENTS and ASSESSMENT HISTORRY if they are already open, they will not appear under that option once they are closed. If you have closed them and you wish to view the information again, they can always be accessed through the PERSON menu option.

CONTACT PERSON MAINTENANCE and the HISTORY, however, are two functions which are available for all grade options and serve an important role in maintaining our sample. The HISTORY function allows us to access previous demographic information which may have been changed and a CONTACT PERSON allows us the possibility of updating information when we can not reach the respondent ourselves.

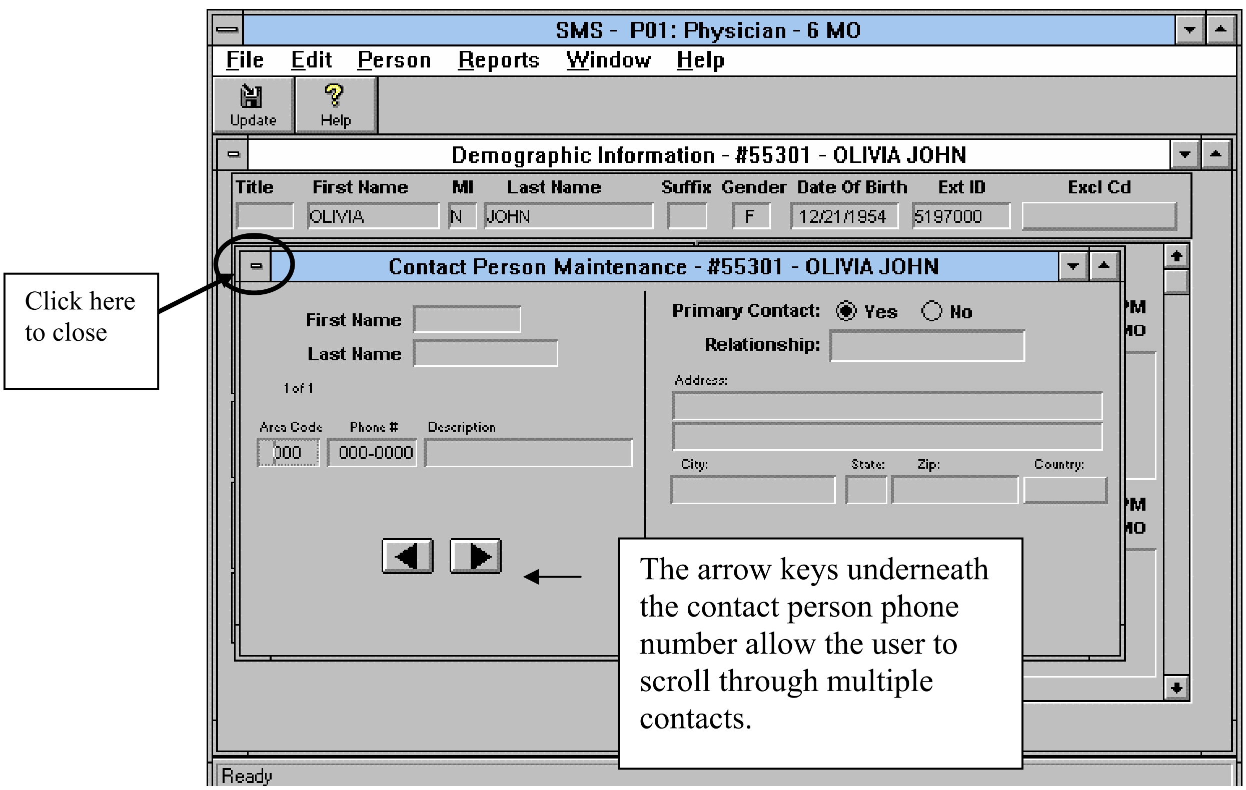
Contacts (Contact Person Maintenance)

By opening this window the user can view, insert, or edit the contact person of the active respondent.

In order to add a new contact person and/or delete a previous contact person:

1) Open the *Contact Person Maintenance* window.
2) Choose Edit, then select either Insert or Delete.

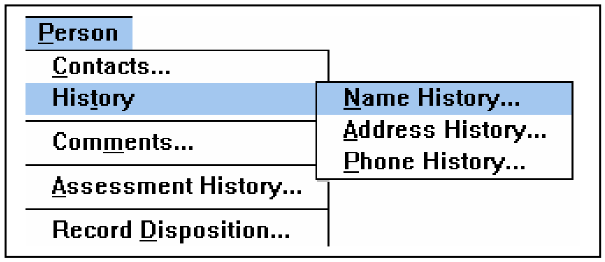
(Note that when no contact person has been entered, the insert window will automatically appear blank and selecting EDIT/INSERT is not necessary.)



Although the CONTACT PERSON screen generally allows for a space to fill in an address, we rarely collect this information as it is generally not needed.

The description field signifies the phone number as being work, home, school, and so forth. This should not be confused with the relationship field which describes the contact person as being the respondent's mother, uncle, or friend. If the respondent wants to give their work number as the contact, just input the respondent's name and put work for both the description and the relationship.

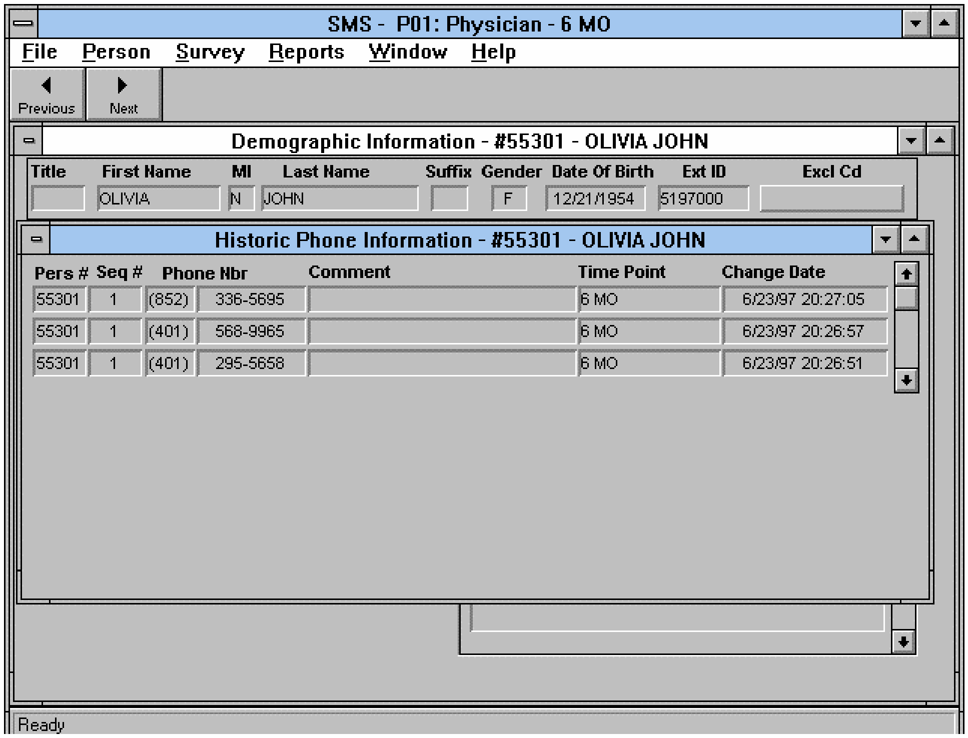
History



This function allows the user to view the demographic history of a respondent, including:

1) Name History: all previous names for the respondent
2) Address History: all previous address information for the respondent
3) Phone History: all previous phone numbers for the respondent

Example: *Phone History* window



The PERSON HISTORY information is updated automatically as changes are made to the demographic screen and are saved by either closing out the case or pressing the UPDATE icon on the top row.

Update

This function allows the user to update or save various changes made to the open window without having to exit and/or re-enter the window. If the Update button was not used, the system will ask you if you would like to save changes before you completely close out of a window.

Edit

We have discussed the function of the EDIT and its use in conjunction with other functions. They are listed here as a definitive review.

Insert

Allows the user to insert:

1) Telephone number: when *Demographic Information* screen is open
2) Special comment: when *Comment* screen is open
3) Contact person: when *Contact Person Maintenance* screen is open

Delete

Allows the user to delete:

1) Telephone number: when *Demographic Information* screen is open
2) Contact Person: when *Contact Person Maintenance* screen is open

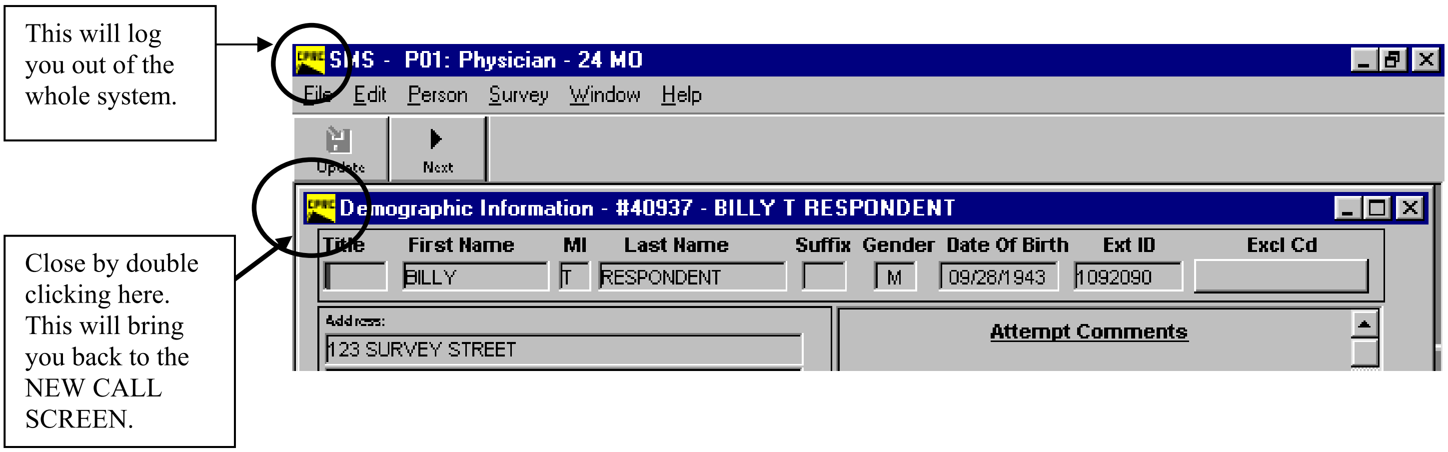
File

Printer Setup and Print

These options do not function for interviewers. Supervisors may use the print option to print the window that is presently open and appearing on the screen or print a list of calls from the Scheduled Activities or Attempts windows.

Assigning a Disposition and Callback Time

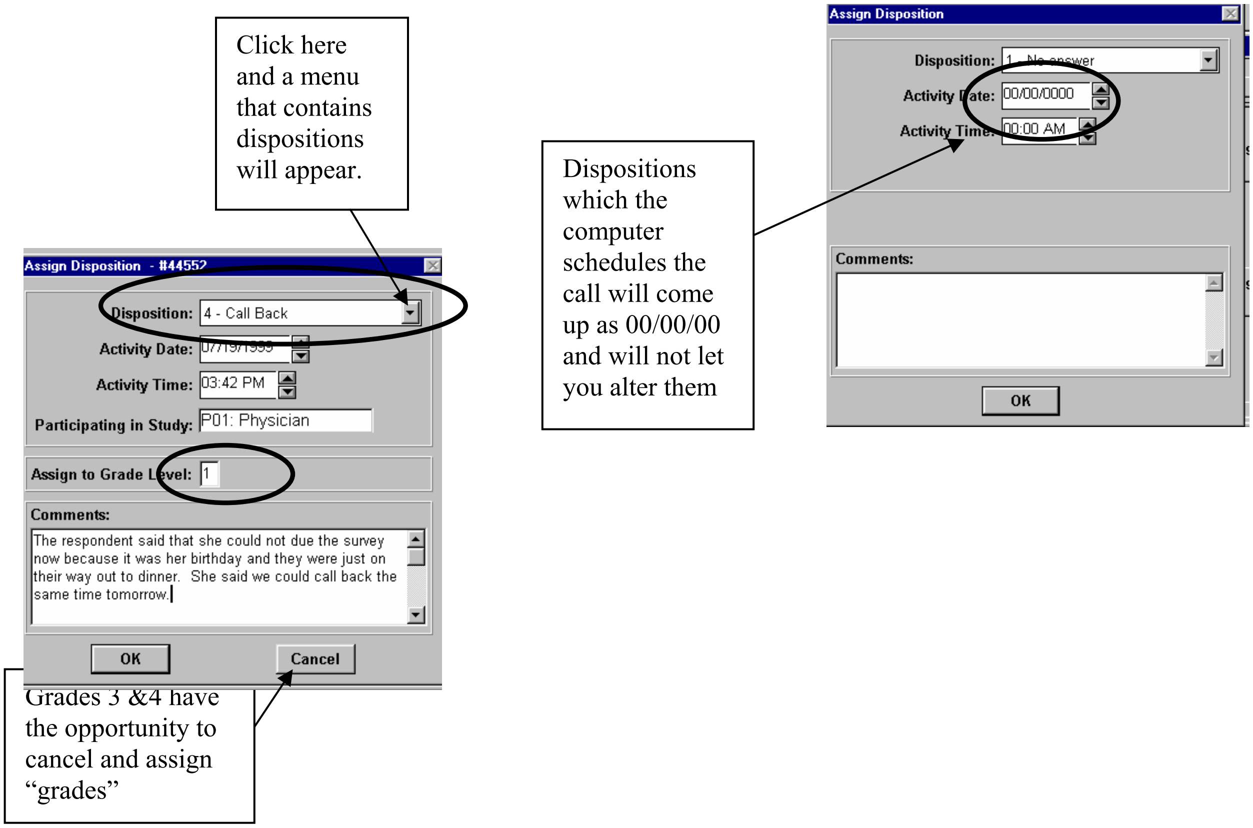
Once the household has been called and the case is ready to be processed so that a new call can be brought up, you are ready to assign a disposition.



Closing the *Demographic Information* screen triggers the *Assign Disposition* window. To close the *Demographic Information* screen you should click on the box/CPRC icon next to the demographic title bar. Once the disposition is assigned it will bring you back to the *New Call* screen.

Although this screen may be closed using the upper CPRC icon (next to the SMS/ study title bar) and the Assign Disposition screen will come up, the system will close after you assign a disposition instead of bringing you back to the New Call Screen. If this happens you will have to log in again.
Please note that once you assign the disposition and hit Enter or click on OK, the respondent's case will close and you will be unable to make any more edits to this record. If an incorrect disposition has been assigned or if comments need to be erased/change, a supervisor should be informed so that a corrected disposition may be added or so the database manager can erase the attempt.

Disposition field - pull down menu allows the interviewer to choose the appropriate disposition that is available.



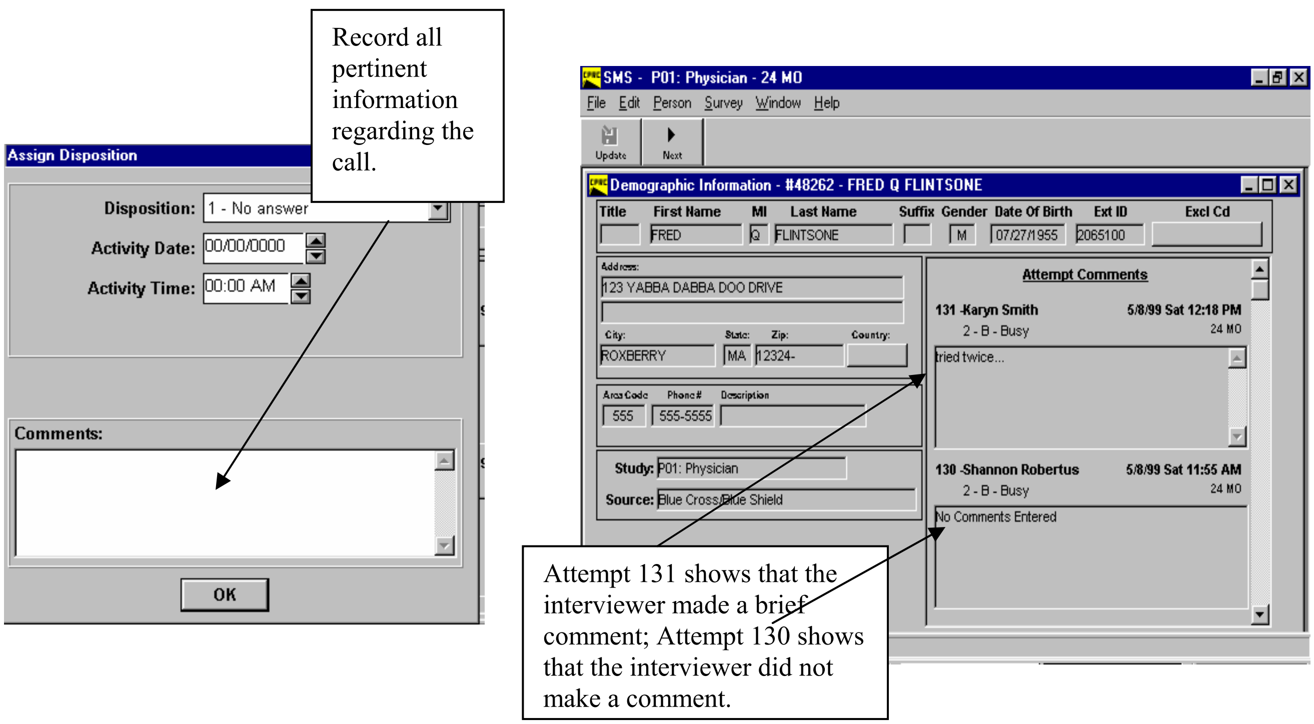
Next Activity Date / Time field - these fields allow the interviewer to assign the appropriate date and time of an appointment . If the disposition requires an interviewer to enter a callback time, these two fields will display the CURRENT TIME and DATE highlighted in blue. Since the current time and date will only bring the call right back to you if you close the call (as you are telling the computer to schedule the survey for “RIGHT NOW.”) you want to be sure that you are attentive to which dispositions require you to input . Those calls which the computer assigns the callback times will be viewed as 00/00/00 0:00.

Changing the disposition will have one of two effects: Every time you change the disposition the Next Activity Date / Time resets itself. (Ex. You select CB. The Activity Time/Date shows the current time. You change the time when you would like it called. If you were to then change the disposition to NH, the Activity Time./Date will show the current time again.)

This is very important because if you do not set the time and just press OK then another interviewer will pull up that call two moments later. This can be awkward if the next interviewer does not notice when it was called last and calls the household AGAIN only to be told that we just called a few moments ago.

On another point, if you switch the disposition from one which needs a callback date (NH) to one that does not (AM) the previous time set will stay "frozen" in the time activity box. This does not cause a problem. The computer will not allow you to change this and will ignore this time and date

Comments field - this field allows the interviewer to record a comment for *any* disposition. Field should be used to document any piece of information that you feel will be helpful to the next interviewer.



It is very important to note that the ENTER key is the same as hitting "OK" at the bottom of the screen. A common mistake with beginning interviewers is to press that key to go to the next line (which results in an incomplete comment).

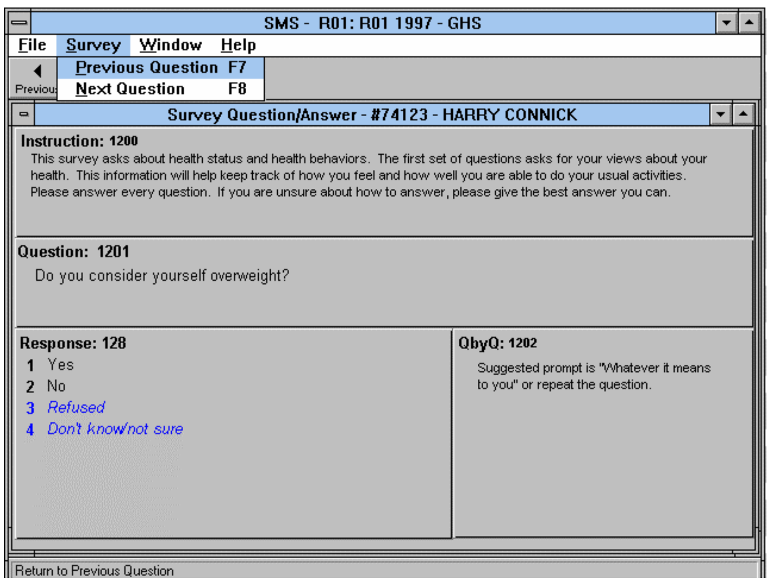
If this happens, simply notify a supervisor so that they can bring up the call and you can finish your comments.

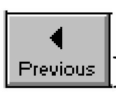
Reviewing the Survey

Now that you are familiar with manipulating the primary functions of the SMS demographic and scheduling options, you are now ready to start looking at the survey itself. Bring up a new call and at the **Demographic Screen** press the **Next Question** button on the tool bar.

Next Question

This function is used to get into the questionnaire initially when the respondent has agreed to do the survey. When in the questionnaire, this function tells the computer that you would like to move on to the next unanswered question. (Menu Option are also available to advance through the survey, but the toolbar options are the easiest)



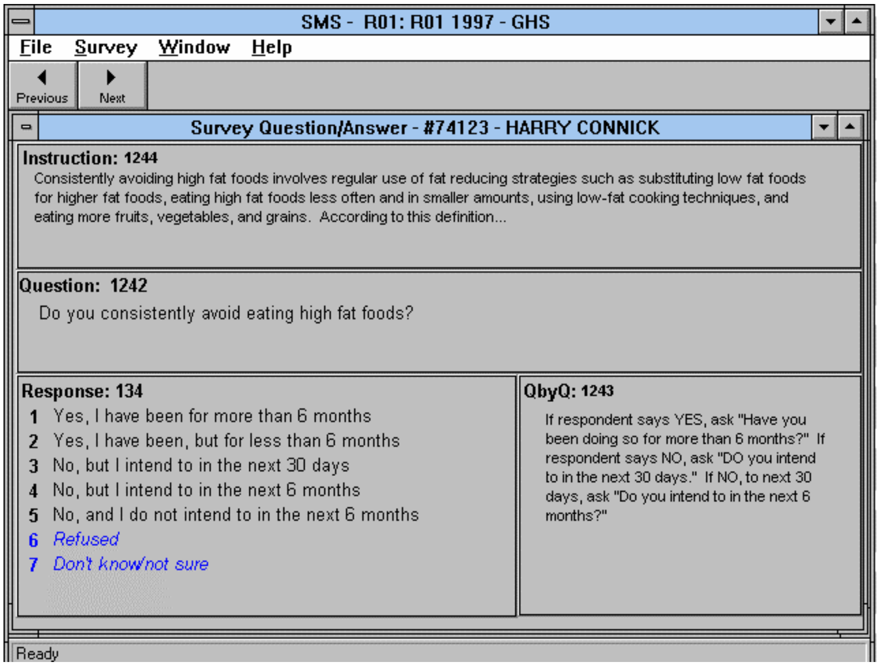


Previous Question

When in the questionnaire, this function tells the computer that you would like to go back to the last question. Please note that when you change a previously entered response, the computer needs to check the navigational path to see if it has been altered. If so, a message box will appear (see ***Questionnaire Navigation***) informing interviewer of this change.

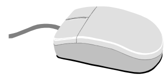
QUESTIONNAIRE NAVIGATION

The way the survey questionnaire will appear on the screen is slightly different from the paper and pencil version, but it proves to be much more usable. It has all skip patterns built in, so there will be no need for the interviewer to determine what question should be asked next. There is one ***question*** on the screen at a time, as well as the ***instructions***, ***responses***, and ***QbyQ's*** (question-by-question prompts) for that particular question.



Upon hitting the Next key, the computer will display each survey question in the above format. Although each survey may begin with a different question, it will always take the form of the four windows including : **Instruction, Question, Response and QxQ**. As you progress through the survey the content of these screens may change, but the individual windows will maintain their current proportions. If the content exceeds the window space available a scroll bar will appear. It is very important that you pay attention to the scroll bar as you do not want to miss any instructions or responses.

WAYS TO SELECT OR ENTER RESPONSES

I. ***By using the mouse*** 

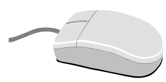
The mouse will highlight the desired response when you chose it and click on the left mouse button.

II. ***By manually entering the appropriate response***

Certain questions will need the response entered manually (i.e., height, weight questions). The appropriate response format will be provided in the questionnaire.

HOW TO GO TO THE NEXT QUESTION

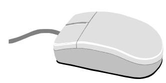
(After selecting the appropriate response)

I. ***By using the mouse*** 

Click on the "NEXT" button on the toolbar.

II. ***Select Next Question under Survey in the menu bar***

HOW TO GO BACK TO A PREVIOUS QUESTION

I. ***By using the mouse*** 

Click on the Previous button on the toolbar

II. ***Select Previous Question under Survey*** o***n the menu bar***

IMPORTANT NOTES:

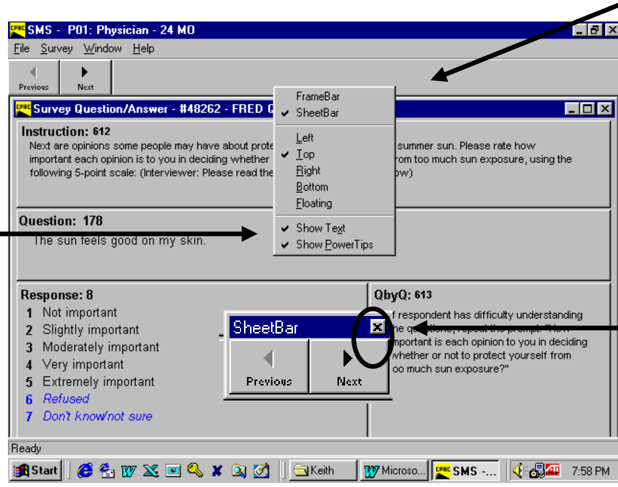
- There are certain rules that apply to the verbal delivery of the questionnaire. The only instructions that are to be read before delivering the question on the screen are the instructions that are in BLACK text. Do NOT read the instructions in the instruction set that are in BLUE text. They are simply there for the interviewer to use as a reference in the event that respondent has a question (similar to QbyQ's).

- If, at some point during the questionnaire, there is a need to go back to a previous question and change a response, be aware that the further along you are in the questionnaire dictates the time it takes for the process to occur (currently, it could take anywhere from 1 to approximately 20 seconds). During that time, the system is checking the navigational path of previously entered responses to see if changing a response will affect the navigational path that has already been determined.

Advanced Navigation

It is highly recommended that the NEXT and PREVIOUS keys be used instead of the key board options presented due to the fact that errors seem to occur more frequently when we are using the keyboard. It is realized, however, that having to use the mouse to select answers at the bottom of the screen and then press NEXT at the top of the screen can become tedious. To help things along a little bit you can move the PREVIOUS/NEXT tool bar closer to the response categories.

A menu will appear asking where you would like to position the toolbar.



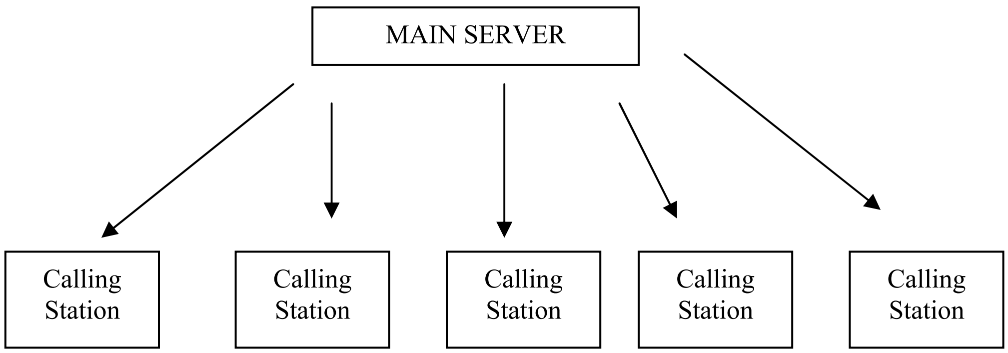
Have mouse arrow positioned anywhere across this gray bar and press the rt. Mouse button.

Be careful that you do not press this "X" while choosing the "floating" option – see below.

CAUTION: If you select the "Floating" option on the above toolbar, you can position it any where you want by putting the arrow on the blue bar of the floating toolbar and drag it by holding down the left mouse button. HOWEVER if you accidentally press the "X" on the corner of this bar it will disappear and you will not see it until you pull up a new call. If this happens you will have to rely on using the Survey/Next Question option in the menu.

A Note About Scheduled Activites

Due to the fact that interviewers are responsible for scheduling virtually all of the calls made by the system, it is important that you realize how the computer selects which respondent is selected when "New Call" is pressed.



First it is important to understand that there is a main server that feeds all the calls to the individual stations. This server creates a list of calls from the highest priority to the lowest priority and then delivers the highest priority to the person who hits the next call. Once the call has been assigned a disposition by an interviewer, it is sent back to the server to be distributed.

This listing of calls is referred to as "**scheduled activities**." Although only supervisors have access to look at scheduled activities. If you are the only one calling a particular study which only has a few calls in it the system may not have a call ready when you hit a new call (i.e. it is 7:00 and the next call available shouldn't be until 8:00) then you will need a printout to inform you when the next call will be available.

Prty	Grd	Emp	Sched Dt/Tm	Act	Disposition	ID	Subject Name	Time
1	1	10	05/10/1999 8:00 PM	CB	4 - Call Back	41571	CAT, BILL	24 MO
1	1	10	05/11/1999 11:20 AM	CB	9 - Incomplete	26934	FLINTSONE, FRED	24 MO
1	1	10	05/11/1999 2:45 PM	CB	4 - Call Back	37416	OH, JACKIE	24 MO
1	1	10	05/11/1999 7:15 PM	CB	4 - Call Back	53486	TARZAN, JANE	24 MO

(above – sample of supervisory view of scheduled activities)

Definitions dealing with scheduled activities:

PRIORITY :

The system has three priorities for assigning calls.

Priority 1 – (highest priority): Assigned to calls in which we generally speak to a respondent. Examples of a priority 1 call would be a Call Back or an Incomplete.

Priority 2 – (medium priority): Assigned to calls in which we have not spoken to the respondent, but has a call back date set for a time in which we believe will be a good time. Examples of priority 2 calls would include Not Homes, Reschedules, Home Unavailable, etc.

Priority 3 – (lowest priority): Assigned to calls in which we have not had any contact with the household and the contact time has not been approved by anyone in the household. Priority 3 calls include No Answers and Answering Machines. These are generally set by the computer. (Note – Although "Busy" would fit this definition, they are assigned a priority 2 because we would like to make several attempts to try back within a ten minute interval.)

Importance of Understanding Priorities

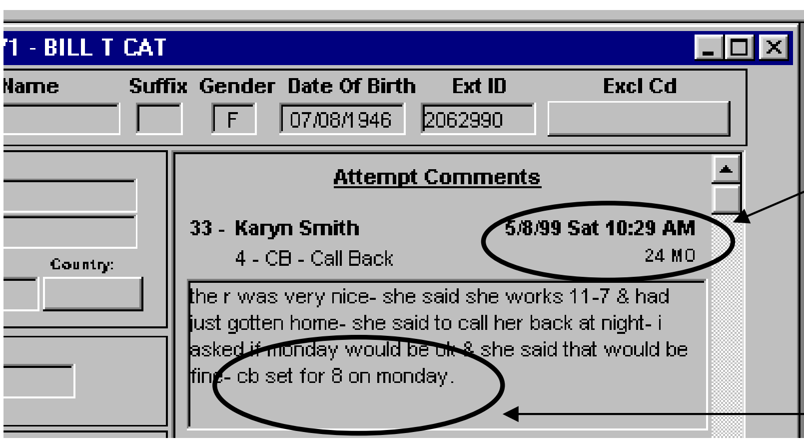
The priority system is important because we are often faced with the circumstance of have fifteen calls all scheduled for the same time. As it is unlikely all of these calls may not get called.

The computer first looks at the priority and then sees if it is time to call. For example, it is 10 AM in the morning on May 11th and the above scheduled activities are shown. The computer checks priority 1 calls and finds that there was supposed to be a 9 PM call back last night. This has the highest priority, it is available to be called and is passed the time in which it can be called. If there are not any calls of a priority 1 or priority 2 stature it will look for the priority 3 call which was scheduled at the earliest date. If there are not any calls, a message box will come up, saying no more calls available.

Understanding the scheduling system is important so that you understand how the computer searches for the next new call and how you are effecting the system as you schedule. For example if it is ten minutes of 7:00 and a call comes on your screen (previous disposition CB) that says IT IS VERY

IMPORTANT THAT WE CALL THIS RESPONDENT RIGHT AT 7 per respondent, you **should not** merely assign a reschedule for 10 minutes because you think it is too early to call.

In a case like this it looks like an interviewer scheduled the call before 7 to make sure it was at the top of the call back list for around 7. If you assign the disposition “reschedule” 7 o’clock then you are causing it to go from a priority 1 (CB) to be a priority 2 and it is possible that it will not come up until 7:15 or 7:30. Sometimes it is best to wait a few minutes and re-read the comments a few times to prepare yourself for the high priority call to make sure it will be done.
It is also important to review when the last attempt was made and to read the comments. If there are not any priority 1 or 2 calls available and the next priority 3 call was just called an hour ago the computer will still bring it up. There should always be at least a 3 hour wait in between calling AMs and NAs.



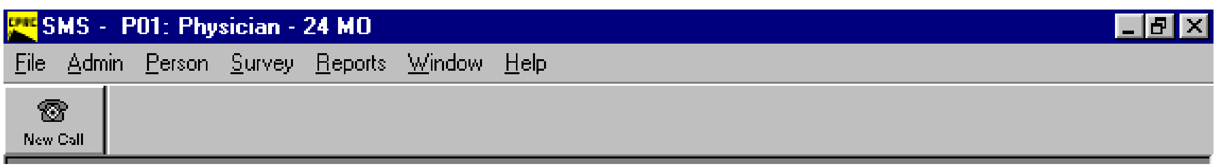
Always be sure to check when the last call was made.

Always check to see what time it is supposed to come up. If this call comes up on 8 PM on SUNDAY , you know the interviewer set the time wrong.

In addition interviewers occasionally make mistakes in assigning callback times (in either the day or the hour). This is why we generally ask interviewers to write down the day and week in the comments to avoid any errors in calling.

Grade

In the scheduled activities there is also a column which denotes “grade.” You will also see comments by supervisor that may say “for a grade 3 caller.” There are four grades of caller -1,2, 3 and 4. A grade 1 caller is someone who has just started out and has not had a lot of phone experience. A grade 2 caller is someone who has worked here for a little while and can handle most of the challenges a respondent can offer. A grade 3 interviewer is generally a seasoned veteran who handles “special” calls with someone who may have a difficulty answering the questions or is highly adamant against doing the survey. Grade 3 callers are also given access to search for person which is explained in the supervisor portion of the SMS manual. Grade 4 is assigned to supervisors and allow them access to other menu screens such as scheduled activities and attempts.



(sample of menu options available to grade 4)

When Errors Occur

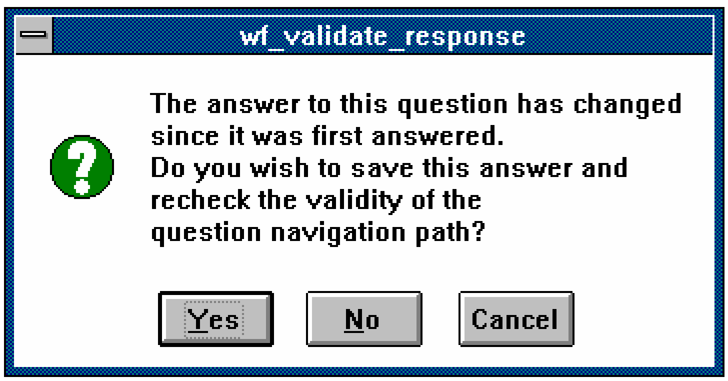
Although the SMS operates extremely well in various complex tasks, errors sometimes occur. If they should happen while you are on the phone, remain calm. Explain to the respondent that you are having difficulties with your computer and you would like to arrange a callback time.

Often error messages will give you the option to press “OK.” Before you do that you should call over a supervisor so that you can write down the respondent’s ID and the error. Both of these pieces of information are very important and the technical staff likes to keep track of them. If you press “OK” the case will sometimes close itself out without letting you assign the callback time. If the supervisor has the ID number then they can pull it back up on their station and assign the time correctly.

MESSAGES THAT MAY APPEAR IN QUESTIONNAIRE

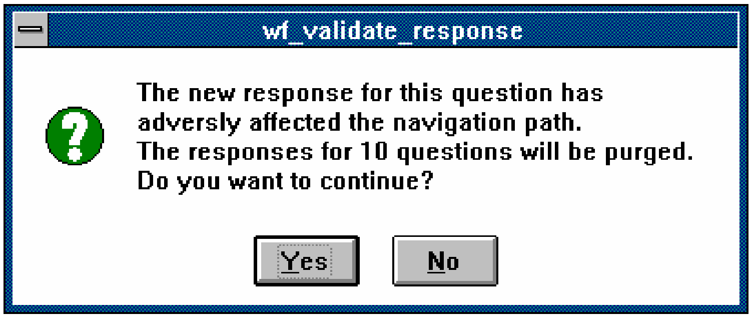
Although errors may occur from time to time, there are also messages which are informing you that you may be entering information incorrectly or you have told the system to undertake an operation which it would like to verify. You do not need to notify a supervisor when they occur, but it is important that you understand what they are for.

Message 1



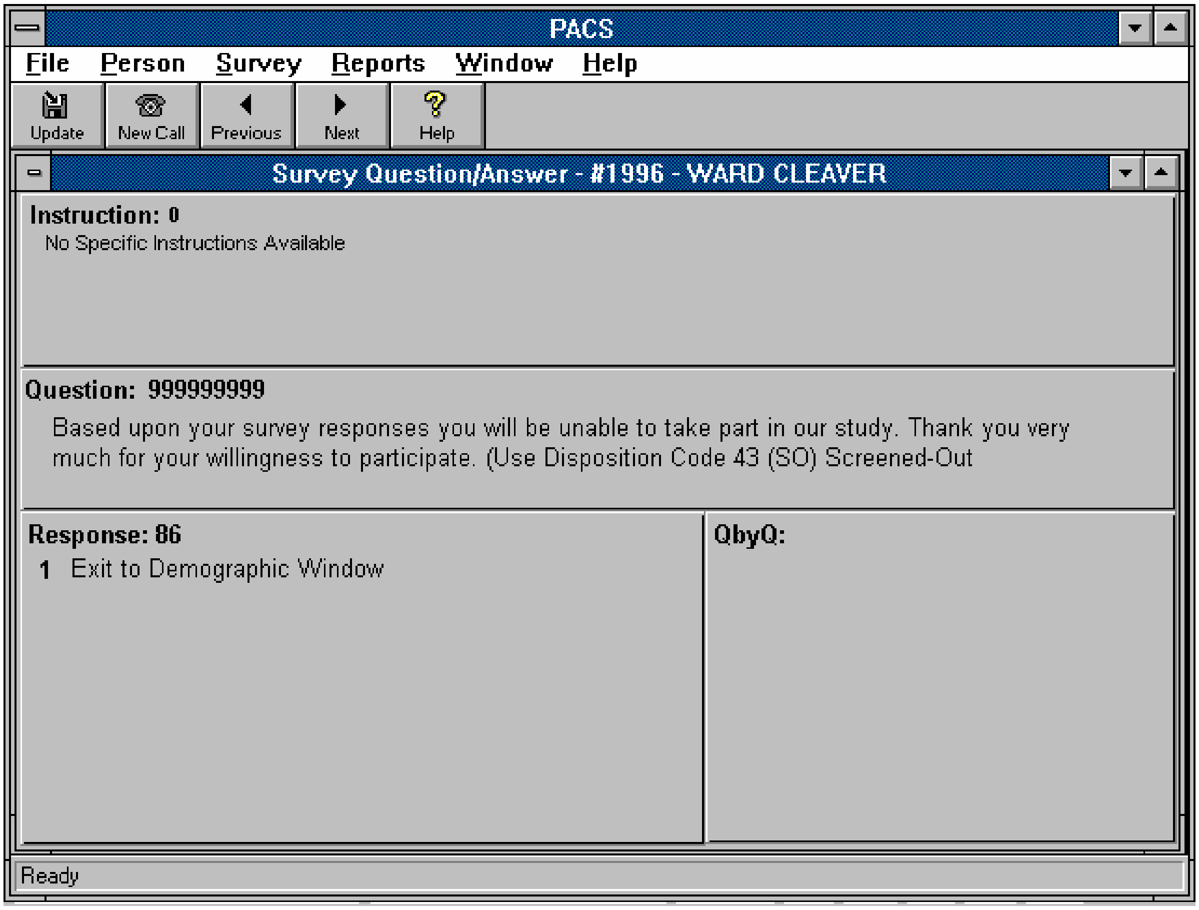
This message will appear when you go back to a previous question and change a response that had already been entered. Know that if you choose the ***YES*** button, the system will accept the new response you have chosen.
By choosing ***NO*** or ***CANCEL***, it will register and accept the previous answer you have chosen for that question.

Message 2



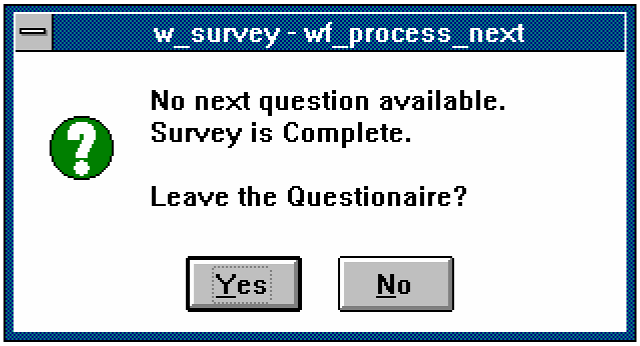
Message 2 will follow message 1, which communicates the fact that a response for a question has been changed. Message 2 signifies that the navigational path has been checked and that the response you have chosen will alter additional responses you have already entered. By choosing ***YES***, the system will accept the new response and will may any adjustments in the navigational path. Responses for certain questions that have already been answered will be deleted, or ***purged***, no longer being necessary for the new navigational path. By choosing ***NO,*** the system will change the altered response back to the previously entered response.

Message 3



Message 3 is a question screen that will appear when the respondent has answered the questions in such a way that he/she is not eligible to take part in the study. This will occur when the responses to the eligibility questions are NO (questions such as "Are you between the ages of 18 and 75?") , or that the respondent was not eligible for any of the risk assessments. Message 3 will simply appear when it is time for the interviewer to close the interview and inform the respondent that he/she was "screened out".

Message 4



Message 4 will appear when you have chosen the response for the last question in the questionnaire. By choosing ***YES,*** the system will register the last response and close the questionnaire screens for the respondent. It will then take you into the demographic screen, where the address should be verified or corrected and a contact person should be given. By choosing ***NO***, you will remain in the questionnaire and your selected response will be highlighted, but the response has yet to be registered by the system.

Managing the computer screens may seem to be a confusing and complicated thing. However, with some practice and some familiarity with the surveys and the keyboard, you will find the computer surveys to be easy, efficient, and perhaps even enjoyable.

Employment Policy

As you are aware, with a large Survey Center staff, reliable shift scheduling is crucial to the scientific mission of the project. The research protocol requires that a fixed number of interviews be completed each week. Therefore, it is imperative that all interviewers are able to meet the minimum requirements of shift scheduling and understand the following:

Required Shifts

Survey Center interviewers are required to work a minimum of **9** hours per week and a maximum of **15** hours per week unless given permission from a call manager to do otherwise. The hours worked by an interviewer must fulfill the following criteria each week:

1) **Weeknight Evening Shift** - (the same weeknight every week)
2) **Weekend Shift** - (must sign up for this shift each week)
3) Any Other shifts in which there are openings

Please note that shift requirements are closely monitored.

Scheduling Shifts

Interviewers are responsible for scheduling shifts for themselves (with the exception of the weeknight shift). The shift schedules are posted 10 days in advance and made available every Wednesday afternoon. Once you have signed up for a shift, changes to that shift can only be made seven days prior to that shift unless you make alternative arrangements with another interviewer to cover your shift.

Absence From a Shift

Within seven days of a scheduled shift you are obligated to fill the shift. In the event of an emergency, or an unplanned absence, you must contact another interviewer to cover your shift. If you are unable to find coverage, please notify the Survey Center staff with as much notice as possible and make up the missed shift during that week.

Survey Center Office ------------	**792-7156**
CPRC Main Office -----------------	792-2830

Additional Considerations

It is important that interviewers arrive for their shift a few minutes before the shift starts. There are often "callbacks" which must be made promptly at the beginning of the shift in order to honor the requests of the respondents.

If an interviewer decides to resign from his/her position, we would like to request two weeks notice so that we may hire and train a competent individual to replace the vacancy. We hope you are agreeable to this and understand the need for proper notification.