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**POLICY AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE LETTER: NRS FOLLOW-UP SURVEY FOR ADULT
EDUCATION STUDENTS [PPGL-0604]**

Background:

The NRS includes four outcome measures that must be collected from students after they leave the program, if the student has designated these outcomes as one of their goals for attending the program. These outcomes are:

- Entered employment,
- Retained employment,
- Entered Post-secondary education, and
- Obtained a secondary credential (e.g. Adult Diploma, External Diploma, GED)

NRS guidelines give states the option of collecting these measures through a data matching procedure or through a survey of the students themselves. This policy and procedures document concerns the process of follow-up surveys.

It is extremely difficult to conduct a survey in a way that produces valid and reliable results because the response rate largely determines the validity of the information. The steps below will help your program gather reliable outcome data using follow-up surveys.

Follow-up Survey Steps:

Your program's procedures for conducting Follow-up surveys should include the following steps:

1. Method for identifying students who must be followed-up.

According to *NRS Guidelines*, programs must Follow-up on students who designate as a main or secondary goal to obtain or retain a job, enter postsecondary education/training or obtain a secondary credential. This Follow-up takes place after the student leaves the program. Consequently, your program's database must have the ability to identify students who must be followed, which include:

- (1) all students with a goal of obtaining a job who exited,
- (2) students with a goal of keeping or improving their current job who exited,
- (3) students with a goal of obtaining a secondary diploma or passing the GED who exited, and
- (4) students with a goal of entering postsecondary education or training who exited.

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Adapted from *Guidelines for Conducting Follow-up Survey* at
<http://www.nrsweb.org/reports/SurveyGuidelinesMarch01.PDF>

The report or output produced by your program's database should include student identifying and contact information, the student's Follow-up goal and, for employment measures, the date the student left the program. You should retrieve this information quarterly or according to the time you administer the survey.

2. Sampling procedures in place, if necessary.

If you have 300 or fewer students in any Follow-up outcome group who exited, *NRS Guidelines* require that you include all of these students in the survey. However, if you have more than 300 students in any group, you may draw a simple random sample of these students. You may use any simple randomization procedure to draw the sample, such as drawing every third or fourth name from a student list, a table of random numbers, or you can have your program's computer system draw a random sample. If your program has from 301 to 5,000 students in any outcome area who exited, the minimum sample size you must draw is 300 for that group. If your program has over 5,000 students in any outcome area that exited, you should draw a minimum sample size of 1,000 for that group.

3. Survey is conducted at the proper time.

While you may collect and report attainment of a GED or secondary credential and entry into postsecondary education/training at any time after the student exits, the employment measures are tied to specific quarterly exit periods. Students with a goal of obtaining a job must obtain the job within the first quarter after program exit quarter. You must then collect retained employment on those students who obtained a job two quarters later, that is, in the third quarter after program exit. Due to the time specific nature of the employment measures, quarterly survey data collection is recommended.

Note, however, that there are three special cases to these requirements:

- (1) if a student obtains a job while enrolled, you may count that outcome, but only after the student exits the program and in the first post-exit quarter;
- (2) an employed student who enters the program with job retention as a goal is surveyed in the third quarter after exit quarter to verify continued employment (not in the first exit quarter); and
- (3) retained employment is not counted for any student exiting in the third or fourth exit quarter of the program year, since their third quarter after exit is beyond the reporting period for the program year (i.e., December 31).

The following chart, Exhibit 1, summarizes the quarterly time periods for collecting employment measures.

Exhibit 1
Quarterly Periods for Collecting Entered and Retained Employment

Exit Quarter	Collect Entered Employment by the end of:	Collect Retained Employment by the end of:
First Quarter (July 1- September 30)	Second Quarter	Fourth Quarter
Second Quarter (October 1- December 31)	Third Quarter	First Quarter, Next Program Year
Third Quarter (January 1-March 31)	Fourth Quarter	Not Reported
Fourth Quarter (April 1-June 30)	First Quarter, Next Program Year	Not Reported

4. Program uses state approved survey instrument, translated for ESOL students, if necessary.

In any survey, how the questions are asked may influence the responses. Therefore it is important that the survey questions you ask do not bias or affect responses. For comparability of data across programs in the state, it is also highly advisable that all programs in the state use the same or equivalent survey instruments. For these reasons, you should use a survey questionnaire that your state approves or has provided to you. The survey should be short and simple. It is not necessary to have a long or complicated survey to collect NRS measures. For example, you need only ask if the person got a job or passed the GED. In addition, if you will be surveying ESOL students, the survey should be translated into the most common languages your students speak.

5. Adequate staff to conduct survey.

Conducting a survey is highly labor intensive. Besides administering the survey, you must locate the students, explain the survey to them and obtain their cooperation. This work requires frequent callbacks to students and careful recordkeeping. Your program should ensure that you have sufficient staff and time to conduct the survey. Due to lack of resources, your program may use teachers or other program staff to conduct the survey. However, this approach may be inadequate if these staff members do not feel the work is a priority or if they do not have sufficient time to conduct the survey. A better approach is to have staff whose primary responsibility is to collect the Follow-up data. For example, your program could hire a part-time assistant or volunteer for the survey. Another approach is to contract the survey out to a third party, which several states

currently do. While costly, this approach is desirable if your program or state can afford it, since it removes much of the burden from your local programs.

6. Staff trained on survey procedures.

While other methods are possible, most programs will conduct a telephone survey of students. Like any other data collection effort, staff must follow a uniform set of procedures to collect data in a valid and reliable manner. You must provide training to all staff conducting the survey, which should cover the following topics: what to say to students to introduce the survey and get their cooperation; ways to avoid refusals; how to ask the survey questions; how to record responses; and how to answer student questions about the survey. During the training, you should go over every question in the survey to ensure staff understands the purpose of the question, what is being asked and what responses are desired. The training should also include conducting mock interviews and other practice. Staff should be thoroughly familiar with all questions and procedures before beginning. It may be desirable to have a Follow-up training to ensure understanding and standardization of procedures.

7. Survey procedures in place to improve response rate.

The validity of a survey depends to a large degree on the response rate - the proportion of people who respond to the survey out of the total number whom you targeted to reach in the survey. If you try to ask 100 students whether they passed the GED, for example, but only reached 10, you cannot be confident that these 10 students reflect the other 90. The NRS requires a minimum response rate of 50 percent. For example, if you have 300 students in the survey, you must get information from at least 150 students. Getting a good response rate is probably the most difficult part of conducting a survey, since it is hard to reach people and get them to respond. It may be especially hard to reach adult education students since many are transient and may not have telephones. Your survey procedures and training should include ways for improving response rate. For example, these procedures help improve response rate:

- Inform students when they enroll and again before they leave about the survey. You should also maintain current contact information on students by periodically verifying the information with them, especially if you have advance notice of when they are leaving the program.
- Call back students you cannot reach at different times during the day (not just on weekday evenings, for example).
- Leave a detailed message if you cannot reach the student, explaining why you are calling and asking for a good time to call back.
- Stress the importance of the survey to the adult education program, if the student is reluctant to participate.
- Keep the survey short (e.g., 5-10 minutes), so the student does not feel burdened.
- Keep track of the days and times that students have been contacted.

8. Program or state has a database and procedures for entering and reporting survey data.

Once you have administered the survey, you must have a way to record responses so that they can be entered into your program or state database. Your state may have a special database established for the survey or you may be required to enter the survey information directly into your student record database. In some programs and states, you might send the survey forms to a data processing contractor who maintains the data. Regardless of approach, you need to have an organized method to keep track of which students are to be contacted, which students have been reached and whether the students achieved the outcomes. You need this information to conduct the survey and track your response rate. The state needs the information so it can aggregate the data across programs for NRS reporting. You should report in the database the total number of students with the goal who exited; if you sampled, the number of students sampled; the total number of students you reached; and the number who attained each outcome. You can compute your response rate by dividing the number you reached over the total number of students (or number sampled, if you sampled) with the outcome goal who exited.

In order to facilitate phone surveys, sample scripts in English, Portuguese, and Spanish have been provided.

Appendix 1: Sample Scripts

English Outcomes Survey Call Questionnaire

Hello. My name is

I'm calling on behalf of the Adult Education Program. I'm calling people who have recently attended classes in our adult education program. We want to know how you liked the classes you attended and how adult education classes have affected you, your family, and your job.

This short survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to answer and your responses are very important. Do you have time now for me to ask these questions? (Reassure the respondent that any information given to us will be strictly confidential.)

Section A: Enrollment

A-1: I understand that you were in the following classes about six months ago.
Is that correct?

A-2: Are you presently attending an adult education program?
(If NO, skip to question B-1)

A-3: Is it the same adult education program?

A-4: Where is the class located?

A-5: In what county is the program located?

Section B: Employment

B-1: While you were taking the class did you get a paying job?

B-2: Since you stopped taking the class have you gotten a paying job?

B-3: Do you still have the same job or do you have a different job?

Section C: Other Information

C-1: Is there anything I didn't ask about that you'd like to say?

Closing:

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer my questions. Your answers are very helpful. The information you gave me will be used to help make adult education programs better and more useful to people like you who have attended or would like to attend such programs.

Portuguese Outcomes Survey Call Questionnaire

Hello, o meu nome e

Estou chamando em nome do Programa de Educacao para Adultos. Estamos chamando as pessoas que recentemente participaram desse programa para obter algumas informacoes e as suas impressoes sobre este programa. Esperamos que os participantes nos possam dizer se gostaram das aulas e tambem se o Programa de Educacao para Adultos tenha afectado ao proprio participante, a sua familia e/ou seu emprego.

Tenho uma lista com certas perguntas e deve levar mais ou menos 10 minutos. A sua participacao e muito importante para nos. Voce tem tempo agora para responder a esta curta lista de perguntas? (Pode ter a certeza que qualquer informacao que nos possa dar sera tratada na maior confidencia)

Secao A: Registro

A-1: Voce ja tem estado a atender as aulas por seis meses, nao e?

A-2: Presentemente, esta a atender a algum Programa de Educacao para Adultos?
(Se nao, salte para a pergunta B-1)

A-3: O Programa de Educacao e o mesmo?

A-4: Onde e o local das aulas?

A-5: Em que freguesia esta localizada?

Secione B: Emprego

B-1: Enquanto atendeu a essas aulas, conseguiu um emprego que lhe pagasse?

B-2: Desde que parou de atender as aulas, conseguiu um emprego que lhe pagasse?

B-3: Ainda tem o mesmo emprego ou outro diferente?

Seção C: Outra Informacao

C-1: Tem alguma coisa que nos queira dizer ou alguma informacao que nos possa dar, alem do que ja lhe perguntei?

Para Terminar:

Muito obrigado por ter tomado tempo em responder ao nosso questionario. As suas respostas e opinioes sao bastante uteis. As informacoes que estamos obtendo dos participantes vao-nos ajudar a melhorar os programas de educacao para adultos e isso e bom, porque os participantes como voce vao acha-las mais uteis e tambem outras pessoas que estejam interessados a atender esses programas no futuro vao poder desfrutar delas melhor.

Spanish Outcomes Survey Call Questionnaire

Hola, Mi nombre es

Estoy llamando de parte del Programa de Educación de Adultos. Estamos llamando a personas que han atendido clases de nuestro programa de educación para adultos. Nosotros queremos saber sobre su experiencia en las clases que Ud. atendido y también como esas clases de educación para adultos han afectado a Ud, su familia, y su trabajo.

Este cuestionario es bien corto, y no tardara más de 10 minutos. Sus respuestas son muy importantes. Tiene Ud. tiempo ahora para poder hacerle varias preguntas. Queremos asegurarle que todas sus respuestas y toda su información serán completamente confidenciales.

Sección: A: Inscripción

A-1: Entendemos que Ud. estaba tomando clases hace 6 meses? Esto es verdad? (Por favor diga las clases que estaba tomando.)

A-2: Esta Ud atendiendo clases del programa de educación para adultos ahora? (si NO, Saltar a la pregunta C-1)

A-3: Es este el mismo programa de educación para adultos?

A-4: Dónde se localiza la clase?

A-5: En qué condado el programa está situado?

Sección B: Empleo

B-1: Mientras que usted tomaba la clase usted consiguió un trabajo que pagaba?

B-2: Desde que usted paró de tomar esta clase ha podido Ud. conseguir un trabajo en donde le pagan?

B-3: Ud. actualmente tiene el mismo trabajo o usted tiene un trabajo diferente?

Sección C: Otra Información

C-1: Hay cualquier otra cosa de la cual no hemos hablado que Ud. quisiera decir?

Cierre:

Gracias mucho por tomar de su tiempo para contestar a mis preguntas. Sus respuestas son muy apreciadas. La información que usted me dio será utilizada para ayudar a hacer los programas de la enseñanza para adultos mejor y más útiles para personas como usted que han atendido o quisiera atender estos tipos de programas.