

Interviewing Skills

NYCDOHMH

HIV Epidemiology Program

Program Evaluation and Training Unit

Goal

To learn effective methods of conducting interviews and collecting data.

Importance of Collecting Data

- Data is the systematic collection of information from which conclusions may be drawn
- Main purpose of collecting data is to conduct a program evaluation

Program Evaluation

- Evaluation is a process of systematically measuring success based on program goals and objectives
- Purpose of evaluation is to inform and improve program activities and provide better services to clients

Types of Data - Qualitative

- Data are narrative and responses options are open-ended (not pre-defined)
- Field observations
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Ethnography
- Progress notes

Types of Data - Quantitative

- Numerical
 - Age
 - Number of sex partners
- Categorical
 - Age group
 - Educational level
- Ordinal
 - Scale (disagree, agree, etc.)

HIV Risk Surveys

- Can be qualitative or quantitative
- Focus on HIV knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and intentions
 - Include basic demographics such as gender, age, race, educational level, etc.
- Personal and sensitive information
- Ensure client confidentiality
- Build and establish rapport

Building Rapport

- Professional and neutral appearance
 - Dress appropriately
 - Do not wear excessive jewelry
 - Avoid overpowering scents
 - Avoid overt religious symbols
 - Do not eat, drink, or chew gum
- Approachable and comfortable demeanor

Building Rapport (2)

- Good eye contact
- Positive body language
- Good verbal and non-verbal communication
 - Avoid using inappropriate language (including slang words)
- Non-judgmental, respectful attitude
- Active listening skills
 - Do not interrupt client
 - Avoid writing while client is talking

What is the difference between administering an interview and counseling a client?

Administering an interview vs. counseling

- Interviewer's role
 - Neutral
 - Nonjudgmental
 - Not clinical
- Address individual client issues in another context

Before you start the interview...

- Remind client that responses are *confidential* and their participation is *voluntary*.
- Client may stop interview at any time without affecting the services they will receive.

Thank the client for participating!

Factors that influence the quality of responses

✓ Standardization

✓ Response bias

What do they mean?

Maximize Standardization

- Interviewers ask all of the questions in the same way for each interview.
- All questions must be asked exactly as they are written and in the same order they appear, so...
- Differences in clients' responses can be attributed to their circumstances rather than the way in which the questions were asked.

Minimize Response Bias

- Clients may not be truthful if they feel their answers will get a negative response.
 - For example, if a question refers to unprotected sex, the client may not be honest if s/he feels the interviewer will react negatively.

To minimize response bias interviewer should:

- Avoid making the client feel defensive or threatened.
- Be relaxed & non-judgmental.
- Not appear anxious, regardless of the topic.

Tips to minimize response bias

- ✓ Present the interview as if the client will want to participate.
- ✓ Be prepared and familiar with the interview.
- ✓ Be an active listener.
- ✓ Maintain eye contact and be aware of your body language.
- ✓ Avoid appearing over-interested when you ask for elaboration or more details.

Tips to minimize bias (continued)

- ✓ Pause during the interview and thank client.
- ✓ Offer encouragement.
- ✓ Remind client that the answers are voluntary and confidential.
- ✓ Maintain a conversational tone and avoid intonation that may add meaning to the question.

Questionnaire Design

- Questionnaires are *designed* to elicit specific information.
- Questions are worded very carefully and should *be read as they appear following skip patterns*.

Skip patterns

- The questionnaire will direct the interviewer to the next relevant set of questions when questions are not applicable to a particular client.
- Skip patterns may be embedded within questions OR following questions, so the interviewer must be aware and follow all skip patterns.
- If there are no skip patterns, proceed through the interview in the order it's written.

Recording Data

- Read the entire question and all responses to the client exactly as written.
- Circle or check the client's response on the questionnaire.

Recording Data continued

- When a participant responds with “other” you should write down the response using the exact words (or words that are as close as possible).
- Similarly, when questions are open-ended, write the exact response given.
- Anyone who reads the response should be able to understand it so - *Write legibly!*

Coding 'Declined' or 'Don't Know'

- If a client refuses to answer a question or does not know the answer, the interviewer should write or circle "declined" or "don't know" next to the question.
- *Do not leave any answer blank.*

Time periods

- If questions refer to a specific time period (past 3 months, in the last year) qualify that time for the respondent.
 - If the interview takes place at the end of June and the question refers to number of times client used a condom in the past 3 months, ask the client "between end of March to the end of June, how many times did you use a condom?"
 - Reference holidays or seasons.

Clarifying Confusion

- If the client did not understand the question, the interviewer should accept responsibility for the miscommunication and repeat the question.
- If a client still does not understand a question, there are several techniques the interviewer can use:
 - Repeat the question.
 - Explain the question, but stick to the original wording as much as possible.
 - Write down exactly what was said so this problem can be addressed with the questionnaire reviewer.

Listen Carefully

- Keep a log of questions clients do not understand.
- Program staff can address the recurring problems and create better questions.

Personalizing the Interview

(an exception to the rule)

- If the client gives you the names of personal associations (main partner, etc), you can insert the name into the question every time you refer to that person.

Guiding

- The interviewer must guide, but not dominate the interview.
- If a client goes off on a tangent, or is overly focused on one topic, the interviewer must steer the client back to the interview. For example:
 - "That's very interesting. Can you tell me more about this question..."
 - "I don't want to keep you here all day, so I'd like to move you through these questions quickly."

Probing

- When respondents give vague answers, the interviewer should prompt the respondent to get a more specific response.
- Probes should help focus the client but should be unbiased.
- The interviewer should not suggest an answer or lead the client.

Types of Probes

1. Pause.

- Allow client to think about the question before responding

2. Reread the question and emphasize key words.

3. Ask for more information

- Ask, "tell me more about that" or "help me understand..."

4. Stress generality and subjectivity

- Ask, "In general", or "In most cases", or "What's your best guess?"

5. Repeat the clients' response back to them to in order to ensure the interviewer understands.

When to stop the interview

1. The client requests that the interview be terminated.
 - Clients may end an interview at any time, for any reason
2. The client is having emotional or physical distress.

When to stop the interview

continued

3. The client is unable to understand the questions or follow the instructions.
4. The client engages in inappropriate behavior.
5. The client is unwilling to be engaged by the interviewer.
6. The interviewer feels threatened.

Tips for effective interviewing

1. Be familiar with the instrument.
2. Be confident during the interview and express interest in the client's answers.
3. Be respectful and non-judgmental.
 - When a client is having a difficult time answering questions, the interviewer should be patient and encourage the client to continue while acknowledging the issue.
 - It is ok if an interview takes a long time.

Tips for effective interviewing

(continued)

4. When discussing sensitive topics, interviewer should emphasize confidentiality.
5. Remind client that answering is voluntary and it is better to skip questions than to be less than honest.
6. Upon completion of the interview, thank the client and ask if there are any questions.

The importance of interviewing skills

To collect accurate data

- Minimize bias
- Maximize standardization

Better serve clients and improve your services!

*Now let's take a look at your
survey.....*