



CQI Quick Sheet

Lessons Learned: Surveys

The CQI Quick Sheet series is meant to assist Court Improvement Programs plan for evaluating an area of focus. It includes some specific questions to ask, as well as some useful tips on methodologies to help achieve goals to improve in this area.

What is the Best Type of Survey to Use?

On-Line	Phone	In-Person	Mail
<p>On-line surveys (e.g., Survey Monkey) are anonymous, inexpensive and quick to complete, but you don't have as much control over who completes the survey and how many choose to complete. Use on-line surveys when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You are trying to reach the most respondents• Funding or staff time is an issue• You have emails of respondents or access to a webpage they visit frequently• The questions are primarily closed-ended (yes/no, multiple choice)	<p>Phone surveys allow you to schedule calls convenient for participants, and provide direct access to the respondent, but require staff time to schedule and complete. Use phone surveys when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You need to hear directly from the respondent about their knowledge, experience, attitude• All staff conducting surveys understand the subject matter and are trained to write down answers as given• You are asking open-ended questions ("tell me about your experience with...", "describe your views about...")	<p>In-person surveys are handed and completed immediately in front of you, but potential participants may worry about anonymity, even if no identifying information is requested. Use in-person surveys:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To survey hard-to-reach respondents, by meeting them where they are (e.g., in courthouse, agency)• For respondents who need help to complete (e.g., child, non-English speaker)• If you want to ensure that you have a higher response rate.	<p>Mail surveys are sent through the post office, and should include a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope; mail surveys have low response rates as many are never returned. Use them if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have a very large sample, with addresses, but not emails or your respondents are unlikely to have computer access• Your survey has longer and more complicated questions, since the respondent can see the question and read it and respond at their own pace

How to Increase Response Rates

It is important to reach the individuals who have the information you need and generate interest in having them complete the survey or your survey won't be helpful. Higher response rates give you more confidence that the information you are getting represents what is happening. Here are some tips:

- Use an on-line survey platform, such as Survey Monkey, and post on webpage or to list servers
- When you have a captive audience (i.e. in trainings, webinars, etc.), you can integrate a survey
- Get the Supervisor or Court/Agency Director/Chief to send out the email with the link to the survey (or a letter for in-person or mailed surveys), if you are surveying attorneys, judges, social workers, or other professionals, as they are more likely to respond
- Provide instructions on the survey asking it be given to the professional/person with the most knowledge/experience about the topic
- Provide a due date for the completed survey and a method to return it
- Use reminders to help participants remember to complete the survey by the due date.
- Assure potential respondents the survey is anonymous, no identifying information will be shared, and no confidential case information reported
- Use gift cards or other incentives to increase participation, especially youth

Who Should Be Surveyed?

Who are you trying to reach? A “sample” is the people you are surveying who will represent all of the people who are in the category. For example, there may be 50 judges in a jurisdiction, but you will survey a sample (i.e., 20). Decisions to make include:

- **How many people should be in the sample?**
Gather information from as many people as possible, balanced by the amount of available time, funding, and resources.
- **Is the sample going to be random?**
Samples can be random, where each potential respondent is equally likely to be chosen, and is unbiased representative of the population being studied. Generating a random sample is time-consuming and often impossible to carry out. More often, commonly used sample types include:
 - *Opportunity samples: survey people who are available at the time the study is carried out and fit the criteria (e.g., judges hearing cases on a particular day)*
 - *Snowball samples: ask participants who fit your target population to refer people they know*
 - *Self-selected samples: participants who volunteer (i.e., any who respond to the survey on a website)*

Questions

The type of question must match the survey’s purpose. All questions should be neutral (“Are you satisfied or unsatisfied with your representation?” vs. “What is your attorney doing wrong?”). Every person should be asked the same questions to ensure you can compare results. In addition, respondents should remain anonymous and no individual’s information reported. Results should be analyzed and reported in the aggregate.

Quantitative

Use Quantitative questions when you want information that can be measured: how many, how often, length of time

Example: “How frequently do you do you come to court?” or “How many mediations do you complete in one month?” or “How long did this hearing take?”

Qualitative

Ask Qualitative questions to gather descriptive information such as characteristics, satisfaction, attitudes

Example: “How did this training meet your needs?” or “What was one thing you learned from the training that will be the most beneficial to your work?”

Closed-Ended

Closed-ended questions provide a list of answer choices. Use these for yes/no or multiple choice questions.

Example: “Did the youth attend this hearing?” or “Was there an ICWA finding reported on the record?”

Open-Ended

Open-ended questions requires an answer to “Why?” “How?” “What is your opinion/perception about...?”

Example: “What outcomes do you believe will result by applying the information you learned?” or “Do you have any other comments or suggestions to improve this training?”