

Policy Guidance

Quality of Life Survey Policy and Guidelines



January 13, 2010

Policy:

(MFP) Programmatic Special Terms and Conditions Section #5, Cooperation with the MFP National Evaluation Contractor

“The grantee must administer, to CMS’ full specifications, the Quality of Life Survey. This survey must be administered within the timeframes and methodology specified by CMS and must include, in its efforts, a number of MFP participants as determined by CMS...”

Baseline Interviews

Baseline Quality of Life interviews are to be conducted with all people who participate in your MFP program. The Quality of Life survey is a census of all MFP participants. Conduct the baseline Quality of Life interview prior to the participant’s transition to community living. Once an individual living in a facility is referred to the MFP program, is found to be eligible for participation, and has signed the program’s consent form, he or she is eligible to participate in the Quality of Life survey. Whether or not the person actually transitions out into the community under the MFP program, CMS will reimburse the state for the completed survey. If despite your best efforts the participant transitions to community living, before the baseline Quality of Life survey is completed, conduct this interview within 10 days of the transition. If the interview is not conducted within 10 days of the transition, then drop this person from the Quality of Life survey. Baseline Quality of Life interviews conducted after the transition to the community should be extremely rare interviews and missed baseline Quality of Life interviews should not occur.

Follow-up Interviews

Follow-up Quality of Life interviews should be conducted with people who completed a baseline Quality of Life interview. The first follow-up Quality of Life interview should be conducted 11 months after transition and the second follow-up Quality of Life interview should be conducted 24 months after transition. The 11 and 24 months after transition interviews are from the initial date of transition to the community, which is when the person’s 365 days of eligibility for MFP-financed home and community-based services begin.

Frequently Asked Questions

How soon is too soon to conduct the QoL survey (baseline)?

Although we originally recommended 2 weeks before transition, the policy is now is “better earlier than after transition.” Mathematica’s preliminary analyses of the data submitted so far indicate clearly that the responses are qualitatively different when the baseline interview is done after the person moves to the community. In addition, many people grantees are transitioning have difficulties with recall. We understand that the transition date can change several times for a variety of reasons (e.g., housing accommodations aren’t ready yet) and that some potential MFP participants may not end up transitioning. Therefore, please find ways that work with your transition processes to conduct

the baseline interview before people transition to the community, even if that means conducting the interview a month or more before transition. However, if despite all your best efforts someone transitions before you complete the baseline interview, than complete the survey no later than two weeks post transition into the community.

If the participant has been reinstitutionalized should we conduct the follow-up interview?

Yes. Regardless of where the person is living, please conduct the follow-up interviews approximately 11 or 24 months after the initial transition date when the person's 365 days of MFP eligibility began.

If the participant was interviewed at baseline but did not transition do we conduct a follow-up?

No. Follow-up interviews should only be conducted for those people who completed the baseline interview **and** transitioned to community living through the MFP program.

If the participant was interviewed at baseline, transitioned, but at any point was hospitalized, do we still conduct the follow-up interview?

Yes, but if the participant is in the hospital around the 11th month and will be discharged in less than 6 weeks, we recommend you wait to conduct the follow-up interview until that person is back in the community. If the hospitalization will be much longer than 6 weeks, then conduct the follow-up interview in the hospital when the person is stabilized.

If a person doesn't participate in the QoL survey at baseline should the person participate in subsequent follow up QoL surveys? No, if a person doesn't participate in the baseline survey that person shouldn't be included in follow up surveys.

If the participant transitioned, but for various reasons is no longer in the MFP program, do we still conduct a follow-up interview?

Yes, please conduct the follow-up interviews approximately 11 and 24 months after someone transitioned to the community through the MFP program, which is when the person's 365 days of MFP eligibility began.

If a respondent doesn't know an answer or is not sure do we leave it blank or choose "don't know"?

Choose "don't know."

If a participant can't communicate a response or a proxy doesn't know well enough how to respond should we leave it blank or choose "don't know"?

Choose "don't know."

Participants in my program live all over the state- sometimes it takes hours of travel to obtain one follow-up interview. Do we have to conduct follow-up interviews in person?

Please attempt to conduct **all** Quality of Life interviews in person. With this population there can be difficulties with phone interviews. Some participants will share a phone with others or feel uncomfortable talking on the phone. However, we recognize that it might be impossible in certain States (e.g., driving 20 hours to conduct one interview). As there is slightly more leeway in the timing of the follow-up interview, some states are trying to schedule several interviews at the same time within a given region to make their survey resources (interviewer time and travel costs) more manageable and cost effective. If this strategy means that some follow-up interviews are delayed several weeks or a month (or are done early), then a delayed (or early) interview is better than a telephone interview. If after your best efforts, you cannot complete a follow-up interview in person, and then a State may conduct the interview by telephone.

Helpful Hints (Recommendations from State to State)

If an interviewer is using the paper version of the survey for the baseline interview, it might help if he/she crosses out questions labeled “after transition” to avoid asking them accidentally.

If you have a new interviewer, have him or her practice a few times before conducting the interview. Hopefully, this will create less anxiety and help the interviewer follow the skip patterns correctly.

Before conducting a proxy interview, make sure to reassure the proxy that he/she should not try and guess. It’s better to state that he/she doesn’t know the answer.

Safety of your interviewees comes first. If a participant is potentially harmful to him/her self or others, consider waiting to conduct the interview until the participant is more stable, conducting a telephone interview, or sending more than one person out on the interview.

Best Practices

It is very helpful to develop a tracking database (e.g., access, excel).

Customize the PowerPoint presentation and training materials (sent to you by Mathematica) to fit your state.

Consider instituting periodic roundtable discussions with the interviewers. It gives interviewers a chance to share their experiences and feel comfortable discussing problems that have arisen.

Consider using the QoL data. For example, some states are looking at how participants’ perceptions have changed pre- and post- transition and presenting this information at meetings with stakeholders and advocates. One state has uncovered some unanticipated problems in their nursing homes from asking the optional questions about neglect and abuse.

Consider periodic refresher trainings. As most states have a limited amount of resources for in-person, time-intensive trainings they have found other methods for continuing to relay important information to surveyors and obtaining feedback from them. For example, some project directors have developed one page email reminders that list important/ “key” items to keep in mind when administering the survey (similar to this sheet).

If one person is entering all the data into a database, consider training one other “back-up” person on how to do it. Another suggestion was to develop your own manual, so that if a staff member leaves the program there is a written document to refer to and train the new staff member.

If possible, create a quality assurance system for data entry. For example: another person entering the same data and checking to see if the answers line up.

Entering the Medicaid ID correctly is **EXTREMELY** important (another reason to check the quality of your data entry).

Entering whether the interviewee was a proxy is **EXTREMELY** important for the evaluation of these data. Anyone analyzing the Quality of Life data will want to control for proxy responses because proxies are much more likely to not know an answer to a question and typically report higher levels of satisfaction.

Payment

CMS will reimburse States \$100 per completed survey for survey administration. In order to receive this funding, States claim this expenditure as an evaluation administration support expense and may claim reimbursement at the \$100 per survey through the Administrative Claims Process. This expense should be included in the project budget on the Worksheet for Proposed Budget (MFP Budget form). The claims for this funding will be reported on the MFP financial reporting form C (administrative services) on the line for evaluation administration support.(Questions to State PO)

Please refer questions concerning the QoL Survey process to National Evaluator:

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