# National Evaluation of the Drug-Free Communities (DFC) Support Program *Frequently Asked Questions*

## GENERAL EVALUATION

### *How do I obtain an accurate sample of my catchment area?*

Although catchment areas are reported by zip code, you may be targeting a smaller area within that zip code. In the progress reports, you have the option of further specifying your catchment area (e.g., a neighborhood within a given zip code), and it's important to be as specific as possible so the National Evaluation team can accurately assess your target population.

When sampling for your core measures surveys, be sure to obtain a sample of youth that is *representative* of your catchment area -- and most importantly, be sure to collect data from the same location over time to ensure that change on the core measures can be attributed to your coalition's activities and not the sampling method you used. Ultimately, the idea of representation is difficult to define, but as a general rule of thumb, make sure your sample "looks like" the population you're trying to target.

### *How do I maintain the anonymity of the youth who are surveyed?*

Because the National Evaluation does not need to track the same students across time, simply tell students not to put their name on the survey. If you want to track individual student responses, use an ID number that cannot be traced back to the individual student's identity except through the use of a list or spreadsheet that is only in the possession of those staff members who absolutely need it. Although students' anonymity should be protected as much as possible, keep in mind that some demographic information (e.g., gender, grade level) is needed to ensure that data are properly reported in your progress reports.

### *How do I work with schools in my area (especially principals/superintendents) to get buy-in to change or implement a survey?*

Working with schools in your local area to implement or change a survey involves a number of different issues, including securing school and administrator "buy-in," confidentiality of data, survey administration logistics, and data use. There may be local environmental factors that influence a school's (or district's) willingness to implement a survey to its students. We would suggest contacting the National Evaluation Team's or CADCA's Technical Assistance Specialists to discuss strategies to brainstorm approaches to working with schools. Additionally, your Project Officer is another resource to utilize if you are considering implementing a school survey.

## REPORTING DATA

### *How do I report outcomes other than core measures into progress reports if the question does not match the DFC requirements (either in the question stem or the response options)?*

If your survey is already approved and listed in the progress report system, refer to your survey guide to determine how to report data in the system. If you do not have a copy of the survey guide, please contact the National Evaluation team at (877) 854-0731 or by email at dfc_evaluators@icfi.com. If no appropriate item for a given core measure was identified on your survey, you will not be able to enter data for that core measure into your progress report.

If your survey is not listed in the system, please follow the steps to submit the survey for review. Even if the survey questions do not match DFC requirements, the response categories may be able to be combined to be compliant with core measures requirements. You will not be able to report core measure data in your progress report until a survey review has taken place.

### *How do I report my core measures in a progress report if I do not have an accurate recording of the grade level and/or the age of the surveyed youth?*

Grantees typically submit data separately by grade level, as it is a grant requirement that data be collected on at least three different grades. For the purpose of the National Evaluation, student survey data will be aggregated at the middle school and high school levels. If information was not obtained regarding students' age or grade level, but the school level (i.e., middle school vs. high school) is known, then all student data should be entered at the median grade level, such as 7th grade for middle school students and 10th or 11th grade for high school students. If student grade level information is missing, student age can be used to assume the average grade level. For example, 11 year old students would fall into the 6th grade category, 12 year olds into 7th grade, and so on. This can be further refined if the school level is known, meaning that, for example, 14 year old students who may fall into either 8th or 9th grade can be properly identified by the identified school level. Be sure to add a comment about what grade levels your aggregated data represents.

### *Should I aggregate my student data by school district or by county?*

We recommend that you aggregate student data by school district. This method allows the National Evaluation team more flexibility when analyzing student data.

## SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

### Can I work with the publisher/distribution company responsible for a statewide survey if they want to update their survey to comply with DFC requirements?

You are free to work with the publisher or distribution company to update their survey to comply with DFC requirements. You will need to submit a survey review request before your survey can be modified in the progress report system. Please contact us to receive technical assistance support on the survey modification process. Additionally, we suggest that you work with your Project Officer throughout the process to ensure you are in compliance with DFC requirements.

### What do I do if my state-sponsored survey or existing survey only captures two out of the four core measures?

Collecting core measure data is a DFC compliance issue. You will need to talk with your Project Officer to determine the best approach for addressing the reporting requirements for both the DFC grant and the National Evaluation.

## SURVEY REVIEW PROCESS

### How long will it take for my survey to be reviewed?

On average it will take **three weeks** for surveys to be reviewed. Surveys can also be marked for urgent review, typically completed within one week. Our survey review staff will examine each survey submitted to determine whether it meets reporting requirements for the National Evaluation and provide suggested feedback through a survey review guide. If there are any clarifying questions, a Technical Assistance Specialist will contact you to obtain more information to better answer your request.

### Are the survey guide suggestions mandatory?

Again, this is a compliance issue that should be addressed with your Project Officer. You will not be able to enter core measure data for any item that is not approved during the survey review process. The survey guide provides feedback and suggestions from the National Evaluation team to more accurately capture DFC program outcomes. As you will be receiving program-specific feedback related to your outcomes, incorporating the suggested feedback enables you to obtain the most accurate and relevant information about your program.

### How do I use/integrate the survey guide suggestions?

We recommend that you discuss the survey guide suggestions with us, your local evaluator, and your Project Officer to decide how to integrate the suggestions. We are available for additional consultation to provide support on understanding the survey guide suggestions.

### After my survey is reviewed, if I revise my survey should I submit a second time for an additional review?

Yes, you MUST submit your survey for review by the National Evaluation team each time a revision is made. This will ensure that the most current version of your survey is available in the system and that all core measure data collected in an appropriate manner can be submitted.

## PROGRESS REPORT SYSTEM

### What exactly does it mean to "add/upload" a survey into the progress report system?

DFC grantees should log into their system account and add/upload the survey(s) they used or will be using to collect data for the next reporting period. Adding/Uploading a survey into the system initiates the survey review process. The progress report system has links that you click on that allow you to browse documents on your computer, select the document with your blank survey and then upload it to the system so that the National Evaluation team can read the document. The National Evaluation team will be notified via an automatic email from the system once your survey has been added/uploaded. After your survey is reviewed, the survey review guide will be added/uploaded into the survey submission by the National Evaluation team and you will receive an email from the system updating you on the approval status. You will read the survey review guide and enter core measures data as directed.

### Where do I go in COMET to submit my survey for approval?

In COMET, click on: Enter and Submit My Data > Core Outcomes Survey Submission > Submit Core Outcomes Survey for Approval.

### When should the survey(s) be submitted for review?

DFC grantees should ideally submit a survey for review prior to collecting data using the survey. However, even if the data have already been collected using a given survey, the survey will need to be submitted into the system and reviewed by the National Evaluation Team prior to submission of core measures data collected using that survey.

### What survey(s) should be submitted for review?

Surveys that need to be reviewed for a given reporting period are those surveys that your coalition used to collect the core measures data that you are planning to submit into your progress report in the upcoming reporting period. If you use more than one survey, each survey must be submitted individually into the system. Do not submit surveys used in the past that your coalition is no longer using.

*Still have questions about the National Evaluation?* Contact us toll-free at **(877) 854-0731** or via email at **dfc_evaluators@icfi.com**