

Examine Survey Administration with nFORM

The Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) performance measures surveys are an essential data source for HMRF grantees and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Grantees' ability to effectively administer the HMRF applicant characteristics survey (ACS), entrance survey, and exit survey is critical to ensuring these data are consistent, timely, and high quality and therefore useful for program operations, performance monitoring, continuous quality improvement (CQI), and evaluation. nFORM's data tools and reports can help grantees identify their strengths and challenges by providing information on survey administration trends and progress to date. These tools allow grantees to calculate survey response and completion rates and assess the quality of survey data.¹

For detailed information on survey administration processes, see the [nFORM 2.0 User Manual](#) and the [Performance Measures and Data Collection Logistics Manual](#) on the nFORM 2.0 page of the [HMRF Grantee Resources site](#). Grantees should also use the [Data Collection Plan template](#) to document and train staff on their program's specific survey administration processes. For in-depth tutorials on reviewing survey data in the operational reports and data export, check out the [November](#) and [December](#) 2022 nFORM office hours presentations. Grantees conducting local evaluations should consult the manual on [Using nFORM 2.0 for Local Evaluations](#) and their evaluation technical assistance partner (ETAP).

Consider the following common questions and how your grant team can use nFORM's query tool, operational reports, and data export to review and better understand your survey administration efforts.

Are the expected number of clients completing each survey? ACF guidelines indicate that, in general, grantees should administer the ACS at enrollment, the entrance survey at the client's first workshop session, and the exit survey at the client's last workshop session.² You can monitor survey completions in the Grant Year Overview tab of the query tool or the Survey Completion Summary operational report. See [Page 2](#) for more information on how to use each of these data tools to understand progress on clients' survey completion.

How can we monitor survey refusals? Grantees should monitor refusal rates to identify potential challenges with survey administration and develop strategies to encourage more clients to take the nFORM surveys. The Survey Report – Refused Survey operational report and data export provide detailed information on which clients refuse to complete a survey. More information on how to monitor refusals is available in [Page 4](#).

How can we identify other data quality issues? By monitoring clients' survey responses, grantees can identify other challenges with survey administration and develop strategies to collect more complete and high-quality data. The data export provides detailed information on which clients submit a survey without answering all the questions. More information on how to monitor data quality issues is available in [Page 5](#).

How can we improve survey response rates, completion rates, and survey data quality? Grantees should develop survey scripts to help clients understand the purpose of each survey and how to complete them and address beforehand any concerns clients might have with the surveys. Programs can also explore alternative modes for administering each survey. See [Page 7](#) for more information on how to improve survey response and completion rates and encourage complete and accurate responses.

¹ Survey response rates tell grantees how many clients who had the opportunity to take the surveys actually did. Survey completion rates tell grantees how many clients who started surveys finished and submitted them. Both metrics are important indicators of data quality.

² Clients are considered enrolled when they complete the ACS. Local evaluation grantees using the service assignment feature in nFORM must record a service assignment for a client to be enrolled.

Are the expected number of clients completing each survey?

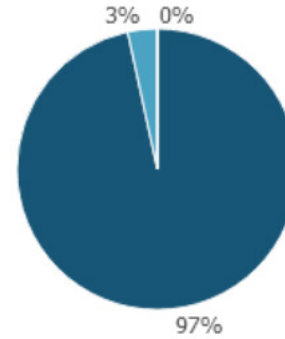
Grantees can review survey administration progress on the Grant Year Overview tab of the query tool. The Data Quality panel at the bottom of this tab shows two pie charts that indicate, for entrance and exit surveys, the counts and percentages of clients enrolled in the current grant year who have completed, refused, or not yet started or submitted each survey. When reviewing each pie chart, remember that enrollees who are not yet eligible to take each survey are included in the incomplete survey counts. Using these pie charts, grantees can identify whether the anticipated number of clients have completed each of the nFORM surveys. For example, if a grantee enrolled 59 clients this year who should have all completed workshop programming by this point, these illustrative pie charts indicate that, so far this year, almost all clients are completing entrance surveys but about a third are completing exit surveys on the expected timeline. This would suggest that the grantee should closely review their survey administration data and processes to identify how to improve exit survey completions and thus the quality and consistency of their data.

To review survey completion data for all clients or a specific cohort, grantees can review the summary tab of the Survey Completion Summary operational report that displays the total number of clients by population that have completed or refused the applicant characteristics survey, entrance survey, and exit survey. Grantees can generate this report for specific client enrollment date ranges and workshop/series to monitor survey administration progress for a specific cohort. In this example, the Families Connect grantee has filtered the operational report to show survey completion status only for clients enrolled between May and August 2022 (n = 53).

Query Tool Grant Year Overview Tab

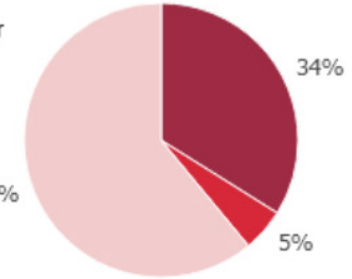
Entrance survey status for clients enrolled in current grant year

- Completed (57)
- Refused (2)
- Incomplete or Not Started (0)



Exit survey status for clients enrolled in current grant year who have completed or refused entrance survey

- Completed (20)
- Refused (3)
- Incomplete or Not Started (36)



Survey Completion Summary Operational Report

Grantee	Population	Number of Clients					
		Applicant Characteristics		Entrance Survey		Exit Survey	
		Completed	Refused	Completed	Refused	Completed	Refused
Families Connect	All	53	1	43	1	17	6
	Adult couple	23	1	22	0	7	4
	Adult individual	30	0	21	1	10	2

You can drill down further by reviewing survey completion information on the detailed tab of the report, which shows the survey completion date or status (if not complete) of each client's three nFORM surveys. The detailed tab of the report aligns with the summary tab, so the data on the detailed tab will be based on the enrollment date range and workshop/series filters a grantee selects when generating the report. After generating the report, grantees can filter on additional fields, such as location, to closely monitor survey completion for a specific group of clients. Because a cohort often takes surveys on the same timeline, grantees can easily identify clients who should be contacted and encouraged to complete any outstanding surveys.

In the example summary table for the Families Connect grantee, 10 out of the 53 clients have not yet completed an entrance survey, and only 17 have completed an exit survey. This grantee should use the detailed tab of the report to identify whether the clients who have not yet submitted an entrance or exit survey should have done so based on where they are in programming and follow up as needed. Using the example detailed tab, Families Connect could see that Snow White began the entrance survey but did not finish it; Snow White's client status is Active, so staff should follow up with this client to encourage them to complete the survey. In reviewing the detailed tab, grantees might find clients who have incomplete surveys but have a client status that indicates they have revoked consent, dropped out, or otherwise left the program, which means that grantee staff likely would not prioritize follow up with these clients.

Survey response and completion data are also available on the Client Info and Survey Response Data tabs of the data export. The Survey Response Data tab also displays the language in which a client completed each survey (either English or Spanish). Grantees can use this information to monitor whether the language in which clients complete surveys aligns with the language in which program services are provided.

Survey Completion Detail Operational Report

Client Grantee Location	Population	Client ID	Client Last Name	Client First Name	Current Client Status	Application Date	Enrollment Date	Survey Completion Date		
								Applicant Characteristics Survey	Entrance Survey	Exit Survey
Candyland	Adult individual	10026689	White	Snow	Active	8/10/2022	8/11/2022	8/11/2022	In progress	
Candyland	Adult couple	10025716	Dumpty	Humpty	Completed/Graduated	5/17/2022	5/23/2022	5/23/2022	5/30/2022	Refused
Candyland	Adult couple	10025635	Mermaid	Little	Completed/Graduated	5/17/2022	5/23/2022	5/23/2022	5/30/2022	8/9/2022

How can we monitor survey refusals?

When clients refuse to start or complete a survey, skip questions, or provide inaccurate responses, the quality of the data that grantees and ACF use to understand client characteristics and outcomes declines.³ The Grant Year Overview tab of the query tool identifies entrance and exit survey refusal rates for clients enrolled to date in the current grant year. You can monitor more detailed information about refusal rates by survey type and refusal reason using the Survey Report – Refused Survey summary operational report. You can use this information to identify and address any refusal trends across clients by population type (if applicable), location, survey type, and the number of days surveys were backdated (if paper surveys were entered).

In the example Refused Survey summary report, the Families Connect grantee does not appear to have survey refusal issues with the applicant characteristics survey or entrance survey because only one client refused an applicant characteristics survey and none refused to complete the entrance survey. Families Connect does, however, have a large number of exit survey refusals among couples served at its Candy Land location: 19 of the 20 exit survey refusals occurred at the Candy Land service location, and 15 of those 19 refusals were from individuals who participated as part of a couple.

As a next step, the Families Connect data manager can review the detailed version of the Refused Survey report to look for trends in refusal reasons or other factors that might explain why so many clients at the Candy Land location refuse to complete the exit survey. For example, if the data manager sees in the last column of the detailed report that privacy concerns are the most common reason clients at the Candy Land location refuse to take the exit survey, the data manager can work with staff at that location to revise their survey script to emphasize the confidential nature of the survey. Data managers can also speak with clients and staff to better understand the root causes of their concerns and identify other strategies to address those concerns. For example, case managers can address individual client concerns about the surveys during one-on-one sessions.

Survey Report - Refused Survey Summary Operational Report

Grantee	Client Grantee Location	Population	Applicant Characteristics Survey					Entrance Survey					Exit Survey									
			Total	0	1	2	3	4	Total	0	1	2	3	4	Total	0	1	2	3	4		
Families Connect	All	All	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	0	0	10	10	0	0
		Adult couple	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	8	7	0	0
		Adult individual	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	2	3	0	0
	Candy Land	All	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	0	0	9	10	0	0
		Adult couple	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	5	10	0	0
		Adult individual	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Magical Kingdom	All	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
		Adult couple	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Adult individual	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0

Refused Survey - Detail Operational Report

Client Grantee Location	Population	Client ID	Client Last Name	Client First Name	Current Client Status	Application Date	Enrollment Date	Survey	Date Client Refused Survey	System Entry Date	#Days difference	Reason
Candyland	Adult couple	10024571	Charming	Prince	Active	3/17/2022	4/29/2022	ACS	4/29/2022	5/2/2022	3	Privacy concerns
Magical Kingdom	Adult individual	10025677	Hook	Captain	Active	5/17/2022	5/23/2022	Exit	8/8/2022	8/10/2022	2	Not interested

³ In some cases, clients might answer questions in a way that they think is safer or more socially acceptable rather than in a way that reflects their own characteristics, experiences, and perspectives. This is known as social desirability bias. In other cases, some clients might misunderstand the question wording.

How can we identify other data quality issues?

Review survey response patterns. Each survey in nFORM includes built-in logical skip patterns so that clients only receive questions that are relevant to them based on their client population and responses to preceding questions. In addition, clients can skip any survey questions they prefer not to answer. Because clients can sometimes provide inaccurate responses to some questions, it is important to closely review response patterns for survey questions to identify potential data quality issues before using the survey responses in your analyses. Grantees can use Sections C-02 (Applicant Characteristics) and C-09 (Client Outcomes) of the Semi-annual Performance Progress Report (PPR), the Client Outcomes tab of the query tool, and the Survey Response tab of the data export to monitor survey responses for data quality.

Sections C-02 (Applicant Characteristics) and C-09 (Client Outcomes) of the PPR show the number or percent of clients who submitted a response on the applicant characteristics survey, entrance survey, and exit surveys for each reported characteristic or outcome. This information is also available on the Client Outcomes tab of the query tool, which shows the number of clients who responded to each reported outcome from the entrance and exit surveys. Remember that you can first review the Survey Completion Summary operational report to identify the total number of clients who submitted an entrance or exit survey for a specified population and time frame. You can then drill down further on the Client Outcomes tab of the query tool by filtering on the same client population and survey completion time frame. You can also review outcomes by applicant characteristic, including age, employment status, ethnicity, gender, partner status, and race.

Review how many clients responded to each question. It's important to review the number of clients who responded to each question so you can determine whether any apparent trends are based on enough clients to provide useful insights. (Keep in mind that only a rigorous evaluation can identify program effects.) But it's also important to know how many clients should have responded to each question before making decisions based on the response data. The maximum number of potential responses to each question is not available on the QPR/PPR or the Outcomes tab of the query tool. Grantees can use the survey PDFs and the data export to identify how many clients should have responded to each survey and each question when analyzing survey response data.

For example, when reviewing the example Client Outcomes tab, it's helpful to know that all clients are asked questions about learning job skills, conducting a job search, and relationship belief questions. It's also helpful to know that there is a logical skip pattern in the survey so that only those who report being in a relationship are asked the question about relationship satisfaction. Ideally, the number of responses to each survey question would match the number of clients who were asked to complete that survey minus the clients who have logically skipped over that question based on their responses to prior questions. Yet the number of actual responses will be lower than the ideal number when clients refuse to answer entire surveys or specific questions within a survey.

PPR Survey Response Information

C-02 Applicant Characteristics

1. Demographic Characteristics		Percent of applicants
1. Gender	Female	55.5%
	Male	43.7%
	Other	0.8%
2. Age	13 – 15 years	0.8%
	16 – 17 years	0.8%
	18 – 20 years	9.3%
	21 – 24 years	11.9%
	25 – 34 years	33.9%
	35 – 44 years	28.0%
	45 – 54 years	10.2%
55 years or older	5.1%	

C-09 Participant Outcomes

1. Characteristics of Adult Couple and Individual Clients at Program Exit

A. Relationships/Marriage

Outcome	Average posttest score	Range	Number of respondents
Attitudes about marriage			
Believes that it is better for children if their parents are married	2.3	1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree)	29
Believes that living together is just the same as being married	2.4	1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree)	29
Relationship status (%)			
Married (%)	3.3%	0 - 100	1
Engaged (%)	3.3%	0 - 100	1
Separated (%)	3.3%	0 - 100	1
Divorced (%)	33.3%	0 - 100	10
Widowed (%)	6.7%	0 - 100	2
Never married (%)	50.0%	0 - 100	15

Query Tool Outcomes Tab

ENTRANCE OUTCOME	RANGE	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS	Average Score/Percent
How often accepts child the way he or she is	1 (always) to 5 (never)	98	1.1
Feels they and their child understand each other	1 (always) to 5 (never)	99	1.7
Hits, spans, grabs, or uses physical punishment	1 (yes); 0 (no)	98	6.1
Yells, shouts, or screams at child when he/she is mad at him...	1 (yes); 0 (no)	96	9.4
Talks about what child did wrong	1 (yes); 0 (no)	98	61.2
In past month, saw child every day or almost every day (%)	0 - 100	10	14.9
In past month, saw child one to three times a week (%)	0 - 100	23	34.3
In past month, saw child one to three times a month (%)	0 - 100	31	47.8
In past month, did not see child (%)	0 - 100	2	3.0
I would like to learn new job skills	1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree)	206	1.5
I feel confident in my ability to conduct an effective job sear...	1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree)	209	1.9
Believes that it is better for children if their parents are marr...	1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree)	218	1.8
Believes that living together is just the same as being married	1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree)	217	2.4
Satisfaction with current relationship	1 (very satisfied) to 3 (not satisfied)	61	1.7

In the example Client Outcomes tab, if 218 clients completed an entrance survey, we would expect to see that 218 clients responded to the question about learning new job skills instead of 206. Grantees can use the Survey Response Data tab of the data export to drill down on potential trends among the clients who did not respond to this question. Grantees would also use this tab of the data export to determine whether the number of clients who responded to the relationship satisfaction question (61 in this example) aligns with the number who reported being in a relationship, or whether there are additional clients who responded that they were in a relationship but chose not to answer that question. If clients are opting not to respond to certain items, grantees should investigate the reasons why and develop strategies such as tailored survey scripts to encourage clients to submit responses to all questions asked.

Check for unexpected response trends. Grantees should also consider as part of survey monitoring whether client responses might not be an accurate reflection of the clients' characteristics or experiences. Unexpected response trends could signal an issue or shift among clients, a situation in which clients are concerned about how they answer a question, or a misunderstanding of question wording. Unexpected survey response data do not necessarily mean the data are inaccurate, but they could indicate an underlying issue in the way clients are interpreting or perceiving a question. For example, a grantee might notice when reviewing the Survey Response Data tab of the data export that the responses clients are reporting on the applicant characteristics survey about challenges to finding or keeping a job do not align with the challenges being discussed during workshop sessions and individual service contacts. Upon further investigation, the grantee learns that clients were concerned about potential repercussions for sharing more sensitive reasons for why they were unable to find employment. To address this issue, the grantee would need to identify ways to address these types of concerns in their survey scripts or other survey administration materials and processes. The next section provides tips on how to address data quality issues such as this one, as well as refusal trends.

How can we improve survey response and completion rates and survey data quality?

Survey scripts are important tools in the survey administration process. Grantees can use scripts to help clients complete surveys, including:

- Explaining the purpose and benefits of completing each survey. The scripts should emphasize the importance of hearing about clients' experiences so that grantees can build on or improve their program services for future participants.
- Providing step-by-step instructions on how to submit surveys.
- Addressing any anticipated concerns or questions clients might have about the surveys. For example, grantees whose clients express concerns about privacy can tailor their survey scripts to emphasize that all information a client provides will remain confidential and not be shared outside the program.

Clients might feel more motivated and comfortable in responding to all survey questions when grantee staff use scripts to discuss the benefits of taking and completing surveys and to address potential concerns up front. Using the example script as a blueprint, grantees can expand on and customize sections of the script to include more detailed information that will encourage their clients to fully complete their surveys. For more information on how to develop tailored survey scripts, see the [Tips for Survey Scripts](#) resource on the HMRF Grantee Resources site.

Example Script

Thank you for helping us by taking this survey! This survey is a chance for you to share your experiences so that we can identify services to help you and others like you.

The survey will take about 25 minutes or less {ADJUST THE TIME TO 15 MINUTES FOR THE APPLICANT CHARACTERISTICS SURVEY}. You may skip any questions in the survey that you do not feel comfortable answering, but we hope you will answer all the questions.

All information you provide will be kept confidential. {PROVIDE ANY IRB CONSENT LANGUAGE AS REQUIRED}

In addition, the Privacy Act establishes practices to help ensure confidentiality. Here is a copy of the Privacy Act. {PROVIDE THE [PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT](#) TO CLIENTS EITHER VERBALLY OR IN WRITING}

You will complete the survey on this tablet. On each page of the survey, you may choose to listen to audio of the questions read to you. Use the earbuds and tap the play button on each page to listen to the audio. {HAND THE TABLET WITH EARBUDS TO THE CLIENT} When you finish the survey, please make sure you tap the "Submit" button on the last page.

Thank you again for taking this survey! Do you have any questions before you begin?

If you have any questions during the survey, please raise your hand and we will help you.

Grantees should also consider adapting their current survey administration processes to help improve response and completion rates. Programs can provide surveys to clients in person or virtually (see the tip sheet on [Options for Administering Surveys Virtually](#) for more detailed information about options that the ACF has approved). Programs should consider whether they can address challenges by switching to another survey administration mode. For example, a grantee that offers a hybrid workshop in which the first session is held in-person and the last session takes place virtually might notice a significant difference between the entrance and exit survey response rates. To address the drop-off in exit survey responses, the grantee could offer both the first and last sessions of a workshop series in person so that survey administration always occurs when clients and facilitators are in the same location. By conducting surveys in person, grantee staff may be better able to support and encourage clients as they complete each survey, which can in turn help increase response rates.

Grantees should discuss any proposed changes to their survey administration modes or processes with their Family Assistance Program Specialist (FPS), and document those changes in their data collection plan. Grantees conducting local evaluations should include their Evaluation Technical Assistance Partner (ETAP) in those discussions because any changes to survey administration procedures could affect the grantee's local evaluation plans and findings.

Contact the nFORM 2.0 help desk with any questions at nform2helpdesk@mathematica-mpr.com. We are happy to help!

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