

## Frequently Asked Questions: Companionship – Transportation Survey Sample

### Who should receive the survey?

Clients who receive services which allow them to live independently - specifically transportation and companionship services - may receive this survey. Decide in advance the minimum amount of service clients should receive before being included in the survey (e.g., once a week for at least 16 weeks). These criteria should be a part of your work plan.

### Can I add questions to the Companionship-Transportation Survey?

Yes, you can add questions to the survey. Additional questions may collect information about the other results experienced by the client or information that will help you improve the service.

### What are the options for conducting the surveys?

The survey can be given to the client in any of the following ways:

- In person, by handing it to them to fill out;
- In person or over the telephone, by reading it to them and taking down their answers on paper or on a computer using an electronic version of the survey; or
- Sending it to them through the mail

Regardless of how you conduct the survey, surveys must be kept confidential. This means there are no names on the completed surveys and they are stored in a safe place.

### How do I collect the information from the volunteer stations? Who can help?

When considering the agency-wide performance measures, first think about the capacity of the volunteer stations where you place volunteers and your working relationship with those volunteer stations. Responsive stations are your best partners in distributing and collecting the surveys.

RSVP volunteers may be well situated to be “survey helpers” and hand the survey to clients with a sealed envelope to ensure confidentiality. A brief orientation offered by the volunteer station or RSVP staff will help RSVP volunteers introduce the survey and respond to clients’ questions.

### How do I know if I have met the H9 outcome?

There are two questions on the survey that respond to the H9 outcome (clients report having increased social ties and/or perceived social support):

Question 1) *Because I have a RSVP volunteer I feel less lonely.*

Question 2) *Because I have a RSVP volunteer I feel I have close ties to more people.*

In your work plan, you determine your target for achieving the outcome by deciding how many of the clients eligible to be surveyed will answer positively (“somewhat agree” or “strongly agree”) to at least one of the two questions. (For more information on reporting on the outcome, see *Summarizing data to report on H9 outcome*).

**What should I do with information from the other questions?**

Because I have a RSVP volunteer...	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
1. ... I feel less lonely.					
2. ... I feel I have close ties to more people.					
3. ... I can remain living in my own home.					
4. ... I am able to get to medical appointments.					
5. ... I am able to get to the grocery store					
6. ... I am able to take care of other necessary errands/appointments.					
7. Overall, I am satisfied with my RSVP volunteer.					
8. Overall, the RSVP has met my expectations.					

Results for all these questions can be reported to stakeholder groups (advisory board, volunteer stations, volunteers) and contribute to greater understanding of client changes. This information can serve as a springboard for discussion about how to improve services and better fulfill unmet needs of clients. High satisfaction with volunteers and the program can also be used to market the program to prospective volunteers or funders. Disagreement with the statements provides an opportunity to look closely at your service activity and, if needed, make modifications.

Aside from the item-by-item suggestions below, you can also look for patterns across the set of questions. In other words, are there questions that score particularly high or low compared to the others? If so, these questions represent areas for further investigation. The comments can be reviewed for information pertaining to these high/low items. Low scores for particular items may represent unmet needs that the program can address internally or via external referrals.

Question 3) *Because I have a RSVP volunteer, I can remain living in my own home.* Agreement with this statement would demonstrate that the service contributes to client independence. If a large number of clients disagree, look for clues as to why. Consider gaps in the service activity or whether clients are in need of additional services to remain independent. Perhaps clients are suffering health issues which put them at risk for continued home living. Your project might be able to offer additional services or a referral. The comments may provide clues to the client issues.

Question 4) *Because I have a RSVP volunteer, I am able to get to medical appointments.* This statement along with statement numbers 5 and 6 below, ask the clients to consider specific activities associated with transportation services. Getting to medical appointments and picking up medications are common activities for transportation services. If that is the case for your project, look closely at the responses. If you are not getting agreement, consider whether transportation services are frequent enough or long enough. Consider if service changes are necessary or if you need to clarify what clients can expect.

Question 5) *Because I have a RSVP volunteer, I am able to get to the grocery store.* Like questions 4 and 6, the client is asked about a specific transportation activity, grocery shopping.

However, if this or any of the statements reflect services your project **does not** provide, you should expect to see “not applicable”. Clients might also simply disagree with the statement.

Question 6) *Because I have a RSVP volunteer, I am able to take care of other necessary errands/appointments.* Like questions 4 and 5, the client is asked about a specific transportation activity, running errands or going to other appointment. Client disagreement may indicate a desire for more or different transportation services. Consider comments as you think about the service changes or expansions.

Question 7) *Overall, I am satisfied with my RSVP volunteer* focuses on client satisfaction with the **RSVP volunteer**. If many clients disagree with this statement, examine the volunteers’ performance and relationships with clients. Perhaps volunteers are chronically late or unable to handle multiple client demands. It may be that additional training is needed to ensure that volunteers are able to do their best work and know about other resources to offer. Check the comments for additional information.

Question 8) *Overall, the RSVP program has met my expectations* focuses on client satisfaction with the **RSVP project** as understood by the client. Disagreement with this statement may indicate a problem with the service or a misunderstanding of what the companionship-transportation service can or cannot do. Look at the comments on those surveys where there is disagreement for any clarification.

### What am I supposed to do with any comments?

Comments can be an excellent way to highlight your findings and further elaborate on what the numbers or quantitative information you receive tells you. As noted above, the comments can clarify the responses, perhaps indicating why a client might have disagreed with one of the statements and specific problems encountered. Likewise, comments may pinpoint why the client agreed with the statements, such as particular aspects of the service that were particularly important. This information can help you determine modifications to the service activity or other appropriate responses. Comments can also highlight outstanding qualities of service that you may want to quote in reports or recruitment materials.

### Does H9 replace aging in place?

For many years I have used aging in place as my most important outcome (“Because of the RSVP volunteer I can remain living in my home”). Can the outcome “increased social ties and/or perceived social support” replace it?

The “Increased social ties and/or perceived social support” can replace the aging in place outcome. The H9 outcome supports the aging in place outcome as twenty years of medical research has established a strong connection between social ties and/or perceived social support and positive mental and physical health outcomes. Put simply, researchers believe that positive social ties and feeling that support is available can help individuals be and remain physically and mentally healthy. The contact with RSVP volunteers providing companionship and transportation services can address both the physical and social connections (mental) needed for good health. The healthier people are, the more likely they are to remain living in their own homes.