

Measuring Telephone Reassurance Activities

Sample Survey for RSVP Projects

with Supporting Materials

About these Materials

This sample survey was developed for RSVP projects that provide telephone reassurance services to help homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities live independently. The survey measures Healthy Futures performance measure outcome **H9, increased social ties/perceived social support**.

We recommend that you first read through the materials and determine if the **H9 outcome** is appropriate for the service that RSVP volunteers provide. If yes, read through the survey and Frequently Asked Questions and determine if the survey is appropriate for your clients. If no, consider measuring only the output (H8) for this activity.

This packet includes:

- [Determining if the H9 Outcome is Appropriate for your Activity](#) (page 2)
- [Client Survey Sample](#) (page 5)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (page 6)
- [How to Analyze the Survey Data](#) (page 7)

Determining if the H9 Outcome is Appropriate for your Activity

If you are measuring outcome H9, you will report the number of homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities who responded to the survey indicating they have increased social ties/perceived social support. Senior Corps defines social ties/perceived social support as “relationships with other people and/or the belief that these people will offer (or have offered) effective help during times of need.”¹

The two survey questions that most directly relate to this outcome are:

- “I feel less lonely.”
- “I feel I have close ties to more people.”

Does this outcome seem appropriate given the telephone reassurance service provided by your RSVP volunteers? Consider whether the amount service clients receive is sufficient to contribute to the H9 outcome, including:

- Frequency: How frequently RSVPs call the client (e.g., daily or 3 times a week)
- Duration: How long clients receive this service (e.g., for at least 6 months)
- Intensity: How intensive the service is (e.g., calls last 2-3 minutes versus 15-30 minutes)

The main question to ask yourself is: “Is it reasonable to expect that the people who receive this service will feel less lonely or feel they have close ties to more people?” There is a [worksheet](#) on page 4 to help you decide.

If the answer is “no” or “I’m not sure”, then consider limiting measurement to output H8 only. If you measure output H8, you will report the number of clients who receive the service (H8: Number of homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities receiving food, transportation, or other services that allow them to live independently).

If the answer is “yes”, review the sample [survey](#) on page 5. You may modify the survey if necessary, but changing or removing questions 2 and 3, “I feel less lonely”, and “I have close ties to more people,” will prevent you from addressing outcome H9.

Program Examples

There are different types of telephone reassurance programs, and not all of them lead to clients feeling they have increased social ties or social support. For example, an automated service where a computer calls the client and plays a recorded message would not result in the outcome. Similarly, a very brief call from a volunteer simply to verify that the client is responding (as a “safety check”, for example) is unlikely to result in the outcome. Below are examples of telephone reassurance programs that are likely to lead to increased social ties/perceived social support, may lead to the outcome, and are unlikely to achieve the result.

¹ See performance measure instructions for Healthy Futures outcome H9 at: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/editor/RSVP%20Appendix%20B%20Performance%20Measures.508.pdf>.

Example 1: Service that is Likely to Lead to Outcome H9

The program matches volunteers with homebound seniors based on common first language and, when possible, common interests and hobbies. The volunteer makes regular calls to check on the senior's well-being and provide socialization. The calls may be several times a week, depending on the client's preference. Calls typically last 15-30 minutes, but may be longer or shorter depending on how the client is feeling that day. Volunteers are screened and undergo training before they are matched, which includes: volunteer tasks and roles, practice in active listening and communication skills, information about community resources, and relevant aging topics. Volunteers meet at least once a month with supervisors. Volunteers keep records of the frequency and duration of their calls with each client, along with any notes on client needs or concerns and actions taken (e.g., referrals to services). Clients who receive this service for at least 4 months are expected to feel they have increased social ties/perceived social support.

Example 2: Service that May to Lead to Outcome H9

The program matches volunteers with homebound seniors based on the senior's preferred days/times to call and the volunteer's availability. The volunteer makes regular calls, at least twice a week, to check on the senior's well-being. Calls typically last about 5-10 minutes but may be longer. Volunteers are screened and undergo orientation before they begin service, including a review of volunteer tasks and roles. Volunteers meet with supervisors as needed (i.e., if a client need arises) and keep a record of their hours on timesheets. Clients who receive this service for at least 8 months may feel they have increased social ties/perceived social support.

Example 3: Service that is Not Likely to Lead to Outcome H9

The program has a roster of seniors to call as a safety check-in at predetermined times. Calls are weekly but may be more frequent depending on the client's situation. Volunteers who are serving on any given day make the calls on the roster. Calls typically take only a few minutes; if the client doesn't answer, an emergency contact is notified. Volunteers are screened and undergo a brief orientation before they begin service. Volunteers do not meet regularly with supervisors but turn in a call record on each day they serve. Clients who receive this service are not expected to feel they have increased social ties/perceived social support, although they may report they feel safer in their homes.

Telephone Reassurance Activity Worksheet

Use the sample activity descriptions below to help you decide if your telephone reassurance activity is likely to increase clients' social ties or perceived social support. The higher the total points, the more likely the activity can produce the H9 outcome.

Activity Description	Likely to result in outcome (2 points)	May result in outcome (1 point)	Unlikely to result in outcome (0 points)	Points
Purpose of the calls	Calls are meant to give clients an opportunity to socialize and form friendships. The volunteer also asks about the client's well-being and notes any potential warning signs. Volunteers may be able to provide referrals.	Calls are meant as a safety check-in. The volunteer also asks about the client's well-being and notes any reported problems.	Calls are meant to be a quick check-in.	
Service consistency, intensity, and frequency*	Calls are regular and ongoing, several times per week, usually at least 15 minutes long (depending on client preference).	Calls are more than once a week but typically short (e.g., 5 minutes).	Calls are short and infrequent (e.g. once a week or less).	
RSVP volunteer-client match	There is an effort to match the volunteer to the client based on common language and interests. Volunteers are asked to commit to the match for six months.	The same volunteer calls the client but they are matched based on scheduling availability – not commonalities. Volunteers are asked to commit to the match for three months.	Volunteers are not matched to clients. Different volunteers may call the client.	
RSVP volunteer training and support	Volunteers are screened and trained before they are matched to a client. Volunteers check in regularly with supervisors to discuss any concerns.	Volunteers are screened and may receive some orientation training. Volunteers talk with a supervisor when the client reports a problem.	Volunteers are screened but receive little or no training. Volunteers typically do not talk to a supervisor unless there is an emergency.	

*For all activities, calls are scheduled in advance so the client knows when to expect them. The length of time the client receives services (duration) depends on the client's need and the project/station's ability to maintain the service.

Total Points: _____

Scores:	0-2 points = Not likely; measure output H8 3-4 points = Somewhat likely, but weak	5-6 points = Somewhat likely, and strong 7-8 points = Very likely; measure H9
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RSVP

INDEPENDENT LIVING PERFORMANCE MEASURE SURVEY Telephone Reassurance Program

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We would like to know how the RSVP Volunteer who has been calling you has affected your life.

All information will be kept confidential; please do not disclose your name. You may choose not to answer questions.

Because I have a RSVP volunteer calling me...	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
1. ... I feel like someone cares how I'm doing.					
2. ... I feel less lonely.					
3. ... I feel I have close ties to more people.					
4. I feel safer knowing someone will check on me.					
5. I look forward to the calls.					
6. Overall, I am satisfied with my RSVP volunteer.					
7. Overall, this telephone reassurance program has met my expectations.					

Please feel free to comment on your experience on the back of this sheet.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who should receive the survey?

Clients who receive services which help them to live independently—specifically, telephone reassurance calls—may receive this survey. Decide in advance the minimum amount of service clients should receive before they do a survey (e.g., three times a week for at least six months). These criteria should be described in your work plan.

Can I change the survey?

Yes, this survey is a sample that you can change. However, please do not change questions 2 and 3; these are the questions that most closely respond to the H9 outcome, increased social ties/social support.

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

You can revise the survey to improve comprehension. For example, there may be some clients who will not recognize “RSVP volunteer” but will know the volunteer’s first name, so you could add that name (e.g., “Because Rose calls me...”).

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 with a cover letter and a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Keep surveys confidential. This can mean you don’t ask for names on the completed surveys; clients have the option to return surveys in a sealed envelope; and you store surveys in a safe place.

The easiest method may be to do the survey over the telephone. However, the person who calls should not be the RSVP volunteer that normally calls because the survey asks about that volunteer.

When should I collect the surveys?

Collect the surveys after clients have received at least the minimum amount of service that you indicated in your work plan (e.g., “Clients that receive calls three times per week for at least six months will report having increased social ties and/or perceived social support”). You do not have to give out the surveys all at once, but be sure you have them completed in time to pull the data together to report your outcome results in your progress report at the end of your grant year.

How do I know if I addressed the H9 outcome?

There are two questions on the survey that respond to the H9 outcome, increased social ties and/or perceived social support. They are:

- Question 2) Because I have a RSVP volunteer calling me, I feel less lonely.
- Question 3) Because I have a RSVP volunteer calling me, 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 *How to Analyze the Survey Data* below.)

How to Analyze the Survey Data

Results that Meet the Outcome Target

You can develop a simple spreadsheet or use a tally sheet to summarize your data for the H9 outcome. Below is an example illustrating an easy way to summarize the information on paper. You will need the completed surveys, a tally sheet, a calculator and a pencil.

Steps

1. Gather all of the completed client surveys.
2. Develop a tally sheet like this one.

Number of eligible clients (i.e. 6 months or more of service): ____ Number of clients who completed a survey: ____	Number that <i>somewhat agree</i> or <i>strongly agree</i>
Q2 ... I feel less lonely.	
Q3 ...I feel I have close ties to more people.	
Both Q2 and Q3	

3. Note the number of eligible clients that were offered a survey (e.g., 80 clients received a survey). Then count up the completed surveys that were returned and note that number. In this example, 65 of the 80 clients completed surveys.

Number of eligible respondents (i.e. six months or more of service): 80 Number of respondents: 65	Number that somewhat agree or strongly agree

4. Go through the pile of completed surveys and focus on just two statements in each survey: Question 2 (...I feel less lonely) and Question 3 (...I feel I have close ties to more people). For each survey, you should put only one hash mark (or leave blank) on the tally sheet.

- If “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” is marked for **both** Q2 and Q3, put a hash mark in “both Q2 and Q3”.
- If “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” is marked for Q2 (only), put a hash mark in that row.
- If “somewhat agree” or “strongly agree” is marked for Q3 (only), put a hash mark in that row.
- Do not put anything if they check “not applicable”, “somewhat disagree”, “strongly disagree”, or leave the question blank.

Number of eligible respondents (i.e. 6 months or more of service): <u>80</u> Number of respondents: <u>65</u>	Number that somewhat agree or strongly agree
Both Q2 andQ3	+++ +++ +++ etc.
Q2 only ... I feel less lonely.	+++ etc.
Q3 only ...I feel I have close ties to more people.	+++ +++ etc.

5. Count up the totals and note the numbers.
- Agreed with both Q2 and Q3 (somewhat or strongly): 40
 - Agreed with Q2 (but not Q3)...I feel less lonely (somewhat or strongly): 10
 - Agreed with Q3 (but not Q2)...I feel I have close ties to more people (somewhat or strongly): 5
 - Total agree responses (somewhat or strongly): 55

Number of eligible respondents (i.e. six months or more of service): <u>80</u> Number of respondents: <u>65</u>	Number that somewhat agree or strongly agree
Both Q2 andQ3	40
Q2 only ... I feel less lonely.	10
Q3 only ...I feel I have close ties to more people.	5
Total (number that met the outcome)	55

6. Report on the H9 outcome in eGrants in your progress report. In this example, the project can report that 55 out of the 65 (85%) clients surveyed report having increased social ties and/or perceived social support. In the progress report, they would simply note the number, “55”, as in “55 homebound or older adults and individuals with disabilities report having increased social ties and/or perceived social support”.

7. In addition to the progress report, think about other reporting opportunities where you might share the information in more detail. For instance, “80 clients received regular telephone reassurance calls from RSVP volunteers. Of the 65 clients who completed surveys...
- Seventy-seven percent (50) agreed that because of the RSVP volunteer, they feel less lonely.²
 - Sixty-nine percent (45) agreed that because of the RSVP volunteer, they have close ties to more people.³
 - Sixty-two percent (40) agreed that because of the RSVP volunteer, they feel less lonely AND also feel that they have close ties to more people.

Information from Other Questions

Responses to the other questions can provide information to improve or alter your service activity and contribute to greater understanding of client changes. This information can be shared with community and stakeholder groups (advisory council, volunteer stations, volunteers, funders, and other partners) through reports or promotional material. Strong agreement with any of the statements by almost all of the clients is cause for celebration. Disagreement with the statements provides an opportunity to look closely at your service activity.

Because I have a RSVP volunteer calling me...	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Not applicable
1) ... I feel like someone cares how I'm doing.					
2) ... I feel less lonely.					
3) ... I feel I have close ties to more people.					
4) I feel safer knowing someone will check on me.					
5) I look forward to the calls.					
6) Overall, I am satisfied with my RSVP volunteer.					
7) Overall, this telephone reassurance program has met my expectations.					

Question 1) *Because I have a RSVP volunteer calling me, I feel like someone cares how I'm doing.*

Given that this is the basis of a telephone reassurance activity, you would hope to see almost all of the clients respond in agreement (“somewhat agree” or “strongly agree”), indicating that the client feels supported. If large numbers of clients disagree, it would be important to consider the reason. Comments provided by clients may offer insights about any problems that are occurring, including issues with the volunteer. You may also want to talk with station staff and volunteers about what they think is happening. For example, depression is not uncommon in the elderly and clients may be in need of additional services.

² This statement includes the 40 that were counted in “both Q2 and Q3” (40+10=50).

³ This statement includes the 40 that were counted in “both Q2 and Q3” (40+5=45).

Question 4) *I feel safer knowing someone will check on me.*

Many telephone reassurance programs also serve as a “safety check” for elderly people living alone. Agreement with this item is important if the goal of the service is to help clients feel safer in their homes. If clients disagree, this may be an indication that something serious is happening in their lives, (i.e., other safety issues or anxieties) and they may need assistance. Look at comments in these surveys for additional information.

Question 5) *I look forward to the calls.*

Agreement with this statement shows that the volunteers have a good rapport with the clients; this is what you would expect for an activity that provides a certain level of companionship. If clients disagree, look for clues as to why. Perhaps clients are suffering health issues which make telephone calls tiring at certain times of the day, or the calls do not meet their expectations (too short or too long). Again, the comments may provide clues to the client issues.

Question 6) *Overall, I am satisfied with my RSVP volunteer.*

This question directly asks about client satisfaction with the RSVP volunteer. If many clients disagree with these statements, 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. There may also be a misunderstanding on the clients’ part about the volunteers’ responsibilities. Check those comments.

Question 7) *Overall, this telephone reassurance program has met my expectations.*

This question focuses on client satisfaction with the service as understood by the client. Disagreement with this statement may indicate a problem with the service or a misunderstanding of what the telephone reassurance service can or cannot do. For example, clients may expect longer conversations, counseling, or referrals to other services. Review the comments on those surveys for additional information.

Using Client Comments

Comments can be an excellent way to gather additional information and find out what is on clients’ minds. Comments can shed additional light on the responses to other questions, both why a client might have disagreed with one of the statements or agreed with it. As noted above, comments can often identify the nature of the problem. 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 be able to share in reports or volunteer recruitment materials.