

Data Collection Tips

Having valid and reliable data are essential to demonstrate whether program goals and objectives are being achieved. Below are several suggestions to minimize errors in data.

- ✓ Pretest data collection instruments
- ✓ Provide a thorough training to all relevant staff on the data collection tools and procedures.
- ✓ Provide periodic follow-up training to reinforce existing procedures or when implementing changes.
- ✓ Document the training for new staff and follow-up trainings.
- ✓ Consultation among data collectors throughout the data collection phase of the project.
- ✓ Create a data dictionary and make sure all staff have a shared understanding.
- ✓ Review incoming data on a regular basis. Include an audit of data across multiple data collectors and/or sites.
- ✓ If developing data collection tools, ask staff for feedback to ensure they are user friendly.
- ✓ Document data collection procedures.
- ✓ Implement validation checks, when possible.
- ✓ Ensure that data are being collected in a consistent manner. All data collectors should use the same procedures and instructions when obtaining the information.
- ✓ Ensure data are securely stored and in compliance with any local, state, or federal guidelines (if applicable).
- ✓ Ensure data are backed up at a secondary location (local or cloud-based server). Data should be backed up on a routine schedule and accessible if needed.
- ✓ Ensure that access to data is limited to authorized individuals.