Attachment A: Screener's Guide

Combined Testing of Social Security Benefits Worksheet and Notice CP 11
Wage and Investment Notice Improvement Office
Screener's Guide

Recruit using the following quotas
1. All must be between the ages of 62 and 75
2. All must be native English speakers
3. All must be a 1040 filer and familiar with their own tax return
4. All must receive social security benefits that may be taxable
5. At least 50% of participants must have completed their own tax return last year.

Would like a mix of:
Gender
Race/Ethnicity
Family Status
Income
Education

Hello, my name is ___________________and I work for __________________. We are a marketing research company that is working with the IRS to improve IRS communications. We would like to better understand your communication needs with the IRS.

Do you have a few minutes to answer a couple of questions? Your participation is voluntary, but your help on this project would be very much appreciated. *[If respondent says yes, proceed with interview]*.

1. Would you say that you are the adult in your household who is most familiar with the preparation and filing of your federal income tax returns?

Yes, most familiar…………..1 **SKIP TO Q2**
Equally familiar…………………….2 **SKIP TO Q2**
Not most/equally familiar….3

1b. Are you sufficiently familiar with your federal income tax return to answer some questions about it?

Yes……….1
No………………..2 **Terminate**

2. Do you currently receive social security benefits?
_____Yes
_____ No **Terminate**

3. Are you between 62 and 75 years of age? **If under 62 or over 75 TERMINATE**

____

4. Which of these categories does your total annual household income fall into? **RECRUIT A MIX**

____ Under $34,999
____ $35 - 59,999
____ $60 - 99,999
____ Over $100,000

5. Please select the statement that best describes the language spoken in your household.

_____English is the only language spoken
_____English is the primary language spoken
_____A language other than English is the primary language spoken **[*terminate*]**

6. Please identify your highest completed level of education. **RECRUIT A MIX**
_____ Grade School
_____ Some High School
_____ High School Diploma/GED
_____ Trade School
_____ Some College
_____ Associate's Degree
_____ Bachelor's Degree
_____ Master's Degree
_____ Doctoral Degree
_____ Professional Degree (M.D., J.P.)

7. What is your employment status?

_____ Full time student
_____ Student, working full time
_____ Student, working part time
_____ Employed full time
_____ Employed part time
_____ Not employed, but looking for employment
_____ Not employed and not looking for employment
_____ Retired

_______________ (company name) in conjunction with the IRS, is conducting research in which taxpayers like yourself will come in and answer questions regarding IRS communications. The purpose of this study is to better understand the communication needs of taxpayers. Are you interested in participating? (give times and dates)

Thank you for agreeing to help us with this valuable research. Now, I need to ask a few questions about the most recent federal tax return you filed, for most people this would have been your 2005 taxes filed by April 16, 2007.

8. Which of the following forms did you use when you filed your tax return last year? ***(IF NONE OF THE BELOW, TERMINATE)***

_____ Short Form 1040EZ – did not itemize deductions
_____ Short Form 1040A – did not itemize deductions
_____ Long Form 1040 without other forms or schedules
_____ Long Form 1040, with other forms or schedules
_____ Long Form, don't remember if had other forms/schedules

1040 filer along with Schedule C, E, F, or K-1, or be a retired individual

9. Did your most recent tax return include any of the following? (check all that apply)

_____ Earned Income Credit (EIC)
_____ Taxable Social Security
_____ Child Tax Credit
_____ Itemized Deductions
_____ Standard Deductions
_____ Dependants

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that the IRS display an OMB control number on all public information requests. The OMB Approval Number for this study is 1545-1349. Also, if you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to the:

Internal Revenue Service
Tax Products Coordinating Committee
SE:W:CAR:MP:T:T:SP
1111 Constitution Ave. NW IR-6526, Washington, DC 20224

Attachment B: Reminder Call Script

Hello, my name is __________________ with _____________________. May I speak with _________________________________{Participant name}.

{Once you have participant on the phone}

We just wanted to remind you that we are looking forward to seeing you tomorrow at (time) at (location) to talk about IRS communications.

Attachment C: Testing Protocol

Combined Testing of Taxable Social Security and CP 11 Testing Protocol

Introduction of Moderator

Welcome, and thank you for coming in today. My name is ___________, and I am a researcher from the Internal Revenue Service and I will be leading today's session. Before we get started, I want to let you know that I will be reading from a script. We are talking with a number of people this week, and we want to be sure we say the same things in the same way to each person.

Today's session will be videotaped to ensure that we collect all pertinent information. In addition, there are representatives from the IRS observing our session from the room next door. It is very common when we conduct tests to have interested parties observe, and that is the case today.

The entire session will take no more than 90 minutes.

Introduction of Activities

During today's session you will complete two activities. First, I'm going to have you complete the front page of the Form 1040 based upon information I will provide about a fictitious taxpayer. Next, I'm going to have you read a notice that was sent to a separate fictitious taxpayer.

After each activity I'm going to ask you a series of questions about your experience completing the activity and about the content of the form and notice.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

ACTIVITY 1: Completion of Form 1040 including Social Security Benefits Worksheet

Before we begin the activity, I have a few background questions I'd like to ask.

1. Have you ever completed a Form 1040?

 NOTE: If participant answers YES, ask question #2.

2. How recently have you completed your own Form 1040?

3. Were you the individual primarily responsible for its completion?

Probe #1: Someone in the household
Probe #2: Paid preparer

NOTE: If the participant reports having completed Form 1040, ask question #4.

4. Did you complete the Form 1040 by hand, or did you use computer software?

GENERAL NOTE: Do not ask about impressions or any problems the participant encountered completing Form 1040.

Activity 1, Part 1: Form 1040 / Taxable SS Completion

For our first activity today, you will be completing the front page of Form 1040.

When the IRS tests forms, we try our best to replicate the actual tax preparation experience of taxpayers. To accomplish this, I will provide you with a scenario that contains all the relevant tax information you'll need to complete this activity.

In addition, you will be provided the Form 1040 instruction booklet, along with scratch paper and a calculator should you need them.

It is important that you understand our purpose today is not to test your ability to complete the form, but to evaluate the form itself. In other words, we are not grading your performance.

Finally, while I will remain in the room, I cannot help you complete this activity.

Do you have any questions?

Ok, let's begin.

These are all the documents and supporting tax information you will have available to complete this activity.

Hand participant each of the following items:

1. copy of testing scenario and tax documents
2. blank Form 1040
3. Form 1040 instruction booklet
4. pencils (2)

5. calculator
6. scratch paper

I would like you to follow along while I review the information in the scenario.

Review the testing scenario.

Name: Andrew Thornton
DOB: 03/12/1933
SS#: 876-00-6987
Employment: Retired
Marital Status: Single

Andrew Thornton is retired. He receives income from pensions and social security. His granddaughter, Elizabeth Monroe, moved in with him in May of 2005. Andrew provides all of her support and she qualifies as his dependent. Andrew and his granddaughter are U.S. Citizens.

Name: Elizabeth Monroe
DOB: 04/05/1993
SS#: 876-00-2001
Relationship: Granddaughter

There is no time limit for completing the form, so please take as long as you need.

As a reminder, while I will remain in the room, I cannot help you complete this activity.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Please begin.

<u>NOTE</u>: Participant may ask: "Where do I start?"

<u>RESPONSE</u>: One of our goals in today's testing is to try to replicate the actual tax preparation experience of taxpayers. So, we would like you to proceed the same way you would if you were filling out this form at home.

Participant completes the task.

Retrieve completed Form 1040, 1040 instruction booklet, scenario and supporting documents.

That completes the first activity.

NOTE: Participant may ask how they performed. Inform them that in order to keep the sessions the same for all participants, you cannot discuss their answers.

Activity 1, Part 2: Taxable SS Comprehension Questions / Structured Interview

As I mentioned at the beginning of our session, I'm going to be asking you a series of questions about your experience completing the form, along with questions about the form itself and the instructions booklet.

As with the completion of the form, there are no right or wrong answers; we are simply interested in your experience and your opinion. Also, you don't have to provide an answer. If you don't know, simply tell me that you don't know.

For this activity, I asked you to complete the front page of Form 1040.

Hand participant each of the following items:

1. blank copy of Form 1040
2. Form 1040 instruction booklet

We are very interested in how taxpayers complete specific lines and sections of Form 1040 and would like to ask you questions about your experience completing line 20a and 20b, where taxpayers report taxable social security.

Process Questions:

1. Would you please walk me though the general process you used to compute the amount of taxable social security.

2. What specific parts of the instruction booklet did you use?

    Information you need
    Table of contents
    Line by line instructions
    Social security benefits worksheet
    Etc.

    2a. Did you have to read any of these parts more than once to understand their meaning?

NOTE: If participant did not use the social security benefits worksheet, ask the following probe:

PROBE: Why did you decide not to use the social security benefits worksheet?

3. How did you use this information?

4. Do you believe you could have computed the amount of taxable social security without this information?

REPEAT PROBE (questions #3 and #4): Were there any other parts of the booklet that you used?

NOTE: If participant didn't complete the social security benefits worksheet skip questions 5 through 8.

5. What additional information or instructions could have helped you complete the social security benefits worksheet (or could have made it easier)?

5a. How would you go about finding this information?

6. How would you change the social security benefits worksheet?

7. How would you change the instructions for the social security benefits worksheet?

8. On a scale of one to five, with one being very easy and five being very difficult, how easy or difficult was it to complete the social security benefits worksheet

PROBE: What made it easy or difficult?

9. Can you think of anything that you haven't told us that would help taxpayers complete the social security benefits worksheet (alternative wording: complete line 20a and 20b)?

Let's move to the next activity.

Activity 2: CP 11 Review

Every year, the Internal Revenue Service sends out different types of notices to inform individual taxpayers about their tax return.

As one of the primary ways in which the IRS communicates with taxpayers, it's very important that these notices provide correct information in the best way possible.

The next activity that I'm going to ask you to complete involves reviewing one of these notices.

Activity 2, Part 1: CP 11 Review

The first thing I'm going to ask you to do is read a notice.

Then, I'm going to ask you some specific questions about the information contained within the notice.

And finally, after I've completed the information questions, I'm going to ask you some more general questions about the notice.

As I did for the completion of Form 1040, I will provide you with a scenario and background information regarding a fictitious taxpayer who received the notice.

Please take as much time as you need to read the notice, and you may read it as many times as you like.

When you are finished, let me know, and we'll start the questions.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

These are all the documents and supporting tax information you will need to complete this activity.

Hand participant each of the following items:

1. copy of CP 11 testing scenario with tax documents
2. copy of CP 11
3. completed Form 1040
4. completed Social Security benefits worksheet
5. pencils (2)
6. calculator
7. scratch paper

I would like you to follow along while I review the information in the scenario.

Review the testing scenario.

Name: Troy H. McCook
DOB: 03/12/1933
SS#: 876-00-6251
Employment: Retired
Marital Status: Married

Troy McCook, and his wife, Yvonne, are both retired. They receive income from pensions and social security. Their granddaughter, *Ashley Fergus, moved in with them in May of 2005. Troy and Yvonne provide all of her support, and Ashley qualifies has their dependent. Troy and his family are U.S. Citizens.*

Name: Yvonne A. McCook
SS#: 853-00-2894
DOB: 10/30/1938
Relationship: Spouse

Name: Ashley Fergus
SS#: 867-00-7521
DOB: 08/05/1993
Relationship: Granddaughter

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Please begin reading the notice.

Activity 2, Part 2: CP 11 Comprehension Questions

I'm now going to ask you a series of specific questions about the notice you just read.

Please remember that you may refer to the notice as much as you'd like to answer the questions.

1. What is your initial impression of this notice?

2. Why did the IRS send Troy this notice?

3. Can you tell me what change, if any, the IRS made to Troy's 2006 tax return?

4. Why did the IRS make this change?

5. What, if anything, should Troy do upon receiving this notice?

    PROBE: How should Troy go about determining where he made an error?

6. What should Troy do if she disagrees with the change the IRS made to his 2006 tax return?

    PROBE: How can he contact the IRS?

7. If Troy decides to call the IRS what, if anything, should he do before calling?

8. Is there a time limit for Troy to disagree with the changes?

9. If Troy owed the IRS money and he wanted to pay, what should he do?

10. Does Troy have other options for making payments?

That concludes the specific questions I have regarding this notice

Activity 2, Part 3: CP 11 Debrief Questions

I'm now going to ask you a series of more general questions about the notice.

Re-Read

Were there any sections of the notice that you had to re-read or go over more than once?

PROBE: What was your primary reason for doing this?

Skipped

Where there any sections of the notice that you either scanned or skipped over completely?

PROBE: What was your primary reason for doing this?

Tone

On a scale of one to five, with one being very friendly and five being very unfriendly,
please rate the tone of the notice.

Do you think the tone of the notice is appropriate?

PROBE: Why or why not?

Understandability

On a scale of one to five, with one being very easy and five being very difficult, how easy or difficult was it for you to understand the notice?

PROBE (if rated as difficult): Which sections of the notice did you find more difficult to understand?

PROBE (if rated as easy): Are there any sections of the notice you believe other taxpayers may find difficult to understanding?

Order of Information

What do you think about the order of information in this notice?

PROBE: Please explain your response.

Length

What did you think of the length of the notice?

PROBE: Was it too long or too short?

Improving the notice

Is there anything you feel we could improve to make the notice more understandable?

PROBE: Is there anything you particularly liked or disliked?
PROBE: If so, what and why?

Testing Summary

That concludes the activities we had scheduled for today.

Do you have any questions or comments about anything we did today, or the questions we asked?

I want to thank you for coming in today and talking with us. Your participation is very much appreciated.

We are required by law to report to you the OMB control number for this public information request. That number is 1545-1349.

Also, if you have any comments regarding the time estimates associated with this study or suggestions on making this process simpler, please write to the:

Internal Revenue Service
Tax Products Coordinating Committee
SE:W:CAR:MP:T:T:SP
1111 Constitution Ave. NW IR-6526, Washington, DC 20224