

Draft SIPP-EHC Field Test Observation Instructions

August 11, 2009

A. PREPARING FOR THE OBSERVATION

1. Review the 2-page Field Observation Guidelines (Attachment A) regarding appropriate observer behavior (e.g.: proper attire, contacting the local Field Representative, etc.).
2. Review instructions from the Field Division regarding contact information at the local site; be sure to have back-up names and phone numbers of staff if your local contact person can not be reached.
3. Bring a few steno notebooks or other materials for making notes.
4. Review the “Themes for Observation” and “Respondent Debriefing Instructions” (attached).

B. MEETING THE INTERVIEWER: explain your role to the interviewer:

“My name is _____ from the US Census Bureau. I am here to observe your work and evaluate the new SIPP-EHC interviewing procedures and questionnaire. This will help us understand the new calendar method of interviewing for SIPP so we can improve the questionnaire, procedures and training for the next test.”

C. MEETING THE RESPONDENT: Interviewer or Observer: explain the role of the observer to the respondent:

“This is ____ from the US Census Bureau. He/she is observing me today to see how well these new interviewing procedures are working so that we can make improvements to our data collection methods.”

D. DURING THE INTERVIEW: Make notes on any interviewer and respondent behaviors that seem important to the EHC interview process, paying particular attention to the “Themes for Observation.”

E. AFTER THE INTERVIEW

1. Thank both the respondent and the interviewer.
2. Conduct debriefing with respondent using the “Respondent Debriefing Instructions.”
3. Type up your notes, with case ID, as soon after the interview as possible, while the information is still fresh. Email them to [SRD?]: Please do this for each EHC interview you observe.
4. Treat all notes (hand-written and typed) as Title 13. Keep them in your possession, or keep them locked in a safe place that is out of sight, at all times.

A. THEMES FOR OBSERVATION

1. Use of EHC-specific techniques (landmarks, cross-referencing domains, etc.)

- Did the respondent have trouble remembering if or when an event occurred?
- Did the interviewer offer help, by mentioning landmarks or events from other domains in the calendar?
- How did the respondent react?
- Did the interviewer miss any opportunities to help the respondent?

2. Instrument usability and navigation

- Did the interviewer have any trouble moving from one question to the next?
- Did the interviewer seem to know how and where to enter responses?

3. Calendar aid

- Did the interviewer give this to the respondent and provide a clear explanation for its purpose and how it should be used?
- To what extent did the respondent use the calendar aid?

4. FR preparedness and confidence: Did the interviewer seem reasonably comfortable with the interviewing procedures?

5. Respondent engagement: Did the respondent seem focused on the calendar features of the interview?

6. Gaps in training: Were there any questions or problems that came up that the interviewer was not prepared to handle?

B. RESPONDENT DEBRIEFING INSTRUCTIONS: At the end of the interview engage the respondent, if you can, in a brief conversation about reporting landmark events and their use in the EHC part of the survey. (It's fine for the FR to join this conversation, too, if he/she wants to.) Basically, what we want to know is this: now that you (the respondent) have been through the interview, and maybe have a better sense of why landmarks and the calendar technique could be helpful for remembering if and when events happened, do you have suggestions for how we could have done a better job asking about them to begin with? Below is a sample guide, but you may use whatever words you like to run this discussion. Please take notes, and include a detailed summary of this conversation in your observation report.

GOAL: The goal of the interview was to find out about activities like moving to a new residence, working, going to school, receiving government assistance, owning various assets and investments, and obtaining health insurance. In particular we wanted to figure out **what month** any changes in these activities occurred.

PURPOSE OF LANDMARKS, CALENDAR: So those questions at the very beginning about memorable events from last year (we call them “landmarks”) and the whole calendar style of the interview were supposed to help you remember these kinds of events and changes.

DIFFERENT WAY?: Having said all that, could we have asked these questions about landmarks differently so that they would help jog your memory any better? Should we have called them something different? Should we have explained in a different way what we were after? Can you think of events now that maybe would have helped you remember the events we asked about in the survey? What should we have said to elicit those events at the beginning of the interview?

Attachment A: Field Observation Guidelines

June 18, 2009

UNNUMBERED MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM FOR All Regional Office Visitors

From: Brian Monaghan /s/Janet Cummings for Chief, Field Division

Subject: Guidelines for Visits to Regional Offices and Observations of Field Representative Training, Interviewing, and Listing

Requested Action: Please follow the guidelines outlined in this memorandum for visits to Regional Offices and Observations of Field Representative Training, Interviewing, and Listing.

This memorandum provides guidelines for all visitors to the Regional Offices (ROs) for training and/or field observations. Field Division (FLD) recognizes the importance of observation visits to the Regional Offices and with Field Representatives (FRs), and believes these observations are critical to help the Census Bureau meet program goals. Observation visits by Census Bureau Headquarters staff and Survey Sponsors should be focused and contribute to the overall survey objectives.

A. Requesting an Observation**Please adhere to the following guidelines when requesting an observation:**

1. All observation requests should be sent to the appropriate Survey Branch Chief and cc the respective Survey Branch email account. The request should specifically state the purpose of the observation and the operation being observed. Attachment 1 provides a list of Current Survey Branches for Approving Field Observation Visits.
2. Arranging observations takes time. **We need to allow two weeks for Regional Offices to respond to the request for observation.** Once the approval has been given, the observer submits the travel request through his or her division for approval. **The entire process takes about four weeks, so it is important to plan early.**
3. The Regional Office does its best to accommodate each observation request. Doing so often requires shifting workloads or making special arrangements with the Field Representative or Regional Office Staff. Please provide enough "lead time" for the regional office to make adequate arrangements. Making last minute arrangements or changes is strongly discouraged and may not be accommodated. Also, if you need to cancel your visit, notify the survey liaison at Headquarters.
4. Should you require suggestions for local hotels, make your request through the appropriate Headquarters Survey Branch **no less than 14 working days before the date of the visit.** Suggestions for hotels will be relayed to the visitor or his/her liaison **within 4 days of the request.** You are responsible for making your own reservation as well as guaranteeing and canceling your own transportation and hotel reservation.

5. Due to the Census Bureau's mandate to safeguard the confidentiality of the information it collects and to fulfill all requirements of Title 13, United States Code, all **observers** who are not currently U.S. Census Bureau employees must complete two obligations before starting travel for an observation visit:

- a. Complete all of the requirements for Special Sworn Status including completing Form BC-1759 and taking the Oath of Non-Disclosure administered by an authorized Census Bureau official.
- b. Complete the required Title 13 training, including receiving a certificate to document the completion of this required training.

All observers who are not currently U.S. Census Bureau employees must always carry with them both the completed Form BC-1759 and the certificate documenting the completion of the required Title 13 training. They must present them upon their arrival at the Regional Office and when being introduced to the Field Representative who they will be observing.

6. The most productive interviewing observations occur during the first part of the interviewing period. Please remember that the last half of the interviewing period is usually reserved for noninterview followup attempts; these are not well suited for observations.

7. Generally the Field Representative (FR) sets the observation schedule based on appointments made with respondents. In that way, respondents may be more receptive and the observer is more likely to see interviews. Therefore, the observation schedule is not subject to modification by observers.

8. Selection of observation sites and dates should best serve the survey's needs, not the observer's preferences.

9. The Regional Office operational and other requirements must come first and may preclude the scheduling of an observation during a particular time period. Field Division will give as much notice as possible on any changes to the schedule.

B. Regional Office Observations

Please abide by these guidelines when observing Regional Office activities such as training or Regional Office operations:

1. Identify yourself (by showing a current U.S. Census Bureau badge or presenting a copy of Special Sworn Status Form BC-1759 and the completion certificate for the required Title 13 training to an appropriate staff member upon arrival. This may be the Regional Director, Assistant Regional Director, Program Coordinator, or Program Supervisor.

2. While attending training sessions or observing Regional Office operations, you are cautioned to refrain from distracting, interrupting, or otherwise interfering with the progress of the training session or Regional Office operation.

3. Observers must plan to attend all survey specific parts of training.

C. Field Representative Observations

In the process of carrying out successful FR observations, it is expected that the following conditions will be applied:

1. The Regional Office will notify the FR that he/she will be observed and provide the FR's name and phone number to the observer. You are expected to contact the FR well in advance to determine where and when you will meet. The meeting place may be the Regional Office or a mutually convenient and recognizable public place such as a post office, courthouse, city hall, etc. At the conclusion of the observation, you may request to be dropped off at the same or another mutually convenient location. Please treat the FR with the same respect and courtesy as you expect for yourself, and refrain from asking him/her to return you to airports or other locations that are outside the normal travel pattern of the day's work.
2. It is expected that you will conform to the FR's work schedule including the hours to be worked and locations to be visited. This may entail late afternoon or evening work; FRs rarely work early mornings. The length of your field observation will depend on the FR's workload and the number of interviews conducted.
3. Proper attire is extremely important. When making arrangements with the FR, you are encouraged to inquire about the most appropriate attire. While you should dress comfortably, avoid clothing that is too casual (such as shorts, t-shirts, flip flops, sneakers, etc.) as well as too formal (such as a black suit and tie). The FR has a challenging job even under ideal conditions. It would be most unfortunate should an observer choose attire that might be offensive to that segment of the population being interviewed. If you are not an employee of the U.S. Census Bureau, please remember to carry your agency's identification badge, your Form BC-1759 and Title 13 completion certificate to present whenever necessary.
4. The FRs' residence is off limits to observers for any purpose. Do not use it as a place to observe or review the FRs' work. Should an occasion require a review of completed work or observation of telephone interviewing techniques, make arrangements that will preclude the use of the FRs' home.
5. Do not make any comments during the interview unless the respondent specifically addresses a question to you. Similarly, do not make any effort to critique the FRs' performance while in the household.
6. You must remember your responsibility for maintaining the confidentiality of the data and individual information protected by Title 13, and Personally Identifiable Information (PII) to which you may have access to during the field activities. You may not disclose the data in a form that will permit identification of an individual respondent's (including persons, corporations, partnerships, associations, and other organizations) address, or at a facility which Census Bureau data collection operations are being conducted such as a group quarters. You may use the data only for the purpose for which they are collected, specifically, the data may not be used for law enforcement (criminal or civil) or regulatory purposes.
7. Prior to your visit you will need to become familiar with the operation or training that you are observing. Be sure to review manuals and materials associated with your observation. This will assist you in understanding the operation or training material.
8. If there is a serious concern that occurs during an observation, such as a violation of Title 13, contact the Regional Office at the earliest convenience after the observation is completed.

D. After the Observation

In order for Field Division to continuously improve its services, you are requested to prepare an evaluation memorandum no later than 10 working days after the completion of the observation. If you notice an incorrect application of written procedures, operational deficiencies, or other violations, include them in your evaluation memorandum. Please give careful consideration and diplomacy to any comments which evaluate the instructor/trainer, the Regional Office and the Field Representative. Limit distribution of any memoranda containing adverse comments about the FR, Regional Office, or Trainer with the appropriate Survey Branch Chief, who will determine the appropriate distribution.

Evaluation memoranda must not contain any information protected by Title 13 such as names of respondents, addresses where interviews were conducted or names and addresses of locations such as group quarters nor any Personally Identifiable Information (PII).

Attachment 2 specifies "Requirements of Field Observation Visits."

Attachment 3 is a suggested template of an observation report.

If you have any questions about this memorandum or any of the observation guidelines contained herein, please contact the corresponding Survey Branch Chief.

Attachments

Current Survey Branches for Approving Regional Office Visits

Financial Surveys Branch fld.financial.surveys@census.gov
josephine.ruffin@census.gov

Surveys:

- Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE)
- Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)
- Teacher Followup Survey (TFS)
- Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)
- Private School Survey (PSS)
- National Survey of Fish, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (FHWAR)

Labor and Crime Surveys Branch fld.labor.and.crime.surveys.branch@census.gov
jacqueline.jovell.jones@census.gov

Surveys:

- Current Population Survey (CPS)
- National Crime and Victimization Survey (NCVS)
- Demographic Area Address Listing (DAAL)
- Survey of Inmates of Local Jails
- Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities

Housing and Health Surveys Branch fld.housing.and.health.surveys.branch@census.gov
medell.edward.ford.iii@census.gov

Surveys:

- National Health Interview Survey (HIS)
- National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS)
- National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NHAMCS)
- National Hospital Discharge Survey (HDS)
- American Housing Survey (AHS)
- Surveys of New Construction (SONC)

American Community Survey Branch fld.acs@census.gov
fern.j.bradshaw@census.gov

Surveys:

- American Community Survey (ACS) - Housing Unit
- American Community Survey (ACS) - Group Quarters
- Puerto Rico Community Survey (PRCS)

Requirements of Field Observation Visits: DOs and DON'Ts of Field Observations

DO	DON'T
<p>Upon arrival at the RO or the observation site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Identify yourself to the Census Bureau official at the location. o Wear your Census Bureau ID at all times. o If you do not have a Census Bureau ID, keep a copy of your Special Sworn Status (BC-1759) and your copy of Title 13 certificate with you at all times. Make your own arrangements for travel to and from the RO and in and around the observation site. Dress appropriately and wear comfortable shoes. You may be walking a lot. If you are to observe a FR, work through your RO contact to meet the FR at a location convenient to him or her. Be on time for all meetings, training sessions, and observation appointments. You must conform to the FR's established schedule for the day, regardless of hours worked and locations to be visited. Be safety conscious. Notify the survey liaison at Headquarters immediately if you need to cancel your visit. Read all applicable operational manuals and training manuals prior to the observation. Refer any questions to the appropriate subject matter expert at Headquarters. Thank the Field Representative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't expect Census Bureau employees to pick you up or drop you off at the airport or other locations. Don't ask the employee to change their schedule to suit you. Don't dress casually or too formally. Find out ahead of time what is appropriate for the locations. Don't wear excessive jewelry. Don't cut short the length of the observation. Don't direct or supervise any employee. Don't ask the FR to change the area in which he or she plans to work while you are observing. Don't arrive late when meeting staff you are observing. Don't directly critique the employee's job performance. Don't make comments about the area in which the observation is conducted. Don't make comments about the employee's job or speak during an interview unless a specific question is directed to you. Don't make comments about other ROs or their operations. Don't let your personal agenda interfere with the purpose of your visit. Don't expect to receive any manuals, a laptop computer, or other materials from the ROs or FRs. Don't express your opinions on success or failure of procedures to FRs. Don't expect unlimited time from the RO's staff for interviews or tours. Don't enter the FR's residence.

Guidelines for Observation Reports

Use this template as a guide for drafting observation reports. Adhering to these guidelines ensures that FLD receives a comprehensive account of the field visit. Send completed reports to the appropriate Field Division Current Surveys Branch Chief no later than 10 working days after the completion of the observation. Evaluation memoranda must not contain any information protected by Title 13 such as names of respondents, addresses where interviews were conducted or names and addresses of locations such as group quarters nor any Personally

Date of report

MEMORANDUM FOR Brian Monaghan
Chief, Field Division

Attention: (Current Surveys Branch) Chief

From: Person who signs off on your memo (perhaps an ADC or Branch Chief)
Title of the above, Division name

Prepared by: Your name
Your title, Your Division

Subject: Observation of Regional Office and/or Field Operations at
(RO visited) on (date(s) of observation).

Include the following in the text of your report:

Background

Explain which operation(s) or training(s) you observed, being as specific as possible. Include when and where the observation took place, and why you were observing. Also include the number and type of staff observed (e.g. FRs, SFRs, clerical staff, supervisors, etc.). Do not include names of survey households and addresses of housing units observed.

Assessment of Operations Observed

Provide an assessment of the operation you observed. You may include an assessment of the staff's knowledge of the operational plans, objectives, and procedures. *(Prior to your visit you will need to become familiar with the operation or training that you are observing. Review manuals and materials associated with your observation. This will assist you in understanding the operation or training material.)*

Problems Discovered

Describe any process, procedural or field problem discovered during your observation. *(Remember not to comment to local staff on process or procedural problems during your observation.)*

Recommendation(s)

As appropriate, make technical or procedural recommendations for changes or solutions to problems discovered during your observation.

Identifiable Information (PII).