

**Attachment 2: HIS-100C, January 2011, Manual for NHIS Field Representatives.
Explaining the Survey, excerpted pages A10-A14**

**EXPLAINING THE
SURVEY**

How to Introduce the Survey

All of the steps listed below must be followed for ALL CASES, even screeners.

- a. Show your official Census Bureau I.D. and introduce yourself. Give the following introduction (or a similar introduction):

“I am _____ from the U.S. Census Bureau. Here is my identification card. We are conducting the National Health Interview Survey for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).”

- b. Hand the respondent a copy of the Advance Letter, HIS-600, saying (something like):

“You may remember receiving this letter a few days ago. Please take some time to read this important information.”

Allow time for him or her to read the letter. If necessary, or if the respondent requests, read the letter to him or her.

If you are conducting a telephone follow-up with a new respondent, you must read the letter.

- c. Then ask:

“Do you have any questions about the National Health Interview Survey?”

- d. After answering any questions, ask:

“Are you willing to participate in the survey?”

- e. Respondents may change during the interview. For each new respondent, use the following introduction:

“I am _____ from the U.S. Census Bureau. Here is my identification card. We are conducting the National Health Interview Survey for the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention (CDC). I have some information from (previous respondent). Now, I would like to ask you some questions.

Repeat the steps b-d above.

- f. If the respondent is **not willing** to participate in the survey, use your judgment as to whether you should attempt to convert the reluctant respondent. If you feel this is a “soft” refusal, try to convince the respondent of the merits of the survey. You may also mention that some interviews take about five minutes but, most interviews will take about an hour to do all parts, depending on the size and health of your family. If he/she still refuses, or you feel it was a “hard” refusal from the beginning, thank him or her and end the interview.

Authorization

The National Health Interview Survey is authorized by Title 42, United States Code, Section 242k.

Confidentiality

All information that would permit identification of the individual is held strictly confidential, seen only by persons engaged in the National Health Interview Survey (including related studies carried out by the Public Health Service) and not disclosed or released to others for any other purpose without the written consent of the individual.

You must avoid mentioning or providing anyone with materials that would link a specific household or person with a specific survey. When discussing your job, be careful never to reveal any information you get during an interview to an unauthorized person.

Unauthorized disclosure of individual information collected in the National Health Surveys is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000, or imprisonment up to one year, or both (18 USC 1905). Deliberate falsification, by an employee, of any information in this survey is punishable by a fine up to \$10,000, or imprisonment up to five years, or both (USC 10001). (See Appendix A2 for a thorough discussion of confidentiality.)

Eligible Household Respondents

Any responsible household member equal to or greater than the age of majority for a given state is eligible to act as a respondent. In most states this age is 18 years old, but in Alabama and Nebraska this age is 19 and in Mississippi it is 21.

Exceptions to this rule are also covered in Part B, Concepts. One such exception would be for a person who is unable to answer questions for him/herself due to illness, such as a stroke. If no other relative is living in the household, a non-household member, such as a caregiver, can respond.

Maintaining Rapport with Respondents

You begin to build a harmonious relationship with the respondent when he/she first answers the door. Maintaining this rapport throughout the interview will ensure that you collect full and valid information. Through your sincere understanding and interest in the respondent, you provide a friendly atmosphere in which the respondent can talk honestly and fully. If rapport is broken because the respondent finds a particular question “too personal,” take time to reassure him/her about the confidential nature of the survey.

Answering Respondent Questions

A small percentage of respondents will want additional information before agreeing to participate in the survey. Some respondents may be reluctant to provide information about themselves or family members or may refuse to be interviewed. It is your responsibility to sell the survey. You will be provided with a supply of informational brochures to help you accomplish this.

To convert a reluctant respondent, try to identify his or her specific objection(s) to participating in the survey and tailor your answer accordingly. A thorough understanding of the survey is the key to a good explanation. The following are examples of questions you may receive and suggested responses:

- **General Explanation of the Survey**

You may need to give some respondents a general explanation of the survey. An example of a general explanation is shown below.

“Most families have or will be affected in the future by health problems. It is extremely important to know about the health of the Nation’s people. Unless there is adequate information about the current health situation, government and medical care personnel may fail in their efforts to maintain a health care system that is equipped to handle the present and future medical needs of the people.

However, to measure the health of the Nation, we need to interview healthy persons as well as those with health problems. If we know in advance the direction in Nation’s health is moving, it is easier to initiate programs to meet current and future health care needs. The statistical information developed from this survey is urgently needed in order to plan intelligently for the health needs of the population.”

- **How Long Will the Interview Take?**

The entire NHIS will take about an hour. This will vary depending on the number of health problems and/or injuries the family has had, as well as the number of family members.

- **I Don’t Have the Time**

If the respondent states that he/she has no time right now for an interview, find out when you may come back. However, always assume (without asking) that the respondent has time unless you are told otherwise.

- **I Don’t Want to Tell You About Myself and My Family**

Ask the respondent to allow you to begin the interview on a “trial basis,” explaining that he/she does not have to answer any question(s) that he/she feels is too personal. In most cases, you will find that the respondents provide most, if not all, of the needed information. Also mention that the information about the household is confidential by law and that personally identifiable information will be seen only by persons working on the survey.

- **Why Are You Interviewing This Household?**

Explain that it would be too costly and time-consuming to interview everyone in the United States and therefore a sample of addresses was selected. The respondent lives at one of the representative addresses picked.

The selection was not based on who lives at the address, nor whether they have problems with their health. Each person represents approximately 2,500 other persons. Taken as a group, the people living at these sample addresses will represent the total population of the United States in the health statistics produced and published by the U.S. Public Health Service.

- **Why Don't You Go Next Door?**

The National Health Interview Survey is based on a scientifically selected sample of addresses in the United States. Since this is a sample survey, we cannot substitute one address for another without adversely affecting the information collected. Also, all addresses have a chance of being in the sample.

- **I Consider This a Waste of Taxpayers' Money**

The information obtained from this survey helps ensure a more efficient allocation of funds for health care programs. Without this information, health care dollars would be wasted.

The Voluntary Nature of the Survey

The fact that participation in the NHIS is voluntary does not diminish your responsibility to convert reluctant respondents. When a person says the survey is voluntary and that he/she would prefer not to participate, tell him/her how important he/she is to the survey and how important the survey is to the Nation. Tell him/her about the confidential nature of the survey and ask him/her to let you begin the interview on a "trial basis." Inform them that they can refuse any question they feel is too personal.