

NLSY97 R15 Transcript Fee Request

There are 1285 NLSY97 respondents who have reported at least one term of post-secondary schooling through Round 15 but have not provided a signed release. BLS proposes to mail these respondents a letter with a pre-paid incentive asking that they return the signed waiver by a stamped enclosed envelope. Of these 1285, almost 75% have completed an interview within the last three rounds (Rounds 13, 14 or 15). A large majority of these were phone completes in these recent rounds, for whom returning a signed waiver by mail would have required extra motivation, but who may not be fundamentally opposed to providing the release. The 1285 represent about 25 percent of all known NLSY97 sample members who have attended post-secondary institutions to date.

As described in the table below, BLS had submitted for (and received) OMB clearance for requesting waivers during the R14 and R15 fielding efforts, and for a mailing between R14 and R15. A mailing was sent at that time, but had a very low return rate. Since this will be the final attempt to request waivers, BLS proposes to enclose a \$10 pre-paid incentive with all waiver requests. The motivation for this incentive amount recognizes the value of their waivers, and the additional effort required for respondents to take the initiative to sign and return a document by mail. Mail return requires significantly more motivation from respondents than does signing a document that the field interviewer hands you and takes from you when signed. To understand the value of these waivers, please note that we are currently projecting that we will be successful in obtaining 80% of transcripts that we are able to request. Therefore, we are currently projecting that we will have transcripts for (80% of 75% =) 60% of all NLSY97 respondents with post-secondary enrollment. If we could get waivers from 50% of those who completed an interview in Rounds 13-15 but have not yet provided a waiver, that would allow us to move from 60 percent of eligible respondents with transcript data to 67%. We believe this would be a material improvement in the representativeness of the transcript data files.

BLS did not include an incentive in the R14 mailing because of the timing of the mailing approximately when we were disbursing incentives for completion of telephone interviews in that round. We feared that proximity of timing with payment of telephone incentive payments for the R14 main interview would lead respondents to conflate the release incentive with the R14 interview incentive; that conflation could then make difficult our completion of the R15 interview with that respondent. The R15 mailing will be our last opportunity to secure a signed release from these respondents both because each additional request has decreasing marginal returns, and because the timing of the transcript study funding precludes processing of transcripts beyond the fall of 2012. Since the NLSY97 is not scheduled for main study fielding until fall 2013, a late summer mailing to respondents would be ideally separated from our next re-contact efforts.

Summary of NLSY97 OMB-Approved and Proposed Activities for College Transcript Releases (revised 7/31/12)				
	Approved by OMB	Incentive approved	Implemented	Proposed
Round 14 – in person	6311 respondents * 1.5 min/each	\$0	6146 Rs*1.5 min/each (including mail returns)	
Round 14 – mail follow-up		\$10	\$0 paid (fewer than 20 received of 367 mailed)	
Round 15 – in person	2500 respondents * 1.5 min/each	\$0	438 *1.5 min/each	
Round 15 – mail follow-up	Not requested	Not requested		1,300 * \$10