

More Detailed Survey Administration Recommendations

While the administration of surveys is sure to be different this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these recommendations below should still hold true whether you are administering surveys in person, over the phone, or through video chat. If you are encountering obstacles or have questions about this process that are related to the pandemic, don't hesitate to reach out to chad@mentorvt.org for assistance.

Responsibilities of interviewer

1. Set the tone
 - Be friendly and warm (but not overly sweet or intrusive).
 - Be confident in what you are doing (know your survey, know your role) so you can pay attention to how the conversation is going. It's fine to be nervous, but watch out for body language or nonverbal cues that give the impression you are uncomfortable, uninterested, or disapproving.
2. Be transparent
 - Always start by explaining who you are, why you are here, and what is going to happen.
 - Don't skip details or speed through the introductory comments – each mentee is hearing what you have to say for the *first* time (even if you feel like it's the 100th time you've said it).
3. Be clear
 - Avoid too much detail – don't “over-talk” (easy mistake when nervous or uncomfortable).
 - Go slow – read questions slowly, move on to next question slowly.
4. Be competent
 - Know the survey inside and out. Mistakes are fine – “woops, I missed something,” or “sorry, let me read that again” – but sloppy surveying is ineffective.
 - When filling out your actual ratings, make sure that you are filling out the right row for each sentence, and **not** marking an answer in the row above or below by mistake. You may want to run your finger along each row to make sure that everything lines up.
5. Affirm without leading
 - Encourage *talking* without encouraging *specific sorts* of responses. You may like or dislike certain things you hear, but you should not give positive feedback (nodding, smiling, laughing) for only those answers you like or agree with.
 - Repeat/Echo. If a mentee says, “I feel scared when the big kids yell at each other on the playground,” you can say (as you write down what the mentee said), “It's scary when the big kids yell on the playground.”



- Acknowledge. React, but don't overreact.
6. Wrap up the survey
- Offer genuine thanks – say it and show it.
 - Repeat why this survey is important, repeat other relevant details.
 - Ask “Is there anything else?” One great way to end a survey is to say: “I’ve asked you a lot of questions, but I know everyone is different and maybe I didn’t ask about something that is important to you. Is there anything else you want to tell me about what it’s like for you in ***(Name of Program)***?” (This can be shortened for younger mentees.)
7. Finish the job
- Once the mentee leaves, you still have important things to do: add notes, fix hard to read sections, double check names/codes, etc...

Helpful phrases

- *“Hold on – It takes me a minute to write this down.”*
- *“Let me check to see if I missed anything.”*
- *“You said _____ [repeat/read your notes]. Did I get that right?”*
- *“Can you tell me more about that?”*
- *“What is it about that...?” (rather than “Why?”)*
- *“Let’s finish up these questions and then we can talk more about [side track topic] if you want..”*
- *“I can understand that..” (use carefully – not just for “socially acceptable” responses)*

Challenges you may face

- Mentees not wanting to participate and/or not wanting to answer honestly
- Distractions – noise, friends, activity nearby
- Mentees trying to please you (guessing at “right” answers)
- Mentees trying to impress you
- Mentees being afraid of getting in trouble for certain answers, or giving a “wrong answer”
- Interviewer feeling defensive, frustrated, annoyed
- Getting off topic

Before you start to survey

Know your survey backwards and forwards.

- Know the purpose of each question.
- Be able to do the survey without your eyes glued to the page.

Practice

- Practice reading the questions aloud. Highlight certain sections, add notes to yourself.
- Ask a friend to role play – practice asking questions and writing down answers (and get feedback).



- Survey someone who is similar to your target audience (e.g., similar age) – young family member/relative, friend, neighborhood kid (get permission from parents).

Extreme importance of confidentiality

- Don't talk about mentees/survey responses in front of other mentees.
- Your program should decide how you will handle confidentiality specifically around the surveys.

Know what to do when something comes up.

If a mentee tells you about an event or circumstance that is a danger to themselves or others, you should follow your program's youth safety reporting procedure.