

# GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

## TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR THE NATIONAL DISASTER MEDICAL SYSTEM (NDMS) HOSPITALS

While the scope of the survey can be comprehensive, carrying out a successful interview can be accomplished with a little time and preparation. The following guidelines will assist the interviewer (you) in completing the survey and avoiding obstacles.

1. **PREPARATION, PREPARATION, PREPARATION**
2. Self-Introduction
3. Carrying Out the Survey
4. Closing the Interview
5. After the Interview

### I. IN-PERSON INTERVIEW

The rates of interviewees completing the survey tend to be highest when the interview is conducted face-to-face. The completion rates in federally sponsored surveys conducted using a personal interview approach have ranged from 85 to over 95 percent, while telephone interviews have response rates of 70 to 85 percent. These rates suggest that in-person interviews are more advantageous in getting the survey completely filled out. The following directions will help to provide interview results that are as complete and reliable as possible.

#### 1. PREPARATION, PREPARATION, PREPARATION

Preparation is the key ingredient in carrying out the interview successfully. Familiarize yourself with the survey. You may want to practice reading the questions out loud to improve the flow and speed of the survey. Identify the sections that are specifically designed for each audience (Point-of-Contact/Emergency Planner, Administrator, and Clinical Service Director) to make sure the correct sections are used. A note: Be careful asking "why" questions. These questions may cause respondents to feel defensive, e.g., that they have to justify their response, which may inhibit their responses to this and future questions. Dress code should be appropriate to your official capacity. Be prompt for interviews, and appreciative of interviewees' availability. We are asking key people to complete this survey, and their time must be a priority.

#### 2. SELF-INTRODUCTION

***Create a script to introduce yourself.*** Include your name and who you represent, e.g., the local Federal Coordinating Center (FCC).

Also, before you get started:

***Choose a setting with little distraction.*** If possible, ask the interviewee for a location that is conducive to concentration, such as a conference room in the hospital. Avoid locations with loud noises or people moving about.

***Explain the purpose of the interview.*** State clearly that the purpose of the survey is to assess the training needs of the hospital in preparing to treat mass casualties, including those resulting from Weapons of Mass Destruction (See page 1 of the survey, "Instructions for Conducting the Survey").

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***Address terms of confidentiality.*** Note the terms of confidentiality (See page 1 of the survey, “Instructions for Conducting the Survey”). Explain that the hospital and interviewee’s name will not be recorded.

***Explain the format of the interview.*** Explain the type of interview you are conducting and its nature, e.g., multiple choice (Refer to page 1 of the survey, “Instructions for Conducting the Survey/Preliminary set-up of the questionnaire following introduction”). If participants may ask questions, let them know if they should ask questions as they occur or wait until the end of the interview.

***Indicate how long the interview usually takes.*** Remind the interviewee that the survey will take less than an hour.

***Ask the interviewee if he/she has any questions*** before you both get started with the interview.

## 3. CARRYING OUT THE SURVEY

***Determine which sections/questions of the survey are appropriate for the interviewee.*** The survey is designed for three different groups of interviewees. Apply the correct sections for the appropriate interviewee to avoid confusion.

***Read Questions and response choices clearly.*** Maintain a moderate pace of reading – not rushed or too deliberate. Tell the participant to ask you to repeat the question and answer choices whenever needed.

***Show response choices to interviewees.*** Some questions contain numerous choices for interviewees to choose from. Feel free to let participants look at the choices and indicate their responses accordingly.

***Uncertainty of meaning.*** Should the interviewee ask for further information about terms or questions, and you are uncertain of the answer, ask them to respond to the best of their ability without adding too much of your own interpretation. State “I Don’t Know” if necessary.

***Ask one question at a time.*** This will minimize recording error and prevent confusion.

***Attempt to remain as neutral as possible.*** Don't show strong emotional reactions to the interviewee’s responses. Neutrality will encourage more accurate responses to your questions.

***Encourage responses*** with occasional nods of the head, "uh huh", etc. or “thank you”.

***Be careful about the timing of note taking.*** If you jump to take a note, it may appear as if you're surprised or very pleased about an answer, and this reaction may influence answers to future questions.

***Provide transition between major topics,*** e.g., "We've been talking about (some topic) and now I'd like to move on to (another topic)".

***Manage the interview time and progress.*** Politely bring respondents back to the topic if they stray, take too long to answer a question, or perhaps ask too many questions unrelated to the interview.

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## 4. CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

*Show gratitude.* Thank interviewees for taking the time from their busy schedule to provide you with information that is important to our national safety.

*Tell interviewees how to get in touch with you later if needed.* Provide interviewees with information on how to best contact you should they have further questions.

## 5. AFTER THE INTERVIEW

*Ascertain that correct sections were asked.* Check to ensure position of the interviewee matches the section used (Point-of-Contact/Emergency Planner, Administrator, and Clinical Service Director). Comment on any irregularities.

*Write down any comments made during the interview.* Did the interview end abruptly? Were there any areas that may require clarification?

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## II. PHONE INTERVIEW

Phone interviews certainly have advantages over in-person interviews. This method is less time-consuming and more cost-effective. Some interviewees and interviewers may prefer phone interviews to In-person interviews because they are easier and simpler to conduct. However, response rates tend to be lower than with In-person interviews. The interviewee will be more likely to end the survey earlier than planned, leaving some questions unanswered. For the purpose of assessing the training needs of NDMS participating hospitals, it is essential to have the survey filled out as completely as possible. Therefore, phone interviews should be used with caution and as a limited alternative to in-person interviews.

### 1. PREPARATION, PREPARATION, PREPARATION

Preparation is *STILL* the key ingredient in carrying out the interview successfully. Prepare yourself just as you did with the in-person interview. Be just as prompt for the interviews, and appreciative of interviewees' availability.

### 2. SELF-INTRODUCTION

*Create a script to introduce yourself.* Include your name and who you represent, e.g., the local Federal Coordinating Center (FCC).

*Suggest a setting with little distraction.* If possible, suggest that interviewee situates him/herself in a location that is conducive to concentration, such as a conference room in the hospital. Avoid locations with loud noises or people moving about.

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