



Administration on Aging

2006 SURVEY OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING

METHODOLOGY MEMO

SUBMITTED TO:

**THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION ON AGING
WASHINGTON, DC 20001**

SUBMITTED BY:

**WESTAT
1650 RESEARCH BLVD.
ROCKVILLE, MD 20850**

NOVEMBER 2006

1.0 Introduction

Westat under a contract with the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA), conducted a web-based survey of the population of Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) on service system integration and coordination during a sixth-month period from October, 2005 to April, 2006. Westat had the responsibility of finalizing and piloting the survey instrument, converting it into a web survey, recruiting AAAs, following-up on non-respondents, and data analysis. This document is a summary of the survey methodology.

2.0 Survey Instrument Development and Testing

The development of the survey instrument was a collaborative process among AoA, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (NASUA), and Westat.

During the development of the survey, Westat conducted three key-informant interviews with directors of AAAs of different sizes and geography (Salt Lake City, Monmouth County, NJ, and Seattle-King County). The interviews focused on integrating funding streams (e.g., Medicaid, Medicare) the creation of single-entry point systems, and the provision of services (e.g., information and assistance, and case management). The interviews also touched on other functions that contribute to service system integration, most notably, building partnerships with other community organizations and providers. The information gleaned from the interviews informed and supported the development of the survey instrument.

AoA staff members developed a core set of draft questions within each of the following areas:

- Information about the AAA (e.g., urbanicity);
- Staffing (e.g., FTE equivalents in several categories);
- Client counts by type of program, race, ethnicity, and service;
- Information and assistance programs;
- Case management programs;
- Partner agencies;
- Single entry point system (and programs administered by area agencies);
- Challenges to service system integration;
- Information about providers (e.g., type of service, for profit versus not-for-profit);
- Disease prevention and health promotion; and
- Management information and performance management.

Westat shared a copy of the draft survey instrument with NASUA and n4a staff members for review. Representatives of the two organizations, AoA, and Westat reviewed the comments and revised the document as appropriate. Westat piloted the hard-copy survey instrument with two AAA directors and made revisions based on their comments.

Westat programmed the final survey instrument into a web-based system. The web-based survey was password protected and more than one person from an agency was able to enter the system. This allowed for persons with different functions to answer the questions in their respective areas of responsibility. The web survey was tested internally and by AAA directors who had participated in the pilot.

3.0 Data Collection

3.1 Initial Contact

Westat obtained an excel file with contact information for all AAA directors from n4a, and assigned a password and AAA identification code to each agency. Westat emailed a recruitment letter with AoA's logo, signed by Frank Burns, an AoA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Wellness and Community-Based Programs, and Sandra Markwood, CEO of n4a, to all AAA directors. The text of the letter urged them to participate in the study, provided instructions for accessing the web-based survey, the URL for the survey, and the AAA's password and identification code. The letter also contained two toll-free help-line numbers. Directors could either call AoA or Westat with questions.

The recruitment letter requested a response to the survey within two weeks of receipt of the initial email. About 50 of the initial emails bounced back to Westat because of automatic out-of-office responses or fire walls. A Westat researcher contacted each of the AAAs involved and made arrangements to resend the recruitment letter.

Two weeks after sending the recruitment letter, Westat sent a reminder letter to the AAAs that had not responded to date. The reminder letter extended the due date by another two weeks.

The toll-free hotlines were maintained throughout the data collection period. The majority of the questions were about how to access the survey and forgotten passwords.

3.1 Followup Procedures

Westat made a concerted effort to encourage non-responding AAAs to participate in the study. Two weeks after the reminder letter was sent, Westat assembled a staff of recruiters who called the directors of the non-responding AAAs. Westat developed a standard protocol for recruiters to follow during their contact calls with AAA directors. The protocol included "frequently asked questions" with answers. A detailed description of the procedures for encouraging participation in the survey is in Appendix A. Briefly, the recruiters urged the directors to participate and told them that the data would be used, in part, for justifying AoA's budget requests to Congress. If a director indicated that he/she was too busy, the recruiter asked the director to respond to critical items (about sources and amount of funding for services).

Appendix

Follow-Up Procedures

During a six-week period, five recruiters made follow-up phone calls to AAAs to encourage full participation in the survey. Recruiters were assigned specific states for contacting AAAs which had not responded to the survey. A sample telephone script was created and used as a guideline to provide uniformity in establishing rapport with the AAAs.

During the initial telephone contact, recruiters verified contact information from the existing n4a database. In several instances, we found that the contact information for the executive directors was out of date, and consequently, those AAAs may never have received the initial e-mail message. Recruiters attempted to speak to the executive director or someone in charge of AAA administration and followed the suggested telephone script to encourage each AAA's participation in the survey. Following the initial telephone contact, recruiters resent a copy of the original cover letter customized with each AAA's unique user ID and password by e-mail or fax.

The recruiters followed the procedures listed below.

1. Identify non-responding AAAs including the name of the director and phone number, and record results using the Excel spreadsheet follow-up log.
2. Call non-responding AAAs in assigned states which have not responded to the survey, and do the following:
 - Ask for the AAA Director;
 - Identify yourself and say that you are calling from Westat, the contractor for the Administration on Aging's web-based survey;
 - If no answer, leave a message on voicemail;

[This is NAME OF RECRUITER from Westat in Rockville, Maryland. We are the contractor for the Administration on Aging's web-based survey on the role that AAAs play in service system integration.

In October, we e-mailed you a letter about the survey which was signed by Frank Burns of AoA and Sandy Markwood of n4a, which contained a user ID and password unique to your AAA. We are following up with you because we have not received a response from your AAA. The original November deadline has been extended to January ____.

We would like to know if you need us to resend the memo with your user ID and password or whether you would prefer the survey in an alternate format, such as a Word document that you could fax or mail back to us.

My direct line is (240) xxx-xxxx or you may call our toll free help line at 1-888-421-4883. Thank you so much.]

3. Verify correct email address for recipient.
 - Some e-mail addresses have changed, are incorrect, or may have previously been sent to a general administrative mailbox (e.g., admin@yorkcountyyaging.org) rather than to director's e-mail address.
 - If the AAA director has changed since we obtained the contact list, you may need to verify the name of the new director.
4. Generate the customized AoA letter for each AAA that requests it.
5. Send e-mail message to appropriate recipient at the correct e-mail address and attach the customized letter from AoA. (See sample e-mail message following this section.)
6. Record in your follow-up log, the date and the outcome of the call. Update any names, phone numbers, or e-mail address in the comments section.

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Q1. What is this survey about?

A. AoA is conducting a survey of all AAAs on the role they play in coordinating and integrating services.

Q2. When did you send the original e-mail?

A. October 21, 2005

Q3. Who sent the original e-mail?

A. The original e-mail was sent with the following e-mail address:
AAASurvey@westat.com

Q4. Why should I respond?

A. It is critical for AAAs to respond, since AoA will use the results to justify its budget requests to Congress.

Q5. My internet connection is slow/or I don't like using the web. Is there a different method we could use to take the survey?

A. We can e-mail the survey as a Word document attachment. Respondents can record their responses in Word or they can print out the document and write in the answers.

- The Word version of the survey can be found at
- Respondents can fax the survey to the Project Director, Beth Rabinovich at (301) 610-5128
- Respondents can mail the survey to the Project Director, Beth Rabinovich, Westat, 1650 Research Blvd., Rockville, MD 20850

2. Can we assign different staff members to access the survey to answer different sections?

A. Yes, multiple staff members can access the survey. Each individual should log in using his/her own name and e-mail address, but use the same user ID and Password assigned to the AAA.

3. Misc. Questions: Beth Rabinovich x 5965, RW3516; Robin Ritter x 5804, RW 3663

