

Conducting the Staff Survey: Instructions for Facility Staff

A staff perception survey that determines your facility's strengths and challenges is the first step on the journey to improving your organization's effectiveness and staff retention.

It is critical that as many staff members as possible participate in the survey. The more responses you receive, the better picture you will have of your facility's work environment. **To make the survey's results valid, you must have at least 75% of your staff return completed surveys.** This can be accomplished by attention to three factors:

- Method of distribution
- Method of collecting and submitting the surveys
- Creation of a safe environment in which staff can complete the survey and feel they will not be singled out for their individual responses.

The strategies we describe below will help you address these issues.

Step 1 – Identify a day/days that the survey will be completed.

Whenever possible, the survey should be completed in one day. Giving staff a survey and having them return it over several days generates more work for the facility for follow-up and does not actually increase the rate of return. In some cases, the survey is administered an additional day to accommodate staff who only work weekends or other specific scheduling factors.

Step 2 – Identify a person to act as the facility survey coordinator.

This person will have overall responsibility for:

- Distribution and collection of the surveys at the facility level

This person should be someone who:

- Available to all shifts and all departments on the day(s) of the survey
- The staff trusts to maintain their confidentiality and return their surveys

Generally, it is NOT the administrator or DON, but that may vary depending upon the facility. If unsure, ask staff directly whom they would prefer.

Some facilities have multiple department or unit staff as points of contact to facilitate the process. If this is the case in your facility, one person should still be appointed as the overall coordinator, to assist the unit staff and serve as a liaison.

Step 3 – Plan the survey distribution and collection strategy.

Responses need to come from:

- All shifts (days, evenings, nights, weekends)
- All roles (e.g., dietary, environmental, even contract therapy if they are considered regular staff members, but not agency staff)

After examining the facility's staffing scheduling, plan a day that allows for as many staff to participate as possible. As discussed in Step 1, an additional day may be necessary to gather surveys from staff unavailable on the first date.

The best response rates start with survey distribution at 6:30 or 7:00 a.m. to obtain responses from the night shift and continue throughout the day until 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. to include the evening shift. However, each facility is unique and you will need to determine the best strategy for you. Each staff member should be given time during their shift to complete the survey and return it to the appointed facility survey coordinator. Having staff complete and return the surveys on the same shift as they are distributed improves the response rate.

Step 4 – Introduce the staff to the survey.

Whether at an all-staff meeting, a unit meeting, a department meeting, one-on-one discussions or any other appropriate setting, it is important the staff hear from the management why the survey is being conducted, when they will receive the results and what they can expect as an outcome. Share your reasons for conducting the survey, methods of distribution and collection and how confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process. This presentation lets them know you value their honest feedback and that you are committed to improving the work environment and organizational performance.

Staff member feelings towards the survey may vary from being excited to wanting to provide input to concerned about confidentiality to apprehensive about how the results will be used. Discuss their concerns, especially how their confidentiality will be maintained. Review step 5 with them, and answer any questions

Step 5– Share results with your staff and solicit their involvement in the action plan.

It is important that staff are thanked for their time in completing the survey, and that both strengths and improvement opportunities are shared with staff. Staff should also be involved as much as possible in the development and implementation of any actions the facility undertakes to address the areas of concern (e.g., participation in focus groups to identify methods to improve inter-departmental communication, participation on work teams to revise specific policies).