

**APPENDIX I:  
INTERVIEWER TRAINING MANUAL**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This document is a training manual for interviewers who will be conducting an Alaska Native Adult Tobacco Survey (AN ATS) among the Alaska Native population. The strategies in this manual will provide the interviewers with the knowledge and capabilities necessary to conduct the AN ATS interviews successfully.

### 1.1 Why Are These Surveys Needed?

Scientific studies have established that tobacco use causes multiple cancers, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, and adverse pregnancy outcomes. Thus, a direct relationship exists between the health of a population and the population's tobacco use.<sup>1</sup> To date, surveillance data on tobacco use among Alaska Natives have been limited, especially at the community level. Surveillance data suggest that Alaska Natives have high rates of tobacco use.<sup>2</sup> The high rates of tobacco use among Alaska Natives may translate into the development of tobacco-related diseases.

**Key Point:** To achieve the goal of eliminating health disparities among populations, authorities must have valid and reliable data on rates of tobacco use in a population.

To improve this situation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office on Smoking and Health funded the development of the AN ATS.

### 1.2 What Are the Components of the Alaska Native Adult Tobacco Survey?

The AN ATS was modeled on the recommended Adult Tobacco Survey used by many U.S. states. All the questions were tested to ensure that they were culturally sensitive and appropriate for Alaska Natives. The AN ATS is divided into topical sections of questions; this sectional design enhances the collection of quality data by imbuing each question set with a rhythmic momentum; this fluency eases the interview process for both the interviewer and the respondent.

**Key Point:** This manual combines accepted scientific practices with culturally appropriate strategies that provide interviewers with the best possible techniques for successful data collection for the AN ATS.

The topical sections of the AN ATS are as follows:

1. **Introduction.** This section introduces the survey and explains the confidentiality statement to the participant.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2004). *The health consequences of smoking: A report of the Surgeon General*. Washington, DC: Author.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2004). Cigarette smoking among adults: United States, 2002. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 53, 427-431.

2. **General Health.** This question elicits information about the respondent's self-reported health condition. It is a "warm-up" question that begins the interview process.
3. **Cigarette Smoking.** This section elicits information about the respondent's cigarette smoking behaviors. Information is gathered on when he or she began smoking, how many cigarettes are smoked daily and have been smoked over a lifetime, how addicted he or she is to smoking, brand of cigarettes smoked, attempts and methods to quit, and health professionals' advice on quitting smoking.
4. **Iqmik Use.** This section elicits information about the respondent's iqmik use. Information is gathered on when he or she began using iqmik, how many times he or she has used iqmik, regular use, age at which use began, how addicted he or she is to iqmik, where iqmik is obtained, attempts and methods to quit, and health professionals' advice on quitting iqmik use.
5. **Chewing (Spit) Tobacco.** This section elicits information about the respondent's chewing tobacco use. Information is gathered on when he or she began using chewing tobacco, how many times he or she has used chewing tobacco, regular use, age at which use of chewing tobacco began, how addicted he or she is to chewing tobacco, where the chewing tobacco is obtained, attempts and methods to quit, and health professionals' advice on quitting chewing tobacco.
6. **Snuff (Dip) Tobacco.** This section elicits information about the respondent's dip tobacco use. Information is gathered on when he or she began using dip tobacco, how many times he or she has used dip tobacco, regular use, age at which use of dip tobacco began, how addicted he or she is to dip tobacco, where the dip tobacco is obtained, attempts and methods to quit, and health professionals' advice on quitting dip tobacco.
7. **Secondhand Smoke Exposure.** The purpose of this section is to determine the respondent's exposure to the smoke of cigarettes, cigars, or pipes of other smokers in various places (home, workplace, and public areas) and the respondent's attitudes regarding laws against smoking in certain places.
8. **Risk Perception.** The purpose of this section is to gather information on the respondent's perception of risk from smoking and from exposure to smoke, as well as their opinions about public policies prohibiting smoking in specific indoor places.
9. **Demographics.** This section gathers information on age, sex, education, and other demographics.
10. **User-Selected Questions (Selected by Alaska Native Corporation or Shareholder Organization).** This section asks selected questions on health topics that local community health planners would like to obtain more information on for future prevention and control efforts.

## 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERVIEWERS

Your village or corporation has decided to conduct a tobacco survey to help better understand your community's tobacco use patterns. The survey includes questions about Alaska Native tobacco use and attitudes toward tobacco use. Data collected in this survey will help identify tobacco use specific to Alaska Native villages and communities. The data will also provide insights that will help improve services and programs to stop or reduce tobacco use in Alaska Native villages and communities.

Conducting a survey is a multifaceted process that requires a great deal of work by many people. Key steps in successfully implementing a survey are as follows:

1. An information need is identified that requires the systematic collection of data.
2. The method you will use to collect the data is developed.
3. A questionnaire is developed.
4. The questionnaire is tested to ensure that it is culturally appropriate.
5. Any necessary revisions are made to the questionnaire.
6. The sample members (potential respondents) are selected.
7. The potential respondents are contacted.
8. Interviews are conducted.
9. The data are reviewed and coded.
10. The data are processed.
11. The data are analyzed.
12. The implications and uses of the findings are considered.
13. The findings are reported to interested parties.

The work of the interviewer is the vital link at the center of this entire survey process; *without you, all other steps are meaningless!* Your skill in conducting interviews directly affects the quality and usefulness of the data collected from villages. This training manual will help you develop all the skills necessary for successful interviewing and data collection. The data you collect will be used to help the people of your village or corporation and will remain important for many years.

### 3. READY YOURSELF FOR THE INTERVIEW

The first task in sharpening your interviewing skills is to thoroughly learn your material.

#### 3.1 Understand How Respondents Were Selected

Selection of the persons who should answer the survey, or the *respondents*, is the first step in this survey work. By the time you become involved in the survey process, a list of respondents will have been selected.

The respondents in this survey have been randomly chosen, which means that they came from a pool of potential respondents meeting certain criteria. For example, all were adults (aged 18 or older) and all were Alaska Native members of a specific village or corporation. Every person in the pool of potential respondents had an equal chance of being chosen to participate in the survey. To ensure that the survey findings will truly represent the Alaska Native community, *only* those who were randomly chosen can participate in this survey. In other words, you can interview *only* the person who was selected for the survey. You must *not* substitute another person for the selected respondent.

**Scenario:** You may be approached by village or community members who were not randomly chosen to participate in the survey but who wish to join the survey. You should thank them for their interest, but explain that the survey methods we are using are very strict and allow us to survey only those who were chosen randomly. Explain that we hope to continue conducting these surveys in the future and that perhaps they will be chosen in the future.

#### 3.2 Understand How Response Rates Are Enhanced

The response rate (the number of people who participate in the survey) must be high for the findings to be reliable and accurate.

##### 3.2.1 Use a Culturally Appropriate Survey

In using the AN ATS, we are using a survey designed specifically for the Alaska Native community: It takes into account the Alaska Native people's culture and way of life. We hope that, when community members understand that this survey has been created with Alaska Natives' input, they will be more willing to participate. If the village or community members can relate to the survey and the interviewer, they will likely cooperate and complete the interview.

##### 3.2.2 Send Advance Letters

Your interview supervisor or coordinator may help enhance response rates by sending the potential participants a letter in advance, describing the AN ATS and explaining why it is important to participate. Sometimes two to three letters may have to be sent, but they generally help increase survey participation.



### **3.2.3 Introduce Yourself**

Important to collecting data through interviews and surveys is the establishment and maintenance of the participants' trust. Experienced survey interviewers understand the importance of an effective introduction to create rapport with respondents and to gain their cooperation.

Many people do not understand what surveys accomplish and that health-related surveys provide the data that serve not only planning purposes, but also community-education purposes. A brief explanation of what the survey is about and what ends the information will serve, given early in the introduction, tends to boost participation. Notably, though, a straightforward but somewhat cold introduction of the survey when the person first answers the door *decreases* the chances that a person will cooperate and participate. Thus, your introduction of the survey should be a friendly, respectful one, with opportunities for the person who answers the door to ask questions about the purpose of the survey. It has been found that "asking for a favor" is key. When the interviewer tells potential respondents that we are asking for a favor from them, they immediately understand the social value of the survey.

The success of a good interviewer often rests in his or her ability to quickly perceive and respond to the concerns of potential respondents. It is worthwhile for interviewers administering the AN ATS to think about effective responses to frequently asked questions.

Also important is your clarification for potential respondents that the survey does not involve selling anything to them and that it is not a marketing survey.

### **3.2.4 Utilize Alaska Native Interviewers**

We are interviewing only Alaska Natives for this survey. We have found that hiring Alaska Native interviewers, whenever possible, helps establish and maintain the respondents' trust. Alaska Native interviewers of the same ethnic background or village share a culture with the respondents and are therefore more likely to be sensitive to and better understand the importance of that culture while interacting with the respondent.

## **3.3 Understand the Importance of Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is an extremely important issue. Typically, respondents in any survey are concerned with the confidentiality of the information they provide to the interviewer. It is critical that respondents in this survey understand that the information they provide will not be shared with anyone and that their names will be kept private—that the answers they provide cannot be matched to their names.

### 3.4 Review the Interview Scripts

The AN ATS includes not only the questionnaire, but also several scripts. A very important element of survey interviews is consistency. In our case, that means that all interviewers will present the survey to the respondents in a similar way. Consequently, the first lesson is to become familiar with the following interview materials, which are appended to the *Guidance Document for Public Health Officials Adminstrating the Alaska Native Adult Tobacco Survey*:

- Household Screener (Appendix D)
- Informed Consent form (Appendix E)
- “Sorry I Missed You” card (Appendix F)
- Receipt (Appendix G)
- AN ATS questionnaire (Appendices A and B)

#### 3.4.1 Review the Household Screener

All interviewers who complete face-to-face interviews will be provided with business cards, if possible, or contact information. After your supervisor has determined whom you will be interviewing, you must present your business card or contact information to the respondent and answer questions the respondent may have before you conduct the survey.

The Household Screener (see Appendix D) introduces the interviewer to the respondent. It also advises the respondent that the survey has been approved by his or her village or corporation board. The script reinforces the importance of the respondent’s help in the study.

**Key Point:** You must provide survey participants with your business card or contact information.

The issue of confidentiality is again stressed in the Household Screener. Remember, this is a very important issue.

Finally, the script allows you to inform the respondent that if a question makes him or her feel uncomfortable, he or she is under no obligation to answer the question and is also free to stop the interview at any time.

#### 3.4.2 Review the Informed Consent Form

The Informed Consent form (see Appendix E) is a critical component of the AN ATS. Unless the respondent signs this form, the survey cannot be administered.

**Key Point:** Unless the respondent signs the Informed Consent form, the survey cannot be administered.

The Informed Consent form *informs* the respondent about the survey process and the respondent’s part in the process. It addresses purpose, procedures, confidentiality, risks and benefits to the respondent, the respondent’s rights as a volunteer, and the respondent’s agreement. The Informed Consent form also addresses the monetary token of appreciation provided the respondent. This document is so important that we will spend some extra time reviewing it and discussing its components.

**3.4.3 Review the “Sorry I Missed You” Card**

If you arrive at a participant’s home and discover that he or she is not there, you can leave a “Sorry I Missed You” card (see Appendix F) to inform the participant that you stopped by to conduct the interview. When leaving a “Sorry I Missed You” card, make sure that you leave the correct contact information so that the participant can call or reschedule the interview.

**3.4.4 Review the Receipt**

To increase participation in the survey, a \$25 “token of appreciation” is being offered to those who choose to participate. To keep track of the cash gifts, you must complete a receipt (see Appendix G).

**3.5 Check the Questionnaire**

Before conducting the interviews, you, with your supervisor, will determine how many you will be conducting for a particular week. After this number has been determined, you will receive your questionnaires from your supervisor. When you receive the questionnaires, you will notice a series of numbers near the top of the first page. The codes ensure that all interviews have a unique number that can be linked to the appropriate village. For example, the numerals in the code 2007-02-01-0001 correspond to the following identifier prompts near the top of the first page:

_ _ _ _ _ _	_ _ _	_ _ _	_ _ _ _ _ _
Year	Interview Supervisor	Interviewer	Survey Number

If you receive a questionnaire that lacks a code near the top of the first page, notify your supervisor immediately.

**4. KNOW HOW TO CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW SUCCESSFULLY**

Now that we have discussed the key materials that you will need to understand to prepare for the interview, we are going to focus our attention on conducting the interview. As stated in Section 2, the interviewer is at the center of the survey process and is the vital link in

making it a success; therefore, we are going to review some key steps that will help you be successful in conducting your interviews.

#### 4.1 Dress Appropriately for the Interview

Remember that, as the interviewer, you are representing your community, as well as the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. Neatness and cleanliness are essential. You do not want to overdress, however, because doing so may intimidate the respondents. Instead, it is best to dress much as the respondents do.

#### 4.2 Speak Positively

The approach that will serve you best is a positive attitude. You will recall from your review of material described in Section 3.4 that the scripts automatically assume that the respondents will agree to answer the questions. By adopting this positive and confident attitude, you minimize the possibility that respondents will refuse to answer the survey questions. Avoid any words or phrases that would give respondents an easy opening for refusal. Questions such as “Are you too busy?” or “Would you mind answering some questions?” belie a hesitant attitude and will increase the chance of the participant’s refusal.

**Key Point:** Use positive words to maximize participation in the survey. Consistency is key.

#### 4.3 Ensure Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the AN ATS is crucial. As an interviewer, you must ensure that the respondents understand that their responses cannot be linked to their names and will be kept confidential. This means that you, the interviewer, must

- *never* mention the names of others whom you have interviewed,
- *never* mention other interviews or answers that you received, and
- *never* allow a respondent to see another participant’s completed questionnaire.

#### 4.4 Focus the Interview

As the interviewer, you will face challenges, one of which is managing the time. From the moment you knock on the door to the time you complete the interview should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. We all know, however, that this time could extend to hours if we let it. Although you may wish to allow a short “social” time before the start of the interview, it is your job to end the socializing and to begin the serious business of the survey. Once the survey has begun, you must ensure that you ask the questions on the survey and that you receive an answer from the list of responses provided for each

question. You must steer the respondent away from storytelling and keep the respondent focused on the list of provided responses.

You may normally work as a service provider to your community. In small communities, people may know that you are a health provider, social worker, or other service provider. You may find that participants will ask you about handling other matters for them during the time that you are interviewing. Please remember that it is best to conduct that extra work at another time; while interviewing participants for the AN ATS, you should be an interviewer only. Politely explain to the participant that at the current time you are interviewing for the AN ATS, but that you will be glad to discuss other matters later.

#### 4.5 Maintain Objectivity

As the interviewer, you must remain completely objective and neutral throughout the interview process. Typically, respondents want the interviewer's "approval" when answering questions. You must make clear through your words and actions that you are not there to judge (approve or disapprove of any answers.) Be vigilant: the tone of your voice, the expression on your face, or your body language could indicate your opinions or judgments to the respondents, so be extremely cautious and do not convey in any way to the respondents your attitudes, opinions, or judgments about the topic at hand. If you are asked about your opinion, advise the respondent that your opinion is not important; only the respondent's opinion matters in this survey. Actions such as nodding your head in agreement or using sounds that indicate agreement must be avoided.

If a respondent answers a question using something other than the scripted responses, *do not* attempt to "translate" the response, and *do not* ask the respondent a question such as "Do you mean . . . ?" Instead, read the scripted responses again and allow the respondent to choose one of them.

**Key Point:** The exact questions and possible answers must be read as they appear on the survey. *Do not change the wording or the sequence of the questions.*

Remember, consistency is key. The questions and answers are worded as they are deliberately; any variation in the wording could compromise the integrity of the survey. Similarly, the sequence of the questions on the survey is deliberate; any sequencing changes could also compromise the integrity of the survey.

#### 4.6 Be Prepared to Address Challenges as They Arise

You will likely face many challenges in your work as an interviewer. Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 may help you anticipate and plan for some of these challenges in your work.

**Scenario 1:** You are in the middle of an interview when the participant decides that she does not wish to continue the interview. Remember: the participant has the right to refuse to answer specific questions and to simply refuse to participate in the survey any longer. At that point, you must end the interview, thank the participant for her time, and leave. Do not argue with the participant. Do not attempt to change the participant's mind. Make sure that you write "respondent stopped interview" on the first page of the survey underneath the code bar, and immediately inform the interviewer supervisor of the situation.

**Scenario 2:** You have begun the interview with a participant who happens to be an older person living in an intergenerational household. Right in the middle of the interview, the participant requests that you allow his son to take his place as a respondent. Using proper respect, you must explain to the participant and his son that only those participants who were randomly selected may be interviewed and that, because the father was selected, his participation would be greatly appreciated.

Undoubtedly, many more challenges will arise during your work. During our role-playing exercises, you will face several challenges, and together we will work to ensure your comfort in addressing such challenges.

#### **4.7 Confirm Respondent Name and Address for Monetary Incentive**

After the respondent has completed the interview, he or she will receive through the mail a check for \$25. It is important that you record the exact name of the respondent, as he or she would like it to appear on the check, and to confirm the mailing address for the respondent. To help keep track of these awards, it is important that you fill in the List ID located on the receipt with the code located on the first page of the survey. Once this receipt is completed, give one copy to the participant and keep the other two copies for your supervisor and yourself.

#### **4.8 Protect and Return the Completed Surveys**

Once the interview has ended, place the survey and signed consent form in the large envelope that will be provided to you. Seal the envelope, and date and sign your name across the seal. While these envelopes are in your possession, make sure that they are in a secure location. Return all the envelopes to your interviewer supervisor within the previously determined time period.

### **5. PRACTICE GAINING RESPONDENTS' COOPERATION**

Now that we have reviewed the survey components and the steps for interviewing success, we will begin the process of reading and understanding the AN ATS located in Appendix B to the *Guidance Document for Public Health Officials Administering the Alaska Native Adult Tobacco Survey*. Afterward, we will begin our practice sessions, during which you will

interview each other several times. This practice will hone your skills and techniques to ensure a successful fielding of the survey.

### **5.1 Make Quality a Priority**

Many people are counting on you to do the best job you possibly can. These people include your community, researchers, health professionals, the media, state and local health departments, and anyone whose health will benefit from the data you collect. Here are several ways you can be sure that you are making quality a priority in your work:

- understand the nature and content of the questions so that you can be comfortable with the interview process,
- interview the correct respondent,
- record responses and code dispositions properly, and
- conduct interviews as efficiently as you can.

### **5.2 Maintain a Courteous and Friendly Tone**

You will soon learn more about how to respond to unkind words. For now, here are a few tips about using your voice to encourage respondents to participate in the AN ATS:

- Practice reading all the questions. If you have questions about how to pronounce unfamiliar terms or how to emphasize particular words, ask your supervisor.
- Use a low pitch of your voice, and don't raise your voice unnecessarily.
- Speak at a moderate pace, deliberately and distinctly.
- Put the respondent at ease by reading the questions in a natural, calm, and friendly manner.
- Do not let your voice trail off at the end of a sentence.

### 5.3 Consider Respondent Cooperation Scenarios

**Scenario 1: "I'm not interested."** Sometimes as an interviewer you will hear, "I'm not interested." As the interviewer, you can use several approaches to change the respondent's mind in this situation:

- you can differentiate the AN ATS as originating from the survey organization conducting the survey, as opposed to a business;
- you can stress that you are not selling anything;
- you can point out that the respondent's involvement could have important effects on the health of the community;
- you can explain to the respondent that, for the sake of accurate statistics, every Alaska Native in the island must be given an equal chance to participate; and
- you can point out that the respondent will be compensated (in this case, paid) for his or her time and cooperation.

**Scenario 2: "How did you get my name and address?" "I'm not knowledgeable," and "What's in it for me?"**

- To questions about how you obtained the respondent's name and address, you can respond by explaining that all persons selected to participate in the AN ATS were selected at random.
- To statements that the respondent knows nothing about health issues and therefore cannot help, you can respond that answers from all types of people help make the study more accurate.
- Perhaps because some studies pay respondents for their participation, the respondent may ask if he or she will be paid for answering the survey. The answer is yes, the respondent will be compensated for his or her time in answering the survey.

### 5.4 Consider Refusal Scenarios

**Scenario 1: "Not interested," "no time."** When you knock at the respondent's door, you may hear, "I'm not interested." As the interviewer, you can use several different approaches to learn whether the respondent will change his or her mind:

- you can differentiate the AN ATS as originating from the organization sponsoring the survey, as opposed to a business;
- you can stress that you are not selling anything;
- you can point out that the respondent's involvement could have important effects on the health of the community;
- you can explain that, for the sake of accurate statistics, every household must be given an equal chance to participate; and
- you can point out that the respondent will be compensated for his or her time.



**Scenario 2: “Mail the survey to me,” or “Pick someone else.”** Some people will ask you to mail the survey to them. This is an in-person survey and cannot be self-administered. Assure the respondent that

- the information that the respondent provides will help his or her community,
- most people find the survey interesting,
- it is statistically important to include everyone who was selected to answer the survey, and
- it is *much better* to conduct the interview at this moment, if at all possible (rescheduling the interview for later is less desirable because, when a reluctant respondent begins an interview, he or she almost always finishes it, even when he or she had claimed to have insufficient time to participate).

**Scenario 3: Correct respondent not available.** You may be told by other household members that the selected respondent can be reached only at “odd hours” because of the type of job he or she has or other activities he or she may be engaged in. If so, you can (1) ask another household member for a better time and (2) leave the “Sorry I Missed You” card asking the intended respondent for a convenient time for you to return to conduct the interview. The respondent is invited to call with a better time. Under no circumstances should a different household member be allowed to take the interview.

## 6. FINALLY, CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

### 6.1 Adhere to the Questionnaire When Reading the Questions

#### 6.1.1 Use the Exact Wording Provided for Each Question

Sometimes you can “improvise your lines,” such as when you are answering common questions about the survey. However, when you are reading aloud the actual survey questions, *you must use the exact wording provided for each question*. The questionnaire has been carefully prepared, and each question has a specific purpose. Interviewers cannot change or substitute any words, because even slight changes in wording can affect the answers given. If questions aren’t read exactly as they are written, the integrity of the entire survey could come into question.

#### 6.1.2 Ask Every Survey Question Appropriate for the Respondent

In answering one question, a respondent may sometimes answer another question that appears later in the interview. If this happens, you still have to ask the partially answered question. You can show the respondent that you haven’t forgotten what was said earlier by saying something like: “I know we touched on this a few minutes ago, but I’m required to ask this next question.”

### **6.1.3 Read the Questions in the Exact Order in Which They Appear**

Just as a movie script is structured to make each scene understandable to the audience and to foreshadow important events, the AN ATS questions are ordered to achieve a desired effect. A question asked out of order can influence replies to the questions that follow.

## **6.2 Probe Respondents' Irrelevant or Unclear Statements**

*Probing* means using words and techniques to elicit more accurate information from a respondent. Probing is one of the most challenging and important aspects of interviewing. Probes are used in two situations:

- when a respondent's answer is irrelevant to the question he or she has been asked and
- when a respondent's answer is unclear.

**Scenario.** The following are two examples of responses requiring probing:

Interviewer: "In the past 12 months, has a doctor, nurse, or other health professional given you advice about your weight?"

Irrelevant answer: "My husband is on a diet."

Unclear answer: "People are always telling me I need to gain some weight."

### **6.2.1 Use Only Neutral Probing of Respondents' Statements**

The most important guideline to keep in mind when you are probing for answers is to use only neutral probes that do not suggest specific answers. Repeating the question is one of the best neutral probes and one you will probably use often. Again, be sure to read the question only as it appears on the AN ATS questionnaire. Some examples of other neutral probes are as follows:

- "What's your best guess?"
- "I just need your opinion."
- "If you had to choose, which would you pick?"

*Never "lead" a respondent to a particular answer.* This rule is difficult to follow because it would seem natural to suggest an answer in ordinary conversation.

**Scenario.** Consider the “leading” probe in the following exchange.

Interviewer: “In the past 12 months, how many times did you go to a doctor’s office or clinic to get care for yourself? Would you say . . .”

- |             |                      |
|-------------|----------------------|
| A. None?    | E. 4 times?          |
| B. Once?    | F. 5 to 9 times?     |
| C. Twice?   | G. 10 times or more? |
| D. 3 times? |                      |

Respondent: “Oh, gosh, I don’t go very often . . . in the last year, just a few times.”

Interviewer: “So, would you say twice, or three times?”

Respondent: (Thinking to herself, “That must mean that ‘a few’ means only two or three times a year. I know I’ve gone more than four times, but I said I didn’t go that often, and I don’t want to sound stupid.”) “I guess I’d say three times.”

Rather than suggesting an actual number or numbers, the interviewer in this scenario would more properly have used a *neutral* probe like the ones suggested above: “What’s your best guess?” or “Which would you pick?”

Other leading probes to avoid are “Do you mean \_\_\_\_\_?” or “Then you feel \_\_\_\_\_?” Some people tend to answer “yes” to any suggestion, either because it is easy to do so or because they think it is the “right” answer.

### **6.2.2 Master Probing Techniques to Elicit Adequate Answers**

Following are some suggestions that will help you master the art of probing.

**Do not try to explain the question or define any terms.** If a respondent does not seem to understand a question, repeat it slowly and clearly. Give the respondent time to think about the question. If different respondents repeatedly ask you to define the same term, bring this fact to the attention of your supervisor.

**Do not leave a question until you have an adequate answer, unless you realize the respondent is becoming very annoyed.** Sometimes a respondent will give a general answer instead of the specific one you need.

**Scenario.** Probing can help the respondent give you an adequate answer, as in the following example:

Interviewer: "How much do you weigh without shoes?"

Respondent: "I'm not sure."

Interviewer: "What's your best guess?"

Respondent: "Somewhere between 180 and 190 pounds."

Interviewer: "What number between 180 and 190?"

Respondent: "I guess the last time I checked it was about 187."

**Do not accept "I don't know" as an answer without probing at least once.** When a question is asked of them, people often say "I don't know" just to give themselves time to formulate their ideas. A good probe for this situation would be to say, "Well, what do you think?" or "What is your opinion?" If the question concerns facts, an approximation is better than no answer at all, so you might say, "What's your best guess?" or "Approximately . . . ?" to convey the notion that 100% accuracy is not required.

**Listen for answers that are irrelevant.** Some people talk a lot, but not about the topic at hand. Irrelevant answers can be interesting, but interviewers must ensure that the respondent answers the question that was asked.

**Scenario.** Consider the irrelevant answer and the interviewer's redirection in this example:

Interviewer: "How often do you eat green salad?"

Respondent: "A lot. I used to hate salads, but I've learned to like them."

Interviewer: "Well, since you've learned to like them, how often do you eat green salads?"

**Listen for answers that are vague.** Some respondents will find it hard to verbalize and may have difficulty expressing their ideas. You can help them say what they mean with probes such as the following:

- "Tell me what you have in mind."
- "Could you be a little more specific?"
- "Can you tell me what you mean by that?"

**Listen for answers that are ambiguous.** Certain terms may mean different things to different people. Always ask yourself whether you are sure what a respondent meant by an answer. You could ask, "What do you have in mind when you say \_\_\_\_\_?" or "How are you defining the term \_\_\_\_\_?"

**Give the respondent the time he or she needs.** During an interview, silence has great value. You may find that, if you keep quiet and let the respondent “ramble,” he or she will be able to think about the question longer and give a more accurate answer. That period of silence may also allow the respondent to expand on or clarify a previously inadequate answer.

**Scenario.** Observe in the following exchange how the interviewer gives the respondent time to recall and formulate the answer.

Interviewer: “About how long has it been since you last smoked cigarettes regularly?”

Respondent: “Well, let’s see. . . . It was my New Year’s resolution, but I started smoking again in the spring. . . . [Interviewer is silent.] Then I decided to stop again on my son’s birthday. [Silence continues while respondent is searching his memory.] I never really did start smoking on a daily basis again after that, and I haven’t smoked at all in over a month.”

Interviewer: “Let me repeat the question now that you’ve had time to think about it. About how long has it been since you last smoked cigarettes regularly?”

Respondent: “My son’s birthday is in July, so it’s been 4 months.”

**Know when to stop probing.** You should stop probing when

- you have obtained the necessary information,
- you have encouraged the respondent to clarify the meaning of his or her own words so that we know exactly what he or she had in mind,
- the respondent becomes irritated or annoyed, or
- the respondent has nothing more to say.

### 6.3 Review the Basic Interviewing Rules

The top interviewing rules are as follows:

- Be sure that you speak to the correct respondent.
- Read all questions aloud, using the exact wording provided for each question.
- Never explain, interpret, or add to a question.
- Always read all the available answers.
- Read all questions in the exact order in which they appear.
- Never hurry an interview unless the respondent is under time pressure—match your pace to the needs of the respondent.
- Keep an even pace.
- Remain objective—do not indicate surprise, pleasure, or disapproval at any respondent’s answers.

- Be prepared to probe when necessary.
- Be courteous and polite, even if the respondent is rude to you.

#### **6.4 Review the Checklist of Steps for Conducting the Interview**

Following is the checklist of main steps for conducting the AN ATS:

1. Greet respondent and provide your business card. ....
2. Understand the purpose and importance of the consent form. ....
3. Read the consent form to the respondent. ....
4. Provide a copy of the consent form to the respondent. ....
5. Sign the consent form (both interviewer and respondent). ....
6. Place the consent form in the provided manila envelope, seal, and sign across the seal.....
7. Proceed to next phase, the interview. ....
8. From the questionnaire, read the "Instructions" to be "read to respondent." .....
9. Conduct the interview. ....
10. Thank the respondent.....
11. Communicate information about the monetary gift.....
12. Place the survey in the provided manila envelope, seal, and sign across the seal....
13. Thank the respondent.....

## 7. PRACTICE INTERVIEWS

- Scenario 1: Respondent has never used any type of tobacco.
- Scenario 2: Respondent is a *current some days cigarette smoker* (no other tobacco use).
- Scenario 3: Respondent is a *current everyday cigarette smoker* (no other tobacco use).
- Scenario 4: Respondent is a *current everyday user of iqmik* (no other tobacco use).
- Scenario 5: Respondent is a *current some days user of chewing tobacco* (no other tobacco use).
- Scenario 6: Respondent is a *current everyday user of snuff tobacco* (no other tobacco use).
- Scenario 7: Respondent is a current everyday cigarette smoker and a some days user of chewing tobacco (no other tobacco use).
- Scenario 8: Respondent is a *current everyday cigarette smoker* (no other tobacco use). When you are almost finished with the interview and you are asking Q136, the respondent provides you with information about his or her cigarette smoking status that contradicts information provided in Section 2 (Cigarette Smoking section).
- Scenario 9: Halfway through the interview (respondent is an *everyday user of iqmik tobacco*, with no other tobacco use), the respondent tells you that he or she does not want to continue the interview.





**ATTACHMENT I-1:  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**



## **1. Questions About the Study, Sponsor, and Survey Contractor**

### ***“What is this study about?”***

“The purpose of this study is to better understand the habits, attitudes, and behaviors of Alaska Natives toward smoking and tobacco use. The information will be used to benefit the health and well-being of smokers and nonsmokers.”

### ***“Who is doing this study?”***

Modify answer to fit your circumstances. For example, “The study is being conducted by [name survey contractor] on behalf of [name your health organization].”

### ***Who is paying for this study?***

Modify answer to fit your circumstances. For example, “[Name your health organization] is sponsoring the study and paying for the survey.”

### ***“Who is [survey contractor]?”***

Modify answer to fit your circumstances. For example, “[Survey contractor] is a well-known, reputable company that has conducted many surveys in the past in this community.”

### ***“How long are you doing the survey?”***

“We will be conducting this survey through [month, year].”

### ***“How do I know this study is legitimate?” or “Where do I get more information?”***

Modify answer to fit your circumstances. For example, “Feel free to call our survey manager at [name your health organization]. Her number is [XXX-XXXX].”

### ***“What are you selling—life insurance, cemetery plots?”***

“We are not selling anything. [Name your health organization] just wants to learn more about factors that affect adults’ health status and their beliefs about health conditions. All information gathered through participation is kept confidential.”

### ***“How will this affect services I get from [your health organization]?”***

“Your participation in this study will not affect any services you receive from [name your health organization]. No one at [name your health organization] will even know that you are a survey participant.”

### ***“Will we lose any current or future health insurance coverage we have?”***

“No. Your name is not connected with your answers, so no one will know you participated. You cannot lose your health insurance coverage now or later because you participated.”

## **2. Questions About the Questionnaire**

### ***“What type of questions will you ask me?”***

“The study asks about your health, use of tobacco products, and exposure to secondhand smoke. The survey also includes questions about your opinions on health issues facing your community.”

### ***“Are the questions personal?”***

“Some questions may seem a little personal to some people, but most people do not find any of the questions personal. Why don’t we get started, and you can see what you think for yourself? You don’t have to answer any question that you don’t want to answer.”

### ***“What if I do not smoke or chew tobacco?” or “I don’t smoke or chew.” or “I gave up tobacco a long time ago.”***

“In order to know the percentage of people who do smoke tobacco or use iqmik, we also have to know how many people do not. Therefore, the responses of people who do not use tobacco or iqmik are just as important as those of people who do. You do not need to know anything about tobacco or iqmik to answer the questions.”

## **3. Questions About Privacy and Voluntary Participation**

### ***“Is it mandatory for me to do the survey?”***

“No. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. However, it is important that we include your views and experiences. We need to complete interviews with as many eligible households as possible to ensure the accuracy of survey results.”

### ***“Will my answers be kept private?”***

“Absolutely. No answers will be connected with any individual. Our interest is only in summary statistics that add up the answers for all the survey participants. Your name will never be connected with your answers. Everyone working on this survey is required to keep your information confidential. No one outside of the survey team will ever see your answers.”

### ***“Can anyone see my answers?”***

“[Name your health organization] is committed to assuring complete confidentiality of responses. Our interest is only in the combination of all responses across your community, not anyone’s individual answers. Your name is never associated with your answers. The information is used only for statistical purposes and cannot be used for any other purpose.”

***“How did you get my address?”***

Modify answer to fit how you selected addresses. For example, “We have randomly selected your address from all residential addresses in your community.”

**4. Questions Concerning Lack of Time or Interest**

***“How long will the interview take?”***

“The time for this interview varies, but it generally takes about [XX] minutes. Of course, each person may take a little more or less time, depending on that individual’s pace. I think you’ll be surprised at how fast the time goes by.”

***“I’m not interested.”***

“The information you provide will be used to help your community. Most people that complete the survey find it interesting. We understand that your time is valuable. Your participation in the survey can help efforts to bring needed medical care and health promotion services to your community. Because of strict scientific research methods, you cannot be replaced by anyone else for this study.”

***“I’m too busy,” “I’m not feeling very well,” “This is a bad time,” or “I’m not really dressed.”***

“I understand. We need to learn about the experiences of busy people like you. Our results would be incomplete if we only included respondents who could immediately make the time to talk with us.”

“We can make an appointment for me to visit again, at a time that would be better for you. I can come back in the morning, afternoon, or evening on the best day for you.”

“We can start now and finish when you have more time. Let’s start and see how far we can get. We may be able to finish it.”

If brochure is available, ask, “May I leave this information with you? I’ll call back when you have had a chance to look it over.”

If a cash gift is provided, state, “We are offering a thank-you gift [describe gift or dollar amount] to those who complete the interview.”

“I am sorry that I’ve stopped by at a bad time. I can visit again in a few [days or weeks] to see if you are feeling better.”

“Are mornings, afternoons, or evenings generally best for you? Would you like me to visit on a particular weekday or sometime during the weekend?”

***“My house is too messy for you to come in.”***

For screener respondent state, “That’s no problem. I have just a few questions to ask to help figure out if anyone in your household is eligible. I can ask those questions right here.”

For interviewee state, “I’m interested only in your answers to our survey questions.”

***“I don’t do surveys.”***

“We understand that your time is valuable. We are not trying to sell you anything. This is a scientific study sponsored by [name your health organization], and we are not associated with any business.”

***“Don’t like surveys—they are a waste of time and taxpayers’ money.”***

“Information participants provide will help the health providers in your community to learn more about important health issues and enable them to spend program money more wisely.”

## **5. Questions About “Why me?” and “Why my house?”**

***“How was my household selected?”***

Modify answer to fit your circumstances. For example, “A scientific random sample of households was selected throughout the [name your survey area]. Once selected, no other residence can be substituted for any reason. To begin, an interviewer comes to your house to ask several initial questions and select a respondent. One (or more) residents of your household may be asked to voluntarily participate in the survey. No other person can be substituted for those who were selected.

***“Why me?”***

“You were randomly selected to participate. Your participation is very important since you will be representing many people like yourself who cannot be interviewed.”

***“Was I selected because I smoke?”***

“No. You were randomly selected for this survey.”

***“Why wasn’t I selected?”***

“I have no control over who is selected. Our study randomly selects one adult to interview. Someone else just happened to be selected. Random selection helps to ensure that our participants reflect all (Alaska Native) adults in your community, not just people who are easiest to contact or most willing to participate.”

***“You want to speak with another adult in my household? Why can’t you interview me?”***

“Our scientific survey protocol calls for us to do the interview with a randomly selected (Alaska Native) adult. This protocol is followed so that we can be sure that our study results represent all (Alaska Native) adults in your community.”

***“Pick someone else,” or “Can my spouse do it instead?”***

“Because of the strict research methods in this study, you cannot be replaced by anyone else. Following strict research methods helps to ensure that our study results represent all (Alaska Native) adults in your community, not just people who are easiest to contact or most willing to participate.”

***“I am busy. Can you just give me a paper questionnaire and let me fill it out on my own?”***

Modify answer to fit your circumstances. For example, “I’m sorry but the research methods for this study require that I read the questions to you, in person.”

## **6. Questions About Reasons to Participate**

***“What’s in it for me?”***

Modify answer to fit your circumstances. For example, “We are offering an incentive payment to everyone who participates. You will be providing health researchers valuable information that may help improve the health of the people that live in this community.”

***“Why Should I Participate?”***

Modify answer to fit your circumstances. For example, “Individual residents of selected households, who are randomly chosen and agree to participate, are given a cash payment of [\$xx] at the end of the interview. By volunteering in this study, you are helping us gather important information needed to make accurate decisions about health services available in your community.”

## **7. Questions About Survey Findings**

***“What happens to my information?”***

Your answers, but not your name or address, are key-entered into a computer file. The answers then are combined with all other participants’ answers and are coded, totaled, and turned into statistics for analysis. As a quality-control measure, you may receive a telephone call or a letter from [name your health organization or survey contractor] to verify that the interviewer did complete the survey with you.”

***“What will you do with the study data?”***

“This data will be used to help the health professionals in your community to better understand the beliefs, behaviors, and knowledge of smokers and nonsmokers in your community. The information will be used to support efforts to anticipate the health needs in your community and develop health promotion programs.”

***“Can you send me results of the study?”***

Modify answer to fit your circumstances. For example, “Summary reports will be available from [name your health organization] upon request. Here is the name of the person to call to obtain a copy: [name person at your health organization].”