

The Arizona Border Study

*An Extension of the
Arizona National Human Exposure Assessment Survey (NHEXAS) Study
Sponsored by the Environmental Health Workgroup of the Border XXI Program*

Quality Systems and Implementation Plan for Human Exposure Assessment

The University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona 85721

Cooperative Agreement CR 824719

Standard Operating Procedure

SOP-UA-T-1.0

Title: Training Guide and Exposition of Interviewer Responsibilities and Behavior

Source: The University of Arizona

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
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Exposure & Dose Research Branch

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Title: **TRAINING GUIDE AND EXPOSITION OF INTERVIEWER RESPONSIBILITIES
AND BEHAVIOR**

Document No. UA-T-1.0

APPROVALS

☒ Full SOP ☐ Working SOP #pages₁₂

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Project QA Director:

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On Site PI:

Project QA Director:

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Training Guide and Exposition of Interviewer Responsibilities and Behavior

1.0 PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY

This SOP outlines the Field Staff's responsibilities in public contact and behavior with Study respondents. The procedure applies to all Staff who interact with the respondents of the NHEXAS ~~Arizona~~ projects conducted by the University of Arizona/Battelle/Illinois Institute of Technology consortium.

Border and
Other Health + Environment
ESG
7.14.97

2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Household (HH) = The residence occupied by study respondents and all persons who reside within the household.
- 2.2 Household Identification Number (HHID) = The unique Household Identification number (SOP#UA-F-1.0) assigned to the household in Stage 1.
- 2.3 Team Leader = Key staff member on a field team responsible for data collection, instructions, and respondent contact within the HH (AKA Interviewer).
- 2.4 Project = Study = The National Human Exposure Assessment Survey (NHEXAS) funded by EPA and conducted in Arizona by the University of Arizona/Battelle/Illinois Institute of Technology consortium.
- 2.5 Respondent = Subject = A person participating in the Study, and selected through a random process from representative homes in the State of Arizona. Each Subject is uniquely identified by a HHID and IRN.
- 2.6 Interviewer = The Team Leader or assigned Staff member who has contact with the Subject.
- 2.7 Individual Respondent Number (IRN) = This number is used on all documentation to uniquely identify an individual within their own home. When used in conjunction with the HHID, the combination forms a unique identification number for each respondent in the NHEXAS Arizona Project.

3.0 REFERENCES

- 3.1 Burrows, B et al. 1971. Year one: Specialized Center of Research (unpublished). Respiratory Sciences Center, College of Medicine, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.
- 3.2 Questionnaire Instruction. 1986. Study of Health and the Environment, Respiratory Sciences Center, College of Medicine, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ. Survey 0 (unpublished).
- 3.3 Lebowitz, M.D. 1993. Study Design (Revision of 31 Dec. 1993). EPA NHEXAS Cooperative Agreement.

4.0 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 Interviewing is communication with a goal. The goal of interviewing within the NHEXAS Arizona project is to collect accurate information regarding personal exposure to environmental pollutants from the participants in the Study. The interviewer's methods of contact with the public and interviewing techniques are both very important areas of consideration in the gathering of good data.
- 4.2 There are several considerations to be kept in mind by the Team Leader when conducting interviews:
- (a) **Questionnaire Completeness:** Every question in the questionnaire is included because of a need to obtain information to help the entire project assess human exposures to potential pollutants. All questions asked have purpose, none may be omitted by the interviewer.
 - (b) **Potential Bias of the Respondent by the Interviewer:** There should be no act, mannerism, statement, or other indication of judgment by the interviewer as to "good or bad" in terms of social acceptance of any topic in the course of the interview. It has been found that the Respondent usually reacts more to the relationship with the interviewer than to the content of the questionnaire. Therefore, it is especially important to be professional and capable of accepting what the Subject says without judgment or reflection.
 - (c) **Open Mindedness:** Although newly trained interviewers may feel that a given question may be personally offensive, not all Respondents would agree. Experience has shown that most people are willing to respond to most questions if an adequate explanation regarding the purpose of the question is given.
 - (d) **Skill Development With Experience:** Even the best questionnaire is only as good as the interviewer's skill in using it. The interviewer, by training and practice, will acquire skills to help the Subject provide reliable information. The interviewer will become skilled in setting the stage for the Subject so she/he can gather frank, complete, and relevant answers to the questions.
 - (e) **Respect for Subjects:** The information sought is respectfully requested of the household as a gift of time and information. Most respondents will recognize the occasion as an opportunity to contribute to the efforts being made to improve the community and the nation. This gift should be given and received in dignity; it must not be demanded nor obtained by coercion. Remember, a refusal to provide information is the prerogative of the Subject; it is not a personal affront, but the expression of a fundamental human right.
 - (f) **Equal Opportunity Enrollment:** The analysis and use of the data is not directed at any particular class of people nor at any particular neighborhood. Although much of the political and

social attention is on the minority community, there are potential contaminant problems in every neighborhood. It is the Study's mission to identify levels of pollutants, respondent exposures and the factors related to those exposures.

5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 The Project Co-Principal Investigator will be responsible for final review and approval of each procedure.

5.2 Interviewer / Team Leader responsibility:

- (a) In collecting information, the first responsibility is to maintain a high standard of accuracy in the collected data. As a representative of the NHEXAS Arizona Consortium, an interviewer is expected to conduct each interview in a straight-forward, business-like way and to conduct oneself in a professional manner. Some Respondents may seek advice from the interviewer regarding health and environmental matters; for example, an interviewer might be asked for views on TCE contamination of water or the relation of smoking to lung cancer. The interviewer should avoid giving advice on any topic. The interviewer should avoid conversation not directed at the desired details or the task at hand. The interviewer should refrain from any discussion of politics, religion, sex, income, or other unrelated and potentially inflammatory topics.
- (b) The interviewer should be prepared to discuss and explain the purpose and philosophy of the project and its continuing nature. Most Subjects will accept a brief explanation in the introduction; however, there will be a few who will want more information, or who may actually refuse to be interviewed for a variety of reasons. The Subject's attitudes and intentions are their own and must be honored at all times.
- (c) The interviewer must dress in a business-like manner. Be sure clothing in no way suggests personal opinions; do not wear lodge pins, political insignias, T-Shirts with advertisements, or the like. As a researcher, the interviewer must not appear to represent any special group.
- (d) Wear the Project Photo-ID card at all times, and carry a University of Arizona Identification card.
- (e) Teams of Staff sample each HH. The team will consist of at least one interviewer and at least one other Staff member as a safety precaution. The interviewer has the right to refuse an interview. Should the team arrive at a household and find a threatening situation, then excuse yourselves as quickly and courteously as possible.
- (f) The NHEXAS Arizona project will provide an official vehicle for use in conducting field work.

- (g) At the end of the household's set of visits, the Team Leader will give the household a report card (Figure 2), and a self addressed stamped envelope. This will allow the household to "grade" the Team Members that sampled in their home.

5.3 The Field Coordinator is responsible for:

- (a) ensuring this SOP is followed by all Field Team Members,
- (b) training of Team Leaders and staff. Some tasks will require on the job training in the field. The Interview Skills Training Log (Figure 1) is located on the last page of the general Team Member Training Log (see UA-T-4.0), and is reviewed by the Field Coordinator routinely,
- (c) assigning all tasks to the Team Leaders and field staff,
- (d) scheduling of two or more Team members for each HH visit,
- (e) responding appropriately to the household report card (Figure 2) upon receipt,
- (f) grading, amending, retraining and evaluating the Field Staff according to the household's responses/comments recorded on the household report card (Figure 2).

6.0 MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

6.1 Materials

NHEXAS Arizona Project Photo-Identification card
University of Arizona Identification card
Official UA Vehicle for field transportation
Portable Tape Recorder and Blank Audio Tapes

6.2 Reagents - N/A

7.0 PROCEDURE

7.1 Preparation

7.1.1 Field Site Selection Criteria

Interviews should be conducted in a comfortable area of the respondent's home which is relatively free from distraction. The Team Leader will coordinate with the respondent to select the best location to conduct each interview.

7.1.2 Samplers

Interview responses are recorded on the particular questionnaire assigned to the respondent. The questionnaire is labeled with the HHID number, the IRN, and the First Name Only of the participant. These labels are applied by the Team Leader before the interview begins. Additional copies of blank questionnaires are available in

the Field Kits to be used as needed. The team leader will obtain consent to record Qx administration for subsequent QA checks as appropriate. See UA-T-2.0.

7.2 Field Procedures

7.2.1 Standards and Blanks deployed - N/A

7.2.2 Interviewing Techniques

- (a) Conducting an interview efficiently combines a friendly attitude with a business-like manner throughout the entire procedure. The interviewer has two roles in the interview process: that of the technician who applies standard techniques and uses the same instrument (the questionnaire) for each interview, and that of the human being who fosters an open relationship with each Subject.
- (b) Establish an initial friendly relationship with the Subject to enhance cooperation and facilitate the collection of the needed information. The Subject needs to know that her/his acquaintance with the interviewer will be pleasant and satisfying, and that the survey is important and worthwhile. Use a positive approach and assume that the Subject will want to participate. Attempt to get the Subject positively involved by giving him/her the feeling that the Subject can contribute something worthwhile in this research effort.
- (c) Just as the interviewer has a right to ask for information, the Subject has a right to refuse it. The reasons for refusals will be many and varied (i.e. a bad experience with another interviewer, anti-government feelings, being "too busy"). In handling these situations, try to approach the Subject from her/his point of view. If this doesn't seem to be working, try to leave the door open for another try at a later time. Interviewers tend to take refusals personally, even though the Subject's reasons for refusing rarely involve the interviewer personally. If the HH refuses at any time, encourage the Subject to complete the short Descriptive Questionnaire by stressing the importance of minimizing bias in the Study.
- (d) Sit near the Subject when reviewing the questionnaire for incomplete or missing answers. In looking back through the questions, the Subject may remember uncertainties as to the meaning of a question. In asking the questions with which the Subject had difficulty, keep the following guidelines in mind:
 - (i) Use the questionnaire with ease. It is not a quiz or a cross-examination. Use no words or manners to imply criticism, surprise, approval, or disapproval of the questions or answers. Be friendly and informal, but at the same time professional. Be sure to listen to the Subject until she/he finishes each statement.

- (ii) Ask each question exactly as worded. There may be a temptation to change the wording to fit the Subject or to short-cut. NEVER frame a question in the negative. Such changes may introduce bias into the information collected.
 - (iii) Ask the questions in the same order as they areed in the questionnaire.
 - (iv) Ask every question which appears to be incompletely answered. Repeat and clarify questions which are misunderstood or misinterpreted.
 - (vi) Be empathetic, attentive, and understanding, but keep to the point of the questionnaire.
 - (vii) Express a neutral attitude toward subject matter and individual responses.
 - (viii) Look for signs of misunderstanding.
- (e) Probing is a technique used by the interviewer to stimulate discussion and obtain more information. It is sometimes necessary to use this technique during the course of an interview to motivate the Subject to enlarge, clarify, or explain the reasons behind what he/she says, or to focus on the specific content of the questionnaire and eliminate irrelevant and unnecessary information. In order to know when to probe, the interviewer must know the objective of each question so that inadequate responses are recognized. All probes must be expressed in a neutral manner. Some examples follow:
- (i) Brief assertion of interest ("I see." "Yes." "Hmmm." "That's interesting."),
 - (ii) Expectant pause (often accompanied by an expectant look),
 - (iii) Repeating the question (as worded),
 - (iv) Repeating the Subject's reply (as though the interviewer is recording her/his reply),
 - (v) A neutral question or comment ("How do you mean?" "I'm not sure I understand what you mean." "Anything else?"),
 - (vi) Asking for further clarification. Sometimes appearing slightly bewildered will stimulate the Subject to help you. This type of probe is very useful in dealing with an answer that appears inconsistent with previous answers.
- (f) There will be times when a Respondent cannot give an answer to every question. "I don't know" is a perfectly acceptable answer if the Subject, indeed, does not know. Note that there are several reasons why The Subject may give this answer:
- (i) Doesn't understand the question, but doesn't want to say so,
 - (ii) Needs time to think and says "I don't know" to fill the silence,
 - (iii) Trying to evade the issue (The Subject may feel uninformed, that she/he may give the wrong answer, or that the question is too personal),
 - (iv) Really has no knowledge of the subject and "doesn't know".
- (g) Giving the Subject a reasonable amount of time to answer each question and being able to explain the objective of each question will be helpful in dealing with a "don't know" situation.

- (h) Record any pertinent remarks volunteered by the Subject, even though they may fail to deal directly with the topic under discussion. Such remarks are often helpful for cross-referencing at the post field QA and analysis stages of the project.
- (i) It is sometimes advantageous to include a thumbnail sketch at the end of the questionnaire. This could include: (1) the attitude of the respondent toward you and/or the survey, (2) any unusual happening or circumstance which may have affected the interview, such as interruptions or language difficulties, and (3) any feelings you may have about the respondent or the interview, things you may sense or suspect. Even though you are collecting very objective information, this sketch may help in providing perspective that could be helpful in later studies. Record this information on the Questionnaire Feedback Form (see fig. 8.3). This form is appended to the Descriptive, Baseline, and Follow-Up Questionnaires after the field visit is complete. Additional interviewer comments may be recorded in the numerous "FOR OFFICE USE ONLY" boxes in each questionnaire. These subjective comments must be recorded after the interview is complete.

7.3 Calculations - N/A

7.4 Quality Control

7.4.1 Tolerance Limits.

All questionnaires will be 100% QC checked for completeness by the Team Leader in the field with the respondent and by the Field Coordinator upon return to the Field Office.

7.4.2 Detection Limits - N/A

7.4.3 Corrective Actions

Apparent mislabeling problems detected in the field may be corrected by them Leaders when appropriate and in compliance with SOP #UA-C-2.0. In the HH sampling site, the Team Leader supervises all work, assigns cross-checking tasks, and QC checks all completed forms. The Team Leader must QC check each form retrieved within 24 hours of collection at which time it is forwarded to the Field Coordinator for QA check. The Field Coordinator must QA check the data record within 24 hours of receipt from the Team Leader, or within 48 hours of collection by the field team.

Telephone interviews will be used to QA check 10% of all Descriptive Questionnaires. Most questionnaires are repeated among stages providing additional opportunities for QA checks for non-changing information. A second field team member will QC check each administered questionnaire by reviewing responses recorded on audio tape against those recorded in the particular qx.

8.0 RECORDS

8.1 Interview Skills Training Log (Fig.1)

- (a) The Project Field Coordinator will observe Team Leader interviewing skills and correct inappropriate techniques or behaviors.
- (b) Routine field checks will be performed and observations documented by the Project Field Coordinator.
- (c) This log is the last page of the general Team Member Training Record. (see UA-T-4.0). The Field Coordinator will observe the first 3 interviews of new Field Team leaders and discuss/document any observations with the Team leader. Two more observations will be accomplished within the first six months of Team Leader training. Observations will occur quarterly thereafter.

8.2 Household Report Card (Fig.2)

- (a) Household Report cards are filed in the HH confidentiality folders located in the Field Coordinator's office. The Field Coordinator responds directly to the questions and comments of the respondents.
- (b) The Team Leader is advised of the Respondent feed back by the Field Coordinator.
- (c) Respondent report cards are an important element in Team Leader evaluations by the Field Coordinator.

8.3 Questionnaire Feedback Form

- (a) This form is completed by an Interviewer or Team Member after they have administered a questionnaire to a respondent.
- (b) The form allows for subjective feedback on the relative "quality" of the interview and questionnaire in general forms.
- (c) The form is to be completed after the questionnaire has been administered and the Team has left the household. The Feedback form is not to be completed in the homes of respondents under any conditions.

FIGURE 1. Interview Skills Training Log (page 4 of New Team member Training Record).

Team Member Name: _____

Interview Skills Training Log

INTERVIEW #1.	DATE ____/____/____	Unbiased	[]
		Respect	[]
		_____	[]

INTERVIEW #2.	DATE ____/____/____	Unbiased	[]
		Respect	[]
		_____	[]

INTERVIEW #3.	DATE ____/____/____	Unbiased	[]
		Respect	[]
		_____	[]

INTERVIEW #4.	DATE ____/____/____	Unbiased	[]
		Respect	[]
		_____	[]

INTERVIEW #5.	DATE ____/____/____	Unbiased	[]
		Respect	[]
		_____	[]

Date Initial Training Completed ____/____/____

Team Member Signature _____ Buddy Signature _____

Field Coord Signature _____

COMMENTS:

Figure 2. Household Report Card

NHEXAS Arizona Project

Please let me know your perceptions of this study and our field staff. This information will be kept confidential and will be used to help us meet the needs of our study participants. Rate us, on a scale of 1 to 5, for each of the questions listed below and write any suggestions you and your family might have (your suggestions are particularly helpful). If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (602) 626-4226. Collect Calls will be accepted.

1. Were you satisfied with our field staff?

1	2	3	4	5
very	satisfied	O.K.	unsatisfied	very
satisfied				unsatisfied

2. Was our staff courteous and respectful to you, your family and home?

1	2	3	4	5
excellent	very good	O.K.	poor	unsatisfactory

3. Was our field staff informative about our study?

1	2	3	4	5
excellent	very good	O.K.	poor	unsatisfactory

4. Suggestions? _____

Do you want me to contact you about any problems that occurred or questions you might have? Check box next to response:

yes []; no [];

Please mail this card in the postage paid envelope provided. Thanks again for your time and support.

Seamus P. Rogan
Field Coordinator-Supervisor
NHEXAS Arizona
(602) 626 - 4226

FORM = UA-T1.0-1.0

Figure 3: Questionnaire Feedback Form

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