

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Measures of Participant Characteristics, Behaviors, Perceptions of Program Effects, and Program Experiences

### General Questions

- 1. Do all Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) program grantees/subrecipients need to collect participant entry and exit survey performance measures?**

Yes. As stated in the funding opportunity announcement, performance measures data collection is a grant requirement for all SRAE grantees and subrecipients. This includes grantees conducting local evaluations.

- 2. Where can grantees find the final approved entry and exit surveys to collect measures on participant characteristics, behaviors, program experiences, and perceptions of program experiences?**

Final approved entry and exit surveys for the collection of measures of participant characteristics, behaviors, program experiences, and perceptions of program experiences were released on July 31, 2020 and can be found on the [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com) website.

- 3. Are there different survey versions for different age groups?**

There are two versions of the participant entry and exit surveys: 1) high school and older and 2) middle school.

- 4. Has the federal government received Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval for the performance measures entry and exit surveys?**

Yes, the federal government received OMB approval for performance measures, including the participant entry and exit surveys. The OMB control number that indicates this approval is on the cover of each survey.

- 5. What is the difference between OMB and Institutional Review Board (IRB)?**

The purpose of the federal OMB process is to review and approve federal data collection and to minimize data collection burden on the public.

The purpose of the IRB process is to review and approve research at the local level that involves human subjects to ensure data are collected ethically and to minimize any potential harm. The Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB)

strongly recommends that grantees seek a Letter of Determination from their local IRB to determine whether a review is needed. A full or expedited review by an IRB may be necessary to approve data collection with SRAE program participants. IRB institutions can be found within state human or health services offices, at local universities, local school systems, and in the private sector. An IRB that covers federal data collection efforts does not exist.

## 6. How is the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) using the participant entry and exit survey data?

The performance measurement data will be used in the following ways:

- a) Monitoring → To monitor program implementation and progress at the provider level, the program level, the grantee level, and the funding stream level.
- b) Improvement → To provide timely feedback to grantees for ongoing program improvement.
- c) Reporting → To report selected performance measures to FYSB, ACF, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) leadership and respond to inquiries from stakeholders that are internal and external to the federal government.
- d) Comparison to national data and surveys → To compare data from the population the SRAE program serves to data from other national youth surveys, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent and Adult Health.
- e) Partnerships → To establish and maintain partnerships, working groups, and collaborations with other federal and nonfederal partners working on issues related to youth.

## Questions About Data Collection and Submission Periods

### 7. What are the data collection and data submission periods for grantees?

All grantees submit data to ACF through the SRAE Performance Measures Portal twice each year, except for structure, cost, and support for implementation measures, which are collected once each year.

| Measures  | Period covered by data                              | Frequency of data submission      |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| Structure, cost, and support for program implementation | Every year<br>(e.g., October 2020 – September 2021) | Annual (each Summer)              |
| Attendance, reach, and dosage                           | Every six months<br>(e.g., January – June 2021)     | Biannual (each Summer and Winter) |

Participant characteristics, perceptions of program effects, and program experiences (entry and exit surveys)

Every six months (e.g., July – December 2021)

Biannual (each Summer and Winter)

**8. What should grantees do if they are unable to begin data collection within the required deadline?**

Grantees should notify their Federal Project Officer (FPO) of challenges related to data collection. Grantees who anticipate the need to delay the data collection start date should share the following with their FPO: 1) the reasons for delay, 2) a timeline for activities necessary to begin data collection, and 3) an anticipated start date to collect data.

Note: Grantees funded in 2019 or earlier were required to begin data collection on September 1, 2020. Grantees funded in 2020 were required to begin data collection on January 1, 2021.

**Questions About the Survey Instruments**

**9. How were the entry and exit surveys developed?**

To develop the SRAE participant entry and exit survey performance measures, ACF drew from existing instruments that included survey items designed to collect information on youth development, sexual behaviors, and program experiences. The SRAE Entry and Exit Survey Measures Guide on the [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com) website provides information about the existing surveys from which SRAE performance measures were drawn.

ACF conducted cognitive pretesting of the participant entry and exit surveys with youth ages 12 to 20. The cognitive pretest sample included geographically diverse male and female adolescents of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. ACF revised the survey items based on the pretest results. The current instruments reflect those revisions. ACF also conducted listening sessions with nine Departmental SRAE grantees and eight Title V SRAE grantees to obtain their input on the performance measures.

**10. How much time did pretest participants need to complete the surveys?**

Pretest participants spent an average of eight minutes completing the high school age entry survey and 16 minutes completing the high school exit survey. The abbreviated middle school entry and exit survey versions required less time.

**11. Are the surveys available in Spanish?**

Yes. Spanish versions of the surveys are available on the [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com) website.

**12. Where can grantees find additional information about survey items?**

The SRAE Entry and Exit Survey Measures Guide on the [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com) website provides information about participant entry and exit survey performance measures, including the category, source, and purpose of items. All grantees are

encouraged to share this information with subrecipients, data collection staff, evaluators, and others who are responsible for data collection.

**13. Can grantees edit survey items or instructions or omit items from the surveys?**

OMB requires that grantees not change the survey item wording, order, the response categories, or skip logic. Grantees and subrecipients must use the entry and exit surveys in their entirety unless the grantee obtains a waiver from their FPO for a particular item(s). The instructions must also be presented in their entirety unless grantees need to make formatting and instruction changes due to virtual data collection. Examples of such changes include:

- No longer instructing respondents to use a pen or pencil
- Limiting the number of survey items that can be viewed at one time, particularly if youth will view the survey on their smartphones
- Formatting survey items and responses presented in a grid to avoid scrolling across the screen

**14. Can grantees add items to the surveys?**

Grantees may choose to add other items to the entry or exit surveys only under the following conditions. All OMB-approved items must be administered first, in the order presented in the ACF-approved survey before any additional items are presented. Grantees should not submit the additional measures to ACF; only the OMB-approved performance measures should be submitted. If grantees intend to add additional measures to the end of the OMB-approved survey, they are required to insert the following phrase between the last federal performance measure item and the first item of any additional measures: *The questions above are part of a national effort to measure whether programs meet their goals. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The next questions are not part of this national effort.*

**Questions About Partnership Buy-In and Approval**

**15. What should grantees do if they have concerns about one or more survey items in relation to their specific target population(s)?**

Concerns about specific survey items will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Grantees should contact their FPO to discuss the specific situation and request a waiver, if applicable. If it is determined that a waiver is needed, the FPO will provide the grantee with the waiver request form (see Question 17).

**16. What should grantees do if they believe schools or other partner organizations might refuse to allow data collection for one or more survey items?**

Grantees should share the performance measures with schools or other partners and discuss the benefits of the performance measures data for the community. If the schools or other partners then refuse to allow collection of one or more

survey items, grantees should work with their FPO to discuss the need to submit a waiver request.

**17. How do grantees request a waiver?**

Waiver request forms are provided as needed by FPOs. Grantees should first discuss the challenges they are having with their FPO. If the appropriate step is a waiver request form, the FPO will send the form to the grantee for completion and submission.

**18. Can grantees request to waive all surveys?**

Requests to waive entire surveys will be denied. Grantees should request to waive specific items.

As outlined in all SRAE funding opportunity announcements, all grantees and subrecipients are required to monitor and report on program implementation and outcomes through performance measures. Grantees applying for funds were required to indicate their agreement to collect information related to the federal performance measures, report the data to FYSB, and describe the approach to collect, track, and report the measures in the grant application.

**19. What kind of information should grantees gather for the waiver request?**

Grantees must identify the specific item(s) for the waiver request, provide a summary of the activities taken to share and vet the surveys with stakeholders, provide a rationale for why the specific item(s) need to be waived, and provide documentation to support the rationale for waiving the specific item(s).

The required supporting documentation to be submitted with a waiver request includes a certification form, an official waiver request letter, and any policies, laws, or regulations (if available) that provide justification as to why the item(s) should be waived. The documentation should come from the group that requested the waiver for the specific item(s) and has authority to make decisions related to data collection for youth. This may include, but is not limited to, IRBs, school boards, and school principals.

**20. How soon should grantees expect to receive a response after they submit a waiver request?**

Grantees will receive a response within two to four weeks after submitting a complete waiver request and documentation to FYSB. During the review process, the FPO may reach out to the grantee point of contact identified on the waiver form to request additional information, if needed.

**Questions About Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval**

**21. Does ACF expect grantees to obtain IRB approval to administer the participant entry and exit surveys?**

The purpose of the IRB process is to review and approve research at the local level that involves human subjects. Some IRBs consider performance measures exempt from review because they are not considered to be research; however,

this varies by IRB. FYSB **recommends** grantees funded in 2019 or earlier seek a Letter of Determination from an IRB to determine whether IRB review/approval is required for performance measures data collection. FYSB **requires** grantees funded in 2020 to contact an IRB to request a Letter of Determination about whether IRB review/approval is required.

## 22. What is a Letter of Determination?

A Letter of Determination is issued by an IRB to document a decision about whether a data collection must be reviewed by an IRB committee. The IRB can decide that: a) a review is not needed, b) an expedited review is needed, or c) a full review is needed.

## 23. Has ACF provided any guidance to help grantees with IRB review and approval?

Yes. A webinar about human subjects protections and data security and privacy requirements was conducted in January 2020 for grantees funded in 2019 or earlier and again in January 2021 for grantees funded in 2020. Webinar materials are available on the [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com) website. For specific IRB issues, grantees should consult with their FPO.

## 24. How can grantees find an IRB?

Grantees should identify whether their organization has an existing relationship with an IRB. Many organizations have internal or affiliated IRBs, so grantees should check within their organizations first. IRBs often operate within public or private nonprofit entities, such as universities, state agencies, or hospitals.

If there is no existing relationship with an IRB, grantees should check with partner organizations, such as local universities, hospitals, and research institutions to learn whether they have an existing relationship with or can recommend an IRB.

If needed, grantees can also work with external or commercial IRBs.

Federal HHS regulations require all IRBs to register with HHS if they will review research that involves participants and will be conducted or supported by HHS. If the IRB a grantee works with determines that performance measures data collection must be reviewed/approved, the IRB must be registered with the HHS Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) database.

A national list of registered IRBs is available through the HHS OHRP database: <http://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search>. Grantees can search this database to learn whether the IRB they have in mind is registered.

## 25. What should grantees do if their IRB does not approve performance measures data collection or specific survey items?

Grantees should review the IRB's written summary of concerns to learn why performance measures data collection or collection of specific survey items is not approved. A rejection from the IRB may indicate that informed consent, data

collection, and/or data privacy and security procedures need to be strengthened. If grantees need assistance strengthening these procedures, they can view materials on the [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com) website, contact the SRAE Performance Measures Help Desk, and/or share IRB concerns with their FPO. Situations will be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine how best to proceed.

**26. What if the grantee’s IRB, school, or other partner organization requires active parent/guardian consent or parental/guardian notification to administer the entry and exit surveys?**

Grantees must comply with any existing requirements to obtain parent/guardian consent or notify parents/guardians about survey data collection. An example parent/guardian consent form that can be adapted by grantees is included with the January 2020 and January 2021 webinar materials at [www.sraepas.com/webinars/](http://www.sraepas.com/webinars/).

If parent/guardian consent is required, some parents/guardians may not allow their child to answer the survey items. Grantees should only administer surveys to youth whose parents/guardians provide consent.

Even if parents/guardians do provide consent, youth have the right to refuse to complete the survey or answer particular items. Those youth can still receive SRAE programming.

**Questions About Data Collection**

**27. Does participant entry and exit survey data need to be collected for all programs and participants?**

Yes, collection of performance measures data is a grant requirement for all SRAE grantees and subrecipients. Performance measures surveys must be offered to all SRAE participants who are middle school age or older, unless parent/guardian consent is required and not obtained.

**28. How should grantees determine which youth should complete the version of the surveys for middle school youth versus the version for high school and older youth?**

The age response categories on the middle school and the high school or older versions of the surveys are guidelines for middle school and high school grades, since the grades that constitute middle and high school vary across communities.

**29. When should the entry and exit surveys be administered?**

Entry surveys should be administered to youth before they begin program activities. Exit surveys should be administered on the last day of the program, after delivering all program content, or shortly after (but no longer than two weeks after programming ends). If any participants are unable to complete the entry

survey the day it is administered because they are absent, grantees should administer the survey to them as soon as possible.

**30. Should grantees funded in 2020 administer the survey to youth who began programming before January 1, 2021 but completed programming on or after January 1, 2021?**

Grantees funded in 2020 should not administer the performance measures entry survey to youth who began programming before January 1, 2021. However, for that same cohort, the exit survey should be administered when youth complete programming on or after January 1, 2021.

**31. How should grantees ensure privacy and security related to the surveys?**

Required data privacy and security protocols can be found at [www.sraepas.com/webinars/](http://www.sraepas.com/webinars/).

**32. Are entry and exit surveys voluntary for youth?**

Yes. Although performance measures data collection is a grant requirement for all SRAE grantees and subrecipients, youth should never feel pressured to complete a survey. The introductory statement on the cover of the survey informs youth that: a) their participation in the survey is voluntary, b) youth can skip any items they do not want to answer, and c) no one outside of the study will see their responses.

**33. Can grantees administer the surveys virtually, with youth accessing the surveys using their personal cell phone, tablet, or computer?**

Yes. Grantees can use any survey mode to conduct the participant entry and exit surveys, including virtual survey administration. General testing of any virtual mode should be done in advance of survey implementation with youth to ensure that respondents will be routed correctly through the survey and that required data privacy and security protocols are in place.

**34. If youth struggle with reading, is it OK to read the survey aloud for the class?**

Grantees may request technical assistance with a performance measures data collection protocol for youth who struggle with reading. Reading the survey items aloud for the class during in-person data collection increases the risk that youth will see one another's responses. If possible, grantees should determine in advance whether any youth require someone to read the survey aloud to them and prepare to make any necessary accommodations. If so, grantees may need additional meeting space to ensure privacy and to avoid disturbing other youth taking the survey.

**35. What should staff administering surveys do if youth do not understand a survey item or if none of the response options fits them?**

Staff may read the survey item aloud to the youth, instruct youth to answer the survey item to the best of their ability, and/or remind youth that they may skip any



item in the surveys. Staff should not provide definitions of terms used in the survey. This would introduce inconsistency into the survey data because some youth would be responding based on what is written in the survey and others would be responding based on additional verbal instructions that the entire sample of SRAE youth program participants did not receive.

**36. What kind of referral protocol is needed if youth become distressed during data collection?**

If a youth appears to be distressed, grantees should follow the trauma-informed procedures established by their organization (for example, refer youth to a teacher or counselor or have a staff person available during virtual data collection). If a youth needs to leave the room because they are upset, an adult should accompany the youth and make a warm handoff to another adult. A youth should not be left alone to find assistance.

**37. What do grantees do if performance measures data collection expenses are not included in their current budget?**

The requirement to collect performance measures is stated in the SRAE grant funding opportunity announcement, as well as in the terms and conditions of the grant. Grantees should discuss with their FPO any budget issues, including the need for a budget revision, if applicable.

**Questions About Data Submission**

**38. Do survey data need to be submitted for all programs and participants?**

Yes. Performance measures data collection is a grant requirement for all SRAE grantees and subrecipients. Grantees should plan to submit performance measures entry and exit survey data for all middle school age or older youth who participate in SRAE programming.

**39. How do grantees submit survey data?**

Grantees submit survey data to ACF through the web-based SRAE Performance Measures Portal. Account holders can access the Portal at [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com) during data submission windows.

Existing grantee users can create additional Portal accounts for others at their organization who need to submit data or for evaluators and subrecipient program providers. Additional grantee staff, evaluators, and providers who want access to the Portal during data submission windows should:

- Request access from the grantee project director or another grantee-level user, who can enter the requester’s name and contact information into the Portal to create an account; or
- Contact their FPO to request permission to access the Portal if other grantee-level users are out of the office or are no longer with the organization. FPOs may request that other grantee staff verify that the requestor has permission to access the Portal.

Survey data will be submitted using optional Excel tools available on the [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com) website or using an Excel or .csv file with identified columns that correspond to the Excel tool format. Grantees will not be able to upload scannable forms to the Portal.

A webinar about submitting data to the Portal will be conducted before each data submission window, and past webinar materials are available on the [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com) website.

**40. Can grantees upload SRAE performance measures data if they use their own database management system?**

Yes. Grantees may submit performance measures data to ACF by uploading an extracted file from their own data system in the format of an Excel or .csv file with identified columns that correspond to the optional Excel tool database structure.

**41. Does performance measures data submission replace grantee Performance Progress Reports (PPRs)?**

No. The performance measures submission does not replace the Performance Progress Reports (PPRs). Grantees are required to submit PPRs, as indicated in the timeline in the funding opportunity announcement, and performance measures data.

**42. How should grantees submit survey data if the grantee administers both middle school and high school and older versions of the survey?**

Grantees that administer both the middle school and high school and older versions of the surveys should combine the data across those versions for all youth into one file for entry surveys and one file for exit surveys. For questions that are not included in the middle school version of the survey, grantees should indicate which youth did not respond to each item because they completed the middle school version. Grantees may use the optional Excel tools to help with entering data into a database structure compatible with the Portal.

**43. What is the relationship between the optional Excel data recording tools and the SRAE Performance Measures Portal?**

The optional Excel data recording tools provide a template in which grantees may record performance measures for upload to the SRAE PAS Portal. Use of the Excel tools is optional, but all grantees must submit performance measures data through the Portal.

**44. Where can grantees find the optional Excel data recording tools to assist with data entry?**

The optional Excel data recording tools can be found on the [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com) website.

**45. Should grantees with multiple providers or providers that operate more than one program combine their data and submit one spreadsheet?**

Yes. Grantees should combine the data across providers and programs into one file for entry surveys and one file for exit surveys.

**46. Should grantees that administer both the middle school and high school and older versions of the surveys combine their data and submit one spreadsheet?**

Yes. Each optional Excel tool accounts for the different versions of the surveys and provides a template for creating one file for entry surveys and one file for exit surveys across the versions.

**47. What kind of data preparation and data cleaning should grantees conduct before submitting performance measures survey data to the Portal?**

Grantees should conduct data checks for completeness, out-of-range values, internal consistency of responses, and reasonableness of responses. If data issues are identified, grantees should investigate the issues by contacting providers or data collectors; editing the electronic file, if needed; communicating with the SRAE Performance Measures Help Desk about data issues; and taking steps to avoid similar issues in the future. Grantees should correct any errors introduced in processing the data. However, grantees should not change youths' actual responses to the survey items, even if they are internally inconsistent. A webinar on this topic was presented on December 3, 2020 and again on December 15, 2020, and webinar materials are on the [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com) website.

**Questions About Analysis of Survey Data**

**48. Does ACF plan to link the entry and exit surveys for analysis?**

No. It is inappropriate to link the entry and exit survey data since they are not pre-test and post-test surveys and there isn't a control group. The entry survey asks about behaviors, and the exit survey asks about behavioral *intentions* and *perceived effects* of the program. The entry and exit survey data will be analyzed separately, and trends will be monitored across data collection periods and years.

**49. Are grantees' evaluators expected to analyze performance measures data?**

Grantees' evaluators are not expected nor are they required to analyze performance measures data before submission to ACF. If evaluators would like to analyze the data for continuous quality improvement (CQI) purposes, they may do so. However, they are not required to submit results of the analyses to FYSB.

Additional information about the Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) performance measures is available at [www.sraepas.com](http://www.sraepas.com). For further support, contact the Public Strategies SRAE Performance Measures Help Desk at [www.sraepas.com/contact](http://www.sraepas.com/contact) or toll-free at 833-797-0166.