

Appendix I: Law Enforcement Interviews

One method for obtaining data is the face-to-face interview. With this method, you talk to each participant individually. This can be done in the participant's workplace, in your office, or in another private place. We recommend that you use a semistructured interview format. This means that you will ask a set of questions prepared in advance. Clarification to follow-up questions may still be used. By asking general questions and having your participants provide answers in their own words, you may gain more complete information. The interview should be structured, but not so structured that it doesn't allow participants to discuss the alcohol-related crashes in the community freely.

Although face-to-face interviews are a valuable way to collect data, they are not without drawbacks. The appearance and demeanor of the interviewer may affect the responses of the participants. Subtle changes in the way an interviewer asks a question may elicit different answers. Also, be aware that the interviewer may not respond similarly to all participants. For example, an interviewer may respond differently to a participant they know versus a participant they've never met before.

I.1 THE INTERVIEWER

Fundamental to the interview is an interviewer who leads the discussion. This person should feel at ease speaking in a one-on-one conversation. The interviewer's goal is to make participants feel comfortable expressing themselves openly while remaining unbiased and keeping the discussion on track. It is recommended that you use someone who has conducted face-to-face interviews before. The interviewer should be able to ask the questions the same way for each participant and be able to read the questions in a neutral manner. The interviewer should also be practiced in active listening techniques that encourage participants to honestly and openly respond to the interview questions.

I.2 CHOOSING THE PARTICIPANTS

As part of this needs assessment you will need to conduct interviews of key law enforcement officers. You are encouraged to do at least one interview with the chief of police and one with the county sheriff, but also you should consider what other

interviews would be most appropriate and informative for your community. In addition to the law enforcement interviews, you may want to interview emergency room staff, alcohol treatment providers, or community leaders. One thing to consider when you choose your participants may include the length of time they have held their current position. Be careful not to choose someone who is too new to be able to accurately answer your questions. The interviewer should keep in mind the questions they are trying to answer, and they should feel creative in how they choose participants.

I.3 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

The interview should last about 30 minutes and follow a semistructured format. Only the interviewer and the participant should be present during the interview, and the interviewer should make sure the interview is being conducted in a private location where others cannot hear the conversation. The interviewer should ask the questions and let the participant respond without interrupting. The interviewer should allow the participant to talk freely but not ramble about unrelated issues. The interviewer should make every attempt to find a balance between keeping the conversation on track and allowing it to flow naturally. To accomplish this, a “funnel” structure is often used. This approach is best outlined as a series of questions that move from general to specific.

I.4 INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

These are questions that introduce the topic for discussion. They should make the participant feel at ease with the interviewer. Usually they are not critical to the research; rather, they are intended to foster conversation and get the participant to start thinking about the topic.

I.5 KEY QUESTIONS

These are questions that drive the research. Their answers provide the best data for later analysis. They should be focused on the topic of interest and open-ended. The interviewer’s goal with these questions is to illicit open responses from the participant. You should avoid questions that allow for short answers as well as questions that can be answered with yes/no.

I.6 ENDING QUESTIONS

These questions bring closure to the discussion and enable the participant to look back upon previous comments. Participant should be asked to summarize their thoughts.

I.7 SAMPLE QUESTIONS YOU MAY CHOOSE TO USE FOR YOUR INTERVIEWS

I.7.1 Introductory Questions:

What alcohol-related problems do you see in our community?

What factors do you believe are causing these problems?

I.7.2 Key Questions:

What percentage of arrests are a result of alcohol-related offenses in our community?

What percentage of convictions are a result of alcohol-related offenses in our community?

How many alcohol-related offenses do you think go undetected in our community?

Are any officers assigned specifically to alcohol-related issues or offenses in our community?

How many officers are assigned?

What does their work consist of?

What special training do officers receive in order to deal with alcohol-related offenses?

Do you hold sobriety check points?

How many sobriety check points were held in 2006?

How many drivers were tested?

How many positive BAC levels were obtained?

Where were the sobriety check points held?

Have you conducted any compliance checks for sales to intoxicated patrons?

How many compliance checks for sales to intoxicated patrons were conducted in 2006?

What else are law enforcement officers doing to reduce alcohol-related crashes in our community?

What else could law enforcement officers do to reduce alcohol-related crashes in our community?

What locations are known for alcohol-related incidents?

Are there particular people that are known for repeated alcohol-related incidents? If yes, what do you do to keep track of or work with those people?

How do you think law enforcement could better address the alcohol-related problems in our community?

I.7.3 Ending Questions:

How do you think the criminal justice system is helping reduce the alcohol-related problems in our community?

How do you think concerns in the criminal justice system are contributing to the alcohol problems in our community?

Our goal is to identify the contributing factors that lead to alcohol-related crashes in our community. Is there anything you would like to add or do you have any final comments?

Thank you for your time and input.

I.8 RECORDING AND USING THE INFORMATION

In addition to taking notes, every effort should be made to audio-record the law enforcement interview, but first you should seek permission from your participant. The use of recording equipment is important because it will allow you revisit the conversation and remember the exact words used by the participant. This recording can also be transcribed or at least listened to for quotes and general ideas. We suggest using a data matrix like the one found on the next page to keep track of major themes and quotes from the discussion.

The information gathered from these interviews should be used to complement other quantitative work by the use of participant quotes and the grouping of ideas. The grouping of ideas refers to the categorizing of attitudes, feelings, or beliefs of the

participant toward the topic. This may simply involve discussions revolving around a single question. In other cases this may involve outlining the major topics brought up during the interview.

Notes for Law Enforcement Interview

Date: _____ Location: _____
 Participant's Title: _____ Interviewer: _____

Section	Major Ideas or Themes	Quotes
Question 1		
Question 2		
Question 3		
Other thoughts, ideas, comments, or themes that arose during the interview:		