

County of Los Angeles – Department of Public Health  
Substance Abuse Prevention and Control

**KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

The following instructions have been created to help contractors conduct reliable and valid community-based key informant interviews.

**PURPOSE OF KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS**

The primary purpose of key informant interviews is to collect in-depth information from individuals who have first-hand experience or knowledge about a particular topic. Examples of key informants are representatives from political, spiritual, business or neighborhood groups, law enforcement personnel, school administrators, and college students. Whereas focus groups are used to understand attitudes and perceptions among community members, key informant interviews tap into individual expertise and specialized knowledge.

Environmental Prevention Services (EPS) and Comprehensive Prevention Services (CPS) contractors are required to conduct a minimum of three to seven key informant interviews among individuals 18 years old or older. Interview topics must be generated from the needs assessment data gathered thus far, for instance to investigate gaps in findings or divergent, inconsistent, or particularly strong or surprising results as documented in the Local Key Findings Summary, Environmental Scan Summary, and/or Survey Summary. Interviews should address a limited number of main topics (a maximum of one or two), incorporate several pre-determined questions per topic, and last approximately 45 minutes.

**INTERVIEW PLANNING**

There are several key steps involved in planning and implementing key informant interviews as a means for data collection. Review the following activities and prepare accordingly with your community partnership members.

1. Gather and review existing data from the Local Key Findings Summary, Environmental Scan and Survey Summary;
2. Determine what information is needed to better understand the local alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues and contributing factors;
3. Determine the type of expertise needed and brainstorm about possible key informants;
4. Work with SPA partners to select incentives; purchase incentives and prepare documentation process;
5. Select the individuals who will be invited to participate as key informants;
6. Develop an interview tool (an example is provided);
7. Determine whether notes will be taken using paper-and-pencil or a computer and whether the interview will be audio taped; obtain needed materials;
8. Determine whether any interviews will be conducted in a language other than English and obtain an approved translation of the consent form;
9. Designate an interviewer and note taker and ensure they meet training requirements (listed below);
10. Select an appropriate location for the interviews;
11. Schedule the interviews at least one week in advance and at times convenient for interviewees; and
12. Plan to send thank you notes or emails to participants.

The following items are required to conduct the key informant interview:

- At least two pens or pencils
- Notepad or computer to take notes
- Audio recorder (where applicable)
- Key informant interview questions and interview tool
- Written consent forms

- Incentives
- Incentive tracking form
- Agency business cards for distribution to individuals interested in participating in the Prevention Community Council
- A copy of this protocol

### Staff

Two staff will conduct the key informant interviews: one to perform the interview (interviewer) and the other to document the proceedings by taking notes (note taker). Because notes are often incomplete or difficult to read or understand a week or so later, SAPC strongly encourages audio taping the interview as well, although this is not required. Where applicable, the note taker will audiotape the interview. Interviews may not be videotaped as this compromises confidentiality.

Requirements for interviewers include the following:

- An agency employee assigned to the EPS or CPS contract who is 18 years of age or older (evaluator permitted);
- Live scan fingerprint clearance through DOJ/FBI on-file;
- Certificate of completion for the Department of Public Health (DPH) Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Subjects Protection training or alternate IRB training if pre-approved by Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC) on-file;
- Attendance documented at the Center for Community Action and Training (CCAT) *Conducting Key Informant Interviews and Focus Groups* training; and
- Other agency conducted training to ensure safety and compliance with all contract/program requirements in advance of participating in interviews or focus groups.

Note takers must meet all of the above requirements EXCEPT attending the CCAT training in person; however, note takers should receive in-house training from a staff person from the agency who did attend the CCAT session. Experience taking notes is recommended so information is not lost due to the fast pace of interviews.

The interviewer should have experience leading discussions, knowledge of the topic to be discussed, and the ability to relate to the participant. The interviewer's primary task is asking predetermined questions and follow-up questions where appropriate. The role of the interviewer is to encourage the frank expression of opinions and ideas and to ensure that participants feel comfortable sharing their views. Discouraging participant expression of their views is inappropriate and will bias the interview. The interviewer is not authorized to sympathize, commiserate, argue, or in any other way express his or her own views on the interview topic.

Interviews may be conducted in a language other than English. Agencies must ensure that administering and supporting staff are qualified to read, speak, and translate the language effectively, and notes from the interview must be translated into English before submission to SAPC. The informed consent document must be translated in advance and approved by SAPC and the IRB, and be the same version used for all Service Planning Areas (SPA).

### Participants

Contractors must provide a list of key informant interviewees, topics and questions to SAPC in the form of the Key Informant and Focus Group Recruitment and Incentives Plan before key informant interviews are conducted. These documents must be accordance with other SPA-based EPS/CPS agencies to avoid duplication of participants and to ensure an adequate range of participants (AWP H1, H2, B4a).

Interviewees invited to participate:

- Must be residents of Los Angeles County
- Must have characteristics (e.g. age, race, education level) representing the population at large
- Must have **first-hand knowledge or expertise relevant to AOD issues** in the community

Appropriate areas of expertise include, but are not limited to:

- Code enforcement
- Marijuana dispensaries
- Local politicians
- Alcohol retail outlets
- Pharmacy retail outlets
- Police
- Schools
- Planning commission
- Neighborhood watch
- Community leaders
- Media
- Health care providers
- Parks and Recreation

## INTERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

Key Informant Interviews must be conducted face-to-face. Telephone interviews are not permitted. Snacks and beverages for interview participants will be the only expense allowed under the contract.

### Procedure

1. The interviewer will introduce her/himself and the note taker and welcome the participant to the interview. S/he will read the consent form aloud, answer any questions, and obtain the participant's initials on the form.
2. Next, the interviewer or note taker will give the interviewee the incentive described in the consent form and document it on the Incentive Tracking form. A non-cash incentive of \$20 or other amount agreed to within the SPA and approved by SAPC and DPH IRB will be offered.
3. The note taker will begin the audio recording (if applicable) and test to see if the recorder is working properly. The interviewer will begin the interview and use the Key Informant Interview Tool developed by the agency as a guide.
4. The interviewer will encourage a fruitful discussion by asking follow-up questions and facilitate understanding by periodically summarizing and/or repeating answers for the participant's confirmation. The note taker will document the discussion by taking hand-written notes or entering the dialogue into a computer. A note taker is required for all interview sessions, regardless of whether or not the sessions will be audio recorded.
5. At the conclusion of the interview, the interviewer will take a moment to go over the notes and give the participant a 2-3 minute summary of what was said. This provides an opportunity to make sure the interviewer has understood and that the notes were taken correctly.
6. The interviewer will thank the participant and end the interview. Provide the participant a copy of the consent form.
7. Provide the participant with an agency business card if s/he asks to participate in the Prevention Community Council.

## ATTACHMENT N (Part A)

8. Immediately after the interview, the interviewer and note taker will read over the notes together to make sure they are legible and reflect what occurred in the interview.
9. The interviewer or note taker will compile and organize the data and translate the discussion into English if necessary.
10. The agency will send a thank you note or email to the interviewee within two weeks.
11. The agency will submit notes, tapes (if applicable) and summary to SAPC by the deadline.

### Written Consent

SAPC will provide a written consent form and script that will introduce the interviewer and note taker and outline the purpose of the interview. Reading from the script, the interviewer will read the consent form aloud while the participant reads along. Interviewees must initial the form to be eligible to participate. Do not write the individual's full name on the consent form.

*SAPC maintains the right to modify the above guidelines based on the needs of the program. Requests for modifications and exemptions to the guidelines may be granted by SAPC on a case-by-case basis. Requests must be submitted in writing to SAPC and must be received prior to the key informant interview activity in question. Key informant interviews completed without adherence to the above guidelines will be disallowed.*