

Successful Recruitment and Retention of Men and Foreign-born Women as Participants in Longitudinal Research: Learning from Community-Based Organization Staff

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INTRODUCTION: Poor rates of recruitment and retention in longitudinal studies jeopardize the validity of studies, limit generalizability, and hinder study progress. Sub-populations offer specific challenges. Men and foreign-born women may be difficult to engage in the National Children’s Study (NCS).

PURPOSE: To contribute to an evidence-based Recruitment and Retention Tool Kit for the National Children’s Study (NCS), we partnered with two Community-based Organizations (CBOs) successfully working with men and foreign-born women in long-term programs, to translate their methods, materials and strategies for our use. **METHODS:** We used a qualitative participatory learning and reflection approach to collect information (English and Spanish) on the grass-roots methods of the CBOs.

Our model included foreign-born women to illustrate hard-to-recruit participants and males to exemplify potential barriers to participation. We transcribed and will analyze semi-structured interviews using thematic content and narrative analysis (Table). **RESULTS:** CBO staff participated in the study (median age 43 years; females, male; Hispanics, African-Americans; foreign-born). We learned recruitment and retention practices that are culturally appropriate, successful and accepted for establishing long-term trusting relationships in the community. We identified the professional characteristics necessary for engaging in a positive manner with NCS participants. Learning was mutual since the CBO staff learned about the NCS research and we learned about their recruitment and retention techniques. **CONCLUSION:** Community-based knowledge transfer and exchange through the partnership with successful CBOs can be used to develop materials and strategies for recruitment and retention in longitudinal research and for public health programs.

Table: Structure of Thematic Content and Narrative Analysis of Semi-structured CBO Staff Interviews

Question	Interview Topics
Lead in Q1:	Tasks respondent does at the CBO
Section A: Recruitment	
A-1	Ways clients find out about the CBO
A-2	Does respondent help recruit clients
A-3	Getting clients started into services
A-4	Reasons clients get started into services
A-5	What makes it hard for clients to get started

A-6	What makes it easy for clients to get started
A-7	Knowing which language to speak at first meeting
A-8	Hints for dealing with people of different cultures
A-9	Inviting men and women differently
A-10	Actions to make people feel comfortable
A-11	Incentives or encouragement used to recruit
A-11-a	Which incentives or encouragement work best
A-12	Tasks and procedures during home visits
A-13	Other comments about recruitment
Section B – Retention	
B-1	Respondent responsible for retaining clients
B-2	Reasons clients continue in CBO services
B-3	What makes it hard for clients to continue
B-4	What makes it easy for clients to continue
B-5	Methods to keep contact with clients
B-6	Incentives or encouragement used to continue
B-6-a	Which incentives or encouragement work best
B-7	Tasks and procedures during home visits
B-8	Actions when client need is identified
B-9	Actions when client is unhappy with services
B-10	Other comments about retention
Section C - Personnel	
C-1	What respondent likes about the job
C-2	Suggestions to keep NCS staff effective
C-3	Type of people who are not good at respondent's job
C-4	Suggestions to help avoid getting tired of work
C-5	Suggestions about training and keeping CBO staff