



Supplemental Needs Assessment Implementation Guide for California Community Colleges

Developing a Paper Survey for Your Campus Needs Assessment

About This Guide

Community college students are a diverse population with specific mental health risks and needs. Possessing current data about student health can help you inform and advocate for student mental health services. As outlined in the publication, ***Addressing Student Mental Health in Community Colleges: Begin with a Needs Assessment***, a campus needs assessment is the first step in addressing student mental health.

Whether standardized or customized surveys are used, data collection may include paper survey implementation.

Who is this guide for?

This implementation guide is intended for California Community College faculty and staff planning to conduct a paper survey for their needs assessments efforts. It includes information about survey planning, logistics, and implementation. The information presented in this guide is meant as a supplement to the document, *Addressing Student Mental Health in Community Colleges: Begin with a Needs Assessment*.

Benefits of Surveys

This information can be used to:

- Identify the most common mental health and behavior risks affecting students' academic performance.
- Design evidence-based health promotion programs with targeted educational and environmental initiatives.
- Provide needs assessment data for campus and community task forces on mental health, as well as other health and risk behaviors, such as sexual assault, alcohol use, eating disorders, etc.
- Generate readily available graphs and data for policy discussions and presentations with faculty, staff, administrators, district board of trustees, county mental and behavioral health agencies, and other community partners.
- Influence the campus culture by opening a dialogue about physical, mental, and behavioral health with students and staff.
- Allocate monetary and staffing resources based upon defined needs.
- Develop proposals to secure grant funding to develop or sustain programs.
- Evaluate your programming efforts by conducting repeat administrations of the survey.
- Compare your data with data from other colleges and campuses.

Getting Ready to Begin the Survey Process

There are a number of steps a campus will complete before beginning the survey process. The checklist below outlines these steps.

- Decide the primary purpose of the survey.** The survey can be used to evaluate students on your campus as a general health assessment, a needs assessment, a comparison to a national sample, a pre- or post-test, or for program planning.
- Obtain administrative approval.** Communicate and confirm participation with the President/Chancellor, Student Services Vice President, or Dean. Share information about the objectives, instrument, and plan for implementation.
- Determine how you will explain survey privacy/consent to participants.** Include a letter of invitation that explains privacy to students. The letter should include a local contact on your campus, any survey incentives you are offering, resources, and other information required by your Institutional Review Board (IRB). See the section "[Recruit and Train Survey Proctors](#)" below for more guidance.
- Obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.**
- Identify sources of support and campus resources available.** Meet with faculty administrators and faculty groups as soon as possible to inform them of the project, and enlist support from faculty selected from the sampling procedure to participate.
- Decide if you want to survey in the fall or spring.** Fall surveys ask students questions based on "the last 12 months"; the spring survey asks students the same questions based on "the last school year." Confirm the appropriate timeline and ensure it does not compete with other surveying on campus.
- Specify the sampling strategy and sample size.** Sampling strategies may include surveying all students, surveying individual students selected randomly, or surveying groups of students in randomly selected classrooms. The desired sample size is the number of individuals that respond to the survey. Larger colleges should sample more students; smaller colleges can sample fewer students. Identify sample size by considering (1) the size of the total population and (2) the predicted return rate.

Sample Size versus Estimated Surveys to Distribute

Size of Campus	Desired Sample Size (Returned Surveys)	Number of Surveys to Distribute
Under 600	All students	Depends on school population
600-3,000	600	2,400
3,000-10,000	700	2,800
10,000-20,000	800	3,200
20,000-30,000	900	3,600
over 30,000	1,000	4,000

The proportion of completed surveys depends in part on the following: (1) campus-wide pre-publicity, (2) timing of first contact (do not survey just before finals or breaks), (3) follow up with non-responders, and (4) the desirability of incentives.

- Determine if you want to offer any incentives to increase your response.** Check with your funding source to ensure incentives are compatible with funding guidelines.
- Optional: Decide on HSACCC NCHA II Consortium Project participation.** Every three years, the Health Services Association of California Community Colleges (HSACCC) coordinates the Consortium Project. For more information, see the text box below.

Information on HSACCC NCHA II Consortium Project

The mission of the Health Services Association of California Community Colleges (HSACCC) is to support and foster student access to quality health service programs within California Community Colleges (CCCs). Composed of health professionals working within the CCC system, a variety of research, advocacy, consultation, and networking activities are accomplished.

The HSACCC NCHA II Consortium Project 2013, supported by HSACCC's Research Committee, was intended to assist with the implementation of the NCHA II survey in community colleges throughout California during the spring 2013 semester. The goal was to merge databases of CCC participants as a specific cohort to further studies on the health status of California Community College students. The final reference group included summary data from all 24 CCCs that conducted the NCHA II during spring 2013 and represents 15.7 percent of all colleges in the U.S. that completed the survey that semester. The participating colleges represent a range of geographic locations, sizes, and diversity of student populations. A standardized supplemental questionnaire is also being developed, that may be included in the student survey process, asking questions that are more specific about demographics unique to CCC students that may further inform program planning for at-risk student populations, such as Veterans.

The extensive database created through the Consortium provides opportunities for statewide reporting, research projects analyzing the status, needs and impact of health issues in the CCC student population, advocacy efforts of organizations serving the health needs of community college students, and comparing trends from similar studies done in 2007, 2010, and 2013.

In addition to HSACCC's plans to share the overall results of this study, it welcomes a more in-depth analysis of the results via collaborative projects with outside researchers. The Reference Group Executive Summary, Spring 2013 report is available at <http://www.cccstudentmentalhealth.org/docs/evaluation/ACHA-CCC-Ref-Group-Spring2013-Exec-Summary.pdf>. Additional HSACCC contact information is available online at <http://www.hsaccc.org/>.

Preparation and Implementation of Paper-Based Surveys

Classroom surveying requires additional coordination and planning. This includes assigning a coordinator, developing a timeline, notifying faculty, recruiting and training survey proctors, confirming sampling procedures, and administering and collecting surveys. This section outlines the steps required for administering a paper-based survey.

Assign a Survey Coordinator

- Dedicate one person for survey implementation and coordination (as a full time focus) for the survey window period.** This may include contracted staff, interns, student workers, clinicians, or support staff. In addition, the survey coordinator may be responsible to work with the Institutional Researcher, or other primary person assigned to collect data.

Develop an Implementation Plan and Timeline

- Define your timeframe for surveying and work backwards from your completion date to allow for time needed to:**
 - Allow realistic lead-time and turnaround time for each phase.

- Order and collate questionnaires.
- Create procedures and communications to faculty.
- Confirm classrooms with faculty, and make arrangements with staff for implementing.
- Notify faculty of selection, including an RSVP timeframe.
- Administer and collect surveys.

Additional timeframe considerations may include:

- Willingness of faculty to participate (early or late semester).
- Sample size/number of classrooms to survey.
- Number of students in classrooms (early or late semester).
- Labor resources to “double up” on certain days or times; the less labor you have, the longer the survey time period.
- Spring Break, holidays, and other conflicting time periods.

Getting Buy-In. Perhaps the most important part of survey administration is a task before the survey is even distributed. Getting support from faculty and administration can be a time consuming and challenging process, takes investment, and needs time. Be sure not to underestimate this important part of the process.

Notify Faculty Using a Multifaceted Approach

- ☐ **Request a letter from your college President, Vice President, Dean of Student Services, or other champion to provide the cover letter request for participation.**

Considerations for distributing this letter and other communications include:

- Create a good tracking system for announcements, RSVPs, and other communications (e.g., using spreadsheet software such as Excel).
- Send invitations using a variety of methods – paper, email, or other – as faculty differ in preferred communication methods.
- Follow up with letters, emails, and phone calls.

Define Sampling Procedure

- ☐ **To develop sample procedures, you will need to consider whether you will:**
 - Include students from credit and non-credit courses, or credit courses only.
 - Survey either or both full-term and short-term classes.
 - Limit the survey to classes that meet Monday through Friday, or include Saturday/Sunday classes.
 - Survey both day and evening classes.
 - Include satellite locations.
 - Include online courses.
- ☐ **To clarify surveying procedures clearly, you will need to:**
 - Calculate the number of class sections needed for sampling, given the average class size and the total sample size.
 - Oversample, as only a portion of the faculty will choose to participate (the more up-front advocacy you do, the better). For example, if only 75 percent participate and your target is 100, you will need to oversample $100/0.75 = 133$ percent of your total sample size to achieve your target.
 - Determine procedures for a second and third pass at sampling, if needed, before you start.

Recruit and Train Survey Proctors

- Prepare well-trained proctors** (e.g. representatives from Health Services, faculty members, volunteers) to administer the paper surveys in classrooms from start to finish:
 - Ensure that the trained individuals are available to administer the survey if you survey across multiple time slots (e.g. morning, afternoon, and evening classes).
 - A well-trained representative can address questions, recognize potential distress in students, and respond; this assures each survey is administered in a consistent way, with required information provided up front.
 - A faculty member may proctor the survey if they have done this before, and after the introduction has been done by a survey representative.
 - Consider ways to ensure student anonymity. For example, you may have a box where students can submit their surveys. If students turn the survey into their faculty member, it may compromise their sense of anonymity.

- Develop a written script to instruct participants about the survey and include the following:**
 - The survey is anonymous.
 - The survey is voluntary.
 - The survey is important to your college.
 - If your survey involves representation from your college's health services department, do not mention *Health Services* until AFTER the survey.
 - The consent policy for those students under 18 years old.

Provide Written Instructions to the People Administering the Survey

- Prepare classroom-monitoring tips.**

- Create and compile "survey packets."** Be sure to include pencils, scripts, agenda, campus map, and instructions.

- Confirm location of classroom.**

- Coordinate with faculty** (e.g., whether or not the faculty member will leave the room, if the faculty member is not assisting in proctoring the survey).

- Ensure faculty contact information (phone) is available if something is amiss.**

- Provide information on how to collect/handle questionnaires after they are completed.**

- Send a thank you letter to staff and faculty who assisted with the process.**

California Community Colleges Student Mental Health Program (CCC SMHP)

Toll-free: (855) 304-1647 ~ www.cccstudentmentalhealth.org

The California Community Colleges Student Mental Health Program (CCC SMHP) is dedicated to increasing the capacity of the CCC system to provide student mental health services. Funded by the California Mental Health Services Authority, this program offers cost-free training and technical assistance (TTA) to California's community college campuses

The California Mental Health Services Authority (CalMHSA) is an organization of county governments working to improve mental health outcomes for individuals, families and communities. Prevention and Early Intervention programs implemented by CalMHSA are funded through the voter-approved Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63). Prop 63 provides the funding and framework needed to expand mental health services to previously underserved populations and all of California's diverse communities.